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George Aguel, President and CEO, Visit Orlando, and the Orlando Eye observation wheel, centerpiece of the new I-Drive 360 complex.
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**THANK YOU America**

Thank you for bringing your meetings back to our city when our future seemed uncertain. When you chose New Orleans, you reaffirmed that others believed in us. With each meeting that returned, we got stronger. Every attendee that came to New Orleans was a vote of confidence in us and our recovery. You gave us the impetus to reopen our kitchens and fire up the burners, dust off the instruments and find the beat.

Now, we are moving through rebuilding and on to recreating New Orleans in ways we never imagined before the storm. For the hope you instilled in us in those dark, early days, we are eternally in your debt. A grateful city invites you, once again, to come, be our guest, and let the city you helped rebuild thank you in person.

**NEWOrleansCVB.com/MEETings**

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**PLAN YOUR NEXT MEETING TODAY.**

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Corporate & Incentive Travel (ISSN 0739-1587) is published monthly by Coastal Communications Corporation, 2700 North Military Trail – Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394; 561-989-0600. Single copies $12.00 U.S.A. only. Snail subscription price is $125.00 in the U.S.A.; Canada and foreign is $165.00. Back copies $14.00 U.S.A. only. Printed in the U.S.A. © 2015
Built for Meetings

Orlando, named the No. 1 meeting destination in the country for 2015 by Cvent, is truly built for meetings. Ranked No. 1 for many years as a family vacation destination due to the popularity of its theme parks and attractions, Visit Orlando, Orlando’s top-notch convention and visitors bureau, has diligently marketed the destination to meeting planners. And, due to the leadership of Visit Orlando President and CEO George Aguel (on our cover this month), the vision is now a reality.

Premier convention destinations must boast an assortment of hotels, and Orlando provides that in spades with more than 450 hotels and 118,000 rooms from major luxury brands to budget options. Aguel reveals, “Among the things we use most to sell the destination to meeting planners is our diverse portfolio of hotels. We have hotels that meet every kind of need and every kind of budget.”

Ideal weather, convenient airift, exemplary hospitality and the steady evolution of the destination also help solidify Orlando’s No. 1 ranking.

The vital role that Visit Orlando plays is primarily based on branding and marketing the destination, Orlando is a very extensive community for planners to navigate, so we like to be the organization that helps them understand and navigate it. But when you get right down to it, what we really want to do is help planners find the right way to get their meeting done.”

For enlightening comments from professional meeting planners who call Orlando their No. 1 meeting destination, see the special 24-page section “Orlando Options & Offerings in Las Vegas, see “The Mighty Las Vegas! Groups Return Year After Year to the No. 1 Trade Show City for Brand New Experiences Each Time” on page 58. “New York and New Jersey — A Wealth of Options and Unparalleled Service” beginning on page 27.

Ideas seem to come easier at Streamsong® Resort. Perhaps it’s the wild, untamed wilderness surrounding you, or the openness of the land. Or the towering sand dunes and glittering lakes of the two acclaimed golf courses. Or the extraordinary resort that’s at the center of it all. Secluded yet accessible. Streamsong is a one-of-a-kind retreat in Central Florida that inspires creativity. A place for your executives to do their best thinking and your clients to be awed. It’s not hyperbole to say Streamsong is where inspiration just seems to come naturally.

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Harrah’s Atlantic City Waterfront Conference Center Now Open

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — Caesars Entertainment celebrated the grand opening of the $126 million Harrah’s Atlantic City Waterfront Conference Center with a ribbon-cutting, fireworks and customer event on September 17.

With the opening, Harrah’s Atlantic City Waterfront Conference Center and Harrah’s Resort Atlantic City now can claim to be the largest hotel-conference center complex from Baltimore to Boston. The Harrah’s Waterfront Conference Center’s 160,000 sf of meeting space along with the resort’s 2,590 existing hotel rooms offer guests the unique experience of being able to sleep, eat and meet all under one roof. The versatile meeting space with two 50,000-sf ballrooms can be configured 200 different ways, and overall more than 120,000 sf of meeting space; and restaurants from renowned local and national chefs.

Meet Atlantic City Launches New Websites

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — Meet AC, a tourism development agency designed to attract meetings and conventions to Atlantic City, has officially launched new websites this year, and three more websites are expected to launch within the next six months. Meet AC’s convention website, www.meetinac.com, features Atlantic City’s convention calendar, comprehensive meeting planner tools such as guides, floor plans, specs and RFP forms, along with marketing materials such as a press kit, press releases, video podcasts and employee contact information. The Atlantic City Convention Center website has merged with Meet AC and soon exhibitors will be able to make purchases directly through the website, when integrated with the Ungerboeck CRM system.

The Atlantic City Sports Commission website, www.atlanticcitysports.org, also launched. It boasts venue information, upcoming events and destination services. The Atlantic City Sports Commission was officially formed on January 13, 2015 as a 501 (c) (3) organization with the support of Meet AC and the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority to attract sporting events, conventions and competitions to Atlantic City.

Meet AC also launched a site for media to obtain photos with proper credit, www.photos.meetinac.com. The site provides high-resolution photos of Atlantic City, meeting venues within the city, event photos for the Atlantic City Sports Commission and conventions. In the coming months, Meet AC will launch a Group Motorcoach website, Atlantic City Film Commission website and a website that is geared toward market research. All of the current and future websites are compatible with mobile, easy to navigate and filled with robust information that educates meeting planners, show managers, exhibitors and attendees on what Atlantic City has to offer.

Meet AC President and CEO Jim Wood stated, “I am very pleased with the direction that Meet AC is going in. Meetings and conventions help support the overall tourism industry in Atlantic City, and it is crucial to have the most up-to-date information and technology in this industry. As the meetings segment increases, it means more jobs, more delegate spending in Atlantic City and overall more non-gaming growth as Atlantic City continues to diversify its tourism portfolio.”

MGM National Harbor Reveals Resort and Guest Room Design

NATIONAL HARBOR, MD — Offering a taste of the striking interiors to come within the $1.3 billion resort, MGM National Harbor recently unveiled the design of its luxurious guest rooms. The newest addition to the MGM Resorts International family, MGM National Harbor is located on the eastern shore of the Potomac River in Maryland. The resort, scheduled to open in the second half of 2016, sits a short distance from Washington, DC. The 400-sf guest rooms will feature light-colored woods and monochromatic earth tones. Floor-to-ceiling windows offer views of the city’s landscape. Motion sensors in each room will automatically adjust temperature and lighting to save energy when guests are not present. Advanced technology in all rooms will remember guests’ temperature and lighting settings when exiting the room and resume those settings upon their return. Wi-Fi and Bluetooth technology will be standard throughout all rooms. In addition to 234 standard guest rooms, MGM National Harbor will offer a premier selection of 74 suites ranging in size from 600 sf to 2,000 sf, up to the luxurious 3,800 sf Presidential Suite. The 308-room resort will feature a casino; a world-class spa and salon; an entertainment theater with 3,000 transformable seats; 18,000 sf of high-end branded retail; 27,000 sf of meeting space; and restaurants from renowned local and national chefs.

A rendering of the exterior of the MGM National Harbor.
Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino Opens

GRANJESTAD, ARUBA and MCLEAN, VA — The Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino is now open. Located less than 10 miles from the capital city of Oranjestad, the hotel offers more than 15,000 sf of flexible function space including eight meeting rooms with total capacity for more than 900 guests; five private meeting rooms for smaller gatherings; a Grand Caribbean Ballroom accommodating more than 900 guests; and two business centers. Outdoors, approximately 24,000 sf of lush tropical landscape can accommodate up to 2,000 guests. www.hilton.com

Access Destination Services Named HPN Global Hospitality Partner of the Year

SAN DIEGO, CA — Access Destination Services has been named Hospitality Partner of the Year by HPN Global, one of the leading and largest site selection and venue finding companies in the world. The award was recently presented at the 2015 HPN Global Annual Conference in New Orleans. Access is the first DMC to receive this award.

HPN Global developed the award in 2010 in an effort to recognize suppliers who demonstrate true strategic partnership. Jil Dasher, vice president, meeting services, HPN Global, said, “The recognition process is purely peer-driven, and it was clear to us that we needed to add the DMC sector of our business to our awards category. Access has set the bar high as a strategic partner. They’ve become an integral partner for HPN by delivering outstanding, timely service time and time again.”

“Access New Orleans, Access’ newest office, sponsored and produced a very successful ‘Club HPN’ event at this year’s HPN Global Annual Conference. Stacey Orvello, Access account director, said, ‘HPN Global is so much more than a client to Access. We truly consider them a strategic partner in every sense, so to be recognized by them for that partnership is such an honor.’”

Over the past 12 months, Access has received numerous awards including making the “Inc. 5000 Fastest Growing Companies” list for the third consecutive year, winning the Shining Star award for CSR programming for the second consecutive year at Pharma Forum and being named as one of the Top 25 DMCs. Founded in 1969, Access Destination Services sets the standard for excellence in award-winning destination management services throughout North America and the world. Through global alliances with Pacific World and Amstar, Access serves more than 100 destinations throughout 30 countries. With global coverage and local expertise, Access meets client objectives and exceeds expectations for corporate, incentive and association groups. www.accessdmc.com

The Adolphus in Downtown Dallas Completes Renovation of Meeting Space

DALLAS, TX — The Adolphus, a Rockbridge Portfolio property located in downtown Dallas, completed a million-dollar overhaul to its 24,000 sf of meeting and event space. With extensive enhancements to the Grand and Century Ballrooms, pre-function spaces, nearby restrooms, as well as the 24-hour business center, no details were spared revamping the property’s event space, while protecting the legacy and charm of the hotel. Additional project elements included the installation of new carpet, wall coverings, leather chairs, updated window treatments, accent sconces, modern artwork, lighting and audio-video technology. www.hoteladolphus.com

Credits: 1-3, Sarawak Convention Bureau; 4 CMITE; 5,6 Thaddaeus McAdams/ExclusiveAccess.net; 7,8 PCMA
Perspective

By Laura Stack

Quietly Toxic: How to Deal With Team Members Who Couldn’t Care Less

"If you can't get rid of a toxic team member, isolate them.” — Dan Rockwell, American business blogger at Leadership Freak.

