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Meetings and Events Contribute to Economic and Business Growth

Uplifting news about meetings, tourism and travel are making headlines all over the map nowadays. As well they should. All the hard work by industry associations is beginning to pay off. “Meetings mean big business, and we applaud our members for stressing the importance of our industry to key legislators as they develop domestic and international policies,” says Convention Industry Council (CIC) CEO Karen Kotowski, CAE, CMP. The CIC recently recognized the efforts of the U.S. Travel Association and the American Hotel and Lodging Association for bringing international travel and tourism to the national stage. CIC President Steven Hacker congratulated the associations: “As a result of their leadership and the efforts of all CIC members, the meetings industry contributes more to the GDP than the auto manufacturing, air transportation and the motion picture industry, according to the Economic Significance Study released by CIC in 2011,” says Hacker. The study also revealed the total economic output of the meetings and events industry ($904 billion in total U.S. economic impact), impact on employment and labor (6.3 million U.S. jobs) as well as federal and state tax revenue generated ($110 billion combined).

On the global stage, an independent study commissioned by Marriott International and published at the World Economic Forum in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, revealed that “international travel is considered even more important than the Internet, TV/movies, or political diplomacy at stimulating the economy and breaking down cultural barriers.”

International arrivals are expected to reach 1 billion in 2012, according to the UN World Tourism Organization. Now that the administration is finally opening up the doors to international visitors by reforming the visa process, the future looks much brighter for travel and tourism. In fact, U.S. Travel says one American job is created for every 35 international visitors to the U.S. And, according to Meeting Professionals International’s December 2011 Business Barometer, a bi-monthly quantitative perspective of the global business of meetings and events, meeting professionals around the world report a sharp jump up in employment numbers within the meetings industry. Only time will tell if all these predictions are accurate, but the promising headlines of a rosy future are certainly welcome.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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EMI Appoints Washko as V.P. of Sales and Marketing

SANTA BARBARA, CA — Elite Meetings International Inc. (EMI), announced that it appointed John Washko to the new position of vice president, sales and marketing.

Washko, who served for four years as a member of the Elite Meetings Advisory Board, will drive revenue generation by creating sales strategies and initiatives for Elite’s three products — SpeedRFP, Appointment Scheduler. He will also supervise the sales and planner communications teams for Elite, which operates out of California, New York, Florida, Mexico and Spain. Prior to joining Elite, Washko was vice president of sales and marketing at The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, CO. His previous experience included executive sales management positions at Atlanta, Paradise Island, Bahamas, and at PGA National Resort & Spa, Palm Beach Gardens, FL. www.elitemeetings.com

2012 Site International Foundation Leadership Announced

CHICAGO, IL — The Site International Foundation named its International Board of Trustees, effective January 1, 2012. The president for 2012 is Stephen Powell, senior vice president of worldwide sales, InterContinental Hotels Group. According to a statement, Powell’s agenda for 2012 includes releasing the next data set for the Participant Viewpoint study, producing four Site Index studies and beginning collaborative research with like-minded associations, such as supporting the U.K. economic impact study.

Executive committee officers include immediate past president Steve O’Malley, senior vice president, Maxavantage/Manzt Inc.; president-elect, Jane E. Schuldt, CITE, president, World Marketing Group Ltd.; vice president, Madelyn Marusa, DMCP; vice president, industry relations, PRA; Destination Management; vice president finance Penny E. Wing, president, Incentive Travel Inc.; World 5 Inc., The Temperance Works. www.siteglobal.com

OMNI BEDFORD SPRINGS RESORT, BEDFORD SPRINGS, PA. The 2012 Winter Relief Meeting Package, available through March 2012 with rates starting at $159, includes complimentary meeting space, ergonomic chairs and AV; 45-minute cooking demonstration with executive chef; Wi-Fi throughout the resort; valet parking; historical tour of the resort; daily afternoon tea; continuous break service; use of onsite fitness center and indoor pool; and nightly firepit conversation. 886-623-8168, www.omnibedfordspringsresort.com

GREATER ORLANDO, FL — Meeting and group clients at the three onsite hotels at Universal Orlando Resort — Loews Portofino Bay Hotel, Hard Rock Hotel and Loews Royal Pacific Resort — now have golf privileges at Orlando’s Grand Cypress Golf Club and Windermere Country Club. Golf Universal Orlando offers meeting planners the services of a dedicated golf coordinator to plan and oversee their entire golf event. Vince LaRuffa, vice president of resort sales and marketing for Universal Orlando Resort, says, “Planners can leave the work to us and let our team, along with our new partners, create a worry-free golf out- ing or tournament.” Grand Cypress Golf Club features 45 holes of award-winning Jack Nicklaus Signature-designed golf. Windermere Country Club was recently renovated and offers a unique opportunity to be a “Member for a Day” at a world-class golf course. www.universalsoirlando.com/hotels/golf

University Orlando Resort to Offer New Entertainment Experiences

ORLANDO, FL — Starting in February at Universal Orlando Resort, guests will experience a new Blue Man Group show including a pulsating new finale with an original Blue Man Group music score. New elements coming to The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man this spring include 4K digital high-definition animation, new high-tech 3-D glasses and upgrades to the set, audio and lighting systems. Universal’s Superstar Parade — an all-new daily parade that features larger-than-life floats, state-of-the-art technology and street perform- ers — arrives in the spring. With narration by award-winning actor Morgan Freeman, guests will relive memorable moments from Universal Pictures’ most powerful and beloved films during the nighttime show “Universal’s Cinematic Spectacular — 100 Years of Movie Memories.” This summer, families will be transformed into minions for an adventure inside the new Despicable Me Minion Mayhem attraction. Other openings include Hollywood Drive-In Golf, a unique 36-hole miniature golf experience; a new immersive retail entertainment experience; and minutes away from Universal Orlando, the popular Wet ‘n Wild water park will open its first interactive family water play area this summer. www.universalsoirlando.com

Sustainability Reporting Guidance Launched

BEAVERTON, OR — Event organizers can now report on sustainability issues such as impacts on communities, natural environments, and local and global economies, thanks to new guidance published by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). The Green Meeting Industry Council (GMIC) helped to develop the guidance as part of a multi-stakeholder working group and advisory group. The new Event Organizers Sector Supplement (ESSS) covers the complete project life cycle of an event, from bid to planning, execution and, finally, post-event, including the issue of event legacy. GMIC’s President Paul Salinger, who is V.P. of marketing at Oracle, says, “The release of the event organizers sector supplement through the GRI, which is the global standard for corporate sustainability reporting, gives an enormous boost to the credibility, materiality and relevance of sustainability reporting for meetings and events.” www.globalreporting.org.

