

A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

AUGUST 2011 VOL. 29 NO. 8 \$9.00
www.themeetingmagazines.com

Corporate & Incentive Travel

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

Food FOR Thought

Using Brain-Friendly Fare
to Enhance Meetings

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Executive Chef Craig Mason puts BrainStrength Systems' food science into practice at The National Conference Center in Leesburg, VA.

Craig Mason
Executive

2011 Greens of Distinction Awards

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● New Orleans

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● Orlando

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R.O.I.

(RETURN ON INSPIRATION)

A meeting in San Diego is positive, uplifting and provides your attendees with an endorphin boost so big it'll stay with them long after the meeting is over. It's all about the attitude, and San Diego corners the market on the "can do" variety. It's a contagiously upbeat vibe that leads to positivity, productivity and strong partnerships. From real-time hotel searches to personal site planning to an event promotion toolkit, discover the kind of positive results our expert team can deliver for you. Plan your next event in San Diego at sandiego.org/positiveresults or call 877-9SDMeet (877-973-6338).

San Diego ALWAYS LEADS TO POSITIVE RESULTS.



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A Primerica meeting held at Atlanta's Georgia Dome showcased the latest in audio-visual techniques including these giant-sized LED ribbons for amazing visual impact.

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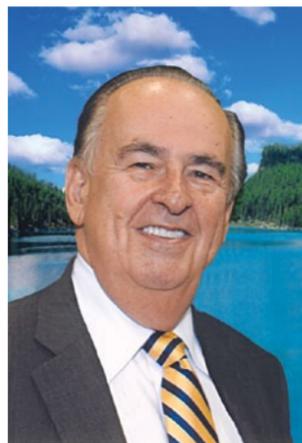
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The Learning Game

As I write this publisher's message a few days after witnessing the extraordinarily successful Meeting Professionals International's World Education Congress (WEC) in Orlando, the debt ceiling issue is still not resolved in Washington, DC. I called my elected representa-



tatives and suggested they learn how to get along and form a consensus from Bruce MacMillan and his top-notch team at MPI, who put together a program that connected thousands of people from all over the world — people who come from different cultures and different backgrounds, different generations, different ways of thinking.

MPI's inspiring leaders like MacMillan, the president and CEO, and Sebastien Tondeur, the incoming chairman, really make a difference. They learned that they had to change because the world around us is changing, especially in the way in which

we communicate with each other. Using the latest technology and the new rules of engagement, MPI put together an incredible, collaborative and interactive process. That's why we saw QR codes everywhere, why we used WEC apps for our smartphones or tablets, why "meeting madness" brought attendee-generated content to WEC, why the hosted buyer program generated more than 4,000+ one-on-one conversations, and on and on. See my Q & A with Bruce that starts on page 12 in this issue. Then go to www.mpiweb.org and check out the WEC Virtual Experience.

Another important lesson in this issue is the subject of our cover story. In "Food for Thought: Using Brain-Friendly Fare to Enhance Meetings," Andrea Sullivan, M.A., president of BrainStrength Systems, explains how the right food choices actually improve learning and performance in meetings. The best news is that chefs and catering departments are on the same page, providing nutritious, local, brain-friendly foods that boost energy and alertness. For example, Craig Mason, executive chef at The National Conference Center in Leesburg, VA, who partners with Sullivan — and graces our cover — is sure his produce is fresh. Mason has a unique relationship with a local farmer who delivers fresh fruits and vegetables in a matter of hours after pulling them out of the ground. Chef Mason says about his farmer, "He'll actually call me up on a Friday and say, 'Hey, I'm sitting up on my tractor. What do you feel like planting this week?'"

Harvey Grotzky
Publisher

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A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

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www.themeetingmagazines.com

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green-centric; *adj.*, placing the planet at the center of an organization's business efforts



As the largest LEED-certified convention center in the United States, here's how the Anaheim Convention Center redefines "Green":

Culinary/Operational/Energy Sustainability

- On-site roof-top chef's garden
- First convention center to join the Seafood Watch program at Monterey Bay Aquarium
- Significant farm-to-fork program in place
- Beef provided through our own free-range herd; certified humanely raised, and grass fed and finished, ensuring a safe food source
- On-site Green Zone, a recycling and composting area that provides the Anaheim Resort District with fortified landscaping compost
- 65% of all waste diverted from landfill
- 1.5 megawatt rooftop solar array coming in 2012
- Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) to comply with green purchasing requirements

Anaheim/OC "LEEDers"

(starting at the back row left to right)

Jim Tripp
General Manager, ARAMARK
Anaheim Convention Center

David Meek
Convention Center Manager
Anaheim Convention Center

Charles Ahlers
President, Anaheim Orange County
Visitor & Convention Bureau

Brian Daniels
Maintenance Manager
Anaheim Convention Center

Tom Morton
Executive Director
Convention, Sports and Entertainment
City of Anaheim

Dina Prediskik
Product Development Specialist
City of Anaheim

Adam Andersen
Show Director
Natural Products Expo West

Earl Lasley
Business Program Manager
City of Anaheim

Equally important, we work with our customers, including Natural Products Expo West, on how to best embrace green policies.



anaheimoc.org/green



Atlantic City's Revel to Debut May 2012

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — The new Atlantic City beachfront destination Revel has announced an opening date of May 15, 2012. The lifestyle casino resort will feature the largest group space for a resort of its size in the Northeast. Featuring 160,000 sf of convention and meeting space, Revel will be able to accommodate three meetings of 500 simultaneously. The outdoor lobby garden, located six levels above the beach and ocean, features generous landscaping, lighting features and ocean views. Group facilities include a 70,000-sf event center with unobstructed views and a general session area for up to 5,500 attendees, including a 30,000-sf column-free ballroom and a 15,000-sf amphitheater; 30,000-sf meeting center with 20 meeting and boardrooms; 60,000 sf of indoor hospitality space including high-rise suites, VIP salons, prefunction areas, private reception areas, dining venues; and 90,000 sf of outdoor hospitality space including a private beach, outdoor lobby garden and cabana area. Revel's glass tower has 1,100 rooms (each with views of the Atlantic Ocean), more than 100 suites, 46 retail shops, 12 restaurants, two nightclubs, a 22,000-sf spa and a 5,500-seat theater. Three pool areas and a private beach with cabanas just above the Boardwalk will provide a refined beach experience. www.revelresorts.com/meetings



Rendering of Revel Casino Resort.