Few things kill productivity faster than a toxic teammate — someone so awful they poison the workplace environment. You can work around or repair a lack of resources, poor training, terrible leadership, an uncertain future, shoddy work processes, even micromanaging; however, toxic workers destroy from the inside out. Like a cancer, their dissatisfaction and distrust eventually metastasize to others, leading to a sick team that nothing short of radical surgery can save. A bad attitude is contagious and spreads quickly. How to Identify Them

Unfortunately, team-wreckers aren’t always obvious. Gossips, saboteurs and unhappy loudmouths usually make themselves known quickly, so leadership can deal with them directly before things go too far. But the disengaged — those who don’t care about their jobs — clog up the workflow process because they miss deadlines, miss work often, arrive late and refuse to pitch in during crunch periods. I call them Toxics. Toxic team members can cause cracks in the foundation of the team work ethic. If not repaired, the cracks can spread, until the whole structure teeters on the brink of collapse. After all, if Bob the Toxic doesn’t care about his job, or Andrea the Toxic regularly takes two-hour lunches, why should anyone else try so hard or take their work seriously? You can try to just ignore their behavior and continue to do a great job and not let them rub off on you. But what if their poor performance impacts your work?

Leaders should catch and correct toxic behavior. But at least for a while, you may find yourself stuck with a "Quiet Toxic" you can’t get rid of. Possibly you ever had a job you despised, and you thought you were doing okay. But you might be told in no uncertain terms to buzz off. Well, at least you tried.

The next level of escalation involves a meeting with other members of your team who are having problems with The Toxic — again, ideally, offline, just in case the person goes off on a rant. Think of it as an intervention, like family members might perform with an addict or someone with dangerous depression. If the entire team goes in determined to help, you may just pull off a miracle, and you may get agreement.

Final Options

If that doesn’t work, volunteer to serve as a spokesman to your manager and/or HR and take it to the next level. What if you discover at this point The Toxic is untouchable? If that’s the case, work around the person. Discuss ways to limit the damage with your other team members and take care of things yourself. You can still get your work done — perhaps not as efficiently as before — but better than not. (Basically, you’ll be like a lame horse in a thoroughbred race, doomed to straggle in at the back of the pack, but hey, you’ll finish.) Hopefully, The Toxic will get the point and notice he/she is being left out.

Ultimately, however, I believe it’s always less painful and faster to lance a boil rather than let it fester, so to speak. You can simply refuse to work with The Toxic. Be aware that this last resort can backfire, depending on the toxic person’s touchability. But if The Toxic is so unbearable, awful, leaving the team might prove beneficial to you.

Have you ever had a Toxic on your team and how did you handle it? If you have a workable secret without betraying confidences, we would love to hear it. Contact us at www.TheProductivityPro.com.

© 2015 Laura Stack. Laura Stack is America’s Premier Expert in Productivity. For 22 years, her keynotes and seminars have helped leaders, teams and employees execute efficiently, improve output and build high-performance cultures. Laura is the president of The Productivity Pro Inc., a training company helping professionals achieve Maximum Results in Minimum Time. She’s the author of six books from major publishers, most recently, Execution IS the Strategy. To invite Laura to speak at your next event, visit www.TheProductivityPro.com.

"Believe me, the short-term pain of confrontation is worth the long-term peace and sanity.”

Laura Stack

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The Growing Complexity Gap: Are You Prepared to Face the Challenges?

As your conference grows, it faces increased complexity. According to a recent IBM study of 1,600+ CEOs, the biggest challenge their companies face is the complexity gap. Eight out of 10 of those CEOs expect their business environment to grow in complexity but less than half are prepared to face that change.

The growth of your meetings, events and conferences face similar complexity gaps. Forward-thinking meeting and conference professionals see gathering business intelligence about their target market as imperative. These professionals know that the big data they are collecting is far from complete and is often misleading.

Big Insights — Not Big Data

Many conference professionals are turning to big data to understand their conference and its customers better. They are getting better at collecting and comparing inputs and outputs. Yet no amount of quantitative data can tell you why a customer attended your event. Or why they skipped the general session. Or why they attended specific education sessions. Or why they are meeting with others in the hallways.

Without that insight, no conference professional can fully understand or close the complexity gap. Too many conference planning teams have reduced attendees to a number and have lost the human element. Attendees are human. And they sometimes make irrational decisions that are even opaque to themselves.

• Most marketers [including conference professionals] cling to assumptions about their customers’ behavior that have been shaped by their organizational culture, the biases of the firm’s managers, and, increasingly, the vast but imperfect data stream flowing in, say authors Christian Madsbjerg and Mikkel B. Rasmussen in “An Anthropologist Walks into a Bar,” an article published in the March 2014 issue of Harvard Business Review. Christian Madsbjerg and Mikkel B. Rasmussen are the authors of The Moment of Clarity: Using the Human Sciences to Solve Your Toughest Business Problems (Harvard Business Review Press, 2014), from which their article was developed.

Phenomenology: A Better Way To Collect Insights

Some meeting professionals are starting to look at the roots of their attendees’ behaviors along with their purchasing decisions. These professionals are using the tools of the human sciences — anthropology, sociology, political science and philosophy — along with traditional linear data collection.

Looking at the conscious and subconscious motivations of your target market can give you insights on how to design and deliver better meeting experiences. These human science tools can be extremely powerful when addressing different contexts, new target markets or new generations of attendees. At the core of these human science tools lies the practice of phenomenology: the study of how people experience life, say Madsbjerg and Rasmussen.

For example, traditional measurement of inputs and outputs can tell Starbucks how many cups of coffee its customers will drink in a day. Phenomenology reveals how those customers perceive the coffee experience. Here are two examples from Madsberg and Rasmussen:

• Starbucks has famously leveraged its understanding of the phenomenology of coffee, profiting from customers’ willingness to pay a premium for the often subtle and complex Starbucks experience.

“Reframing the conference challenge as a phenomenon is the first step in looking at your conference problems through the human sciences.”
experience — the hip baristas, the community of telecommuters, the crafted playlists — as distinct from the coffee itself.

Consider how the Lego Group used phenomenology to understand its customers’ deepest motivations. Eight years ago Lego had lost touch with its core customers and was bleeding cash; today it’s one of the largest and most respected toy makers in the world, the result of a remarkable turnaround driven in part by its commitment to sensemaking.

Reframing Conference Challenges as Phenomena

Reframing your conference challenges as phenomena requires shifting the thinking from inside out (how the conference organizer perceives the problem) to outside in (how the attendee perceives the problem.)

Consider these examples:

Conference Problem: How do we stop our exhibitor churn?
Phenomenon: How do our attendees experience our exhibitors? Why are our attendees not walking the show floor? Why don’t they want to meet with our exhibitors?

Conference Problem: How can we create a premium conference with value-adds?
Phenomenon: What is a premium conference experience? And what are value-adds to that conference experience?

Reframing the conference challenge as a phenomenon is the first step in looking at your conference problems through the human sciences. Stay tuned (in a future column or at www.velvetchainsaw.com) for the next steps to continue using the human science tools when analyzing your conference challenges.

What are some other ways to reframe common conference challenges as phenomena? How would you describe a premium conference experience? Send your comments to Jeff Hurt at jhurt@velvetchainsaw.com.

This article first appeared on Velvet Chainsaw’s Midcourse Corrections.

Jeff Hurt is executive vice president, education and engagement, Velvet Chainsaw Consulting, and is based in Dallas, Texas. Velvet Chainsaw Consulting exclusively services companies and associations with their annual meetings, conferences, education and events. They also help technology, service and membership organizations establish and execute plans and processes that result in improved business results. Hurt has worked in the events/nonprofit arena for more than 20 years including Keep America Beautiful as a consultant/trainer/writer; Keep Texas Beautiful as education coordinator; professional development manager for Meeting Professionals International; professional development manager for Promotional Products Association International; and director of education and events for the National Association of Dental Plans. Originally published by Jeff Hurt in “Velvet Chainsaw Midcourse Corrections.” Contact Hurt at 214-886-3174 or jhurt@velvetchainsaw.com. www.velvetchainsaw.com
Organizing a corporate retreat or offshore meeting? From the world’s oceans to quaint fishing harbors to inland lakes to rolling rivers, there are plenty of uncharted waters and ports of call for groups to explore onboard cruise ships, sailing vessels, river longships and more. These vessels offer unique accommodations and amenities for your group to work some and play some. Adept at accommodating groups as small as 10 and as large as a few thousand, these full-service craft are a great way to make the next business meeting or event you plan, a truly memorable one.

Unique Venues
When you think about cruise lines, what comes to mind? Luxury travel, certainly. Exotic ports of call, definitely. And the ships themselves: Huge, luxuriously furnished, with fine restaurants, pools, salons, fantastic nighttime entertainment, staff that attend to your every whim, allowing attendees to enjoy every event facet of their experience.

