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CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

How Secure Is Your Meeting's Data?

Experts Reveal Alarming Vulnerabilities

PAGE 18

Focus on Small Meetings

They're Taking a Bigger Slice Out of the Group Business Pie

PAGE 28



The Gen Y Factor

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Credit: Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport Hotel
The Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport Hotel offers 40 pre-set boardrooms for up to 25 people. **PAGE 28**



Credit: San Jose McEnery Convention Center
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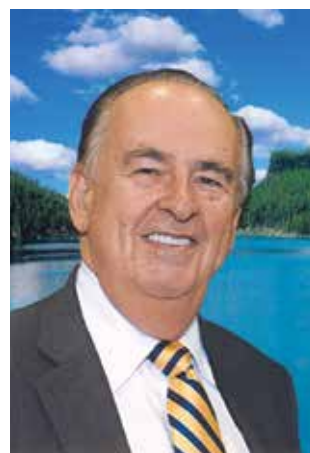
Credit: The Gleneagles Hotel
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Publisher's Message

Networking Transcends the Generations

In our cover story in this issue, we explore generational accommodation trends and discover that the “general direction of meetings is already shifting in a way that suits all generations.” I agree. After all, we are marking our 40th year in business this year; thus, I can attest to the fact that opportunities for face-to-face networking at meetings and events will always transcend differences among generations.



Even though millions of millennials, those born since 1980, are the first generation to be “connected” to the Internet from birth, the prospect of gaining access and networking with mentors is a huge factor in whether or not they will attend a meeting.

As Kim Lear, director of content for BridgeWorks, which provides speakers on generational workplace dynamics, says, “One reason that millennials are going to conferences is that it’s the only time they have access to leadership. A driver in attending meetings is access, ability to spend time and network with leaders. It needs to be orchestrated because if we let it happen organically, it doesn’t work: At cocktail hour, all the millennials are in one corner, all the leadership is in another corner. If meeting planners can think of

interesting ways to create cross collaboration, they can really connect. Millennials are hungry for mentoring and getting feedback.” That’s probably why her “speed dating” design is so successful.

Other ideas gaining favor among the younger set include getting outside the meeting venue and exploring fresh experiences unique to the destination such as the crawfish boil Lear hosted in New Orleans or the teambuilding hike that Joe Martin of BDI Events suggests, as it provides a more personal, active component to networking efforts.

Also in this issue, planners will find plenty of places to satisfy the needs of all the generations: from the big cities and scenic off-the-beaten track locales of the great state of California on page 36 to the rich culture and history of magnificent Western European capitals and countrysides on page 42. As Jodi Swailes at ITA Group, says, “I choose Europe for the experience it gives people and the wow factor. It’s especially popular when someone wants to do a top-level incentive program and also wants to make sure it’s really special. When that’s the case, we tend to look more toward Europe as opposed to anyplace else in the world.”

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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News & Notes

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Anne Hamilton Recognized as 2015 Supplier Honoree at the PCMA Education Foundation Dinner

WASHINGTON, DC — PCMA's 2015 Education Foundation Dinner Celebrating Professional Achievement was held on April 8 at the Marriott Marquis in Washington, DC. Anne Hamilton was recognized as the 2015 Supplier Honoree at the dinner. Hamilton, vice president, resort sales and services, Disney Destinations, leads a team of 170 representatives responsible for sales and services efforts related to meetings and conventions and theme park events held at Disneyland Resort in California, Walt Disney World Resort in Florida and Disney's Aulani, a Resort and Spa in Hawaii and Disney's National Sales. She has been instrumental in growing the Disney Destinations sales organization while continuously balancing the company's goals along with the customer's desires, enabling both to achieve a high level of success.

A 35-year industry veteran with a wealth of experience, Hamilton has spent more than two decades actively advocating on behalf of the meetings industry. This includes serving on the board of directors for MPI and PCMA, and holding a broad range of other volunteer leadership roles



Honoree Anne Hamilton and Visit Orlando President and CEO George Aguel at the PCMA Awards Dinner.

with MPI, ASAE, PCMA and related industry organizations. She also serves on the Florida State University Board of Governors, the University of Central Florida Rosen Hospitality School Advisory Board and the U.S. Travel Association's "Meetings Mean Business" Coalition. In recognition of her industry contributions, Anne has been named an ASAE Fellow and Florida State University Dedman Hospitality School Alumnae of the Year. www.pcma.org

The Scottsdale Plaza Resort Unveils Renovations This Summer

SCOTTSDALE, AZ — The Scottsdale Plaza Resort, located in the heart of Scottsdale and Paradise Valley, announced the details regarding room renovations, which will begin in May with the first phase to be completed mid-July and the remaining standard rooms to be finished in October.

The renovations include replacing bathtubs with glassed walled showers; replacing flooring throughout vanity and shower area; new in-room lighting; expanding the closet area/vanity bathroom area with more square footage; new accent chairs for seating area and desk; new framed vanity lighted mirrors; new plumbing fixtures; new brushed nickel

hardware; new mounted TVs; all new millwork; paint refreshed throughout; granite on wet bars and vanities; and the addition of in-room refrigerators.

The Scottsdale Plaza Resort boasts numerous amenities including five pools, lighted tennis courts, a fully equipped fitness center, a full-service salon and day spa, and a nine-hole putting green. Several dining options at The Plaza include a light lunch by the pool at Café Cabana, a breakfast brunch at Garden Court, a romantic dinner at Remington's, or cold beer and freshly popped popcorn at JD's Lounge.

www.scottsdaleplaza.com

Hilton West Palm Beach Celebrates Topping Out

WEST PALM BEACH, FL — Related Companies, Coastal Construction, Hilton Worldwide executives, meeting planners, Palm Beach County, West Palm Beach city officials and civic leaders celebrated April 6 at a topping-out ceremony of the Hilton West Palm Beach, which is connected to the Palm Beach County Convention Center. The 400-room hotel is scheduled to open in early 2016.

The hotel will offer more than 24,000 sf of meeting space, an expansive pool deck and outdoor fire pit, a state-of-the-art fitness center, an eclectic and curated art program, lobby bar, restaurant and lounge, and poolside

bar and grill. The Hilton West Palm Beach is designed by Miami-based architecture firm Nichols Brosch Wurst Wolfe & Associates.

The 350,000-sf Palm Beach County Convention Center features a 100,000-sf exhibit hall, a 22,000-sf ballroom and 21,000 sf of flexible breakout space divisible into 19 rooms.

Hilton West Palm Beach is located minutes from Palm Beach International Airport, just steps away from CityPlace, a premier shopping, dining and entertainment destination, and less than a mile from Norton Museum of Art and Kravis Center for the Performing Arts. www.hilton.com

PCMA President and CEO Deborah Sexton Addresses Legislation and Meetings in Indiana

Deborah Sexton released this statement on April 6.

Last week, a civics lesson played out in real time. It started when lawmakers in Indiana passed a "religious freedom" measure — a piece of legislation that many businesses interpreted as legal protection for businesses to refuse service to the LGBT community.

Critics spoke up loud and clear. A movement to boycott Indiana sprung up almost overnight. Individuals, businesses, sports teams, municipal and state governments all pledged they would avoid traveling to or investing in Indiana.

While the controversy erupted after Indiana Governor Mike Pence signed the bill into law, Visit Indy had been working with Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard and business leaders since February to oppose the legisla-

tion. Tourism officials worked hard to ensure that an amendment to eliminate the potential for discrimination was added to the law. The leaders at Visit Indy share the open-minded belief of the entire meetings industry: that every citizen and visitor should receive fundamental human rights everywhere they go. Other destinations around the state such as Bloomington and Fort Wayne joined the conversation, voicing support for policies that welcome every visitor.

Late in the week, the travel industry's work paid off. Lawmakers met in Indianapolis and approved changes to the law to prohibit service providers "from using the law as a legal defense for refusing to provide services, goods, facilities or accommodations. It also bars discrimination based on factors that include race, religion, disability,

sexual orientation, gender identity or United States military service," according to The Associated Press.

The legal language in Indiana has been fixed, but the backlash from the media attention lingers. We all know first impressions are often the strongest, and those who first heard of the initial measure didn't necessarily stick around to hear about the corrective, clarification amendment. So there is the sad potential for a residual negative perception for our Indiana colleagues.

What can our industry do? Support Indiana. Keep our contracted meetings in Indiana and keep Indiana in our future consideration set. And when you are in Indiana, lend your voice to our colleagues who are asking the state legislature to obliterate intolerance and discrimination and make LGBT individuals a protected class. www.pcma.org

View from Sunset Harbor, Miami Beach

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Your meetings will feel less like work and more like a reward when you stage it in a place with swaying fronds, wild macaws, a rhythmic nightlife and interesting neighborhoods with unique cultures and authentic food. And with the new Miami Beach Convention Center opening in 2018, you will raise the expectations for what a venue should do for you. Consult a meeting specialist at MiamiMeetings.com or call 305-539-3071 to learn more.

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News & Notes

JW Marriott L.A. Live to Add 755-room Tower

LOS ANGELES, CA — Just five years since the grand opening of the JW Marriott L.A. Live, Los Angeles, plans were announced March 5 by AEG to develop a 755-room expansion of the hotel. Combined, the new project together with the existing JW Marriott L.A. Live and The Ritz-Carlton, Los Angeles will contain 1,756 rooms and more than 200,000 sf of function space, making it the second largest hotel in California. Taking advantage of the proposed



Rendering of the new tower at JW Marriott L.A. Live.

connecting links to the Los Angeles Convention Center, Staples Center and Nokia Theatre L.A. Live, convention and hotel guests will have convenient access to the full range of amenities offered at L.A. Live including 19 world-class restaurants, Regal Cinemas, Lucky Strike Lanes & Lounge, the Grammy Museum and its popular Live sports and music venues.

The new hotel tower will be directly connected to the existing 878-room JW Marriott L.A. Live and 123-room Ritz-Carlton Los Angeles hotels by means of a bridge across Olympic Blvd. In addition to two levels of below-grade parking and ground-level retail space, a second floor amenity deck will include a restaurant, bar/lounge, fitness center, executive lounge and pool area with cabanas.

AEG will build additional meeting, conference, banquet and ballroom space to support the new JW Marriott L.A. Live hotel rooms. This new function space totaling more than 75,000 sf would be directly linked via two short bridges to the existing approximately 100,000 sf of function space immediately to the north of the Event Deck. Combined with the project's additional outdoor entertainment deck the development will deliver more than 200,000 sf of total convention and meeting space.

Construction is expected to begin in late 2015 or early 2016, with the new hotel rooms and facilities scheduled to open in 2018.

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Snapshots



Credits: 1. Stephen Elliot in association with MudProductions.com; 3-6 DMAI; 7 R&D Events

1 Disney colleagues and friends celebrate with Anne Hamilton (center), vice president, resort sales and services, Disney Destinations, the Supplier Honoree at the PCMA Education Foundation's Dinner Celebrating Professional Achievement held at the Marriott Marquis, Washington, DC, on April 8. Two other winners honored were Kati S. Quigley, CMP, senior director partner, community marketing, Microsoft Corporation, the Meeting Professional Honoree; and George G. Fenich, PhD, professor, School of Hospitality Management, East Carolina University, the Educator Honoree. **2** Mark Sadowski (l), public relations director, Disney Meetings and Terry Brinkoetter (r), public relations director for Disney Cruise Line, Disney Vacation Club and Adventures by Disney, flank *Corporate & Incentive Travel* Publisher Harvey Grotzky at the PCMA Education Foundation's Dinner Celebrating Professional Achievement. **3-6** Destination Marketing Association International's Destinations Showcase was held March 25, 2015, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. The DMAI Showcase has grown to become North America's largest one-day event bringing conference, convention and trade show professionals together with exhibiting meeting destinations from the United States and beyond. **7** More than 170 corporate volunteers helped revive and restore Virginia Key, Florida, by removing invasive and exotic plant species, and planting native plants — an award-winning project arranged by Stuart Gardner's Florida Meeting Services in conjunction with Las Vegas-based R&D Events.

By Mary MacGregor

Focus on the 3 R's to Take Your Event Sponsorships to the Next Level

Asking key partners to be sponsors at an event, exposition or convention is a proven way to offset program costs for you and a good way for sponsors to get valuable face time with your participants. It's a tried-and-true marketing strategy that has stood the test of time. It's unlikely to go away any time soon — nor should it!

But it can be so much more when you apply the three R's of audience engagement.

Right Partners, Right Interaction, Right Results

Maximizing the impact of sponsorships for you, your partners and your participants requires bringing together the three R's of audience engagement: Right Partners, Right interaction, Right Results.

Using the three R's means:

1. Working with the **Right Partners** who want to spend quality time with attendees and are open to new ideas to make that happen.
2. Creating the **Right Level of Interaction** with participants that appeals to their interests and needs.
3. Knowing upfront what you want your **Right Results** to be so you can demonstrate to your sponsors why investing in your event is worthwhile.

Traditional 10-by-10-foot pipe and drape booths and promotional product giveaways still have their place, but savvy marketers are applying the three R's — and benefiting because of it.

A Case in Point

A major telecommunications company applied the three R's to their call center employee incentive event in Puerto Rico recently and were astounded by what happened.

Instead of offering traditional and costly optional activities such as tours, golf and water sports rentals, the telecommunications company worked with three key partners to create a series of interactive events each day of the trip. The partners represented add-on products the call center attendees were expected to sell to their customers.

The afternoon events were held inside a closed, windowless nightclub — hardly a place most people visiting sunny Puerto Rico would choose to be. Yet these activities were eagerly attended by all the travelers. In fact these sponsorship

events ended up being rated as the highlight of the trip by participants. And, the sponsor partners were equally pleased with the results.

Why were they so successful?

1. The telecommunications company wisely chose the **Right Partners** who appreciated the tremendous influence these call center employees had in selling their products.
2. The partners were willing to try new and entertaining ways to get the **Right Interaction** with the call center employees so they would be open to the sponsors' messages and feel valued at the same time.
3. The telecommunications company utilized the services of BI Worldwide to create cost-effective interactive experiences that delivered the **Right Results** for everyone involved.

Making a Lasting Impression

BI Worldwide frequently applies key principals of behavioral economics as part of its successful three R's design methodology. Each of the three distinctly different afternoons was cleverly designed by BI Worldwide as an interactive event that provided fun and engaging experiences that capitalized on two behavioral economic principles: vividness and memory bias.

Vividness causes people to remember things that are graphic or dramatic. Memory bias helps us to better remember those experiences we particularly enjoyed. Successful interactive sponsorships need to be positive emotional experiences that attendees remember and are excited to share with colleagues, friends and family.

Applying the Three R's Is Easier Than You May Think

Inviting the right partners to play a role in your events goes way beyond the obvious financial benefits of cost sharing. When integrated properly using the right interactive experiences, everyone involved realizes the right results.