Mike Mason Introduces Zentila

ORLANDO, FL — At MPI's recent WEC in Orlando, hospitality veteran Mike Mason presented Zentila, a new online booking platform, which is free to planners and focuses on meetings booked within 90 days of the arrival date. Mason, a former senior vice president of sales for Gaylord Hotels, says Zentila is the first technology to focus specifically on short-term meetings, promising planners a three-hour bid turnaround time versus the traditional three to four days it currently takes planners to search and source. "There is real pain out there on both the planner and hotel sides that we're working to fix," says Mason. "Short-term meetings are getting shorter and shorter, but the process for searching, sourcing and booking remains the same. Lots of back and forth and upwards of five days to place the meeting."



MASON

A key feature is the "Secret Offer," which works this way:

Planners create meeting requests and select specific hotels they want to work with. When their preferred hotels respond with meeting packages, the hotel name will not show up. The advantage is that the hotels have the confidence to offer their best deal upfront, knowing that planners are ready to book and not just rate shopping. And hotel bids that aren't chosen remain confidential, so hotels don't lose their competitive edge. "Zentila offers hotels an advantage they've never had before, which is the ability to see who they're competing against before they make their offer to the planner," Mason says.

Currently, Zentila has a stock of roughly 200 luxury hotels including all Hyatt, Kimpton and Gaylord properties. Mason expects to have an inventory of 1,000 hotels by the end of the summer. In addition to company founder Mason, the Winter Garden, FL-based Zentila management team includes Mike Schugt, a former vice president of sales and marketing for Hilton Worldwide; and James Murdock, a veteran of Gaylord and Hyatt hotels. For more information, visit www.zentila.com or call 407-656-5683.

Japan Airlines to Launch Tokyo to Boston Service

BOSTON, MA — Patrick Moscaritolo, president and CEO of the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau, says the new non-stop Japan Airlines flight from Tokyo to Boston, which begins in April, will drive growth in Japanese visitors to Boston and New England. "It will also help to increase market share from the rest of Asia as Asian markets — Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong, Seoul, Taipei, and 17 other markets — have frequent service to Tokyo's Narita International Airport where Boston's new 13½-hour non-stop flight will depart from," he says. In addition to this new Japan service, new international air service from Europe to Boston's Logan International Airport through September, 2011 is forecasted to grow 20 percent. www.bostonusa.com

New MPI Chair Touts Global Recovery

DALLAS, TX — The global meetings industry recovery is steadily improving, says



TONDEUR

Sebastien Tondeur, CEO of Geneva-based meetings and exhibition management firm MCI Group,

and Meeting Professionals International's new chairman of the board. Tondeur, as reported in *Business Travel News*, says, "There was a period of time when there was a very deep cut in the North American market, in the number of events at the height of (the financial) crisis. In Europe, we did not have the same drastic reduction. In Europe, the recovery so far is pretty strong, and very similar to what's happening in North America. I don't see that North America picked up faster than Europe."

Tondeur also recognizes the new normal for today's meetings, which are "more business-focused, trying to optimize those two or three days for business with less time for teambuilding activities or creative components," he says. "There was a time when there was a reduction in budgets, but organizations and corporations have taken the financial crisis as an excuse to look at their business and see how they operate and to optimize they way they do things, so that there's even more coherence in budgeting decisions." www.mpiweb.org

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GLOBAL DESTINATIONS

VisitBritain Invites Meeting and Incentive Planners to Edinburgh

VisitBritain announced that Edinburgh, Scotland, will host Trailblazers, its exclusive North American meetings, incentives, conventions and events marketplace July 27–30 at the Sheraton Grand Hotel & Spa. Trailblazers is organized to replicate an actual incentive program, allowing participants to experience the host destination. www.trailblazers-info.com, www.visitbritaintrade.com/en/Britain-for-Events



Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh, Scotland.

China Officially Sponsors Asia's CIBTM. The China Incentive Business Travel and Meetings Exhibition (CIBTM) announced the official support and co-hosting by the China National Tourism Administration and the Beijing Municipal Commission of Tourism Development. CIBTM 2011 will be held in Beijing August 30–September 1 at China National Convention Centre (CNCC). www.cibtm.com

Planet Hollywood Hotel to Open in Qatar. Wyndham Hotel Group announced it will manage a new-construction Planet Hollywood hotel in Doha, Qatar. Located near Entertainment City, the hotel will feature approximately 300 guest rooms, a restaurant, café, lounge, meeting facilities, fitness center, spa and pool. The hotel is expected to open in 2014. www.wyndhamworldwide.com

Renaissance Debuts Il Ciocco Hotel in Tuscany. In the summer of 2012, following a total renovation, the Il Ciocco Hotel, located in Barga, Italy, in the heart of the Apennine Mountains, will be rebranded a Renaissance Hotel under a franchise agreement with Shaner Ciocco. The 200-room hotel and surrounding region are known for their food and wine, rich culture and natural beauty. www.ciocco.it

European Cities Marketing and MKG Hospitality Partner. ECM, the European network of city tourist offices and convention bureaus, recently signed a partnership contract with MKG Hospitality, a leading French research agency specializing in the hotel, tourism and restaurant sector to provide ECM member cities with accurate and timely data on key hotel performance indicators OR, ADR and RevPAR, based on a robust and representative sample of 291,000 rooms spread across Europe. ECM is the leading European association of city tourism offices and convention bureaus, representing 120 members across 100 major cities in 32 countries. www.europeancitiesmarketing.com

Hong Kong Makes the List as a Top Destination in the World. Hong Kong was recently named one of the top winners in this year's Travelers' Choice Destinations Awards by TripAdvisor. Hong Kong ranked No. 10 and was selected due to the city's wide variety of culinary offerings.