EVENTS CALENDAR

February 27–28, 2012 IACC-AMERICAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE La Toretta Lake Resort & Spa Montgomery (Houston), TX Contact: 314-993-8575 www.iacconline.org


Proving the Business Value of Meetings

Editor’s Note: The following is the first in a series on Meeting Professionals International’s Business Value of Meetings Toolbox.

Since the onslaught of the AIG effect in 2008, the need to prove the value and necessity of business meetings and events has been paramount for individuals, governments, organizations and corporations — and Meeting Professionals International has continually championed the cause of proving return on investment and return on objectives. Early on, with other affiliated associations, we took a defensive stance to protect our constituents against harsh criticism and empower event professionals to defend their programs and sometimes their careers.

In-depth research among our membership showed that proving the Business Value of Meetings is a topic many of our members struggle with. Through the MPI Foundation, funds were raised to activate the Business Value of Meetings Thought Leadership, which is providing research insights and hands-on business tools that will address different levels of concern and help our community to take the first steps towards introducing measurement practices.

The Toolbox

We’ve realized that while our research, interviews, education sessions and surveys give us a large amount of data, what they don’t give us are the tools we need to actually help our members build successful measurement practices, which will determine the Business Value of their meetings. Hence the launch of phase two of our BVOM initiative — the toolbox. We’re introducing this new set of resources as a toolbox because a toolbox can be continually added to and selected from. For example, while a professional may have strong analytical skills, they may need a tool to help them establish clear event objectives that are aligned to business objectives. So as the tools get added, individuals can sort through, pick and choose what they need — then use them!

The first tools we’ve introduced are truly focused on knowledge management for MPI globally, is responsible for the overall development, design and aggregation of MPI content for use in various delivery channels, to include live events, online learning and others.

Miranda van Brück

is Knowledge Manager, Meeting Professionals International, Dallas, TX. Miranda, who focuses on knowledge management for MPI globally, is responsible for the overall development, design and aggregation of MPI content for use in various delivery channels, to include live events, online learning and others.

We’ve spent three years talking in theory about proving ROI. ...Now we’re able to show people how to do it.

Miranda van Brück

is Knowledge Manager, Meeting Professionals International, Dallas, TX. Miranda, who focuses on knowledge management for MPI globally, is responsible for the overall development, design and aggregation of MPI content for use in various delivery channels, to include live events, online learning and others.
INCENTIVES

Rewards on the Rebound

‘Creative Solutions in a Difficult Environment’

By Mike Bassett

While the dark days of 2008–09 have been left behind, uncertainty about the economy — underlined by continuing high unemployment and acrimonious arguments about the national debt — has the meetings and convention industry just a little bit gun shy when it comes to evaluating the prospects for incentive programs entering 2012.

For example, the Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) pulse survey released in November found an unsettling number of survey respondents — 62 percent — reporting the economy was having a "negative impact" on their incentive planning. Sandi Daniel, president and CEO of the Fire Light Group, an incentive marketing company, and an IRF trustee, says that kind of pessimistic response approaches 2008 levels.

But, Daniel says the apparent pessimism of the survey respondents should be put in perspective. After all, the pulse survey released in the spring of 2011 showed a positive trend concerning incentive programming. "There’s so much uncertainty," Daniel says. "There seems to be something new happening every day, so these negative responses could just reflect the mood of the week."

Positive Trends

Daniel points out that the IRF survey contains some positive news as well. For example, only 28 percent of respondents expect to see a decrease in incentive program travel budgets for the coming year. Twenty-seven percent actually expect to see budgets increase.

So, it’s clear, says Daniel, that there are many companies that continue to understand and appreciate the value of incentives. For example, Kathy Brassil, CMP, manager, meeting services, for the St. Louis, MO-based multinational agricultural company Monsanto, calls their annual incentive in Hawaii a “critical component” of her company’s sales strategy.

The program budget hasn’t changed, and neither has the format — it continues to be a week-long program. "There’s never been any question of eliminating it, even when we have years that haven’t been as profitable," she says. "Our leadership team values it very highly."

Julie Benson, planning/buying director at Minneapolis loyalty management company Aimia, formerly Carlson Marketing, says that while her company has seen neither large increases nor decreases in incentive travel, those incentive trips that are taking place have seen the numbers of participants increase. "Which tells us that it’s obviously very important that these companies continue to reward people by offering incentives," she says.

There is also some evidence that the perception issue is beginning to finally subside. Brad Williams, vice president, meetings and events, for MotivAction, an incentive management company with offices in Minneapolis and Chicago, says companies that in 2009 and 2010 held off holding incentives at properties that “conjured up an image of luxury,” are changing their tunes. "There is much less..."
concern about that now and we are see-
ing more bookings with the traditional luxury chains like Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons,” Williams says.

The meeting component of the in-
centive trip continues to become an
ever more crucial part of the overall
program. Attendees “really appreciate
the face-to-face time they get with se-
nior management on these trips,” says
Daniel. “They like to get together and
network, particularly those people in
companies that are widespread.”

Employee interaction with senior
leadership is “one of the really big parts
of our program,” says Brassil. “We had
10 people from our leadership team (at
the last trip) and 120 of the winning
employees, so the ratio of leaders to
winners was small.” This allows for a lot
of valuable one-on-one interaction be-
tween the company’s leaders and high-
performance employees, Brassil says.

A Challenging Environment
Budget restrictions are having an
impact on incentive programming,
which is making the incentive en-
vironment “challenging,” Benson
says. “We’re trying hard to come
up with some creative solutions in
a difficult environment.”

One result of reduced or stagnant
incentive budgets is shorter trips, adds Benson, an observation sup-
ported by the IRF pulse survey.

According to the survey, 41 per-
cent of respondents anticipate re-
ducing the total number of days
and nights for the accommodations
portion of incentive travel programs
over the next year. Reductions will
be seen in other portions of incen-
tive programs as well:

- Thirty-five percent report that onsite inclusions per
program participant will decrease.
- Thirty-two percent indicate that the number of rooms
for incentive travel programs will be reduced.
- Twenty-two percent say the number of room upgrades will be reduced.
- Forty percent say that sponsored non-meal related components will
be reduced.

Financial uncertainty is also having an
impact on non-travel incentives as well.
Twenty-four percent of IRF survey
respondents said the economic downturn
will have a negative impact on their abil-
ity to plan and implement merchandise
non-cash incentive programs in the com-
ing year — an increase of 10 percent com-
pared to survey results from spring 2011.

At the same time, just 25 percent expect to
see a positive impact, down 7 percent from
spring 2011 survey results.

The irony, Daniel says, is that while
she believes companies actually have the
money to apply to their incentive budgets
— both travel and non-travel — the
uncertainty has them spooked.

