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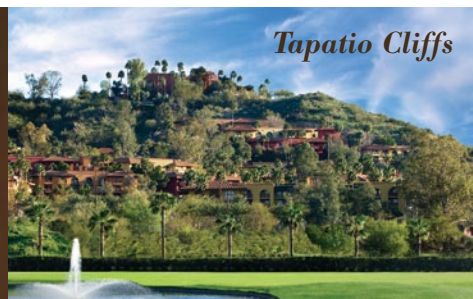
The Next Wave

A Rising Tide of New
Convention Center Hotels
Is On the Horizon

PAGE 22

DALLAS OMNI HOTEL

Tom Faust,
vice president, sales,
Omni Hotels & Resorts



Tapatio Cliffs



Squaw Peak



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ASSOCIATION
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THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT
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On the Cover: The new Omni Dallas Hotel, which will connect to the Dallas Convention Center via skybridge on two different levels, will officially open two months ahead of schedule on November 11, 2011.

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A Harbinger of Better Times

Ahead of schedule and on budget! Such an optimistic report on a major hotel project sounds like wishful thinking. Yet the new Omni Dallas convention center hotel not only has achieved these milestones, its grand opening will now take place two months early due to high year-end demand: There are already 120 conventions on the books through 2017. Not that they need the talisman of lucky numbers, but the opening date has been set for 11-11-11, perhaps just to keep the good karma going.

The Omni Dallas Hotel is a harbinger of better times ahead, a poster child for the recovering economy. It's heartening to know that despite the credit crunch, major convention center hotel projects like this one are breaking ground again. Why? Tom Faust, vice president of sales for Omni Hotels & Resorts, explains, "People have realized that you can't put off meetings forever; you need the face-to-face contact. And convention center hotels offer ideal environments in which to have it. ... We're convinced there's a growing market for the convention center hotel. Planners and attendees today want memorable meetings in interesting locations, without a lot of time or money wasted on transportation." Our story on page 22 details why convention center hotels provide the best ROI for planners and ROE for attendees, as well as the latest news on up-and-coming and ongoing projects in Washington, DC, Miami, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Columbus and beyond.

And then there's Orlando, which has its own success story to tell on page 28. The Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) reports that convention and trade show attendance was up a whopping 23.5 percent in April year-to-date with hotel occupancy at a three-year high. The city's meetings infrastructure is booming: The OCCC now has skyway connections to three convention center hotels; the new Medical City campus continues to expand; the Amway Center just opened; the international airport is beginning a two-year improvement project; and Visit Orlando has rededicated itself to providing attendance-building and marketing support for its customers.

Such investment in meetings infrastructure is a hopeful sign of an improving economy, but it's the intangibles that will sustain it. Cindy Wood, director of programs and meeting services at the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists said it best: "For our people, using (convention center) hotels is like 'going home' to reconnect with old friends, to compare notes and to problem-solve."



Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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APEX Green Meetings Standards Reach Milestone

The Convention Industry Council (CIC) announced that the APEX-led initiative to create standards for environmentally sustainable events has reached a milestone: Eight of the nine draft standards have completed review by the ASTM, which marks the completion of the consensus process for the development of the standards and clears them for final approval and ratification as official ASTM Standards. The suite of standards, comprised of nine individual "sector" standards, covers all facets of event planning and management: Audio-Visual, Communication & Marketing, Destinations, Exhibits, Food & Beverage, Meeting Venue, Onsite Office, Transportation and Accommodations (undergoing final revisions). "CIC is thrilled to report that the project has reached this stage," states CIC CEO Karen Kotowski, CAE, CMP. "...We know there is much anticipation in our industry for their completion. The process has been long due to overwhelming interest from all parties, and we are now right at the finish line." www.conventionindustry.org



Clean the World founder Shawn Seipler (right) distributes soap in Haiti. The organization partners with hotels and planners to recycle gently used products.

World has distributed more than 8 million soap bars to children and families in nearly 45 countries, most of which were collected from more than 1,000 hotel partners throughout North America.

The latest development in the relationship between Clean the World and MPI is the advancement of Clean the World's meeting industry partner programs, designed to assist planners with implementing sustainability practices during the RFP process. The turnkey CSR initiative turns meetings into lifesaving events in which host properties and event attendees play a role in the collection and shipping of soaps to the Clean the World headquarters, where the materials are processed and distributed to communities in need. www.cleantheworld.org

MPI Foundation Partnership Advances Sustainability Measurement.

The MPI Foundation Canada, in partnership with Hotel Association of Canada (HAC), launched the Green Key Meetings (GKM) Program, a tool designed to assist meeting professionals by providing an index that measures a property's sustainability efforts. The program gives a score based on the same 1 to 5 (best) scale used by the Green Key Global program, taking into account services, communication, activities, people and ancillary items. Said Didier Scaillet, MPI chief development officer, "The Green Key Program demonstrates the leadership of HAC and its members, and it's encouraging for the Foundation to align itself with an association which treasures the principles of people, planet and profit." Scored properties are listed on the GKM website, a resource for planners seeking comprehensive data on environmentally conscious sites for meetings and events. www.greenkeymeetings.com

MPI Launches Competency Standards

DALLAS, TX — Meeting Professionals International (MPI) in June released the Meeting & Business Events Competency Standards (MBECS). The standards were collaboratively created and designed to quickly help a meeting professional discern which areas in their professional development they need



MacMillan

to pursue to advance their career. "These standards are arguably one of the most important resources we have ever had in terms of professional development and career enhancement," said Bruce MacMillan, MPI president and CEO.

MBECS is also a relevant tool in the day-to-day professional development of meeting and event professionals. Students and academic instructors can use the standards to influence curriculum and course selection, while hiring managers can develop more accurate job descriptions based on clearly defined competencies. Covering every area from strategic planning and event design to stakeholder management and varying areas of communication, the 87 pages of standards are easy to navigate.

The Convention Industry Council (CIC) aligned their recently updated CMP International Standards to the MBECS/CTHRC standards (see page 8). The Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) also will be working closely with the CIC to align its CMP Online Prep Course and Professional Meeting Management textbook with the updated CMP International Standards. MPI's new standards are available free to download at mpiweb.org/mbecs. For information on CIC's CMP International Standards, visit www.conventionindustry.org.

Disneyland Hotel Unveils Renovations

ANAHEIM, CA — Meeting professionals were among the more than 1,000 guests who participated in a June 2 gala unveiling enhancements to the landmark Disneyland Hotel in Southern California. They include a scenic outdoor event lawn, a luxurious new themed suite, and courtyard upgrades that include a new water-recreation area and pool-side restaurant and bar.



Aguel

"This is much more than a hotel refurbishment," said George Aguel, senior vice president for The Walt Disney Company. "Over the last three years we created an almost entirely new Disneyland Hotel...it's a powerful setting for meetings and incentive programs alike." Adjacent to the resort's 136,000-sf convention center is the new Frontier Lawn, which can accommodate up to 60 people for receptions. A second lawn will open in the fall of 2011 and will feature 12,500 sf of flexible space and a permanent stage. www.disneylandmeetings.com



Among the attendees at Disneyland Hotel's gala were (left to right) Laura Fitzgerald, senior sales manager for the Disneyland Resort, Karen Conlon, president & CEO of the California Association of Community Managers Inc. and Robert Donahue, director of resort sales and services for the Disneyland Resort.

Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort to Open Near Disney

ORLANDO, FL — Wyndham Hotels and Resorts plans to complete the half-finished Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek by this October. Located next to Walt Disney World, the 400-room Spanish Mediterranean-style hotel will complement the adjacent Wyndham Bonnet Creek Resort, the company's flagship 1,600-unit timeshare facility. The plans call for 20,000 sf of flexible meeting and conference space including an 8,000-sf main ballroom; spa and fitness center; 18-hole championship golf course; a full-service specialty restaurant; three-meal restaurant; pool bar and grill; lobby bar and the Wyndham brand's new combination café, barista and food mart. www.wyndham.com

HSMAI Rebrands Affordable Meetings

MC LEAN, VA — The Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI) will unveil MEET at its national show September 7–8 in Washington, DC. In an effort to rebrand its mission and focus, the 20-year-old organization



Gilbert

dropped the name Affordable Meetings in favor of MEET: Meetings, Events, Education, Technology. "With new show components, HSMAI's MEET is more than just a new name," says Fran Brasseux, HSMAI executive vice president. "It's entirely new and offers an inviting venue for learning and experiencing all aspects of event planning. ...We are believers in the power of face-to-face interaction to build and maintain strong business relationships." MEET's new components include: MEET University, a revisioned educational program; TEEM Up, a reverse trade show buyer appointment expo; MEET Exhibitor Concierge; and MEET On, a virtual extension of the two-day conference. "We value the feedback of our members and advisory boards in developing this exciting new event that focuses on elements that truly fuel sales, inspire marketing and optimize revenue," says Robert A. Gilbert, CHME, CHA, president and CEO of HSMAI. www.hsmaimeet.com

CMP Board Approves Revised CMP Blueprint

ALEXANDRIA, VA — The Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) board of directors recently announced the approval of a revised CMP Blueprint now known as the CMP International Standards, which define and categorize a comprehensive summary of the competencies, skills and abilities a certificant must possess to be successful in his or her field. These competencies are identified through a job analysis process, and this resulting document guides the development of the examination.