Study Reveals Insights About Face-to-Face Versus Online Events

CHICAGO, IL — Recently, the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), UBM Studios (a UBM company), and the Virtual Edge Institute (VEI) released a joint report, “Business Motivations and Social Behaviors for In-Person and Online Events.” The report, which surveyed 479 marketing and event professionals, sought to understand how digital technologies can be best used within the framework of a work environment, answered questions regarding in-person and online events including why individuals attend, what business goals are achieved and how participants engage within these environments. Key findings include:

- **People are social creatures in-person and online.** More than 80 percent of respondents are comfortable/extremely comfortable connecting and networking with strangers regardless of the setting — either physical or virtual.
- **People share information via social media.** 41 percent of online delegates and 51 percent of physical delegates respectively have tweeted and texted to share event information.
- **People will pay for virtual events.** 25 percent of respondents will pay the same fee as an in-person event, while 74 percent will pay less as an in-person event.
- **People are multitaskers.** Compared to their online counterparts, in-person participants are nearly as likely to be checking email (81 percent versus 83 percent) or leave a meeting/session for some reason (65 percent versus 68 percent).
- **People want accessible content.** Respondents seek access to content online or via mobile before, during and after the event.

The full report is available at: <http://bit.ly/pmksCr>. www.pcma.org, www.virtualedgeinstitute.com

MEETING VALUES



Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa, Destin, FL

Meetings booked by October 31, 2011 and consumed by December 31, 2011 with 200 or more total group paid room nights receive: 10 percent off published banquet pricing; 10 percent off AV published pricing; 15 percent off Serenity by the sea services; 25 percent attrition; comp Internet in guest rooms and one connection in general sessions; double Hilton Honors points on guest room revenue; five beachfront upgrades with complimentary amenities; 10 percent off teambuilding; comp “Welcome Sunset Reception”; and comp a.m. and p.m. breaks. 877-705-6641, www.sandestinbeachhilton.com

■ **Hotel Madeline, Telluride, CO.** The Venture Out package, with rates starting from \$235/person/night, includes deluxe guest room; comp one-hour wine/cheese reception; comp function space; reduced attrition; and choice of adventure activity including golf, river rafting, jeep tours and more. Program must be booked by August 31, 2011 and held by November 23, 2011. Package includes 15 percent commission for planners. Call 970-369-8973 or email jegelhoff@hotelmadelinetelluride.com

■ **Bay Point Marriott Golf Resort and Spa, Panama City, FL.** The Powerful Perks Meeting offer, valid for meetings booked by December 31, 2011 and consumed before the end of 2012, include: four percent rebate on programs valued from \$10,000–\$50,000; six percent rebate on programs more than \$50,000 (maximum rebate of \$25,000). For more information on this and value date offers, call Dawn Wolfe, director of sales and marketing, 850-236-6023, dwolfe@marriottbaypoint.com

■ **The Westin St. John Resort & Villas, St. John, VI.** “The More Value. More Variety” package, valid for meetings booked by September 31, 2011 and held by March 31, 2012, receive choice of one of the following: 2 percent off master billed rooms; 1/25 comp room upgrade; complimentary staff office space. 340-714-6070, www.starwoodpromos.com/caribbeanaspoffers

HSMAI's MEET National Event Expects 2,000 Attendees

MCCLEAN, VA —Registration is now open for the Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International's (HSMAI) inaugural MEET National show, focusing on Meetings, Events, Education and Technology. Registration is complimentary for qualified meeting planners due to the support of MEET exhibitors and sponsors. Previously known as Affordable Meetings National, HSMAI's MEET is set for September 7–8 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. This year the 2,000 expected attendees will find enhanced educational experiences through MEET University; TEEM Up, a reverse trade show buyer appointment expo; the MEET Attendee Concierge, who will pre-schedule one-to-one

appointments for the planning professional with supplier partners; and year-long access to MEET On, a virtual extension of the two-day conference with networking and educational content. In addition, HSMAI's MEET University Boot Camp: Meeting & Event Back to Basics, is set for

September 6–7. The separate registration includes exposition, lunch and sessions led by Vicky A. Betzig, CMP. Also, a new charitable program working with Soles4Souls, Changing the World, One Pair at a Time, will be introduced at MEET National. www.hsmameet.com



Kingsmill Resort to Expand, Add Hotel

WILLIAMSBURG, VA — Kingsmill Resort soon will begin a long-term expansion and upgrade of its facilities. The first projects to be undertaken include construction of a two-story restaurant at the marina, a luxurious swimming pool complex where the current Bray Links par-3 golf course exists, and redesign of the current fitness center and swimming pool. These projects are scheduled to be completed by May 2012. Also, the resort will add a 210-room hotel building featuring a new golf pro shop, conference space, restaurant, lounge and wedding venue. Timing for the new hotel has not been finalized. Kingsmill Resort currently features 425 guest rooms and a 16,000-sf conference center overlooking the James River. www.kingsmill.com

Where heaven and earth meet, so can you.

Incredible convention and meeting facilities are only the beginning of your experience at Inn of the Mountain Gods. From full casino action and award-winning dining to championship golf and unparalleled mountain scenery, even your keynote speaker will be speechless.

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- > Full casino
- > Ski Apache*
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1-800-545-6040 | Mescalero, NM near Ruidoso
Booking Info: jakazhe@innofthemountain gods.com
FULL CASINO | CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF

*Weather permitting. Must be 21 or older to enter casino. The Mescalero Apache Tribe promotes responsible gaming. For assistance, please call 1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537).