“They’re just afraid to spend right
now,” she says.

Incentives and
Employee Morale

Daniel points out that surveys of
employee attitudes indicate how im-
portant the issue of employee engage-
ment has become when it comes to
issues concerning employee morale,
performance and retention.

The new “What’s Working Sur-
vey,” conducted by Mercer Human
Resource Consulting (taken be-
tween the fourth quarter of 2010
and the second quarter of 2011) of
30,000 employees in 17 geographi-
cal markets found a marked decline
in the rate of employee loyalty. For
example, the survey found that in the
U.S. the number of employees consider-
ing a job change rose to 32 percent, up
one percent since a similar survey was
performed in 2005.

Another survey has some equally
disquieting news for employers. This
survey of 562 senior managers and ex-
ecutives, performed by AMA Enterprise
(a division of the American Management
Association), determined that 26 per-
cent of employers are ineffective at re-
taining their high-performing employ-
ees. The same survey found that just 18
percent of employers are very effective
at retaining those same employees.

“So, at the time we have all of this
negative news about the economy, we
have a problem with employees feel-
ning negatively about their jobs,” Daniel
says. “Companies aren’t hiring, employ-
ees are having to do more with less, and
it’s having a negative impact on morale.
At a time some companies said
they had the money to spend on incentives, it’s actually the
time they should be spending money on them.”

It’s reassuring, therefore, says Daniel,
that her company is seeing more interest
developing in the consulting side of the
incentive business.

Companies are being careful about
the way they spend their money, Daniel
says, “and they are going to take a num-
ber of steps before they actually start
spending.” One of those steps, she says,
is determining how they can structure a
better incentive program.

“Companies are actively seeking the
best tools to motivate and engage their
employees,” she says. “They recognize
that investing in your people is never a
bad idea, so they are starting to reach
out to us.”

Staying Close to Home

When companies do travel, they
seem to be staying fairly close to home,
although some of the old tried-and-true,
long-haul destinations such as Europe
remain attractive, while some new de-

corations are developing as well.

According to the IRF pulse sur-
vey, 83 percent of respondents said that
they have selected sites in North
America as destinations for their in-
centive travel programs in the coming
year. Fifty-five percent said they have
chosen Caribbean destinations, while
Europe is the site of an incentive for
52 percent of respondents.

Other areas include Central America,
29 percent; Asia, 18 percent; South
America, 18 percent: Africa, 18 percent;
and the Middle East, five percent. Overall,
16 percent of respondents said that in the
coming year they expect to see a change
from international to domestic destina-
tions in their incentive programs.

“They don’t want the same old incentive
program, but something new to reaw-

 dow the group they’re trying to inspire.”

Brad Williams agrees that many com-
panies are staying close to home, but
suggests that has more to do with bud-
get constraints that are shortening the
length of incentive travel programs. “You can’t
go too far for a three-night trip,” he says.
Williams adds that for those companies

"Attendees) really appreciate the face-to-face
time they get with senior
management on these trips.
They like to get together and
network, particularly
those people in companies
that are widespread.”

SANDI DANIEL, President and CEO
Fire Light Group, NY and WI

The cabanas at Maui’s Grand Wailea Resort provide a serene retreat for top-performing employees experiencing an incentive program in the Hawaiian Islands.

“McKinsey&Company is one of the
best tools to motivate and engage
their employees,” Brassil says.
McKinsey & Company, a leading
consulting firm, has been recognized
for its commitment to employee
morale and engagement. Their
incentive programs have
received numerous awards and
recognition for their effectiveness.

“McKinsey&Company is one of the
best tools to motivate and engage
their employees,” Brassil says.
looking to travel outside North America, "the destination that is generating the most buzz right now is Panama. It’s the new Costa Rica with new resorts (such as the Trump Ocean Club International Hotel and The Westin Playa Bonita), a jungle, great beaches and airlift."

Cruising Is Back

Daniel says her company is also seeing a lot of interest and activity in cruising. "It’s a program with costs you can really motivate employees. According to a study published in The Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management that compared cash and non-cash rewards among 45 insurance agents, travel was the biggest motivator resulting in more sales. In his blog, Brad Nickel, vice president, marketing and product development, of Landry & Kling, the cruise event services company in Coral Gables, FL, says, "With travel incentives, employees have the opportunity to visit destinations or go on trips they may not have necessary chosen on their own due to budgetary concerns. Travel or incentive trips also hold the potential of creating lasting and meaningful memories."

"Cruises are one example of an ideal incentive trip. There are a variety of ships and trips suitable for organizations and companies of all sizes. Interest in cruising is also high in the United States. According to the Cruise Line Industry Association, 36 million Americans indicated that they have an intention to cruise in the next three years," Nickel reported last fall.

Doing Good as a Reward

The inclusion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) components in incentive programs continues to become more established. According to the IFR survey, 44 percent of respondents said they are using CSR "tools and techniques" to enhance their programs. "More and more people are getting into the act," says Lucy Eisele, CITE, principal of Big Lake, MN-based Integrity Incentives. "Planners, hotels, DMCs, convention services companies — they’re all starting to do them."

"The (CSR) event was a huge hit. Not only did the attendees get a chance to rub elbows with the chef, but they made care packages for the shelter as well. So it was a combined event, which I think could become a trend."

*Lucy Eisele, CITE, Principal Integrity Incentives, Big Lake, MN

Eisele says that while she still has clients that do straight incentives without CSR components, "there’s a definite trend towards a general acceptance that attendees are going to expect it" as part of an incentive program.

Even though the presence of CSR components in incentive travel is a relatively recent phenomenon, its role is evolving, Eisele says. For example, the budget cuts in incentive travel programs mean shorter program durations, which means "time is of the essence," Eisele says. "So, now companies are trying to see what they can accomplish in two or three hours, where a few years ago they could give a half day, or even a full day with a lunch break."

"I think that could become the norm," Eisele says. "Which means the end result could become a little diluted, which is a concern."

Eisele says time constraints could help establish another trend: combined events involving a CSR component. Eisele introduced the idea at an event held early in 2011 in Savannah in which attendees spent a day at a cooking school and prepared meals, which, in turn, were delivered to a local charity — in this case, a battered women’s shelter.

"The event was a huge hit," Eisele says. "Not only did the attendees get a chance to rub elbows with the chef, but they made care packages for the shelter as well. So it was a combined event, which I think could become a trend, and it’s something I’m proposing more and more."

*Lucy Eisele, CITE, Principal Integrity Incentives, Big Lake, MN*

*Photo courtesy of Carnival Cruise Lines*
“Small meetings are typically board meetings, training meetings and sales meetings,” he continues. “They have less changing elements than a very large meeting has.” Quartermaine, who has an Internet background, decided to see if there was an opportunity for an online solution that would “take the grunt work out of” planning small meetings.