Recently Gegorio Palomino, CDMP, CEP, CMP, creative executive officer at CREBADS, partnered with a corporate planner at a Texas-based technology distributor to plan a meeting/incentive-based cruise for 2,400 attendees. In planning this meeting aboard Royal Caribbean’s Allure of the Seas, Palomino needed to make it a two-part affair, with 1,200 attendees onboard one week, and the remaining 1,200 attendees attending the following week — each engaging in a five-day cruise to Nassau, two private island stops and Cozumel. “This company wanted something different than the typical hotel or tourist destination,” Palomino says. “They wanted to expand their options beyond the land.”

One of the great advantages of hosting a meeting at sea is that ships mostly provide all-inclusive options for corporate events — everything you could want has been attended to, and nothing has been overlooked. These vessels also are equipped with some of the most advanced audio-visual equipment, which can be utilized for events and meetings onboard.

Palomino utilized the cruise ship’s onboard meeting space for his large group. “The cruise line is great at helping with the space needed, but if your group is larger than 100, you’ll always want your own planner to be with you as the cruise line may not provide a dedicated event manager throughout the cruise,” Palomino says. Royal Caribbean’s Allure of the Seas offered six usable meeting/breakout spaces, plus a restaurant, theater and general areas that could be privatized.

“Since the entire company was coming on board the first or second week, we had two chances to modify and execute the events,” Palomino says. “Some of the space where it was more of a general session, we used the theater in waves and then broke out to the other meeting spaces for more specific topics on each person’s role in the company.”

According to Palomino, some of the unique attributes of hosting a meeting or event aboard a vessel is that all entertainment and dining is included, reducing the cost and need for additional entertainment options.

“The ship met needs on various levels,” Palomino says. “We needed private dining, group dining, activities, meeting space, plenty of balcony cabins and suites, plus the ability to get us the same program in back-to-back weeks. The ship offered us many concessions such as 24/7 dining options and beverage packages. The ship also had enough capacities for at least 1,500 at any given time, so no one was going to miss a thing.”

There are hundreds of reasons to have a meeting at sea, but one of the biggest is that you can focus on the meeting itself and not the transport, entertainment, meal options and other factors that detract from the purpose.

“The cost is comparable to doing something on land as it can cost anywhere from $1,000–$3,500 per person,” Palomino says. “This ship was more accommodating for this size group. Each cruise line offers something different. There’s no wrong choice, but every ship may or may not be the best fit for a group.”

Anna Sedgwick, Carnival Cruise Line’s divisional vice president of charter, corporate and incentive sales, agrees. Because so much is already included in a cruise, ease of planning and the tremendous value are among the many benefits of hosting corporate meetings and incentives onboard.

“Planners should remember that the largest costs of a meeting such as accommodations, meals, meeting rooms and AV equipment are already included in the price of a cruise,” Sedgwick says. “In addition to having rooms, meals and activities readily available, being at sea makes the experience even more memorable for the participants.”

According to Andrea Giraldo, manager of special events at CruiseOne & Cruises Inc., inclusiveness of cruise line pricing, where meals and most entertainment is included in the booking price creates a streamlined cost for attendees. “Additionally, built-in excursions and entertainment options create great opportunities for teambuilding and networking events, to add more engaging aspect to any event onboard,” Giraldo says.

Carnival works very closely with meeting planners in determining the specific event needs, and then they customize the event to make it productive and memorable.

“For example, we recently worked with a company that always had held an awards dinner. While this is a very common request, we suggested an awards reception ceremony followed by the gala dinner,” Sedgwick says. “They loved it, and so did their attendees. It allowed for them to really upgrade the overall experience and make the recipients feel even more special than they already did.”

Going Big, Going Small
While cruise ships are exceptional venues, some planners need smaller vessels to better meet the needs of attendees. Jessica Greenwalt, CIO and co-founder of CrowdMed, a platform that solicits the wisdom of the public at large
to solve difficult medical cases online, recently hosted a meeting aboard a 35-foot sailboat.

“We invited other health tech found- ers and tech experts with experience in building partnerships,” Greenwalt says. “Since we’re constantly working on part- nerships, we wanted to learn from these folks. Rather than organizing one-on- one meetings with everyone, we thought it would be nice to bring everyone to- gether and sail around the bay.”

Greenwalt says that by bringing ev- eryone together on one boat — rather than arranging individual lunches, dinners
and drinks — they were able to have discussions with a group and solve prob- lems as a group.

“On a beautiful day, sailing is a relax- ing experience that loosens everyone up and makes people feel comfortable to share deeper thoughts on a topic than they would have in another environ- ment,” Greenwalt says. “Boat meetings tend to be longer than other meetings, which can be both a benefit and a draw- back. Going out to sail is a bonding ex- perience similar to going on a road trip. When you’re sharing a limited space with the same person for several hours, you’re bound to learn a thing or two about them. Everyone who went on our sailing trip loved it. We made valuable connections and got a lot of great advice. Our guests appreciated our departure from an ordinary business meeting.”

David Hartman, meeting and incen- tive travel specialist at Key Largo, Flor- ida-based Cruise Planners, frequently uses cruise ships for many of his corpo- rate clients for conventions, incentives, regional events and client/member ap- preciation. Hartman recently worked with planners at CKO to orchestrate an in cruise ships, the itinerary and type of ship are critical.

“The best and newest ships travel on seven-night cruises or longer, which is often too long for most corporate meet- ing clients,” Hartman says. “Shorter itiner- aries are available, but then sufficient meeting space is a concern and needs to be verified prior to booking.”

The size of the group also is a key fac- tor. Cruise ships are not for all groups depending on the size and timing of meeting or conference.

“Small to medium-size meeting groups are ideal for most cruise ships,” Hartman says. “Large groups require a balancing act between ships with avail- able space and blocking the space for enough hours to satisfy the client. Most larger meeting spaces on cruise ships are also public venues, and meeting groups need to be flexible with their meeting time request and total hours.”

Karen Shackman, president of Shack- man Associates in New York, says that in a company’s quest to find new and unusual venues to hold meetings and events, an ocean cruise or even a river journey aboard a vessel definitely is an out-of-the-box option.

“For meetings, groups are given their own specific areas, and gener- ally the meeting and food and beverage component comple- ment each other in terms of location,” Shackman says. “For events, a cruise provides a unique opportunity for guests to enjoy both the out- side and the inside of the ship. Different levels of the vessel can play to different themes for the event, and there is an opportunity for those who wish to enjoy what the destination has to offer.”

Shackman recently orchestrated a 10- boat flotilla on the Hudson River for a destination meeting group that ended up at the Statue of Liberty, where at- tendees were treated to an amazing fire- works show. They also organized a cruise from lower Manhattan to Liberty State Park, which included character perform- ers reenacting life as immigrants coming to Ellis Island.

“There are several vessels in New York which we have used as creative alterna- tives for standard meetings, where there is also a higher networking requirement — that the focus is not only on the meeting at hand, but an opportunity for guests to enjoy some highlights of the destination,” Shackman says. “In New York City, we generally propose a din- ner or lunch cruise to every client. We believe it is important for clients to ap- preciate our city from all perspectives — and a perspective from the water is an important one for an appreciation of the scope and majesty of the city.”

For her clients, Shackman incor- porates networking components into meetings at sea — so that the focus is not only on the meeting at hand, but also is an opportunity for guests to enjoy some highlights of the destination while getting to know other attendees.

“Sailing and cruising makes people feel comfortable to share thoughts and ideas — something that was not possible in an ordinary business meeting.”

For events, a cruise provides a unique opportunity for guests to enjoy the view of the vessel. “With key-card access only, guests enjoy VIP accommoda- tions and service with 24- hour concierge service, a private restaurant, pool, pool bar/buffet area and lounge,” Lindsey Elwood says. “Beverages are in- cluded in all MSC Yacht Club areas. This is perfect for including a group of MSC Yacht Club suites or even charter- ing a vessel for complete exclusiv- ity and privacy.”

Offering the wow factor is para- mount for MSC Yacht Club and other cruise companies.

“In fact, meeting the unique needs of corporate clients is the focus of Bruce Setloff, vice president of global charter sales and special projects at Crystal Cruises.”

Recently Setloff worked with a corpo- ration to help plan a combined meeting and reward incentive trip for the top sales leaders from a European automak- er. “This well-known luxury automaker chartered the entire Crystal cruise ship just to have the exclusive rights to the programming and onboard operation of the vessel.”

“I noticed a feeling onboard that the guests were really excited to know every facet of this company’s new model au- tomobile and noted everyone could not wait to show up for all of the meetings held onboard,” Setloff says. “The guests walked around the ship with a great sense of being proud to work for a com- pany that always went the extra mile for them and did not do the same old thing every year. This was really a great mar- riage of a company not only having the perfect meeting but also a perfect ven- ue to host it.”

Unique Challenges

To best work with the cruise line in securing meeting and event spaces, an event planner should consider the at- tendees of their group, the scope of the meeting they are planning and identify the most suitable options for network- ing or excursion events.

Of course, hosting a meeting or event onboard a vessel offers its own set of challenges — the primary concern be- ing the lack of sufficient Internet access. However, many cruise lines are address- ing this issue. For example, Carnival Cruise Lines recently announced its new social media Internet packages are available on more than half of the line’s ships with fleetwide implementation scheduled by the first quarter of 2016. From emails and texts to tweets and Instagram posts, travelers want to digitally share and stay connected while onboard. While the perception may be
that a cruise does not offer a chance to be accessible, the Cruise Lines Interna-
tional Association reveals that cruise lines have introduced a host of Wi-Fi ca-
pabilities and offerings on cruise ships making it easier than ever before to stay connected at sea.