Events Calendar

SEPTEMBER 7-8, 2011
HOSPITALITY SALES & MARKETING ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL (HSMAI) MEET NATIONAL

Walter E. Washington Convention Center
 Washington, DC
 Contact: 800-564-4220
 www.hsmaimeet.com

OCTOBER 4-6, 2011
THE MOTIVATION SHOW (IT&ME)

McCormick West
 Chicago, IL
 Contact: 630-434-7779
 www.motivationshow.com

OCTOBER 11-13, 2011
IMEX AMERICA

Sands Expo at the Venetian/Palazzo Hotel
 Las Vegas, NV
 Contact: +44 1273 227311
 www.imexamerica.com

OCTOBER 13-15, 2011
SITE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Bellagio
 Las Vegas, NV
 Contact: 312-321-5148
 www.siteglobal.com

NOVEMBER 13-16, 2011
2011 FINANCIAL & INSURANCE CONFERENCE PLANNERS (FICP) ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Grand Hyatt San Antonio
 San Antonio, TX
 Contact: 312-245-1023
 www.ficpnet.com

DECEMBER 6-8, 2011
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS (IAEE) EXPO! EXPO! IAEE'S ANNUAL MEETING & EXHIBITION

Las Vegas Convention Center
 Las Vegas, NV
 Contact: 972-458-8002
 www.iaee.com

New Austin Convention Center Hotel in the Works

AUSTIN, TX — Manchester Texas Financial Group recently announced a proposal for a 1,035-room, \$350 million hotel adjacent to the Austin (TX) Convention Center. The project includes two restaurants, retail, and 115,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space. Manchester Financial Group of San Diego California (the parent company), contributed the land for the San Diego Convention Center and built both the Manchester Grand Hyatt and The Marriott Hotel and Marina consisting of approximately 3,000 rooms. Construction is estimated to begin in a year and take up to 2½ years to complete. Potential operators include Hilton, Hyatt and Starwood. Austin will welcome another convention hotel project within nine months when White Lodging's 1,003-room Marriott Marquis breaks ground three blocks from the convention center. The Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau notes that large groups have bypassed Austin due to a lack of hotel rooms.



Austin Convention Center Hotel rendering.

Kansas City's Sheraton Crown Center to Open in January

WHITE PLAINS, NY — Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. and Crown Center Redevelopment Corporation announced that the Hyatt Regency in Kansas City, MO, will fly the Sheraton flag and undergo a \$13 million renovation. The 733-room Sheraton Crown Center is scheduled to make its debut on January 1, 2012 and will feature all the brand's signature offerings including the Sweet Sleeper bed, Club Lounge, Link@Sheraton experienced with Microsoft, Link@Sheraton Café and Sheraton Fitness programmed by Core Performance. All guest rooms will be equipped with an oversized work desk, custom-designed ergonomic chair, high-speed Internet, LCD flat-panel television and MP3 docking station. The newly flagged hotel will feature more than 95,000 sf of flexible meeting space with the latest in meetings technology. Located on the southern edge of downtown Kansas City, Sheraton Crown Center is adjacent to the 53,000-sf Crown Center Exhibit Hall and less than a mile from the city's convention center. A city within the city, Crown Center's 80 acres features shops, restaurants and theaters, and the worldwide headquarters for Hallmark Cards. A Sea Life aquarium and Legoland Discovery Center will open in 2012. www.crowncenter.com, www.starwoodhotels.com



MPI's World Education Congress Gets Rave Reviews



Clockwise from top: (1) The MPI Foundation hosted The Big Deal poker tournament with proceeds going to fund scholarships and grants. (2) New WEC addition Daily Download gathered the insights and opinions of attendees that are shared online and filtered them into one session onsite. (3-4) Several of the more than 4,000 hosted-buyer sessions. (5) At the general session, Simone Sinek, author of Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action (Portfolio Hardcover, 2009) inspired attendees to action. (6) Incoming MPI Chairman Sebastien Tondeur stressed that "when people gather, magic happens."

MPI's World Education Congress, which took place July 23-26 in Orlando, FL, debuted a dynamically redesigned program to reflect a fast-changing industry impacted by new technologies and new ways of doing business. New this year was a hosted buyer program that netted an impressive 4,000+ appointments between qualified buyers and suppliers. New sessions and "environments" for learning and experimentation included Solution Rooms for interactive learning; the Daily Download, which fostered peer-to-peer sharing and learning in-person and online; the HIVE, a gathering spot that showcased event technology trends; the Blitz, a networking and "show and tell" space for attendees and suppliers; and more. MPI President and CEO Bruce MacMillan said that WEC was planned around the new "rules of engagement," which compel planners to: measure and manage performance; embrace new technologies for connecting and communicating; consider the meeting's environmental and social footprint; and take action and initiative in furthering meeting design and goals to the C-suite. Also at the conference MPI announced its lineup of future host cities for WEC: Minneapolis, MN, in 2014; San Francisco, CA, in 2015; and Philadelphia, PA, in 2016. Previously announced cities for WEC include St. Louis, MO, on July 29-31, 2012 and Las Vegas, NV, on July 20-23, 2013. www.mpiweb.org

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Bruce
MacMillan

Q & A with MPI's President and CEO

MPI's MacMillan Says Mobile Technology Has Forever Changed How We Connect

At Meeting Professionals International's (MPI) World Education Conference (WEC), held last month in Orlando, Harvey Grotsky, publisher and editor-in-chief of *Corporate & Incentive Travel*, interviewed MPI's President and CEO Bruce MacMillan. Here is their edited conversation.

C&IT Explain how and why this year's WEC is different — and why you dropped the trade show.

MPI We wanted to make this more about connecting people, more engagement, more collaboration so we've put more into mobile, interactive technology. We had people vote and called it "meeting madness." It is a much more collaborative and interactive process. We didn't get rid of the trade show; we moved it to partner with IMEX America (to be held in Las Vegas October 11–13, 2011). We also looked at what do you want to do to advance your business? That's what people wanted: More one-on-one conversations with the qualified people, so that's what we created for them.

C&IT You've had to expand your hosted buyer program for this year's WEC by 30 percent. What do you think accounts for this increased demand?