“In 2009, we launched a test site, which was MeetingsInLondon,” he says. “It was a very, very basic site and the call to action was a form to fill in. We called it ‘the meeting concierge,’ which was then sent to two HelmsBriscoe associates to fulfill. We spent between $20–$30,000 on the test, but we got back $5.7 million worth of leads and closed $1.25 million worth of business. I thought, OK; we’ve got some legs here.”

After an amicable split from HelmsBriscoe, Quartermaine launched MeetingsIn.com, a global online RFP and booking resource that targets the small meetings market. The site includes city guides and planning tools such as a guide to contracts and a glossary of industry terminology. The site utilizes StarCite’s database of 93,000 hotels, and RFPs submitted through the site are powered by StarCite’s small meetings platform. MeetingsIn has developed microsites for 23 destinations in North America, Europe, Asia/Pacific, and Africa, and more cities are continually being added. Quartermaine also plans to enhance the site with rich media, including a video on how to conduct a site inspection for a small meeting.

Quartermaine says that MeetingsIn has proven to be popular with novice planners as well as professionals. He spoke to one executive from a large company who has a team of seven event planners who are very busy planning large events. She says that if one of her district managers wants to bring 10 people in for a meeting in Phnom Penh, for example, she can direct them to MeetingsIn to make the arrangements, yet she can still keep track of their plans. MeetingsIn is available to planners free of charge, and because there are no transaction fees involved, planners can still take advantage of any arrangements they have with their preferred hotels. All they need to do is note that information on their RFPs. Quartermaine explains, “As the buyers and the hotels contract their own commercial terms between themselves, we do not receive any fees or commission for this. We monetize the platform by listing fees from the hotels and suppliers.” He continues, “MeetingsIn is a one-stop source for destination information, planning tools and a free, easy-to-use platform for sourcing their RFPs.”

Anatomy of a Successful Small Meeting

Small meetings can have a significant impact on a company’s future, particularly when the purpose of the meeting is to chart a new course or address major issues the company is facing. Bob Frisch is managing partner of Strategic Offsites Group Inc., a Boston-based company dedicated to designing, managing and facilitating these types of offsite strategy meetings for Fortune 500 to medium-sized companies. Frisch described the advantages of holding strategy meetings offsite. “In this era, first after 9/11 and then after the market crash a couple of years ago, a lot of companies’ offsites started to be held in-house. We really try to discourage our clients from doing so. Even if you’re only going to a hotel around the corner, there’s a tremendous virtue in getting out of the building. Part of that is getting people away from dropping back to their offices during the break and never coming back. Also, as we think about strategy, we’re really trying to get people’s mindsets away from the day-to-day of running the business, and a change in venue really helps get a certain distance and perspective that you really can’t get in your own conference room.

“We are finding more and more clients are starting to go back to the classic offsite destination,” he continues. “It used to be partially as a reward for work that’s well done, but I actually think the meetings are more productive. People have an opportunity to relax. They’re not necessarily trying to end (the meeting) to rush home. They’re going to be staying over at the facility. The conversation tends to continue over recreational activities, cocktails, meals, etc. You really do get people sort of engaged in a multiday conversation that is very, very hard to do when you’re not all traveling together.
“Our business is really the design and facilitation of strategy conversations,” he explains. “One of the reasons people like having an outside facilitator is that it’s always an ‘outside’ party at the flipchart who is helping to manage the conversation. It’s all about the management team getting together to talk about things that they don’t normally talk about day-to-day. You want enough process so that conversation has a beginning, a middle and an end. Most conversations in corporate life have a middle. You sort of jump in, you go around two or three rotations, you jump out and you never really come to any conclusions. We like to have that conversation have a specific targeted outcome.”

Strategic Offsites Group has helped its clients achieve specific outcomes such as developing a three- to five-year vision for the business, clarifying their value proposition, dealing with large vision for the business, clarifying their talk about day-to-day. You want enough process so that conversation has a beginning, a middle and an end. Most conversations in corporate life have a middle. You sort of jump in, you go around two or three rotations, you jump out and you never really come to any conclusions. We like to have that conversation have a specific targeted outcome.”

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hours teambuilding.’ You may get a lot of boxes checked, but nobody is going to look back at that meeting and say it was a really terrific use of our time. ‘One of the interesting things about working in the offsite business is that there’s not really a problem there,’ he adds. ‘Nobody is lying awake at night saying, ‘Gee, my offsites stink.’ But I think there is a general feeling that maybe we’re not getting everything out of these that we should.’

Strategic Offsites starts working with clients anywhere from four to eight weeks before the meeting. ‘Typically, clients have teams starting to focus on it four weeks out, and you start to get the attention of the senior executives two weeks in advance of the meetings,’ Frisch states. Frisch says that one of the things his company often makes is to load on too much pre-reading before a strategy meeting. ‘The management team will be going away for a couple of days and all of a sudden there’s a four-inch binder with articles and book chapters and PowerPoint data.’ He says that ‘90 percent of the reading advanced in advance really has no relevance to the meeting. By going heavier on the pre-reading meeting material instead, he explains, the organization has the advantage of selecting the reading material based on topics that were actually discussed at the meeting.

Success Story: It’s the Little Touches...

After the “what” of the meeting is established, planners look for the perfect “when.” Mai Lam, executive assistant to the CEO of USA Water Polo, Inc., planned a board meeting for 16 attendees last summer. ‘The site the chairman chose was the River Terrace Inn, a 103-room luxury boutique hotel set on the banks of the Napa River in downtown Napa, CA. Its location in the heart of the Napa Valley wine country makes the Inn a perfect setting for group meetings from which to explore the area’s many wineries, shops and galleries. The property, which has 3,000 sf of indoor and outdoor event space including an idyllic riverfront setting, is managed by Noble House Hotels & Resorts. “As we are a non-profit organization, River Terrace Inn worked graciously right in our budget and their customer service was wonderful,” Lam says. The sales manager was “professional and hospitable,” she says. “I felt that I was really in good hands with her. I couldn’t do a site visit, so I had to trust what I saw on the website. She was so reassuring over the phone and made me feel that our group would be well taken care of.”

Mai Lam describes the Inn’s setting. “The lobby/bar/breakfast area was lovely with the whole back wall lined with windows and double door glass entries. There were a couple of patios with fire pits where guests can sit along the river and enjoy their breakfasts. A huge stone fireplace in the lobby offered an other relaxing breakfast area. River Terrace Inn exudes a very warm and homely ambiance.