The next steps, according to Karen Kotowski, CAE, CMP, CEO of the Convention Industry Council (CIC), the industry body that administers the program and awards the CMP certification, will include development of additional exam questions to address any new competencies in the standard, and the review of study materials to determine if additional materials need to be developed. Also, the CMP board will move to computer-based testing in the second quarter of 2012. www.conventionindustry.org

Business Travel Airfares Back to Pre-Recession Levels

NEW YORK, NY — American Express Global Business Travel released first quarter figures on business travel pricing trends from its Business Travel Monitor for trips originating in North America and going to both domestic and international destinations. Domestic airfares this quarter have pushed past the pre-recession levels of Q1 2008 and hotel rates are on the rise. Comparing Q1 2011 to Q1 2010, the study indicates average domestic airfares increased 10 percent to \$247, surpassing the pre-recession average in Q1 2008 which was \$233; average international airfares increased 8 percent to \$1,866; average domestic hotel rates increased 3 percent to \$150; and average international hotel rates increased 4 percent (4%) to \$238.

“Airfare increases have been expected given the rise in the cost of oil and the return in demand in business travel,” says Christa Degnan Manning, director, eXpert insights research, American Express Global Business Travel. “On top of this, airlines are continuing to form alliances and joint ventures. As prices continue to increase and capacity levels remain tight, companies need to ensure they are following the market, reviewing travel spend and ensuring they are using suppliers and implementing policies that facilitate optimal cost-savings opportunities.”

The free report, “Business Travel: A Catalyst for Economic Performance,” is available at www.WTTC.org.

New Ethics Statement and Policy for CMP Program

ALEXANDRIA, VA — The Convention Industry Council has released a new ethics statement and policy for the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) program.

“The new ethics statement and disciplinary policy are an extension of policies that were already in place within the program,” states CIC CEO Karen Kotowski, CAE, CMP. “Having both an ethics statement and an enforcement mechanism are a best practice and a necessity for all credible certification programs that set professional standards. The ethics statement outlines norms of professional conduct that should guide and act as a compass in day-to-day business dealings. The disciplinary policy establishes procedures and avenues of recourse in the very rare event when they are needed.” The ethics resources are publicly available at www.conventionindustry.org/CMP/Ethics.aspx.



Hilton Cancun will be renamed Iberostar Cancun December 1.

PALMA DE MALLORCA, SPAIN — Iberostar Hotels & Resorts acquired its ninth property in Mexico by purchasing the 426-room Hilton Cancun, which will be renamed Iberostar Cancun when it reopens December 1 as an all-inclusive Iberostar resort. Hilton will continue operating the hotel until August when it will close for renovations to the main lobbies and lobby bar, new pool terraces and a new buffet restaurant and four specialty restaurants. The property features more than 100,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space. www.iberostar.com



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Catering Trends



Linda E. Schwartz

In light of tight budgets and changing tastes, event planners are becoming increasingly resourceful in their approach to food and beverage. F&B is a large part of most annual meeting budgets, and the onsite gastronomic experience can greatly enhance — or detract from — the attendees' overall experience.

Have Your Cake and Eat It, Too: Keep F&B Quality High and Costs Low

Much like air travel, no one goes to a conference mainly for the cuisine. However, the quality of your onsite food and beverage service greatly influences the overall attendee experience, and meeting evaluations typically include numerous compliments and/or complaints about F&B.

As the economy remains sluggish, most organizations have been loathe to increase event registration fees over the past few years. At the same time, hotels — much like the airlines — are finding inventive and often subtle ways to pass along price increases.

Here are 10 tips from SmithBucklin and Courtesy Associates Event Services professionals Jessica Cremer, Pat Dwyer, Rhonda Grizzard, Melissa Huston, Eric Johnson, Perry Juliano, Kelly Marks, Regina Mohr and Susan Gilbert for controlling food and beverage expenses while meeting the expectations of today's attendees.

1 Do you want coffee with that cup? While the tables for a plated lunch typically include a coffee cup in the setup, you may find that the hot java, along with iced tea, now carries an extra charge. Will your group be satisfied with just coffee, just iced tea or neither?

2 Carbs are bad for you anyway. When choosing a lunch or dinner menu, be aware that bread and rolls may not be included in the price of the meal. Some attendees may be dis-

appointed, while others may not even notice the difference.

3 Vegetarian doesn't mean a salad. It also doesn't mean a plate of soggy steamed vegetables. Diet- and health-conscious individuals, in addition to vegetarians, are opting for the "vegetarian meal" and they expect something both creative and tasty.

4 This won't be the attendees' last meal. Portion sizes are becoming more reasonable. Rather than trying to stretch a tight budget by serving a wide variety of lower-priced options, work with the F&B staff to become more creative. With a buffet, reducing just a few items from each station can bring down the budget without lessening the quality of the remaining choices.

5 Bottled water isn't green — and it isn't inexpensive, either. Once the rage, bottled water is being eliminated from most bars, refreshment breaks and in other areas where high-consumption/high-volume usage is expected. Water stations (tap water in urns, pitchers, etc.) are becoming the norm, and they are easier on the organization's budget as well. Some hotels impose a one-time, per-person water charge to cover all tap water used by the group, typically ranging from \$0.75 to \$0.95 per attendee.

6 "I'll have a White Cloud, please." Offering one or two specialty drinks themed to your event can help reduce the need to have more expansive

and expensive selections at the bar. Promote the themed drinks, and you'll add to the excitement while cutting your bar tab. Also, be aware that some hotels are imposing a bar setup fee in addition to the bartender fee: This can be difficult to negotiate as it is not shown as a labor charge.

7 "I'll have what they're having." Talk to the venue about what is on the menu for the conferences and meetings occurring right before and after your event. You should be able to save money if you piggyback on the other menus, as the chef can save by ordering a larger quantity of the same food.

8 Make snack time healthful and fun. Healthful snacks such as nutrition bars and fruit can strain your budget. Consider a "make your own trail mix" buffet, which was a big hit at one recent conference — and far less expensive than other options.

9 RSVP, if you please. Many groups are asking attendees to indicate in advance (via the registration form or other means) if they will attend the onsite lunches, dinners and receptions. This helps gauge attendance at each function so the event staff can provide more accurate guarantees to hotels and convention centers. Not only does this cut expenses, but it reduces food waste as well.

10 Elvis has left the building. Entertainment at receptions, once thought to be necessary to the overall experience, is being eliminated in

many cases, with part of the savings being used to enhance the F&B. For example, instead of a live band, groups are opting for a disc jockey for a very limited number of hours or even piped-in music. Because one of the key benefits of any conference is networking, attendees often appreciate chatting with peers in a quieter atmosphere while enjoying good food and beverages.

Conference F&B truly is a moving target. Yesterday's "musts" (such as a full open bar, bottled water and live entertainment) are disappearing faster than the proverbial tray of breakfast breads (which, in turn, is being replaced by cereal and fruit!). In light of tight budgets and changing tastes, event planners are becoming increasingly resourceful in their approach to food and beverage. F&B is a large part of most annual meeting budgets, and the onsite gastronomic experience can greatly enhance — or detract from — the attendees' overall experience. A little imagination, combined with experience and hard work, can make your organization's next moveable feast one that will garner rave reviews. AC&F

Linda E. Schwartz, senior director, marketing and communication services for SmithBucklin, an association management company headquartered in Chicago, has worked with associations and their members for more than 30 years to develop, implement and manage a broad range of membership programs.

The More the Merrier New and Improved Gaming Resorts

Give Planners More Options

By Derek Reveron

The number of new and expanded gaming resorts is growing, affording association meeting planners multiple options for staging exciting, engaging conferences and events. Gaming resorts provide an ideal setting for national, state and regional associations because they can satisfy all of their meeting and entertainment needs at one facility and usually under one roof.

Nationally, about 15 states now have commercial casinos and at least 29 states have Native American gaming facilities, and several states have both types of gaming. More states are considering new gaming projects to increase revenues. Also, existing gaming resorts continue to renovate and expand to meet the demands of the association meetings market.

This growth reaches globally as well. Las Vegas Sands Corp. is planning on expanding its integrated resort model to several more countries, according to chairman and CEO Sheldon Adelson, the visionary behind the company's successful casinos and resorts from Las Vegas to Macau and Singapore. Adelson says he's interested in Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam as well as Europe. The company wants to develop a EuroVegas "Strip" in either Madrid or Barcelona along the lines of its Cotai Strip in Macau but twice as large:

as many as a dozen properties each with 3,000 rooms. Sands China will open early next year alongside the Venetian resort on the Cotai Strip. Steve Wynn and MGM Resorts International already have a presence in Asia with more development on the drawing board.

MULTIYEAR CONTRACTS COMING BACK

Gaming resorts nationwide are seeing an increase in association business. At Biloxi's Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, state and regional associations that book up to 700 rooms account for 60–65 percent of the property's business, according to a spokesperson. The bookings have remained relatively the same, but attendance is up compared to last year because many organizations bring additional people to man their booths.

At the South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa in Las Vegas, the situation is similar. According to a spokesperson, there's an uptick in association business and the bookings for the next few years are about double from last year. South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa maintains the same convention rate, meeting room or exhibit hall rental and adds a 5 to 7 percent increase for the room rates and keeps food and beverage increases to no more than around five percent, says the spokesperson.

Multiyear bookings are rising as dates become less available. For example, one of South Point Hotel's repeat clients requested dates for 2011 that were no longer available so, to avoid that problem in the future, the association signed a multiyear contract to lock in dates and rates.



Dawn Slykhouse
President
Face to Face Events
Santa Clara, CA

"We were looking for the one-stop-shop meeting fee where we could incorporate our meeting space, AV, food and beverage and networking all in one price per day, per person. It was a great package and an outstanding experience."



Photo courtesy of The Borgata

Conferences held at gaming resorts often attract additional attendees, whether or not the facility has gaming floors that are near or separated from meeting facilities — a consideration for some meeting planners. That's why many casino properties are designed so that delegates don't have to walk through a gaming space to get to meeting and conference facilities. As one property spokesperson touts, "Everyone knows that Las Vegas hotels have casinos. It's like an additional amenity."