MPI The big thing is that everybody is really busy. And to be able to get guaranteed access to a planner or a seller in these times, to have one-on-one time with a qualified business lead, that's what people want. They don't have time to play hit and miss. It's like we're going to be there when we say we are ready to talk business. And that's what people want more than anything.

C&IT How would you rate the effectiveness of co-located events, such as the recent AIBTM?

MPI You have to design for co-location. You can't just put things together. You have to understand the cultures and manage the expectations. You have to have goals: What does success look like for a co-located event? It's a great way to maximize more connections if you have business in both areas. But you have to design it so that it makes it real easy for people to access both areas.

C&IT What are your expectations for the upcoming IMEX America in Las Vegas where you'll be the premier education provider?

MPI IMEX America is going to be an incredible experience for the meetings and events industry in North America. We already expanded our space once, and the demand keeps coming. The community of Las Vegas is really rallying behind it. We're seeing exhibitors from all over the world. We're going to have over 2,000 hosted buyers. It's going to be a great draw. To have a meeting/event exposition in a place like Las Vegas — that's what our industry needs.

C&IT You recently raised the dues of suppliers for the first time in seven years. Did suppliers understand the rate increase?

MPI Our role is to provide to meeting and event professionals around the world the opportunity to be as successful as they can be. Bringing people together and allowing them to get the most out of their work, that's what we promise our members, and that's why we do what we do. So we made a decision to raise our supplier dues because the bar is going up. We need to invest. We need more technology. We've improved our website, we're getting more sessions, and

all that costs money. And we wouldn't be fulfilling our mission if we didn't continually invest in that.

C&IT Since you became president and CEO of MPI, how has technology most changed the meetings industry?

MPI Two things come to mind. First is what we call 'thinking outside the room.' It used to be you had to worry about what was in the room, but now, with technology, we can bring part of the experience around the world. You can watch the general session live on our website. We have to think differently when we design: There are people in London, Sydney and Beijing who are watching this. The second thing is the mobile phone. It's changed how we connect when we're onsite. We deliver our updates, all the info and speakers' bios and more. For ex-

C&IT Is social media here to stay or will something else take its place in a few years?

MPI Social media is a tool. It activates collaboration and the spirit of community. What's really here to stay, for example, is collaboration like our "meeting madness." Here's our sessions — tell us what you want to hear. We're so crowded we're asking which sessions do you want repeated? We do that on social media. I think it's a great thing for our industry. It's a way to collaborate that we couldn't do before this technology.

C&IT MPI is becoming more global in scope than ever before. Where do you envision the organization in the next five years?

MPI You go where the growth is. You have to. We've been very fortunate. We've made some investment in China. The first Global

*We have to think differently
when we design: There are
people in London, Sydney and
Beijing who are watching this.*

ample, there are 5.2 billion mobile phones in the world and 4.2 billion toothbrushes. People check their phones on average every 6½ minutes. How can you tell somebody to come into a meeting for the next three hours but you have to turn off your phone? We're just not wired that way anymore. That next generation of attendees — that's how they are wired. And we are in the business of connecting people, and mobile technology is connecting people and connecting them faster than any other technology.

Training Program is being offered with the Beijing Tourism Administration. Growth in Asia is not going to fade. So that's a huge opportunity for us to have good partners there. There's also Latin America where we have partners. For example, Brazil will host the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016 so they are building infrastructure all over the country. We have a chapter there of about 200–300 people. Those are the two areas that should continue to grow in the next five years. **C&IT**

Bruce MacMillan, President and CEO
Meeting Professionals International, Dallas, TX. www.mpiweb.org

The Dilemma of the Mobile Age

How Our New Tools Increase Risk

When meeting planners ponder the endless details of a meeting, they rarely consider one of the few factors that could actually do severe damage to the enterprise — the security of sensitive corporate data related to the event and/or carried on the laptops and other mobile devices of attendees. At the same time, reports technology publication *TG Daily*, cybercriminals once hot on the trail of customer credit card information are now hungry for corporate intellectual property — which is worth more on the global black market.

The challenge for companies, of course, is that mobility has become an almost universal workplace lifestyle. As a result, according to a recent study from New York City-based People Security, “employees are putting...con-

fidential corporate information at risk outside the office.”

And nowhere is that more common than at meetings and events.

Unfortunately, experts agree, the typical meeting planner and attendee are clueless when it comes to the risks they face or what to do about them. “In my experience, those things are not considerations at all,” says Brian J. Thomas, CISA, CISSP, the Houston-based partner, advisory services at Weaver, the largest public accounting firm in the Southwest. “The planner’s consideration is simply providing a facility that can allow people to meet or hold the event.”

Meanwhile, Thomas notes, data security is handled by an IT department that generally has no clue about the

types of meetings the company is holding or what kinds of sensitive information are discussed.

Complicating matters is the modern technological wonder known as mobility. “It’s very common for meeting attendees to work on their laptops at airports, train stations, airplanes and hotel lobbies, then in hotels and convention facilities when they get to the event,” says Rich Plansky, senior managing director and head of the New York office at global security behemoth Kroll. “And that’s fine. But you need to be mindful of where you’re working and what kind of work you’re doing. There are simply some things that should not be done in a hotel lobby.”

For example, he says, a software executive or engineer introducing his



Lisa F. Young/www.Shutterstock.com

By John Buchanan

company's revolutionary new product should not carry that information on a laptop. "Using a laptop with source code on it could be a bet-the-company issue," he says.

And the biggest threat is not a cyber-criminal who targets a computer from across the lobby or airport lounge, says Jeremy Miller, Nashville-based director of operations at Kroll Fraud Solutions, a specialized division of the parent company. It's that most security breaches are caused by lost or stolen devices.