The Westin Phoenix Downtown is “very modern, cool and hip,” says Mercedes-Benz USA Special Events Manager Hans Lupold. “I loved the meeting space,” she continues. “It felt as if we were in a secluded cabin. The grand fireplace was lit to add warmth. We didn’t feel that we were in a business-like meeting room or boardroom.”

The meeting space for that, the ballroom space, is beautiful,” Lupold says. “It has a kind of a classic, very luxurious feeling, and it’s a really terrific use of our time.”

Success Story: Intimate and Chic

Hans Lupold, special events manager for Mercedes-Benz USA, found his small meeting success at the new 242-room Westin Phoenix Downtown. In July, he bought an incentive program for 85 sales people to the hotel to attend the Major League Baseball All-Star Game at nearby Chase Field.

The executive kicked off with a welcome reception at the hotel. “The meeting space for that, the ballroom space, is beautiful,” Lupold says. “It has a kind of a classic, very luxurious feeling, and it worked out really well. The food was really delicious. They did an amazing job.”

The hotel’s 3,000-sf Copper Ballroom includes an 84-foot expanse of floor-to-ceiling windows, which overlook downtown Phoenix.

The group attended the Home Run Derby on Monday and the All-Star Game on Tuesday. “On both Monday and Tuesday, we offered lunch in a private room (at The Westin), and it had windows, which was really nice. You don’t find that too much. We set it up, and they could come at their leisure,” he explains. “We had Italian food one day and the other time was a Southwest-inspired lunch.” Westin executive chef David Viviano takes an environmentally responsible approach to creating his menus, which also include Westin SuperFoodsRx, items rich in antioxidants and other superfoods.

Lupold described what he liked about the hotel. “It’s very modern, cool and hip like the Westins are now. I liked it a lot. It’s perfect for our brand.” The hotel has the biggest hotel rooms I’ve ever seen in my life.” The hotel’s oversized guest rooms measure 540 sf because of the building was originally designed as an office building, but plans changed with the downturn in the economy.

“People enjoyed the bar downstairs, as well,” he adds. “It was very lively.” Lupold was impressed by the service levels he received, particularly because the property had only been open for three months. “The general manager was always around checking up on us, and the convention and AV staff was wonderful to work with.”

Lupold says that his group loved the hotel. “They also loved the convenience of the hotel being downtown and being able to walk to the stadium and the restaurants. The city has grown so much, so staying at a city hotel was perfectly. I liked that. (The Westin) feels almost like a boutique hotel but with the knowledge and support of a larger hotel. It was very intimate.”

Big Savings On Small Meetings

The “where” of the meeting is course is the “how much,” which may reveal “who” really wants your business. The Boulder Convention & Visitors Bureau has announced that it is making small meetings a big deal. The bureau says that Boulder, which is located 45 minutes from Denver International Airport, is ideal for meetings with 10-300 attendees. The Boulder CVB is offering complimentary services and

Executive assistant to the CEO of USA Water Polo, Inc., Huntington Beach, CA

“I loved the meeting space. ...The grand fireplace was lit to add warmth. We didn’t feel that we were in a business-like meeting room or boardroom.”

The AAA Four Diamond Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs features Western warm and charm, and IACC-certified conference space.

The Westin Phoenix Downtown is “very modern, cool and hip,” says Mercedes-Benz USA Special Events Manager Hans Lupold.
financial incentives for booking group business during its value season from now through April.

The Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau is offering special incentives for meetings actualized by December 31, 2014. Groups with as few as 50 and as many as 200 peak room nights can choose three offers from the bureau’s Southwest Service Package. Ten choices are available, including zero percent attrition, five percent of the master bill donated to the charity of the group’s choice, a day of morning and afternoon breaks and a seminar on how to shop for silver and turquoise.

The intimate boutique property Hotel Granduca, located in the Uptown Park/Galleria district in Houston, has a “Suite Meetings Offer.” Once meetings are booked, groups receive complimentary upgrades to suite accommodations and welcome amenities for all attendees. Meetings must take place by May 31, 2012.

Also in Houston, the Hotel Sorella CityCentre is offering groups of 10 nights or more special rates starting at $139 from June–August 2012.

The Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs, CO, is featuring a small meetings value package for groups of 10 rooms or more that includes a complimentary round of golf; welcome amenities for VIPs; complimentary airport shuttle; master account rebates based on group spend, and more.

The Westin Phoenix Downtown has just unveiled a meeting package geared toward smaller meetings that includes meeting room, meals and AV.

The luxurious and secluded Marina Inn at Grande Dunes in Myrtle Beach, SC, is offering value rates starting at $109 during the month of March.

An unusual and intriguing option for smaller executive groups is being offered for a limited time by the exclusive Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo, FL. A rare pre-war vessel, The Washingtonian has made port at the resort from now through April 30, 2012. One of only 20 pre-war Trumpys in service today, the 1939-era yacht was fully restored in 2010. The Washingtonian accommodates up to 30 passengers for meetings and events, and up to six for exclusive weekend excursions. There is a spacious covered deck dining and shopping options, marina, private airstrip, two championship golf courses, spa and salon, and more.

Measuring Success

Frisch described one sure sign that a small meeting has been a success. “The way that we know that a meeting has impact is that a couple of months later, it has a name. People talk about, ‘Oh, we discussed that at the Cape Cod meeting’ and they’ll refer back to when they were together. ‘Remember at Cape Cod we talked about so and so?’ Well, now that’s starting to happen. Let’s talk about that again.’

“There are occasionally really memorable meetings when people see their time together as some kind of a turning point,” he states. “Those don’t come easily, and they certainly don’t come at the last minute. It usually is because the sponsor or the owner of the meeting really designs the meeting to bring some fresh thinking to the management team.”

For a limited time, small groups can charter this fully restored, 1939-era yacht, currently docked at Ocean Reef Club in Key Largo, FL, for small meetings and events.

“(The Westin) feels almost like a boutique hotel but with the knowledge and support of a larger hotel. It was very intimate.”

It’s no secret that the Ocean Reef Club is an extraordinary place. But, you may not be aware of all the changes and upgrades in recent years. If you have not visited recently then you have not seen what over 150 meeting planners experienced last year with their program:

- Renovated rooms with ocean and water views
- 36 holes of tournament quality golf with new greens and bunkers
- Updated and upgraded outlets for dining and private events
- Renovated meeting rooms with state of the art electronics
- 30,000 sq. ft. of indoor meeting space and on-site AV
- New seawalls and strolling docks in the shopping village
- Two new pools overlooking the Atlantic Ocean

Because we are a private club, our meeting experiences are personalized, intimate and uniquely yours.