Applying the three R's:

- Gives partners a unique opportunity to interact with channel members to whom they normally can't get direct access.
- Gives event participants the ability to learn directly about the sponsors products, services and value propositions to better meet their own goals.



- Adds interest and appeal to the event.
- Creates positive memories when the principles of memory bias and vividness are applied to the event design and implementation.
- Builds loyalty and goodwill for both you and your partners.

The Right Partners Are Willing to Jump in

Most sponsors are extremely receptive to new and different ways to engage with the key influencers of their products and services. It's important to remember that your sponsorship partners are experts in whatever line of business they are in; they are not experts in participant engagement. Sponsors continue to rely on the tried-and-tired promotional product giveaways, cocktail parties and coffee bars with free Wi-Fi because it's what's familiar to them. But given a chance, they will

try new approaches and even invest more for the right interaction that leads to the right results for their businesses.

The Right Interaction Attracts New Sponsors

BI Worldwide has helped many organizations dramatically build their event sponsorships by using the three R's to carefully and creatively develop partner packages that capture the specific interests of the event audience. The packages offer a range of investment opportunities for sponsors that meet their distinct needs. For one major energy company, BI Worldwide helped that organization add many new sponsors to their annual 2014 convention and business expo resulting in a 22

percent increase above the sponsorship revenue goal.

The Right Results Are Realized

What exactly did BI Worldwide do for the telecommunications and energy companies? What were those successful interactive experiences BI Worldwide created for the telecommunications company that had participants passing on the beach in favor of a windowless room in the Caribbean? Curious to learn how BI Worldwide helped the energy company dramatically exceed its revenue goals and have a key executive declare "you raised this convention to a new level"?

Visit our website at BIWorldwide.com or contact us at info@biworldwide.com and we'll not only share what we did, but we'll help you apply the three R's to take your event to the next level. We'd love to hear from you.

C&IT

“Given a chance, (sponsors) will try new approaches and even **invest more for the right interaction** that leads to the right results for their businesses.”



Mary MacGregor

is Corporate Vice President – Event Solutions for BI WORLDWIDE (BIW), responsible for all operating areas of the BIW Event Solutions Group including purchasing, design, delivery, group air, individual incentive travel, onsite operations, technology, communications and merchandise. She leads a team of more than 175 industry professionals who deliver memorable experiences and measurable results for their customers. www.BIWORLDWIDE.com, info@BIWORLDWIDE.com

By Dean Sivley

Beware the Ride Sharing Revolution — What You Should Know Before You Go

The ground transportation/black car service space has gone through dramatic changes in recent years, driven largely by the explosion of peer-to-peer car sharing services and the advent of mobile technology. These changes are adding additional risks that need to be addressed by corporations and travel managers. While not an exhaustive list, these additional risks include a lack of regulation leading to security inconsistencies and the potential for employees to be transported by uninsured or underinsured providers.

What corporate travelers and corporate travel managers may not appreciate is that several firms within the traditional car service industry have evolved as well. A number of companies now offer all of the conveniences of the new tech-enabled players, but also a continued focus on safety, security and duty of care. Corporate buyers are discerning enough to understand that there are points of differentiation between the new ride share services and these “hybrid” traditional car service providers. However, they may need to focus on asking even more questions to fully understand what is best for their organizations and their employees.

Surge Pricing

It may come as a shock to some to learn that ground transportation is the fifth largest expense category in business travel. In fact, ground transportation actually outpaces car rental — just behind airfare, lodging, dining and entertainment (according to a recent study by Concur). Travel managers are sometimes of the mindset that peer-to-peer car-sharing services generally offer less expensive rates. Frankly, that is not always the case. “Surge pricing” for Uber, or “prime-time pricing” for its main competitor, Lyft, creates a major challenge for travel managers looking to manage costs. Pricing is based on supply and demand, and can be double, triple or more during periods of high demand (e.g. during rush hour, on concert or event dates and during rain and snow storms). Employees typically are not aware of “surge” periods until they request a car, and at that point, they don’t have other viable options. Due to fluctuating

pricing based on demand, it is difficult for corporations to negotiate a flat or discounted rate for car service with these types of providers. According to a recent article on *Boston.com*, customers have felt victimized by Uber’s “surge pricing” practice. In one case, a woman was charged \$362.57 after a 20-minute ride in Baltimore. Another customer in Denver racked up a \$539 bill after a 25-minute ride.

Corporate travel managers also are becoming increasingly uneasy with at least one of the ride share firms’ apparent cavalier attitude toward safety and security. Reported incidents include:

Just last month, as reported in the *Denver Post*, an Uber driver



was arrested in Denver for attempting to break into a passenger’s home after dropping her off at the airport. In January of this year it was reported by the *Boston Globe* that an Uber driver was indicted on charges that he allegedly kidnapped and raped a female passenger. As reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in September of last year, a passenger accused a driver of being seriously injured by an Uber driver who “bashed him in the head with a hammer.” In July of last year, a New York-based CEO traveling to Washington, DC, was kidnapped by an Uber driver, held against his will and taken on a high-speed chase across state lines (as reported by *The Washington Post*).

In city after city, Uber has failed to take responsibility for their

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drivers' actions, and claims it is not subject to local licensing requirements and ordinances as they are a technology company and not a taxi or limousine company. As reported by National Public Radio in February of last year, when an Uber driver hit and killed a six-year-old girl in San Francisco the company said it wasn't responsible as the driver was "an independent contractor, not an employee and he wasn't on the clock."

Another complaint from many regulators is that ride share services frequently do not comply with local regulations and do not consistently complete background checks on all of their drivers. According to a recent article on *CNN Money*, Uber is getting pushback from local officials worldwide. A judge in Spain temporarily blocked Uber in that country, and Uber has been banned in New Delhi, India. Authorities in Portland, Oregon, recently filed a lawsuit demanding the service be suspended until the company complies with local laws.

Traditional Car Services Offer Technology Solutions

As was mentioned above, travel managers also are often not aware that many traditional car service companies have been busy reinventing themselves with the latest technology platforms. These technology solutions not only feature the "bells and whistles" that the tech disruptors offer, but go one step further to include technological solutions built for scheduled service. They also are tailored for the corporate travel market, integrating with online booking tools and GDS systems. Whether it is developing new booking tools, utilizing data to know more about travelers' needs or providing that extra level of customer service, corporate travel managers do not need to accept a one-size-fits-all model (including how the booking is actually made). The peer-to-peer car sharing services typically do not offer Web bookings and certainly not phone bookings. The "new hybrids" I am referring to typically offer all three, and they work with travel agents.

While a rising number of companies now have travel risk management programs in place, nearly half of those do not include specific requirements/controls with respect to ground transportation. That is alarming, especially considering that 35 percent of frequent business travelers cite "safety of ground transportation" as a major concern, based on a recent study conducted by the Global Business Travel Association in conjunction with AIG Travel Guard. Corporations and their travel executives need to

strike a balance between providing employees with the flexibility and convenience they need, with duty of care responsibilities to mitigate risk. A good starting point is a comprehensive travel risk management program that addresses all employee safety and security risks, including ground transportation.

Following are a few additional tips:

On-demand vs. scheduled. While on-demand services might appeal to consumers who are "out on the town" and need a quick lift home whenever the night ends, they don't make sense for business travelers who have a flight to catch, need to be met at the airport or have an important meeting to attend. Make sure your provider can offer scheduled service, backed by a solid reputation of on-time performance.

Safety and security. Make certain that your ground transportation provider is insured and their drivers are properly licensed, and that they will stand behind their drivers. Passengers should know who is picking them up. A ground transportation company should provide each passenger awaiting pickup with a name and picture of the driver, as well as the car model and continuous vehicle location via GPS.

Technology is power. Look for a company that offers booking and payment capability through a user-friendly mobile app, transactional website and 24/7 customer service center. You don't want your travelers to have to worry about tipping, having cash on hand, waiting for paper receipts or having to worry about carrying vouchers. A reliable ground transportation company also should provide an automated flight tracking system, so that airport pickup times are based on actual flight arrival times. This will help your travelers avoid waiting for drivers once their plane lands. And, e-receipts from all trips are a nice addition.

Effective cost management. Stay away from ground transportation companies that raise their costs during periods of high demand, bad weather or traffic delays. You want to know all costs in advance and not be a victim of "surge pricing."

One-stop shopping. Look for a solution provider that serves all of your travel markets — both domestically and internationally. It used to be that the industry was highly fragmented with mostly local and regional providers. Now there are companies that provide service across the country and around the world — providing you with better opportunities for negotiated rates.

C&IT

“ ‘Surge pricing’ for Uber...creates **major challenges** for travel managers.”



Dean Sivley

is the chief executive officer of GroundLink, a leading tech-enabled provider of executive black car service in major cities throughout the world, offering the industry's only on-time guarantee with a focus on duty of care, reliability and exceptional customer service. He also serves on the company's board of directors and oversees the company's growing operations throughout the U.S. and in more than 110 countries worldwide. www.groundlink.com



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By Issa Jouaneh

Selecting the Perfect Meeting Destination

A number of major world events occurred in the past few years, creating a slew of new, unique conference and event spaces available for use in business. Seasonal sporting events drew hundreds of thousands of tourists from around the world, both to developed countries such as London, which hosted the 2012 Summer Olympics, as well as to emerging regions in Brazil, which hosted the 2014 FIFA World Cup, leading to better hotels, upgraded airports, improved infrastructure and innovative facilities. With these options in mind, there are many additional factors to consider when selecting your next meeting destination, whether it's domestic or international.

Analyzing Air Travel

One of the most important considerations in destination selection is air travel. In particular, performing an event travel analysis as part of the planning process can help planners to select the best location. The first item to consider when evaluating destinations from an air travel perspective is accessibility. Be sure to determine the airport location in relation to potential hotels and venues to get clarity on ground transfer time to the meeting location.

Another key consideration is ease of travel, specifically the average flying time and number of direct flights from key locations. Flight time should be considered as part of the attendee experience, especially for situations where attendees may need to transition into meetings immediately upon arrival. Also, a limited number of flight choices could result in the number of attendees per flight exceeding organizational guidelines. Furthermore, security issues vary country to country, and it is essential that planners are up to date on security in emerging countries. The U.S. Department of State site (www.travel.state.gov) is a great resource for ensuring your meeting is in a location that meets the required security needs. Many countries also require a visa for entry. Applications can be lengthy, so keep this in mind when evaluating potential meeting destinations.

Finally, booking flights as early as possible is highly recommended as prime departure times in cities with summer concerts/festivals or other large corporate meetings/events can fill up quickly. Booking a flight weeks or months in advance can reduce costs and relieve the stress of booking last-minute.

Integrating Air Travel Management

Evaluating and understanding past travel experiences and issues can help planners make recommendations for future events. With these components of destination evaluation in mind, organizers can reduce budgetary impact from the initial stages of planning. Integrating air travel management as part of planning allows planners to manage the budget in a comprehensive fashion. If not controlled, air travel can easily consume a significant portion of an event budget. However, savings achieved through proper management of air travel can provide funding for other important areas such as food and beverage.

Looking at What's Trending

Airfare cost comparisons can have a major influence on the destination choice. In the case of two similar destinations, a significant difference in air cost can be the deciding factor. However meeting planners should research airline promotions that offer reduced fares for new aircraft or for new or focus destinations.

Compliance

If there was ever a time when planning a corporate meeting simply involved choosing the perfect location and coordinating guests, that time has passed. Today, meeting planners are becoming increasingly aware of complex compliance standards as regulatory pressures on multinational corporations have intensified, especially when operating in foreign jurisdictions. Due to such pressures, meeting planners are facing increased scrutiny around third-party outsourcing, information security, data privacy and corruption-related risks.

Emerging markets, which often equal high-risk jurisdictions from an anti-corruption perspective, continue to present challenges for many global corporations, where growth opportunities and the need for in-person training or conferences can be greater. When planning meetings and events in emerging markets, internal compliance is often called upon for final approval to ensure compliance is being met. Compliance teams are now monitoring meeting activities, and it is not uncommon for them to review spending, attendance and other key metrics after each meeting or event.

Considering the fact that compliance is an integral part



of any meeting planning process, meeting planners and internal compliance departments should work together to develop an integrated approach to planning meetings to accomplish their goals efficiently and within the bounds of regulatory compliance.

Making the Decision

Ultimately, meeting planners must decide what makes the most geographic sense for each individual client. According to the American Express Meetings & Events 2015 Global Meetings Forecast, there is a continued push to stay close to home and host meetings where the greatest number of attendees live. For those attendees who want to stay close to home or may not be able to attend a physical event, hybrid solutions can enhance and expand the value of in-person meetings by connecting with new audiences online. Organizations

can complement their face-to-face, onsite, physical meeting with simultaneous online viewing over the Web.

Meeting and event data from 2013 and 2014 provide destination projections for the coming year. Meeting planners who organize domestic meetings will frequently turn to Chicago, Orlando, Las Vegas, Atlanta and San Diego in 2015. Additionally, the Forecast examined international meeting destination trends to determine the top international cities for meetings in 2015. London tops the list in Europe, accompanied by Singapore in Asia Pacific and Rio de Janeiro in Central/South America. However, as new meeting destination opportunities arose recently in London, Russia and Brazil, meeting planners should keep an eye on worldwide sporting events that will provide new possibilities in coming years across the globe, specifically in South Korea, Rio de Janeiro and Japan.