LAS VEGAS

As the nation's No. 1 gaming destination and a magnet for association conferences, Las Vegas offers more than 148,000 hotel rooms and more than 10.5 million sf of meeting and exhibition space. Las Vegas is also the nation's top trade show destination. According to the 2010 Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority's (LCVA) 2010 Visitor Profile Study, 52 percent of people attending conferences and trade shows in Las Vegas come because they are held in the city.

Las Vegas is packed with several world-famous gaming properties that offer an array of options for association meeting planners. One of the most prominent Las Vegas resort property operators is MGM Resorts International, which owns several properties including The Mirage, Aria Resort &

Casino, Bellagio, Vdara Hotel & Spa, MGM Grand Las Vegas, Signature at MGM Grand, Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino, THEhotel at Mandalay Bay, Monte Carlo, New York-New York Hotel & Casino and Excalibur Hotel & Casino. The properties offer a combined 2.4 million sf of meeting space, ballrooms, breakout rooms and prefunction space.

Caesars Entertainment operates 52 casinos in six countries and several properties in Las Vegas, including Caesars Palace, Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino, Imperial Palace, Bally's Las Vegas, Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino, Harrah's Las Vegas, Paris Las Vegas and Flamingo Las Vegas.

In May, Caesars Entertainment introduced Total Rewards Meetings & Events, a loyalty and reward program for convention and meeting customers. The program allows customers to earn Total Rewards credits for events they hold at Caesars Entertainment properties in North America. Under the program, clients can earn one credit for each dollar paid by a master account.

Located only minutes from The Strip on the south end of Las Vegas Boulevard, South Point Hotel Casino & Spa's 2,163 guest rooms offer great views of the Las Vegas valley and nearby mountains. Planners can use 170,000 sf of flexible meeting space and a 4,600-seat arena. There's also a 16-screen movie complex and a 72-lane

Atlantic City's Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa boasts a 161,000-sf casino featuring 4,100 slot machines and 200 table games.

bowling alley. The property's casino was expanded to 55,000 sf.

Wynn Las Vegas and Encore hold more Forbes Five Star awards than any other casino resort in the world. Together, the two properties provide a total of more than 4,700 guest rooms and 260,000 sf of meeting space. All of Wynn's 2,716 rooms will be refurbished by the end of this year. The property is also home to an 18-hole golf course and three ballrooms, the largest of which is 50,000 sf.

The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and the Palazzo Las Vegas, located alongside each other on The Strip, are very popular with associations because of the adjacent Sands Expo Convention Center, which offers 2.2 million sf of flexible meeting space, including an 85,000-sf ballroom.

The two Las Vegas Sands Corp. properties, which are also part of the InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) portfolio of properties, comprise one of the biggest five-diamond hotel and gaming resort complexes in the world. The two hotels offer more than 8,000 guest rooms and suites.

ASIA

Las Vegas Sands Corp. also owns the Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, which opened last year

and is one of the top resort, convention and exhibition properties in Southeast Asia. The Marina Bay Sands features 2,560 rooms, 1.3 million sf of flexible convention and exhibition space and an 86,000-sf ballroom, the largest in Southeast Asia. The property also includes a shopping mall, an outdoor event plaza and top entertainment, including The Lion King and the ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands.

In March, a committee of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) held a five-day meeting for about 800 attendees at the Marina Bay Sands. The group meets three times a year. Prior to meeting at the Marina Bay Sands, the group held its meetings in North America. However, starting with the meeting at the Marina Bay Sands, the group plans to hold one of its three yearly meetings outside of North America due to its growing international membership. About 65

percent of the attendees hail from countries worldwide, including Brazil, Egypt, North America, Israel, Europe and Asia, says Dawn Slykhouse, president of Face To Face events, a Santa Clara, CA-based independent meeting, event and trade show planning firm.

The IEEE selected the Marina Bay Sands as the site of its first international meeting partly because of its space and amenities. "It has been challenging for us to find the amount of meeting space we desire for this meeting with breakout rooms. We have about 45 meetings running every day. The meeting space was flexible and very accommodative to this type of meeting," says Slykhouse. She also noted the great value. "We were looking for the one-stop-shop meeting fee where we could incorporate our meeting space, AV, food and beverage and networking all in one price per day, per person. It was a great package and an outstanding experience. We want to take this group as well as other groups back if we get the right deals again," adds Slykhouse.

ATLANTIC CITY

In recent years, Atlantic City has faced more competition for its Northeastern base of customers from other gaming resorts in the region. In order to help maintain its competitive edge, the state of New Jersey recently created a new nonprofit group, the Atlantic City Alliance (ACC), to market Atlantic City. The Atlantic City Convention & Visitors Authority (ACCVA) will focus on increasing convention business. New Jersey law requires casinos with more than \$1 billion invested in Atlantic City to participate and help fund the ACC, which is also partly financed by state gaming taxes.

Revel Entertainment Group LLC has resumed work on its \$2.4 billion Revel hotel-casino project after financial difficulties and delays. The beach-front property will offer at least 1,090 guest rooms, 160,000 sf of meeting space, a 5,800-seat arena with retractable seating and a 40,000-sf ballroom. Revel will include a unique feature — a two-acre rooftop landscaped outdoor deck with thousands of plants and views of the ocean. The property is scheduled to open in May 2012.

One of Atlantic City's existing linchpin properties, the chic Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, features 2,000 rooms and more than 70,000 sf of meeting space. In addition, the property offers a 161,000-sf casino floor and Spa Toccare, a 54,000-

sf European-style spa. The Borgata is also home to the 800-room Water Club at Borgata, which features a cosmopolitan hotel atmosphere. The facility features Immersion, a 36,000-sf European-type spa and 18,000 sf of meeting space.

Celebrity chef restaurants star at Borgata: Bobby Flay Steak, SeaBlue, Wolfgang Puck American Grille, Izakaya and Fornelletto join the Old Homestead Steakhouse, a New York City landmark. The Metropolitan Café, Oyster Bar and Gelato Bar; Gypsy Bar; B Bar; Borgata Buffet, Noodles of the World (N.O.W.) and Roma are also onsite at the Borgata.

Top acts such as Carly Simon, Aerosmith and Sting have performed at the property's 2,400-seat event center, and The Music Box, a 1,000-seat theater hosts more intimate events and is home to Borgata's nightly Comedy Club. Borgata's four nightlife hotspots include Gypsy Bar, B Bar, MIXX, and mur.mur.

CONNECTICUT

Long known as the capital of the insurance industry and the home of Yale University, Connecticut also features two large Native American-operated gaming properties between New York and Boston.

Located in Uncasville and owned by the Mohegan Tribe, the Mohegan Sun provides a 1,200-room hotel, more than 100,000 sf of meeting space and a 38,000-sf ballroom. The Mohegan Sun Arena, complete with the latest sound and lighting systems, seats 10,000 guests and offers 30,000 sf of flexible exhibition space. A 17,500-sf outdoor terrace provides space for cocktails and receptions. The popular meeting resort features several restaurants, including fine dining choices such as Bobby Flay's Bar Americain, Todd English's Tuscany and Michael Jordan's Steak House. On the casual side, attendees have a choice of Big Bubba's BBQ, chef Bobby Flay's Burger Palace, Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville and more.

Mohegan Sun features an 18-hole golf course and a 23,000-sf spa with 21 treatment rooms. Mohegan Sun Country Club at Pautipaug, located 15 minutes away, is undergoing a redesign and complete renovation. It will reopen in April 2012.

In May, Mohegan Sun launched a new Wall of Fame, a dedicated wall honoring clients who have hosted events at Mohegan Sun for numerous consecutive years. As the Connecticut State Dental



Photo courtesy of Mohegan Sun

Association (CSDA) marked its 10th consecutive year at the resort, it also received the first plaque on the Mohegan Sun Wall of Fame and a customized "tooth" cake created by Lynn Mansel, the executive pastry chef. Mohegan Sun will continue to recognize valued customers who book consecutive annual events with a special customized ceremony.

Connecticut's other large gaming facility is Foxwoods Resort Casino. The resort features four hotels — the MGM Grand at Foxwoods, Great Cedar Hotel, Grand Pequot Tower and Two Trees Inn — which provide a total of more than 2,200 guest rooms and more than 150,000 sf of flexible meeting space. MGM Grand at Foxwoods's 50,000-sf ballroom accommodates 4,000 guests and the MGM Theater seats 4,000 people. The popular resort offers more than 35 restaurants, bowling alleys, two theaters and an outdoor pool as well as two 18-hole golf courses.

Much of Foxwoods' association business comes from Northeastern-based regional and state organizations, many of which are repeat customers. Customers include the Greater New England Minority Supplier Development Council (GNEMSDC), based in Hamden, CT. Last September, the GNEMSDC met at Foxwoods for the 15th consecutive year. The three-day meeting attracted 1,500 members and 160 exhibitors from throughout New England.

Why did the association choose Foxwoods? "It is in itself both a draw and a destination," says Fred McKinney, president of the GNEMSDC. "That's always helpful to attendance. People want to go to the facility to meet and play and be entertained. There's high quality meeting space. I like the AV capabilities and the quality of the staff. We get a quick response — they have people walking around with

Mohegan Sun's spectacular 55-foot indoor waterfall at the Taughannick Falls Bar marks the spot to meet fellow conventioners.



Rendering courtesy of Revel

According to a recent announcement by CEO Kevin DeSanctis, the 1,090-room Revel is slated to open in Atlantic City in May 2012, featuring 160,000 sf of convention space.



Photo courtesy of GNEMSC

The Greater New England Minority Supplier Development Council based in Hamden, CT, finds Foxwoods Resort to be the ideal venue for their Trade Expo. They recently convened there for the 15th consecutive year.