But, he says, at the same time, the threat landscape is stretching farther toward the horizon. "For example," Miller says, "phones come with a different set of vulnerabilities than a laptop. And then you have the fact that there are new vulnerabilities being exploited in things like Gmail." Even more important, he adds, not even Apple's fabled technology is "safe" anymore. "They were never a target before," Miller says. "But now with the iPhone and iPad, they are. So there are no security blankets anymore."

The Big Risk — Wi-Fi

There's cruel irony in the fact that the very thing that has helped revolutionize offsite meetings and conventions — Wi-Fi technology — poses the greatest risk. There's even more irony in the fact that hotels are increasingly offering free Wi-Fi as a basic perk — and that the most common forms of free Wi-Fi are the most dangerous.

There are two basic types of wireless attacks, explains Miller. Both are relatively easy to learn, and the necessary tools can easily be found online if you know where to look.

A so-called "man in the middle" attack means that the data thief is connected to the same public Wi-Fi network that a meeting planner or attendee is. As a result, the thief can easily steal whatever information a person transmits, such as an email or a newly composed report.

A "peer to peer" attack means that



Rich Plansky
Senior Managing Director
Kroll
New York, NY

"Privacy screens are ...absolutely essential. You should not be doing any work in a public space without one. They should be standard operating procedure."

the criminal targets an individual laptop, attacking it directly from within a shared Wi-Fi network. In that kind of attack, the thief inserts malware or bots (short for robot, a computer program that runs automatically) that allow him or her full access to a computer via its password and key loggers.

Fortunately, the fix is fairly easy. First, advises Miller, do not connect to a Wi-Fi network that does not require a password. "A shared public network that you can just connect to," Miller says, "is an indication that the venue has not thought very much about security."

And if you do decide to work on a typical public network that is not password-protected, recognize that you are

in an insecure environment and do not address sensitive business issues or log into your corporate email account. "And as a precaution," Miller says, "as soon as you leave the conference, change the passwords you used over that network."

The other good news, says Thomas, is that "it's not really that inconvenient to secure a Wi-Fi connection. The first requirement is encryption, which should ideally be so-called whole-disk encryption." The next is issuing user names and passwords to every attendee. And the third factor is educating attendees about the risks and why such actions are being taken.

"It's that simple, basically," says Thomas, one of the country's leading data security experts. It's just that most meeting planners don't know that — and are preoccupied by the hundreds of other details they consider more relevant to the meeting's success.

A key best practice touted by Plansky is the use of privacy screens, a plastic cover that acts as a hood, for all attendees who will work on laptops. They guard against visual breaches of the data on a computer, such as taking a photo with a smart phone. "Privacy screens are inexpensive, and you can buy them anywhere," Plansky says. "And they're absolutely essential. You should not be doing any work in a public space without one. They should be standard operating procedure for every company."

Yet another necessity is the ability to remotely "wipe clean" a laptop or other mobile device that is lost or stolen.

Leading vendors including Absolute Software offer applications that allow IT departments to remotely delete data from a laptop, then trace its whereabouts and facilitate its recovery approximately 75 percent of the time. The company also offers similar technology for other mobile devices.

More Best Practices

Rainer Enders, chief technology officer, Americas, for technology provid-

er NCP located in Mountain View, CA, stresses that the ability of an IT department to remotely control laptops and other mobile devices being used by meeting planners and attendees is key to a serious data security initiative.

He also advises the use of "device firewalls" in addition to the standard firewall that comes with the laptop. "That is one of the most misunderstood aspects of this issue," Enders says. "IT departments too often assume that the basic firewall on the computer is sufficient. But unfortunately, in most cases it is not." The reason: it cannot be centrally controlled by an IT department. Companies that present and discuss sensitive corporate data at their meetings and transport it on the laptops carried by planners and attendees should install device firewalls



Rainer Enders
Chief Technology Officer, Americas
NCP
Mountain View, CA

"IT departments too often assume that the basic firewall on the computer is sufficient. But unfortunately, in most cases it is not."

on every device that will be in use at the meeting.

Enders also preaches the importance of a so-called "defense in depth" approach to data security. Simply put, that means a layered defense protocol that uses multiple building blocks that work in conjunction with one another to provide maximum, state-of-the-art security. "It puts different kinds of protection in different places," Enders explains. "For example, you have perimeter protection. But inside the perimeter, you have different functions and features that have to do with things like access and the firewall."

All of that said, notes Plansky, technology is only half of the equation. "There's a technology side to this issue and there is a human side," he says. "On the human side, the most important thing is the mindset of meeting planners and attendees. When you have people who are traveling and gathering for meetings, you can have — broadly speaking — one of two mindsets. First, you can take the view that you are carrying hardware, like a laptop, and a briefcase with papers in it. And if you take that view — that you're carrying physical items — then you behave in a certain way. But there is a second mindset, one that at Kroll, in our experience, is more productive. And that is that not only are you carrying things, but you're carrying valuable information. It's not about the laptop. It's about the information on the laptop — or a handheld device."

For maximum security, attendee laptops should use either VPN or UMTS technology, advises Eddy Willems, Brussels, Belgium-based security evangelist at data security technology provider G Data, which has a U.S. headquarters in Durham, NC. VPN stands for "virtual private network" and simply means a more secure connection to the company's network. UMTS stands for "universal mobile telecommunications service" and represents the best solu-



Eddy Willems
Security Evangelist
G Data
Brussels, Belgium

"A UMTS connection is always better than the Wi-Fi connection. ...You are using a completely different network that is known to be very, very secure."

tion, Enders says. "A UMTS connection is always better than the Wi-Fi connection being provided by the trade show or meeting venue," Willems says. "The reason why is that you are using a completely different network that is known to be very, very secure."

Analyzing Risk and Setting Policy

Meeting planners at companies without formal data security policies for offsite meetings should initiate a discussion of how to put them in place. And the starting point is the IT department. "They are the people who must decide how to secure mobile devices used at meetings," Enders says. But the

essential requirement is that ultimate control of the devices be in the hands of IT professionals.