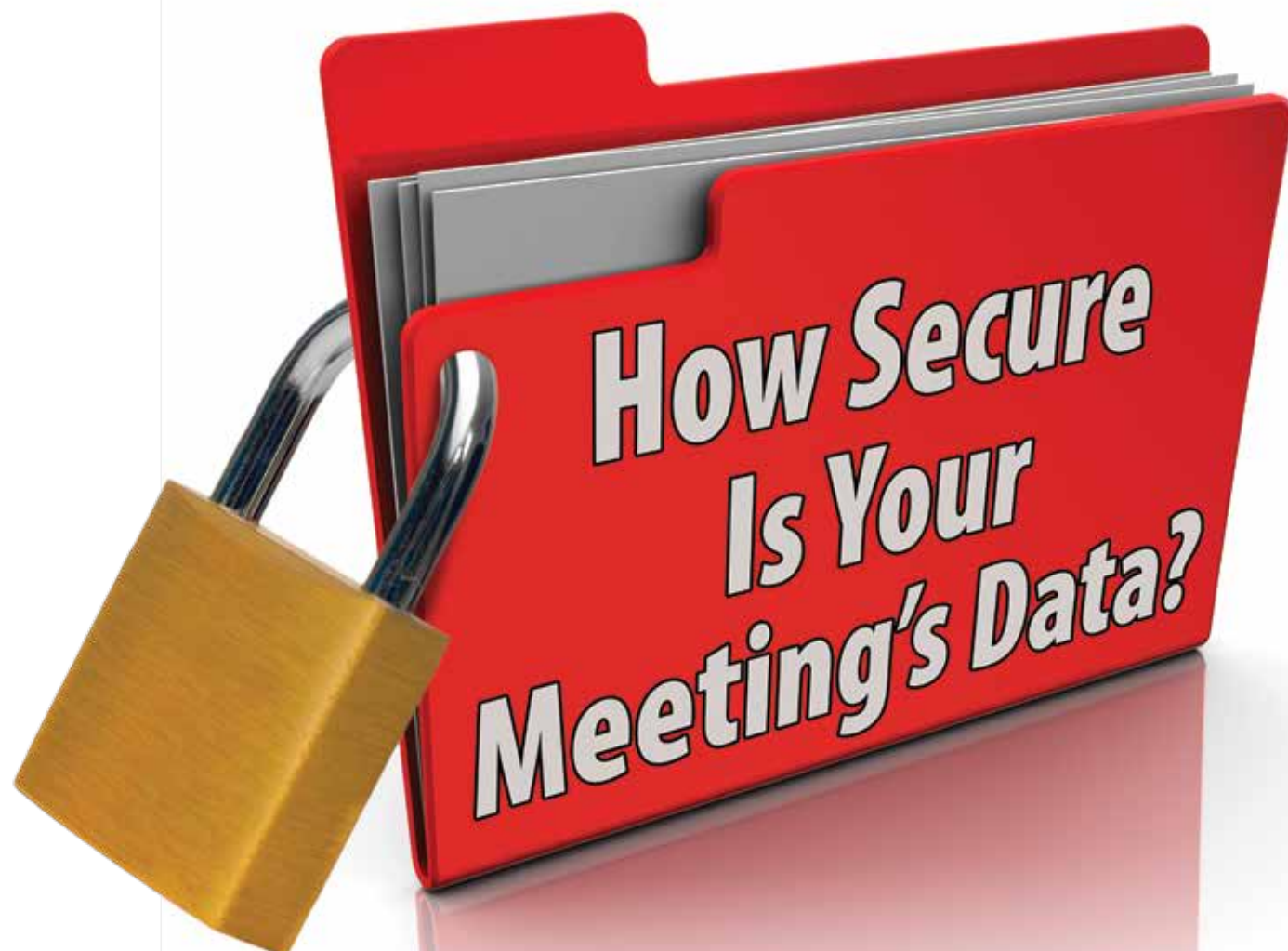
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“Meeting planners who organize domestic meetings will frequently turn to **Chicago, Orlando, Las Vegas, Atlanta and San Diego** in 2015.”



Issa Jouaneh

is the Vice President and General Manager, American Express Meetings & Events. “American Express Meetings & Events” is a service provided by American Express Global Business Travel (“GBT”). GBT is a joint venture that is not wholly-owned by American Express Company or any of its subsidiaries (“American Express”). “American Express Global Business Travel,” “American Express” and the American Express logo are trademarks of American Express, and are used under limited license.



Experts Reveal Alarming Vulnerabilities and How to Prevent Them

By Karen Brost

If protecting the security of information at your meetings isn't near the top of your list of things to worry about, it should be. Just ask the experts. Whether it's a competitor trying to get the inside track on your company's business plans or a hacker trying to grab your attendees' credit card data, dangers are all around.

Let's start with the physical security of your data. John Sileo, CEO of Sileo.com, is a keynote speaker on cyber security who has tested the system to determine just how easy it is for someone to gain access to the information they're after. "I've personally been able to talk my way into more than 20 hotel rooms that weren't mine (telling the maid I forgot my key), and have attended conferences for which I had no badge. At over 1,000 talks in conference rooms, I have picked up purses, tablets, phones and laptops more than 10,000 times without more than a handful of people (ever) noticing. In 1,000 conferences, I've probably been caught five times."

Sileo's experience underscores the importance of reminding attendees to keep closer tabs on their electronics. It also leads to a couple of other questions: Just how easy would it be for one of your competitors to slip into your general session or a breakout session? Is anyone checking badges at the door? If it's a large meeting, the attendees won't all know each other, so a stranger could just blend right in.

He shares another alarming story. "I've also been at conferences where the registration desk was left unattended and the entire set of laptops and printers was taken."

Arturo Perez-Reyes, cyber, privacy and E&O practice leader for the insurance brokerage firm Hub International, has seen similar criminal activity. "I've been to two places where the speaker turned around and somebody stole their computer." He explains why this situation is so tempting for hackers and those engaged in corporate espionage. "If the person who is speaking is someone like the CFO of (a major technology company), you definitely want their computer, especially if it's on. If it's off, you have to know the password. If it's on, they've already logged on." In other words, that makes it very easy for the thief to steal whatever confidential data is stored on the laptop.

Sileo offers this advice. "Don't leave your computer unattended on the lectern, in the seating area, in the green

room, in the registration area or in your hotel room. All of those areas are very common places where mobile devices are stolen during conferences. If you have to leave devices or files in your hotel room, hang the privacy sign on the door and call housekeeping to let them know that you don't want to be bothered."

In a blog post that Sileo wrote on data security tips for meeting planners, he states that almost 50 percent of serious corporate data theft occurs because a laptop computer is stolen. He recommends, "In addition to the standard forms of protection (passwords, encryption, anti-



Scott Schober, President, CEO
Berkeley Varitronics Systems
Metuchen, NJ

virus, etc.), carry as little data on your laptop as possible. Identity thieves target business travelers because they are generally rushed, distracted and carrying valuable data."

Staffing Up for Security

Depending on the value of the information being presented at the meeting, it may be worthwhile to hire private security to protect data confidentiality. U.S. Security Associates, a security solutions firm based in

Roswell, Georgia, offered the following suggestions in its "Threatscapes Risk Intelligence" newsletter:

"At events where participants are privy to sensitive information, security must work on the assumption that adversarial competitors are motivated to compromise the confidentiality of the meeting. Security agents are guarding not against the actions of the many but the determined few."

The newsletter article goes on to explain, "Security agents for these events should be chosen with utmost care, because those with experience are more likely to know what to look for. People who are too curious, ask questions or try to cozy up to attendees and strike up conversations — these are just a few examples of behaviors that raise flags. Every security agent must remain alert for individuals behaving in suspect ways and intervene respectfully."

According to the company, protecting data security requires a team effort. "To ensure that proprietary and confidential information is not compromised, security must establish liaison not only with hotel security but also with housekeeping and banquet staff, to coordinate daily room sweeps to capture and properly secure or dispose of potentially sensitive materials left behind by attendees. Plans also should be established to secure confidential information if there is an evacuation."

Who's Listening?

U.S. Security Associates also addresses the use of recording devices. "Security staff may need to conduct sweeps of areas where recording devices might be hidden, and policies may need to be established regarding usage of personal electronic devices for recording purposes."

Scott Schober, president/CEO/cyber security expert for Berkeley Varitronics Systems based in Metuchen, New Jersey, explains, "One of the big concerns with corporate meetings is somebody listening in. Sometimes it's the bad guy, sometimes it's the competitive company looking for the edge or to see what the

next product is coming out or what you're discussing in the boardroom. (Companies are) very paranoid of bugs being planted." He describes just how easy that is to do. "In many cases, what they're doing is buying these cheap smartphones. You can get them prepaid so it can't track back to anyone. You load an application on it. You take a piece of duct tape and you duct tape it underneath the table. You do it the night before the meeting or when the cleaning staff comes in. Then, remotely, when it's 1:00 and the meeting is about to start, they can turn on the application and listen in with the microphone and transmit the whole conversation."

He explains why this cheap, easy trick works. "If they pick the phone up and look at it and say, 'Hey, who put this here?' Guess what? It's wiped clean. There are no fingerprints, there's no traceability, because it was paid for in cash at 7-11. It's a prepaid throwaway so nobody cares about it. It's a simple way to kind of be a spy without getting into the spy business and finding microbugs to hide."

Watch Out for the Wi-Fi

All three experts we interviewed warned about the dangers of using unsecured Wi-Fi connections. "Be careful of the free Wi-Fi hot spots," Sileo says. "If you aren't logging in to them with a unique password and username, almost any cybercriminal can be sniffing what you send over the wire, including emails, account logins, intellectual property, etc."

That advice also applies to the free airport Wi-Fi service attendees may elect to use on their way to and from the meeting. "When you go to an airport, you see the hot spots pop up, the free Wi-Fi that we all know is very dangerous. You should never click on those because you can get redirected," Schober explains.

Perez-Reyes elaborates on the dangers. "What people will do is go to an airport or a hotel and they'll create a hot spot. It will say something like 'Free Ronald Reagan Airport Wi-Fi' and it isn't Ronald Reagan Airport. It's basically a hacker who has attached his or her hot spot and



"At over 1,000 talks in conference rooms, I have picked up purses, tablets, phones and laptops more than 10,000 times without more than a handful of people (ever) noticing."

John Sileo, CEO
The Sileo Group Inc.
Denver, CO

all of the data goes through that hot spot. It's ludicrous how many people are doing that. The last time I was in Ronald Reagan Airport, I counted five of these fake hot spots. When I was in the Mexico City airport about a year ago, I counted 20. It's really hard to distinguish who the authentic hot spot is because there are just so many impersonators. So basically, if you see an unlocked Wi-Fi anywhere, you should be suspicious." He adds, "It's easy for people in public spaces to just harvest everything everybody's doing."

So, what can planners do to ensure that a Wi-Fi connection is secure in the meeting room? Schober says, "They should ask (the hotel), what is the SSID? Do they have encryption in place and what level? Usually, WPA2 is pretty good encryption. Typically, when you ask somebody at a hotel, 'How do I know it's secure?' They'll say, 'Don't worry, it's really secure,' and they have no clue. You've got to be careful. Most hotels will have multiple access points. You can ask, 'We would like to make sure this is a confidential meeting. We'd like to have a dedicated access point that we know the password for that we can access just for our group.'"

Perez-Reyes says that the solution is

to create a VPN (virtual private network) when using a Wi-Fi connection. "All of the modern operating systems have a control setting to create a VPN. What the computer does is use the public encryption handshake, and it will create an SSL (secure socket layer) connection. You've seen these with your browser like with your bank. It switches from http to https. That tells you that you're now using the secure socket layer protocol and that the browser, in that case, is creating an encrypted tunnel between you and the bank."

Bluetooth, Red Flag

Bluetooth connections on mobile devices also can be insecure and the experts recommend only turning on the Bluetooth feature when it is needed. "It's a pain, and yes, you can forget, but it's a lot safer," Schober says.

Perez-Reyes shares a story about how several years ago, two young hackers stood right off of the red carpet for the Oscars as all of the stars were coming in and they were able to harvest the address books of all of the major stars by hacking into their phones. In addition to recommending that people shut off their Bluetooth connection when it's not being used, he says, "If you're a likely target for industrial espionage, don't carry your phone into places where the bad guys can get to you." He even knows of IT executives whose companies will not allow them to bring their phones into China. "They just buy disposable phones randomly so that nobody can sell them a hacked phone," he explains.

Schober is a big proponent of using a personal hot spot for Wi-Fi connections. "It can be hosted off of a 4G LTE connection and perhaps 12 people can tie into this hot spot. Then you have a secure password; you know who's accessing it. The LTE 4G protocol is not easy to hack into. It's a modulated signal. It's complex. Only somebody with a million dollars worth of equipment in a van could easily intercept that. Basic hackers are not going to try to breach that."

Schober's company designs and manufactures wireless test and security prod-

ucts and equipment that can detect contraband cell phones. He has some clients whose board meetings are so confidential that they don't allow anyone to bring mobile devices into the room. Despite that ban, some people will try to smuggle phones in by hiding them in their clothes or even body cavities. "They know metal detectors can't pick up on a phone, because there's very little metal in phones," he explains. "So we have a portal system called the SentryHound. It's essentially two poles you walk through, kind of like a metal detector, but it's not. We pick up on the high-powered magnets in the speaker, the microphone and the vibrator motor. We can pick up and tell where on the body (the phone) is. It's not dependent upon whether the phone is powered up or transmitting."

Phone App Hacks

Perez-Reyes also warns that phones can be hacked through the apps that are downloaded on to them. "Android is the most insecure operating system on Earth," he says. "It makes Windows look like a paragon of security. It's not the Android system itself. It's the fact that people load apps. IBM published a study and they found that over half of the dating apps were malicious. The dating apps not only harvest your address book, but they can take over your phone. Your phone is 'poned.' It's cybertalk for when you own a system. The phone is now poned, which means the bad guys can turn it on any time they want. It doesn't matter what the app is. What they do is they go fishing with applications that people find useful — the flashlight one, the dating app. The problem with Android is that nobody is validating the apps. On the Apple operating system, Apple is basically looking at everything that goes up on their store."

The Drone Threat

According to Schober, cyber criminals could even enlist the help of drones. "You could take a modified access point and a stealthy little drone and fly over people, where you're maybe 200 or 300 feet above them where they can't hear it or see it, and you could actually take over

somebody's phone and hack it and pull the contact list and compromise emails and other content."

His company recently purchased a drone as Schober was preparing to present at a cybersecurity event where he will talk about how easy it is to hack data by using a drone. When one of his employees took the drone on a test flight, it really drove the point home. "I'm here in my office and I'm up on the second floor and he put the drone one foot outside of my window and took live HD footage of



"If you see an unlocked Wi-Fi anywhere, you should be suspicious. It's easy for people in public spaces to just harvest everything everybody's doing."

Arturo Perez-Reyes, Cyber, Privacy and E&O Practice Leader
National Executive-Liability Practice
Hub International, Chicago, IL

me inside my office. I turned around and nearly fell out of my seat! It shows you how easy it is to spy on somebody."

A Protection Plan

Perez-Reyes says there are four basic ways to manage cybersecurity risk: avoid it, prevent it, mitigate it or transfer it. Avoidance would include steps such as not using public Wi-Fi and not taking a phone into places where there is a higher risk of being hacked.

Prevention would include steps such as using a VPN connection to connect to Wi-

Fi. "Mitigation means, 'All right, so I suffered a loss, but I want to make sure that it's as small a loss as possible, so you're mitigating by encrypting your hard disk,'" Perez-Reyes explains. "If somebody steals your hard disk and it's encrypted, basically, it's useless. It's a brick."

Transferring the risk would involve buying cyber insurance that protects against liability in the event of a data breach. These types of policies may cover costs such as credit monitoring for individuals whose data was compromised, forensic analysis and crisis management. "We're shocked at how little people buy the cyber insurance," he states. "What is it going to take? How many companies can operate without a computer? They're not insuring their brain."

Perez-Reyes is seeing somewhat of a sea change in this area, however. He shares the story of a major vendor he knows of that serves the movie industry. "Prior to the Sony breach, it was like 'We don't need this stuff. Get out of here, you're wasting our time. After the Sony breach, it was, 'How much can I buy?'"

