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**2015 Meetings Outlook**

**The View From Industry Insiders**

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**California**

The Golden State Ranks High on Meeting Planner and Attendee Wish Lists

By John Buchanan

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2015: Meetings Are ‘Back in Business’

We invited leading experts from various sectors of the travel, hospitality and meetings industries to share their views and predictions on how the meetings business will fare during the new year for our cover story this month. As most indicators continue to point to an improving economy, optimism prevails.

For example, Issa Jouaneh, vice president and general manager, American Express Meetings & Events, pronounced the meeting industry overall “very much ‘back in business’” in their 2015 Global Meetings Forecast.

Not surprisingly, industry experts agree that 2015 is shaping up to be a very good year. Michael Massari observes that “face time is money” as companies discovered “they cannot replace the benefits of a face-to-face meeting.”

Dave Marr, S.V.P., Brand Management, North America, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, notes the importance of continuing “to evolve our practices and develop more ways to host sustainable, socially conscious and responsible meetings.”

William D. Talbert, III, CDME, president and CEO, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, agrees that CSR is trending upward as they have “received more requests than ever for volunteer projects from groups meeting in Miami.”

David Peckinpaugh, president, Maritz Travel Company, notes the formation and rollout of the Meetings Mean Business Coalition is one of the most significant trends of the year. He encourages everyone to get involved because “the future of F2F events is now, and the time to proactively communicate the value that our industry drives on the local, regional, state, national and global level has never been more right.”

And on page 8, Cruise Lines International Association President and CEO Christine Duffy says, “At a time when more companies are expanding globally, so too is the cruise industry with more cruise lines catering to the global market and easily meeting the demands of multilingual and multinational planning and accommodation for incentive and meetings-incentive hybrid programs.”

For more timely and interesting news of the world, turn to page 9 for our special Global Meeting & Incentive Travel Planner. Take a whirl around Dubai, Fiji, Ireland and New Zealand.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher
Incentive Travel Outlook Is Bright for 2015 and Beyond

CHICAGO, IL — Results from the SITE Index Annual Analysis and Forecast for the Motivational Events Industry confirms that 2014 has been a very good year for the incentive travel market, and the outlook for 2015 is positive. The report was released by the SITE Foundation during the SITE Global Conference 2014 in Rotterdam, Netherlands. For the second consecutive year, there is continued optimism about the industry’s future, and the overall use of motivational travel experiences continues to increase. An ever-improving economy appears to be the major reason for this confidence as well as bookings for future business.

Incentive travel continues to be on an upswing and is predicted to grow in 2015 and 2016. Fifty-two percent of respondents surveyed for the Index say the use of incentives will increase or substantially increase in the next six months — a 4 percent increase over last year, and 60 percent are similarly optimistic about the following 6 to 12 months — an 11 percent increase over last year.

Since 2010, the SITE Foundation has conducted the SITE Foundation Annual Analysis and Forecast for the Motivational Events Industry, which compiles and compares data meaningful to the incentive travel and motivational events industry. The research examines both internal and external challenges to the sector and how these factors impact the stability and growth of the market. It addresses behaviors of both buyers and suppliers providing leading indicators for future trends.

To obtain a full copy of the Executive Summary of the SITE Index Annual Analysis and Forecast of the Motivational Events Industry, visit www.siteglobal.com.

Orchestra of Emotions was the theme for the SITE Global Conference 2014, held in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, November 14–17. Attendees were promised that their senses would be stimulated. And they were. Attendees were “highly engaged; challenged to think anew; inspired to reflect; and provided with the opportunity to grow.”

SITE Young Leaders from around the globe join SITE President Paul Miller and SITE CEO Kevin Hinton at a recent conference.

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Orchestra of Emotions was the theme for the SITE Global Conference 2014, held in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, November 14–17. Attendees were promised that their senses would be stimulated. And they were. Attendees were “highly engaged; challenged to think anew; inspired to reflect; and provided with the opportunity to grow.”

2 SITE Board Member Pamela Shepherd, CEO, Distinctive Destinations and Madelyn Marusa, DCMP, V.P. industry sales and global relations, Allied PRA, rock out to the music of Mr. Holland (your personal Holland Host) and his band. 4 Netherlands-based Drums and Barrels opened the conference with a colorful teambuilding exercise full of dynamism and movement using Boomwhackers to produce infectious Latin and African rhythms. 1 SITE Global Conference 2015, which is set for October 23–26 at the Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi, Delhi, India, will bring together hundreds of industry professionals from around the globe to experience India as an exciting canvas to create unparalleled incentive travel experiences.
Cruise M&I Full Speed Ahead

With a growing cruise industry (Cruise Lines International Association projects 21.7 million travelers will cruise in 2014) and exciting new ships and itineraries to the most interesting places in the world, it is no wonder that more businesses are realizing that meetings and incentives at sea are a viable option for corporate gatherings.

When I stepped into my role at CLIA, coming from Maritz Travel, I immediately saw the potential for the cruise industry and the M&I market to work more closely together and mutually grow their market segments. This is a big focus area for me, and I’m pleased that there is more recognition than ever before that a cruise ship is the perfect venue for business meetings and events — large and small.

Personalized Programs

I’m also excited to see that the cruise industry is actively cultivating the meetings and incentive market with new onboard amenities, conference facilities designed specifically for meetings and events, and new and advanced technological capabilities.

The cruise ships of today — and tomorrow — have become dynamic facilities for companies to reward and enrich their meeting and incentive planners to create highly personalized programs to meet their needs.

And, at a time when more companies are expanding globally, so too is the cruise industry with more cruise lines catering to the global market and easily meeting the demands of multilingual and multinational planning and accommodation for incentive and meetings-incentive hybrid programs.

All-inclusive Pricing

Key among the reasons why cruises stand out with corporate groups is the incomparable value they offer and the ability to create a meeting or event that is truly distinctive. A cruise is generally less expensive and more inclusive than a land-based program — an important factor in a recovering economy. One rate covers meals, onboard activities, taxes, gratuities and entertainment. This allows planners to have a firm grasp on their budgets, and makes planning a sea-based M&I program much easier and less time-consuming — especially for larger groups.

Depending on the line, planning group programs is a one-stop process with group sales departments, dedicated group planners and onboard meeting and incentive staff to handle all group needs. Options for cruises are extensive, with cruises available in every part of the world, of every length (from two days to two weeks or more), and in every price category.