"The planner should go to their director of information security and explain their meetings and the information that is discussed at them," Thomas says. "And you need to inform the IT department that not everyone at the conference is a company employee and that they are often carrying their own devices, not just the devices approved and managed by the company."

Once a planner asks for help, he or she can be confident that the IT department has the requisite skills to put a proper policy in place, based on risk analysis and other key factors.

A smart first step in the development of a policy is a data security audit. That means assessing how much information is deployed at the company's meetings — and how much can be removed and protected without harming the meeting.

"You can't lose what you don't have," says Plansky. "So you should only bring to the meeting information that is essential to that meeting. And if you have the mindset that you're carrying valuable information, then you realize you don't need all five of your USB drives, with all kinds of information on them that won't be necessary at the meeting."

A proper assessment, says Thomas, includes an analysis of the type of meeting being held and the relative sensitivity of the information that will be discussed. "And that should be considered early," he says, "and the company hosting the meeting should involve someone in the organization from a data security standpoint. And then that person works with the planner. But you have to understand where the risk is coming from and what to do about it."

To flesh out a policy, "you also need to work with your legal and compliance teams to talk about training the people who will be attending your meetings," says Miller.

However it's developed, the experts



Jeremy Miller
Director of Operations
Kroll Fraud Solutions
Nashville, TN

"If you're leaving a laptop or a thumb drive in the room, lock it in the safe. Or take it to the front desk and have the hotel safely store it."

say, every company that holds offsite meetings should have a formal, written data security policy. And, Miller adds, companies also should be aware that meetings that attract a lot of third-party attendees who are not employees are the most vulnerable and require the most thought and analysis.

Educating Attendees

Just as important as technology is the education of meeting attendees about the risk the company faces and why a formal data security policy is so important.

"You have to educate them by saying, 'We want you to have a secure online experience while you're at the meeting,' Thomas says. "In order to do that, you need to keep your access credentials on

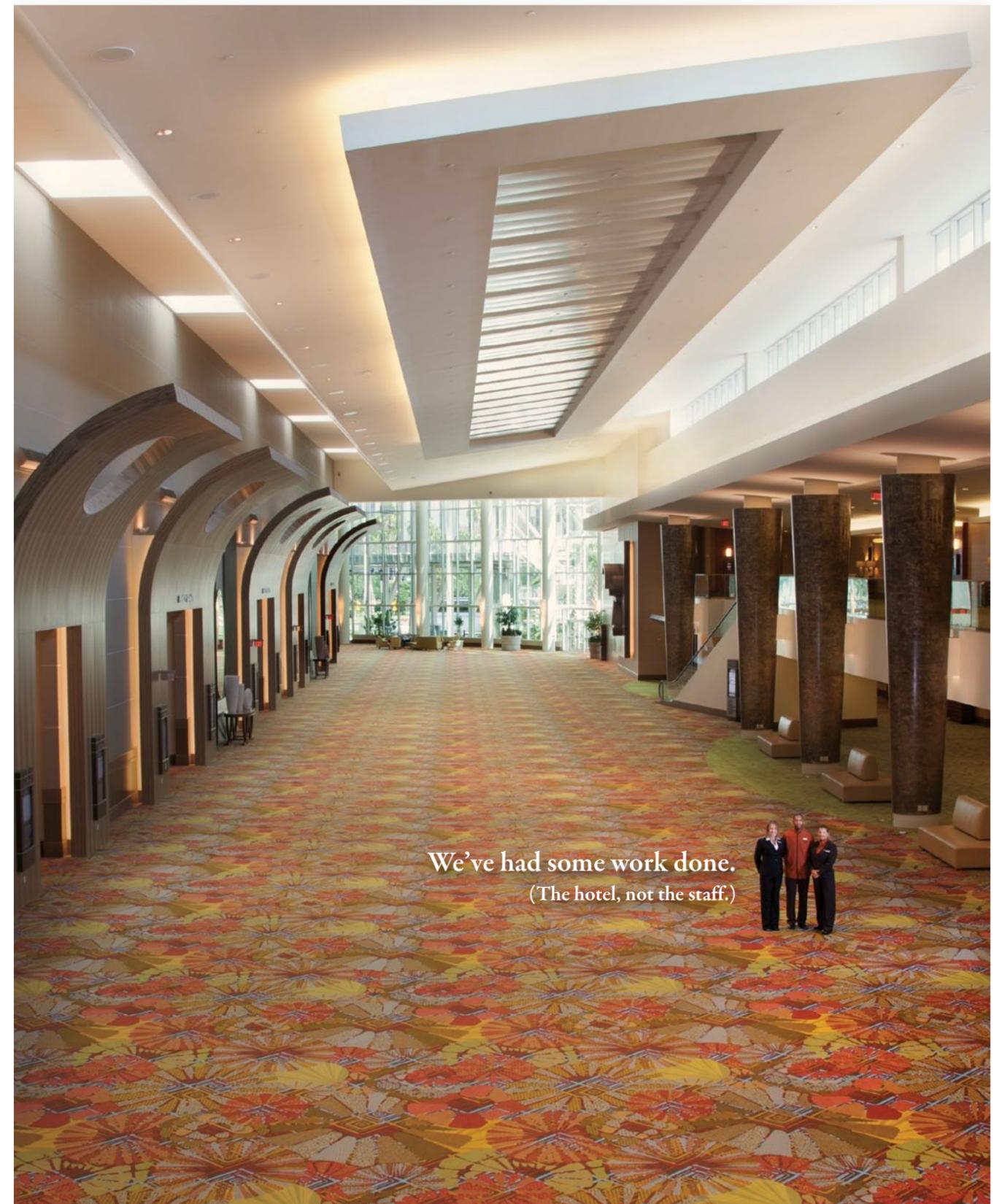
your person. Don't leave that information lying around somewhere. People are almost tone-deaf these days when it comes to passwords and security, because they're overwhelmed with passwords. The last thing they want is another password they have to use. So, without educating them as to what you're trying to do and why, your efforts may not be very successful."