Fred McKinney
President
Greater New England Minority
Supplier Development Council
Hamden, CT

“It (Foxwoods Resort) is in itself both a draw and a destination. That’s always helpful to attendance. People want to go to the facility to meet and play and be entertained. There’s high quality meeting space.”

walkie-talkies and cell phones — to address any issue that might come up. Plus, we get a good deal.”

MORE NATIVE AMERICAN GAMING

Established by the Tulalip Tribes in 1983 as a bingo hall, the Tulalip Resort Casino is located 30 minutes from Seattle on the Tulalip Indian Reservation. Last year, the resort opened a new 370-room luxury hotel that offers 30,000 sf of meeting space, a 14,000-sf spa and scenic views of Puget Sound and the Cascade Mountains. The resort also features a 3,000-seat amphitheater entertainment venue and 192,000 sf of gaming space.

Talking Stick Resort, located in Scottsdale, AZ, 15 minutes from Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, opened last year with 497 guest rooms and more than 100,000 sf of indoor and outdoor conference space. Developed by the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, the 15-story Talking Stick offers 12 conference rooms, a 240,000-sf gaming floor and a 13,000-sf spa. Native American exhibits and art adorn the property, which includes a 25,000-sf ballroom.

In Florida, the 500-room Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino boasts all that planners need for successful meetings. Located in Hollywood, FL, a few miles from Fort Lauderdale, the property features 40,000 sf of meeting and exhibition space, including a 16,000-sf ballroom. The 130,000-sf casino includes more than 2,300 games and slots. Planners

can use a 7,000-sf poolside area for outdoor functions. The 5,500-seat Hard Rock Live indoor arena has featured performances by stars such as Bill Cosby, Lionel Richie and ZZ Top. The arena is also available for meetings.

GULF COAST

In February, the Gulf Coast Food & Fuel Expo held its Petroleum & Convenience Marketers of Alabama (P&CMA) at the Beau Rivage Resort & Casino in Biloxi, MS, for the third consecutive year. The two-day regional trade show and meeting attracted about 850 petroleum

marketers, convenience store owners and those who sell products to the stores. Most attendees came from Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana, and others hailed from Texas, Arkansas, Florida and Tennessee. The first day of the meeting included a golf tournament, networking and business meetings, and a banquet featuring a live band and former Alabama football coach Gene Stallings as speaker. The second day was dedicated to the trade show, which included about 125 exhibitors at the nearby Mississippi Gulf Coast Coliseum & Convention Center. Attendees enjoyed gaming in their spare time.

Lauren Hodge, director, industry relations and meetings, P&CMA, says that the physical separation of the meeting and gaming facilities is appealing. “The Beau Rivage is more than just a casino atmosphere. They have everything you need for a meeting, including great convention staff that is easy to work with,” says Hodge. Value is another major reason why the P&CMA has met at the Beau Rivage. “They are very competitive. They want to keep our business, and we have a good relationship with them. We get different quotes from different resorts, and our committee hasn’t made a final decision, but we hope to go back,” Hodge added.

The Beau Rivage offers more guest rooms and suites (1,740), and meeting space (50,000 sf) than any other facility on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Owned by MGM Resorts International, the Beau Rivage provides a 20,000-sf spa and salon and a 1,550-seat theater. Located less than a 30-minute drive from the resort, the Fallen Oak golf resort was designed especially for Beau Rivage. The 18-hole luxury golf resort features a spacious clubhouse on more than 500 acres. Earlier this year, the Beau Rivage opened Stalla, an Italian restaurant.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Association meeting planners who need a luxurious under-one-roof facility, exciting built-in entertainment, and surprising value for their next annual conference can find all that and more at a gaming resort. Organizations with a contingent of international members will find plenty of gaming resort options in Asia and around the globe. And delegates don’t even have to step into the bustling casino unless, of course, they feel a lucky streak coming on.

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Keep an Open Mind

By George Seli

Rethinking Strategies to Address Diversity

Association memberships, like the U.S. work force, often represent a variety of ethnicities, cultures, age brackets, professional experience levels and other kinds of diversity. It's part of what makes networking during the annual convention so enriching for delegates. Naturally, then, diversity is "on the agenda" of executive directors, planners and marketing teams, whether they aim to cater to a diverse membership or, in some cases, diversify that membership even further.

Just one example of an association involved in the latter activity is the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS). "We at the Academy are working very hard to have orthopedic surgeons be more diverse, and we're making some headway in that respect as it relates to race, ethnicity and also very importantly gender," notes Karen Hackett, CEO of AAOS and chair of the ASAE. "Currently, only less than 4 percent of the Academy fellows, namely those who are board certified and have been in practice for a couple years, are female. It's increasing, but just slightly."

Toward increasing it more, the AAOS' women's health issues advisory board tries to "spread the word that women can be successful in orthopedics,"

Hackett adds. "We also have a diversity advisory board, and they work to promote orthopedics to minority populations."

NEW GENERATIONS

Ethnic diversity among the membership tends to develop as an association expands its geographic reach. For example, when Moline, IL-based American Rental Association (ARA) began in the mid-1950s, the first members were rental business owners concentrated mainly in the Midwest, but "now there are members in every state, every Canadian province and all throughout the world — more than 40 countries," reports Chris Coleman, ARA marketing manager. Also in those 50-plus years, new generations have joined rental businesses and the ARA itself, including fourth generations of families in some instances, according to Coleman. "The newer generations in the businesses are going to college and graduate school to get a business education to help them be more successful as well, which wasn't as common in the early years of the association."

Like any other demographic shift, a diversification in member ages often calls for an association

to retool its educational programming, networking opportunities and other offerings to ensure all members will find value. It may also call for new marketing channels: reaching out to younger members via social media, for example. "Associations are trying to appeal to a broader range of ages," says Teri Elliott Jarvie, CMP, vice president, member programs with the Association Forum of Chicagoland. "Most people would say our membership is aging, but we are also looking to reach young professionals and help them understand the lifecycle of cradle-to-grave membership."

GLOBALIZATION

Members of all ages do tend to have one important feature in common these days: They're increasingly becoming "global" professionals, versed in the global economy, well-traveled and communicating virtually with peers in other countries. That's in line with the globalizing nature of many fields, which in turn can culturally diversify the memberships of associations serving those fields.

A U.S. association needn't work to become international for this to happen, notes Jarvie, former director of meeting services for the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP). "Many associations now are becoming global or collaborating with a global organization, but the business world itself is also becoming more global. We're becoming much more connected in the course of the business that we do." Thus, an American association serving a globally vibrant field, especially one in which the U.S. is a world leader, may well accrue some international membership and, hence, cultural diversification.

The AAOS is one example, with members from other countries attending its annual meeting. And the supply chain industry "has always been global," Jarvie notes. "In that organization our members literally led the world into global business, and so it was natural for us to try to do meetings in other countries. Probably 14 percent of our annual meeting attendance was from outside the U.S. There are many organizations for which that percentage is much higher."

Jarvie notes that diversity marketing is a popular topic at the Forum, as many associations continue to see their target audiences represent a variety of ethnicities, ages and other demographic features.

Typically, associations learn about the characteristics of their memberships through periodic surveys as well as the registration process for new members and convention registration. The ARA, for instance, sends a "demographic update" to its members annually, "and they are good at responding and providing this information," says Coleman.

With that data in hand, an association can design its materials, including marketing pieces, to be appropriately inclusive in terms of language and visuals. Stock art that shows racial and generational diversity is a common vehicle, but the ARA takes a different approach to visuals, one that directly reflects the "face" of the membership. "We actually don't use much stock art in our marketing materials. We take pictures at all of our association events



Karen Hackett
CEO
American Academy of
Orthopaedic Surgeons
Rosemont, IL

"We recognize a different country at each annual meeting and so encourage surgeons from that country to come. ...We recognize them during the opening ceremony, we give them a booth...and we host a reception for them."



— the convention, leadership training for the state/local association volunteers, a legislative caucus held in Washington, DC, annually and more — as well as get pictures from those in the membership to use in all of our marketing,” Coleman explains. “Members can see pictures of their peers and themselves as we market the association, the convention, educational opportunities and so forth.”

SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE

As far as language, a U.S. association offering materials in English doesn't necessarily send a message of exclusion to members (or potential members) who have a different native tongue, since there is widespread proficiency with English among the international business and science communities. But if an association is trying to attract professionals of a certain nationality or geographic region, it is advantageous to try to make that audience as comfortable as possible by offering content in their native language as well as English.

Robb Lee, chief marketing and communications officer for the ASAE, illustrates this point: “Let's say I speak French and you're speaking English to me. You may end up speaking French to me, but if all of your materials are in English, you still are making a determination that I'm OK receiving your materials in English, and that may not be the case. English is a viable language throughout much of the world. That said, however, it's about what your audience needs in order to engage with you.”

The AAOS, for example, is trying to increase engagement with orthopedic surgeons on a global level. “In the U.S. we have as members 98 percent of all orthopedic surgeons who are eligible. So our growth opportunity in membership would be in the international area,” Hackett says. Given that marketing focus, “we translate some of our materials, including our journal, into other languages” despite the fact that “most of our international members who come to our annual meeting are fairly proficient in English.”

TARGET AUDIENCES

The culture of the city where a convention takes place, though it may inspire entertainment and

F&B choices, need not reflect the demographics of the target audience. “For example, you may be holding a meeting in Barcelona, but your target audience may not be people from Spain — you may want to attract people from all over Europe,” Jarvie explains. “Marketing has become much more complex than it used to be, when we were only marketing to smaller audiences.”

One resource for marketing to a broader, more diverse audience may be the association's own staff. Outreach to the Asian population, to senior citizens, and so on, naturally benefits from input by staff members who reflect these demographics. Understanding the nuances of the target audience can of course be achieved by other means, but if some staffers “are part of the audience that you're trying to connect with, they may come up with some things you wouldn't have thought of,” Lee points out.