Register today at www.meetings.oceanreef.com. Not only will you receive our entertaining and informative newsletter, if you also provide us with an RFP we will send you our new 80-page coffee table book flavors of the Reef featuring the favorite recipes of our master chefs!
The décor at the Montelucia Resort & Spa, including this grand boardroom, is inspired by the Andalusia region of Spain.

Where Service Shines Like the Sun

By Karen Brost

At the end of her sales meeting at Loews Ventana Canyon Resort in Tucson, Anne Taylor, senior vice president of sales for Vishay Americas, noticed that something was missing. “There was not one negative comment,” she states. “When you bring a group of 250 people, they will find something to criticize and complain about. That’s human nature. But people actually went out of their way to write me letters and tell me what a great event it was.” That was unprecedented.

Taylor had checked out Tucson as a potential meetings destination on the advice of a colleague. “I travel all over the world, and then there was the quality of the property. It was built in the 1950s, so it had to be easy enough for them to come in from the East Coast, so it had to be easy enough for them to come in from the east. The airport there (Tucson International Airport) is a modern airport, but it’s small enough to get in and out very quickly.”

Her 600-attendee group met at the 575-room JW Marriott Tucson Starr Pass Resort & Spa, which offers 88,000 sf of meeting space, the Starr Pass Country Club and Hashani Spa, along with spectacular views of the surrounding cactus-studded landscape.

Paul stated that his company has been happy with Marriott-branded properties in the past, and the Marriott Starr Pass was turned out to be a great choice. “Going into the meeting, we felt like it fits us like a glove. It had the right amount of meeting space between the two main ballrooms for our trade show, general session and larger events like a keynote lunch. We knew we were going to have the lion’s share of the property, so we knew we were going to compete with multiple groups being in-house at one time. And then there was the quality of the property. It was built in 2005, so it had the neatness to it.”

For their downtime, Vishay’s attendees had a full menu of recreational activities to choose from. Options included a golf tournament, road bike ride, trap and skeet shooting, a desert jeep excursion and tours of the Sonoran Desert Museum and the San Xavier del Bac Mission. “I think we had seven or eight activities going on at one time. They seemed to enjoy that,” he adds.

Paul lauded the resort staff’s dedication to making sure that guests were made to feel welcome. “Somebody doesn’t just walk down the hall and say ‘hello,’” he explains. “They look at your name badge. The level of service and personal attention that all of the staff gave was overwhelming. It was a culture there. It wasn’t just one or two people that you run into that do that great job. We’ve had great experiences at a lot of different properties, and these guys stood right up with the best of them. The level of service and attention to detail were fantastic.”

More Tucson news: Tucson’s newest hotel, the 215-room Casino Del Sol Hotel, Spa and Conference Center, made its debut in November. The $100 million property can accommodate up to 3,000 guests. The new hotel is located on the Pascua Yaqui Reservation southwest of downtown Tucson. The 428-room Hilton El Conquistador Golf & Tennis
range just minutes from Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, the resort features 48,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space, including a recently updated Palacio event venue, a free-standing, 6,362 sf space with multiple levels. The resort’s Hole-in-the-Wall River Ranch is a water park with four acres of pools and waterfalls, and a lazy river. Golf is available just minutes away at the Lookout Mountain Golf Club.

Success in Scottsdale
Joshua Rice, account manager for the third-party planning firm Creative Group Inc., recently brought a pharmaceutical group with 180 attendees to the luxurious Montelucia Resort & Spa in Scottsdale. “They just love the hotel,” he says. “It’s their Phoenix (area) hot spot. It’s always on their short list.”

With an elegant design inspired by the Andalusia region of Spain, the Montelucia is filled with courtyards, arched walkways and fountains. It features 293 rooms, 27,000 sf of meeting and event space, and Joya, a 30,000 sf Moroccan-themed spa.

“We did an opening welcome reception at the pool, which has an amazing landscape,” Rice explains. “You don’t need to put much décor there with Camelback Mountain in the background. We had a lot of space heaters because it was November, but the attendees didn’t mind because the whole pool area has a great vibe to it.”

Rice appreciated the staff’s flexibility. When it was determined that the resort’s Alhambra ballroom was too big for the group, they got creative with air walls and made it work. “They’re fully flexible. They have no problem gutting rooms to make them breakouts. They want to make it work and be a true partner, which is great.”

Joshua Rice, Account Manager Creative Group Inc., Buffalo Grove, IL

He said that the Montelucia is his personal favorite hotel in the Phoenix/Scottsdale area. “The rooms are big. The bathrooms are spacious. Every room has a couch, so if you’re a business traveler, you can sit on the couch and work or you can sit at the desk or sit on your bed. The rooms are spacious enough to allow all that.”

Rice did a dine-around event for his group that had a team-building element to it to encourage attendees to meet new people. “Everyone was given a puzzle piece, and you had to find your group to build your puzzle to find out where you were going (to dinner),” he explains. The company hosted a cocktail reception at the resort before loading the group on buses to head to six different restaurants. “It was great,” he adds.

On the final day of the program, the West Coast attendees traveled home while the East Coast travelers stayed overnight and departed in the morning. “The hotel had a grab-and-go hot breakfast ready for them on the front drive,” Rice notes. Also located in Scottsdale, on the north slope of Camelback Mountain, Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain Resort & Spa offers 105 private casita accommodations and seven private mountainside homes. The resort’s premier event space is aptly named The Views, because the 3,500 sf venue contains floor-to-ceiling windows and a wraparound terrace that deliver stunning mountain and sunset views.

Sanctuary is offering two new options for fun teambuilding events. One is a cooking competition judged by the resort’s executive chef, Beau MacMillan, who also happens to be a “Food Network” star. The other is “Mixology 101,” an interactive cocktail mixing experience at the resort’s Jade Bar where guests learn tips, techniques and take a shot at cocktail culture, then pick up some recipe cards to take home.

In other Scottsdale news, Joie de Vivre Hotels recently opened The Saguaros, the company’s first property outside of California. Long-time planners might recall the property’s earlier “lives” as the Hotel Theodore, the Mondrian and the James Hotel. The 194-room hotel, located in Old Town Scottsdale, contains 10,000 sf of meeting space and a signature restaurant, District, which showcases the street foods of Mexico City.
The hotel’s designer has chosen a vivid color palette of pink, green, orange and yellow to mimic the wildflowers found in Scottsdale’s desert landscape.

The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess has broken ground on a new $20 million conference center, which is expected to open in October 2012. The 52,331-sf space will include the new 23,000-sf Palomino Ballroom, which will have walls that open to the outdoors. The new addition will bring the resort’s total meeting space to 150,000 sf, making it the largest meetings resort in Fairmont’s portfolio worldwide.