In his blog post on data security tips for meeting planners, Sileo recommends additional steps such as securing your online reservation system to protect attendees' personal information and shredding registration information when it's no longer needed. He also recommends educating attendees. "Before they ever begin their travels, attendees should read through a quick, two-minute tip sheet on how to protect themselves while going to a conference. Simply making them aware of some of the risks that exist traveling (laptop theft, unprotected Wi-Fi, smartphone hijacking, etc.) will cause them to pay greater attention onsite."

He's also seeing planners paying more attention to this issue. "Lately, I've been at more conferences with badge-checkers, before-break reminders to take your valuables with you and password-protected Internet access. These are all great trends!" As Schober states, "Sometimes just controlling your own environment, your own security, just gives you peace of mind."

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Optics Steering the Ship



Perception and Transparency Issues Challenge Pharma Meeting Planners Still

By John Buchanan

Sometime in the future, when a think tank or university hosts a seminar on the law of unintended consequences, it's possible that a modern practical example will be the effects of unprecedented regulation — strangulation, some might call it — on pharmaceutical meetings — that are attended by many of the most renowned doctors in the U.S. and from around the world.

As of January 1, 2015, relatively longstanding but vague ethical guide-

lines created by Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) collided head-on with new requirements under the provisions of the Open Payment Act (OPA), formerly known as the Sunshine Act, to wreak havoc on pharmaceutical companies and their meeting planners.

Although there are no formal rules under either PhRMA guidelines or OPA, concerns about optics have forced pharma companies to set strict and conservative limits on the amounts of money

they can spend on hotel rooms, meals and other costs such as transportation.

In light of the pre-existing and much-feared PhRMA guidelines, OPA — which requires detailed reporting on a public website of every “transfer of value” to a doctor or other health care professional (HCP) who attends a meeting paid for by the pharma company — has led to even more draconian limitations on spending.

As a result of the enactment of the OPA reporting requirements as of

January 1, “all of the big pharmaceutical companies now have their own (policy) practices and standards and all the HCPs (health care professionals) are fully aware of them,” says Vanessa Stafford, CMP, senior project manager at Indianapolis-based Ashfield Meetings & Events, which is noted for its expertise in medical meetings and events. Today, Stafford says, the high-end meetings once hosted for doctors at five-star resorts — as an incentive to attend — are a thing of the past. “Now a lot of these meetings are being held at airport hotels across the U.S.” she says, “in order to make the rate limitation in major cities.”

In top-tier destinations, Stafford says, a major-flag downtown meeting hotel can no longer be used if the hosting pharma company wants to adhere to the rate restrictions. “The only possible exception to that would be off-peak times of the year or week,” she says.

Judy Johnson, CMP, HMCC, president emeritus of Plano, Texas-based Rx Worldwide Meetings, says that as a result of the latest generation of cost guidelines, it is now becoming increasingly difficult to get the dates, rates and space needed to hold the meeting and still meet the spending guidelines.

Incredibly, however, there is no set of formal spending guidelines. Neither PhRMA nor OPA dictates any specific restrictions or cites any numbers. In effect, acute paranoia about optics has motivated pharma companies to set increasingly conservative spending restrictions of their own — with little commonality among them except that expenditures have been reduced.

The OPA just made an already bad situation worse. It requires that all financial details of a meeting, broken down by doctor or HCP individually, be posted to a public website within 25 days of the meeting. Doctors then get 15 days to review their line items and either confirm or disagree with accuracy.

The concern of doctors, Stafford says, is based on the simple fact that

the Open Payment Act website is public. “Anyone can go to it,” she says. “It’s there for the entire world to see. So the doctors want to make sure that a (meeting host) is not showing too much money — or an incorrect amount. And, for example, if they are driving to the meeting and not staying at the hotel overnight, they don’t want it reported there was a \$300 hotel stay they actually did not use.”

Johnson notes that there is also growing concern, especially among doctors, that media sensationalism will expose them to even more scrutiny. For example, Johnson says, a newspaper reporter might look at a \$200,000



Judy Johnson, CMP, HMCC, President Emeritus Rx Worldwide Meetings Inc., Plano, TX

“There’s no regulation, rule or law that says what you can or cannot spend. But you hear the word ‘perception’ ad nauseum. There is no end to that. Everything is about perception now. And you have to be aware of that.”

figure reported next to the name of a doctor, for the year, and construe that as \$200,000 in compensation. “But the reporting doesn’t mean the doctor was paid \$200,000,” she says. “It means the pharma company spent \$200,000 to get that doctor to the various meetings during a clinical trial of a new drug. But the newspapers will never tell the story that makes that clear. The press is not playing ‘gotcha’ with this stuff yet, but they will be. And the thing the media will never say is that these doctors are worth the investment. They are the best of the best. So it’s just not fair they have to be so concerned about going to these meetings, which are absolutely essential to the development of new drugs.”

Market Reaction

Because pharma meetings have been an almost recession-proof, bread-and-butter form of meeting business for decades, hotel companies and individual operators are looking for ways to gain advantage in the current climate.

For example, Stafford says, a number of major-flag and independent hotels in popular pharma meeting destinations such as New York, Chicago and Dallas have created special “pharma menus” designed to meet the need for carefully controlled costs. “And a lot of restaurants in those destinations also have pharma menus as well,” Stafford says.

The fact that some hotels have already addressed the issue of cost limitations is helpful to meeting hosts and planners, she says. “But it’s also true that not all hotels have done that yet. So we have to work into the contracts menus that meet the cost requirements and there can be no variation from those limitations for any meeting anywhere.”

To her knowledge, Stafford says, no major national hotel brand has formalized a set of offerings based on the cost guidelines. “So far, no brand has done it. It’s being done by individual hotels in certain destinations. We have preferred vendor programs with all the major brands. But they can’t get all of their hotels to agree (to meet the specific cost guidelines).” As a result, she says, the process today is a property-by-property proposition, not a brand standard.

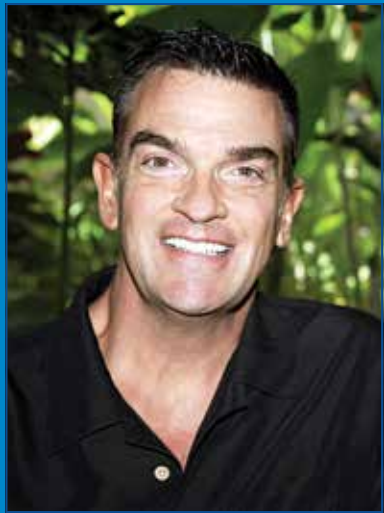
Stafford does not believe that the major hotel brands such as Hyatt, Hilton or Marriott will ever create a standard set of pharma meeting room rates or F&B menus because it would be too cumbersome and potentially controversial among franchised operators of individual hotels.

Adding insult to injury, Johnson says, is the fact that over the past year or so, the market has become a seller’s market again. “For a long time, pharma was the golden child for hotels, because they were planned at the last minute, they

A Different World

Michael Flagg, co-CEO of Bannockburn, Illinois-based The Meeting Group, which serves a number of pharmaceutical clients, functions in a much-different world from those who plan meetings attended by doctors.

The Meeting Group plans meetings for rank-and-file internal employees of pharma companies. And by definition, its events are largely exempt from the growing regulation and optic sensitivity that afflict their PhRMA-influenced counterparts.



Michael Flagg
Co-CEO, The Meeting Group
Bannockburn, IL

“And we can use whatever destinations we want. For example, we are probably in Las Vegas four times a year with pharma meetings.”

“So as a result of that, we are able to use any hotels we and our clients choose to use,” Flagg says. “And we can use whatever destinations we want. For example, we are probably in Las Vegas four times a year with pharma meetings.”

In Las Vegas, Flagg often favors Caesars Entertainment properties, including its flagship Caesars Palace.

“The ability of Caesars Entertainment to really understand what a pharma client needs and their flexibility are important to me,” Flagg says. “Pharma meetings are a part of our expertise and we look to find that with our partners as well. And Caesars Entertainment does a great job of being able to say, ‘Hey, I know what your needs are. I know how this works.’ And they address things immediately as they come up. And that kind of service is also important to us.”

However, current market conditions across the country sometimes present challenges for Flagg, just as they do for all meeting planners.

“The biggest challenge for us at the moment is that everything is just being booked on shorter and shorter notice,” he says. “And that’s not just true of pharma meetings. It’s true of all meetings. And even if it’s a large meeting, we’re even seeing those being booked on a short-term basis now, because decisions are more and more being made on a short-term basis today.”

And that means that all planners, including those who execute pharma meetings, now often have trouble getting the dates, rates and space they need.

“Sometimes, though, by booking short-term, you can get a good deal,” Flagg says. “But then you have to take what’s available in order to get that deal. You don’t get the luxury of selecting from a vast array of properties. You’re down to the hotels that can offer the time frame you need. That’s just the nature of the beast nowadays when it comes to planning meetings.”

And budgets also continue to be under longstanding and unprecedented scrutiny since the Great Recession.

“Budgets are definitely tighter,” Flagg says. “Even though our pharma meetings are not restricted by the spending guidelines for doctors, you do

see a watchful eye being kept over everything that gets spent, because companies want to control their costs. So in that case, it’s self-monitoring, in terms of their budgets. But it is happening.” — JB

paid for every meal for the doctors for the most part at the property, and room rate was never a factor,” she says. “And even back in 2008, when the PhRMA guidelines were strengthened and led to reductions in the amounts you could spend for each meal, pharma meetings were still a great piece of business for

the hotels. But now, other industries don’t have the spending restrictions that pharma meetings do in terms of room rates and food and beverage.” And that, she says, has created another level of demand for hotel rooms and meeting space — with pharma planners often at a disadvantage for obvious reasons.

Planner Consequences

In addition to the big challenges imposed by a new set of circumstances, the extra administrative requirements of OPA reporting add more work — and cost — to the planning process. “Now we also have to spend all that time, even before the meeting even takes place,

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just figuring out the amounts of what will have to be reported for each doctor that is going to attend,” Stafford says.

Many pharma companies and planners did not fully anticipate how much new work would be required once the Open Payment Act’s reporting requirements took effect January 1. “I think we all had a pretty good idea,” Stafford says, “but there are definitely a lot more questions now that the act has actually gone into effect and companies know what is required of them. And that requires a lot more work, especially on the front end. Everyone has to be much more diligent now.”

Under OPA, a standalone website is required for every individual meeting hosted in order to report all data specific to that meeting. “So I now build

be stopped. But now I think it has gone too far to the other extreme and we have lost sight of what the reasonable costs of a meeting for doctors are.”

Asked for comment, PhRMA responded in a statement, “Pharmaceutical company relationships with health care professionals, such as during conferences and other meetings, are intended to benefit patients and to enhance the practice of medicine and are regulated by multiple government entities. When interacting with the medical community, PhRMA and our member companies are committed to following ethical standards and all legal requirements. To ensure the appropriate focus on education and informational exchange and to avoid even the appearance of impropriety, pharma-

“There are definitely a lot more questions now that the act has actually gone into effect and companies know what is required of them. And that requires a lot more work, especially on the front end. Everyone has to be much more diligent now.”

Vanessa Stafford, CMP, Senior Project Manager
Ashfield Meetings & Events, Indianapolis, IN

websites every day as part of my job,” Stafford says.

The great irony, of course, is that neither PhRMA nor OPA actually set any formal restrictions on spending. Determinations are calculated by each pharmaceutical company based on an abstract formula that includes PhRMA’s broad ethical guidelines, the specific reporting requirements of OPA and sensitivity to optics.

“There’s no regulation, rule or law that says what you can or cannot spend,” Johnson says. “But you hear the word ‘perception’ ad nauseum. There is no end to that. Everything is about perception now. And you have to be aware of that.”

Johnson makes it clear, based on her 20 years of experience planning meetings for top pharma clients, that she is a champion of transparency. “I’m all for transparency, because in the past you did have pharma companies ‘buying’ doctors,” she says. “And that needed to

ceutical companies comply with codes of conduct that address requirements for conducting or sponsoring meetings with health care professionals.”

PhRMA did not comment on the specific issues and concerns raised by planners interviewed for this article.

Miscalculation

The most fundamental indication of the disconnect that has led to the current situation is the fact — which all meeting planners are aware of — that costs of airfare, hotel rooms and F&B are rising each year. And no one doubts they will continue to rise until another economic downturn swings the pendulum back to a buyer’s market, which might not happen for years.

Meanwhile, Stafford says, “It is becoming very challenging now to meet the current guidelines and provide good food — and especially healthy options like whole foods during breaks.”

Johnson adds, “The fact is, we keep asking the hotels to do more and more for less and less money. And then we’re mad if they won’t give us exactly what we want for breakfast when we’re paying \$25 inclusive.”

F&B prices, in general, are going through the roof as a result of a seller’s market and rising food costs, Johnson says. On top of that, she adds, are ever-increasing service fees of as much as 22 percent or more in some high-demand destinations.

“And as a result of that, some pharma companies are now taking a closer look at the destinations they use, because there are places where you have to say to yourself, ‘There’s no way we can get breakfast for \$25 inclusive in that destination. So you don’t go there anymore. And that is frustrating.”

Fortunately, Johnson says, she is still able to do meetings in Las Vegas, one of the most coveted destinations for many doctors, because of the value proposition she gets there.

Her go-to properties include Aria Resort & Casino and Vdara Hotel & Spa, operated by MGM Resorts International at its sprawling CityCenter complex. “Some clients like Vdara because there is no casino and therefore no perception issue there,” Johnson says. “The No. 1 reason, especially today, that I like MGM Resorts properties is the buying power they have based on their entire portfolio of major Las Vegas hotels. So if you say you have \$45 for lunch, you’re going to get a lovely lunch for that \$45. You’re not going to be embarrassed in front of your attendees like you would be at some other hotels.” And their hotels are also staffed properly onsite for meetings that require a lot of attention, as pharma meetings do.”

The most frustrating fact of all, perhaps, about the broader current situation, Johnson and Stafford agree, is that it’s as if the current meeting cost guidelines were created without any attention to market dynamics, instead being driven by nothing more than perception and concerns about optics.

And that, in reality, is not good for anyone concerned. **C&IT**

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Focus on Small Meetings They're Taking A Bigger Slice Out of the Group Business Pie

By Patrick Simms

The Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport Hotel offers 40 pre-set boardrooms for up to 25 people.

Credit: Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport Hotel

Regular group business is certainly of interest to hoteliers, and that's just what small meetings offer, especially in recent years. Serving as a guest blogger for IMEX last fall, Sherry Romello, senior director, Hilton Meetings & Product Management, noted that meetings requiring a room block of fewer than 25 rooms "now make up more than 70 percent of (Hilton's) market. While that doesn't diminish the significance of large meetings, it does shed a new light on a market segment that deserves some special recognition."

The common definition of a small meeting (i.e., 10–100 guest rooms on peak night) covers larger events than those Romello refers to, and a recent meeting planner survey lends further evidence that such events are on the rise. PCMA's 24th annual Meetings Market Survey, published in March, drew input from 500-plus association, independent and corporate planners.

