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Getting Golf Events Right

Winning Advice From Meeting and Golf Pros
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The Conference Center Cure

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One Size Doesn't Fit All

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Photo courtesy of Kiawah Island Golf Resort

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Lorraine Struck has directed the annual Chubb
Charity Challenge golf tournament for 13 years.
Background: Kiawah's Turtle Point course.

Photo by Scott Janelle



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INSURANCE & FINANCIAL MEETINGS MANAGEMENT

THE EXECUTIVE SOURCE FOR PLANNING MEETINGS & INCENTIVES

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The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort in Naples, FL, hosted last year's Chubb Charity Challenge.

On The Cover: Lorraine Struck, corporate event planning manager for Chubb Group of Insurance Companies has been the steady hand behind the annual Chubb Charity Challenge golf tournament for 13 years. Kiawah Island Golf Resort (Turtle Point course shown) will repeat as host to the national tournament in 2014.

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The Garden of the Gods swimming and lounging oasis at Caesars Palace.

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Publisher's Message

Winning Advice

Lorraine Struck, corporate event planning manager for Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, is just one of the meeting planning professionals who dispenses winning advice to our readers in this issue. Struck, who also graces our cover, has for the past 13 years directed the annual Chubb Charity Challenge golf tournament, which has raised nearly \$10 million for charities across the U.S.

A non-golfer, Struck was advised early on to hire an outside golf management team to handle the logistics of the tourney. With her “golf go-to guys” running the golf-related logistics of the tournament, Struck devotes her attention to the rest of the event. Communication also is a key element, says Struck, and thus she maintains a comprehensive website for her Chubb people so they can obtain advice and information about the golf tournament at all times.

As golf is an ideal environment for networking and entertaining clients, the winning advice from the golf pros dispensed in “Getting Golf Events Right” on page 44 also will be invaluable as you plan your own programs in the coming months.

As the weather cools in the Northern states, many attendees soon will be making their way to Florida for warm sunshine, sparkling beaches, golf and more golf. Scott Coble, executive vice president and North Florida regional president, Wells Fargo, Jacksonville, FL, says, “Everybody likes to come to a Florida meeting in January or February. The benefit you get as a planner is an engagement boost, based on nice weather and the fact that people like coming to Florida from colder climates during the cold months of the year. And because of that, we often have people who pay a little extra out of their own pocket to extend their time in Florida.” For more winning advice on meeting in Florida, see page 50 for how the Sunshine State exceeds expectations every time.

And if Las Vegas is on your to-consider list, turn to page 58 to discover the most recent news and why insurance and financial companies are returning in droves to the Entertainment Capital of the World now that perception issues have cooled down. Word is that space for 2013 dates is going very fast.

What's more, remember to peruse the winning advice in the profiles of the many 2012 World Class Award winners beginning on page 24.

Harvey Grotsky

Harvey Grotsky

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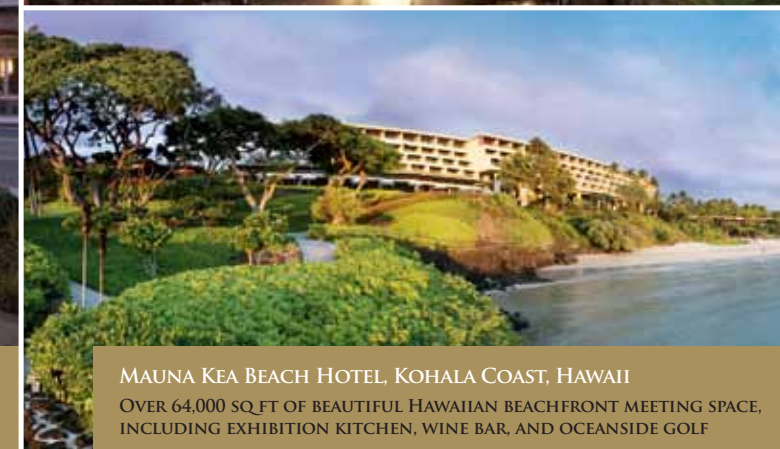
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Las Vegas Hard Rock Ready to Roll Out Makeover



LAS VEGAS, NV — The Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, which opened in Las Vegas in 1995, is investing \$20 million to \$30 million on renovations and refurbishments for the property “to keep the rock ‘n’ roll vibe alive and regain its audience’s attention.” The construction projects include changes to the registration desk, Hard Rock Store, Mr. Lucky’s Cafe and the high-limit gaming area. Renovations are scheduled for completion by late September. “The overarching goal of the renovation is to give Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas a much-needed facelift with the addition of brand new restaurants, additional entertainment options and gaming areas,” said Paul Pusateri, COO for the Hard Rock Hotel, adding that the resort “is going through an exciting evolution to attract 25- to 40-year-olds who used to frequent the property.” The new music venue Vinyl, which has a speakeasy atmosphere, is a multifunctional space featuring brick and cinderblock, wood floors and an exposed ceiling. Other new additions include the Culinary Dropout restaurant and Ainsworth, an upscale sports bar and cocktail lounge. www.hardrockhotel.com

Zentila Launches Version 2.0

ORLANDO, FL — *Zentila.com*, the online booking engine for meetings and conventions, announced the launch of its newest version: Zentila 2.0. Zentila was designed to take the current e-RFP process and make it into a complete A-to-Z RFP process, enabling planners and hotels to complete the booking right from within Zentila. Zentila’s 2.0 version expands communication between meeting planners and hotels, enabling them to build relationships and successful negotiations both online and offline. New features include easy-to-navigate interactive mapping for hotel search; a flexible booking window; and choose your favorite hotel and finalize your offer or negotiate with your top two hotels. “I created Zentila because I saw how difficult it’s become for both planners and hotels to book meetings,” said Mike Mason, “CEO” of Zentila. “Since we launched in January, we’ve seen an evolution in how our planner members and hotel sales teams are using the platform. Zentila 2.0 is a direct response to the continuous feedback we’ve received. We are building a technology that will serve as both a real time-saver and also a real relationship driver. In our industry, that’s the Holy Grail.” www.zentila.com



MASON

Millennium UN Plaza to Be Renamed One UN New York

NEW YORK, NY — The 438-room Millennium UN Plaza Hotel, which opened in 1976, will be renamed One UN New York upon the reopening of its upgraded West Tower this month, according to *TravelWeekly.com*. The hotel is spending \$30 million renovating the 154 rooms that take up the 29th through 40th floors of the West Tower. The lobby will be upgraded, a new restaurant and bar will be added next year, and improvements to its East Tower rooms will come later. www.millenniumhotels.com

Seminole Tribe Plans New Hotel in Florida

COCONUT CREEK, FL — The Seminole Tribe of Florida wants to build a 20-story, 1,000-room hotel and entertainment complex next to its casino in Coconut Creek, located in Broward County, FL, according to a report in the *Sun-Sentinel*. The proposed hotel would be more than double the size of the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel in Hollywood and include an expanded casino, shops and restaurants, and a 2,500-seat theater. Spokesman Gary Bitner said there is no timetable for the project, and it may not be built at all. “There are a number of factors that will be involved in any decision to move ahead on some or all of the master plan,” he said. As proposed, the structure would be larger than most other South Florida hotels. A local hotel consultant said that the hotel’s casino, entertainment complex, excellent accessibility from airports and a size sufficient to attract conventions and meetings could make it a successful development.

Oregon Convention Center Hotel Under Consideration

PORTLAND, OR — The Metro Council in Portland, OR, selected a development team and directed staff to begin negotiations to craft a privately owned and operated convention center hotel package for its consideration. A team comprised of Mortenson Development Inc., Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Mortenson Construction, Schlesinger Companies, Ankrom Moisan Associated Architects, Elness Swenson Graham Architects, Piper Jaffray and Co., and Jones Long LaSalle Hotels received unanimous support by an evaluation committee last month as the preferred development team to pursue a hotel adjacent to the Oregon Convention Center with the specific goal of attracting and serving national conventions in Portland. Metro Council president Tom Hughes reiterated the goals of the project: to leverage private hotel development with minimal public investment while maximizing the economic impact across the region of the convention business at the Oregon Convention Center. “Receiving letters in support of this project by hoteliers outside the city center demonstrates that when national conventions are in Portland, business across the region and state benefit,” he said. The Metro hotel project team is expected to return to the council with an update and potential hotel financing package in December. Metro is the regional government that serves 1.4 million people who live in the 25 cities and three counties of the Portland metropolitan area. www.oregonmetro.gov

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Meeting Value Line



Atlantis Paradise Island, Bahamas. Planners are offered added value of up to \$25,000 in the form of complimentary stays in two superior suites: the Royal Towers Bridge Suite Offer (value \$25,000/night) is valid for minimum of 2,000 room nights contracted for 2013 or 2014 by December 31, 2012; offer includes a private reception with customized menu for up to 20 guests; 24-hour butler service. The Coral Towers Penthouse Offer (value \$4,000–\$6,000/night) is valid for minimum of 1,500 room nights contracted for 2013 or 2014 by December 31, 2012; offer includes a private reception with customized menu for up to 20 guests. 954-809-2000, www.atlantis.com.

■ **British Colonial Hilton Nassau, Bahamas.** Hot Dates & Rates for 2013: \$179–\$209, January 1–May 31, 10–40 rooms; \$139–\$159, June 1–August 31, 10–75 rooms; \$129–\$179, September 1–December 21, 10–75 rooms. Planners also can choose up to three of the following incentives based on number of room nights booked: 1/35 comp room; double Hilton Honors Points; coffee/tea break; complimentary meals for up to four staff members; 1,400 Hilton HHonors bonus points per paid group room night. 242-302-9032, www.hiltoncaribbean.com/nassau

■ **The Shores Resort & Spa, Daytona Beach Shores, FL.** The “S’mores bord” offers planners a buffet of up to four of the following options based on number of room nights booked for meetings contracted by September 30, 2012 that actualize before February 20th 2013: Complimentary one-hour S’mores Dessert Reception; complimentary afternoon S’mores Break during

one general session; complimentary S’mores Kit for each guest; complimentary room category upgrade for entire group; complimentary Presidential Suite during the group stay; double STASH Rewards Points; complimentary limo transfers for up to 5 VIPS to Daytona International Airport; complimentary one-hour teambuilding activity at the hotel. 386-322-7243, www.shoresresort.com

■ **Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa, Destin, FL.** Planners booking 2012 meetings can choose up to three of the following perks based on number of rooms: signature drink at check-in; poolside firepit event with hot chocolate, s’mores and live music; 50 percent off meeting space Wi-Fi; one morning’s complimentary continental breakfast for group; 30-minute a.m. and p.m. break; \$500 credit towards a team-building exercise. Planners who book by December 27, 2012 receive a \$150 AMEX gift card. 850-267-9601 www.hiltonsandestinbeach.com

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MPI Releases Annual Business Barometer

DALLAS, TX — Meeting Professionals International (MPI) has released the annual Business Barometer, which provides valuable, cutting-edge industry insights for senior executives, meeting planners and suppliers to plan for the upcoming year. The Annual Business Barometer prepares senior executives to plan 2013 budgets, as well as gives meeting planners a gauge of the industry's 2013 directions, available careers and industry salaries. Additionally, suppliers receive an inside look at what the largest membership of meeting planners will be looking for in the upcoming year. "The big difference between the Annual and Bi-monthly Business Barometer is the annual barometer surveys the entire membership to give a comprehensive look at our industry. MPI's goal is to support our international membership of suppliers and meeting planners and this report will provide every member data and tools to be successful," said Cindy D'Aoust, COO, and interim CEO of MPI. Highlights include:

- Predictions for an increase in the number of meetings next year compared to last, specifically an increase of 3.3 percent in Canada, 3.2 percent in Europe and 2.8 percent in the U.S.
- Predictions for an increase in meeting budgets of .1 percent in Canada, .7 percent in Europe and 1 percent in the U.S.
- Shorter lead times are reported globally.
- Technology: The report includes a list of 16 things planners want from technology and what technology can give planners. For example, the report notes that meeting planners rank "better Internet access in venues and hotels" as the most or second-most demanded technology; yet rank it as the 10th most available and accessible solution.

This is the first Business Barometer to offer country- and region-specific data for the U.S., Canada and Europe, and the first report to offer supplemental tools, research and white papers to help readers address their specific challenges. www.mpiweb.org

Biloxi's Hard Rock Hotel to Expand

BILOXI, MS — Premier Entertainment Biloxi LLC and Hard Rock International announced they will build a 154-room hotel tower addition (*rendering pictured*) at the 318-room Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Biloxi set for completion in late 2013. The 12-story tower is slated to be built around the existing pool and will include 140 standard guest rooms and 14 suites. "This hotel addition brings our original vision closer to fruition," said Roy Anderson III, an owner of the property since pre-Katrina, "and is a testament to the progress the Gulf Coast has made and the success enjoyed by Hard Rock Biloxi."

www.hardrockbiloxi.com



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1 The China Incentive, Business Travel & Meetings Exhibition September 12–14 in Beijing, China, welcomed approximately 5,000 industry professionals, 413 hosted buyers and 398 exhibitors. **2** The Secretary General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization Taleb Rifai addresses the first Global Tourism Economy Forum in Macao, China. **3–5** FICP's 2012 West/Midwest Region Meeting in Chicago July 19–20: **3** On the terrace at PUBLIC Hotel Chicago. **4** (L to r) Theresa Fuerbringer and Lynn Taetsch (West Bend Mutual Insurance), Francine Cobb (Hilton Worldwide) and Lisa Lopez (NYC & Company). **5** (L to r) Sara Broderick (Wynn/Encore), Shelby Adams and Julie Wildebour (Principal Financial Group). **6** (L to r) Charles Reece, GM, Eaglewood Resort & Spa; Michael Koziol, Eaglewood master gardener and recipient of Benchmark's Chairman's Award of Excellence, recognized for his extensive charity work; Burt Cabañas, founder, chairman & CEO, Benchmark Hospitality International. **7** Prince William and Katherine, Duchess of Cambridge at Singapore's Gardens by the Bay with Dr. Kiat W. Tan, CEO of Gardens by the Bay. **8** The China-U.S. Tourism Leadership Summit, including Nicki E. Grossman, president of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau (*pictured in red jacket, second row from the top*), met in Qingdao at the invitation of the Chinese National Tourism Minister to create joint marketing strategies.

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GBTA Reveals Best and Worst Travel Taxes

WASHINGTON, DC — Discriminatory travel taxes and fees enacted on travel-related services impose an average increased cost on visitors of 57 percent over general sales tax, according to new research released by the GBTA Foundation, the education and research arm of the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA). Findings from the 2012 annual study of car rental, hotel and meal taxes in the top 50 U.S. travel destination cities found these taxes are often used to fund local projects unrelated to tourism and business travel. Said Joseph Bates, GBTA Foundation vice president of research, "Tax rates that spike add another dimension for travel managers and local businesses. If spending one night in Chicago is 81 percent more expensive than visiting Fort Lauderdale, for example, it can have an effect on where businesses decide to meet, hold events, and spend their travel dollars." The top 50 markets are ranked in two ways: By overall travel tax burden, including general sales tax and discriminatory travel taxes; and by discriminatory travel tax burden, excluding general sales taxes to count only taxes that target car rentals, hotel stays and meals. Discriminatory travel taxes are targeted at travelers or travel-related areas and go above the general sales tax.

For example, cities with the highest discriminatory travel tax rates over sales tax include: Portland, OR, \$22.45; Boston, MA, \$19.17. Cities with the lowest discriminatory travel tax rates over sales tax include Burbank, CA, \$1.81; and Orange County, CA, \$3.36. Cities with the highest total tax burden (including sales tax and discriminatory travel taxes) include Chicago, IL, \$40.31; and New York, NY, \$37.98. Cities with the lowest total tax burden include Fort Lauderdale, FL, \$22.21; and Fort Meyers, FL, \$22.21. The list of 50 U.S. destinations can be found in the full report. Email pyachnes@gbtafoundation.org.

Hard Rock Puts Atlantic City Casino Hotel on Hold

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — AC Gateway LLC, scrapped plans to build a casino-hotel on the south end of the beach in Atlantic City that would have been run by Hard Rock International, the casino-entertainment company owned by The Seminole Tribe of Florida. It cited the economy and Atlantic City's struggling casino market, according to news reports. "Hard Rock International has decided not to move forward with an application for a potential hotel-casino development in Atlantic City, due to current market conditions," the company said. "We have been evaluating Atlantic City as a prospective location for a hotel-casino development and have not eliminated this location for a future endeavor." The project would have been the first smaller casino-hotel under a 2011 law permitting them in New Jersey. The smaller casinos were allowed to attract new investors to enter the Atlantic City casino market without having to spend the billions to build a first-class casino resort. Revel, the new \$2.4 billion resort on the Boardwalk that opened in April, currently ranks 8th in revenue out of Atlantic City's 12 casinos.

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Business Travel

By Michael J. Kelly



Preparation Is the Key to Minimizing Risk

Whether travelers like it or not, face-to-face meetings are much more effective than an email or phone conversation. However, with more than 6 million Americans living overseas in 160-plus countries; no matter where the next meeting is scheduled, an employee will have to travel.