The Scottsdale Resort & Conference Center, which is managed by Benchmark Hospitality, recently partnered with the nonprofit organization Clean the World to donate bars of soap and 2,500 bottled amenities such as body lotion, shampoos and conditioners to the organization. Clean the World then sanitizes the products and distributes them to help prevent the spread of disease in developing countries and homeless shelters. In the first month of the program, the resort donated approximately 3,000 bars of soap and 2,500 bottled amenities to shelters.

The AAA Four Diamond, 497-room Talking Stick Resort offers 13,000 sf of indoor space and an additional 20,000 sf of outdoor function areas.

Sedona, one of the most photographed destinations in the world, is just a two-hour drive north of Phoenix. It is also home to Enchantment Resort, a luxury property surrounded by the spectacular red rock beauty of Boynton Canyon.

Enchantment, which also includes the award-winning destination spa Mi Amo, recently completed phase two of a renovation project that included the refurbishing of all 218 guest rooms. The redesign, inspired by Native American traditions, includes onyx vanity tops, custom lamps with hammered metal finishes, headboard designs with the sun symbol of the Yavapai Nation and Native American patterned tapestries. New electronics, including 42-inch HDTVs, custom desk lamps with charging capabilities and Bose iPod docking stations, have also been added. The project follows on the heels of the resort’s $4 million expansion of its Meeting Village, which offers 13,000 sf of indoor space and an additional 20,000 sf of outdoor function areas.

The high service standards many groups have experienced at Arizona’s hotels and resorts make the attendees’ experiences more enjoyable and the planners’ lives easier. So it’s only natural to want to return. That’s what Rice and his client have found with their experiences at Montelucia.

Jake Leinenkugel, President, Jacob Leinenkugel Brewing Co.

“We love the hotel. We’re trying to make it work next year to go back there.”
What's New

IN

New York

AND

New Jersey

By Derek Reveron

Imagine that you and your client are on a whirlwind site visit to New York City, attempting to squeeze four hotel site visits into a one-day visit. A four-day product introduction and business strategy meeting for 225 pharmaceutical company executives, sales people and researchers from the United States and abroad is on the drawing board. You seek a high rate they paid for the meeting. We were also able to use the ballroom another day if we needed it, but we didn’t. Also, the concierge helped me get 75 Broadway theater tickets within an hour. What began as a horrible day turned out to be a great evening,” says Strauss. “I was thrilled with the service from start to finish and would definitely return,” she adds.

With more than 23,500 sf of flexible function space, the 770-room Crowne Plaza Times Square features the Crowne Meeting Success Program. Planners start with a sales manager who understands their industry and can provide a two-hour response guarantee. Then, after a meeting is booked, the planner partners with a Crowne Meeting Director — a trained, certified meeting professional who helps with every detail. The hotel features two ballrooms and 25 function rooms.

New York, New York

A variety of meeting hotels is available throughout New York City. About 40 percent of New York City’s 2011 hotel openings were in the boroughs of Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens and Staten Island, according to NYC & Company. However, Manhattan is home to many of the city’s most popular hotels, including the following:

The Sheraton New York Hotel & Towers is working on phase two of its $150 million renovation, launched in December 2011. Phase two includes additional guest room renovations and is scheduled for completion in April 2012. During the first phase, Sheraton began expanding and renovating its 1,080 guest rooms and suites. The redesigned rooms received a fresh look and colors, new graphic patterns, low credenzas and wall-

staged many meetings in New York City. She is accustomed to receiving superlative service during site visits and meetings. However, in this instance, the Crowne Plaza Times Square blew away the competition by providing an unmatched level of service and attention to detail, says Strauss.

Strauss and her pharmaceutical company client were amazed at the level of preparation the hotel undertook for the site visit. Strauss explains, “They had set up meeting rooms the way they would look the day of meeting. The conference room was arranged to the last detail with the stage, tables, piping, drapes, chairs and tables. The AV equipment we would use was set up. They had a breakout room set up with a conference table and 12 hairs, which is exactly what I needed. Hotels hardly do that. They even did their homework on what I and my customer like for drinks and snacks. When we ended the site visit and went to the concierge lounge, everything they had was what we liked,” says Strauss.

She had found her hotel. “The fact that they were so ready for my group made a huge difference. That’s what closed the deal for me. The way they showed the property was perfect. They wanted the business, and they showed it. If they did their homework for a site inspection, I could only imagine what they would do for my group,” says Strauss.

She imagined correctly. As the meeting drew to a close, heavy snow fell in New York City. About half of the group was stranded. “The hotel extended everybody’s stay for the same rate they paid for the meeting. We were also able to use the ballroom another day if we needed it, but we didn’t. Also, the concierge helped me get 75 Broadway theater tickets within an hour. What began as a horrible day turned out to be a great evening,” says Strauss. “I was thrilled with the service from start to finish and would definitely return,” she adds.

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The hotel offers 101,450 sf of space, selected the Waldorf=Astoria for a three-year renovation to match specific themes. The makeover also includes the lobby and two restaurants and lounges. The hotel offers 101,450 sf of meeting space. Completed in 1924 and known as the Grand Dame of Madison Avenue, the Roosevelt Hotel is undergoing a multi-million dollar redesign and upgrade scheduled for completion in February 2012. The project includes the Madison Club Lounge and the hotels 1,015 guest rooms and suites, which will be refitted with a modern and art deco look. Two ballrooms and 23 function rooms provide a total of 30,000 sf of meeting space.

Another hotel, the Grand Hyatt New York, has completed its $130 million renovation. The face-lift includes 1,306 redecorated guest rooms and suites, the Empire Ballroom and the addition of the Gallery on Lex, a new 4,400-sf social event area. The renovation also encompassed the New York Central restaurant as well as the lobby and mezzanine. About 60,000 sf of meeting space was added.

The 217-room W New York Downtown hotel has launched, green initiatives that include energy use and water conservation, recycling, organic waste composting and sustainable food and beverage options. The hotel offers four meeting spaces, the largest of which is 1,320 sf. New York City offers many hotels with stately old-world architecture, elegant old-world decor and a black ceiling that can be transformed to match specific themes. The makeover also includes the lobby and two restaurants and lounges. The hotel offers 101,450 sf of meeting space.

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The New York Marriott Marquis is scheduled to complete the renovation of its 1,043 guest rooms and suites in spring 2012. The hotel, which boasts 29,025 sf of space, received more than 55,000 sf of meeting space with 43 meeting rooms.

Another historic venue Gotham Hall is one of New York’s busiest live music venues, offering 5,000 sf of space and 3,400 sf of meeting space.

The Waldorf=Astoria, which offers 1,416 guest rooms and 10,204 sf of meeting space, is one of the largest hotels in New York City.