The size of the group and purpose of the trip are key elements in select-
ing the right kind of vessel for a meet-
ing. If your group is looking for a party, there are many options. However, there also are yachts available for rent to smaller groups looking for a unique cor-
porate retreat.

As Shackman explains, the idea of hosting a meeting or event on water also can vary because some yachts and boats can accommodate incentive travel or brainstorming groups, and others are ideal for breakout sessions for 10 or fewer executives. Also, if groups want to be on the water in colder weather, some vessels provide huge windows so anyone can get great views from the warm interior.

When organizing a vessel-based meeting or event, departure port and the duration are both important but for many groups, they also need to be cre-
ative in programming and space usage. “For example, there isn’t a hotel pool or grand lawn that can accommodate the welcome reception, so meal functions must be approached with a fresh eye and open mind,” Smith says.

And once onboard a cruise ship, event planners need to have everything for their event with them, as options for last-minute additions can be a challenge.

“This can be easily overcome with de-
tailed planning leading up to the event and working with a travel professional and the cruise line staff to determine what a group will need onboard,” Giraldo says. “There are many aspects of cruise line events to determine what cruise line and what ship are right for a group to host their meeting onboard, from cruise itinerary and length of sailing, to enter-
tainment onboard.”

On larger vessels or longer cruises, you also can create your own activities on the ship, with the help of the cruise director who has done numerous events and come up with creative ways to utilize the ship.

“Whether it’s a group of 50 or 5,000, we’ve done them all,” Palomino says. “Most ships have the ability to do spe-
cial things for groups depending on the event management company you se-
lECT. It’s all about relationships.”

New & Noteworthy

Planners seeking a more immersive and memorable experience in the Carib-
bean for their groups will be pleased to hear that Celebrity Cruises’ new “Eve-
nings Around the World” shore excursions are designed to help groups expe-
IENCE THE CARIBBEAN — instead of just seeing it. At least three dozen Caribbean cruises will have access to more than a dozen new nighttime activities and events such as bonfires, live music, boat parties, wine-tastings and more.

Carnival Corporation recently launch-
ed a new brand called fathom, defining a new travel category dubbed “social im-
pact travel,” which will offer consumers authentic, meaningful, impactful travel experiences to work alongside locals as they tackle community needs. What sets fathom apart is the long-term, systemat-
ic partnership approach with its partner countries paired with the unique busi-
ness model that allows for sustained impact and lasting development. Begin-
ning in April 2016, fathom will embark on seven-day voyages from PortMiami aboard the MVAdomia, a 710-passenger vessel redeployed from Carnival Corpo-
rations’ P&O Cruises (UK) for the start-
up of the new operation.

Norwegian Cruise Line recently announced exciting and exotic new itineraries for the brand’s fall/winter 2016/2017 deployment, including cruises to Asia onboard Norwegian Star, with itineraries departing from Istanbul, Dubai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Sydney and Auckland — marking the line’s re-
turn to the Asia and Australia regions for the first time since 2001–2002 and first-
ever visits to the Gulf and India.

Renowned for elite culinary enrich-
ment programs, Oceania Cruises will continue to set the bar high in 2016, as it announces the upcoming launch of Culinary Creations Land Tours. The ex-
panded collection of tours will be avail-
able beginning spring 2016 in parts of Europe and South America. The events will take place on select cruises aboard the Nautica, Marina, Riviera and Sirena.

Regent Seven Seas Cruises tailors every aspect of a corporate meeting or event, recognizing customization and flexibility is paramount. Customized charters about Regent Cruises including complete customization of your pro-
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Tech Companies Often Lead the Way in Eco-Responsible Practices

By Patrick Simms

Corporate planners looking for exemplars in the area of green meetings may find quite a few in the technology sector. Many high-tech companies are ahead of the curve on sustainability, and when one wants to take the initiative to the next level, why not take a few tips from meetings that go far beyond recycling and eschewing bottled water? Oftentimes, these very eco-conscious events are not merely the brainchildren of individual meeting planners, but the products of companies whose core values include a respect for the environment.

One case in point is VMware, a cloud and visualization software company. Sustainability is “the way we do business,” states Eve Schmitt, senior manager of global sourcing for meetings and vendor relations at VMware. “And as Gen Y come into the industry, I think you’ll start to see more and more (efforts in sustainability) because it’s a value that aligns with the way they’re going to need to see the world. It’s becoming a bigger issue for them around climate change, diminishing resources and so on.”

Supplier Alignment

Of course, green meetings are not exclusively driven by the host company and its values; supplier partners must align with those values as well. To that end, a major component of the effort to optimize sustainability is to bring business, as much as possible, to eco-minded cities, convention centers, hotels, caterers and so forth. For Schmitt, one of the initial questions to ask when considering a site is, “Does the destination have a good sustainability structure in place?” That not only includes aspects of the meeting facilities, such as garbage diversion rates, and energy and water efficiency, but the layout of the city. “Is it a walkable location where we’re not going to be using a lot of transportation?” Schmitt asks.

This is a factor that is often overlooked by planners interested in sustainability, notes Nancy Zavada, principal of Portland, Oregon-based MeetGreen. “Look at your meeting neighborhood: Are the meeting venue and accommodations close to each other? Are there restaurants and shops close by, so attendees can walk or at least take mass transportation?” The more convenient it is to commute in these greener ways, the less tempted attendees will be to take cabs or rent cars. When it comes to the sustainability of hotel partners, some aspects will be quite evident to the average guest, such as the presence of blue recycling bins in guest rooms, or cards in the bathrooms offering guests the opportunity to reuse their towels the next day without housekeeping washing the towels. But then there are many “behind the scenes” sustainability efforts planners can inquire about, Schmitt notes. For example: “Is there an energy- and water-saving room?”

Oracle works in concert with MeetGreen and the Moscone Center to continually improve and track waste management strategies for its OpenWorld conference.

A Window on Your Brand

In the case of San Rafael, California-based Autodesk Inc., the company’s products have a connection to sustainability, lending even more support to the green meetings initiative. If the products themselves “promote” sustainability, then meetings and events, particularly customer-facing ones, should be a “window to your brand,” in the words of Laura Bell Way, senior manager, global customer events, field marketing, industry strategy and marketing. “Our software helps buildings be designed and managed in a way that is less taxing on the environment. So for us it’s an easy fit to drive for sustainability in our events.”

The high proportion of millennials in many high-tech firms, as well as the desire to attract young talent, also can drive a focus on sustainability. “I would say that younger employees coming into Oracle are to some degree quicker to recognize that we’re (adopting sustainable practices),” observes Paul Salinger, vice president, marketing at Redwood City, California-based Oracle. “And as Gen Y come into the industry, I think you’ll start to see more and more (efforts in sustainability) because it’s a value that complements the way they’re going to need to see the world. It’s becoming a bigger issue for them around climate change, diminishing resources and so on.”

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Senior Global Sourcing Manager
Meeting and Vendor Relations
VMware
San Francisco, CA

“Is there an energy- and water-saving room?”

Oracle works in concert with MeetGreen and the Moscone Center to continually improve and track waste management strategies for its OpenWorld conference.
ter-efficient washing machine used by the housekeepers? What are the cleaning chemicals that the housekeepers are using? Is the hotel involved in Clean the World (an organization that recycles and donates soap and shampoo used by the hospitality industry)? Does the hotel use solar or wind energy? Are they doing everything they can to make sure they’re reducing the use of paper?”

Evaluating Hotels
Admittedly, trying to assess a hotel’s green status in such depth can be “overwhelming when you look at all the criteria involved,” Schmitt says. Thus, VMware deploys a short form at the RFP stage that includes questions about any credentials the property may have (e.g., LEED, Green Seal, state green lodging designations) that address numerous green features and practices. A very good sign is when a hotelier volunteers such information before a planner inquires, as that emphasizes their commitment to green meetings. “As a supplier, tell us even though we don’t ask, and if it’s your standard process, be proud of it,” says Schmitt.

Another good sign is an onsite sustainability officer. The Hilton San Francisco Union Square, where VMware regularly hosts events, employs such an individual, and “we engage with her quite a bit at the very beginning.” There is also quite a bit of engagement with the catering department to optimize sustainability. It’s not merely a matter of using locally sourced, seasonal foods and avoiding bottled or canned beverages; many subtleties are involved. “We want nothing pre-poured,” says Schmitt. “And glass should be inverted, not facing up. When glasses are facing up, they have to wash them again regardless of whether or not they’re used, but if they are inverted, they don’t have to rewash them.” And wherever possible, VMware tries to ensure that excess food can be donated, for example by opting for pre-wrapped foods instead of items exposed on a buffet that must be discarded if not consumed. In the same vein, the company looks to donate any non-digital signage used to local schools for art projects. The Hilton San Francisco Union Square not only supports VMware in these efforts, but also continually refines its own eco-conscious features. Last September, for example, the hotel installed Hydration Stations that provide access to high-quality water from the pristine snowmelt in Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in Yosemite National Park. Stations were installed in each of the three towers of the hotel as well as the health club, and water bottles were removed from all standard guest rooms. Each hydration station has a small counter in the upper right corner, indicating how many plastic bottles are eliminated from landfill.

Planner Guidance
While circumstances sometimes do not allow for a certain sustainable practice to be implemented, it’s important that the planner at least make the effort by raising the issue with the supplier. For large corporations with many meeting planners, conveying that importance is an initiative unto itself. With assistance from MeetGreen, Autodesk is in the process of improving the sustainability of its small to mid-sized meetings, of which there are approximately 500 a year. "Our software helps buildings be designed and managed in a way that is less taxing on the environment. So for us it’s an easy fit to drive for sustainability in our events.”