Members themselves also can be a touchstone on demographically based preferences. If one wants to increase membership from professionals in Barcelona, for instance, one would want to take care to use the term “Catalonian” instead of “Spanish” in referencing the city's people, Jarvie notes. “The native people in Barcelona do not consider themselves Spanish, they're Catalanian,” she says, and members from that city might well enlighten U.S. marketers on that linguistic point.

GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS

The subtleties of communication are compounded with the range of communication vehicles available in the Internet age. “We make efforts to utilize the variety of communications channels we have to spread the word about the various educational programs — emails, direct mail, our websites, articles in all of our publications, even social media,” says Coleman, adding that the ARA has Facebook and Twitter pages plus a LinkedIn group for The Rental Show, and “we use these to promote the convention educational programs in particular, but also to promote the education available throughout the year.”

While it's statistically true that promotions sent via social media will reach more of the younger members, that's no basis for limiting information geared toward those groups to that medium. Casting a wide net is the best way to ensure that information reaches its intended audience. “No one is making decisions based on one particular exposure or becoming aware of a program or an event just through

social media, just through direct mail,” says Lee. “The reality is that all of us receive information from a number of different sources. All the channels are important individually as well as collectively.”

Regarding meetings in particular, all the information that positions a convention as “not to be missed” — abstracts on cutting-edge topics, session descriptions, speaker bios, networking-event promotions, dining guides for the city — can be made available via everything from booklets to mobile apps. One may also highlight the meeting's offerings to members within certain demographic segments. A good case-in-point is the AAOS' “guest nation program” at its annual meeting, which has been in place since 2005 toward the goal of bolstering international membership. “We recognize a different country at each annual meeting and so encourage surgeons from that country to come to our meeting,” says Hackett. “We recognize them during the opening ceremony, we give them a booth to set up and talk about what they're doing in their country, and we host a reception for them. They become more engaged, and they tend to join the Academy as a result of that.” Naturally, the reception features cuisine indigenous to the guest nation.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

In practice, a meeting will market the association to professionals hailing from the destination, many of whom will find it convenient to attend. Thus, a planner will want to ensure the event respects the social norms of that country or region of the world. “You of course would want to introduce and represent your own country, but you want to be able to give local attendees a level of comfort and somewhat of their preference,” Jarvie says. For instance, when in Europe, take coffee breaks like the Europeans do — with juice on the menu. “As a relatively new planner to international meetings, you have to avoid imposing your own expectations of what a coffee break really is. They drink a great deal more juice than we do and don't drink water as much.

“If you looked at a facility menu and wondered why there is orange juice on it all day long, that's what they prefer,” says Jarvie, drawing on her experience planning a CSCMP meeting in Rotterdam. Similarly, when convening in Spain — and assuming local professionals are part of the target audience — one might allot more time for lunch, the main meal of the day in that country. “If something looks unusual to you,

ask the question, but don't assume that it's wrong or even unusual in that destination. Each country is a new adventure, so the best way to arm yourself is to have no assumptions and really look at things with a completely open mind,” Jarvie advises. “Your facility representative, PCO (professional congress organizer), national as well as city convention authorities can be really helpful in guiding you through these kinds of decisions. The other great reference is peers who are planning international meetings, because there are more and more people now who have done it. So use your professional organizations.”

Making marketing decisions sans research or consultation is a risky proposition, given the complexities that can be involved. Some mistakes are fairly obvious and easy to avoid, such as staffing a booth without representing the kind of demographic segment the association wants to attract.

The AAOS' effort to expand its female membership naturally guides its booth staffing at the AMA (American Medical Association) annual meeting, specifically on the day where the students visit different booths and learn about different specialties. “We always make sure that we have some diversity at that booth to try to show that orthopedics is a welcoming specialty. So we'll have a female orthopedic resident who can relate to the medical students,” Hackett comments.

But other mistakes are less obvious, because they are based in what seem to be plausible assumptions. For example, one might think that having speakers representing various nations would make the association more appealing to a global audience. Yet that's not necessarily so. “You have to understand your audience because in many disciplines they want U.S. research or U.S. speakers.

In the case of the CSCMP, in many cases what they wanted were speakers from the supply chain industry in the U.S. because we have the best practices,” says Jarvie. And catering to the educational desires of members quite arguably trumps the objective to display cultural diversity. “So it's back to that market research, back to using the expertise of your members and perhaps your staff,” she concludes, “so that when you design the program, you don't go in with all these preconceptions.”



Teri Elliott Jarvie, CMP
V.P. Member Services
Association Forum of Chicagoland
Chicago, IL

“If something looks unusual to you...don't assume that it's wrong ...in that destination. Each country is a new adventure, so the best way to arm yourself is to have no assumptions and really look at things with a completely open mind.”



Chris Coleman
Marketing Manager
American Rental Association
Moline, IL

“The newer generations in the businesses are going to college and graduate school to get a business education to help them be more successful as well, which wasn't as common in the early years of the association.”

The Next Wave

By Steve Winston

There are a hundred reasons not to build new convention center hotels. After the economic trauma of the past few years, municipalities are no longer receiving the tax revenues they once were and can offer little help with footing the bill. Investors, wary of such huge projects, are hesitant to help developers and hotel companies build them. Downtowns in most major cities are already built out, which means that you'd have to knock something down in order to put something up. And, even if the land's available, again, the costs are prohibitive.

"No doubt about it, these ventures are risky," says Bobby Bowers, senior vice president of Nashville-based Smith Travel Research, which tracks hotel-industry performance. "These hotels are hard to finance. They're big, complex projects that often require government assistance. And we're not completely out of the economic woods yet."

Acknowledging the challenges of funding such projects, Ted Mandigo, CPA, ISHC, president/founder of hospitality consulting company TR Mandigo & Co., says, "It's interesting that several companies are still doing them. I think there's a growing recognition of the advantages — that, if

A Rising Tide of New Convention Center Hotels Is On the Horizon

you're meeting because there's a need for personal contact and face-to-face, it's much more efficient than scattering your attendees among different hotels. And it's a much more efficient way of ensuring that more of your people actually attend the sessions, instead of skipping out.

"When your sleeping rooms are next to the meeting venue," he adds, "it helps keep your group together. And it creates a more congenial atmosphere for networking and problem-solving."

MAJOR PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE

Bowers notes that there are significant projects currently underway that are either adjacent to or attached to existing (or upcoming) convention centers.

"There are some big ones scheduled to come online in the next few years," Bowers says. "Washington, DC, is getting a Marriott Marquis at the (Walter E.) Washington Convention Center, and a new Marriott just opened last year at the (Indiana) Convention Center in Indianapolis. Omni Hotels is building a big one in Dallas. Here in Nashville, another Omni project has already been approved and is projected to be finished by June of 2013, right next to a brand new convention center. And construction of a new Hilton is now underway next to the (Greater Columbus) Convention Center in Columbus, OH."

Deborah Sexton, president and CEO of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), believes that, with the loosening up of the economy, we're going to see more convention center hotels built in the near-future.

"Take Dallas, for example," says Sexton. "With



"Our intent is to avoid cookie-cutter layouts. We want our new convention center hotels to reflect the spirit and the culture of their cities, so that attendees can have a truly 'local' experience."

Tom Faust
Vice President, Sales
Omni Hotels & Resorts
Irving, TX

this new Omni, they'll be better prepared to respond to RFPs requiring a hotel at the convention center. If you're bidding for a convention, and you can't answer 'yes' to that question, it can knock you out of the running."

Sexton notes there are inherent advantages to using hotels adjacent to convention centers, such as reducing transportation costs and maximizing attendees' ROE (return on event).

"Association meetings today need to have demonstrable benefits for the attendees," she says. "They may not want to leave home for the better part of a week if they don't think the networking, idea-generation and training opportunities are sufficient. And keeping your people together for a longer time can enhance all of these opportunities."

Sexton's now planning next year's PCMA Annual Convening Leaders Meeting at the San Diego Convention Center. Approximately 4,000 attendees will be housed in six hotels that connect to the center.

OMNI'S TAKING THE PLUNGE

Omni's new properties in Dallas and Nashville will be technologically advanced and artfully appointed.

"Convention center hotels are a growing segment of our business," says Tom Faust, vice president, sales, for Omni Hotels & Resorts. "The Omni Fort Worth Hotel, which we opened in 2009 across the street from the Fort Worth Convention Center, was a watershed for us. All of a sudden there was



Among the Dallas city officials and Omni executives who attended the Omni Dallas Hotel's topping out ceremony were (above / to r) Phillip Jones, president and CEO of the Dallas CVB; Tyrus Sanders, chairman of the Dallas CVB; Ed Netzhammer, Omni Hotels; and (second from right) Tom Faust, Omni Hotels.

a new four-star brand in town that planners may not have considered before. And the decision to build our new Dallas convention center hotel was a direct result of the success in Fort Worth."

Business has been brisk at the 614-room Omni Fort Worth, which features 68,000 sf of meeting space.

Due to high year-end demand, the new Omni Dallas Hotel will hold its grand opening two months early on November 11, 2011. Reservations are now being accepted for the 1,001-room hotel. Ed Netzhammer, regional vice president of Omni Hotels and Resorts told a local news outlet, "We have just over 120 conventions already booked at the hotel, and that goes all the way out through 2017." The LEED Silver-certified Omni Dallas Hotel will connect to the Dallas Convention Center via skybridge on two different levels. The hotel will offer more than 110,000 sf of flexible meeting and event space including 21 meeting rooms, and the grand and junior ballrooms, encompassing 32,000 sf and 15,000 sf respectively.

The new Omni Nashville Hotel, scheduled for



Photo courtesy of Omni Hotels & Resorts

The Omni Nashville Hotel will serve as the headquarters hotel for the Music City Convention Center. Both new developments are slated for completion in 2013.