While life on the road can sometimes seem appealing from racking up frequent flier miles to overnights at popular hotels, true road warriors know that business travel can be strenuous, stressful and exhausting. This is especially true if an employee becomes seriously ill or has an unfortunate accident while living abroad or traveling for business. Who can they call for help, and who is responsible for ensuring their safety? Therein lies the “duty of care” question, and the answer, in most cases, is that employers are legally liable if an employee is traveling for business and they need assistance or an evacuation for medical or security reasons.

As the president and CEO of On Call International, one of the industry leaders in the medical and travel assistance field for business, leisure and academic travelers, here are my top seven tips for employers whose employees travel for business purposes or live abroad on expatriate assignments.

1. Be Prepared

Whether you have three employees or 30,000, it is always imperative to be prepared. With more than 100,000 Americans residing in China, the Dominican Republic, Greece, Israel and the West Bank, Mexico or the Philippines, companies are quickly realizing the precarious position they could be in if they have not pre-

planned for medical or security situations, which are bound to happen with any population of traveling employees.

It would only take one international emergency evacuation, which can cost more than \$100,000, for travelers from business hubs in Dubai, UAE, to New York, or China to Texas, to make a company realize that they are financially better off making appropriate arrangements in advance.

2. Minimize the Risk

There is substantial risk that can adversely affect an employee and the company if a seamless travel assistance plan is not in place. If an employee is involved in an emergency medical or security situation, a delay in response can be disastrous to that employee, his or her family and the company. Having an emergency response plan in place leaves the difficult task of getting people home to professionals who are experts in dealing with these catastrophic situations, such as a political revolt or natural disaster.

3. Don't Forget the Families

It is just as vital to make sure the families (spouses and children) traveling or living abroad with the employee are covered as well. An employee could become totally ineffective if something happened to a family member who has no coverage and who was on assignment with the employee. In fact, most expatriate assignments fail (roughly 40 percent) not due to the expat, but due to underlying health issues experienced by their spouses and children that cannot be effectively managed in their countries of assignment.

4. Time Off Is Really Time On

When the employee and his or her family are engaging in any leisure activity, it's just as important to continue coverage because they are away on behalf of the company. The company has placed them in a spot for increased risk, so it's vital for the company to take care of the employee and the family while on assignment, from the time they leave until the time they return home.

5. Support and Screening

Research shows that the average cost to a company in the first year of a single expat contract is anything upwards of US\$250,000 and the cost of a failed expat contract is about three times the employee's annual package. With proper support and screening (pre-deployment and while on assignment), businesses can help mitigate this financial loss.

6. Legal Woes

ExpatHealth.org states that many multinational employers who fail to meet their duty-of-care obligations toward expat employees — whether intentionally or accidentally — could land in court, translating to expensive lawsuits or even criminal charges. Several countries have developed duty-of-care legislation, most recently, Australia and New Zealand. In the United Kingdom, failure to uphold duty-of-care obligations can result in civil and criminal liabilities for individuals, not just companies. In Germany, for example, liabilities for sickness and health-related costs actually extend to family members who visit the expatriate in various host countries.

7. Safety First

No matter where your employees may travel, it's important to make sure they are covered. Companies should take advantage of corporate solutions such as securing services from a travel, medical and security emergency assistance company to help eliminate any worries for employees while traveling.

Employers should consider travel assistance memberships that provide these types of ser-

Who can they call for help, and who is responsible for ensuring their safety?

vices: a 24-hour nurse helpline; emergency medical transportation to the home hospital, regardless of medical necessity; 24/7 emergency travel arrangements; worldwide legal assistance; and more when traveling at least 50 miles from home.

I&FMM

Michael J. Kelly is the president and CEO of On Call International, which he founded in 1995. The company makes available medical, personal, travel, concierge and security services to more than 10 million customers annually. Kelly is a founding board member of the U.S. Travel Insurance Association. www.oncallinternational.com

The Conference Center Cure



The newly renovated Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs, CO, offers 40,000 sf of IACC-certified meeting space.

Photo courtesy of Cheyenne Mountain Resort

It's been four years since the notorious AIG debacle, and despite the lingering austerity hangover it has caused, signs are showing that insurance and financial meetings are a steady, even growing, portion of conference center bookings.

As everyone is painfully aware, insurance giant AIG (American International Group), days after receiving government bailout money during the height of the financial crisis, spent lavishly on a high-profile retreat for its executives, causing all planners and the companies they organize events for to more closely scrutinize facilities, amenities, costs and return on investment.

For small to midsize meetings of approximately 25–200 attendees, conference centers, with their intimate

A Remedy for the AIG Hangover

By Timothy Herrick

classrooms, exhibition spaces and reception areas, are an effective setting for events focused on education, training and networking. In these austere times, insurance and financial planners are more conscious of costs and the need to justify those costs: Planner demands now include streamlined pricing; adding value to meetings without increasing costs; reducing the length of meetings; and making the

site selection decision closer to the time of the event. Conference centers have sharpened their competitive edge by responding positively to planners' requests.

As a result, conference centers have retained a substantial slice of the insurance and financial services meeting pie. This category continues to be a reliable and steady portion of their business, mainly due to conference centers now emphasizing adding value to an event.

Cost Watching

"We are watching our spending more closely and working to get as much value as possible for every dollar we spend," says Dan Young, director of event planning and field recognition, Thrivent Financial, Minneapolis,

MN. "Normally we use conference centers when there is a desire to use a remote or retreat type of location."

While tighter budgets and closer scrutiny of spending and costs have now become the norm, Young points out that the need for the face-to-face meetings is still the rule for the industry's meetings. "Meetings and events are a critical part of how we build culture, reward and recognize, and train our financial reps," he adds.

Lynne Coyne, CMP, senior conference consultant, Manulife Financial in Waterloo, Ontario, says "We have found that typically the lead times for a good portion of our educational meetings are shorter. There does seem to be a focus on locations that are closer to home and more condensed meetings."

Some insurance meeting planners had become dissuaded from conference centers, according to Joan Orentlicher, CMP, assistant vice president, meetings, conferences and travel, LIMRA and LOMA (these two insurance trade associations, which only use their acronyms, merged earlier this year), but due to how effectively conference centers responded to planner concerns, she believes this

trend reversed last year. "(Planners) stopped using conference centers because the packages were inflexible and did not include a lot of the costly items they include today," said Orentlicher. "When the CMP includes basic AV and unlimited coffee breaks, etc., it is worth continuing having the small meetings rather than converting them to videoconferencing — which was the direction we were headed."

Cautious Optimism

Precisely quantifying the scope of insurance and financial services meetings hosted by conference centers is a problematic endeavor. The International Association of Conference Centers (IACC) has 297 members throughout the U.S. (an additional 30 in Canada). IACC member facilities go through a certification process, with criteria that covers both the size and caliber, including technology and ergonomics, of the space. However, any facility with meeting space, regardless of their affiliation or lack of affiliation with IACC, can market themselves as a conference center, so the actual

"The AIG effect is still a concern in planning a meeting. The impact was not overblown, but it has made it more important for the conference center to work with planners to develop a productive, value-added meeting and understand the client's outcomes."



Peter Stockmann
President
IACC-Americas
St. Louis, MO

number of conference centers in the U.S. is unknown, and is likely much higher than the IACC figures indicate.

According to the facility executives interviewed for this article, the insurance and financial services segment accounts for about 10 percent of conference center business, a proportion that has remained steady even during the economic decline. In fact, the

Technology Musts

What are the meeting technology musts for conference centers, according to meeting planners?

"Screens in rooms, remote control for temperature regulation and ergonomic chairs are popular," says Ted Davis, senior vice president sales and marketing, Benchmark Hospitality International. But Davis points out that these demands are far outpaced by a nearly insatiable Internet appetite. "Many of these organizations have equipped their teams with tablet computers and smartphones for their day-to-day business activities," says Davis. "Most financial and insurance groups require a reliable wireless Internet connection and sufficient bandwidth, particularly when utilizing their device in computer-based training programs."

Todd Steinberg, global account director, Dolce Hotels & Resorts, adds, "Organizations are now seeking a venue with a great deal of bandwidth lately with so many of the attendees bringing two or three technology items such as an iPad, iPhone and PC."

"Onsite global communication with translation reflects the global nature of our business world," says Jim Bressler, a member of the IACC board of directors and director of sales and marketing, Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club, Durham, NC. "Documentation of meeting proceedings continues to grow, and of course Wi-Fi is now expected."

In addition to more bandwidth, planners are insisting on no dead spots. "A conference center must have good wireless Internet available in all of the spaces," says Lynne Coyne, CMP, senior conference consultant, Manulife Financial. "And complimentary would be amazing!"

"Internet continues to be a major hot button," agrees Kerry McMahon, director of national sales, Destination Hotels & Resorts, but he also sees the need for better pricing strategies by conference centers. "Wireless Internet should not be a per day, per person charge in the meeting space. If it can't be free then a one-time charge."

— TH

“Typically the lead times for a good portion of our educational meetings are shorter. There does seem to be a focus on locations that are closer to home and more condensed meetings.”

Lynne Coyne, CMP
Senior Conference Consultant
Manulife Financial
Waterloo, ON



executives are cautiously optimistic about this segment, which exhibited a new vigor in 2011 through the first half of 2012.

Peter Stockmann, president, IACC, Americas and CEO of 3P Business Solutions, Bloomfield Hills, MI, estimates that in 2012, the insurance and

financial services industry is up between 3 and 5 percent, in the years immediately following the financial crisis. By comparison, he estimates that the decline ranged 20 to 30 percent. “Companies are starting to put meetings on their calendars and plan out their year,” says Stockmann. “They’re starting to do more employee training meetings which dropped off 50 to 75 percent. Companies are starting to realize that they need to make up lost ground in employee training.”

Says Todd Steinberg, global account director, Dolce Hotels & Resorts, “In 2012 there has been a great deal of requests for proposals in each of these markets, which shows there has been an increase in meetings versus 2011, in which a large amount of meetings were cancelled or changed to be conducted in-house at the organization’s office. Utilizing our internal software, we have tracked the insurance and finan-

cial services segments, and over the past two years, we have seen an uptick in meetings in these segments.”

Regional strengths seem apparent within the conference center market. As one might expect, conference centers near cities with a strong financial and insurance industry presence receive the lion’s share of bookings for these meetings. “At our Heldrich Conference Center in New Jersey, the financial services and insurance segments have historically made up approximately nearly 10 percent of the meetings business,” relates Ted Davis, senior vice president sales and marketing, Benchmark Hospitality International. He says that the segment has remained steady, although understandably shows regional strengths. “Our Cheyenne Mountain Resort property is experiencing about 5 percent of their group business from these two segments.”

Davis believes the worst is definitely over for this sector. “Meeting budgets are not quite back to 2008 levels, but the trend is headed up and favor-

able,” says Davis. “As a company we are seeing movement and a bit more robust activity from the financial sector, which is up nearly 11 percent in group room night activity over 2011.”

“Finance and insurance business represents 16.7 percent of our definite business,” says Kerry McMahon, director of national sales, Destination Hotels & Resorts. “This is up from 11.4 percent. Finance and insurance bookings through Q2 appear to be booking further out compared to 2010 and 2011. Through Q2 10, there were 28 bookings a year or more out, for the same time in 2011, there were 47 and this year there are over 60.”

All-Inclusive CMP

Conference centers have recognized — and positively responded to — demands for streamlined pricing, a concern that seems especially prevalent among these planners. This summer, IACC released findings from its third consecutive customer round table — where focus groups of meeting planners are surveyed for their

opinions on industry issues — and found that financial issues (compared to technology, facility or food and beverage issues) were at the top of the concerns planners voiced. And all of the concerns revolved around streamlined pricing concepts. Issues planners raised at the round table include: “Setup fees included in the Complete Meeting Package (CMP); CMP — a single package price — no nickel and diming; and meeting room rental expenses included in CMP.” Says Stockmann, “With this third series of face-to-face customer round tables, the focus is to make sure we are aware of the customer’s wants and needs and to ensure that we continue to provide an exceptional meeting experience.”

Planners prefer an approach where a single price encompasses the entire meeting “We like conference centers that have generally all-inclusive CMP, including break refresh-

ments,” Young says. “Planners then don’t have to worry about F&B issues and decisions.”

“The latest trend in what planners are seeking from a conference center has been and still is a complete meeting package in which everything is included as well as transparent to the planner,” says Dolce’s Steinberg. “Transparency is the utmost in importance to prove the value in selecting a conference center versus a typical hotel to the client.”

Steinberg speculates this emphasis on transparency is another lingering ramification of the AIG effect, although the impact was not as great for conference centers as it was for other venues. “There was certainly more of a negative impact on the hotel side of meetings due to the AIG effect,” says Steinberg.

Nonetheless, simplified pricing, which must also be tied to the value of the actual event, seems here to stay. “Conference centers must offer a transparent price option for these meetings, meaning each portion of a complete

But How Was the Food?

Sales training, teambuilding and education are all critical components of insurance and financial services meetings, especially those held in the intimate and focused settings of conference centers — but often the answer to a single question determines the crucial if intangible success of any event: How was the food?

The rubber-chicken days are long gone for conference centers wishing to remain competitive in the small-to-mid-size meeting market. Hotels are upgrading their restaurants and meeting spaces, and even convention centers are hiring new chefs and catering services to complement their smaller meeting configurations. Many conference centers have implemented similar F&B upgrades, and planners have noticed these palatable improvements.

The most apparent difference is that more healthful choices are more readily available. Ted Davis, senior vice president sales and marketing, Benchmark Hospitality International, says, “The general trend continues toward healthier foods, gluten-free and vegetarian options. Also a greater push for variety, unique presentation and creativity.” Davis points out that most conference centers are “increasingly looking for the ‘wow’ factor.”

Foodie Influence

In addition, the impact of the Food Network and the plethora of “foodie” programming throughout the media has meant that superstar chefs are now promoted by the venues as part of their meeting menus. Lynne Coyne, CMP, senior conference consultant, Manulife Financial, says that conference centers “are placing more of a focus on the impact of food and beverage to the overall attendee experience. You are seeing more of the new conference centers partner with celebrity chefs to help create their offerings.”

“I have seen an improvement overall in the food service at conference centers,” agrees Joan Orentlicher, CMP, assistant vice president, meetings, conferences and travel, LIMRA and LOMA (these two leading Insurance Trade Associations, which only use their acronyms, merged earlier this year). She says that the chef as celebrity — even if that celebrity-hood is mainly within the conference center and local restaurant circles — translates to a personal, more attentive touch evident in the improved dining options. “When I see healthy items offered at a reasonable price, I have more respect and confidence in the chef. It’s

easy to provide fried, high-carb items and other unhealthy entrées. But when we find healthy items at a reasonable price that appeal to the masses — bravo! We also make sure the chef can honor special dietary requests such as vegetarian, gluten-free, kosher, etc.”

Todd Steinberg, global account director, Dolce Hotels & Resorts, adds, “Food and beverage trends have been favoring locally grown items, organic items and thoughtful foods for thoughtful minds.”

Another food trend is incorporating higher quality, more imaginative and more elaborate menus within the Complete Meeting Package price. “Planners then don’t have to worry about F&B issues and decisions,” says Dan Young, director of event planning and field recognition, Thrivent Financial. “We like conference centers due to (the fact that) their generally all-inclusive CMP now includes break refreshments, and they normally have a buffet dining area.”



The National Conference Center’s executive chef Craig Mason competes in a past Copper Skillet Competition for chefs of IACC-member properties.

College Food Making the Grade

Even conference centers on college campus have upgraded their food items. Less-than-delectable food offerings — making planners contract with an outsider caterer — no longer appears to be the rule among this event-space category. “The college conference centers, the better ones, now have an onsite kitchen, and the food quality has been improved,” says Maria Prendergast, recruiter, human capital management division for Goldman Sachs. The majority of conference centers Prendergast contracts with are on college campuses, used for student recruitment. “You used to always have to get an outside caterer, which is just another step and another contract for the planner. Now, we get one final bill. You have less risk of running out of food once you are there. But also the food is noticeably better. You have more food options, and the planner has more control over the event. That has been an important improvement.” — **TH**

meeting package can be fairly priced and fully visible to the meeting planner,” says Steinberg.

AIG Effect Still Affects Planners

Industry members seem now able to put the impact of the AIG effect — which reflected more on the luxury resort segment — in a more realistic perspective. “The overall economic downturn hurt our conference centers

the appearance of careless spending and ostentatious events.

“The AIG effect will always be in the back of people’s minds,” says McMahon. “Things will never go back to exactly the way they were prior to the AIG effect. Companies are still planning luxurious events but they realize they are in the public eye and they have to be careful of how their events are perceived.”

Davis adds, “The AIG effect is slowly dissipating, but the effects are still being felt. We believe this is where we can truly benefit our conference center meeting engagers and attendees. ...We provide dedicated and proven conference center facilities, which are very appealing to some companies wanting an exclusive business environment.”

Says Ann Marie Moayed, CHSC, CRME, national director of sales and marketing, Aramark Conference Centers, “It is still present, but not as strong a focus for events held at conference centers. Conference centers offer a focused environment. The image of a conference center supports the learning and meeting environment without a red flag of high-end spending.”

Luxury Justified?