Twenty-six percent of them (compared to 13 percent in the 2013 survey) said they held more small meetings in 2014 than 2013. In addition, 24 percent (compared to 15 percent in the 2013 survey) said they expected to hold more small meetings this year.

Small Meetings Growth

Phoenix, Arizona-based Avnet Technology Solutions is one example of a company where small meetings form the bulk of internal planners' workload. "Approximately 95 percent of our meetings have between 10–100 attendees on peak night, on average using close to 50 rooms," says Susan Morgan, event planner. The exceptions would be Avnet's annual partner conference and annual incentive program, but these are vastly outnumbered by small meetings, many of which have a training focus. And in line with the trend noted by PCMA, Avnet's number of small meetings is

increasing, due to "growth in the business and the various initiatives that we have in play at a given time," Morgan explains. "Our events are tied to our strategy. So if we have an initiative that's best communicated in the form of an event, that results in more activity for us, and we are seeing some of that right now."

Crucial Content

Indeed, the content of small meetings is seldom of small importance, and may even be crucial for the segment of the company in attendance. "Regardless of how small the program is, the meeting content is just as important as a larger meeting," says Jessica Menzer, account lead, Caledonia, Wisconsin-based Meetings & Incentives Worldwide. Menzer, whose focus is on corporate and pharmaceutical meetings, notes that about 50 percent to 75 percent of her events are small under the common

definition (e.g., advisory board and investigator meetings).

In her IMEX blog post, Romello elaborates on the point: "Historically, our industry has viewed small meetings as high investment, low return. Unfortunately, that diminishes the critical role that many small meetings play in achieving business objectives. Just think about a board meeting focused on setting a company's strategic direction or a sales meeting with a large new client. The attendee numbers really don't tell the story."



"Approximately 95 percent of our meetings have between 10–100 attendees on peak night, on average using close to 50 rooms."

Susan Morgan, Event Planner
Avnet Technology Solutions, Tempe, AZ

Offsite vs. Onsite

Of course, vital content does not necessarily justify going offsite for a small meeting, and oftentimes these events save on travel and lodging costs by being held at company facilities. Going offsite can have the advantage of removing

participants from the distractions of the workplace (where they may be tempted to return to their desks during breaks, for example) and keep the meeting running on schedule. An offsite location "gives us the opportunity to keep people focused," notes Ann Barker, director, event marketing, Avnet.

But the main reasons for taking a small meeting offsite — those that would offset the added cost — usually have to do with logistical convenience for attendees flying in, as well as group activity options. "If it's not just a fly-in in the morning and fly-out in the afternoon, if it's an overnight program, groups sometimes like to offer additional activities (more easily done in a hotel environment) such as going out to dinner as a group," says Menzer. "And then they also have the convenience of staying overnight in the same place where the meeting is located."

For Thais Toro, senior corporate event planner at Atlanta, Georgia-based Autotrader.com, small meetings comprise about 70 percent of the planning workload, and many of those events are training-focused. The reasons for taking these programs outside of company offices are similar to those Menzer cites. "If (nonlocal attendees) need hotel accommodations we prefer to go to a venue that is convenient, so it will depend how many days or nights the event will last," Toro explains. "If it's just one night, probably we will do it at the office; more than one night we will probably do it off-property. And if we want

that calls for a planner to book hotel space within a matter of months, not years. According to PCMA's Meetings Market Survey, 58 percent of respondents (compared to 67 percent in 2013 survey) said that they are booking their small meetings more than six months out. The average lead time is nine months, compared to 11 months for the 2013 survey.

For Morgan and Barker, the lead time is usually at least three to four months. "If there's a regular group of people gathering we may have a heads-up as far as a year out," Morgan says, "but generally, no, because the environment that we're in varies. We can make plans, but especially for some of the smaller meetings, certain (key) participants can have a conflict in their schedules. So we can make (long-range) plans but end up adjusting them because of that."

Third Parties to the Rescue

A regular flow of meetings that need to be placed within a few months of being approved can be quite taxing for an in-house planning team. Hence, third parties often "come to the rescue" with their numerous hotelier connections and knowledge of properties with "holes" to fill, properties that have had cancellations, and so on.

"Our sourcing department is very good at that. They're able to reach out to all the relevant properties pretty quickly and get some responses," Menzer says.

Avnet has been working with a third-party sourcing company for nearly

to add one factor to the meeting, either an activity or a nice dinner, usually we will do it off-property to go outside the conventional."

Booking Window

With small meetings in particular, going off-property is typically a decision

15 years, and will place about 70–80 meetings with the company this year. Morgan says, "Because of the longstanding relationship we have, they know our preferences, and they know our contractual terms."

Some planners prefer to book small meetings in smaller hotels. "The reason

why it does sometimes matter is that if the hotel has tons of meeting space, there may be several other large meetings in the hotel at the same time. Then they might not necessarily focus on your (small) meeting as much," Menzer relates. "Focus" comes down to "service time and willingness to spend time with you to determine your needs, and meet and exceed them, instead of just giving you a cookie-cutter program."

Equal Treatment

A planner who has had such an experience at a large hotel is likely to pair small meetings with small hotels going forward, when possible. But many planners have not experienced a lack of focus on their meeting at such properties. "I have never felt that the attention will change because of the (meeting) size," Toro says. "The hotel should not treat me based on the number of attendees that I bring, but based on the future and the opportunities that I will bring to the industry."

More often than not, hotels bear in mind this potential for repeat business, and treat groups of all sizes accordingly. Thus, "the size of the hotel doesn't matter. First we see if it's convenient for the people if most of them are flying," Toro explains. "No. 2 we look for the concessions that the hotel is offering us, and

the wow factor that the hotel will offer our attendees. At the end of the day, it's going to be about the experience for the planners and the participants."

Morgan echoes Toro's viewpoint: "I can't think of any instance where I feel like I've received less service because of being a smaller group. I feel the attention that we get from the pro-

meetings from our perspective require the same sort of attention in that respect as larger meetings. So even though it's a small meeting, we still need some suites at the group rate. They wouldn't necessarily think we would need that since it's a smaller meeting, but it has a lot of the same components."

With a small program, it is challeng-



"Regardless of how small the program is, the meeting content is just as important as a larger meeting."

Jessica Menzer, Account Lead
Meetings & Incentives Worldwide, Caledonia, WI

viders that we use is always very good. Thus, hotel size really isn't a consideration. Location is probably the key driver for us. It's either a geographic need to serve a certain set of our business partners, or perhaps to place the meeting in Phoenix because we're headquartered here and our resources for staff participation are more readily available."

Fewer Concessions

While a hotelier may extend the same quality and degree of service to its smaller group clients, concessions can be another matter. "For smaller programs not bringing in as much revenue to the hotel, they tend not to be as generous with concessions," Menzer notes. "But small

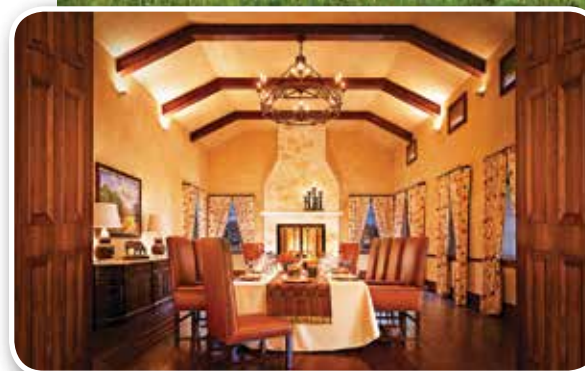
ing to gain the leverage needed to negotiate for concessions due to the lower revenue the event represents. But there are tactics a planner can deploy to make the business more attractive. For example, maximizing the amount of F&B revenue for the hotel by keeping group meal functions onsite. And when the C-level executives will be attending, that demographic should be communicated to the hotelier, who may perceive an opportunity to impress these individuals and perhaps draw a larger piece of business down the line.

Disproportionate Space

Another negotiating hurdle may arise when a small meeting uses an amount of meeting space that the hotel feels is disproportionate to the number of guest rooms the group is booking. This may happen, for example, when some of the attendees are flying in but others are from the host company's local office and not staying overnight at the hotel.

Menzer has noted that even small investigator meetings for pharma companies tend to use a significant number of breakout rooms, more so than hotels are used to allotting for the guest rooms being used. In such scenarios, "I have seen hotels increase the guest room rate," Menzer says. In other cases, the hotelier might levy a room rental fee for the disproportionate space, a fee that is normally waived if the group meets its F&B minimums.

If the extra space usage does not in-



Even large hotels are catering to small meetings: The JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa in San Antonio now offers a meeting and event concierge service focused on corporate groups using 10-300 rooms. (Inset) The resort's warm and inviting Sunday House is perfect for board meetings or receptions.

lieve in the power of personal connections through face-to-face interactions. Many times these interactions take place at the large-scale events like IMEX; however, we feel personal connections are at the heart of small meetings."

Some properties within a chain will be especially suited to those types of gatherings. Menzer has found the 860-room Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport

A recent development in specialized service to small groups can be witnessed at another major chain. The JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa's new Griffin Meeting Experience is a specialized meeting and event concierge service focused on corporate groups using 10-300 rooms. A dedicated Griffin Meetings Specialist coordinates all the details regarding meeting room space, guest room reservations, amenities for

convenience the hotel from a business perspective, the property may well not seek financial compensation. "I find generally they're willing to work with us if they can, based on their space needs for other groups in-house. It's highly dependent upon that," says Morgan, who notes that Avnet groups sometimes end up needing additional breakout space beyond what originally contracted. When there is some potential conflict, "we are as flexible as we can be with meeting space (needs)," Menzer says. "So we wouldn't demand that we get the space two days ahead of time for setup, for example." A planner might also consider using non-traditional gathering areas at the hotel for additional space needs, if possible.



"The hotel should not treat me based on the number of attendees that I bring, but based on the future and the opportunities that I will bring to the industry."

Thais Toro, Senior Corporate Event Planner
Autotrader.com, Atlanta, GA

Hotel, for example, to be a great host for groups of fewer than 100 attendees, offering 40 pre-set boardrooms for up to 25 people. "They don't have huge meeting spaces (the largest meeting room is 3,500 sf) so a lot of the concurrent meetings are going to be similarly sized," she observes. "Also I like the fact that there is a meeting concierge located on level two." The concierge obviates the need to contact the convention services department with requests, and ensures immediate service for all groups, no matter how small.

Hotel Brands Take Notice

While there can be challenges to negotiating the best deal for a small meeting, the good news is that the major hotel chains are generally well aware of the value of this kind of business. As Hilton's Romello emphasizes, "Small meetings are particularly important to us at Hilton because, at our core, we be-

VIPs as well as F&B planning. Guest rooms are blocked into one priority area of the hotel, keys are customized with the host company logo, and a complimentary hospitality suite as well as welcome amenities for up to five VIPs are all part of the Griffin Meeting Experience.

The fact that a mammoth hotel such as the JW Marriott, at 1,002 guest rooms and 256,000 sf of meeting space, has devised a program devoted to small meetings is an encouraging indicator that hotels of all sizes appreciate this segment of the group market. **C&IT**



Credit: Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel

The new 11,000-sf Lower Lobby meeting space at the Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel is designed for small meetings. Shown is the reception seating area.

Generations



Now that millennials — adults born since 1980 — are expected to outnumber baby boomers this year, their proclivities and preferences are of paramount interest to, well, everyone. Per the U.S. Census Bureau, the generation of people under 35 will be 75.3 million strong by the end of 2015, and that strength in numbers can be felt in the many ways that marketers and human resources professionals are beginning to cater to the supposed needs of this generation.

Corporate meeting planners, however, are not necessarily concerned with breaking down attendee needs by generation. One of the unexpected revelations from a 2013 survey of U.S. planner attitudes toward generational accommodations was that what attendees want is

simply not high on the list of factors that go into planners' decision-making about venues. Planners know their audiences' needs, certainly, but not necessarily by decade.

And while businesspeople are being exhorted on all sides to determine how best to connect with millennials, it may be that the general direction of meetings is already shifting in a way that suits all generations.

Generational Similarities

As the other generations can attest, not everything hyped as a "millennial preference" is necessarily restricted to one age group. "Maybe millennials aren't as 'millennial' as we think we are," admits Lane West, event specialist with MPI. "Maybe we're just young. There's

more and more Gen Xers wanting to keep up with trends. Maybe I will eventually turn into a Gen X."

Gen Xers and boomers occasionally bristle at suggestions that they are categorically different from other generations. West says he's heard from meeting attendees of a certain age, "I've been 20-something before, and I've had the drive and taken the risks, same as you have."

Generational Differences

Still, this group does seem to have certain distinguishing characteristics that planners can recognize and skew toward. For one, they are the first generation to grow up entirely connected to the Internet. "Generally speaking, this group cares less about job security, pay-

ing their dues and working their way up a corporate ladder than their generation X and boomer counterparts, and are exponentially more interested in careers that suit their personalities, their needs and allow them to have a life outside of work than their predecessors," opines Shelly Kramer in a blog post for V3 Kansas City Integrated Marketing and Social Media Agency.

Networking

Gen X tends to focus entirely on the professional aspect of conferences; the networking and social media elements are less important: "in and out with max efficiency," says Kim Lear, director of content for BridgeWorks, which provides speakers on generational workplace dynamics.

Millennials, by contrast, sometimes find the opportunity to network a major draw, she says. "One reason that they're going to conferences is that it's the only time they have access to leadership. A driver in attending meetings is access, ability to spend time and network with

leaders. It needs to be orchestrated because if we let it happen organically, it doesn't work: At cocktail hour, all the millennials are in one corner, all the leadership is in another corner. If meeting planners can think of interesting ways to create cross collaboration, they can really connect. Millennials are hungry for mentoring and getting feedback," Lear says.

For example, she has successfully used a "speed dating" design, with leaders in a circle as new hires or high-potential millennials talk for 15 minutes to leaders in the company.

For their part, leaders note that they aren't exactly swarmed with requests for mentorship. Millennials are hesitant to encroach on leaders' time, she says, but leaders are flattered to be approached and pleased to hear different perspectives.

Joe Martin, partner and director of conferences, BDI Events, suggests offering a more personal, active component to networking efforts; for example, a team-building hike among the generations.

Travel Preferences

Martin sees a rise in popularity of "second-tier" cities such as Austin, Anaheim and Portland, Oregon, for getting the localized experiences millennials appreciate — though arguably, the desire to connect with a city is a cross-generational trend.

Lear says both millennials and Gen X prefer unique experiences that incorporate fun and the vibe of the city, rather than having the meeting off the beaten path where the venue can be picked up and moved anywhere. The food, music and history of cities such as Boston, Austin and New Orleans are all attractive to attendees, she says, although "from a planner perspective it's more difficult to handle the logistics." For example, a crawfish boil hosted in New Orleans was a draw for millennials and Gen X. "Instead of being stuck in a hotel conference room, professionally they were gaining things from the content, and personally gaining things from the city," Lear says.