Cruise Lines Offer More in 2015

This is an exciting time for the cruise industry with the debut of cruise ships that rival the imagination. More and more cruise lines are creating revolutionary experiences with new, state-of-the-art spaces, adrenaline-rushing onboard activities, elegantly appointed and newly designed staterooms, game-changing technology, groundbreaking venues, gourmet dining options and Broadway-style entertainment. River cruising, specialty cruising and luxury cruising are also growing in popularity for executive retreats and incentives. Most important is passenger satisfaction, which at 96 percent is the highest in the travel industry.

Cruising Commitment

The M&I market is so important to CLIA that we have established a Meetings, Events & Incentives (ME&I) Task Force made up of the major cruise line members focused on developing a strong relationship with the meetings and incentive industry. Some 24 MPI Chapters in the U.S. and Canada are aligned with CLIA cruise line members to help their planners have a better understanding of what the cruise industry can offer them. We are also assisting our cruise line members in being more active with other trade associations, such as PCMA and SITE, and in having a presence at incentive industry functions and trade shows such as EIBTM, IMEX and IT&E.

When I first started at CLIA, I saw that there were clearly many meeting planners and meeting professionals who had no idea what the cruise industry was all about. I believe we’ve changed that view with increased numbers of meeting and incentive events being held on cruise ships, and I’m confident that this trend will continue to grow. 2015 will be an exciting year for the cruise industry and a wonderful opportunity for the meetings industry to take advantage of the incomparable value and excitement that can only be experienced on a cruise.
Dubai has established a strong international reputation as a vibrant and diverse destination with a quality hospitality offering, first-class infrastructure and a range of headline grabbing attractions. While the city is well known for luxury, it also offers great value for those traveling on a budget.

Easy Access

The emirate’s infrastructure is such that doing business in, and from the city is easy. Transport is expedited by Dubai International Airport (DXB), one of the busiest in the world in terms of international traffic that is served by over 145 airlines flying to 260 destinations across six continents. In addition, Dubai’s second international airport, Al Maktoum International at Dubai World Central (DWC), opened in October 2013 and is set to increase the emirate’s global accessibility even further.

Within the city itself, transport options abound. These include the Gulf region’s first-ever metro system, as well as well-priced taxis, water taxis, buses, chauffeured cars and the soon-to-be-launched tram network.

Accommodations

In terms of accommodations, there are currently more than 89,000 hotel rooms in stock ranging from seven-star luxury to pocket-friendly mid-ranged options. Estimates show that 15,000–25,000 hotel rooms will be added to the market by 2016, increasing the options available to international visitors.

For business events, Dubai’s many hotels also offer a plethora of flexible facilities — whether that’s simply a meeting room for 10 people or a convention for tens of thousands. And of course, this is all supported with the expansive facilities offered at the Dubai World Trade Centre — the host for more than 50 percent of all exhibitions in the Middle East region.

Backed up by a professional service and a “can do” attitude, business event organizers appreciate the opportunities on offer in the city, which goes some way to explaining why Dubai has been named among the top three most vibrant cities in the world in the latest City Momentum Index released by the commercial real estate firm Jones Lang LaSalle in January 2014.

Endless Experiences

Dubai is one of the world’s safest and fastest growing tourist destinations. For incentive delegates it offers an array of truly memorable experiences, with itineraries that can capture the essence of Arabia with desert safaris (as shown above), dune-bashing, falconry and camel-riding; while adrenaline junkies can go sky-diving over Palm Jumeirah, dive with sharks at the Dubai Aquarium or go skiing at the world’s largest indoor snow park. VIP groups, on the other hand, can take a seaplane or helicopter ride over the city and indulge in afternoon tea at the Burj Al Arab.

The possibilities in Dubai are endless — where else can you wrap up your meetings and spend time at the beach, snow skiing or testing your limits in a 4x4 while dune bashing in the desert?

Dubai Business Events, the official convention bureau, offers a host of free services to professional congress organizers to make planning meetings a convenient experience. To access services related to business event development, destination expertise, convention planning, attendance building and onsite event servicing, visit dubaibusinessevents.ae.

Dubai Business Events — The Official Convention Bureau of Dubai

Tel: +971 600 55 5555, Email: askdbe@dubaitourism.ae, www.dubaibusinessevents.ae
With quality venues, spectacular weather and an abundance of things to do, Fiji is the ultimate destination for an organization’s meeting or incentive program. From small island getaways to international-style mainland resorts, from thatched-roof bure (bungalows) on the beach set discreetly in the sand along miles of pristine beaches to deluxe hotel suites, Fiji has all your conference and incentive needs covered, no matter the budget or group size.

Accommodations
There are plenty of different options available to suit your meeting or event. Stay at one of Fiji’s many majestic five-star resorts, enjoying the luxurious beauty of their surroundings while taking advantage of all the modern amenities your attendees may desire. Or charter a yacht for a four-day conference, stopping at some of Fiji’s many unspoiled white-sand, palm-studded coral isles.

Getting to Fiji Is Easy
Nestled in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Fiji may seem far away, but getting there is easy. Fiji Airways, Fiji’s national carrier, has regular flights from many international destinations (Auckland, Christchurch, Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Vancouver and Hong Kong). In addition, Jetstar, Air New Zealand, Korean Air, Pacific Blue, Virgin Australia, Air Niugini, Air Vanuatu, Air Caledonie and Nauru Airlines also fly regularly to Fiji. Nadi International Airport is the main gateway to the country for most travelers, and there are several domestic airports scattered throughout the islands. A four-month visa is granted automatically on arrival to visitors from most countries including the United States and Canada. Visitors needn’t do anything other than have a passport that is valid for at least six months beyond the end of the visit.

Time for R&R
When your team is done meeting for the day, you’ll find so many things to do you won’t know where to start. From snorkeling, white-water rafting and kayaking to bush walks, golf and cultural centres, Fiji has an endless offering of activities to keep your attendees engaged and entertained. Relax around the pool, or picnic on a perfect white sand beach. Crank up the adrenaline with an action sport adventure out on the water or up in the hills. Get close to nature with jungle treks or visit one of Fiji’s famous Nature Reserves. There is a huge variety of things to see and do in Fiji, which boasts year-round air and water temperatures of about 80 degrees.