Laura Bell Way
Senior Manager, Global Customer Events
Field Marketing, Industry Strategy
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Autodesk Inc.
San Rafael, CA

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In 2014 San Francisco’s Moscone Center, which hosts Oracle’s OpenWorld conference, achieved ASTM/APEX for Venues, Level 1 Certification. (Above) Moscone’s rooftop solar system; and one of many three-stream (compost, recycling and landfill) diversion stations.

In 2014 San Francisco’s Moscone Center, which hosts Oracle’s OpenWorld conference, achieved ASTM/APEX for Venues, Level 1 Certification. (Above) Moscone’s rooftop solar system; and one of many three-stream (compost, recycling and landfill) diversion stations.

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nually, and it is essential that all planners know what practices they should try to implement.

“We offer our planners a very simple program of questions to ask when they’re planning an event, and we leave it in their hands so they’re able to realize some effective sustainability practices even for small events,” Bell Way explains. “Some of our key questions are:

• Were alternative transportation methods encouraged?

• Was recycling of event materials requested of the venue?

• Were individual plastic water bottles eliminated from this event?

• Were name badges and table tags collected and recycled?

• Was the caterer asked to design menus that included local, organic and sustainable choices?

“So we’re not asking, did you succeed in these things? But did you bring up the question, was the venue asked? Because that empowers the planner to embrace sustainability and raises awareness of the requirements.”

“The advantage of measurement is that it allows quantitative answers to questions such as, “How green is your meeting?” and “How green do you want your meeting to be?”” The MeetGreen Calculator scores events against 10 sectors of the supply chain, including destination selection, meeting venue, accommodations, transportation, AV, F&B, exhibition production, communications and marketing, onsite office and offsets. It also quantifies the success of specific practices related to air quality, waste management, water conservation, energy efficiency and environmental purchases.

“In 2007 we were at 34 on the scale of 100 on the calculator, but we quickly shot up into the 60–65 percent score,” Salinger says. “We’ve kind of plateaued at around 90 for the last couple of years, and we’re at the point where we really are looking with a fine-tooth comb for the areas where we can improve in order to get above 90.”

The performance data is reported to all stakeholders, including management and stockholders, and posted on the Oracle OpenWorld site and Oracle.com. “It generally tries to disseminate it across the industry, so the Green Meetings Industry Council gets a copy, and they typically post it on their website,” Salinger notes. “We think there are two aspects to that: 1. We want to be as transparent as possible so that other people can learn from what we’re doing; and 2. We want to create a community of best practices here in San Francisco. As a big company, we can leverage those best practices across our supply chain and across the venues and hotels that we use, and that allows other companies coming in behind us to take advantage of (the results).”

Autodesk ran a “summer camp” with monthly sessions that covered such questions for audiences of 20–30 stakeholders, and the sessions were recorded and made accessible on the company’s global intranet site.

Tracking Results

Apart from companywide participation, another aspect of a mature green meetings program is the tracking and reporting of the results. Oracle developed and rolled out its own MeetGreen, which began just after Oracle OpenWorld 2007. “Before we engaged with MeetGreen we were doing whatever I would consider the basics, the low-hanging fruit,” Salinger says. “We started looking at reducing paper and recycling to some degree, and worked with Moscone Center on waste management methodologies. We were also looking at ways we could signage more sustainably with reusable materials.”

The partnership with MeetGreen not only expanded these practices, but also led to the establishment of key performance indicators. “We started to think about how we could make bigger impacts each year and improve our score against their MeetGreen calculator year over year, and really engage our supply chain.”

Autodesk asked whether a hotel has completed the APEX/ASTM Level 1 survey and references the World Travel & Tourism Council’s Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative, a methodology for measuring and communicating a hotel’s carbon emissions. “In many cases we may not get that information back from the hotels, but we feel that by referencing the standards and starting the conversation that we guide our procurement process toward hotels and venues that are more aware and plugged into the measure standards,” Bell Way says. Hotels that show a sufficient degree of sustainable features and practices get designated as Autodesk Green within the company’s SMPM. “So when our planners are viewing the hotels in the system they’ll see that additional recognition and can make that choice.”

Room for Improvement

Making the choice to “go green” with meetings and events is a key first step that generally leads to some positive results, but there always seems to be room to become greener. Even companies that have long been green meetings continu to refine that sustainability, whether it’s Oracle moving into the 90s on the MeetGreen Calculator or Autodesk extending the green initiative into their small meetings. Schmitt characterizes the initiative as a “journey” over many years, one that is eased by partnering with the right suppliers.

Fortunately, the final destination need not be reached for the effort to bear fruit, much benefit to the environment is accrued along the way.

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“Room for Improvement”

“Continued from page 26”

Paul Salinger
Vice President, Marketing
Oracle
Redwood City, CA

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Networking

“One thing we really tried to do this year was to get the interaction with both the VIPs and our vendors happening in different types of environments.”

Steve Borgquist, Executive Vice President, National Accounts
HPSI, Irvine, CA

How Planners Design Events to Facilitate Connections

Training, strategizing, motivating, marketing. All of these are among the typical objectives of meetings and events. Networking among participants, on the other hand, often happens as a byproduct of the activities during the meeting. Attendees have opportunities to get to know each other at receptions, dinners, sessions, exhibit hours, city tours and so forth. But companies that truly appreciate the value of networking treat it as more than an afterthought, proactively fostering introductions and relationship building among attendees.

The value of networking is clear across different types of meetings: National sales meetings, for example, will often convene representatives who have not had much or any face-to-face interaction. Client-facing meetings clearly benefit from host company representatives and potential clients developing a rapport. And even peer-to-peer networking among external attendees can benefit the host company, insofar as attendees will realize the company has created the environment for those connections to be made.

“We definitely understand the value of peer-to-peer networking, and if we can be the host to those opportunities, it typically has a ‘halo effect’ for us,” notes Karen Zunkowski, director, global events at Landesk, a South Jordan, Utah-based software company. With this principle in mind, Landesk is proactive about facilitating networking at its user groups and other events. Indeed, one should not assume that networking will happen automatically in the context of a meeting. “It doesn’t always come naturally” to them, she observes. “You do kind of have to encourage the typical IT manager, the core delegate that we come in contact with, to interact a little bit.”

Networking-Focused Meetings

A fine example of prioritizing networking in the design of a meeting comes from the HPSI’s four-day National Meeting & Tradeshow, most recently held in August at The Grand America Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Irvine, California-based healthcare group purchasing organization welcomed about 500 attendees to the event, including exhibitors, customers and HPSI representatives.

Kathryn Jurgensen, CEO of Raleigh, North Carolina-based Premier Meetings & Recognition, planned the event, and in her experience, the overt emphasis on networking was uncommon. “Usually companies try to create networking but they act like they’re not; it’s kind of under the rug. But this year HPSI unabashedly made it all about networking.” The approach worked. “The thing that most of us noticed right away, during days one and two, is that making it all about networking turned out to be a really powerful strategy, because people were in great moods and almost forgot that they were really working.”

“Making it all about networking turned out to be a really powerful strategy, because people were in great moods and almost forgot that they were really working.”

Kathryn Jurgensen
CEO
Premier Meetings & Recognition
Raleigh, NC
“We strategically made sure we put together our VIPs, vendor partners, and ourselves with the right people, so the (golf) foursomes were all paired based on business needs.”

Kirk Hess
Executive Vice President, Sales
HPSI
Irvine, CA

HPSI. “So we determined our top vendors happening in different types of environments,” notes Steve Borgquist, executive vice president, national accounts with HPSI.

Creating various opportunities for networking is indeed one of the psychological keys to fostering it successfully. Whether or not a person becomes more outgoing among his or her fellow attendees can depend on the setting and situation. So, it makes sense to offer as many different networking environments as possible during the meeting.

**Receptions and Cocktail Parties**

Receptions and cocktail parties are typically the first that come to mind as networking vehicles. However, it often happens that only those who are naturally inclined to making new connections will do so, and the goal is to get everyone conversing with those outside their familiar circle of acquaintances. Host-company representatives can help facilitate that by making introductions. Sales reps, for example, can introduce clients to each other, or even organize gatherings that are likely to lead to new connections. “Oftentimes sales reps will host their customers after our evening event and sometimes combine their customers because they know they have similar interests or challenges that they want to work with,” says Jurgensen.

One limitation to receptions and cocktail parties, she points out, is C-level executives who might not perceive much value in attending them. And these are just the individuals that many attendees will want to connect with. “Depending on who they are, they may go for a while for the food and drinks and then leave unless there’s something compelling to hold them there,” she explains.

“Typically there would need to be a specific activity they want to participate in to draw them to the event, or the opportunity to speak with people they wouldn’t normally have access to, whether it be industry experts or even their peers at perhaps some higher-profile companies. So an ordinary cocktail reception might not be enough of a pull (for top executives),” she says.

**Dinner Seating**

Banquets, dine-arounds and the like are another classic venue for networking, but here the interaction often will be limited by the seating arrangement. First, people tend to sit with those they know: “That’s been a problem with our sponsors in the past,” says Jurgensen. “All nine people from one sponsor company will sit together. We had to break them up.” Second, dinners are usually limited in potential connections to those near them at the table. To some extent, this problem can be ameliorated by eschewing long banquet tables in favor of smaller round tables. “Sometimes customers are here, and your vendors and sponsors are at the far end of the table, and the opportunity to interact really doesn’t happen,” Hess notes. “So instead of having them at the long rectangular table, which is often the case in big restaurants, we’re there at the Grand America and in round tables with 12 (attendees per table), where everyone can talk and participate.”