"I'm not worried face-to-face meet-





“Millennials want to be heard and see the results of being heard. They hope to see a difference or a change the next year, so they feel they have a reason and a purpose.”

LANE WEST, Events Specialist
Meeting Professionals International, Dallas, TX

ings are going away anytime soon,” says West. He indicates that millennials love to travel — possibly because they have fewer family commitments, and because as digital natives, their sense of space is more global.

Millennials love to travel and see new people and places, he says, especially if they also have the chance to network while experiencing a new culture. “Millennials travel more because they want to, Gen X because they have to,” he concludes.

Having a Say

“Millennials have grown up having their voices heard by their baby boomer parents — where to go on vacation, what TV to buy — and now that translates into incorporating their voices into programming, into speakers chosen and location chosen,” says Lear.

Social media, especially Twitter with its easily located hashtags and Facebook with its dedicated event pages, is the voice conduit of choice for the moment. Participants can tweet what they thought about speakers and what they found most useful about the conference, thus driving interest and attention for future conferences as well as providing valuable feedback for planners.

“Millennials want to be heard and see the results of being heard. They hope to see a difference or a change the next year, so they feel they have a reason and a purpose. When you take a meeting survey, you hope your feedback will be addressed,” says West.

In a limited way, some organizations — though certainly not most — are beginning to take this voice into account even when it comes to planning the conference. For example, Lear mentions that one company put together a survey that included videos and bios for a few speakers, then chose the conference speakers based on potential attendees’ votes. “Instead of six people on a committee making a decision about the content, they let it be driven by people attending,” she says. When she speaks to millennials at events, she says, they are

laborative spaces, which millennials are much more in tune with, and away from a traditional classroom environment with stiff-backed chairs, a talking head and PowerPoint presentations. Anything that appeals to the senses can help drive session points home, he says. Comfortable furniture, objects on the table that attendees can pick up and later associate with what they’re learning in the meeting and discussion rather than presentation are all slowly taking hold in meetings. “That’s how the younger generation captures knowledge,” he says.

PowerPoints are not, however, going away anytime soon. They still can be a vital part of an effective presentation. However, as speakers strive to appeal to a broader audience and find themselves up against increasing competition, they are beginning to stretch themselves to try more creative and collaborative styles. For example, instead of presenting to a large audience, a presenter may do a series of small, 20-person chats that provide for ample discussion time.

West notes that many hotels, Marriott among them, are moving in the direction of providing objects for the tables and smaller meeting rooms and setups.

“A driver in attending meetings is access, ability to spend time and network with leaders. It needs to be orchestrated because if we let it happen organically, it doesn’t work.”

KIM LEAR, Director of Content
BridgeWorks, Hopkins, MN



tremendously appreciative of this ability to have a say in what they will hear and to be able to move away from the committee-driven process.

Experiential Meetings

West notes that the meeting industry in general is moving toward col-

Development Counsellors International and the International Association of Conference Centers Emerging Trends Committee surveyed U.S. meeting planners about generational meeting preferences in 2013, then followed up in 2014 with a survey of planners in Europe. Both surveys found that meeting plan-

ners across the generations are primarily concerned with what meeting planners have always been concerned with: sufficient and flexible meeting space in an appealing venue at a reasonable cost. They found that conference room design was important to all the generations, particularly spaces that allow for collaboration and learning. Open space, movable furniture and informal setup were particularly important to European meeting planners in the 2014 survey.

Entitled to Give Back

West acknowledges that one of the negative characteristics often associated with millennials is a sense of entitlement. He finds one way to parry that charge is through passion — not only for innovation and networking but for embodying corporate social responsibility. “It’s important not only for millennials but every generation,” he says. “But millennials can use it as a driver. It’s an opportunity for us to show that we’re not as entitled as people think we are.”

For example, he has planned one meeting where attendees had the option to build IKEA bedroom furniture for a boys’ and girls’ home, and another where attendees gathered blankets, food and furniture for the homeless: Physically seeing and providing results in lieu of writing a check is something of a millennial hallmark, he avows.

Even CSR-friendly practices, such as not providing unnecessary paper in the form of maps, bags full of presentation materials, “stuff we would leave in our hotel rooms,” can be a draw for millennials, he finds, noting that he finds it heartening that conferences are increasingly moving toward less waste.

Short Attention Span

It’s likely that the rise of handheld devices and Internet connectivity has created a multigenerational world of short attention spans, but for the moment, the generation most associated with easy distractibility is millennials.

“We constantly have to compete with second screens: phone, iPad, laptop. We have to know how to make our meetings interactive, but also keep attendees off

social media with things like audience polling or a continual Twitter feed where you can tweet questions that are passed on to the presenter,” says West.

Shortened attention spans also means trying different types of formats to keep attendee engagement high, and not only for millennials. “We’re a very visible generation, so we’re leading the charge, leading it and pushing it forward, reminding planning committees

ing styles: one session with a talking head and no audience engagement, one with a short keynote speech and longer period for audience interaction, some workshops or some panel discussions.

Connectivity

The 2013 and 2014 DCI/IACC surveys both found that boomers and Gen Xers ranked “ease of Wi-Fi connectivity” as the most crucial element in deciding on a

“We’re a very visible generation, so we’re leading the charge, leading it and pushing it forward, reminding planning committees to take risks.”

JOE MARTIN, Partner & Director of Conferences
BDI Events, Los Angeles, CA



to take risks,” Martin says. For example, a company that usually plans the same type of speaker in the same format took a risk by doing more focused topics and a shortened keynote — 30 to 45 minutes — immediately followed by a workshop of an hour or so. “It totally paid off,” Martin says. “Registration increased 30 percent this year.”

Other tactics include mixing different styles of sessions or presenting information in a different way — in an outdoor venue, for example, or using five-minute TED Talk presentation styles for certain content. Cartoons, animation, videos are all ways not to lose the audience or to surprise them.

Martin says for some meetings, the keynote speaker can be preceded by several “warm-up acts” as a way to engage attendees. “It’s powerful,” he says, “and can be more impactful because it’s easier to remember.”

For meeting planners, this can mean instead of scheduling six general sessions with identical structure, thinking through how to create a variety of meet-

conference venue; for millennials, “cost” was the No. 1 factor.

Hotels seem to be finally coming around to this reality: Many of the major chains now offer at least baseline free Wi-Fi for their preferred or reward members, with the option for faster speeds available for a fee. Hyatt now provides free Wi-Fi for all hotel guests.

Martin says he likes to send out a mobile app link two to three weeks in advance of his meetings “to get the buzz going,” so attendees can add the schedule to their phone, connect with exhibitors and otherwise become engaged with the conference before it begins. Marriott and Starwood both also have meeting services apps designed to help facilitate this.

The meetings industry has undergone unprecedented innovation in the past 10 years in terms of technology, collaborative meeting design and crowdsourced program content. You might even say that meeting planners have millennials to thank for raising the bar for better meetings. **C&IT**

Destination

Experiencing a destination as a local, not a tourist, is certainly a trend in leisure travel, and one that has impacted corporate group travel. Accordingly, planners often seek to create offsite events that immerse participants in the local culture and make them feel part of it.

When meeting in California, it's natural to try to capture the laidback, West Coast lifestyle, and a reception held at Grapevine, Texas-based GameStop's Expo 2014 in Anaheim succeeded in that regard.

Anaheim

The Anaheim Convention Center's new Grand Plaza, spanning 100,000 sf, was converted into a casual setting for attendees to sample classic street fare, mingle, relax and enjoy the Southern California weather.

Credit: Jowdy Photography

"We had around 4,000 attendees for our main arrival day on Sunday, and instead of having box lunches or lunch in a ballroom, we decided to have a little fun with it, and we had the convention center secure food trucks," relates Judy Anderson, CMP, director of meetings and travel with GameStop.

"The convention center has a partnership with the food trucks, so the event went toward my F&B minimum. It was extremely well-received. Our attendees were able to sit out in the California sun and shop around at the different food trucks; we gave everybody food tickets and drink tickets. We had lounge chairs and tables set up throughout the Grand Plaza, as well as entertainment, a PlayStation truck and a stage with contests. It created this kind of organic sense of camaraderie."

Like several convention centers in California, the Anaheim Convention Center plans to expand, and by early 2017, an additional 200,000 sf of meeting space will be available. "The size now is perfect for what we do," Anderson says. "But we're excited about the expansion because we're always looking to grow."

The center's 7,500-seat arena also was a nice fit for the GameStop group, which used that facility for the program's three daily general sessions. The meeting space itself "is very well laid out, 'stacked' with a lot of common areas and very easy to maneuver in," she adds. "They also have a lot of outdoor meeting space that we use for all of our evening networking events, VIP receptions, award-winner receptions and so on." She adds, "They're upgrading their Wi-Fi, which we're also very excited about." By the end of the year, the Anaheim Convention Center will boast 10 gigabit Internet connectivity thanks to a \$2.5 million investment and partnership with Smart City Networks.

The center's proximity to hotels and restaurants was a big selling point, Anderson notes. GameStop used both the 1,572-room Hilton Anaheim (140,000 sf of function space) and the 1,300-room Anaheim Marriott (100,000 sf) as headquarters hotels.

GameStop's Expo brought 4,000 attendees to the Anaheim Convention Center where they enjoyed outdoor events on the Grand Plaza.

It's fair to say the city's Resort District is booming with a nearly \$200 million investment by major hoteliers to bring more than 1,500 guest rooms on line by the end of this year. Last year saw the opening of the 178-room Hyatt Place Anaheim Resort and two SpringHill Suites by Marriott (172 and 120 rooms, respectively). This year will see the opening of the 262-room Hyatt House Anaheim Resort, 274-room Residence Inn, 215-room Homewood Suites by Hilton - Anaheim Convention Center/Disneyland Main Gate, 96-room Holiday Inn Express and 221-room Courtyard Waterpark Hotel At Disneyland. Additionally, the Hilton Anaheim, Anaheim Marriott and Sheraton Park Hotel are undergoing \$53 million in renovations expected to be completed by year's end.

San Diego

Unlike the Anaheim Convention Center expansion project, San Diego's is still at the proposal stage, and no construction is scheduled to take place prior to 2016. The phase three plan would add approximately 200,000-225,000 sf of exhibit space, 100,000 sf of meeting space and an 80,000-sf ballroom.

Portland, Oregon-based Johnstone Supply, an HVAC wholesale distributor, held its Spring Sales Meeting and Tradeshow at the San Diego Convention Center in March, and previously in 2010 and 2012. With 1,200 attendees, the event does not require the added space the expansion would bring, but Janet Tipton, communications director with the company, sees these projects as beneficial nonetheless.

"We're kind of that awkward size where we don't fit nicely into a hotel per se, yet we don't need the entire convention center. But I think that any time a city is investing in its infrastructure, it's going to be positive for all sizes of meetings," she explains.

While San Diego is sometimes perceived as a rather expensive destination, Tipton has not found that to be the case. "When you compare San Diego with other cities in the West, including San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix

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California

What's New for Meetings From SoCal to SanFran

By Patrick Simms



Credit: Ojai Valley Inn & Spa

The Ojai Valley Inn & Spa is a scenic meeting oasis tucked away in Southern California's Ojai Valley.

to change, however. The first phase of its renovation plan will be complete in July, including a refined lobby design with tablet check-in, an upgraded adult pool, a new Italian signature restaurant and a refreshed parlor concept at the Neff Lounge, a cornerstone of the property since 1923. The second phase of the renovation will begin in early 2016.

Removed From City Life

While Loews Coronado Bay Resort is located in San Diego, it also is removed from city life, though in a different way than Ojai. Situated on its own 15-acre peninsula, the 439-room resort offers views of the Pacific Ocean and Mexico on one side, and the San Diego skyline on the other. Pleasanton, California-based Zeltiq, a medical technology company, held its global sales meeting for about 215 attendees at the Loews.

"We look for resort-style properties for this particular meeting, but we also look for properties that are a little bit removed from the prime location in a destination," notes Kimberly Coleman, CMP, senior event manager. "The reason the Loews was such a good fit for us is because it is not in downtown San Diego and not in the main area of Coronado. So we keep our team on-property; they don't have as much desire or access to go off-property." Loews Coronado Bay Resort offers 65,000 sf of function space, and Coleman found the layout of the indoor meeting space very convenient: "The meeting rooms are in proximity to each other, only on two levels and very compact." — PS

Off California's Beaten Paths

As the nation's third-largest state, California is home to both major cities and a great deal of rural enclaves and natural environs, from Laguna Beach to Death Valley to Redwood National Park. Planners sometimes want a resort that is removed from the metropolitan areas, one that offers a retreat for participants, and there is no shortage of options.

Scenic Natural Surroundings

One example is Ojai Valley Inn & Spa, located in Southern California's Ojai Valley, about 60 miles north of Los Angeles. The AAA Five Diamond, 308-room resort offers 35,000 sf of function space, the 31,000-sf Spa Ojai and a George Thomas-designed golf course that dates from 1923. Evelyn Morgan, Microsoft's director of operations and citizenship for Southern California, found the property's location an asset for a kickoff sales meeting for the new fiscal year. The scenic natural surroundings provided a memorable setting for the 300 or so salespeople, leaders and industry partners to convene. "You're

in this valley with the mountains surrounding you, and you can see deer running through the golf course," Morgan describes. "It allows you to relax instead of in a big city hotel where there's traffic. When you're able to create that kind of an environment, it brings the meeting to a different level."

In order to allow attendees to appreciate the views of Ojai Valley, Morgan organized a welcome reception complete with a disc jockey at one of the pool areas, which was closed off for the event. "I found the staff very willing to make some modifications to the menu based on dietary needs," she says. "The property has been owned by a family for a long time and so you have a stability that shows in management and in the staff. At investment properties that are sold again and again, what you might experience one year doesn't necessarily transfer to the following year. At Ojai I'm still dealing with the same director of sales, GM and conference services people the several times I've been there."

Ojai Valley Inn is certainly not averse

and Las Vegas, San Diego is actually very competitive," she remarks. The city's CVB is certainly an added value, she says. "One of the nice things about the San Diego CVB is that they do a great job with social media, so you're constantly getting specific, useful updates about new things that are happening. I find their communications are really spot on for planners. They're also a great resource for any third-party referrals, such as DMCs and photographers." The city's suppliers now have even more credibility with planners: More than 200 salespeople representing hotels, restaurants, venues, attractions and other service providers registered for the first session of San Diego Meeting Certified, a six-month course custom-designed

by Terri Roberts, director of training and communication for Destination Marketing Association International. The program just graduated its 2014 inaugural class.

Overall, Tipton has found San Diego to be a "very visitor friendly" city where "you don't have to create a lot of specific things for your attendees to do because it's very self-service. They can find things to do on their own, such as great restaurants and shopping, and the downtown is very walkable and safe."