When it comes to dining, restaurants are almost limitless and offer a range of multi-ethnic foods including cuisine from Fiji, India, China, Europe, Japan, Korea and the Americas. Many resorts have a relationship with a neighbouring village or two that will allow you to sample traditional Fijian fare during village tours, hikes or Meke nights, a Fijian dance festival accompanied by singing. You won’t find a better location to host your incentive program, meeting or event. Fiji is fun and vibrant, with world-class accommodations and conference facilities. The weather is superb, the people are friendly and the environment is like no other — a true paradise nestled in the idyllic South Pacific.

Make happiness this year’s bonus.
Reward the best people in your company with a trip to beautiful Fiji. From our playground in the South Seas we offer exotic island buyouts, an array of land and water-based activities, socially responsible community projects and uniquely themed events catering to all sized groups and budgets. Ensure your best people stay your people — take them to the land where happiness lives.
Progressive, vibrant and energizing — Ireland offers a rich heritage, welcoming culture, easy access, top-class venues, facilities, technologies and accommodation options — key reasons why more and more businesses are choosing to host corporate meetings, conferences and incentive programs in Ireland.

An abundance of purpose-built meeting facilities — including the Convention Centre Dublin, which can accommodate up to 8,000 delegates, and Belfast Waterfront Conference and Exhibition Centre, (major expansion work set for completion in 2016) is testament to Ireland’s highly developed infrastructure. In addition, unique meeting venues equipped with the latest technology are available throughout the island of Ireland.

When it comes to gala venues in Ireland, the choice is endless — museums, historic castles, universities, former prisons, stately country homes, cookery schools, breweries, distilleries, traditional farms and the iconic Titanic Belfast (pictured above).

Quality Accommodations
Ireland offers a wide range of quality accommodations — from ultra-modern boutique hotels to historic castle properties.

Whether it’s a small board meeting or a large conference, such as the 12,000-delegate World Flower Show hosted by Dublin in June; the 10,000-competitor World Police and Fire Games in Belfast last year; or the 640-delegate World Youth Conference, held in Dublin in September, Ireland’s emphasis on professionalism and hospitality ensures events run smoothly.

Ireland delivers on value with a low 9 percent VAT rate on accommodations, and there is widespread availability of complimentary Wi-Fi.

Best for Business
Forbes magazine in 2014 declared “Ireland Is Best for Business.” Home to more than 1,000 multinational companies, Ireland boasts eight out of 10 top global ICT companies, nine out of 10 global pharmaceutical companies and more than half of the world’s leading financial services firms.

Recently launched, Ireland’s Corporate Meeting Supports program offers a suite of financial and practical supports to attract corporate meetings and events to Ireland.

In recent years, Ireland has gained a reputation for excellence when it comes to food, fueled by artisan producers and innovative chefs with a focus on local produce. When business is done, delegates can enjoy world-class golf as Ireland is home to one-third of the golf links courses in the world, sightseeing, spa facilities, fine dining, shopping and mingling with the friendly locals or exploring the Wild Atlantic Way — a spectacular scenic 1,500-mile touring route along the western seaboard.

The combination of a business event combined with a parallel cultural encounter provides a unique, memorable experience and makes Ireland a perfect destination for corporate meetings and conferences.

Ireland is easy to get to with direct flights from cities across the United States, UK and Europe. With more than 190 routes into Ireland operated by 63 airlines, there are direct flights from more than 20 countries. Passengers departing from Dublin or Shannon airport to the U.S. pre-clear customs and immigration prior to boarding flights.

More and more global organizations and associations are making the decision to Meet in Ireland, where working hard and an easy-going nature go hand in hand. Where else can you find state-of-the-art conference facilities and cutting edge professionalism amongst a young and vibrant population?

Welcome to Ireland — the perfect place to meet.

Where 100,000 welcomes and our enviable passion for life always ensure an enjoyable experience for both event organizers and delegates alike.

Visit www.meetinireland.com/us and plan your next corporate meeting or conference with us.
Boasting world-class facilities, spectacular landscapes, friendly people and a diverse range of activities within easy reach, New Zealand will take your next event from ordinary to extraordinary. From exhilarating jet-boat safaris and heli-excursions to sampling award-winning wine or engaging with unique Maori culture — New Zealand is the perfect place for high performers to relax and recharge.

Reward and Motivate

Reward and motivate your top performers with an amazing New Zealand experience. With its towering mountains, enchanting forests and golden beaches, New Zealand’s landscape is one of the most diverse and scenic anywhere in the world. It’s also one of the most accessible. Groups can move easily from one experience to another in a short space of time.

Luxury Accommodations

At the end of the day, a wide range of luxury accommodations are available, from global five-star hotel brands to cliff-top lodges with world-class golf courses onsite. Many luxury options are specially set up to make an incentive trip to New Zealand memorable.

Amazing Experiences That Can’t Be Beat

New Zealand tourism providers go out of their way to craft unique experiences tailored to groups’ individual requirements:

- Get out on Auckland’s Waitemata Harbour aboard a former America’s Cup yacht with ExploreNZ. Work together to learn the ropes before putting your newfound sailing knowledge to the test in a match race against an opposing team.
- Scale New Zealand’s tallest building, the Sky Tower, for a SkyWalk around its spectacular 630-foot-high outdoor walkway. With no handrails and nothing but air on either side of you, there’s literally nothing to spoil the spectacular views of the sparkling harbor and city.
- Head to Waiheke Island for the Wild on Waiheke experience. Try archery, laser clay bird shooting and brilliant teambuilding challenges such as the Great Escape — an experience that is part “Amazing Race,” part “Survivor Waiheke Island.”
- Fly through the forest canopy in Queenstown at Ziptrek Ecotours. This unique experience can accommodate groups of all sizes, and involves zipping through the trees while harnessed to a zipwire or flying fox.
- Explore the backcountry around Queenstown on a Nomad Safaris off-road adventure. The company offers experiences like the Gold Rush — solve clues as your team navigates its Landrover through the scenic Wakatipu Basin.
- Journey to Moonlight Country near Queenstown for a great day out. The 800-acre property offers tailor-made teambuilding experiences including orienteering, sheepdog trials, clay target shooting and quad bike riding.

Your best employees deserve an amazing experience. Let them relax and recharge with unforgettable excursions in a country with spectacular landscapes, friendly people and diverse activities within easy reach. Give them New Zealand and be amazed by what you get back.
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Everything is looking up for the meetings industry in 2015, which is a mixed blessing for planners: Group demand is up, but so too are room rates and travel costs. That reliable old supply and demand thing.