Planners know that meetings are necessary for optimized performance of industries, organizations and professionals. If the value the conference center offers is apparent, meeting planners insist that even luxury meeting venues are justifiable. “I would not say that I am apprehensive to book a luxury property if it has the facilities, location, amenities, availability and pricing that meets the objectives of the conference,” says Coyne. “It really depends on the meeting and what the objectives of the conference are.”

A positive ramification of the AIG effect may be that planners and facility managers are more motivated to work together to cost-justify a meeting.

“The AIG effect is still a concern in planning a meeting,” says Stockmann. “The impact was not overblown, but it has made it more important for the conference center to work with planners to develop a productive, value-added meeting and understand the client’s outcomes.”

Booking Windows Closing

While a more inclusive meeting package or planner apprehension in overall spending seems to be a fluctuating if omnipresent trend, what also seems here to stay is a shorter booking window. Facilities report that the six-month to a year lead time to book an event is now the exception. Long-term planning for smaller meetings is another casualty of the poor economy. “We have experienced a shortened booking window compared to years past,” said Moayed. “The window has shrunk to 60 days or less for the majority of the bookings. We have even experienced booking receptions and meetings for 200–400 people within the week.”

Davis says, “The booking window — from RFP submission to contract signature — has become increasingly shorter. The current booking window has varied from company to company but the average is 60–90 days.”

With more open nights on the calendars, conference centers have become aggressive in terms of fulfilling an escalating amount of client demands. “There are increasing expectations of heightened service attention and of close relationship with their salesperson,” adds Moayed.

In addition to the shorter booking window now being more the rule than the exception, meetings have also tended to become shorter, or at least not grow, although some venues have noticed that with the gradual uptick in business, a small but noticeable increase in attendance is occurring. “Overall, the average length of stay has remained the same at approximately three–four nights,” says Davis. “There is a gradual increase in rooms utilized, particularly in the financial sector.” **I&FMM**

“We are watching our spending more closely and working to get as much value as possible for every dollar we spend.”



Dan Young

Director of Event Planning and Field Recognition
Thrivent Financial, Minneapolis, MN

more than the AIG effect,” says Jim Bressler, a member of the IACC board of directors and director of sales and marketing, Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club, Durham, NC.

Bressler feels that the conference centers already had enough positive perceptions to dissuade any lingering repercussion from the AIG effect. “Conference centers are considered great centers for learning and are the best learning environments in the world. We are not looked at as resorts or facilities with extravagant entertainment and recreational distractions. If anything, some IACC centers benefited from the AIG hangover as opposed to being hurt by it.”

Many conference center managers are operating from the standpoint that even if the negative impact of the AIG scandal has eased considerably, in the current economic climate, planners and the executives and board members they must report to, remain hyper-sensitive to potential negative publicity of even

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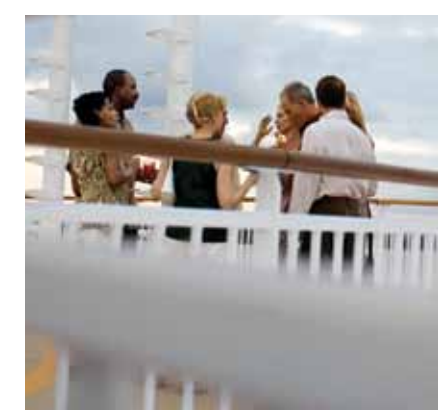
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One Size Does Not Fit All

How to Motivate and Reward a Four-Generation Work Force

By John Buchanan

In the ever-changing world of incentive travel, a new and important topic of debate has emerged over the last few years — the unprecedented impact of a four-generation work force on a planner's ability to motivate and reward participants based on the notion of an accomplishment and shared experience that will gratify everyone.

The Silent Generation is aging before our eyes. These are workers who were born before 1945 and are working much longer than any previous generation. Millennials, those born after 1981; baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964); and Gen Xers (1965-1978) comprise four generations of today's work force. As a result, the generationally crowded incentive universe now presents unique challenges that are only recently being considered and comprehended.

"These four generations have very different consumer tastes," says Miami-based consultant Chuck Underwood, one of the founders of the

generational research field more than 25 years ago and author of a seminal book *The Generational Imperative: Understanding Generational Differences in the Workplace, Marketplace and Living Room*. (The Generational Imperative Inc., 2007) "Therefore, my advice to incentive planners is to be as generation-specific as you can in the travel package you offer."

Jim Ruzsala, senior director of marketing at Maritz Travel in Fenton, MO, agrees with that assessment. "The new mantra," he says, "is that one size does not fit all."

Michael J. Lyons, DMCP, a veteran of the meetings industry and the newly appointed director of Americas Meetings & Events Exhibition (AIBTM) for Reed Travel Exhibitions, explains why that is the case: "The last two generations in the work force are completely different from my generation and my father's generation," says Lyons, a baby boomer whose background includes senior level posts

with companies such as Global Events Partners, Carlson and McGettigan Partners. "And most of that difference can be attributed to advances in technology. Today, as we all know, Gen X and Y workers tend to communicate constantly via text messages, Twitter, and Facebook. So their interactions differ greatly from baby boomers who grew up with handshakes, phone calls and personal meetings. Today, communication is instantaneous and no one is ever disconnected."

Consequently, Lyons says, planners are beginning to understand that "when it comes to incentive programs, generational differences are an important factor, and now more than ever, one size does not fit all. Getting to the root of what motivates each age group and communicating that message clearly, particularly through social media to the younger participants, is critical to the success of the program. So you need to take that into account when designing your program."

That reality has been confirmed by the 2010 Site Index report. In it, 88 percent of planners reported an increased focus on generational issues in planning programs. Faye Beauchine, president of business loyalty for Carlson Marketing in Minneapolis and a former president of the Site International Foundation, calls that finding "program-changing," adding, "Boomers are different from

ny's incentive travel programs for years. Yet, she says, generational differences have never been discussed at American Universal. "We've never delved into that topic," Walko says.

However, she notes, she has observed differences in the ways different agents want their training, for example. "Some folks want to come to a seminar, and some are okay with sitting

"Getting to the root of what motivates each age group and communicating that message clearly, particularly through social media to the younger participants, is critical to the success of the program."

Michael J. Lyons, DMCP, Event Director, AIBTM
Reed Travel Exhibitions, Norwalk, CT



millennials who are different from Gen Xers or Gen Yers. Choice is a big deal for the younger groups... and they want to be involved with the local culture. They're looking for experiences they can't get anywhere else or on their own. We can motivate them best by fulfilling that desire."

Drew Stevens, Ph.D., CEO of Stevens Consulting Group in Eureka, MO, is another expert who has monitored and measured the generational issue for years. While he agrees that generational impact on motivation is a hot topic, he cautions that there are two extremes to the debate. "I've seen companies spend too much time on these generational issues, and I've seen companies not spend enough time," he says. "And on the side where there's not enough time spent thinking about it, there's just not enough communication across the generations within the company. And that ruins morale and productivity in the workplace."

Despite such claims, however, many planners remain somewhat skeptical of the generational generalizations being bandied about.

Nancy Walko, vice president of marketing support services at insurance company Universal American in Lake Mary, FL, has planned the compa-

ny's incentive travel programs for years. Yet, she says, generational differences have never been discussed at American Universal. "We've never delved into that topic," Walko says.

However, she notes, she has observed differences in the ways different agents want their training, for example. "Some folks want to come to a seminar, and some are okay with sitting in front of a computer and taking their training that way," Walko says. "So, in that respect, I do understand what people are talking about when they raise this issue." But, she adds, she remains skeptical of the notion that as a general rule, different generations should be engaged differently.

Loree J. Rossi, director of marketing at Ameriprise Financial in Plantation, FL, says that although she and her colleagues are now conversant in the generational issue, she does not want to make — or accept — overly generalized statements about why and how different people should be treated differently within a single incentive program. For Rossi, the essence of the issue is in the details — facts that can be discerned, reported and acted upon.

Destination Decisions

For those who subscribe to the mantra that one size no longer fits all, the dilemma of destination selection looms large. That's because the timing of the generations has meant everything when it comes to perceptions of and preferences in travel, explains research pioneer Underwood. "The Silent Generation came of age before commercial air travel was affordable to the masses," he says. "Therefore, to

this day, they prefer traditional, glamorous destinations — just because of their glamour. The other things they want are physical safety, a schedule that is active but not overly scheduled, one that is more based on sightseeing than being physically active, and an experience that enables them to return home with lots of photos to show their friends."

For baby boomers, who were the first generation to enjoy easy access to travel at a young age, the destination must offer more than sightseeing. "It needs to be experiential and educational," Underwood says. "And to a certain extent, it needs to involve physical activity." For Gen

Xers, who eclipsed their predecessors by traveling to exotic destinations with their parents from a young age, the essential ingredient is what Underwood called a characteristic "family first" mentality. "They want to go to a destination that is family-friendly — and bring the family," Underwood says. "If they can't bring their kids, then their concern is how long they will be gone. Are the travel connections plentiful and hassle-free? Also, Xers are a very independent and individualistic generation. Offer activities that don't require a group. And give this generation lots of choices."

Somewhat ironically, millennials mirror baby boomers in one basic way that is at the core of incentive programs. "They love the idea of 'group,' 'team,' 'we' and 'us,'" Underwood says. "The destination and the sizzle of the destination are important to them. They're looking for experience, too, but in many regards their tastes run parallel to the travel tastes of the baby boomers. And make sure they can get good wireless connections. If they go somewhere where their mobiles are inoperable, this generation will suffer severe withdrawal symptoms."

Faced with such essential differences in participants, planners should carefully and painstakingly analyze the demographics of their groups, says

Jennifer Vecchi, CRP, manager, incentives and recognition programs, at Atlas Meetings & Incentives in Milford, MA. “You need to really know the age range a group and look for destinations that offer activities for the different age groups,” she says.

One good example of an area where generational differences require proper assessment and action is dining and nightlife, Vecchi adds. “And that’s really hard when you’ve got 400 people on a program, across three or four generations,” she says. “It’s hard to please everyone.”

Since that’s the case, says Misti Burmeister, founder/CEO of Towson, MD-based consultancy Inspirion and author of *From Boomers to Bloggers: Success Strategies Across Generations*, (Synergy Press LLC, 2008) planners should adhere to the time-tested principle that the best course is sending everyone to the same destination — but with some new age considerations.

“That’s because there should be an element of teambuilding and team motivation in an incentive program,” says Burmeister. “And younger people should want to spend time with the older folks who have more experience or more influence over their careers.” Then, if there are demonstrable generational differences within the group, account for those with a range of activities, Burmeister recommends. But think of and act on the group as a single organism, she says.

Acting Out

In terms of how to accommodate a diverse group successfully, the most critical consideration is the roster of activities, says Underwood. “The Silent Generation will embrace bus tours and short hops around the destination,” he says. “They like group activity because of its sociability and safety. Baby boomers, Gen Xers and millennials all want lots of individual freedom and lots of choice in activities. And they want activities that can be enjoyed as well

by an individual as a group. Boomers, Gen Xers and millennials, in general, do not like the idea of escorted activities. They don’t want to be herded around as part of a big group.”

As for specific examples of different activities that are perfectly suited to different generations, Underwood cites gourmet cooking classes for baby boomers and an adventurous ski trip for Gen Xers and millennials.

“The big thing today,” says Vecchi, “is giving people a choice of what they want to do. It used to be that everything was a group activity and you had to go. That’s not true so much today. What we see more of is companies offering three choices for each activity on the trip.” The practical effect of that on incentive programs, in general, has been positive, Vecchi adds with a chuckle. “People don’t have to say they’re sick anymore so they don’t have to go snorkeling,” she says.

Recognition

Recognition — another pillar of the motivational process — also represents another way in which the generations are different, says Stevens. “Older folks



Misti Burmeister, Founder/CEO
Inspirion, Towson, MD

“Content is actually less important at events today — they want to connect with each other. The meeting planners who pull that off will ultimately be successful...across the generations.”

want something that recognizes them as part of the company,” he says. “They want to be known by management for their years of service, their dedication and for the hours that they have put in. The younger person wants to be the show-off. They’re more interested in having everyone know how much money they’ve made, how many sales they’ve closed, how many new customers they’ve brought in. So, for younger people, it’s about them and their performance. For the older per-

son, it’s about the long, loyal contribution they’ve made to the company.”

Lyons agrees that generational distinctions in recognition are now a key element of how well an incentive program works. “For younger people, it’s more important for them to be recognized by their peers and have fun during the program than it is to shake hands and get their picture taken with the CEO,” he says. “They want to be accepted by their peers, hang out with them, and enjoy the good times a well-designed incentive program offers (and not have the CEO catch them partying too much). But for the older guys, it’s still about getting their picture taken with the CEO and sitting next to him at dinner.”

A related challenge, cited by Vecchi, is that in the age of instantaneous communication among vast peer groups, an incentive program can be sabotaged very quickly if broader issues of communication are not considered. For example, she noted, if a lot of tech-savvy participants immediately go to Trip Advisor to read reviews about the program hotel — and many of those reviews are negative — that can deflate enthusiasm and motivation very

quickly. By the same token, she added, the hotel can have nothing but good reviews at Trip Advisor. But attendees can still be disappointed when they arrive only to find that the hotel draws an older crowd — and that they never realized the great reviews were all from old fogies, not Young Turks like them.

Another area where the issue can have impact is in the growing demand for individual trips as opposed to group experiences, Vecchi says. “It’s a little ironic, but the group where I now see

the biggest preference for individual trips is the older generation,” she says. “One of my clients is a big insurance company, and they do a huge number of individual IT trips now.”

But, she added, they also remain fiercely loyal to the time-tested President’s Club model, where large-scale, shared public recognition is the very point of the exercise. “By doing it both ways,” Vecchi says, “you get the best of both worlds.”

At Maritz, Ruszala also sees a trend toward creating more individualized experiences for group incentive travel strategies. “It’s a fact of the world today that you need to have more options,” he says. “Otherwise, your motivational efforts are going to reach a narrow audience. They’re not going to appeal to everybody.”

Moreover, Ruszala explains, “It’s less about identifying more options and more about picking the right options based upon your audience. In doing so, you create an aspirational conviction of program participants who are more motivated and aligned with helping your organization achieve its business goals.”

To gauge and manage program appeal, Rossi says, planners should do more research to get definitive answers to direct questions. “We do surveys after each of our programs, and we started to get more feedback on what people would like to see,” she says. “And I started to realize that generational issues were a part of that. And part of that was definitely the topics that the different generations wanted to talk about and learn about.”

That reality is important to insurance and financial services companies because of the breadth and complexity of their product lines, Rossi says. “That’s why one issue for us has become the topics we discuss at our meetings during incentive programs,” she says. “For example, we’ll have a full-day seminar, and we bring in speakers. And I have noticed that the topics tend to change

with the generations. The biggest difference I see is that the younger advisors are just thinking about different things. For example, younger advisors usually don’t have the kind of established clientele that the tenured advisors do. So, the younger guys are not really looking



Jim Ruszala, Senior Director of Marketing
Maritz Travel, Fenton, MO

“It’s...more about picking the right options based upon your audience. In doing so, you create an aspirational conviction of program participants who are...aligned with helping your organization achieve its business goals.”

at things like insurance. They’re looking at broader financial planning for the future with their clients, whereas the tenured advisors are still looking at things like insurance and estate planning. You have to know that and react to that kind of difference now.”

But perhaps the most important lesson today is that successful incentive programs require flexibility, Burmeister says. “A lot of the incentive travel programs I see are not flexible,” she says. “They say ‘you’re going here for this long, and you can bring one person — and that’s your spouse.’ Seasoned professionals will put up with that. Younger people will not. And you can de-motivate a group just as powerfully as you can motivate it.”

For Underwood, after a quarter-century of studying generational impact in the workplace, the issue is a clear and simple one. “A four-generation work force can no longer be treated as a homogenous group,” he says. “And the meeting planners who are on top of generational study understand that they have to possess a ‘gear box’ and be able to shift generational gears to customize their IT programs for each generation. Generational strategy has proven itself, and you should know that and act accordingly.”

Like it or not, says Vecchi, there are fundamental and resounding

differences among the generations when it comes to motivation. “The younger generation is there for the trip. They want to go on the trip to have fun,” she says. “The older people are not driven by the trip. They’re driven by internal forces that make it a different experience.”

However, says Burmeister, at its core the issue of successful incentives is more about commonalities than differences. “We *all* want to feel important, special and valued,” she says. “Meeting planners just have to ask enough questions to get down to what is going to make their group feel important, special and valued.”

Burmeister suggests such questions as: *What would you like to get out of attending this event? Why is this event important to you? What’s the best event you’ve ever attended? What made it so great?*

“In terms of the specialness factor, people like to contribute their opinions...at events and everywhere,” Burmeister adds. “That said, it’s critical to both engage the audience and highlight their brilliance. Pull them into every single conversation that is started from the platform. Since you know why they’re choosing to be a part of the event (what’s important for them to gain), and because you asked the questions (examples listed above), you’ll know what content is important to them,” she says.