The JW Marriott Indianapolis opened earlier this year as the world's largest JW Marriott. It's connected to the newly expanded Indiana Convention Center.



Bobby Bowers
Senior Vice President
Smith Travel Research
Hendersonville, TN

"There are a number of built-in savings when you use convention center hotels. ...We're all looking for quick savings these days and convenience. And these hotels can offer both."

completion in 2013, will have 800 guest rooms and 80,000 sf of meeting space. It will be located adjacent to the 1.2-million-sf Music City Convention Center currently under construction and slated for a 2013 opening. It will be steps away from the new Country Music Hall of Fame, to fully embrace the "Music City" music culture.

"Our intent," says Tom Faust, "is to avoid cookie-cutter layouts. We want our new convention center hotels to reflect the spirit and the culture of their cities, so that attendees can have a truly 'local' experience."

In addition to Omni Fort Worth, there is an existing Omni convention center hotel in Atlanta, adjacent to The Georgia World Congress; and in San Diego, across the street from the convention center.

STARWOOD NEWS

The Greater Baltimore Committee recently announced plans for a \$900 million Inner Harbor project that will more than double the size of the Baltimore Convention Center, and add an 18,500-seat arena as well as a new 500-room Sheraton attached to the convention center.

MARRIOTT MOVES WITH THE TIMES

Marriott has been a major player in the convention center hotel scene for some time now. And the company's not sitting on its laurels.

In February, Marriott unveiled the world's largest JW Marriott, the 1,005-room JW Marriott Indianapolis, a 34-story showpiece with 104,000 sf for meetings. The new hotel is the centerpiece of the \$450 million Marriott Place project occupying seven acres downtown

Photo courtesy of Visit Indy

that includes four other Marriott hotels. All five hotels (total 2,248 rooms) connect to the newly expanded Indiana Convention Center.

And Marriott has another big project in the works.

When the Washington Marriott Marquis opens in DC in 2014, it will be one of only five Marriott Marquis properties in the U.S. The four-star hotel will incorporate the historic Samuel Gompers AFL-CIO building (known as the "Plumbers Building") into the property, and will be connected to the Walter E. Washington Convention Center via an underground walkway, allowing conventioners to access the convention center directly from the hotel's ballroom level (underground) or by crossing the street to the center. The hotel will boast 1,175 guest rooms and 100,000 sf of meeting space.

There are other changes afoot, as well. The company recently rebranded the former San Diego Marriott Hotel & Marina as the San Diego Marriott Marquis & Marina. A bayfront facility featuring 1,362 guest rooms and 160,000 sf of meeting space, it's adjacent to the San Diego Convention Center and within easy walking distance of Petco Park (home of the San Diego Padres) and the historic Gaslamp Quarter.

In addition, the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, next to the newly expanded Philadelphia Convention Center, is undergoing a \$32 million renovation of all 1,408 guest rooms and 95,000 sf of meeting space.

HYATT HOTELS

Hyatt has 17 convention center hotels throughout the country, including a couple of recent additions and newly renovated properties.

The Grand Hyatt San Antonio (1,003 guest rooms; 115,000 sf of meeting space) opened in 2008, adjacent to the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center and the beautiful Riverwalk. And the Hyatt Regency Denver at the Colorado Convention Center opened in 2005 (1,100 rooms; 61,000 sf of meeting space).

Renovations are complete at the Hyatt Regency Columbus in Ohio, adjacent to the Greater Columbus Convention Center, as well as the Hyatt Regency Baltimore, a four-diamond Inner Harbor hotel connected by skywalk to the Baltimore Convention Center. Also recently reno-

vated are the Hyatt Regency Phoenix adjacent to the Phoenix Convention Center; Chicago's Hyatt Regency McCormick Place; the Hyatt Regency Indianapolis at the Indiana Convention Center; and the Hyatt Regency Miami, overlooking the Miami River and Biscayne Bay, and attached to the James L. Knight International Center, the Miami Convention Center.

HILTON'S A VETERAN

Hilton Hotels has 15 convention center hotels around the country, ranging from big cities such as Houston to small towns like Branson, MO. Its newest property is the Hilton Orlando, which opened in September 2009. The 1,400-room Hilton Orlando offers 175,000 sf for meetings and is connected via open-air walkway to the Orange County Convention Center, the second-largest convention center in the U.S. at 2.1 million sf.

Hilton's now building a new convention hotel in Columbus, OH. The Hilton Columbus Downtown, due to open in the fall of 2012, will be a \$140 million showpiece with 532 guest rooms and 22,800 sf for meetings. It will connect to the 1.7-million-sf Greater Columbus Convention



Photo courtesy of Hilton Hotels

The Hilton Columbus Downtown will open in 2012. A glass walkway will connect it to the Greater Columbus Convention Center and Nationwide Arena.

Center and Nationwide Arena via glass walkway.

The Hilton Omaha, the only hotel attached via skybridge to the Qwest Center Omaha, is currently undergoing a \$37 million makeover, including a new junior ballroom scheduled for completion in late 2011.

Both Hilton and Marriott have been in talks with Miami Beach officials on the city's plans to build a 1,000-room convention center hotel and expand the Miami Beach Convention Center.

NOTABLE INDEPENDENTS

The Peabody Orlando recently completed a \$450 million renovation last September that added a second tower with 800 guest rooms. The Peabody now offers a total of 1,641 guest rooms, 300,000 sf of meeting space, and a new open-air walkway connection to the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC).

Orlando's Rosen Hotels & Resorts owns four convention properties offering a total of 4,500 guest rooms and 605,000 sf of meeting space. The 1,334-room Rosen Centre Hotel recently completed work on a new pedestrian skyway linking the hotel to the OCCC.

THE UPSIDE AND THE CHALLENGES

"We all know about the meetings that were canceled over the past few years," says Omni's Tom Faust. "But now, we seem to be heading back to 2008 levels. People have realized that you can't put off meetings forever; you need the face-to-face contact. And convention center hotels offer ideal environments in which to have it."

If there's been an upside at all to the events



Photo courtesy of The Peabody Orlando

The Peabody Orlando completed a major expansion last fall and now is one of three hotels connected to the Orange County Convention Center.



The Rosen Centre Hotel unveiled a new pedestrian bridge in March that links the hotel to the Orange County Convention Center.



Deborah Sexton
President and CEO
Professional Convention
Management Association
Chicago, IL

Attendees “may not want to leave home for the better part of a week if they don’t think the networking, idea-generation and training opportunities are sufficient. Keeping your people together for a longer time can enhance all of these opportunities.”

of the past few years, it’s that some in the hotel industry now seek input from the end-users of their products.

“At Omni, we have a Customer Advisory Board consisting of meeting planners,” Faust says, “and we meet with them twice a year. We rely on their feedback, particularly in our focus of creating ‘local’ experiences that reflect the culture of the cities in which we’re located.”

Joe McInerney, who is president and CEO of the Washington, DC-based American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA), is not necessarily bullish on the short-term prospects for construction of convention center hotels, because of the lingering credit crunch. But he does see more of them being constructed in the future.

“Convention center hotels give planners additional flexibility,” McInerney says. “You can walk to the convention center. And you can use the hotel’s own meeting rooms to supplement the convention center, perhaps getting some free meeting space for your smaller breakout sessions. These hotels can provide you with more alternatives.”

Bowers also notes budgetary benefits. “There are a number of built-in savings when you use convention center hotels,” he says. “For one thing, you don’t have to transport people downtown; you’re already there. And for another, even if you do have to transport people to attractions, restaurants, sports events, cultural facilities, for the most part, you’re already there, or very close. We’re all looking for quick savings these days and convenience. And these hotels can offer both.”

Cindy Wood plans large

meetings at convention center hotels. As director of programs and meeting services at the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA), she holds meetings with up to 4,000 attendees. Last year’s annual meeting was held at the Washington State Convention & Trade Center in Seattle, using the Sheraton Seattle (across the street) as the headquarters hotel. This year’s annual meeting will be at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston in August, and the headquarters hotel will be the neighboring Sheraton Boston. Next year, she’s taking her group to the Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco, with headquarters at the adjacent Marriott Marquis.

“Location is big,” Wood says. “People like to be able to run back to their rooms in between meetings. In addition, we’ve found that if our attendees are placed too far apart, there’s a disconnect; you can’t network as well, and you can’t exchange ideas — or even pleasantries — as well.”

Wood notes that even dining is a part of networking, and that, for many attendees, this type



Photo courtesy of Marriott International

The Washington Marriott Marquis will be connected to the Walter E. Washington Convention Center via an underground walkway when it opens in 2014.

of networking can provide as much learning as the sessions do.

“For our people,” says Wood, “using these hotels is like ‘going home’ to reconnect with old friends, to compare notes, and to problem-solve.”

Omni’s Tom Faust says it’s all about location, convenience and time-savings, all of which add up to cost savings, as well.

“We’re convinced there’s a growing market for the convention center hotel,” he says. “Planners and attendees today want memorable meetings in interesting locations, without a lot of time or money wasted on transportation. And we’re doing our best to provide them.”

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Four Diamond Award

Orlando

Attendance and Infrastructure Are Booming

By George Seli

One of the Sunshine State's most viable cities for association meetings is in full swing this year, with combined attendance at conventions and trade shows in the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) up 23.5 percent in April year-to-date, and hotel occupancy at a three-year high with 80.6 percent of rooms filled in March, according to Smith Travel Research. Orlando's 115,000 hotel rooms are part of the largest meetings infrastructure in the U.S. behind Las Vegas, and "it's a big engine to fill everyday. But it's improving and that's great news," says Gary Sain, president and CEO of Visit Orlando. In fact, Visit Orlando recently announced that the city is the first in the U.S. to break the 50 million visitor mark, with 51.445 million visitors in 2010, the most visitation in its history. Understandably, "I feel very confident we're going to hit 50 million total visitors in 2011," Sain adds.