“The meeting industry overall appears to be very much ‘back in business,’” said Issa Jouaneh, vice president and general manager, American Express Meetings & Events in the 2015 Global Meetings Forecast, which predicted that group hotel prices would rise by 4.6 percent, thanks in part to increasing group demand. A recently released PwC lodging forecast projects a 2015 U.S. occupancy of 64.9 percent, the highest since 1984. “Group demand improved significantly in the third quarter, leading to stronger-than-expected occupancy levels,” according to Scott Berman, PwC principal and U.S. hospitality and leisure practice leader. “Despite an evolving supply pipeline, industry demand trends are expected to remain robust, giving confidence to the operating community to drive room rates higher in 2015.”

Add to this rising airfares (5 percent), F&B catering costs (4 percent), audio-visual (3.1 percent) and meeting rooms (2.5 percent), as reported in MPI’s fall Meetings Outlook, which also noted, not surprisingly, that planners are challenged with shorter lead times.

To keep the meetings momentum going in the face of rising costs, American Express predicts an uptick in meeting budgets made possible by a more disciplined approach, with increased scrutiny, transparency and attention to compliance and strategic objectives. In addition, the Forecast noted “a continued push to stay close to home and host meetings where the largest number of attendees live.”

The cruise meetings segment is growing, too, says Christine Duffy, president and CEO of Cruise Lines International Association. See her column on page 8.

The incentive travel industry is also on the upswing. Look for an in-depth report in our January issue, including “6 Trends That Will Impact Incentive Travel in 2015 and Beyond” by Rhonda Brewer, SITE 2015 president and vice president, group business travel-sales, Maritz Travel Company.

We asked other leading industry experts to put their fingers on the pulse of the meetings industry heading into 2015. Responses reflect a range of perspectives, from an industry-wide view to what’s happening and is predicted to happen in their own backyards. Their thoughts and opinions appear on the following pages.
The Industry Is Getting Stronger
Karen Kowalski, CEE, CMI
CEO
Convention Industry Council

The meetings industry is strong and its outlook is positive, as we see the end of 2014 and head into 2015. Building upon the work of our members, industry partners and supporters, the Convention Industry Council (CIC) is poised to continue working towards its mission to promote a strong meetings, conventions and exhibitions industry by championing the economic and social value of the industry. Continuing to emphasize the importance of face-to-face meetings and their impact on the U.S. economy, the CIC members released an updated Economic Significance of Meetings to the U.S. Economy study in early 2014. The results, representing the U.S. share of the total global market, showed that the economic output and job growth continue and that the industry is getting stronger. Other countries, including Mexico, Canada and Scotland, are following the methodology used in CIC’s study in their own regions to lend data toward a global picture of this impact. While the economy has continued to rebound, the market has seen a shift towards the sellers with increased demand for hotel rooms, meeting space and event services. The 24/7 work environment is leading to the trend to do more with less time. Technology is changing at an accelerating rate, creating both opportunities and challenges. One of those is hotel room block poaching, defined here as the threat from businesses that actively seek to re-cruit or divert event attendees from official room blocks and into other hotel bookings which can be both legal and illegal, and has affected many aspects of the industry. CIC’s Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX) has been working with industry stakeholders to create education, best practices and other resources for planners and suppliers in managing room blocks. This information should be available in early 2015. Looking ahead to 2015, we feel that there will be continued growth of the industry particularly in global markets outside of North America. While face-to-face meetings remain a critical component to moving businesses forward, the growth of virtual and hybrid meetings will continue to adapt, creating more opportunities for those who cannot travel due to limited time or money to participate in meetings. Mobile technology and social media platforms will continue to rank high among the growing resources for planners and suppliers to both conduct and market meetings more successfully. CIC is also continuing its commitment to advocating for the industry through a stronger, unified voice, through the work of its Meetings Industry Advocacy Hub, created in partnership with Voices in Advocacy and the efforts of the Meetings Mean Business (MMB) Coalition (see opposite), of which CIC is a proud member. Leaders in the meetings industry should be among its strongest and most vocal supporters, but effective advocacy also needs the support of an engaged network of industry professionals committed to promoting the benefits of meetings to communities and commerce.

As we look ahead to 2015, CIC is encouraged by the strides the meeting and events industry has made in recent years and is excited about helping it grow stronger, and more vibrant than ever. Once the focus of unfair attacks of the initiative. The goal is “One Industry, One Voice,” comprised of leaders from all facets of the industry working to showcase the substantial value that meetings, conferences, conventions, incentive travel, trade shows and exhibitions have on businesses, the economy, local communities and individuals. The impact of the industry cannot be overstated; according to a recent PWSC study, the meetings industry contributed more than $280 billion to the national economy in 2012. Additionally, an Oxford Economics report found that companies that invested more in business travel during the economic downturn grew the fastest. In fact, the report determined that every dollar invested in business travel realizes $9.50 in new revenue and produces $2.90 in new profits. This is an important message of the successful meetings and events, it’s critically important that the industry remains united behind a singular voice. As the Meetings Mean Business campaign looks towards 2015, it will continue to enlist the support of business leaders and ensure the impact of in-person interactions is well understood by consumers, stakeholders and policymakers.

Meetings Mean Business Update
Roger Dow
President and CEO
U.S. Travel Association

The meetings and events industry has come a long way since 2009. Once the focus of unfair attacks based on isolated incidents of abuse, the industry has now come together in an effort to change the conversation. This effort, the Meetings Mean Business (MMB) campaign, is comprised of leaders from all facets of the industry working to showcase the substantial value that meetings, conferences, conventions, incentive travel, trade shows and exhibitions have on businesses, the economy, local communities and individuals. The impact of the industry cannot be overstated; according to a recent PWSC study, the meetings industry

Long-term sustainable campaign that defines the value of the face-to-face meetings industry. The focus has been on the personal connections that are created, the positive business outcomes that are driven and the stronger communities that are built via F2F events. An industry toolkit has been created along with a free app that brings all of the resources of the MMBC to everyone’s fingertips. You can download the free app via the iTunes store and Google Play. Everyone can get involved via their industry organization or via grassroots efforts. The future of F2F events is now, and the time to proactively communicate the value that our industry drives on the local, regional, state, national and global level has never been more right.