“Content is actually less important at events today — they want to connect with each other. The meeting planners who pull that off will ultimately be successful...across the generations,” concludes Burmeister. **I&FMM**



2012 World Class Award Winners

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Miami, FL

Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau
Long Beach, CA

New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau
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Palm Coast, FL

Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando
Orlando, FL

M Resort Spa Casino
Las Vegas, NV

MGM Grand Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV

Ocean Reef Club
Key Largo, FL

The Peabody Orlando
Orlando, FL

Ponte Vedra Inn & Club
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

Rosen Shingle Creek
Orlando, FL

Vdara Hotel & Spa
Las Vegas, NV

The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino
Las Vegas, NV

Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel
Lake Buena Vista, FL

Wynn Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV



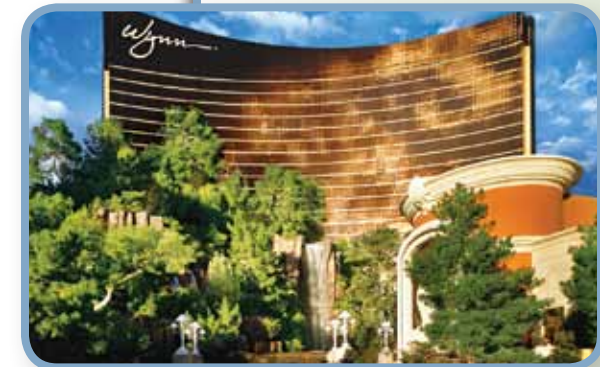
Ponte Vedra Inn & Club



Vdara Hotel & Spa



The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino



Wynn Las Vegas



Greater Miami Convention
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Long Beach Convention
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New Orleans Convention
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Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando



M Resort Spa Casino



WILLIAM D. TALBERT III
President and CEO

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www.MiamiMeetings.com



Citywide Facts & Features

Guest Rooms: 50,000

Meeting Space: Miami Beach Convention Center: 502,000 sf of exhibit space; 70 flexible meeting rooms and 100,000 sf of prefunction space.

Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau

Imagine planning your next event at the place on everyone's lips. That's what will happen when you schedule your next meeting in Miami. Our inspiration comes from a convergence of cultures, and we've got every amenity your audiences are looking forward to enjoying.

The newest state-of-the-art performing arts center in the Americas anchors the city's bustling downtown. And the Frank Gehry-designed home of Miami's New World Symphony includes the Miami Beach Soundscape where concert-goers watch the symphony al fresco. Best of all, this amazing new venue is directly across the street from the more than 650,000-sf Miami Beach Convention Center.

Water sports are available most anywhere the Atlantic Ocean or Biscayne Bay kisses the South Florida shoreline. Your attendees can spend a day wandering under arches of banyan trees. Watch the cruise ships sail past downtown's glittering skyline. Play beach volleyball. Shop at the world's largest collection of designer boutiques. Take in a major sports contest. Shoot a round of golf. Try to get under the limbo stick. Rollerblade. Whack a tennis ball. Build a sand castle. Run on the beach. Sip a cool one.

Miami's the international city where you'll hear languages and dialects from around the world. Meet people from every corner of the earth. Find fashions from New York, Paris, Rome and Sao Paulo. Art from Basel. Celebrities just in from Hollywood. Rock bands from Argentina. String quartets from Europe.

What you won't find in Miami is the

same old, same old. No usual suspects. No been there, done that. We're brighter, hipper, hotter, cooler, friendlier, sunnier, sultrier, sexier, tastier, steamier and more sensuous than anywhere you've ever been before.

And who knew that hip Miami is a world-class, family-friendly destination? Between Jungle Island, the Miami Seaquarium, Zoo Miami, The Miami Children's Museum and our sparkling beaches, there's lots of fun things to do with your kids.

Accommodations and More

Miami is chock-full of new hotels — almost 50,000 guest rooms. Our grand dames have been face-lifted with billions of dollars of renovations and joined by scores of brand-new hotels flying famous flags from around the world. And of course, South Beach is the home of the world's largest collection of restored art deco, art nouveau, and cutting-edge boutique hotels.

In the last year, newly arrived stand-out restaurants have opened next door to our international superstars and Miami's own world-renowned home-grown classics, increasing our total to more than 5,000. Almost every corner hosts another ethnic favorite, trendy late scene spot or neighborhood haunt.

When it comes to coming and going, no destination has more going on than Miami. We've invested mightily in our transportation infrastructure to make it even easier to get here and to enjoy the trip. Miami International Airport boasts new terminals and a new high-speed train to whisk travelers from plane to baggage claim and on to MIA's new intermodal center where your group will find rental cars, taxis and limos, and public transportation waiting for them in one convenient place. **I&FMM**



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So someone tried to tell you why meeting in Miami's so inspiring, so exciting and so productive. Know this. No tweet, snapshot or posting will ever be enough. You so have to meet here to get it. **MiamiMeetings.com**

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Meetings@UniversalOrlando.com
www.UOMeetingsandEvents.com



Facts & Features

Guest Rooms: 750

Meeting Space: 42,000 sf

Special Services & Amenities:

Guests receive an exclusive package of special theme park benefits, including FREE Universal Express Unlimited ride access,* which lets them skip the regular theme park lines all day.

*Some restrictions apply, valid theme park admission required.

Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando

Planners looking for ways to meet responsibly and still enjoy exceptional service at an award-winning hotel have plenty of reasons to host their next meeting at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando, a stunning re-creation of the Mediterranean seaside village of Portofino, Italy.

Meeting Space

The hotel features more than 42,000 sf of function space that's adorned with authentic Italian details such as handcrafted Venetian glass chandeliers, a grand spiral staircase that leads to the function space, 27-foot ceilings and prefunction areas with natural lighting. Planners will love this breathtaking setting for both business and social events. Plus, it's next door to all the excitement of both Universal Orlando theme parks, including Universal Studios Florida and Universal's Islands of Adventure.

Accommodations

Offering 750 rooms and suites, this AAA Four Diamond Award hotel transports meeting attendees to the sunny shores of the Mediterranean. Here, every detail of the legendary village of Portofino, Italy, has been reproduced right down to the cobblestone streets and outdoor cafés. Guests can dine at eight restaurants and lounges, and enjoy a wealth of amenities and recreation.

The newly renovated Mandara Spa, located by the Piazza Ponte between the Beach and Villa pools, includes 14 treatment rooms, co-ed lounge and whirlpool, a world-class fitness center

with individual TV monitors, and a full-service hair and nail Salon.

Convenient Location

The hotel is located within walking distance of both Universal Orlando theme parks — Universal Studios Florida and Universal's Islands of Adventure — and the Universal CityWalk dining and entertainment complex. Loews Portofino Bay Hotel also has two sister hotels at Universal Orlando: the 1,000-room Loews Royal Pacific with 85,000 sf of meeting space, and Hard Rock Hotel with 650 guest rooms and 6,000 sf — ideal for smaller groups.

Choose from more than 250,000 sf of destination-wide meeting and event space. In addition to the meeting spaces at the onsite hotels, events both large and small can be held inside the theme parks or at a restaurant or club at Universal's CityWalk.

Exclusive Guest Benefits

Attendees and guests of the onsite hotels at Universal Orlando will enjoy many exclusive perks that can be used throughout the entire resort. Before they head to the meeting they can enjoy Early Park Admission to The Wizarding World of Harry Potter one hour before Universal's Islands of Adventure theme park opens. This benefit alone is worth booking this hotel because your attendees will feel like they are on the VIP list and can experience it all before the rest of the crowd is allowed in!

As an onsite guest your attendees will also skip the regular lines throughout both theme parks all day long for free as long as they have valid theme park admission. Planners should inquire about buying theme park tickets in advance so they can take advantage of the specially priced tickets for attendees. **I&FMM**

DON'T SETTLE FOR BUSINESS AS USUAL

It's not often you find everything a meeting planner would want in one location. There's ample space for meetings and events of any size between two amazing theme parks, an entire entertainment complex and three world-class on-site hotels. Want to create an event your attendees will never forget? Well, give yourself the opportunity and choose from over 250,000 square feet of customizable event space. So, whether you need a place to get work done or a place to celebrate when the work is over - And really, why not do both? - You won't find a better partner than Universal Orlando® Resort!

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MEETINGS & EVENTS

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Citywide Facts & Features

Guest Rooms: 4,527

Hotels/Resorts: 21

Meeting Space: Hotel: 219,000+ sf. Offsite: 500,000+ sf.

Convention Center FYI

With the recent addition of free Wi-Fi throughout the convention center, guests will be able to go online to work and connect with their offices.

Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau

The Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, with more than 300,000 sf of modern, flexible exhibit and meeting space, is located in the center of the downtown waterfront with sweeping harbor views.

The center recently underwent a major modernization, and more than \$35 million in major upgrades and renovations have been invested to create a new model for contemporary convention centers. This dynamic repositioning is designed to give guests a warm, stylish and welcoming social experience. In addition, complimentary Wi-Fi is now available throughout the convention center, so attendees can go online to work and connect with their offices.

With the needs of today's convention and meeting attendees in mind, the center's lobbies and hallway areas have been enhanced with new furniture, carpets, plants and artwork to create mini meeting spots and networking pods where people can sit, talk and socialize.

All of these enhancements have continued to hit higher benchmarks in surpassing customer expectations in terms of service and experience. This is already being

noted in the convention planning community and is one of our main competitive advantages.

The Long Beach Arena

Set to be complete February 2013, the Long Beach Arena will have the capability of being transformed into a "loft-style" ballroom and will produce 45,000 sf of event space. The loft-style ballroom will be formed using the floor space of the arena and dropping elec-

tronically operated curtains from the ceiling, covering the views of the upper deck seating. Over the ballroom area will be a grid of truss systems (complete with LED, stage lighting and sound systems). This will provide an intimate environment for dinners and concerts for up to 5,500 people, doubling current capacity.

New Campus Created

A campus has been created around downtown Long Beach that encourages the development and sharing of ideas. This campus includes newly renovated hotels, which are just steps from the convention center and the surrounding downtown waterfront entertainment district. Attendees will find shopping venues, entertainment, nightlife and more than 100 quality restaurants, many with spectacular oceanfront views.

Long Beach is the center of Southern California, with all the attractions of Los Angeles and Orange County just minutes from our downtown waterfront. But Long Beach features its own world-class attractions: The Queen Mary and the Aquarium of the Pacific, The Pike At Rainbow Harbor, Shoreline Village, plus four distinctive museums and two historic ranchos.

Easy Accessibility

Getting to Long Beach has never been easier with service from three major airports. Los Angeles International Airport and Orange County Airports are less than 30 minutes away, and Long Beach Airport is just seven minutes from downtown. Set to be complete in 2013 is Long Beach Airport's \$140 million modernization project, which includes a new parking structure, ramp improvements, gates and a concourse with a central garden.

I&FMM

The Urban Waterfront Playground

Experience Unconventional

Meet the City that doesn't do Ordinary. Chic. Casual. Modern. Retro. Hot, sunny days. Bright, electric nights. It's the unmistakable contrasts and sweet contradictions that make Long Beach a city apart from the rest. So when hosting your next event, go where a world of possibilities await just a few sandy steps from your beach towel – because in Long Beach, whatever you do, you're in for the unconventional. visitlongbeach.com



LONG BEACH
CALIFORNIA



GABE KUTI
Director of Sales

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Henderson, NV 89044
866-551-1540
gkuti@themresort.com
www.TheMResort.com



Facts & Features

Guest Rooms: 390

Meeting Space: 92,000 sf

Special Services & Amenities:

M Resort features a four-star spa and salon, fitness center, restaurants and unique wine cellar as well as a 100,000-sf pool piazza.

M Resort Spa Casino

Selecting a venue for your meeting is about choosing what's right for both your business and your attendees. The choice is about more than the square footage of the convention center or the view from the rooms. It's about choosing a venue equipped with the right team — a team that connects the dots from start to finish offering not only expertise, but creativity so you maximize your meeting dollar and your objectives.

Four-Star Service

With a Forbes Travel Guide Four Star rating and a four-star team to match, the M Resort is a natural choice. Located on the famous Las Vegas Strip just a few miles from McCarran International Airport, the M Resort is driven by a personal, hands-on service approach.

"As any planner will tell you, there are so many factors that go into choosing a property to work with, and service certainly tops the list," said Jeff McMurdie, practice lead for Novell Inc. "The staff at the M is extremely pleasant to work with, accommodating to our needs, and at the end of our conference

delivered on every single commitment. It's apparent that the team enjoys their jobs and all have a common goal of pleasing the customers at top-of-mind."

Meeting Facilities

With its passion for guest service and appealing boutique size, the M Resort is perfectly equipped for small to mid-sized meetings and events. The resort, which was built with environmental sustainability in mind, deliv-

ers more than 92,000 sf of open and dynamic meeting space including a 25,000-sf pavilion, 17,400-sf ballroom with built-in stage, multiple reception areas and a convenient business center.

Accommodations

Catering to the needs of planners and attendees is at the heart of the property and doesn't stop at the meeting and conference center. Exceptionally appointed guest rooms offer a luxurious retreat, complete with spa bathrooms and conveniences like separate tub and shower, wireless connectivity and complimentary shuttle service to and from McCarran International Airport and the heart of The Las Vegas Strip.

Four-Star Spa

Attendees will enjoy the M Resort's four star Spa Mio, which is one of only 104 Forbes Four Star-rated spas worldwide. Relax and rejuvenate before or after a day of meetings with a menu of spa services and treatments, including massages and facials as well as salon and barber services. The 23,000-sf world-class spa also includes a state-of-the-art exercise facility offering exceptional views of the pool and outdoor entertainment area.

Dining Options

Providing a portfolio of dining options, planners can choose to utilize any of the restaurants in addition to the meeting and conference space. From LUX, a dynamic event space located on the 16th floor offering expansive city views, to the below-ground Hostile Grape wine cellar, bar and tasting room, the M Resort team will plan your meeting with personalized service and flawless execution.

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— Lynette Owens, Executive Director FSMA/AFMP

Plan your next meeting or special event at the **four star resort** that has everything you want all under one roof. M Resort is a boutique retreat just 10 minutes from McCarran International Airport on the famous Las Vegas Strip.

Impeccable service is combined with thoughtfully designed facilities that offer breathtaking views from the conference center. M Resort currently features more than 60,000 square feet of open and dynamic conference space in addition to the new M Pavilion, offering 25,000 square feet of innovative and flexible space for your expo or special event. All of M Resort's meeting venues have been created for optimum customization, technology and connectivity to meet your needs.

Meeting and event attendees will also enjoy our uniquely-designed guest rooms, suites, seven signature restaurants, world-class spa, plus all the excitement that a true entertainment complex and meeting destination has to offer.

Speak with one of our Sales Professionals NOW
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Citywide Facts & Features

Guest Rooms: More than 22,000 rooms within one mile of the convention center.

Meeting Space:

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center: 1 million sf; 60,300-sf Great Hall, 25,400-sf prefunction; 4,660-sf junior ballroom
Mercedes-Benz Superdome: 269,000 sf
New Orleans Arena: 21,250 sf

New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau

Bring your meeting or event to New Orleans and you'll find more than one-of-a-kind hotels, restaurants and conference facilities in America's most unique city. A walkable place where centuries old architecture is the backdrop for a culture so invigorating, it'll rouse your spirit. You'll discover a commitment to the future that inspires everyone who visits or meets in the most authentic city in America — New Orleans.

Award-Winning Destination

New Orleans welcomed 8.75 million visitors in 2011, the highest numbers in the city's history and an increase of 5.6 percent from 2010. In addition to hundreds of prominent conventions, New Orleans hosts major events such as Mardi Gras and the French Quarter Festival, known as the largest free music festival in the South. This year, the city also hosted the 2012 NCAA Men's Final Four.

New Orleans placed in the Top 25 Traveler's Choice World Destinations as well as the Top 25 Traveler's Choice U.S. Destinations. The New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation launched GO NOLA, the first official visitor app for iPhone. The free app has an augmented reality feature that identifies landmarks through the phone's camera.

Cuisine and Music

Time in New Orleans isn't kept in hours or days, but in meals. When dining in New Orleans, experience a culinary adventure that spans a wide array of cuisines. From Cajun and Creole to soul and contemporary French, award-

winning chefs create food for your taste buds and nourishment for your soul.

Music is where New Orleans' first settlers found common ground, and no other city loves music more. Nowhere else does it occur more effortlessly or more joyously. Jazz was born in New Orleans while rhythm and blues, gospel, Cajun and zydeco all express the rich melting pot that is the city's heritage.

Convention & Sports Facilities

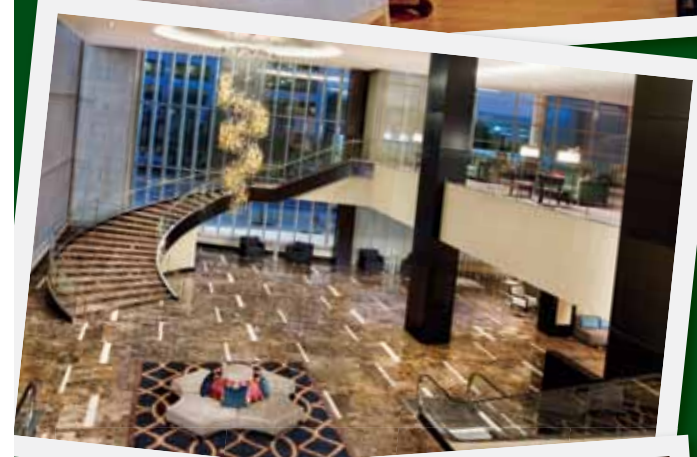
The Great Hall of the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center will debut in January 2013, featuring a 60,300-sf divisible Great Hall, 25,400-sf multiuse prefunction space, with hotel-like appointments throughout. The impressive 1-million-sf Center's features include a 4,660-sf junior ballroom, complete with a 3,420-sf rooftop terrace, a 980-sf indoor balcony and a 5,700-sf executive club lounge.