Meeting and convention travelers will make healthy contributions to

Orlando's future visitation. Their number is forecasted to increase 2.3 percent in 2011 to 3.34 million and 4.8 percent in 2012 to 3.62 million. Part of the city's recent surge in convention attendance were the 31,200 registrants of Chicago-based Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society's annual conference in February. "We had a 13 percent increase in attendance between 2010 and 2011," notes Karen Malone, vice president, meetings with HIMSS. "I would attribute it to two things mostly, the first being our industry, health care technology. There's a lot going on with legislation and health care reform," so members are especially in need of education at this time. "And second, it would be Orlando."

The city's combination of accessibility, affordability and attractions is one that few metropolises can match, and HIMSS chose to showcase one of Orlando's newer attractions, The Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Studios' Island of Adventure, for an offsite special event. Transportation to the theme park was provided from all of the meeting's 64 designated hotels, including Rosen Shingle Creek, where the society held its Awards and Recognition Banquet. Groups of about 200 attendees also dined at Cuba Libre and B.B. Kings Restaurant & Blues Club, two among a slew of Orlando venues that cater well to the meetings industry.

THE NEW MEDICAL CITY AND MORE

HIMSS will be returning to Orlando in 2014, and by that time, Medical City should be a boon to the health care conference. The 650-acre parcel of land is growing into a \$2 billion medical campus that includes a medical school, research laboratories and hospitals. "We'll work with the folks from Medical City to get them really involved with our program," says Malone. "The campus will be a huge complement to Orlando, not just as a destination, but a huge business component to the health care industry." Well before Medical City was developed

on its Lake Nona site, Orlando was already a major draw for health care conferences. According to the Healthcare Convention and Exhibitors Association, it was the No. 1 destination, averaged over the past 13 years. Medical City is just a five-minute drive east from Orlando International Airport, which is also in the midst of developments. Beginning this year through 2013, nearly \$40 million will be invested in improving runways, security, signage and emergency electrical systems.

Also augmenting Orlando's infrastructure is the multimillion-dollar Amway Center, a major sports and entertainment venue that opened last fall. Its variety of suites and hospitality rooms offers exhibitors energetic ambiances to host clients, which some HIMSS exhibitors may well take advantage of in 2014, Malone remarks. On the site of the old Amway Arena, adjacent to the University of Central Florida's Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy, the Orlando City Commission plans to build a Creative Village — a 68-acre neighborhood with digital media companies, residences, office space and possibly a hotel.

Medical City and the Amway Center are among the fruits of Orlando's continued infrastructural investments throughout the recession, along with new upscale hotel developments such as the Peabody Orlando's \$450 million expansion, completed in September; the Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek and the Waldorf Astoria Orlando, which opened in 2009; and the Hilton Orlando, which debuted in 2009 adjacent to the OCCC. Orlando's convention center offers 2.1 million sf of exhibition space, two 92,000-sf general assembly areas, 74 meeting rooms, the 2,643-seat Chapin Theater, a 200-seat Lecture Hall and the 62,000-sf multipurpose Valencia Room. "The layout of the building worked very well for us," says Malone. "From an attendee's perspective it's fairly easy to navigate. It has a lot of contiguous exhibit space, which is great, and then it has meeting rooms very close to the exhibit space, as well as many food outlets (three restaurants and eight food courts)."

Linda M. Still, CMP, director, meetings and exhibits for the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), has also found the OCCC logistically advantageous for the AACR's annual meetings in the city, the last two in 2011 and 2004. "Its individual meeting rooms are larger than some other centers, so we can accommodate more people in the rooms," she comments. "With meeting space on

two main floors, it is easy to navigate around the convention center. The staff is very knowledgeable about their building, and the services department works well with our designated vendor partners."

From a technological standpoint, Malone adds, "Telecommunications is very important to us, and it's a very strong component of the convention center with Smart City (a telecom company focused on the events industry) as a partner there. Being a health care technology show, we have a huge consumption of telecom services (with a high) bandwidth, and they did a great job for us."

NEW FOCUS ON PLANNERS' NEEDS

The OCCC is also ensuring that planners stay abreast of its latest features. According to Buffy Levy, director, event services with SmithBucklin Corporation and show director for the North American Association of Food Equipment Manufacturers (NAFEM), "Visit Orlando and the OCCC have just started producing a Convention District News video. The first one they did was all about what they're doing to ensure the technology in the building is as upgraded as we need it to be, and why cell phone service is not an issue in that building. That's a really good thing that they're doing that's helping meeting planners understand what's available."

Levy is a member of Visit Orlando's customer advisory board, and the news video was one of the suggested ideas at a recent annual meeting. It's just one way the city's marketing organization is increasing its services to planners. A full-time destination marketing professional focused on attendance-building initiatives was recently brought on staff, as well as two additional site inspection professionals.

"We've added a creative services department for meetings and conventions," Sain says. "We now have people that are dedicated to helping customers of ours who want to grow their brand or their show's attendance. And that's somewhat unique to CVBs.

"The (Medical City) campus will be a huge complement to Orlando, not just as a destination, but a huge business component to the health care industry."



Karen Malone
Vice President, Meetings
Healthcare Information and
Management Systems Society
Chicago, IL



Photos courtesy of Oscar Enrig Photography for HIMSS

The Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society's 2011 annual conference in Orlando included a visit to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Orlando (inset).



Nancy Bock
V.P., Consumer Education and Meetings
American Cleaning Institute
Washington, DC

“Our partnership with Grande Lakes provided us with a seamless transition. Their service level is I think beyond the commitment that many properties make. And we really gave due diligence to being certain that when we left a property after 37 years, the new property would deliver.”

CVBs traditionally have been about dates, rates and space. We are a marketing company, but now we’re becoming more of a marketing company to our customers. These are things the show managers are really looking for. They’ll say, ‘We want to grow our international attendance by 10 percent. How can your international offices help us do that?’” In the future, Visit Orlando plans to offer international marketing expertise specific to different countries, Sain notes.

TOP HOTELS AND TESTIMONIALS

Visit Orlando’s site inspection experts are an excellent resource for navigating Orlando’s great range of hotels. Whether a delegate wants to pay \$80 a room or \$300 a room, whether she wants a property accessible to theme parks or more secluded, and so on, Orlando can offer an association the right hotel to contract with. For example, the 1,094-room Doubletree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld, formerly the Doubletree Resort Orlando

— International Drive, has recently completed a \$35 million renovation. It offers 60,000 sf of meeting space and an ideal vantage point for both Universal and Disney theme parks.

Featuring outstanding golf is the 720-room Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate, housing 70,000 sf of function space. The Omni is the world headquarters for the David Leadbetter Golf Academy. Another fine golf property is the 540-room Reunion Resort. With 50,000 sf of function space, Reunion is home to three championship golf courses and the Annika Academy.

And new lodging options are regularly available. For example, the 400-room Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek is scheduled to open in October. Offering 20,000 sf of meeting space, the property is located in Wyndham’s Bonnet Creek time-share resort, next to Walt Disney World Resort. The Wyndham Grand joins the 1,000-room Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek (122,000 sf of meeting space) and the 497-room Waldorf Astoria Orlando (28,000 sf of meeting space). Several lower-tier properties are also debuting, including the recently opened 216-room Holiday Inn Resort — The Castle, a 236-room Drury Inn & Suites scheduled for spring 2012, and a redeveloped 489-room Sheraton Safari Hotel and Suites, with completion anticipated by spring 2012.

After its expansion, The Peabody Orlando offers 1,641 guest rooms and more than 300,000 sf of meeting space. Last fall it opened the 6,000-sf Rocks, an upscale lounge overlooking International Drive. Just off International Drive on Destination Parkway is the 1,400-room Hilton Orlando, with more than 175,000 sf of function space.

NAFEM, which held its trade show in the city this year, found the hotels ideal for its two ancillary events: a kickoff reception the night before the show opened at the Hilton and then a black-tie gala event on one of the nights at The Peabody. “We always were impressed with The Peabody but now it’s at a new level. The gala was executed brilliantly,” says Levy. “Huey Lewis & the News performed and we had a surf-and-turf meal. Our kickoff event in 2009 we held at Epcot World Showplace, which is a wonderful space that you can transform however you want. But we received feedback that although the reception was well done, our attendees prefer not to take a 20-minute bus ride to the event. The networking is what’s most important, and getting there quickly. So we did it at the Hilton, and they

liked the ambience of a reception without any added special entertainment.”

NAFEM contracted with 21 hotels for its citywide convention, which brought in about 20,000 participants. The largest room blocks were at The Peabody and the Hilton, as well as the Rosen Centre, whose 316-foot covered skywalk to the OCCC’s West Building is now open. The 1,334-room hotel offers 106,000 sf of meeting and event space and 33 meeting rooms, and has also recently debuted 98Forty Tapas & Tequila Bar in its Grande Lobby. The 150-seat restaurant is available for private events. Meanwhile, the 1,500-room Rosen Shingle Creek Resort has opened Banrai Sushi and Tobias Flats & Watering Hole. The hotel features 445,000 sf of meeting space, and is also complemented by the 800-room Rosen Plaza Hotel with 60,000 sf of meeting space.

AN ORLANDO FIRST-TIMER

While NAFEM’s first show in Orlando goes back to 2001, Washington, DC-based American Cleaning Institute (ACI) first held its annual convention in the city last year — after a remarkable 37 years of meeting in Boca Raton, FL. “Which I think demonstrates that in the world of meetings, change is definitely not easy,” says Nancy Bock, ACI’s vice president, meetings. The circumstance around the move “was like a perfect storm. Our industry’s undergone a significant amount of change over the years. We also changed our name (from the Soap and Detergent Association), so the move to a new location was just in synergy with a new name for our organization, a new brand, a new tagline (For Better Living),” she explains.