Face Time is Money
Michael Massari
Vice President
Caesars Entertainment

Face time is money. Look back just a decade, and we can see an era where many meetings were booked by senior leaders without a true understanding of why the meeting was needed. Then when the recession hit, many of those meetings were canceled. They were canceled in part because the value of face-to-face wasn’t truly understood by the senior leaders. Over time, the meetings program for those companies was added back because they began to really understand the value of face-to-face meeting. Senior leaders now know what needs to be communicated in meetings and exactly why these meetings are important. They’ve dissected different platforms including virtual meetings, teleconferences and WebEx, and discovered they cannot replace the benefits of a face-to-face meeting. In today’s multitasking work world, it is important to create a more focused environment with fewer distractions. The 24/7 work environment is leading the trend to do more with less time. Content is presented in shorter sessions, and more audience engagement tools are being used. It is important to be able to get the attendee to be “in the moment” and engaged to ensure they continue to be there. The use of images will continue to be seen, and the use of shorter video will be on the rise. Attendees are seeking to be actively engaged versus being passive listeners. Facilitation of discussion and participation through room setups is being seen to encourage engagement. Creating special events, ones which the attendee couldn’t do on their own, are being sought-after to create distinctive experiences. The experience is carried from start to end to help keep the event alive through the day and is exciting about helping it grow stronger, and more vibrant than ever.
Meeting Personalization Through Technology
Anne Hamilton
Vice President of Resort Sales & Services
Disney Destinations

One of the greatest challenges today for the meeting professional is the lack of availability because of restricted demand and no significant new supply being added to the meetings market.

Date and pattern flexibility are part of the discussion for the first time in many years. Add to that pricing pressures that are being experienced from airfare to rapidly increasing food and beverage prices, and you have a very challenging and complex meetings environment.

CSR: a Requirement, Not Just a Preference
Dave Martin
SVP, Brand Management, North America
Starwood Hotels & Resorts

As we begin to plan for 2015, a trend that is truly becoming a pillar in the meetings industry is the focus on sustainability and CSR. Client requests prove that programs addressing energy, water and greenhouse gas emissions reduce goals and the supply chain are no longer just a preference, but a requirement when selecting meeting locations.

At Starwood, we have seen an increase in demand for more transparency in our policies and what we as suppliers have in place to help clients achieve their CSR and sustainability goals. We’ve built Sustainable Meeting Practices (SMP), a globally aligned collection of initiatives that integrate environmental and social concerns into the meeting process. Included is a Meeting Impact Report. This report is provided to our clients and calculates the carbon footprint of a meeting, tracks the sustainable practices incorporated during events, and provides the ability to offset a meeting’s carbon footprint.

This report instills confidence in our customers that Starwood will deliver on elements promised to decrease negative environmental impact, such as sustainable food and beverage practices, reduction of paper waste, carbon neutrality, labor and human rights, and more. Customers are also eager to give back to the communities in which they are meeting. We’ve implemented efficient, yet very impactful, ways to do so through opportunities like the One Hygiene Kit project with Clean the World, where attendees build kits containing much-needed essentials that are then donated to local organizations.

As these initiatives grow in importance, it will be top-of-mind for us throughout 2015 to continue to evolve our practices and develop more ways to host sustainable, socially conscious and responsible meetings.

Focus on Small Meetings
Larry Luteran
Senior Vice President of Group Sales and Industry Relations
Hilton Worldwide

Looking ahead to 2015, we expect to see strong growth in the meetings and events environment, continuing the momentum from 2014. As we look to raise greater awareness across industries, face-to-face and value of meetings, there are three major trends I would like to highlight: 1. an increased value being placed on face-to-face meetings; 2. a broadening view of attendees’ experiences when planning events; and 3. a growing recognition of the importance of small meetings.

1. In the hyper-connected world we live in, business professionals, CEOs, meeting professionals and others are starting to place a much higher value on the power of human connection and the impact that meeting face-to-face brings to the table. In fact, a study conducted by the Mettology Group found that on average, face-to-face meetings generate 30 percent more ideas than their virtual counterparts. In 2015, we anticipate seeing an even higher value placed on networking in-person and the strong impact it can have on reaching business objectives.

2. We’ve seen a shift toward considering the complete attendee experience when planning events and meetings. As an example, not only more and more travelers are looking to adopt or continue healthy habits while on the road. For Hilton, our Connect philosophy is rooted in the power of human interaction and enriching people’s lives. We recognize that planning is no longer about just delivering on a singular business objective – it’s about considering every element of attendees’ well-being. Professionals can no longer just focus on the logistics of an event, but instead, they have to truly understand what attendees really care about and what they’re getting the most out of the experience.

3. We also anticipate a growing recognition of the importance of many small meetings, something we are passionate about at Hilton. In an industry used to planning meetings at a mass scale, this trend requires us to shift our thinking and evolve what we are offering. In order to advance our relationships with our clients in this space, professionals need to clearly understand what the scale of their event. For most small meetings this means maximizing efficiency and streamlining the customer experience.

Hot-Button CSR Trend
David Peckinpaugh
President
Maritz Travel Company

A hot-button trend in CSR is the industry’s growing awareness of human trafficking. For many years, the travel industry has been an unwitting participant in the human trafficking of men, women and children across the globe. The horrific $32 billion industry has claimed nearly 23 million victims worldwide, and these victims are often mentally and physically abused, and can be forced into prostitution, unfair working conditions or other exploitative situations.

Globally, the travel industry is a key conduit for this practice, which has been dubbed “modern day slavery.” Capitalizing on the Internet to sell victims, traffickers move across cities and countries via air and ground transportation, and they use hotels as venues to abuse victims. As one of the most powerful and influential industries of our time, it is OUR responsibility to increase awareness of and put an end to human trafficking. Our strong network of travelers, travel agencies, suppliers and employees is in a unique position to be the eyes and ears needed to help victims. Many travel industry members, including the U.S. Travel Association, have already taken steps to do their part to put an end to human trafficking by partnering with organizations such as ECPAT — which is dedicated to seeking to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children through awareness, advocacy, policy and legislation.

In addition, many in the industry — including Maritz Travel Company — have become signers of The Code, an industry-driven, multi-stakeholder initiative with the mission to provide awareness, tools and support to the tourism industry in order to combat the problem of child sex tourism. As one of the key stakeholders in the travel industry, we need to clearly understand what the scale of the industry is doing to help combat this growing crisis. As one of the key stakeholders in the travel industry, we need to clearly understand what the scale of the industry is doing to help combat this growing crisis.
**Expanding Role for DMOs**

**Michael Gehrisch**
President and CEO
Destination Marketing Association International

In 2015, I see the meetings industry continuing to maintain its position as a tool for economic development and social engagement, with official destination marketing organizations (DMOs) — also known as convention and visitor bureaus — serving an integral part of the meetings industry's growth.