Nonetheless, Johnstone Supply did host an organized off-site event at the USS Midway Museum this year that included dinner, docent tours and fireworks. The historic naval aircraft carrier accommodates private events for up to 3,500 guests,

who can explore more than 60 exhibits and a collection of 29 restored aircraft.

Long Beach

The last couple of years have seen numerous upgrades to Long Beach's meeting facilities, including the debut of the Pacific Ballroom at the Long Beach Arena. The ballroom's 45,000 sf of customized event space is complete with adaptable, electronic walls and a \$1.6 million state-of-the-art AV system. On the hotel front, the Renaissance Long Beach Hotel (21,000 sf of meeting space) completed an \$8 million renovation last April that redesigned its 374 guest rooms. Other major renovations include The Hyatt Regency Long Beach (\$30 million), Westin Long Beach (more than \$12 million) and the Long Beach Marriott (\$10 million). Overall, more than \$60 million has been invested during the past several years to upgrade the city's primary meeting hotels.

Two fine choices for offsite events represent Long Beach's status as a maritime hub of the U.S.: the Queen Mary and the Aquarium of the Pacific. The Queen Mary departed from Southampton, England in 1936 on its maiden voyage, and since 1967 has been docked in Long Beach, today serving as a floating hotel and attraction with three world-class restaurants. The ship offers groups more than 80,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space in 14 art deco salons. The Aquarium of the Pacific offers the LEED Platinum-certified Watershed classroom with catering by Savor.

Los Angeles

In line with the overall improvement in California's convention centers, the Los Angeles Convention Center is undergoing a \$10 million renovation that should be fully complete by May 1. Numerous interior aesthetic and facility systems enhancements include a new energy-efficient solar-ready "cool roof" on the South Hall and Concourse Hall; new carpet throughout the center; overhauled parking systems; a remodeled 299-seat Theater; elevator and escalator modernization; and much more. Plans also are under consideration to expand the 870,000-sf LACC to 1.3 million sf, including 60,000 sf of new ballroom space, in order to attract more meetings business.

Also renovating is downtown Los Angeles' Hotel Figueroa, with a multimillion-dollar modernization of its 285 guest rooms. The hotel features Spanish Mediterranean-style architecture and 20,000 sf of meeting space.

Large groups can look forward to a 755-room expansion of the 878-room JW Marriott L.A. Live, recently announced by developer AEG. Combined with the 123-room Ritz-Carlton Los Angeles, the expanded JW Marriott will house 1,756 rooms and more than 200,000 sf of function space. The tentative year of completion is 2018.

Meeting facility developments are just one aspect of Los Angeles's growth this year. A 120,000-sf contemporary art museum The Broad will open in September. This fall also will see the completion of the \$160 million transformation of Macy's



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Shopping Plaza into The Bloc, featuring more street-accessible stores and restaurants, a high-end theater, and the complete renovation of the 485-room Sheraton Los Angeles Downtown Hotel, located in the same building. To top it off, LAX's Terminal 5, home of Delta Air Lines, is scheduled to complete a \$229 million renovation this year.

San Jose

The "capital" of Silicon Valley offers its own distinctive venues for offsite events, including The Tech Museum of Innovation, the recently renovated City National Civic (formerly San Jose Civic Auditorium) and the Center for the Performing Arts. All are located within walking distance of the San Jose McEnery Convention Center, whose expansion was completed in October 2013. The center's 169,957 sf of additional space includes 27,834 sf of flexible meeting space and a 35,194-sf Grand Ballroom.

The city's "Wickedly Fast Free Wi-Fi" now extends to the center, which is connected to both the 353-room Hilton San Jose and the 506-room San Jose Marriott. A natural for a high-tech hub like San Jose, the fast and free Wi-Fi service also is offered throughout the downtown and the Mineta San José International Airport, which recently installed two automated Global Entry kiosks in the International Arrivals facility.

During free time in San Jose, attendees can visit the bohemian San Pedro Square Market and Plaza de Cesar Chavez, home to the San Jose Jazz Festival. Planners can rent spaces in the San Jose Museum of Art, which can accommodate meeting groups of 20 to 150 during the day in the Wendel Education Center. Team San Jose, which manages the convention center, City National Civic, Center for the Performing Arts and four other venues, is a "one stop shop" for a planner's sourcing needs.

Monterey County

Home to some of the country's most scenic coastlines including the Big Sur, Monterey offers groups much more than R&R in a consistently mild climate. Twenty-five golf courses, 19 state parks, 10 major museums and a variety of vineyards open to the public are among the offsite options. The county's regional

airport offers direct service to Las Vegas, Phoenix, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego.

Contributing 550 guest rooms to the county's 12,004-room inventory, the Hyatt Regency Monterey Hotel & Spa completed a \$6 million renovation over the last two years, featuring the theme "Land, Edge, Sea" in the color scheme and décor of its ballroom and conference center. (The Monterey coast has been described in literature as "the greatest meeting of land and sea" by poet Robinson Jeffers.) The hotel offers more than 40,000 sf of flexible meeting space, including indoor and outdoor facilities.

The Monterey Conference Center and Meeting Connection, a partnership with three adjacent hotels, combine to offer more than 61,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space and 700 guest rooms. The Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay and the Monterey Marriott are directly connected to the center via skybridge; the Hotel Pacific is directly behind the center. The Monterey Conference Center, which itself offers 41,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space, will begin a \$45 million renovation in November with the first floor of the upgraded center planned to reopen by late summer 2016 and the grand opening of the entire renovated facility in early 2017. The center will be better configured to host multiple meetings simultaneously, and will feature advanced technology and a new exterior.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium offers not only a stunning setting for corporate events but an event planning staff to coordinate entertainment, décor, menus and more. Venue rental helps to support the aquarium's marine conservation efforts.

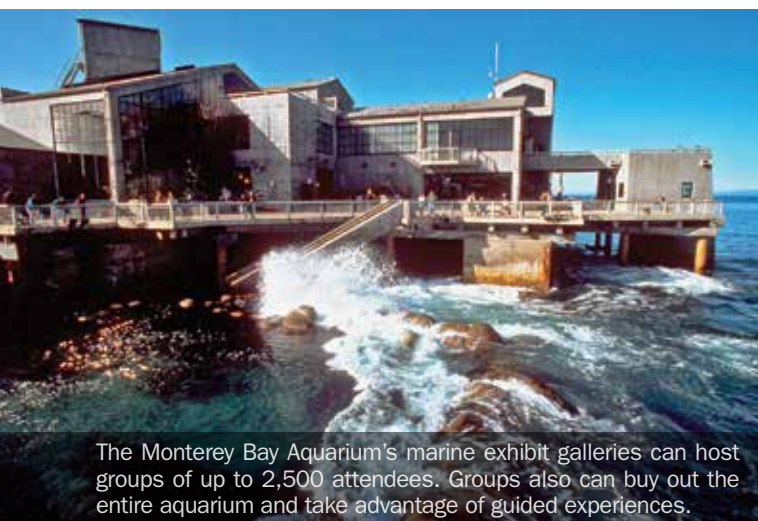
San Francisco

Like Los Angeles, the City by the Bay is one of California's most accessible, particularly for international groups. SFO offers nonstop flights to 21 international points on 30 international carriers. When in town, there is great cultural diversity for attendees to explore, including iconic areas such as Chinatown, Haight-Ashbury and the Mission District, as well as a variety of compelling venues for planners to hold offsite events.

Several of them will be showcased this August at the 2015 Meeting Professionals International World Education Congress. Pier 48 will be the site of the Opening Night Celebration. Approximately 2,000 attendees of the Congress will enjoy panoramic views of the waterfront, Bay Bridge and the city skyline, as well as some of the city's finest sustainable cuisine. The MPI Foundation will be hosting two events: The Big Deal poker party at City View at Metreon, an indoor/outdoor venue overlooking the renowned Yerba Buena Gardens, and the Rendezvous fundraiser and networking event at the historic Fillmore, the stomping grounds of many classic rock greats. The Beaux-Arts City Hall, reopened in 1915, will provide stately surroundings for the Congress' Closing Night Celebration.

Hosting MPI will surely boost meetings business in San Francisco, but many other major cities in California should see that result once planners gain exposure to the investments that have been made into the state's meetings infrastructures. California's culture may be laidback, but its meetings industry certainly is not.

C&IT



The Monterey Bay Aquarium's marine exhibit galleries can host groups of up to 2,500 attendees. Groups also can buy out the entire aquarium and take advantage of guided experiences.

Credit: Monterey Bay Aquarium

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Destination

A once-in-a-lifetime gala at the iconic Gleneagles Hotel, near Edinburgh, Scotland, in the Perthshire countryside.



Europe Delivers

Matchless Experiences Abroad Provide the 'Chance of a Lifetime' for Groups and Incentive Winners

By John Buchanan

Credit: Gleneagles Hotel

As the meeting landscape expands internationally as a result of ongoing globalization, perhaps no other place on earth is generating the kind of enthusiasm among planners that Europe is — especially for incentive programs. In fact, savvy planners at progressive companies who want to deliver “chance of a lifetime” trips for incentive winners have been loyal to European destinations for decades, knowing they dramatically outperform lesser destinations when it comes to wow factor motivational power.

“I choose Europe for the experience it gives people and the wow factor,” says Jodi Swailes, senior buyer, purchasing and product development, at West Des Moines, IA-based ITA Group. “It’s especially popular when someone wants to do a top-level incentive program and also wants to make sure it’s really special. When that’s the case, we tend to look more toward Europe as opposed to anywhere else in the world.” For the past 16 years, Swailes has planned incentive programs to major Western European destinations. “The experi-

“Kinkell Byre is just an incredible venue. It’s imbued with so much character. It was just great for our event.”

Steven Gray, Operations Analyst
Health Learning, Research & Practice
Wolters Kluwer, New York, NY



ences you get in Europe are hard to match anywhere else in the world,” she says.

“And a lot of that has to do with the history and culture you experience in Europe.”

That’s one key reason why so many tried-and-true destinations, such as England, Ireland and Scotland in the United Kingdom, as well as Italy, have always ranked high in the destination pecking order, along with other traditional favorites such as France and Spain.

Today, however, new and even more exotic destinations such as Hungary and Turkey are getting their share of planner attention — and business.

Scotland

Scotland is among the most beautiful and fascinating places in the world. And especially since the epic Mel Gibson movie “Braveheart,” Scotland has held a special appeal.

“People are also familiar with the history of Scotland, and it has fabulous scenery,” says Swailes, who has several incentive programs headed for Scotland over the next few years. “It also has kind of a romantic appeal.”

For Swailes, a Scotland itinerary usually includes the historic medieval city of Edinburgh and the storied Gleneagles Hotel, located about 90 minutes outside Edinburgh on 850 acres of rolling green hillsides in the Perthshire countryside. The world-renowned, five-star property, a member of the Leading Hotels of the World Collection, is especially prized for its three championship golf courses and spa.

“Gleneagles is really popular with incentive groups,” Swailes says. “It’s just a fantastic hotel.”

Historic Edinburgh also earns high praise from Swailes.

“Edinburgh is a great city,” she says. “And it’s easy to walk around and discover history.”

Although the city offers a wide range of hotel options, Swailes favors The Balmoral and Sheraton Grand Edinburgh — both rich in history, culture and luxury.

“The Balmoral is another great hotel, and it has a very convenient location,” Swailes says. “But if a client has a little more money to spend, we usually recommend the Sheraton Grande. It’s just a fabulous hotel.” The Sheraton Grande completed a major renovation in 2012 that reinforced its distinctly Scottish flavor.

Aside from its gorgeous landscapes and landmark hotels, another thing that draws meetings and incentive programs to Scotland is its golf — which makes sense since the sport was invented there.

And the Holy Grail for golf-oriented groups is fabled St. Andrews, where the Old Course is among the most acclaimed in the world.

Steven Gray, operations analyst, health learning, research and practice for New York-based Wolters Kluwer, an aggregator of content for hospitals and other health care providers, took 198 attendees from 22 countries to St. Andrews in January 2013 for the company’s annual global sales meeting. Wolters Kluwer did a buyout of the intimate and tony Fairmont St. Andrews.

Most attendees flew into Edinburgh and spent several days there before heading off to St. Andrews. “That was a nice way to give people even more of the flavor of Scotland,” Gray says.

Although he knew Scotland would have a lot of appeal for his attendees, Gray says, the value he received had much to do with the company’s decision.

“We also looked at other destinations,” he says. “But based on the responses we got to our RFP, Scotland came in at a really good price point. And the Fairmont St. Andrews just offered us a really wonderful deal on a buyout.”

Among the things that most appealed to Gray about the Fairmont St. Andrews was its meeting space. “It is phenomenal,” he says. “We usually use 10 to 12 breakout rooms. And the breakout rooms at the hotel are just very beautiful. And the staff was very accommodating.”

Wolters Kluwer held its awards ceremony in Kinkell Byre, a renovated 14th century barn. “It’s just an incredible venue,” Gray says. “It’s imbued with so much character. It was just great for our event.”

What was once the home to the farm’s livestock has now been converted to provide a versatile function venue. For dinners, the main dance floor seats between 200 to 300 at round tables.

And because their awards ceremony is always a themed costume event, the company staged this event in medieval costumes that attendees created and brought from home.



Steven Gray planned the Wolters Kluwer’s awards ceremony in Scotland at Kinkell Byre, a 14th century barn converted to a unique venue. Attendees created their own medieval costumes for the event.

The ceremony included a formal presentation of haggis, a Scottish national dish that became a cultural and culinary highlight of the meeting.

“Being in a 14th century venue and doing a traditional haggis ceremony was absolutely magical,” Gray says.

He also planned a dine-around evening in St. Andrews. “We found some wonderful little local restaurants,” Gray says. “I had some of the most amazing food I’ve ever had in my life.”

And to his surprise, there are all kinds of restaurants in St.

“London is also a great choice because there is so much to do. You can... have a great experience wherever you are.”

Jodi Swailes, Senior Buyer
ITA Group, West Des Moines, IA



Andrews, even an Indian restaurant.

The company also hired a local event company to stage a Highland Games competition, a wonderful teambuilding activity. “It was a huge teambuilding activity and a huge success,” Gray says, adding that after the games he hosted a dine-around within the hotel’s multiple restaurants.

After dinner, the group visited a local Scotch distillery and enjoyed the other thing, besides golf, that Scotland is best known for.

And despite some inclement weather, the group played golf in the most famous golf destination in the world. “But it happened to snow the day we were scheduled to play golf,” Gray says. “And the Fairmont St. Andrews pulled out all the stops to find a course that was still open and didn’t have ice on their tees. So our folks got to play golf in Scotland.”