Two major sporting events arriving in New Orleans next year include Super Bowl XLVII on February 3, 2013 in the newly named Mercedes-Benz Superdome, home of the New Orleans Saints; and the 2013 NCAA Women's Final Four. In 2014, New Orleans will host the 63rd NBA All-Star Game at the New Orleans Arena, home to the New Orleans Hornets.

Top Hotels

Cvent named five New Orleans hotels in their Top 100 Meeting Hotels in the U.S. including Sheraton Hotel New Orleans, Hyatt Regency New Orleans, Hilton New Orleans Riverside, New Orleans Marriott and The Roosevelt New Orleans, a Waldorf Astoria Hotel. With the finest convention hotels and venues anywhere in the world, the experience of meeting in New Orleans has never been better.

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This year, New Orleans' downtown hotel inventory increased significantly. And, from the airport to the French Quarter, small boutique hotels to national chains are upgrading and updating their properties—some are even adding new nightclubs and restaurants.

Famous dining establishments. Authentic music. World-class meeting facilities and hotels—just steps from the French Quarter. Let the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau help you plan your next meeting. Visit www.neworleansmeeting.com. We make it easy.



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Sales@PVResorts.com
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Facts & Features

Guest Rooms: 250

Meeting Space: 25,000 sf
and 17 meeting rooms.

Special Services & Amenities:

Atlantic surf, beach, pools,
two golf courses, 15 tennis
courts, oceanfront gym, award-
winning spa, four restaurants,
three lounges, 10 shops and
boutiques, business center,
24-hour room service.

Ponte Vedra Inn & Club

Framed by graceful palms and rolling dunes, the oceanfront Ponte Vedra Inn & Club is nestled in the picturesque seaside village of Ponte Vedra Beach, just 20 miles southeast of Jacksonville, FL. Since its celebrated opening in 1928, this AAA Five Diamond rated resort has served as host to some of the nation's most influential meetings and conferences.

Lodging

Ponte Vedra's stunning coastline serves as dramatic backdrop for 250 luxurious rooms and suites, most enjoying breathtaking Atlantic Ocean views. The award-winning interiors combine exquisite furnishings, rich fabrics and classic details to create an atmosphere of sheer indulgence. Each spacious room features king or queen bedding, cable TV, stocked honor bar, twice-daily maid service, complimentary high-speed Internet access, morning newspaper and coffee maker.

Meetings Blueprint

Annual accolades such as the World Class Award and the Award of Excellence attest to the resort's favored status among meeting planners.

More than 25,000 sf of flexible function space (17 rooms), ideally suits groups from 10-450 people. Featured are two ballrooms, a cherry-paneled executive boardroom, vaulted ceilings, exquisite chandeliers, imported marble floors, silver service, crystal, china and flex-back conference chairs for the maximum in meeting comfort. Available support services include a meeting coordinator, audio-visual rental equipment and an onsite business center.

Recreation & Attractions

Blessed with year-round sunshine and a pleasant climate to match, Ponte Vedra is a favorite choice among outdoor enthusiasts. Recreational pleasures include the Atlantic surf, beach, golf, tennis, pools and fitness center. Additionally, biking, fishing, sailing and horseback riding combine to create a year-round recreational paradise. A luxurious spa, the region's largest, features peaceful surroundings, ultra-modern facilities and an impressive selection of more than 100 beauty and pampering services. For those seeking a cure from ordinary shopping, the resort features 10 shops and boutiques

Dining Delights

Great resorts are often defined by their great dining experiences. From the elegant sophistication of classic cuisine to the casualness of traditional fare, Ponte Vedra's four restaurants cater to a variety of tastes and moods in distinctive and imaginative locations. Catered group events include beachfront cook-outs, country-western-style jamborees, black-tie affairs, putting green coffee breaks and "closest to the hole" cocktail receptions. Twenty-four-hour room service is a featured convenience.

On the Map

The resort is 31 miles (a 35-minute drive) from the recently modernized Jacksonville International Airport. Eight major and regional airlines provide more than 100 daily flights to and from most major cities.

Time honored and steeped in more than 80 years of tradition, the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club successfully combines award-winning lodging, amenities and activities with a warm and friendly atmosphere.

I&FMM

OCEANFRONT EXCELLENCE



A landmark since its celebrated opening in 1928, the **Ponte Vedra Inn & Club** proudly presides as the grand dame of northeast Florida resort hotels. Featured are 250 luxurious rooms and suites, the Atlantic surf, beach, golf, tennis, fitness, spa, fine dining, shopping and a AAA Five-Diamond award for hospitality excellence.

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Director of Sales

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Facts & Features

Guest Suites: 1,495

Meeting Space: 10,000 sf.

Special Services & Amenities:

Unique meeting and event spaces offering personalized services. Crystals, the premiere shopping destination in Las Vegas.

Vdara Hotel & Spa

Vdara Hotel & Spa, a AAA Four Diamond and Forbes Four-Star Award-winning internationally inspired all-suite boutique hotel, is designed for those who love the energy and excitement of Las Vegas but prefer to enjoy it in an exclusive, non-gaming, smoke-free and sustainable environment.

Accommodations & Amenities

Vdara's 1,495 suites are luxuriously appointed with open floor plans and horizontal windows that deliver expansive views of the city and mountains. Ideally located next to ARIA Resort & Casino and connected by a pedestrian walkway to Bellagio, Vdara combines contemporary interior spaces with the very latest modern amenities and services. Vdara has achieved LEED Gold certification and received a "5 Green Keys" rating, the highest honor possible from the Green Key Eco-Rating Program.

The comfortable suites include open floor plans in one-, two- and corner-bedroom suites, and two-story penthouse suites.

Vdara boasts amenities that rival those at the world's greatest resorts. Spa & Salon Vdara features an 18,000-sf, two-level Spa, Salon and Fitness Center. Market Café Vdara features a gourmet coffee bar, pastries, paninis, and a menu of freshly prepared breakfast and lunch items.

Meeting Facilities

Vdara's exceptional and intimate service extends to the meeting spaces, specializing in smaller groups from 10 to 300 guests. Meetings held at Vdara are handled by experienced staff, in

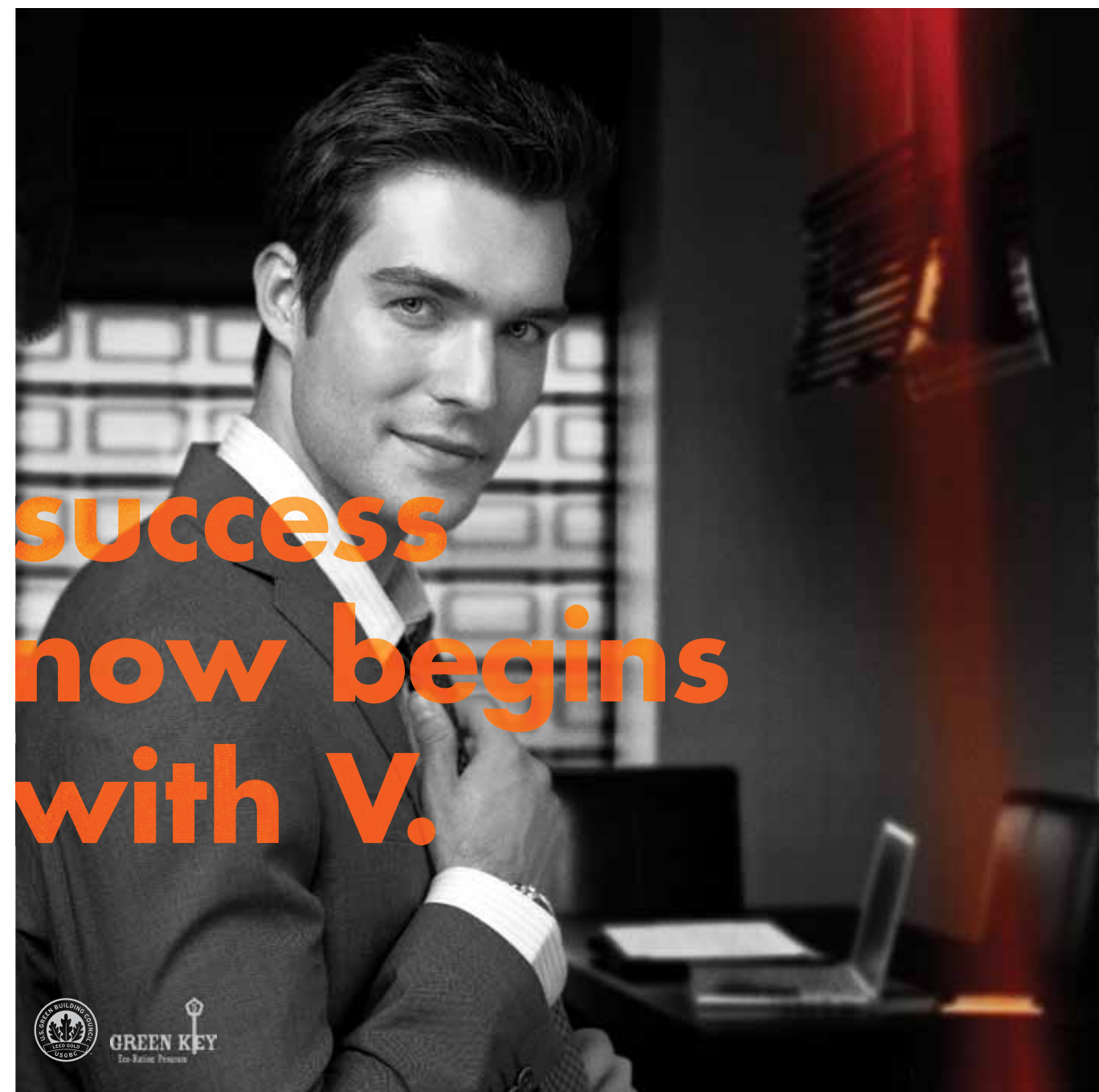
spaces designed with nature and flexibility in mind. The 10,000 sf of ground-level conference space provides a convenient setting for incentive meetings, general sessions, or food and beverage gatherings. The only thing planners have to think about is what they would like our chefs to put on their customized menus.

The meeting space includes a 4,000-sf ballroom, three additional meeting rooms averaging 800 sf each, a 14-person executive boardroom and a stunning prefunction area. Vdara extends the unparalleled offerings and professional service for which MGM Resorts International is renowned worldwide.

Easily accessible from Vdara's main entrance, the refined meeting space boasts state-of-the-art technology offerings and flexibility. The space is equipped with the latest technology, including built-in audio-visual systems with Crestron control of lighting, sound and video; drop-down, high-definition projectors and screens; patchable fiber, Ethernet, IPT V, broadband and wireless capabilities; and flexible power distribution.

For those who prefer the flexibility of an outdoor event, Pool & Lounge Vdara can also be used for private events providing a dynamic backdrop of CityCenter and the Las Vegas Strip. Enjoy a more intimate setting at Bar Vdara, a luxurious, yet playful and sophisticated space situated in the heart of Vdara's lobby. With more than 4,000 sf of meeting space, Silk Road, a unique setting, offers a flexible meeting space with stunning décor.

Vdara's experienced and professional convention services and catering staff assist in the entire planning process from décor and entertainment to creating tailored menus. **I&FMM**



An exceptional destination for meetings and events, Vdara Hotel & Spa at CityCenter is a non-gaming, smoke-free, eco-friendly, all-suite hotel. Ideally situated between ARIA Resort & Casino™ and Bellagio® on the Las Vegas Strip, it's the perfect host for up to 300 guests with 10,000 square feet of flexible meeting space. Offering a spacious rooftop pool for private events, on-site audiovisual experts and full-service catering, Vdara will leave you experiencing success like never before.

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Facts & Features

Guest Suites: 7,100

Meeting Space: 2.25 million sf

Special Services & Amenities: Business Center, Venetian Showroom, Canyon Ranch SpaClub, nightly entertainment, 30+ restaurants.

The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino

The comfort and productivity of attendees is front and center at The Venetian and The Palazzo, two Five Diamond resorts in the heart of the Las Vegas Strip, where networking opportunities abound and every guest room is a plush suite. Add the seemingly unlimited all-in-one-place resources of 7,100 guest suites and more than 2.25 million sf of convention space, and you've got the ultimate convention destination.

Meeting Facilities

The Venetian convention space features one of the world's largest pillarless ballrooms at 85,000 sf, with an additional 298 meeting, conference and boardrooms. In addition, the adjacent Sands Expo features state-of-the-art convention facilities, with 1.9 million sf of newly renovated meeting and show space.

Together, the two hotels create the largest green-certified hotel property in the world. The hotels feature an unrivaled green meeting and convention program that offers a selection of standard environmentally responsible services.

Dining and More

To facilitate networking, attendees can enjoy delectable dining created by a host of James Beard award-winning chefs in more than 30 onsite restaurants, more than 130 boutiques, dazzling entertainment and the calming retreat of Canyon Ranch SpaClub — renowned as the ideal place to relax, renew and re-energize.

From Emeril Lagasse's Delmonico to Thomas Keller's Bouchon, Tom Ma-

loney's Aquaknox to Wolfgang Puck's Postrio, The Venetian's sumptuous Las Vegas fine-dining options promise to satisfy every palate.

The experience begins the moment attendees enter The Venetian and The Palazzo as the most exquisite resort experience in Las Vegas unfolds. The Venetian, a must-see, gotta-share-a-picture-with-friends experience, overflows with the artful, authentic charm and romance of old-world Venice. Every painstaking detail has been recreated, from the beautiful frescoes of the Colonnade to the serenading gondoliers winding their way down the Grand Canal.

At The Palazzo, modern Italian design welcomes visitors to a world where impeccable service and unforgettable ambience are at every turn. The Venetian and The Palazzo were named in the Travel Channel list of "the ultimate 10 hotels in the world."

Accommodations

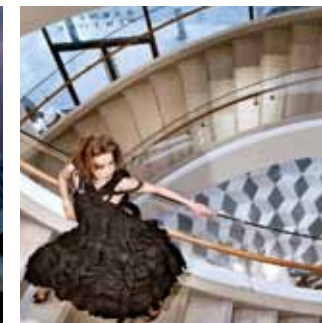
The breathtaking accommodations at The Venetian and The Palazzo offer a degree of luxury unavailable anywhere else. Suites average 700 sf — roughly twice the size of the typical Las Vegas hotel room — each designed to facilitate the business needs of meeting attendees.

Also new in 2012 is The Venetian and The Palazzo Premio Travel Rewards program, a new incentive program that leverages the most popular destination in the world — Las Vegas. The potential to experience Las Vegas as a winner is the ultimate travel incentive.

Located minutes from McCarran International Airport, The Venetian and The Palazzo offer the finest in meeting space, accommodations and amenities, all set in a luxurious resort. **I&FMM**



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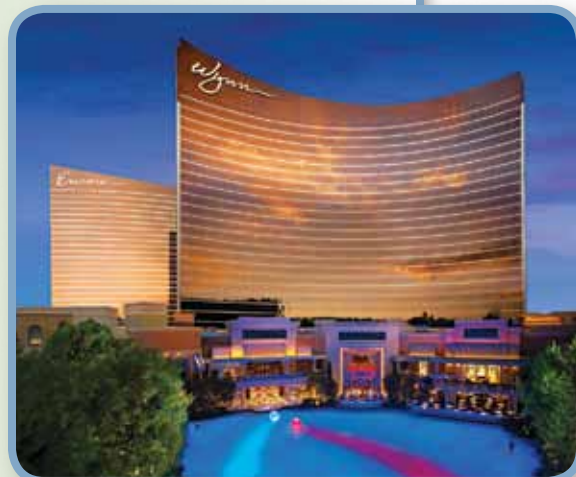


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Facts & Features

Guest Rooms/Suites: Wynn — 2,716 and Encore — 2,033

Meeting Space: 260,000 sf

Special Services & Amenities: High-tech support, a full-service business center, high-speed Internet access, spacious sunlit meeting spaces, state-of-the-art audio-visual capabilities and two technically supported stages are available.

Wynn Las Vegas

Wynn Las Vegas and Encore are Las Vegas' ultimate business meets pleasure destinations. Beyond the 260,000 sf of meeting space; Wynn and Encore offer 19 restaurants, two award-winning spas and salons, pools, designer boutiques, breathtaking shows, a sprawling golf course and world-class nightlife.

Meeting Facilities

The services and facilities of Wynn Las Vegas and Encore are designed to surpass the expectations of professional meeting planners worldwide. Their Meetings Concierge and Convention Services teams will provide all of the onsite support one would need — from entertainment production services and equipment rentals to floral arrangements and gourmet catering.