DMOs not only understand the economic value of direct spending from the events themselves, but also recognize meetings as a gateway for business exchange, development, innovation and investment. The next years ahead will see DMOs take on an even greater role in aligning destination promotion activities with economic development interests of their communities. DMOs will be assuming greater roles as destination marketers to help develop meetings segments that align with their destinations' targeted economic clusters.

This falls in line with other trends we are seeing: Meetings are becoming more targeted in content and regional in scope. The focus on ROI has broadened to include not only professional development and business advancement, but also quality of unique experiences and social good. With this in mind, meeting planners will find DMOs to be unique resources with which to garner support for their events — whether large or small — from local venues, city officials and the business community.

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**Doing More Good**

**William D. Talbert, III, CDME**
President and CEO
Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau

Corporate social responsibility is definitely trending upward among corporate and association planners. We have received more requests than ever for volunteer projects from groups meeting in Miami. One recent example comes to mind. In May 2014, Tourism Cares, a national organization, attracted more than 350 travel industry professionals to Miami to make a difference in our community by doing something good for a community also translates into doing something positive for travel. Representing 29 states, four countries and 89 different companies, including Amadeus, Expedia, Norwegian Cruise Line, Tauck, Collette and many, many more, the volunteers planted 800 trees and 11,000 seagrass plants at the Historic Virginia Key Beach Park and cleared out truckloads of debris from the iconic Miami Marine Stadium. Their efforts have paled the way for renovations currently being planned.

Without doubt the companies and organizations that sponsored the hundreds of volunteers for the Miami Marine Stadium effort are an excellent example of the growing commitment to social responsibility. This example, along with others, have made us keenly aware that there is a renewed and growing trend to give back. The GMCVB’s Convention Services team offers planners a wide array of volunteer opportunities for groups of all sizes and interests — a resource that is being tapped more and more.

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**Growing Need for ‘Big Data’**

**Jay Burress**
President and CEO
Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau

As we head into 2015 planning and a major expansion at the Anaheim Convention Center, we’ve been keenly focused on what we could do to help ease the burden of the planners we work with and provide them with the exact services they are looking for when planning small or large events. After talking with several planners and reviewing the resources we have available to us as a bureau, we saw that there was a growing need for planners to have research and “big data” to help them build attendance at the meetings/events they plan. By disseminating the big data we have to our local community and beyond, we can help drive attendance for small and large events. We see this as an opportunity to grow our role and provide a unique aspect and service to planners as a greater part in our ever-changing role as the DMO of the future.

Sustainability: Last month, in conjunction with the city of Anaheim, Anaheim Convention Center announced the 24 Megawatt Anaheim Solar Energy Plant, which sits on the rooftop of the Anaheim Convention Center. This recent announcement follows a number of initiatives that is part of the Anaheim Convention Center’s Sustainability Program, which was established with Aramark Leisure Services in 2004. Over the years, we’ve implemented several sustainable efforts including: purchasing a herd of free-range, grass-fed cattle, creating a convention center recycling area where plastic, cardboard, aluminum, glass, electronics and paper are separated and food waste is composted; and planting a 2,000-sf garden with an array of adaptive plants and herbs on top of the Arena Box Office roof. As an organization that has a growing footprint and presence in Anaheim, we’ve made a commitment to tirelessly search out alternatives to conducting our business that are sustainable and positively impact our local community.
Windy City Meetings Transformation
Don Welsh
President and CEO
Choose Chicago

Chicago is heading in the right direction and at an aggressive pace. Group room demand is growing in the right direction. New sales strategies, including the development of strategic partnerships with key intermediaries, has proven to be a smart investment for Choose Chicago.

Following a redeployment within our sales team, corporate and association bookings for Chicago increased by 12 percent since 2013. We have also seen a 37 percent increase in the Year-for-Year business from this market from 2013 to 2014.

Chicago’s meetings industry is experiencing its greatest transformation yet. With more than 37,000 hotel rooms in the Central Business District, and an additional 2,500 rooms in less than three years, Chicago remains one of the fastest growing domestic markets for new hotel development, reflecting the investment community’s perception that Chicago will support that growth. The implementation of exhibitor rights at McCormick Place and tremendous support from labor have been critically important to this transformation.

The McCormick Place complex is about to undergo another transformation. We are reinvesting in what we have and planning for the future. Beginning in early 2015, construction will begin on the 10,000-seat Event Center and the 1,200-room Marriot Marquis, both of which are scheduled to open in 2017. This addition to the complex will allow for even greater flexibility, especially for groups who don’t require the use of the larger meeting space at the convention center.

Global Exhibitions Trends
David DuBois, CMP, CAE, FASAE, CTA
President & CEO
International Association of Exhibitions and Events

What does 2015 look like for the global exhibitions industry?

The International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE) closely monitors the health and viability of the global exhibitions industry. We do this through the IAEE Future Trends Task Force who review and extrapolate data to bring viable trend analysis to the exhibitions and events industry.

We’re seeing several trends in the coming year, but a few stand out. To begin, international attendee growth is up substantially, and we expect it to keep growing. Next, new technology such as wearables, as well as advanced smartphones, are exploding, opening whole new avenues to reach pre- and post-show attendees, thus extending the life of a show. As a segue, mobile computing with ever-changing smartphone capabilities and the myriad of apps available, continues to growing a huge avenue for marketers to deliver information in a timely and relevant fashion, again, before, during and after a show. Finally, while the registration focus used to be about getting a specific job title or function to a show, the industry is evolving to further define attendee engagement. In 2015 we will see best practices emerge on how to define engagement pre- and post- show and what the best measurements of ROI will be.

Visit www.iaee.com for the IAEE Future Trends White Paper, which was released at Expo! Expo! IAEE’s Annual Meeting and Exhibition, December 9-11 in Los Angeles.

More VIP Involvement in Site Selection
George Aguel
President and CEO
Visit Orlando

A developing trend that we are seeing more of at Visit Orlando when it comes to the future of site selection, is the hosting of more of the group’s leadership coming to experience the destination — in addition to the organization’s meeting professional. We oftentimes find ourselves working with meeting sponsors, board members and even presidents and CEOs of companies and associations.