Jurgensen further improved the interaction by creating a free-flowing dining experience where participants did not feel compelled to stay in their seats. “Usually we’ll have a dinner in the ballroom with a screen and slideshow, and we use the foyers for cocktails. This year I put tall cocktail tables in the ballroom with bars set up,” she says. “And that includes attendees who would not be very extroverted in the traditional dinner setting.

**Special Activities**

Receptions and dinners are passive networking environments in that attendees need no more than enjoy the F&B if they choose. Some guests, however, may be more apt to strike up conversations where there is a mutual activity they can discuss. Activities of various sorts are thus popular as networking mediums, but care should be taken in selecting one that allows for conversation. Those that are very strenuous or otherwise intensive, while sometimes good for team-building, are not ideal for building rapport among a group.

“For some of my Hawaii programs, for example, they want everybody to snorkel,” says Jurgensen. “Well, you’re not talking to anybody you’re snorkeling. When you’re parasailing, you’re not talking to anybody — and there’s a maximum exposure for embarrassment.”

In contrast, hiking usually does not...
challenge attendees enough where they become more focused on the activity than each other. At HPSI’s National Meeting & Tradeshow, attendees could select from three different hiking paths surrounding the Grand America Hotel, based on their level of proficiency, and they would end up at three different summits, respectively.

“Even if they didn’t make it to the summit, they got up to the Twin Lakes. And there were folks that were planning on just doing the walk around the lake that had no hills, but as they went through the aspen groves it got prettier and prettier and the conversations kept going,” Hess relates.

“The activity also corresponded with our theme, Race to the Summit,” Borgquist adds. “Every year, our purchasing consultants that build the most profitability and revenue in their territory receive a Summit Award.”

Competition

Activities with an element of (good-natured) competition tend to get participants more emotionally involved. As such, they can be even better icebreakers than activities missing that element. Playing golf in foursomes is a classic example, and the HPSI meeting added that to its various networking opportunities. “Not all of our vendors went on the hike, 145 participants.” Borgquist notes, “We were all paired based on business needs.”

“Playing with the right people, so the foursomes would be strategically made sure we put together our VIPs, vendor partners and ourselves. ‘They wanted to have more networking.’” Abram explains. “Basically, 650 people are going to be hand-selected to attend this event with the goal of them getting to know one another.”

It was desirable to include some competitive activities at the venue for guests, since “commercial real estate reps are typically very competitive.” But at the same time, “they didn’t want to force any participation for attendees that are so high-level,” says Abram. “So we’re setting up somewhat of a competition, but not a forced competition. On the field, we’ll have golf putting and then up on the concourse we’ll have the speedway simulators, bocce ball and video games. Whether they do well or not, they’ll get a point for participation and more points if they do better, and the points are going to keep scoring on the jumbotron. What we hope is that as they start seeing the scores building, they’re going to want to start participating and meet their other team members.”

A networking event that Abram arranged for a food distributor also included a competitive game presented in a casual way. “They wanted to have their initial networking event in a ballroom, so we created trading cards where each attendee’s photo was on the card along with information based on some fun questions asked of them during registration. ‘For example, what’s your favorite food or what’s something embarrassing that happened to you? And during the event they were encouraged to go through and exchange cards, and then there was a competition as to how many cards you collected from other attendees,’” she relates. “For this group it worked perfectly, they were mingling and exchanging cards.”

CSR and Networking

Arguably, nothing instills a feeling of closeness more than a common cause, and closeness begets conversation. “A philanthropic activity or effort that you’re doing in conjunction with the conference has a tendency to draw people into conversations,” Zunkowski observes. It could be, for example, providing the opportunity to put together food packs for a local food drive during registration. “We’ve also invited attendees pre or post to help volunteer to do simple IT tech installations at a local school, or to collect school supplies for local districts,” she says.

Assessing the Success of Networking Events

Networking activity at a meeting is not easy to quantify. Deals closed with new clients in attendance do imply new connections, but the converse does not hold. Many new, valuable connections can be made that do not translate (in an obvious way) to sales for the host company, especially in the case of client-to-client connections or those among internal attendees.

“We also want to measure what we call the viable relationships,” says Jurgeness. “We all go to meetings and meet people we never see again, we want to see who’s staying in touch, who’s referring. Are people getting new referrals back from the meeting?” To this end, post-event surveys can include questions about new connections made. But the overall value of networking to attendees is not in question: Abram notes a very telling response across the many surveys she has sent out: “On 99 percent of our post-event surveys, attendees ask for more networking.”
The mighty Las Vegas meetings and events engine keeps humming along for a number of reasons: It offers a seemingly endless variety of luxurious mega resorts that are destinations unto themselves. Las Vegas continues to open new resorts while improving and expanding existing properties. Meanwhile, the city is adding several new non-resort attractions. As a result, Las Vegas offers what few other destinations in the world can — the opportunity for groups to return year after year and have totally new experiences each time.

That’s a big reason why, in 2014, Las Vegas was the No. 1 trade show destination for the 21st consecutive year, according to the Trade Show News Network’s “2014 TSNN Top 250 Trade Shows in the United States” list. Another banner performance is expected this year thanks partly to 12 new and rotating conventions and trade shows that will draw a combined 242,000 attendees in 2015.

Groups Return Year After Year to the No. 1 Trade Show City for Brand New Experiences Each Time

By Derek Reveron

This year is also shaping up as a strong one for corporate meetings, including those that repeatedly return to Las Vegas such as a Fortune 500 consumer products business that met in July 2015 at Aria Resort & Casino. The seven-day combination meeting and incentive included 2,400 salespeople, employees and customers.

First Meeting at Aria

It was the first time the group met at Aria following meetings in previous years at other Las Vegas properties. “Las Vegas has a plethora of hotel options, but we narrowed it down to Aria and one other hotel,” says the company’s meeting planner. “We selected Aria because of its level of service and the Aria Convention Center.”

The planner was impressed by the uniqueness of the Aria Convention Center, a three-story, 300,000-sf facility. “It’s like no other,” she says. “It’s a beautiful, functioning space. The rooms are easy to get to. There is a patio where you can leave...
During our site visit, the hotel Liquid Pool Lounge for receptions.

The Buffet at Aria was also popular with many people using pre-paid vouchers that we provided. "We used three of the ball rooms, and the corridors were good for prefunction activities," says Kravitz. "All of our break-out rooms were around the corner from our major general session room, so we didn't have to worry about getting lost. The general session room and pool were close to the terrace, where we ate most of our meals."

Like a growing number of meeting planners, Kravitz used an app to help attendees get the most out of the meeting. "They used it to give feedback during breakouts," she says. "We put our schedule and agenda on it so we no longer had to print all of those materials. It included speaker info and attendee contact information to encourage networking. They started networking before the meeting because we provided the app prior to their arrival."

The app contributed to an enjoyable experience for attendees, and that was evident in the post-meeting survey. "They liked the app, the venue, the food and service," says Kravitz. "Most people said they liked the fact that it's off The Strip and quieter. Several people said it was the best conference ever. There is a good possibility we will go back next year."

During the meeting, the planner was impressed by a unique service that Aria provided—a concierge dedicated to working solely with the group. "That is unbelievable, and it really stood out," says the planner. "It surpasses anything we have ever experienced. This concierge ran the business center for me, made sure lunches were ready and offered to help by asking me questions like, 'I heard you mention reservations. Do you want me to look something up for you?'"

The concierge helped with the many reservations that the group made at Aria's restaurants. "Everyone ventured to at least one of the hotel's restaurants at some point," says the planner. "We used Javier's Restaurant, the fine-dining Mexican restaurant a lot. That was a hit because it's centrally located in the casino, has great food and service, and is perfect for people watching. The Buffet at Aria was also popular with many people using pre-paid vouchers that we provided."

Feedback from attendees after the meeting showed that they were wowed by Aria. "That's a big reason why the planner has been discussing possible dates with the property for 2016. Overall value was another advantage. "Aria offered a great price point," says the planner. "On average, most Las Vegas properties we visited came in about the same. Because Aria is so new, snack dab in the middle of The Strip and a five-star property, we knew that for the total value we wanted to pick Aria."

Aria's service, a deciding factor in choosing the resort, was top-notch even before the corporation selected the hotel. "During our site visit, the hotel salesperson and team we were assigned to stayed with us from the beginning through the end," says the planner. "The way they treated the property with us, the touches they provided and the way they cared about our questions made us feel like it wasn't the standard tour they give everybody."

Dedicated Concierge

During the meeting, the planner was impressed by a unique service that Aria provided—a concierge dedicated to working solely with the group for the entire event. "That is unbelievable, and it really stood out," says the planner. "It surpasses anything we have ever experienced. This concierge ran the business center for me, made sure lunches were ready and offered to help by asking me questions like, 'I heard you mention reservations. Do you want me to look something up for you?'"

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Off The Strip

While some planners prefer resorts in the middle of The Strip, others seek properties away from the action. Cindy Kravitz, meeting planner for Moen, which is headquartered in North Olmsted, Ohio, held the company's Global Supplier Conference at the Green Valley Ranch Resort, Spa & Casino located off The Strip. The three-day meeting in May 2015 included about 200 of Moen's suppliers, employees and executives.

It was the fourth consecutive time that Moen has held the conference—which meets every other year—in Las Vegas. "We like Las Vegas because it's a big draw for suppliers coming from Asia and other countries," says Kravitz. "We get a higher attendance rate when meeting in Las Vegas. We also like it because the group can focus on the conference instead of the nightlife."