Their facilities include 21 meeting rooms, four boardrooms and three column-free ballrooms; with many of the spaces offering floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the pools and gardens or the Wynn golf course. In addition, their highly successful nightlife venues — XS, Surrender, Tryst and Encore Beach Club — are available for private events as well. From the smallest business meeting to major incentive events or conventions, Wynn and Encore will make it an affair to remember.

Accommodations

For attendees, Wynn and Encore are the perfect retreat. Their resort rooms — which range from 640 sf up to a luxurious 5,800 sf in their Forbes Five Star award-winning Tower Suites — will feel like a home away from home. When it

comes to dining, they've combined their passion for food with that of the world's culinary masters who not only plan the menus, but prepare them as well. From fine dining to casual fare, their restaurants present creations that bring everyone to the table.

Ways to Escape

While Las Vegas offers plenty of ways to escape, nothing compares to what attendees will discover at Wynn and Encore. Le Rêve — The Dream combines provocative choreography with gravity-defying aerial feats in their Aqua Theater-in-the-round. In the intimate Encore Theater, Garth Brooks takes audiences on a journey through a lifetime of hits and memories. Or for those who would rather lose themselves in the music of today's most sought-after DJs; Tryst, XS and Surrender combine sleek style with exclusivity, while the Encore Beach Club turns night into day with its lush surroundings and European-inspired vibe.

Surprisingly, some people want to relax when they visit Las Vegas, and Wynn and Encore provide plenty of opportunities to do just that. Designed by Steve Wynn and world-renowned architect Tom Fazio; their 18-hole, par-70 golf course features dramatic elevations once thought impossible to create on The Strip.

Luxury Is on the Agenda

Their shopping esplanades have cornered the market on style featuring coveted brands including Manolo Blahnik, Chanel, Hermès, Dior and Ferrari. And their Forbes Five Star award-winning spas offer complete treatment menus, salons to look one's best for any event and modern fitness centers.

At Wynn and Encore, luxury is on the agenda. **I&FMM**



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Getting Golf Events Right

The Ocean Course at Kiawah Island Golf Resort, one of five championship courses.

Photo courtesy of Kiawah Island Golf Resort

Winning Advice From Meeting and Golf Pros

By Karen Brost

Never underestimate the power of golf in achieving your corporate goals. Just ask Lorraine Struck, corporate event planning manager for Chubb Group of Insurance Companies in Warren, NJ. She has been responsible for planning the annual Chubb Charity Challenge golf tournament for the past 13 years. Since its inception in 2000, the event has raised nearly \$10 million for charities across the U.S.

Chubb's Million-Dollar Charity Event

The event begins with a series of local tournaments held by the company's branches across the U.S. "What is unique about this is we are ask-

ing our top-tier agents to pay \$2,500 to join this tournament," Struck explains. "By donating their \$2,500 they are choosing a charity that their team is playing for. This is unheard of in the insurance world, because with most of the incentives that you're familiar with, we wine and dine our agents at no cost to them. We took a big risk because we didn't know what the reception would be. Early on, we probably had 20 teams. Now we're maxed out at 45 raising nearly \$1 million each year."

The winning team from each local tournament competes in the final tournament held in October. This year's tournament will be held at the Ritz-Carlton Lodge, Reynolds Plantation in Greensboro, GA. Last year, the site was the Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort in Naples, FL, and in 2010, it was held at Kiawah Island Golf Resort on Kiawah Island, SC, where the tournament is slated to return in 2014.

"Chubb underwrites the cost of all of the 45 local events and the final event," Struck explains. "We take care of their airfare, three nights' stay in the hotel, two rounds of golf, all food and beverage. The money that the agents contribute is all earmarked for charity."

Chubb also partners with Taylor-Made and Adidas to set up a pro shop onsite at the final tournament. "Instead of doing room drops each night, we give them gift certificates, so when they check in they go right into our pro shop and they're able to buy equipment, shirts, bags, hats, anything they want, up to \$150. We found that people that are able to pick and choose exactly what they want in their own size are happier."

"At the end of the day, at that final awards night when we announce the winner, there isn't a dry eye in the room because of the charity impact."

Lorraine Struck, Corporate Event Planning Manager
Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, Warren, NJ

Photo by Scott Janelli

"When you put together a large tournament, you need multiple courses to do anything over about 140 people."



John Haskins
Director of Golf Group Sales
Kiawah Island Golf Resort
Kiawah Island, SC

She described her site selection process. "When we first started this I had strict budgets, and I was looking for upscale venues that fit and reflected Chubb's brand and that upscale clients would want to go to. So I went into a multiyear contract with the Ritz-Carlton hotels, and that afforded me the option of keeping golf pricing flat for five years. That was an advantage to me."

She says she looks for resorts that have two high-end golf courses onsite because tournament attendees play each course one time during the two-day event. "They just walk outside the back of the hotel, and they're on the golf course. I've minimized transportation and logistical issues."

Half of the tournament's proceeds are distributed to charities named at the local tournaments and the other half is donated to the charities played for at the final tournament. "At the end of that two-day tournament we have a final awards banquet where we announce the winners. The awards are

\$50,000 to the top team all the way to \$5,500 to the last-place team, so everyone's a winner," Struck explains.

Last year alone, more than 50 charities benefited from the Chubb Charity Challenge. "It not only includes the major national charities like the National Cancer Society, Autism Speaks and the Boys & Girls Clubs, it is smaller local charities like one right in our backyard — Bonnie Brae Home for Boys. Last year, our winner was Misty Meadow Mitey Riders. It's a horse farm in Charlotte where disabled children go. It's therapeutic. The beauty of this is that there are a lot of well-known charities and a lot of local ones, which enable the playing teams to give back to their own community.

"One other unique thing is they're all foursomes at the local level. When that team qualifies for the final, the Chubb branch manager joins them and it becomes a fivesome, so Chubb is helping their team win money for the charity."

She noted other business advantages of hosting the tournament. "Our CEO, our CFO and all of our senior people come because it provides us with an opportunity to network with our top agents and be more visible in the field." The event also gives top-level executives the opportunity to meet more customers, since brokers can include a client on their team as



Photo courtesy of The Broadmoor

“We really promote a 7:30 a.m. shotgun or a 1:30 p.m. shotgun where they can do their meetings and the golf.”

Russ Miller, Director of Golf
The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, CO



long as they’re a Chubb personal-line or commercial-line client.

Managing Critical Issues

Each branch organizes its own local tournament, which Struck manages from afar. “I think communication is the most important piece, because each year you may have new players. I build a very comprehensive website that my Chubb people can go to 24/7 if a question comes up, such as ‘Can I replace a player after a team is qualified?’” She explained that while maintaining consistency is critical, “There are always going to be exceptions to the rule and different questions that arise, and we try and handle them fairly. These are our best agents. You don’t always want to say no when a request comes up. It’s evaluated on a case-by-case basis.”

The website also describes how to pick a qualifying charity. “They have to be a 501(c)(3), which is a non-profit designated by the IRS. We can’t give it to their child’s grammar school or soccer league. It has to be a bona fide charity.” She also notes, “the agents cannot write this off as a charitable

contribution because they’re really getting a day of golf for it. Their checks are made out to Chubb, not the charity. Chubb divvies out the money afterwards, based on the standings. I work closely with our internal audit department to ensure that no money is left behind.”

Even though Struck is an experienced meeting planner and member of Financial & Insurance Conference Planners, she knows her limits. “I am hands-on for the entire event, but I do hire an outside golf management firm. I do not know golf. Because so much money is at stake, we had to take into consideration the integrity of the tournament. We had to be above board, so I hired a golf management team to handle all of the golf logistics — sourcing out everything, pairing up the teams and also verifying handicaps and scores from previous tournaments.

“I’ve used the same company from New Jersey for the past 13 years,” she continues. “I call them my ‘golf go-to guys.’ They come onsite with me and I don’t worry about anything golf-related. My role is checking (attend-

ees) in, their rooming list, their food and beverage, amenities, the normal things you would do with an event.” She notes that having golf experts involved is especially crucial when questions arise on sensitive issues such as handicaps.

“We do have one rule in place, though. The same team can’t return more than two years in a row,” she notes. “In the beginning, we were seeing the same teams winning over and over again. We didn’t want that for the event. We wanted more people to buy in, and the only way that they could buy in is if they felt that it was running properly.”

Struck says it is very rewarding for her to plan this event. “We bring an extensive video team with us onsite and they capture the two days of golf. They also include footage from all of the charities. We have it displayed prominently in the lobby. We don’t want to forget the reason we’re there. It’s to help the charities. There’s great camaraderie, it’s good fun, and you’re at beautiful resorts, but at the end of the day, at that final awards night when we announce the winner, there isn’t a dry eye in the room because of the charity impact and the videos that we show.”

Pointers From the Golf Pros

Russ Miller, director of golf for The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, CO, says it’s important for meeting planners to start by evaluating what they want to accomplish with their golf event. “If it’s just to have fun, allow us to set up the golf course as easy as possible because you don’t want to be out there all day. You don’t want them to be frustrated. Golf is a hard game. On the other hand, we’ve had some meetings here that had very, very serious golfers, and they wanted to play a layout that the Senior Open played here at The Broadmoor a couple of years ago. It helps us to know what they’re trying to accomplish, and we’ll set up the golf course accordingly.

“It’s very easy to have a meeting

and a golf tournament in the same day,” he notes. “You can do a meeting from 8 a.m. to noon and have a golf outing from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. or vice-versa. I think where meeting planners get in trouble sometimes is they want to do one or the other from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and it kind of messes up the whole day because you can’t fit in both. We really promote a 7:30 a.m. shotgun or a 1:30 p.m. shotgun where they can do their meetings and the golf.”

Time for Teambuilding

Miller says there are ways to work golf in even if there’s no time in the agenda for a full tournament.” Let’s say they only have two hours. We can design a clinic to help them with their games or do a skills challenge where they do different stations of putting, chipping, whatever it may be. If they want to award winners, we can do that, or we can just let them measure against themselves. Time is the main issue nowadays, so we really have to be creative with those types of things. Honestly, we get as much good feedback with clinics as we actually do with them playing golf.”

Advance Planning

Miller recommends booking a tournament nine months to one year in advance to ensure the best choice of courses and times of day. Mike Griggs, director of golf at Loews Ventana Canyon resort in Tucson, says that after the initial booking, it’s critical to keep the golf pro updated as head counts change. “Maybe 90 days out we’ll be calling them and saying, ‘What do your numbers look like now?’ Just communicate with us. We like to be within 10–15

percent 60 days out. If an outing is going bust, let us know so we can plan. We can sell those times if we have enough warning.”

Clubs: to Bring or Not to Bring?

Miller says that given the cost and hassle of traveling with golf clubs, rentals are on the rise. “It’s really changed,” he notes. “I would say about 30 percent of golfers now use rental clubs. We’ve increased our number of rental sets to 125 sets. We used to have 50 when I started 15 years ago. They’re brand new clubs each year, so it’s well worth it not to have to hassle with

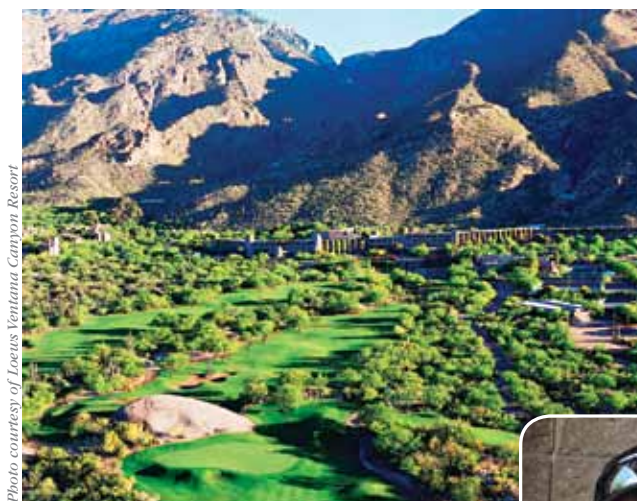


Photo courtesy of Loews Ventana Canyon Resort

“It’s even better if (planners) admit they don’t know anything about golf. Then that tells us where we need to help them out.”



Mike Griggs, Director of Golf
Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, Tucson, AZ

their own clubs. We have them pre-loaded for them and ready to go.”

What’s Included?

Jason Johns, golf sales manager at Rosen Shingle Creek in Orlando, FL, says, “Make sure you clarify what you would like to have included for your players and make that clear with our event staff.” A prime example is that all-important beverage cart. “We can

offer multiple items,” he says. “We have hard liquor, and we even have wine on the beverage cart now, so it can get pricey.” If the company is picking up the tab, planners can choose which items the beverage cart will carry. “We have a master account authorization form and it lists, item by item, what’s on the beverage cart. In order for a client to have anything charged to their master account, they need to have that signed and sent back so there is no miscommunication.”

The Non-golfing Planner

“A lot of times the meeting planners don’t know anything about golf, which is fine,” says Griggs. “It’s even better if they admit they don’t know anything about golf. Then that tells us where we need to help them out. We’ll walk them through everything they need to do.”

Choosing the Best Format

“Most corporate outings typically have some type of shotgun start if they have more than 30–40 players,” Griggs explains. With a shotgun start, teams are assigned to all 18 holes so everyone can start at the same time. “The most popular format is a four-person scramble,” he adds. “A four-person scramble is where everybody hits their tee ball, and then they go to the best shot, hit again from there and go to the best shot. The beginner doesn’t feel bad if they hit bad shots because they’re always going to the best shot, and that speeds up play a lot.

“Quite frankly,” Griggs continues, “very few of them want to play their own ball when they come to a corporate event. They don’t want to be embarrassed. They want to go out and have fun.” He says that if the group is going to have more than 60–70 players, planners should allow at least five hours for the tournament.



“Make sure you clarify what you would like to have included for your players and make that clear with our event staff.”

Jason Johns, Golf Sales Manager
Rosen Shingle Creek, Orlando, FL



“We also give them the option to have contests for longest drives, closest to the pin and longest putts,” he adds. “If it’s for charity, it’s nice to sell mulligans, which makes more money for the charity. A mulligan just gives you an extra shot. It’s like getting a do-over.”

The Fine Art of Pairing

“The manner in which you pair different groups together can be strategic,” explains John Haskins, director of golf group sales at Kiawah Island Golf Resort, home of the 2012 PGA Championship. “Case in point, if a company is putting together a golf group, and their goal is for their group of 20 sales guys to get in front of a bunch of potential buyers, they might want to make sure that each sales guy is in a foursome with three potential buyers.”

It’s also important to decide upfront whether the pairings are carved in stone or flexible. “A lot of times when they get right on the staging area, people will say ‘I want to go over there and play with them,’” Griggs says. “We don’t make that decision for them. Somebody is going to have to say ‘Yes, they can switch’ or ‘The pairings are what they are.’”

Timing Is Everything.

Haskins recommends checking what sports are going to be on TV during the tournament. “Generally, if you’re an avid golfer, you’re also an avid sports follower. Always make sure you have a couple of extra TVs on hand if there’s a large golf event going on. They want to know what went on in sports when they’ve been out on the course all day.”

Haskins says another factor to consider is seasonality. “That’s something that planners who aren’t used to planning golf events won’t consider as much. The maintenance schedule that every course follows is different. They do what’s called aerification in the summer, and then they do overseeding in the winter for courses that stay open all year long. If you’re looking up north, you’re going to have courses that are closed down for a significant portion of the year, about four or five months. Then there are courses that have severe frost delays, which can keep you from playing your first round of golf until 10:30 or 11. If it’s in October or November where they have not overseeded and they’ve allowed it to go dormant, the course is visually not what it would be in peak season. It’s going to be dead grass.”

One Course or Two?

“When you put together a large tournament, you need multiple courses to do anything over about 140 people,” Haskins says. He adds that if the property has multiple courses, there’s another factor to consider. “Is there a flagship course that is leaps and bounds better than the other courses?” If it’s a two-day tournament, that’s not a problem because golfers can play each course once. But if it’s a one-day event, “You have to run two different tournaments,” Haskins states.

The Benefits of a Buyout

“You also have to consider if you want to be the only group that’s on the course that day,” Haskins says. “If so, you have to look at a course buyout. Different courses have different policies, but the main thing is seasonality. Not many courses will allow you to buy out during a peak season on a Saturday.”

“When you buy out a course, you have the ability to play golf as much as you can on that course that day,” Haskins continues. “You can schedule your original shotgun start for your 144 players, have them finish by about 1 or 1:30, go in and do your awards ceremony, and then you can send people to play more golf if they want to. As long as there’s light out and you want to play, you can play, and there’s no additional cost. In golf terms, they call it an ‘emergency nine’ to go back out.”

Tee-Off Time

When all the plans are in place and the big day draws near, it’s time to let the golf pros do what they do best. “It’s important that they get us the names of the players and the pairings they want,” Griggs notes. “I’ll take care of everything from there. I’ll make you look really good, and I’ll give you all the credit for it.”

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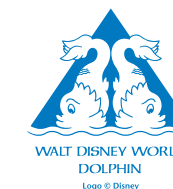


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Buccaneer Island at Ocean Reef Club, Key Largo, FL, is ideal for special corporate events along the waterfront.

At a time when it seems that more and more domestic destinations are finding their way into the meeting mix, a handful of coveted, time-tested options remain constant. And one of them — a perennial favorite for as long as there have been meetings — is Florida, known far and wide for its fabled beach-and-sun benefits.