At Visit Orlando we have extraordinary relationships with our members that provide every kind of service, property and venue imaginable. So for incoming sites, Visit Orlando takes the lead and handles everything — from planning to execution in close coordination with our members — so the meeting professional and his or her leadership team have a seamless experience engaging with our destination. And since tourism is the No. 1 industry in Orlando, our community has hospitality in its DNA and understands how to help us go that extra mile for a client.

‘Green’ Expectations Are Growing
Rossi Ralenkotter
President and CEO
Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority

Sustainability efforts continue to be a key component in the meetings and conventions industry as planners and show organizers realize the environmental impact their events have or can have. They are coming to expect a certain level of environmental consciousness from their venues and assistance in implementing greener practices to reduce waste and energy.

In an effort to exceed those expectations in addition to our own desire to be environmentally active, the Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC) is committed to improving our role in sustainable operations, environmental impacts and energy conservation.

The LVCC is active in the Environmental Protection Agency’s Waste Wise Program with a primary objective of diverting recyclable materials away from landfills.

Through working in close collaboration with building partners, vendors and employees, we achieved a record recycle rate of 69 percent in 2013 by processing 5,518 tons of material — that’s the equivalent of 19 Boeing 747s of waste from landfills.

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Inside the exhibit halls of the LVCC, the process of converting to energy-efficient lighting that delivers up to 20 percent more light while using 42 percent less energy is nearly complete. In addition, low-flow faucets and toilets have been installed throughout the facility to reduce water usage, and desert landscaping has been maximized throughout the facility grounds.

To reduce fuel consumption, the LVCCA promotes the use of alternative energy with 90 percent of its vehicles powered by electric or propane. Visitors can take advantage of four free electric vehicle charging stations located in the LVCC parking lot. The charging stations were made possible by a grant from the Consumer Electronics Association, the producers of International CES.

Sustainability is a guiding principal of the Las Vegas Global Business District (LVGBD), a $2.3 billion project that will expand and reinvent the LVCC and its surrounding areas over the next decade. Solar, energy and water efficiency components all will be incorporated into the design and construction of LVGBD. Reducing waste, conserving water and saving energy is the right thing to do for our customers, our community and our environment.
A competition among destinations intensifies as the meeting industry continues to regain its health and vitality. California ranks high on the wish lists of many planners because of its broad appeal to attendees and Mediterranean-type climate—sunny days with little rain year-round. California offers an unusually long list of options from San Francisco, San Jose or the wine country of Napa and Sonoma counties or the central coast of Monterey County to Los Angeles, Anaheim and San Diego to the south.

“We always get good feedback when we hold a meeting in California,” says Carol Waring, marketing communications manager at Tustin, California-based global medical device company MicroVention, which holds about 10 meetings a year in the Golden State. ‘And a lot of that has to do with the weather and timing. A lot of the times we bring people to California, people from the East Coast or other parts of the country who are coming in from rain or snow. And they just enjoy coming to sunny Southern California. Simple as that.”

Waring, in concert with her meeting planning staff and Cathy Demyanovich, MicroVention’s senior director of corporate communications, work together as a team to make their vision come alive for their sales meetings, many of which have been held at The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel, a 396-room beach resort located south of Los Angeles in Dana Point. Her last meeting there was a week-long sales meeting last May for more than 100 attendees.

Why do her team and her attendees like The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel so much that they keep going back? “Besides the beautiful location and the coastal views, the No. 1 reason would just be the quality of their service,” Waring says. “The hotel has a quality staff, a phenomenal group of people that always deliver quality service. They understand our high expectations and give us tremendous support. They fulfill every request we make, and they are consistent. It just comes down to the fact that they understand our needs.”

One of those needs — just the right amount and configuration of meeting space — is perfectly met by The Ritz-Carlton. Waring notes. The hotel has more than 26,000 sf of indoor convention and banquet space. “Because of the type and amount of meeting space the hotel has, we can have our general sessions in a space that is appropriate, even if there are multiple meetings going on at the same time,” she says. “So depending on what kind of meeting we’re having, we can get the space we need to do the kinds of sessions that we do. For example, for some meetings, we might have rotary training sessions that require a particular configuration of space. And we can always find that at The Ritz-Carlton, no matter what else is going on in the hotel.”

MicroVention also does what it calls meet-and-greet networking sessions, themed dinner and recognition events as part of its major meetings. “We always have a number of things going on during our meetings,” Waring says. “It’s not just a matter of meeting sessions or training sessions. There’s also socializing and entertainment. And we always find what we need at The Ritz-Carlton.”

Of particular importance for a number of her meetings are recognition dinners that pay tribute to salespeople and support staff. “We do a nice formal dinner,” Waring says. “And at The Ritz-Carlton, we do those dinners in one of the ballrooms or the Pacific Promenade. And depending on the weather, we do some of our meet-and-greet events outdoors. And all of those are just great venues for the events.”

Although the amenities and level of service she gets at The Ritz-Carlton often help create highlights of individual meetings, “the real highlight of our meetings there is just that it’s such a beautiful location,” Waring says. “It’s also a great escape for our attendees, because the property is a little bit secluded. It’s just a nice place to be.”

For her higher end meetings, such as sales meetings, MicroVention offers activities such as golf, which is played at the nearby Monarch Beach Golf Links, designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. and located on the same dramatic bluffs over the Pacific Ocean that give The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel its spectacular perch.

The Ritz-Carlton spa also is popular with MicroVention’s attendees. “It’s a really nice spa, and they offer some great treatments,” Waring says, who also praised the fitness center. “It’s nice,” she says, “to be looking out over the ocean while you’re on a treadmill or one of the other cardio machines.”

Despite the hotel’s luxurious amenities, it is the service that keeps MicroVention coming back. “The thing that is really special about The Ritz-Carlton is that they make you feel special. When you walk into the lobby, they know your name and they really make sure that you feel welcome and that you understand that you’re important to them.”

Carol Waring, Marketing Communications Manager MicroVention Tustin, CA

“There were several important reasons that San Jose was right for this event. One important one was that their convention center was newly renovated. And it was almost as if it was perfectly designed for our conference.”

Lori Luna, Vice President of Events Operations BlogHer Belmont, CA

San Jose

Although not as well-known a meeting destination as San Francisco, San Jose — the de facto capital of Silicon Valley — has emerged over the last few years as a go-to option, especially, not surprisingly, for technology companies.