New and Noteworthy

Scotland is currently investing huge sums in public and private projects to improve the country’s tourism infrastructure, according to Visit Scotland, Scotland’s national tourism organization. Some key highlights for 2015–2016:

- The new Technology and Innovation Centre at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow opened with four seminar rooms, which can accommodate 70 attendees each. Removable walls will allow for larger events.
- Lennox Suite at Edinburgh International Conference Centre is a newly developed expansion exhibition space in Edinburgh, featuring an innovative moving floor system, transforming the space from flat-floor to auditorium, arena and tiered-cabaret modes.
- The Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre (AECC) recently retained a Gold accreditation from the Green Tourism Program following an extensive audit of the venue’s sustainability practices. Plans for a new AECC have been approved.

- SSE Hydro in Glasgow was voted as the second busiest arena in the world by Pollstar in January 2015. The venue accommodates 13,000 for conventions/exhibitions and concerts.
- Five-star luxury resort Gleneagles is converting one of its Activity School equestrian arenas into a modern, multi-purpose event space. Located within the hotel’s 850-acre estate, the venue will have the capacity to cater up to 2,000 guests for concerts, launches and brand-experience events. Key features will include loading bay access doors, 63 integrated hanging points tested to 500kg, a 200-amp power supply, LED lighting and oil-fired heating.
- Edinburgh-based Apex Hotels opens in the Glasgow market for the first time with the acquisition of Marks Hotel in Glasgow’s Bath Street. The hotel is expected to re-launch in June 2015 as the four-star Apex City of Glasgow Hotel.

Ireland

Ireland is yet another stunningly beautiful destination steeped in history.

Swailes took an incentive group with 80 attendees there in 2013 for a five-night program.

“The reason we like Ireland so much is because of the combination of the value and experiences that you get there,” she says.

For example, she says, for another recent program, she was able to deliver a program to Ireland for less cost than a similarly sized program in California.

For the most recent program, Swailes selected Adare Manor Hotel & Golf Resort, which ranks as one of Ireland’s most cel-



Credit: The K Club

Home to several Open Championships and the 2006 Ryder Cup, The K Club is a multifaceted resort set on the banks of the River Liffey in Straffan, County Kildare, Ireland.

brated five-star castle properties. The vast resort, which is located on 840 acres in County Limerick, offers a range of luxury accommodations from its historic manor house to nearby villas. The resort also features a Robert Trent Jones-designed 18-hole golf course, archery, falconry, clay pigeon shooting and horseback riding.

Swailes chose Adare Manor because her client wanted an intimate property that delivered a high-end experience — but at a reasonable cost.



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It surprises a lot of planners, Swailes says, to learn that Ireland delivers some of the best value in all of Europe.

Her program also included three nights at Hotel Europe in Killarney.

“The attendees loved Ireland,” she says. “I think one of the things people love most about Ireland is really getting to know



Credit: Adare Manor Hotel & Golf Resort

Located in County Limerick, Ireland, Adare Manor Hotel & Golf Resort is a five-star meeting and incentive venue.

the people there. But you also get fabulous scenery and wonderful food. It’s a great experience. But it’s really the people of Ireland that make it a special experience, because they’re so warm and welcoming.”

She also uses Dublin as a destination. There, her favorite hotels include the Shelbourne Dublin Hotel, a Renaissance property. “It’s a very nice five-star hotel located right in the heart of Dublin,” Swailes says.

New and Noteworthy

According to Tourism Ireland, Aer Lingus will be operating direct flights from Washington Dulles International Airport to Dublin, effective May 1, 2015. Also, there is increased capacity on Aer Lingus flights from Boston, New York, Orlando and San Francisco to Ireland as well as a new trans-Atlantic business class featuring improved service, fine food and entertainment, and a lie-flat bed.

- Passengers departing from Dublin and Shannon to the U.S. are pre-cleared by U.S. Customs & Immigration prior to boarding their flights. Plus, luggage for passengers with connecting flights within the U.S. will be checked through to the final destination.
- Cork City is set to have a new 6,000-seat convention center as early as 2016.
- InterContinental Hotels Group signed InterContinental Dublin on January 1, 2015, located in the former Four Seasons Hotel Dublin. The hotel features 197 rooms inclusive of 58 suites, plus impressive meeting and event space with two ballrooms totalling more than 15,000 sf.

- Reopening after a major restoration project, the beautiful Mount Stewart House is a unique event venue. Guests experience the elegance and charm of the house as it was when it was home of the 7th Marchioness Edith, Lady Londonderry and her family in the early 20th century.
- The historic Dublin City Hall, designed by Thomas Cooley in the 1700s, is the perfect place to host a special corporate event. With its magnificent circular entrance hall, extraordinary dome and sleek marble floor, the location will wow attendees.
- The iconic Ulster Museum, conveniently located in Belfast City, offers a wealth of corporate facilities for 20 to 1,500 attendees. The contemporary Atrium is suited to stylish gala dinners for up to 160 guests, while the Lecture Theatre provides an ideal environment for seminars and meetings.

London

By definition, London is among the world’s most fascinating cities for American travelers because of its unique role in U.S. and world history.

Swailes uses London at least once a year for an incentive program.

Her hotels of choice include Grosvenor House, a JW Marriott Hotel, and the new Rosewood London.

“One of the reasons some clients like London is that they’re traveling to Europe, but they don’t have to travel too far or for too long,” Swailes says. “It’s a shorter trip. It’s easy to get to. You can also get some very good airfares because London is a major European hub.

“London is also a great choice because there is so much to do. You can just walk out the front door of any hotel and have a great experience wherever you are. And you also get good value in London. For example the museums are free.”



Credit: The Goring

The Goring, a family-owned luxury Belgravia hotel replete with a new fleet of handsome footmen, reopened after renovations just in time to celebrate its 105th birthday.

New and Noteworthy

In addition, a wave of new hotel development and infrastructure construction that took place in advance of the 2012 Summer Olympics has made London particularly attractive for groups.

And many of the facilities built for the Olympics, such as Olympic Park, are now being re-engineered into ongoing multipurpose venues that are perfectly suited for meetings and conferences.

The Goring, a family-owned luxury Belgravia hotel, reopened in February after an extensive renovation, just in time for its 105th birthday celebrations.

The reopening also saw the arrival of a fleet of handsome footmen, channeling “Downton Abbey” luxury and true-blue aristocratic service. The footmen, in full regalia, will be on hand to fulfill every wish of The Goring’s guests.

The Goring was opened in 1910. In its second century, it is now the only five-star luxury hotel in London that is owned and run by the family who built it.

The hotels of the Dorchester Collection provide novel incentive offers with engaging and memorable experiences across the globe. For example, a private Kitchen Party at the 250-room The Dorchester, for up to 120 guests with a front-row perspective on one of the most highly regarded culinary operations in London. Guests will be personally escorted through staff service doors to the “back of the house” arrayed in color schemes of the client’s choosing. Additional options such as personalized aprons for cooking challenges also can be arranged. Menu highlights include: “sauté gourmand” of lobster and truffled chicken quenelles from Alain Ducasse; a Peking Duck Station from China Tang; a sushi bar from Henry Brosi and more.

At Coworth Park, Dorchester Collection’s 70-room country house hotel in Ascot, active and adventurous guests can engage in a variety of truly entertaining outdoor experiences. Duck Herding is offered for groups of all sizes and begins after guests are given a brief history and introduction of the sport. They are then paired with highly trained Welsh colliers to work together and guide lively gangs of Indian runner ducks through an easy obstacle course.

Italy

Although 21st century Europe offers an almost endless list of destination options, none is more time-tested or spectacular than Italy. Especially hotels and castles in Tuscany.

For example, Castello di Casole is a restored Italian castle on a country estate in Tuscany, which features 28 restored and reconstructed Tuscan farmhouses and a 41-suite boutique hotel complete with a world-class spa and wellness center, swimming pool, pizzeria, stylish bar and fine-dining restaurant. It’s history dates back to the end of the 10th century.

Unique and memorable gathering spaces are every-



Credits: Castello di Casole

Castello di Casole features 28 artfully restored Tuscan farmhouses and a 41-suite boutique hotel with a spa, swimming pool, stylish bar, fine-dining restaurant and unique event spaces.



where at Castello di Casole, which was acquired in 2005 by Timbers Resorts.

The property includes indoor and outdoor options for small and large events including the Ampitheater; Casa Del Prete, secluded spaces warmed by a fireplace, an intimate and private setting ideal for small meetings and private dining; Limonaia Terrace, a grand and inviting lawn and cobbled walks that front the restored estate greenhouse; and many more.

Activities include the Ferrari driving experience — a meeting with the Ferrari team and driving through the surrounding

regions of Chianti and Siena, visiting unique sites throughout the day or an extreme race-track experience. Also, the Tosca Culinary Workshop offers hands-on lessons focusing on the distinctive skills of each on-property expert: from charcuterie classes, gelato-making and tastings, cooking with truffles, pizza and pasta-making, olive-oil tastings, etc.

More intriguing incentive options from the Dorchester Collection in Italy include the Truffle Hunting Adventure — a hunt for the “diamonds of the kitchen” in Italy’s picturesque northern region of Piedmont at Milan’s exclusive 301-room Hotel Principe di Savoia. Participants will unearth truffles and explore the medieval castle of Roddi and enjoy a three-course, truffle-themed lunch.

Rome’s 121-room Hotel Eden offers a Retro Car Tour of Rome where participants can be chauffeured in classic cars from the past on scenic routes including an ancient Roman road to lakeside Castelli, with a view of Roman aqueducts and a visit to the catacombs along the way.

Spain

Madrid, Spain’s capital city, offers a world-class experience for all types of corporate meeting groups, according to Susan



Credit: Hotel Principe di Savoia

Milan’s Hotel Principe di Savoia invites corporate groups to unearth truffles near Alba and return for a three-course lunch and tour of the Alba Truffle Fair.



Credit: Starwood Hotels & Resorts

Espacio Palace at The Westin Palace, Madrid, which opened last year, is the largest five-star conference facility in the heart of the Spanish capital. The ballroom accommodates 800 guests.

Adams, CPIM, CEP, the director of engagement for Dittman Incentive Marketing in New Jersey. Hotels such as The Westin Palace, Madrid feature uniquely European style and Old World charm but have a clear understanding of the needs and expectations of international business events, with menus designed to appeal to an American palate. And just outside the door, the city offers a world of options for excursions and unforgettable off-site events, from the Prado Museum to the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium, home of Real Madrid, she says.

The Westin Palace, Madrid offers the most modern meeting facilities in downtown Madrid. Espacio Palace opened last year and is the largest five-star conference facility in the heart of the Spanish capital. The largest ballroom can accommodate up to 800 guests.

The new meeting rooms overlook Madrid's renowned Neptune fountain, which inspired the design — an aquatic motif is reflected in the furniture, carpets and lighting, while both neutral and metallic finishes enhance the contemporary look of the function rooms. High ceilings, rooms offering full daylight and an elegant but practical design are features of the complex that reflect the culture of innovation and style of Westin.

Hungary

Although it was caught up in the regional conflicts in the Balkans that dominated the 1990s, Budapest has emerged as a hot destination for incentive programs because of its unique history and exotic beauty.

"In the past, people tended to think of Budapest as dark and dreary, primarily as a result of the perception that it was a Communist country," Swailes says. "But once you go there, you realize it's an incredible city with the Danube River running through the middle of it. It's also incredibly clean."

The Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace is her go-to hotel in Budapest. "It's a very beautiful property," Swailes says. "I'd say it's one of the top hotels in all of Europe. It also has an excellent location, so you just walk out the front door and there are the restaurants, cafés, and shops."

Budapest also features world-class wineries and unique off-site venues of all sizes.

"Another nice thing about Budapest is that it's easy to combine it with Vienna, Austria, another city located along the Danube and one that also offers unique history and culture, like the history of classical music and opera."

Turkey

Another destination that is gaining popularity simply because it represents something strikingly new and different when it comes to incentive destinations is Turkey.

Turkey also has made extensive investments in new infrastructure aimed at attracting groups. For example, the country's first and only mixed-use project, the Zorlu Center in Istanbul, includes a luxury hotel, a major performing arts center and an ultramodern shopping mall.

Istanbul also now enjoys status as one of the best of the best World Heritage centers by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It earned the honor based on its important landmarks such as Topkapi Palace, one of the most important historical sites from the Ottoman Empire.

Major Istanbul hotels include the Hilton Istanbul Bomonti Hotel and Conference Center. JW Marriott Hotels & Resorts will open its second JW Marriott Hotel in Turkey on May 15. The 107-room property is located in the picturesque town of Yalikavak on the Bodrum Peninsula with panoramic views of the Aegean Sea, combining the alluring charm of the Turkish coast with JW Marriott's contemporary design and intuitive service.

JW Marriott Bodrum will offer exceptional dining experiences in an array of restaurants and bars; the spa will offer an extensive selection of 24 treatment rooms, a salt room and traditional Turkish baths. Additional hotel facilities will include two outdoor pools, one indoor pool, a ballroom and five meeting rooms. JW Marriott Bodrum also will offer a unique space for al fresco events overlooking one of the peninsula's most beautiful bays. JW Marriott Ankara was the brand's first hotel in Turkey. JW Marriott Bodrum is the brand's seventh property in Europe.

The city also offers an astonishing array of unique, smaller local properties that rank as one-of-a-kind architectural wonders.

Radisson Blu has opened a new property in the ancient Pera Taksim district, and Wyndham Hotel Group has developed two new properties, including the Wyndham Izmir Ozdilek, which overlooks tranquil Izmir Bay. **C&IT**



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On The Move



BERGOS

Heidi Bergos was named director of sales and marketing at Hotel Irvine in Irvine, California. She was previously director of sales and marketing for Laguna Cliffs Resort & Spa, Dana Point, California.

Suzette Deveau was named vice president of sales and marketing, the Americas, for Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group. She will join the group's New York corporate office from Mandarin Oriental, Geneva, where she was director of sales and marketing.

Barry Brown has been named as vice president of sales and marketing



DEVEAU

ing for The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, Colorado. A 30-year veteran of the hospitality industry, Brown most recently was regional director of sales and marketing for KSL Resorts where he oversaw Hotel del Coronado, Beach Village at The Del in Coronado, California, and Omni La Costa Resort and Spa in Carlsbad, California. In addition, Joshua Garcia was named national sales director for the Northeast region. He was director of sales and catering for Ameristar Casino Resort in Black Hawk, Colorado.

The Founders Inn and Spa in Virginia Beach, Virginia, has named Melissa Georges as director of sales



BROWN



GARCIA

and marketing. She previously worked for The Founders Inn and Spa for nine years as a senior sales manager.

The Wyndham New Yorker Hotel in New York City has named Joseph Sanchez as associate director of sales. He most recently was senior group sales manager at InterContinental New York Times Square.

La Quinta Resort & Club, a Waldorf Astoria Resort in La Quinta, California, has appointed Justin Ely as director of sales. He was director of group sales for The Fairmont Newport Beach in California. **C&IT**



GEORGES

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