“Depending on the time of year, one of the reasons we regularly use



Scott Coble
Executive Vice President and North Florida Regional President
Wells Fargo
Jacksonville, FL

“Depending on the time of year, one of the reasons we regularly use Florida destinations is the favorable weather, especially in the winter. The benefit you get as a planner is an engagement boost.”

Florida destinations is the favorable weather, especially in the winter,” says Scott Coble, executive vice president and North Florida regional president at Wells Fargo in Jacksonville.

“Everybody likes to come to a Florida meeting in January or February. The benefit you get as a planner is an engagement boost, based on nice weather and the fact that people like

coming to Florida from colder climates during the cold months of the year. And because of that, we often have people who pay a little extra out of their own pocket to extend their time in Florida.”

And, Coble says, the golf courses and long list of activities add to the allure of the Sunshine State.

“And within Florida,” he says, “there are a number of good destinations that all have their own

personality.” Coble has hosted multiple Florida meetings in recent years in Orlando, Miami, Destin and on Amelia Island, outside Jacksonville. But no matter where he goes, he says, he always finds good value.

“It’s a matter of the overall value you get for each dollar spent, based on the total experience you get with a Florida meeting,” he says. “There are plenty of places where you can go and get more urban settings in the Northeast, or elsewhere in the country where you can have a great meeting, but the question you often have to ask is, ‘What’s it going to be like when you get outside the hotel or the meeting venue?’ And in that sense, Florida offers a lot of beauty and the opportunity for businesspeople to take some time to relax or stay active in a great climate. And those things are more and more important these days as companies pay more attention to the health and well-being of their meeting attendees.”

In March, Coble and Wells Fargo took advantage of just such an op-

portunity for some R&R when they hosted 40 attendees for a three-day, three-night meeting of senior Florida leaders from across the state at the AAA Four Diamond Omni Amelia Island Plantation. Although Coble has used the fabled retreat for years, he was impressed by its evolution since Omni acquired it in 2010.

The renowned property is now undertaking an \$85 million renovation project that will be completed next spring and include a 30,000-sf expansion of its conference center, which will feature a new 16,800 sf ballroom and additional prefunction space that will bring its total to 80,000 sf. The addition of 155 new guest rooms will bring its total to 404.

“The best thing that ever happened to the property was being taken over Omni, because more investment has gone in there, and they have paid great attention to delivering great service for meetings,” Coble says. “It’s remarkable. And for our most recent meeting, their senior leaders looked at us as an opportunity to develop more business, not just with our company, but also to build their reputation by having us go out and talk about how great the resort is and the great experience we had there.”

As a result, Coble says, his group received some of the most extraordinary service he has ever enjoyed. “They would ask us for feedback after each meal, then we would see changes and improvements from that

meal to the next meal or break,” he says. “And that is an attention to detail I have really never seen happen before. It was probably the best service I have ever experienced at a hotel.”

Near Jacksonville in St. Augustine is a well-known destination for Florida-bound groups: The Renaissance World Golf Village Resort, Convention Center and Beach Club. The 301-room, AAA Four Diamond resort is adjacent to the World Golf Hall of Fame: The two facilities deliver a total of 101,000 sf of function space. The resort’s newest outdoor function space is La Terrazza, which accommodates groups of up to 2,000 guests and features advanced technology and power capability, comparable to that provided in indoor ballrooms. In addition, attendees can now enjoy privileges at the exclusive Serenata Beach Club on Ponte Vedra Beach, which offers a 12,000-sf oceanfront clubhouse. The Renaissance resort provides a complimentary shuttle to and from Serenata for individual guests (based on availability), as well as to and from downtown St. Augustine, America’s oldest city. Founded in

“We always use Florida, and we look for resort hotels where everything is provided for so there’s no reason for anyone to ever leave the property. We want their undivided attention.”

Deborah English
Director of Client Services
Construction Services Group
AON Risk Solutions
Dallas, TX

1565, St. Augustine features the historic Castillo de San Marcos fort, the quaint St. George Street, Old Town Trolley Tour, St. Augustine History Museum, Spanish Quarter, The Oldest Wooden Schoolhouse and many other points of interest.

Ponte Vedra Beach is also home to the famed Ponte Vedra Inn & Club, built in 1928 and joined by the Lodge & Club in 1989. The 250-room Inn & Club offers more than 30,000 sf of function space, while the 66-room Lodge & Club offers 13,000 sf. The AAA Five Diamond property’s amenities include the largest spa in north Florida at 30,000 sf, 36 holes of golf, including links-style with ocean breezes, 15 tennis courts and four heated pools in a beachfront setting.

A Palm Beach Landmark

Another planner who favors Florida year in and year out is Deborah English, director of client services in the Construction Services Group at AON Risk Solutions in Dallas. She uses the Sunshine State every year, in fact, for one of the company’s most important meetings, a 2½-day global conference for senior executives from top construction contractors.

“Florida is the only destination we use for this meeting, because it’s in February, and we pull a lot of snowbirds out of the north,” English says. “So we always use Florida, and we look for resort hotels where everything is provided for so there’s no reason for anyone to ever leave the property. We want their undivided attention for the entire time we have them there.”

No. 6 is one of five oceanfront holes on the Ocean Links Golf Course at Omni Amelia Island Plantation.



This year, English used the AAA Four Diamond PGA National Resort & Spa in Palm Beach Gardens. It was her first experience with another of Florida's most acclaimed landmark hotels, hailed worldwide for its European-style spa and PGA Tour-quality golf courses.

"PGA National was the best resort we've used so far for this particular meeting," English says. "It's a world-class venue. As a planner, you go in with high expectations for your meeting and hope that the hotel will deliver. PGA National exceeded our expectations. It was just an outstanding experience."

Because golf always plays an integral role in AON's contractor conference, English selected PGA National partly because it hosts the annual Honda Classic PGA tournament and features five championship courses.

"For this particular meeting, we need a resort with a great golf course," English says. "It's a networking type meeting, so we use golf to facilitate interaction between company executives and clients. And PGA National features a 'chance of a lifetime' course to play on, just a week before the Honda Classic. And we also require a great spa. We look for a great atmosphere. And PGA National provided that."

The resort, which features 40,000



Rory McIlroy and caddie en route to winning the 2012 Honda Classic. Deborah English selected PGA National because it "features a 'chance of a lifetime' course...a week before the Honda Classic."

sf of meeting space, is currently in the final phase of a \$65 million renovation that includes makeovers for all of its 379 guest rooms, as well as the 19th Hole bar and grill — being renamed Bar 19 — and the Citrus Tree Café, as well as its 40,000-sf spa.

PGA National, which includes nine restaurants and lounges, also delivers first-class food and beverage, English says. "The F&B was phenomenal," she says. "I didn't hear a single complaint over the entire course of the three days we were there. We were completely pleased with everything we got. It was a great experience for everybody."

The attendee response was so good, in fact, that AON is going back to the resort next year.

"We do a review of our meeting each year to get client feedback and ideas about what they think we could have done better," English says. "We're always looking to improve the quality of the event and provide a very positive experience for our attendees and partners. And in our opinion, the venue itself is probably responsible for 90 percent of the success of the event in terms of providing a good atmosphere. And that was especially true this year with PGA National."

VIP Hideaway in the Keys

Yet another of Florida's most prized enclaves is the private, exclusive Ocean Reef Club, located in Key Largo, in the Upper Keys about an hour south of Miami International Airport.

For 60 years, Ocean Reef Club has been a personal hideaway for titans of industry and other wealthy Americans who largely kept it a well-protected secret. Because of its VIP membership, privacy is paramount and security is suited to the world leaders who have vacationed or attended conferences there.

The complex features 285 accommodations, more than a dozen restaurants, a 175-slip marina, a private airport, and 54 holes of golf, as well as 30,000 sf of meeting space.

For the last two years, global banking giant HSBC has held VIP meetings at Ocean Reef, planned by Skip Stano, CMP, the company's Yarmouth, ME-based former vice president of conferences and events. The three-day, two-night conference brought together 250 investors and the CEOs and CFOs of Latin American companies.

How did HSBC settle on relatively little-known Ocean Reef?

"One of our senior managers had spent time there and that was where he wanted to do the meeting last year," Stano says. And it worked so well that they went back this year."

Like his attendees, Stano was taken by the uniqueness of Ocean Reef. "It's a private club and resort," he says. "So it is very exclusive. And I also found out that it had also previously done the kind of very specialized, VIP program that we were doing. So they had specific experience with the type of event we were staging."

Because the club typically deals with Fortune 500 top executives and other global business leaders who are members and maintain residences there, Ocean Reef is singularly qualified to cater to very high-end, very private meetings.

The practical benefit of that exclusivity for a meeting group, Stano says, is a captive audience. "It's a very private, very exclusive environment and so it's just a different experience from a typical meeting resort in a typical meeting destination," he says. "And that suited the purpose of this particular meeting perfectly."

Because of the affluence and sophistication of Ocean Reef's normal day-to-day member clientele, the resort also provides an exceptional level of service and the attention to detail that such an audience demands as a matter of course.

"The sales manager, the conference service manager and the other key staff members all knew and understood what had to be done to make the event successful for us," Stano says. "So it wasn't like we were reinventing the wheel. That's important for an event like we did, because a lot of times when you go to a hotel for the first time, you are reinventing the wheel for your meeting. But Ocean Reef made it very easy for us to plan and manage the conference."

And although the complex is not configured like a typical meeting resort, it still can accommodate virtually any need, Stano says. "We needed more than 50 breakout rooms, so one thing they did was remove the furniture from sleeping rooms and turn them into meeting rooms," he says. "And then each participating corporation could have their own

meeting room where they could meet privately with our clients."

The complex also offered other logistical advantages. "It is quite spread out with its various 'villages,'" Stano says. "But they gave us a building right next to where we staged a general session every morning before we went off to our breakouts. And that was another convenient thing they were able to do for us. People just

walked out of the Town Hall ballroom after the general session and walked down the street to the building where the breakouts were."

Destin Area Beach Getaway

One of the Sunshine State's most popular beach destinations is the Destin area, south of the Florida Panhandle on the Gulf Coast. Destin features some of the most beautiful



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With 30,000 sf of flexible meeting space, there is an ideal space for every size group at the Ocean Reef Club, located about one hour south of Miami in Key Largo.



Photo courtesy of Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa.

and pristine beaches in the U.S. and another of Florida's most celebrated resorts, the 598-room Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa, which features 32,000 sf of meeting space.

In July, David Smart, director of Destinations, an in-house meeting planning company at Alfa Mutual Insurance and sister organization Alabama Farmers Federation, in Montgomery, AL, used the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa — a longtime favorite on his list of destination resorts — for a three-night incentive program for 220 qualifiers, plus another 520 spouses, children and guests.

"We have used Hilton Sandestin many times over the years," Smart says. "The hotel and the entire area just provide a very relaxing atmosphere where you can do anything you could ever want to do, from the water park to boat trips to fishing or golf and tennis."

Smart and his attendees also have high regard for the Hilton Sandestin's amenities. "The F&B is consistently excellent," he says. "There is also a very good range of restaurants, from casual beachside dining and bars to fine dining in a top quality steak house onsite. But there's also a grab-and-go facility called Picnic by the pool and a very nice restaurant for breakfast. And the Serenity by the Sea spa is also top-notch, which is another thing that's very important to us."

Harbor Nights on the Piazza at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando Resort features wine, gourmet food samples, live music and more.

But, he adds, the appeal of the area reaches beyond just the hotel. "We like the entire Destin area," Smart says. "It is unique in that it offers a wide variety of restaurants from top-line, white tablecloth service to very casual beach atmosphere dining. There is also a tremendous selection of golf courses, which is another thing that's important to most of our incentive programs. And they have every type of course, from the most difficult to less demanding ones that are just beautiful and reasonably priced."

Mighty Orlando

Although Florida offers a range of individual destinations, each with its own special appeal, Orlando rules the roost when it comes to infrastructure and popularity — ranking as one of the top meeting destinations in the country year after year.

James Wolfe, CMP, director of administrative services at NCCI Holdings Inc. in Boca Raton, FL, has been using Orlando for years. One of



Photo courtesy of Universal Orlando Resort

the company's most important meetings, an annual educational conference on worker's compensation insurance that draws 700 attendees from all over the U.S., has been held there for the last 17 years.

"Orlando continues to be a great destination for ease of travel," says Wolfe, who returned this year to the 750-room Loews Portofino Bay Hotel, with 42,000 sf of meeting space. "We have a significant repeat rate for that meeting, and a lot of the attendees are from the East Coast, so for a lot of them Orlando is just an easy place to get to."

And Loews Portofino Bay provides a virtually perfect fit for

Destin... is unique in that it offers a wide variety of restaurants. There is also a tremendous selection of golf courses, which is another thing that's important to most of our incentive programs."



David Smart
Director, Destinations
Alfa Mutual Insurance and
Alabama Farmers Federation
Montgomery, AL

the meeting, Wolfe says. "We're able to pretty much take over the entire hotel," he says. "And that property offers consistently great service. We've been there a number of times over the years and the entire staff, from the general manager all the way down to the catering staff, knows the group because we've been there before. So it's kind of like going home."

The hotel is also perfectly suited to one of the meeting's highlights, an outdoor reception aimed at taking advantage of the great Florida weather that time of year. "It's a great venue for outdoor events, because



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you really feel like you're in Portofino, Italy," Wolfe says. "You've got the 'bay' there and we did a fabulous program out on the harbor. It was the reception we did the second night. We did a variety of small plates so that people don't have to get stuck at a banquet table. They can walk around and mingle and socialize with our executives. And the space there is large and unrestricted enough that people can move around very easily."

Based on his experiences over the years, Wolfe says, it's no surprise that Orlando — and all of Florida — remain at the top of the A-list of destinations for so many planners. "For a lot of meetings," he says, "you just can't beat Florida."

'Green' Fort Lauderdale

Like the rest of Florida's vacation spots, Fort Lauderdale has been experiencing a spike in visitation over the past year. According to the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau (GFLCVB), the city ended 2011 with the highest December hotel occupancy in the state, fueled in part by an 8 percent increase in international growth. Nicki E. Grossman, GFLCVB president, noted that key growth areas include leisure, international, meetings and corporate groups, and film projects.

The Broward County Convention Center recently announced that it has been awarded Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The LEED certification process, which began in 2008, resulted in the 600,000-sf facility being converted into an energy-efficient and environmentally sound, carbon-neutral building.

Also, the oceanfront Hilton Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort, is now installing wind turbines on the roof of



The Broward County Convention Center was recently awarded LEED Gold Certification for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance.

the 25-story all-suite resort that will function as an alternative energy source for the property.

Marvelous Miami

One of the most significant developments in Miami's meetings scene is Trump Hotel Collection's purchase of the iconic Doral Golf Resort & Spa this summer. Through the fall of 2013, Trump will be investing more than \$200 million in a property-wide renovation that covers the resort's



The waterfall and signature 18-hole island green at Turnberry Isle Miami's Soffer Course, one of two 18-hole Raymond Floyd-redesigned championship golf courses.

700 guest rooms, 86,000 sf of meeting space (including a 24,000-sf ballroom) and all four golf courses including the legendary Blue Monster course. The resort will remain open during the renovation.

Meanwhile, the AAA Four Diamond Turnberry Isle Miami has joined Marriott's Autograph Collection, a portfolio of world-class, independent boutique and luxury hotels, which will enable groups to earn Marriott Rewards points. The 408-room resort offers a 40,000-sf conference center and a private beach club, which can accommodate events with up to 500 attendees. Turnberry Isle has recently partnered with the elite Cañas Tennis to provide its guests with the opportunity to receive tennis instruction from players ranking in the top 10 for doubles and singles, as well as nationally ranked juniors. Other highlights include two 18-hole Raymond Floyd-redesigned championship golf courses, a three-story Spa & Fitness Center and acclaimed Chef Michael Mina's award-winning Bourbon Steak restaurant.

The Greater Miami area is replete with venues such as the new South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center, Coral Gables Museum and Miami Seaquarium. And Villa Vizcaya, a National Historic Landmark and public

museum representing the Gilded Age of the 1910s, is available for offsite events that are truly one of a kind.

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Happy to be back! The American Securitization Forum hosted its Winter Conference 2012 at Aria Resort & Casino after skipping Las Vegas in 2010–2011 to avoid perception issues brought on by the AIG debacle.

Las Vegas Revival

Insurance and Financial Companies Are Coming Back

By George Seli

Las Vegas has understandably struggled in recent years to reestablish its image as a responsible site choice for corporate meetings, particularly insurance and financial meetings, which were most affected by the “AIG syndrome.” In fact, one major event in that industry, the American Securitization Forum (ASF), had to relocate from Las Vegas during 2010–11 due to “perception” issues and has just returned for its Winter Conference 2012, selecting Aria Resort & Casino among the city’s portfolio of mega-resorts. “Most sponsors felt that for the good of the conference and getting the business done it would be good to go back,” says Wendy Zuluaga, CMP, director of events and marketing for the New York, NY-based ASF.