The success of ACI’s 2010 meeting, held at Grande Lakes Orlando, prompted a return to the site for this year’s convention. Grande Lakes comprises the 582-room Ritz-Carlton Orlando, with more than 47,000 sf of meeting space, and the 1,000-room JW Marriott Orlando, featuring more than 100,000 sf of meeting space. On hand is The Ritz-Carlton Golf Club, with an 18-hole par-72 Greg Norman Signature Golf Course, and The Ritz-Carlton Spa, featuring 40 treatment rooms, a lap pool and fitness center. The ACI hosted a charity event on the golf course “and the fitness center and tennis courts were very much used by our members,” Bock notes. “We’re all trying to be a little more health conscious.”

The event brought in about 800 attendees and used much of the Grande Lakes’ meeting space and suites for breakouts. “We’re not a huge meeting, but

we’re a very different type of meeting, Bock says. “Unique to us is the amount of small meeting space we need. We don’t require lots of large general sessions; it’s all about B-to-B meetings and B-to-B networking. These business leaders are setting up meetings from very early in the morning to very late at night, so it is a constant revolving door of meetings. And if we don’t have that down from an efficiency and service standpoint, we’re dead in the water. Our partnership with Grande Lakes provided us with a seamless transition. Their service level is I think beyond the commitment that many properties make. And we really gave due diligence to being certain that when we left a property after 37 years, the new property would deliver.” The result was increased attendance in 2011 over 2010, and in 2010 over the previous meeting in the old location. “With the economy, travel restrictions, oil prices, all the things that are going on in the world, I’m really proud to be able to say that the last two years we’ve seen an increase in registration,” Bock notes.

For many years, she explains, the ACI had perceived Orlando as more about recreation than business meetings. “And that is nothing against amusement parks, but we all have brands, and the brand of Orlando years ago was amusement parks, bring your kids. That shaded us a bit from the treasure that Orlando has today” for conventions like ACI’s.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY APPEAL

Part of that treasure is resorts that capably host business meetings while being in the midst of recreational offerings, such as Disney’s convention resorts. Washington, DC-based American Financial Services Association (AFSA) has been meeting at the 1,217-room Disney Yacht & Beach Club Resorts,

The convention center’s “individual meeting rooms are larger than some other centers, so we can accommodate more people. ...The staff is very knowledgeable...and the services department works well with our designated vendor partners.”



Linda M. Still, CMP
Director, Meetings and Exhibits
American Association for Cancer
Research
Philadelphia, PA



Photo by Amber LaValle for Convention-Photography.com



Tom Morano
V.P. Meetings and Conferences
American Financial Services Association
Washington, DC

Orlando is “definitely one of the easier places to negotiate. And we’re usually there during high season. We’ve done some great contracts, and then by the time we’re there I’m amazed at how good our rate was given the number of transients that come in.”

which share 73,000 sf of meeting space. “We do two programs that regularly rotate to Orlando,” says Tom Morano, vice president, meetings and conferences with the AFSA. “One is in conjunction with the NADA (National Automobile Dealers Association) annual meeting, and the other is our independent section of finance companies. They’re owner/operators, and they go to a resort every year. Since they’re family-run businesses, they often bring their children.” The Disney location, then, is a plus for the group. The closing banquet features entertainment, the last one graced by Mickey and Minnie dressed to match a pirates theme.

The AFSA has also staged a board meeting for 60 attendees at Epcot’s Seas pavilion, as well as a dessert party on the French Islands to witness the fireworks. Overall, Morano finds Orlando “definitely one of the easier places to negotiate. And we’re usually there during high season. We’ve done some great contracts, and then by the time we’re there I’m amazed at how good our rate was given the number of transients that come in.”

Like the AFSA, the AACR also held a board of directors dinner at Epcot, and found the city’s family entertainment offerings of interest to members at the convention. “Orlando is a great destination to combine education and family fun,” says Still. “This feature aids in the increased attendance for those trying to mix a little pleasure with business. Orlando has grown over the years and added additional large hotels, restaurants and non-Disney activities and venues, which adds to the attraction of coming to Orlando.”

Two new Disney hotel projects are set to be completed next year: the Port Orleans Resort is refurbishing its 3,056 guest rooms, and the Art of Animation Resort is debuting with 1,120 suites and

864 traditional rooms designed around four themes: The Lion King, Cars, Finding Nemo and The Little Mermaid. Through 2013 Disney will be introducing its new waterfront district, Hyperion Wharf, to its Downtown Disney dining and entertainment area. Billed as “a nostalgic yet modern take on an early 20th century port city and amusement pier,” Hyperion Wharf offers delegates diverse eateries that will expand dining availability at Downtown Disney by more than 25 percent.

UNIQUE VENUES

Of course, Orlando is already well stocked in dining and nightlife venues catering to every taste, and new establishments are always coming online. For example, the new Mojo Cajun Bar & Grill on Church Street in downtown Orlando, a New Orleans-themed restaurant and bar, offers an 8,000-sf space for up to 414 delegates, and a private room can be rented for up to 100. In February, One80 Grey Goose Lounge opened on the sixth floor of the Amway Center. The space can be reserved for special events with up to 360 attendees. In March, Touch Orlando, a 3,700-sf nightclub, opened on Church Street. For private events, up to 375 delegates can be accommodated, and special lighting, audio and sound equipment is available. A combination art gallery/lounge in Orlando’s up-and-coming Milk District, Blank Space Gallery & Lounge is now available to rent for events with up to 100 attendees and offers Wi-Fi and projector capabilities.

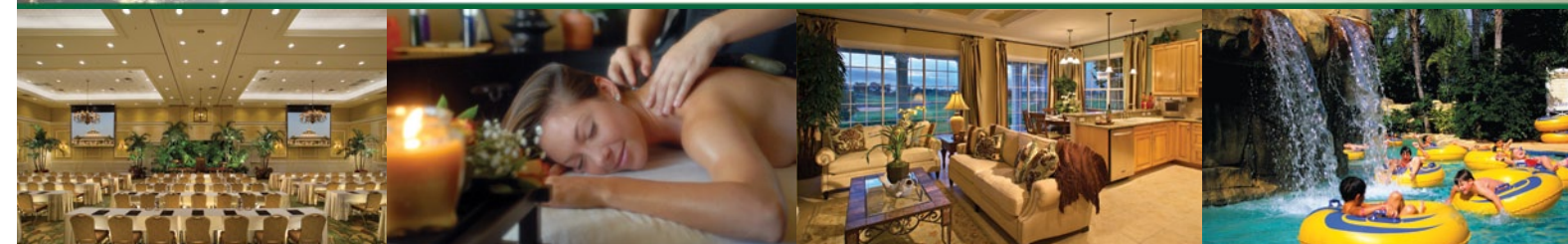
Universal CityWalk, a 30-acre restaurant, shopping and nighttime entertainment complex, is also teeming with venues that planners can reserve for their attendees. In fact, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is scheduled to conclude its five-day World Education Congress in Orlando at CityWalk on July 26. Planners will enjoy Bob Marley—A Tribute To Freedom, Pat O’Brien’s, Latin Quarter, CityWalk’s Rising Star karaoke club and finish off with a dessert reception at Hard Rock Live, a 3,000-capacity concert venue.

The 2,700 or so delegates that MPI will bring to Orlando comprise a relatively small portion of the total number of conventioners expected this year. But once these decision-makers re-familiarize themselves with the city’s meetings infrastructure — including the dynamic venues of CityWalk — they will surely be motivated to bring even more events to Orlando in the future.

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WINDHAM



TORRENCE



PEREZ



MCPHERRIN



ROADARMEL

Christine Madden has returned to the Santa Fe Convention & Visitors Bureau in her former position as director of sales. She was the bureau's East Coast sales representative.

Stephanie Windham, CMP, was promoted to vice president of sales and marketing for Aria Resort & Casino and Vdara Hotel & Spa at CityCenter, Las Vegas, NV. She most recently served as director of sales at Aria.

The New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Ted Pennison** as senior sales manager and **Sharon Sibley** as convention sales manager. Pennison was director of convention sales for the Greater Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau. Sibley was contract management coordinator for Vinson & Elkins LLP. Both previously had worked for NOCVB.

The St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission has named **Jani Torrence** as national convention sales manager. She was corporate sales manager for the Greater St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau, St. Charles, MO.

The Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Ruben Perez** as director of sales. He most recently served as director of

group sales for The Westin City Center Dallas and The Westin Park Central Dallas.

Robert McPherrin was named director of sales and marketing for the Hilton Anatole, Dallas, TX. He was previously assistant executive director at the Grapevine (TX) Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Meet Minneapolis has named **Matt Meunier** as national account executive for conventions and meetings. He was associate director of sports development for the Bloomington (IN) Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Visit Winston-Salem (NC) has named **Timothy Simmons** as national sales manager responsible for the national and regional convention market. With more than 17 years of hospitality and tourism industry experience, he formerly served as southeast regional sales and marketing manager for Grandover Resort in Greensboro, NC.

Tod Roadarmel was named director of sales and marketing for the Omni Nashville Hotel, which is scheduled to open late 2013. He joins the Omni Nashville Hotel from RevSource, a Nashville-based hospitality sales and marketing firm he founded in 2002.

Mark Theis was named director of group sales - North America, for Starwood Hotels & Resorts. Theis, who has more than 20 years of sales experience, most recently served as executive vice president of the Chicago Convention & Tourism Bureau.

The Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL, has named **Rodney Gutierrez, CMP**, and **Kathleen Cotter** as senior sales managers. Gutierrez was meetings and events manager for BCD Travel, Orlando, FL. Cotter was senior sales manager for Walt Disney World Resort's park and event sales.

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