Green Valley Ranch Resort's conference center also was a plus. "We used three of the ball rooms, and the corridors were good for prefunction activities," says Kravitz. "All of our break-out rooms were around the corner from our major general session room, so we didn't have to worry about getting lost. The general session room and pool were close to the terrace, where we ate most of our meals."

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A Favorite Resort

Another corporation held its annual conference for sales agents at Caesars Palace for the last four years and is considering returning in 2016. "Every year I ask does everybody really want to go back to the same property," says the company's planner. "I ask in surveys if there is something we can do to change things up, but they always want to return because they have a fabulous time."

The planner cites one huge advantage of returning to Caesars Palace: The property's staff knows the group's needs. "They still have the same people we have worked with for three or four years,
Back by Popular Demand

After a year off, Celine Dion returned to the Las Vegas stage August 27 with her new show “Celine at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace,” which features her biggest hits directed by famed Grammy Awards producer Ken Ehrlich. One of the most highly recognized, widely respected and successful performers in pop music history, Celine has sold nearly 250 million records during her more than 30-year career.

Reba, Brooks & Dunn added more shows for their residency at Caesars Palace. The Country music powerhouses will take the stage for additional performances on December 1-8, with tickets on sale now. The superstar entertainers sell out crowds night after night since they debuted their show in June.

The legendary Diana Ross returns to The Venetian Theatre for another residency in November. Last April, the renowned superstar sold out nine shows, wowed audiences and received rave reviews at The Venetian Theatre. Diana Ross once again returns for another nine shows, between November 4-21.

 Legendary comedian and impersonator Rich Little will return to the Las Vegas Strip with the debut of his new autobiographical one-man show “Rich Little Live” at the world-famous Laugh Factory inside The New Tropicana Las Vegas – a DoubleTree by Hilton. Featuring a compilation from those working at the pool to those in the conference office,” says the planner. “They know us by name. I don’t have to go through lengthy explanations of our needs because they already know. It takes a lot of stress out of planning.”

Meeting at the same property every year also provides good value. “I don’t pay for meeting room space,” says the planner. “We rent the same hospitality suite every year and get it at a tremendously discounted rate. This year we got some show tickets for free. Every year we return, they are willing to do more because they want the repeat business.”

Another plus of meeting in Las Vegas is higher attendance. “We probably added a good 25 percent to attendance after we started meeting in Las Vegas,” says the planner. “People tend to bring their spouses more and turn it into a vacation. They also tend to stay on afterwards and some people come up to a week early.”

New and Noteworthy

Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino is redesigning more than 3,000 guest rooms and suites as part of the final phase of its resort-wide renovation. The rooms will feature modern furnishings, and new colors and designs. Plans call for the $100 million remodeling to be completed by spring 2016. Mandalay Bay recently opened the 350,000-sf expansion of its convention center, bringing total space to 2 million sf. The second and final phase of the convention center’s expansion will transition existing space into a 70,000-sf ballroom.

This year, the final phase of the multi-year renovation of The Venetian and The Palazzo Congress Center and Sands Expo was completed. Recent improvements at Sands Expo included a new $6 million 12,000-sf kitchen designed to provide higher quality food for trade show attendees, support show growth, and increase energy efficiency by 35 percent. This is in addition to the recent total remodel and redesign of all lobbies and common spaces; construction of a 60-foot central atrium with a 30,000-sf, 3-D articulated ceiling; reconstruction of meeting rooms and business center; renovation of the building facade and porte cochere; and upgrades to the exhibition halls. Also, attendees will find upgrades to the technology and Wi-Fi infrastructure throughout the resort and convention center.

Celine Dion triumphantly returns to Caesars Palace.

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Jeff Civillico will be a headliner inside the Flamingo Las Vegas’s Bugis’s Cabaret. Civillico is a dynamic entertainer with a comedy show that blends physical humor, stunts and juggling with friendly audience interaction and insane amounts of energy. He was recently named the 2015 “Cultural Advocate/Entertainer of the Year” by Vegas Live, “Girls Night Out” will boast an all-new show created specifically for the Las Vegas audience featuring a set list handpicked by Wynonna and Naomi.

Reba, Brooks & Dunn added more shows as their residency at Caesars Palace continually sells out.

Steve Wynn’s ShowStoppers (above) is a new show at Wynn Las Vegas that features a cast of 66 singers, dancers and a full orchestra performing Broadway’s hit numbers. (Right) South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa’s new 60-lane, state-of-the-art tournament bowling and event center.

The Mandalay Oriental Las Vegas introduced The Gallery, a loft-style meeting venue that offers 1,900 sf of space accommodating up to 200 guests for a reception and 80 people for a seated dinner.

The new Lavo Casino Club is a modern gaming experience fusing blackjack table games with Vegas-style VIP bottle service, mixology and Italian cuisine. The new concept will launch as part of a partnership between the United States Bowling Congress and AEG Live, “Girls Night Out” will mark the country duo’s first concerts together in nearly five years. “Girls Night Out,” a nine-show residency at The Venetian Theatre inside The Venetian, October 7-24, 2015. Produced by AEG Live, “Girls Night Out” will mark the country duo’s first concerts together in nearly five years. “Girls Night Out” will boast an all-new show created specifically for the Las Vegas audience featuring a set list handpicked by Wynonna and Naomi.

Mother-daughter duo The Judds will reunite for “Girls Night Out,” a nine-show residency at The Venetian Theatre inside The Venetian, October 7-24, 2015. Produced by AEG Live, “Girls Night Out” will mark the country duo’s first concerts together in nearly five years. “Girls Night Out” will mark the country duo’s first concerts together in nearly five years. “Girls Night Out” will mark the country duo’s first concerts together in nearly five years. “Girls Night Out” will mark the country duo’s first concerts together in nearly five years.

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The entire venue is available for evening group rentals.

The New Tropicana Las Vegas – a DoubleTree by Hilton introduced new Wi-Fi service that offers one of the fastest Internet services available in a Las Vegas property. The property also expanded its Trinidad Pavilion, increasing the resort’s total convention and meeting space to 100,000 sf.

The Mandarin Oriental Las Vegas recently introduced Sky Pool, an upscale pool offering personalized service, including complimentary refreshments, a private guest entrance and 125 single and 15 double chaise lounge chairs.

South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa opened a new 60-lane, state-of-the-art tournament bowling and event center. As part of a partnership between the United States Bowling Congress and the LVCA, the venue will host 122 days of professional bowling tournaments through 2017.

The Judds

The Mandalio and Sports Book announced new cutting-edge video dis-
plays — just in time for football season. The 2.5MM NanoSimul Engage LED displays are the largest of their kind ever installed in North America, and take the viewing experience to an unparalleled level with a sharpness and clarity that brings all the action on the screen to life. The new displays, measuring 17 feet tall by 31.5 feet wide each, which totals nearly 32 yards of wall-to-wall race and sports book action, replace projector screen technology. The screens showcase 4K video content for viewing in ultra high definition, which is the most sophisticated and best viewing technology currently available.

**Big Projects**

Genting Group recently broke ground on Resorts World Las Vegas, a new $4 billion, Chinese-themed resort on the site of the former Stardust Hotel. The property will include three hotels with more than 3,500 rooms; more than 100,000 sf of gaming space; several retail outlets; and an outdoor amphitheater. Genting Group, which operates casino resorts worldwide, plans to open Resorts World in 2018.

Caesars Entertainment has completed its Linq Complex with the opening of The Linq Hotel & Casino after renovating all 2,253 guest rooms and adding two loft-style penthouses and 25 poolside guest rooms. The Linq Hotel also added an automated valet retrieval system, an automated check-in process and a new lobby bar. The Linq complex also includes the Linq Promenade and High Roller observation wheel.

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority plans to build the Las Vegas Global Business District. Once completed, the district will host the largest exhibition and meeting space in North America and is within a short distance of more than 150,000 guest rooms and just minutes from the world-famous Las Vegas Strip. The project will add 100,000 sf of general session space and 100,000 sf of meeting space.

MGM Resorts International plans to build a 5,000-seat arena at Monte Carlo Resort and Casino. The new theater will anchor the burgeoning entertainment district on the west Las Vegas Strip and feature special appearances by top music performers. The theater will be adjacent to the new Las Vegas Arena that MGM and AEG are developing on Las Vegas Boulevard. The Arena is expected to open in April 2016, while the theater opening is planned for the end of 2016.

Speedvegas was recently given approval to transform 100 acres of South Las Vegas Boulevard into the destination’s newest, adrenaline-inducing supercar experience. The Speedvegas experience will feature a welcome center, event center and supercar course. Located just 10 minutes from the world-famous “Welcome to Las Vegas” sign, Speedvegas is scheduled to open in January 2016.

**Dining News**

Las Vegas keeps them coming back to sample new dining options such as the following:

Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino recently opened Edge Steakhouse, a fine-dining restaurant with a new twist on the traditional steakhouse concept. Award-winning chef Nick Lees and his staff blend traditional American steakhouse dishes with creative entrees, specialty appetizers and innovative side dishes.

Aria will debut its own version of New York City’s critically acclaimed Carbone restaurant, a finalist for the 2014 James Beard Award for “Best New Restaurant.” The Italian-American restaurant serves classic dishes from the mid-20th century such as Fra Diavolo and Chicken Scarpariello.

Red Rock Resort will introduce Salute, an authentic Italian-inspired restaurant that will feature traditional Italian dishes. Internationally known chef Luciano Sautto, a native of Naples, Italy, will offer cuisine passed down through Italian generations and focus on freshness.

Delano Las Vegas will introduce Rivea, a restaurant featuring casually elegant but simple Mediterranean cuisine from the French Riviera and Italian Riviera. A 50-seat dining room with floor-to-ceiling windows will offer views of The Strip.