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The Quarter, the hotel’s indoor mall. The Quarter includes Virginia and New Jersey. Jan Bryan, regional administrative leader, Johnson Controls, planned the meeting and plans more than 10 others annually with the number of attendees ranging from 20 to about 100 people. “It’s about the third or fourth time we have used the Tropicana for meetings. It offers a combination of good room rates combined with a fairly easy-to-get-to location from across our region. There is gaming for those who choose it, it has many venues for eating, and it’s close to other places,” says Bryan.

The meeting included a boardroom function, awards dinner and group meetings. “The awards dinner we have each year is always well received, with the food always being excellent and the bar set up and well run. There are always needs that come up that you can’t anticipate. So what’s most important to me is the responsiveness of the people you’re working with, from the salesperson to the people who handle rooms, food and business items,” adds Bryan.

The Tropicana’s staff was Johnny-on-the-spot when needed. She cites an example: “We had more people than we had anticipated for one meeting. When we got to the room and everybody started filing in, we realized it wasn’t big enough. We told the hotel that we had to immediately change the configuration. People just jumped in and helped us do what we needed to do,” says Bryan. “The reaction and feedback have been positive around the meeting as well as the location,” she adds.

In December 2011, Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa announced a $1 million renovation of its poker room and the debut of a high-limit poker lounge called The Boardroom. The hotel is currently undergoing a $50 million renovation to refurbish 2,000 guest rooms, residences and hotel corridors by spring 2012.

The hotel offers 70,000 sf of event space, 161,000 sf of gaming space and a 54,000 sf spa. A sister property, the cosmopolitan Water Club at Borgata, has 800 rooms, a 36,000 sf spa and 18,000 sf of meeting space.

The Borgata is known for its culinary talent. Recently, the Water Club’s Culinary Lifestyle Consultant Geoffrey Zakarian, was crowned Iron Chef on the Fourth Season finale of Food Network’s “The Next Iron Chef: Super Chefs.” Zakarian, the third chef/partner from Borgata to be named Iron Chef, joins Bobby Flay (Bobby Flay Steak) and Wolfgang Puck (Wolfgang Puck American Grille) in the esteemed ranking.

In addition, other Borgata world-renowned chefs under one roof include Michael Mina (Seablue, A Michael Mina Restaurant), Michael Schulson (IZAKAYA – A Modern Japanese Pub), Stephen Kalt (Fornelletto Cucina & Wine Bar), and restaurateurs Greg & Marc Sherry (Old Homestead Steak House). Borgata also offers an impressive wine collection of more than 40,000 vintages.

Caesars Atlantic City, one of 38 Caesars Entertainment properties, offers more than 1,100 guest rooms and suites, and 30,000 sf of meeting space, which includes 14 meeting rooms, the largest offering 17,135 sf of space. Caesars is also home to 125,000 sf of gaming space, the 1,500-sf Maximus Theater and the Pier Shops at Caesars.

Attendees who drive to Atlantic City will have more parking options later this year. The Casino Reinvestment Development Authority is building a new $38.4 million parking garage. The facility will include 1,182 parking spaces, 16,170 sf of retail space and a 50,000 sf rooftop solar panel. The garage will be located near the Atlantic City Convention Center.

Atlantic City offers many one-of-a-kind venues that typically are located within a relatively short distance of the city’s resorts. Boardwalk Hall, located at the center of the world-famous Boardwalk, is a renovated arena that hosts a variety of events and meetings. The largest of the facility’s six meeting spaces is 23,100 sf. The Atlantic City Aquarium provides more than 100 marine-life exhibits on three floors. Groups can meet in the Harborview Room, which accommodates up to 100 people. Atlantic City is also home to the historic Absecon Lighthouse, the third tallest such structure in the U.S. Built in 1857, the top of the lighthouse offers mesmerizing views of Atlantic City. Absecon’s museum, formerly the Keeper’s House, showcases memorabilia from the 1800s. Groups can reserve the lighthouse and grounds for private meetings and events.

Many of Atlantic City’s major attractions are located on or near the Boardwalk. The Steel Pier offers 25 rides and attractions, Ferris wheel, Wet Boats, Mini Rackets and hovercraft rides. The Steel Pier also provides fun teambuilding events for corporate groups. Ripley’s Believe It or Not museum features bizarre and fascinating interactive exhibits, artifacts and curiosities. Exhibits range from a shrunken head to the world’s smallest production car. Ripley’s is available for private corporate functions. Located on historic Garden Pier, the Atlantic City Art Museum originally opened in 1908. The museum features sculptures, paintings and photos by U.S. artists.

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Michael Mancke was named director of sales and marketing at Plantation on Crystal River, Crystal River, FL. He formerly was director of Florida sales for the Miles Media Group in Sarasota, FL.

The Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau has named Jay Marsh as regional director of sales. He previously served as the DCVB’s director of national accounts in the Washington, DC, regional office.

Michael Masterson was named director of sales and marketing for Starwood Hotels & Resorts Hawaii, which is comprised of three resorts: The Westin Kaanapali Ocean Resort Villas, The Westin Maui Resort & Spa, and Sheraton Kauai Resort & Spa. Masterson, who has more than 20 years of experience in hotel sales and marketing, most recently served as director of sales and marketing for The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua.

Chateau on the Lake, Branson, MO, has named David Hume as executive director of sales and marketing for La Quinta Resort & Club and PGA West, La Quinta, CA. With more than 20 years of sales and marketing experience, formerly served as director of sales and marketing for The Westin Maui Resort & Spa and The Westin Kaanapali Ocean Resort Villas.

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin, Lake Buena Vista, FL, has named Angel M. Faire as national sales manager for the Midwest region, responsible for corporate groups. She previously served as senior sales manager for the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort, Lake Buena Vista, FL.

The Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate in Orlando, FL, has named Jeanne Spellouding as director of sales and marketing. She formerly served as senior vice president, resort sales and marketing, Noble Investment Group, Atlanta, GA.

Trapp Family Lodge, Stowe, VT, has named Paul Richer as director of sales and marketing. He formerly served as director of sales and marketing at Basin Harbor Club, Vergennes, VT.

The Santa Fe Convention & Visitors Bureau, Santa Fe, NM, has named Debra Stottlemeyer as sales manager. She most recently served as director of sales at Hotel Andaluza in Albuquerque, NM.

Paige Cabacungan was named director of sales and marketing for The St. Regis Princeville Resort, Kauai, HI. Cabacungan, who brings more than 22 years of hospitality sales and marketing experience, formerly served as director of sales and marketing for The Westin Maui Resort & Spa and The Westin Kaanapali Ocean Resort Villas.

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