BlogHer, whose customers are women in social media and especially female bloggers, chose San Jose for its three-day 10th anniversary meeting earlier this year for more than 3,000 attendees.

The company, now located in Belmont, California, and which has been acquired by SheKnows Media, wanted to return to its Silicon Valley roots for the important event, explains Lori Luna, vice president of events operations.

“There were several important reasons that San Jose was right for this event,” Luna says. “One important one was that their convention center was newly renovated. And it was almost as if it was perfectly designed for our conference. It just ideally met our needs for general session space and breakouts and our expo, which had more than 100 exhibitors and used about 35,000 sf of space.”

Another factor was the convenience of having three airports that attendees could fly into — San Jose, Oakland and San Francisco. “That meant that people had multiple options, depending on where they were coming from,” Luna says.

Especially important was the fact that San Jose offered a hub of four major flag hotels that were perfectly situated around the convention center. The headquarters hotel, The Fairmont San Jose, and the Hyatt Place San Jose/Downtown are just a block away, while the San Jose Marriott and Hilton San Jose are connected to the convention facility.

“That kind of infrastructure and convenience is pretty rare,” Luna says. “And for us, a very important event, it was just perfect.”

Because the meeting celebrated BlogHer’s 10th anniversary, the company went all out to make it special.

Iconic female blogger Arianna Huffington, founder and CEO of The Huffington Post, was brought in to headline a general session. “We don’t do traditional keynote speeches,” Luna says. “We have interviewers who turn it into a dialogue.” For Huffington, the interviewer was superstar social media guru and former chief evangelist of Apple, Guy Kawasaki.
McDonald’s, which brought in a semi truck full of stuff, was just amazing. McDonald’s also secured Rev Run from the iHeartMedia Entertainment Group, the home of the iHeartRadio Music Festivals, which are the biggest live music events the world has ever seen. Luna also worked closely with Team San Jose, the innovative economic development organization that combines the resources and services of a CVB, destination management company, marketing agency, and destination marketing organization all under one roof. They have a different approach from most CVBs,” Luna says. “Their model of having everything coordinated by a single entity means that you get a higher level of service, because you’re not going to the CVB for one thing and the convention center for another general meeting and the hotel for a third thing. And that makes things so much easier for me as a planner.”

Disney Magic!

Monica Wihongi, chief communications officer at Close to My Heart, a scrapbooking and paper sculpting company in Pleasant Grove, Utah, had never experienced a Disney meeting until she hosted a 2011 event at Disneyland Hotel at Disneyland Resort in Anaheim. The 973-room property has 136,000 sq ft of meeting space, including exhibit space.

After selecting Anaheim as the destination for the 2011 meeting, Wihongi selected Disneyland Hotel after it submitted a successful bid as part of the RFP process.

But when we went back this year, it was specifically because of the Disneyland Hotel,” she says. “One of the main issues for us was the logistics of how well the space Disneyland Hotel has worked out for our event. For example, having everything close together with a big box convention facility was a huge plus for us.”

The third major highlight was the company’s awards gala in the Disneyland Hotel’s main ballroom.

“Another important factor was that Disney’s space is car park friendly. It’s right in the center of the resort,” Wihongi says. “Disney’s extraordinary capabilities enhanced three major highlights of her meeting this year, Wihongi says. “The first was our general session. This was the first time we really made it into a production. We had Disney actors mixed in with corporate officers and managers, including our CEO. And to be able to bring that kind of talent together to unveil our new products was extremely entertaining and fun, and very memorable for our attendees. It brought the Disney magic, but it wasn’t what I would call ‘Disneyfied.’ It was very much about Close to My Heart. It just had the production caliber of Disney.”

A second major highlight was a visit by 100 company representatives to World of Color, a water and light show at Disney California Adventure Park. “We did an exclusive private VIP viewing just for our top leaders,” Wihongi says. “We had Disney escorts and our own private section for viewing. And dessert. And it was a very special experience.”

The third major highlight was the company’s awards gala in Disneyland Hotel’s main ballroom.

“Our awards gala is very important, because that’s where we recognize our top salespeople, top recruiters, top teams,” Wihongi says. “At Disney, we had a dinner and then entertainment throughout the evening. The staging and lighting were just beautiful. It was an event that made everyone feel special, especially those getting recognition. They were made to feel like movie stars.”

In addition to the hotel itself, Wihongi has high praise for the and staging abilities of Disney. “They have a different approach from most CVBs,” Luna says. “Their model of having everything coordinated by a single entity means that you get a higher level of service, because you’re not going to the CVB for one thing and the convention center for another general meeting and the hotel for a third thing. And that makes things so much easier for me as a planner.”

Disney is just a perfect fit for us,” Wihongi says. “And you really do feel the Disney magic.”
Laura Lee Wren was named assistant director of sales for Kalahari Resorts and Conventions' new Pocono Mountains, Pennsylvania, resort, which is scheduled to open in the summer of 2015. Wren formerly was executive director of sales and marketing at Split Rock Resort & Golf Club in Lake Harmony, Pennsylvania, in the Poconos.

La Posada de Santa Fe, New Mexico, has named April Gallegos as sales manager. Previously, she served as the opening manager for Antiqua Inn in Santa Fe.

The Wyndham Orlando Resort International Drive in Orlando, Florida, has named Art Fasano as director of sales and marketing. He was most recently director of sales and marketing and director of group sales at the DoubleTree by Hilton at the Entrance to Universal Orlando Resort.

Carla Jean Thomas Carroll was named national sales manager for The Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau. She formerly served as national sales manager for Kona Kai Resort & Marina in San Diego, California.

The Hilton Orlando has named Dawn Walzak as director of sales. Bringing more than 25 years of sales experience to her position, she most recently was directly involved in sales, marketing and revenue strategy with Tishman Hotel Corporation.

Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa in Austin, Texas, has named Carissa Smith as director of sales and marketing. She most recently served as director of sales and marketing for the Omni Austin Hotel Downtown in Austin, Texas.

Andrew “Andy” Rosuck was named vice president of sales and marketing at Hawks Cay Resort in Duck Key, Florida. He formerly served as regional vice president of sales and marketing at Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida.

Melanie J. Rice was named sales manager for The New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, Louisiana, responsible for clients in the West Coast and technology markets. She most recently served as national convention center sales manager at the Memphis Cook Convention Center in Memphis, Tennessee.

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