Therapy Las Vegas recently opened in the Fremont East Entertainment District of downtown Las Vegas. Therapy combines the best elements of downtown dining and imbuing into one destination complete with an American gastro-style menu by executive chef Daniel Ontiveros and a full bar program with more than 40 craft beers and signature drinks.

Anchor Bar, the iconic Buffalo, New York, institution opened its first West Coast outpost in the Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian. Inventors of The Original Buffalo Wing, Anchor Bar boasts creating the prized recipe that started a nationwide sensation. Anchor Bar Las Vegas will serve the classic wings in mild, medium, hot, spicy hot barbecue along with the signature celery sticks and blue cheese dressing.

Although Las Vegas is the gaming capital of the United States, it is as close to a sure thing as planners can get when it comes to meetings and incentives. Planners are perpetually pleased with increased attendance and post-meeting surveys of groups meeting in Las Vegas. That is very unlikely to change, and that is why groups keep coming back year after year.
New York and New Jersey

A Wealth of Options for Meeting Planners

By Mark Rowh

New York City welcomed 6.1 million meeting and convention delegates in 2014, up from 5.9 million the year before, according to Britt Hijkoop, manager, tourism PR for NYC & Company. With all the glamour that is New York, the city has nearly unlimited appeal.

On a different yet still exciting scale, Atlantic City offers its own unique character. Despite its small year-round population, it stands as a big-time meeting destination. Long known as the gaming capital of the Northeast and one of the country’s premier resort and entertainment destinations, Atlantic City offers a wealth of options for meeting planners. In fact, meeting pros themselves find it an attractive location for their events, as evidenced by the recent decision by Meeting Professionals International (MPI) to hold its 2016 World Education Congress in Atlantic City. Meeting professionals and global leaders.

Certainly New York City and nearby New Jersey give meeting planners much with which to work.

“New York City is the media and entertainment capital of the world,” says Anthony Napoli, CMP, DMCP, president and CEO of NYC-based Briggs Inc., a DMC Networking Company, one of the most respected and established destination management companies in NYC. “There’s always something to do.” Not only is this huge metropolitan area constantly evolving, but its sheer size and complexity means every visit is different.

“We are very fortunate that NYC still continues to be a huge draw for both international and domestic incentive clients. It has the allure that motivates guests to achieve their targets.”

Karen Shackman, President Shackman Associates

Atlantic City Waterfront Conference Center.

“... And every day that we spent with them was very successful.”

Bob Menasco, director of sales, Atlantic City Waterfront Conference Center.

The Meeting Magazines.com • Corporate & Incentive Travel • September 2015
The city continues to expand from an accommodation and amenities perspective, offering new hotels, boutique or otherwise, in areas which were available, Shackman says. “In fact, for incentives and meetings that include New York in their rotation, there is always something new to offer.” In addition, she says the now accessible Meatpacking District, Lower East Side and Financial District are very welcoming. And there are very viable options for meeting and entertaining guests in Brooklyn and, to some degree, in Queens.

For a recent meeting of employees in the food service industries, Shackman says her clients selected the Trump Soho as the base for the 140 guests. Property features 10 meeting rooms and 11,485 sf of event space, and has 919 guest rooms. Attendees were an international group whose agenda included product knowledge enhancement. The location was selected as a new area for guests with the right amenities as well as proximity to several food purchasing outlets in New Jersey and Brooklyn.

“New York is a perfect city for a meeting,” she says. “And the dramatic penthouse view was the perfect backdrop for a welcome reception. It was a perfect fit for these guests from both a comfort and a service level.”

Receiving great fanfare is the sprawling Trump Golf Links at Ferry Point, opened in the Bronx earlier this year, and the new Whitney Museum of American Art adds to an already incredibly rich cultural scene.

One thing meeting planners always assume is that New York is expensive. But you can find less expensive options. … If you want to move to an off-season time, you can save a lot of money.

Anthony Napoli, CMP, DMCP
President and CEO, Briggs Inc., New York, NY
center, and six restaurants and lounges. Event space is offered on six different levels. It may not be possible to top the name recognition of this classic hotel — the Waldorf Astoria New York — but it also offers more than reputation. Along with 300-plus suites and more than 1,100 guest rooms, the Waldorf-Astoria has more than 5,500 sf of dedicated meeting space. The historic two-tiered Grand Ballroom accommodates up to 1,500 guests.

New and Noteworthy in NYC

Perhaps most attractive to meeting planners is the host of changes bringing new features that would appeal to meeting participants. With the multitude of such changes, some are calling this incredibly vibrant metropolis the “new” New York City. A new Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course, Trump Golf Links at Ferry Point, opened in the Bronx earlier this year, and the new Whitney Museum of American Art adds to an already incredibly rich cultural scene.

This summer, NYC & Company expanded its Delegate Discount Pass program. Available to meeting and convention attendees as well as meeting planners, event staff and exhibitors, the pass offers more than 60,000 sf of dedicated meeting space. The host of changes bringing new features that would appeal to meeting participants. With the multitude of such changes, some are calling this incredibly vibrant metropolis the “new” New York City. A new Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course, Trump Golf Links at Ferry Point, opened in the Bronx earlier this year, and the new Whitney Museum of American Art adds to an already incredibly rich cultural scene.

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“New York is a perfect city for a meeting. It’s home to countless hotels from large chains to independent properties and an endless array of venues, restaurants and activities.”

Beth Lockwood, Managing Director Details NYC, Brooklyn, NY

The new Harrah’s Atlantic City Waterfront Conference Center

Resorts Casino Hotel, the first hotel casino to open in Atlantic City, recently opened its new multifaceted conference center. “Resorts Casino Hotel is dedicated to ensuring that our leisure and business travelers are always offered the best that Atlantic City has to offer,” stated Morris Bailey, owner of Resorts, in a news release. “We are committed to continuing to reinvest in the property and to offer the finest in meeting space, lodging, gaming, dining and entertainment.”

Now group meeting attendees at Resorts can wirelessly connect laptops and personal media devices simultaneously, while sharing screens with each other and even with colleagues in remote locations. Convenient touch-panel controls and built-in wireless microphones offer ease for presenters as well.

Other highlights of the new technology include full 1080P resolution on all screens, and up to four devices can share the screen in QUAD view. Resorts installed higher resolution capabilities in anticipation of future needs, high-capacity Wi-Fi, electrical and Telecom connectivity hidden in the floors, and architectural LED lighting on dimmers with programmable pre-sets. Twelve breakout rooms keep productivity high with built-in 80-inch or 90-inch LED monitors, drop-down screens and cinema-quality projection. Two theaters offer seating for 300 or 1,350 with state-of-the-art sound and light technology.

In addition to the 12 new meeting rooms, the showpiece of Resorts’ conference center is the Atlantic Ballroom with a multi-use pre-function area, with natural lighting. Four sets of operable walls divide the main conference hall into five potential spaces and allow groups to have an adaptable floor plan for a variety of uses. The new conference center brings the total offerings at Resorts to 24 meeting and function rooms with more than 64,000 sf of usable space, most featuring natural light and ocean views.

Bally’s Atlantic City, with more than 1,200 guest rooms, has 33 meeting rooms and 80,000 sf of meeting space. Facilities include nine park and garden rooms with space from 700 to 1,900 sf and three ballrooms, including a 12,000 sf ballroom overlooking the boardwalk. An executive boardroom and 450-seat theater also are available.

Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa offers 24 meeting rooms with capacities ranging from 10 to 3,500 people. Options include a 12,000 sf meeting facility, three 4,500 sf meeting rooms, four 1,250-sf rooms and two 550-sf boardrooms.

Along with 1,100-plus guest rooms, Caesars’ Atlantic City has 28,000 sf of meeting space and 12 meeting rooms. Event facilities include the 17,135-sf Palladium Ballroom and 10 individual meeting rooms. And the renovated Circus Maximus Theater seats more than 1,500 people for special events.

New & Noteworthy in AC

The Playground, formerly known as The Pier Shops at Caesars, is a 464,000 sf self-contained entertainment venue resting over the Atlantic Ocean. It includes eight live entertainment clubs and restaurants, high-end retail establishments, bowling alley, swimming pool and a sports bar.

Gardner’s Basin, located in the marina district, is undergoing an expansion and redevelopment project designed to provide additional restaurants, shops and entertainment venues. Plans also include reconstruction of The Boardwalk from Revel to Gardner’s Basin.

A 200-foot-high observation wheel is coming soon to the iconic Steel Pier. The $14 million project will offer riders views of both the ocean and the Atlantic City skyline from inside climate-controlled gondolas.

Borgata Festival Park, the city’s newest outdoor entertainment venue, features a 4,000-person capacity concert space adjacent to the hotel casino. It includes a main stage, bar, Ping-Pong tables and amenities including beer trucks, fire pits and tables.
On The Move

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel has named Austin Bagwell as group sales account director for the New England market. She previously was part of group sales teams at Aria Resort & Casino and The Cosmopolitan in Las Vegas. Alan Enns was named group sales account director for the Washington, DC, Virginia and Maryland association markets.

He was director of sales at the former Peabody Orlando.

Cory Baum was appointed director of sales and marketing for Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront. He joined the property having most recently served in the same role at Hyatt Regency Columbus in Columbus, Ohio. Yajaira D. Torres was named sales manager. She was director of sales at Hyatt Place Manati, Puerto Rico.

Turnberry Isle Miami has appointed Joseph M. DeMille Sr. as director of sales and marketing. With more than 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, he formerly served as regional director of sales and marketing for Dolce Atlanta Peachtree.

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