Not only can several Las Vegas properties accommodate ASF’s 4,500-

plus attendees all under one roof, but they also have numerous onsite venues where ASF’s affiliates can host events, Zuluaga explains. Aria is one such property, featuring the Haze Nightclub,

law firms and rating agencies, and they host tons of events. And they are looking for places where they can buy out venues. What’s most important is that they have the options on-property: res-

“We have signed on for 2013 with Aria, and what I’m seeing out there is that absolutely there are fewer dates available. For the 2012 contracting there was still a good amount of availability.”

Wendy Zuluaga, CMP
Director of Events & Marketing
American Securitization Forum, New York, NY



where ASF hosted its welcome reception as well as 16 onsite restaurants. “We have affiliates representing the top investment banks, accounting firms,

restaurants, nightclubs and so on. They’re there to do business first and foremost; we’re almost secondary to the reason attendees come. Out of Aria’s 300,000

sf of meeting space, as show managers we only use 90,000; the rest is going to all our sponsors and members such as JP Morgan, Credit Suisse and Bank of America.”

Business-Focused Spaces

The city definitely means business these days, and Aria is a case in point. One of the main business advantages Zuluaga cites is “the exclusivity of the meeting space. It has one point of entry so everyone has to come through



one hallway, and no one would wander into casino areas. So that was very big for us; it was very easy for us to manage our security, and our attendees enjoy that as well. They don’t want to be mixed up with other conferences going on, and anyone you walked past you knew was part of the ASF conference.” The 4,004-room property, located in MGM Resorts’ CityCenter along with the 1,495-suite Vdara Hotel & Spa, also features “stacked” function space on three levels, which “was great,” Zuluaga says. “When you’re dealing with 300,000 sf, being able to go from the farthest meeting room on a level to the bottom level in a matter of minutes is really important for attendees. They go to hundreds of brief one-on-one meetings over the three days of our conference; the investors will meet with the banks and the issuers. So not having to walk 10 or 15 minutes to a meeting is

really great for them. And most of our attendees are from New York, so they have a certain expectation of getting things done very quickly.”

Meeting Off The Strip

While Las Vegas hotels often seem to be dominated by major groups like ASF’s, insurance and financial meeting planners do well to bear in mind that much smaller events — like board meetings — also can find a home here. For example, Pocatello, ID-based Idaho-Nevada Community Development Financial Institution Inc., recently brought its annual board of directors meeting to Las Vegas, specifically the Green Valley Ranch Resort, Spa & Casino, for the second time. The group, comprised of just 15 participants plus a few spouses, enjoyed the property’s off-Strip location in Henderson, and felt well secluded and serviced within the resort despite any large groups concurrently in-house, says Cindy Williams, senior vice president of investor relations for the organization, who planned the event. “We don’t run into each other. It’s not an issue of any discomfort on our part of having extra noise in our meeting room, or not being able to get solid service. It seemed that wherever I turned, there was a staff member there; I didn’t have to pick the phone up to call anyone.”

The 495-room Green Valley Ranch houses 79,000 sf of meeting space, including 37 meeting rooms and four ballrooms, as well as Hank’s, one of the top steak houses in southern



The 816-room Red Rock Casino, Resort & Spa features 94,000 sf of flexible meeting space.



An elegant prefunction space at the Green Valley Ranch Resort, Spa & Casino.

Nevada, where the Idaho-Nevada CDFI plans to hold a meet-and-greet.

Green Valley’s sister property, the 816-room Red Rock Casino, Resort & Spa, offers a 94,000-sf meeting facility and comparable amenities, such as the 25,000-sf Spa at Red Rock Las Vegas. But Green Valley, Williams felt, simply has a more appropriate ambience for a board meeting and the demographics of her participants. “I have stayed at Red Rock, and it is wonderful, just as impressive as Green Valley. Red Rock is very vibrant, very active and young. The service is top notch at both, but Green Valley has that relaxed, Tuscan feel and an older crowd. My board is 30 and up, and they enjoyed the spa and access to nearby golf courses.”

Also in Henderson is The Westin Lake Las Vegas Resort & Spa, rebranded from a Loews this spring. The 493-room luxury property features more than 45,000 sf of interior meeting space as well as 50,000 sf of outdoor function space, including a lake-view terrace. Amenities include the only Jack Nicklaus Signature golf course in Nevada, a Moroccan-inspired spa and the AAA Four Diamond award-winning Marssa Restaurant, offering Japanese cuisine.

Yet another intriguing off-Strip choice for groups both small and large is South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa, situated at the south end of Las Vegas Boulevard. The hotel’s 2,163 accommodations include standard rooms that measure among the largest in Las Vegas at 500 sf.

Photo courtesy of Station Casinos



South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa's 500-sf standard guest rooms are among the largest in Las Vegas.

There is 165,000 sf of exhibit, meeting and banquet space, which accommodates everything from 500-booth expos, 5,000-person banquets and 4,000-person general sessions to 10-person boardroom sessions. During their free time attendees can explore the world-class 4,600-seat South Point Arena, 80,000-sf casino, 64-lane bowling center, and the Costa del Sur Spa and fitness center.

What's New on The Strip

While off-Strip properties do promise that feeling of seclusion for high-level attendees, Caesars Palace is offering such an experience at its new "hotel within a hotel," Nobu, opening later this year. The luxurious 181-room property will feature the largest Nobu Restaurant and Lounge in the world at 11,200 sf. The 3,960-room Caesars Palace is also debuting two other new culinary delights this fall: the \$17 million Bacchanal Buffet, a 25,000-sf space seating 600 guests with a view of the Garden of the Gods pool complex, and the Gordon Ramsay Pub & Grill. The 290-seat restaurant will include a vintage-style lounge, a series of casual dining rooms and a private dining room.

When attendees leave their sessions within Caesars' 300,000 sf of meeting space, they can also enjoy The Forum Shops at Caesars, featuring more than 160 boutiques and restaurants; Cascata, an exclusive golf course; and headliner entertainment at the 4,300-seat Colosseum.

Across from the hotel, Caesars Entertainment is developing The Linq, a 200,000-sf retail, dining, entertainment and hospitality district, which will debut in 2013. The Linq will fea-

ture the Las Vegas High Roller, one of the world's tallest observation wheels. The wheel has 28 cabins — each of which can serve as an out-of-the-box venue for 40 people — designed as transparent spheres. The wheel makes one revolution in 30 minutes.

Besides Caesars, several upscale hotels in the city are offering new venues that are possibilities for special events. There are always the classics, such as Siegfried & Roy's Secret Garden and Dolphin Habitat at the 3,044-room Mirage (more than 170,000 sf of meeting space). But why not give those well-traveled sales reps a taste of the newest venues? For example, MGM Grand Hotel & Casino will debut Hakkasan Las Vegas in spring 2013, an upscale dining experience with a lavish lounge and nightclub, spanning approximately 75,000 sf over five levels.

The 4,000-suite Venetian Resort Hotel Casino has its own share of excitement with the opening of the Bourbon Room, a 1980s-themed bar with a menu of 28 different fine bour-

bons. (Combined, the Venetian, the adjacent Sands Expo and Palazzo house a total of 2.25 million sf of function space, including the 85,000-sf Venetian Ballroom.) The Venetian recently announced its biggest musical event to date, the "Soul2Soul" show starring husband-and-wife country-western stars Faith Hill and Tim McGraw, debuting in December and running through April 2013.

Over at the 2,716-room Wynn Las Vegas, groups can find a couple of new eateries, Mizumi and Allegro (traditional Japanese and Italian-American, respectively), and the newly renovated Spa at Wynn. It's the first spa in Las Vegas to receive the Forbes Five Star award, along with the Spa at Encore, Wynn's 2,064-room sister property offering 60,000 sf of meeting space.

Renovation News

The 3,933-room Bellagio is remodeling all 928 rooms and suites in its Spa Tower and adding three new 2,500-sf Executive Hospitality Suites featuring billiards lounges and separate home theater living areas. The \$40 million remodel will be completed by December. Hyde Bellagio is a new 12,000-sf indoor/outdoor event venue with floor-to-ceiling windows and an expansive terrace that showcases the Fountains of Bellagio. Each space within the venue can be utilized as a place for discussion, brainstorming or socializing.



The new Hyde Bellagio venue offers a front-row seat to the awe-inspiring Fountains of Bellagio performances in its 12,000 sf of indoor/outdoor event space.



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Bellagio's renovation is just one of several major resort improvement projects in the city:

The MGM Grand Hotel & Casino just completed in September a \$160 million remodel of all 3,570 guest rooms and 642 suites in its main tower. A variety of one- and two-bedroom suites also have been re-designed, several of which

feature expansive outdoor terraces with sweeping views of The Strip. For example, the 1,500-sf, two-bedroom Skyline Marquee Suite is perfect for VIP entertaining with its 180-degree views of The Strip, oversized bar, billiard table and grand foyer. The MGM



The newly renovated, two-bedroom Skyline Marquee Suite at MGM Grand offers views of The Strip and space for entertaining.

renovations at the Tropicana were conducted from 2009 through last fall, and one group that experienced the breadth of the project is the Western States BancPac Users Group, which currently consists of approximately 35 banks located within the Western states (the majority in California) who all use "BancPac," offered by FIS Global, as their

core banking software. Apart from the 35 bank representatives, the group includes about 20 FIS reps, sponsors, presenters and trainers.

Tricia McCall, AVP/software specialist for Community Bank of Santa Maria in Santa Maria, CA, and event coordinator for the user group, notes that the Tropicana extended the "most affordable package" at the RFP stage. "It was well within our budget, plus their location was convenient for after-hours entertainment," she says. The first year that the event was held at the resort, it was still under its former management and, while McCall commends the service and F&B, some attendees complained about the room quality.

"Months later, I received a phone call from the young lady from the sales department at the Tropicana informing me that the property had sold and the entire resort would be undergoing a major renovation beginning with the conference facilities," she relates. "So year two of the event, the conference facilities were completed and beautiful. Year three, the rooms were gor-

all meeting space to 85,000 square feet. The Pavilion features 40-foot ceilings and space for 2,300 people. The resort also recently added LUX, a 16th-floor fine-dining restaurant with expansive views of The Strip and the mountains, and 7,200 sf for special events.



"It seemed that wherever I turned, there was a staff member there; I didn't have to pick the phone up to call anyone."

Cindy Williams, S.V.P. Investor Relations
Idaho-Nevada Community Development Financial Institution Inc., Pocatello, ID

Grand offers 602,000 sf of meeting space, including the 92,000-sf Marquee Ballroom, 57 meeting rooms and two boardrooms.

Delano Las Vegas, a 1,100-suite hotel, will open in 2013 at Mandalay Bay, replacing THEhotel. The property, a partnership between MGM Resorts International and Morgans Hotel Group, will feature the "Delano lifestyle" of luxury and service at the Delano South Beach in Florida.

The historic Flamingo Las Vegas recently completed a \$10 million renovation of 2,300 of its 3,500 guest rooms. The Flamingo features a 73,000-sf Corporate Convention Center.

Last December the 390-room M Resort Spa Casino debuted the new M Pavilion, a 25,000-sf expansion of the resort's existing meeting space. The project increased the M Resort's over-

The Tropicana Las Vegas completed a \$180 million renovation of its 1,375 guest rooms, casino, pool area and public spaces. The Tropicana offers more than 100,000 sf of meeting space.

Through Thick and Thin

The extensive, South Beach-inspired



M Resort Spa Casino recently created the new LUX fine-dining restaurant, with 7,200 sf for events, overlooking the Las Vegas Strip from its perch on the 16th floor.

MEETING PLANNERS REVEAL THE BEST KEPT SECRET ON LAS VEGAS BOULEVARD

It has been wonderful to work with a property that works with us to keep our costs in line. South Point definitely gives us value for our dollar.

Another value that can't be determined in dollars and cents is the fact that your hotel and convention staff has very little turnover.



Our confidence in using South Point is what led us to also recommend the property for the WaterSmart Innovations Conference which we manage and 2012 will be the fifth year for that conference at the South Point.

Lee Anne Short
Chief Operations Officer
Las Vegas Management

Open Systems, Inc. has used the South Point for our partner and customer conferences for the last three years. As a meeting planner who has worked with hundreds of venues, I find the staff at South Point to be a breath of fresh air. They are an experienced team that work together like a well-oiled machine. The meeting space is ideal for us because our attendees don't have to walk through the casino and we can have all our functions on the same floor. We also LOVE having the Showroom for our private parties. The hotel offers enough amenities so you feel like you're on the strip without the crowds and the high prices. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend South Point for a great meeting space.

Ms. Carla Alarcon
Director of Marketing
Open Systems, Inc.

Isuuzu would highly recommend the South Point for any meeting you may plan in Las Vegas. We used the new hotel in January of 2007 for a launch event that took over the hotel. Since that meeting, we have used South Point more than 15 times for various events, and meetings, from events that have taken over the hotel to just a small group, the staff at South Point will treat you the same. From the sales office to the staff working on the event, they're all about making sure that you're having the best event possible.

Brian Tabel
Retail Marketing Manager
Isuzu Commercial Truck of America Inc.



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SOUTH POINT

Rediscover Reno

Dave Funk, senior vice president and regional manager of Portland, OR-based Umpqua Bank, is based in Reno and recently planned a meeting for bank reps at the Peppermill Resort Spa Casino. He knows the Peppermill's owners "very well" and has lived in the city since 1947. "I think it's a very appealing area" for corporate meetings, he says. "It's easy to get in and out of (Reno-Tahoe International Airport), and if groups want to coordinate outdoor activities



Dave Funk
S.V.P. and Regional
Manager
Umpqua Bank
Reno, NV

"It's easy to get in and out of (Reno-Tahoe International Airport), and if groups want to coordinate outdoor activities in the summertime, we have boating, fishing, hiking... and so on."

in the summertime, we have boating, fishing, hiking and in the wintertime skiing and so on."

About 200 attendees from Oregon, Washington, Northern California and Reno gathered at the Peppermill,



Photo courtesy of Peppermill Resort Spa Casino

geous, the renovated restaurant and casino space were great, though they were still working on the lobby, and the pool was demolished and under construction. Now we are scheduled to meet this October at the Tropicana." Participants also have convened informally at the Piano Bar at New York-New York Hotel & Casino, and some have even made the Las Vegas trip a mini vacation and toured Hoover Dam.

Growing Demand

As Las Vegas' resorts develop, its popularity continues to grow as a worldwide destination, and one sign is McCarran International Airport's \$2.4 billion investment in Terminal 3, which opened in June. The 1.9-million-sf expansion added 14 gates, increasing McCarran's annual capacity to approximately 53 million passengers. Among those passengers will be

thousands of ASF attendees next year. "We have signed on for 2013 with Aria, and what I'm seeing out there is that absolutely there are fewer dates available. For the 2012 contracting there was still a good amount of availability," Zuluaga reports. Indeed, the longer insurance and financial firms wait to book their 2013 meetings in Las Vegas, the more of a gamble they're taking. **I&FMM**



Photo courtesy of Grand Sierra Resort & Casino

The Grand Sierra Resort & Casino has 200,000 sf of meeting space plus the nearby Reno-Sparks Convention Center.

which houses 1,635 guest rooms and 106,000 sf of meeting space. Yet the resort can make groups of any size feel comfortable with its extensive breakout capability, Funk explains. "They can provide all the same services in a smaller space if you need it, but they can also do it in a very big space if you need it."

And for planners keen on green meetings, it's hard to top the Peppermill, which has invested \$9.7 million toward heating 100 percent of its domestic water through geothermal energy produced on the immediate property, the only resort in the U.S. to do so. The resort also works with the nonprofit Clean the World, uses LED and fluorescent retrofit lighting throughout, features a water recycling system for all laundry services, and a building management system to control and regulate heating room and water temperatures, among many other eco-conscious initiatives.

The other major property in "The Biggest Little City in the World" is the 1,993-room Grand Sierra Resort & Casino, offering 200,000 sf of meeting and convention space. Venues include the 39,846-sf Grand Ballroom and the Nevada Conference & Exhibition Center with 44,115 sf of meeting space. The Grand Sierra offers fine dining, a cinema, a 50-lane championship bowling center, a driving range and more. Groups also have at their disposal numerous non-resort meeting facilities in the area, including the Reno-Sparks Convention Center (more than 500,000 sf of meeting space), and the Reno Events Center (56,000 sf of exhibit space).

— GS

The outdoor patio at the Peppermill Resort Spa Casino's Edge nightclub, an edgy, entertainment hot spot.

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Palace Resorts has named **Susan Hanlon** as vice president of meeting and incentive group sales at seven resort properties in Cancun, Cozumel, Isla Mujeres and Riviera Maya. She was Northeast regional director of group sales for Palace Resorts.

PGA National Resort & Spa named **Darin Riggio** as director of mid-Atlantic sales. He was national sales manager for Fontainebleau Miami Beach.

Mona Ingram was named director of sales and marketing at the Hilton Orlando. She most recently was vice president of Colorado-based Sceptre Hospitality Resources.

The Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, The Pueblo of Santa Ana, NM, has named **Troy Wood** as director of sales and marketing. He was part of the leadership team for the pre-opening and opening at

the Grand Hyatt and Hyatt Regency San Antonio.

The Westin La Cantera Hill Country Resort, San Antonio, TX, has named **Joseph Thompson** as director of sales and marketing. With 20 years of sales and marketing experience, he most recently served as director of sales and marketing at Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa in Naples, FL.

I&FMM

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