In fact, says Plansky, effective education — or lack thereof — is often the most critical determining factor in the success or failure of a new data security policy. And he agrees that such vigilance is even more essential at organizations that draw large numbers of third-party attendees to their meetings.

But perhaps the most important reason why education is so critical is the simple fact that most of the risk companies deal with has to do with carelessness on the part of the planners and attendees, rather than criminal aspirations from cyber thieves. "For example," says Plansky, "an attendee at a large annual sales meeting involving independent sales reps from all over the country — or world — might give sensitive information to a 'colleague' over drinks or dinner. That's because meetings are social events. But loose lips sink ships."

Miller adds that attendees should be trained not to leave USB devices or sources of information, such as a CD, lying around a hotel room while at lunch. "If you're leaving a laptop or a thumb drive in the room, lock it in the safe," he says. "Or take it to the front desk and have the hotel safely store it."

Teaching attendees to be protective of data is fairly easy. Not so easy is determining just how much sensitive information should be carried to and discussed at meetings. "Those are extremely important and difficult decisions that every company has to make," says Plansky. "And it has to be done on a case-by-case basis. But you have to balance the need for security with your need to get together and get certain things done." **C&IT**



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(The hotel, not the staff.)



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Food for Thought

Using Brain-Friendly Fare to Enhance Meetings

As the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw once said, “There is no sincerer love than the love of food.” But the challenge facing meeting planners is to not only choose foods their attendees will love — but foods that will help them stay mentally alert and productive during their meetings.

Andrea Sullivan, M.A., is president of BrainStrength Systems, an organization dedicated to improving learning and performance. She is also a speaker and consultant on how to plan brain-friendly meetings.

“Whatever we eat impacts our bodies immediately as well as long term,” she says. “For meeting planners, it’s really about the short-term effect, and it’s huge. There are different things that immediately give us energy or immediately drain our energy in a variety of ways. What we eat and what we drink affect our state, and state, of course, affects the way we’re going to be in our meetings.”

Brain-Friendly Breakfasts

She continues, “In general, (planners) want to choose foods that will maintain a steady blood sugar level. So for breakfast, they want to look for whole grains as opposed to white flour and sugar. Danish and pastries are the worst thing you can give to people.”

When serving muffins, Sullivan suggests that they be smaller in size than those typically served, and they should be whole grain or at least multi-grain. “The chef can throw in a little bit of ground flax seed, which is not expensive,” she adds. “It’s wonderful because the flax seed itself will slow down the sugar rush and nobody even knows it’s in there.

“Plus,” she adds, “flax seed has Omega 3s which help with information processing and clear thinking as well as brain health. Omega 3s are one of the few things that will have a short-term effect. A lot of things like spinach and blueberries are very good for your brain health in the long run, but they don’t really have an immediate effect. The ground flax seed, to me, is a hot tip. It’s easy.

“You also always want to offer protein, because when you balance protein with the grains it slows down that sugar rush,”

she continues. “The sugar rush is good for a few minutes, and then it creates this drop in blood sugar. That’s when you feel what we call brain fog. You feel drained and you can’t think clearly.” She recommends eggs as a good source of protein at breakfast, whether they’re served hard-boiled or in a burrito or sandwich.

Sullivan says that offering more healthful choices doesn’t have to be an all or nothing proposition. “I’m not one to tell people ‘don’t get any white flour,’” she states. “I don’t think that’s realistic. There are some who will want that, but the balance has changed. One of the things I’ve been noticing since I’ve been doing this is that the Danish and bagels are what are left over, and if there are any whole-grain options, they are snatched up really quickly.”

Sullivan says that fruit is another healthful option, although a lot of people will not pick up a whole apple or banana to eat at a meeting. “Make it user-friendly,” she says. “Cut it up or create little dishes of it. I personally love when yogurt is served in a beautiful bowl surrounded by fruit and nut options that people can choose.”

Lighter Lunches

“I would not serve beef at lunch,” Sullivan notes. “It ties up all of our resources. We have to remember that the brain needs fuel, just like the rest of the body. It takes a lot of fuel to digest beef, so we’re going to be tired. Lunches need to be light. It should be chicken or seafood, and then lots of vegetables.”

Craig Mason, executive chef at The National Conference Center in Leesburg, VA, has teamed up with Sullivan to put BrainStrength Systems’ food science into practice. He focuses on serving sources of lean protein that are grilled or

sautéed to let the true nature of the food come through. “We’ve found if you cook it faster at a hotter temperature, that you hold more of the nutritional value of the food in,” he explains.

The National Conference Center is located on 110 acres and includes 917 guest rooms and 265,000 sf of meeting space. The facility, which is accredited by the International Association of Conference Centers (IAAC), offers a Complete Meeting Package that includes breakfast, lunch and dinner served in an 800-seat dining room.

“We’re using probably 30-40 percent more fish than we were three years ago, and we’re really trying to feature the fish and the chicken during our lunch periods and then hit on some of the heavier things in the evening,” he adds.

Sullivan says lunches should include more lean protein than carbohydrates, even if they’re good carbohydrates. “When the ratio is such that there’s more lean protein, it creates an amino acid called ‘tyrosine.’ This is a building block of several neurotransmitters that stimulate the brain and are wonderful for alertness, for learning and for motivation. It’s just fantastic.”

Regina Mohr, CMP, manager, meeting and event operations for Courtesy Associates in Washington, DC, is seeing an increased use of smaller plates, both at the buffet table and for plated meals. “I was just at a meeting at the Ritz where for lunch they brought out big square plates, and on the square plates were four small plates with an appetizer, salad, entrée and a little dessert portion. There were four separate dishes, but they were dropped at one time. It was quicker to serve and it was a beautiful presentation. The people at the table were swapping dishes back and forth. It was a great idea. It’s something I plan on using in the future.”

Sue Whatley, president, meeting services for Premier Meeting Services in Trinity, FL, has seen a trend toward more healthful eating in the continuing medical education (CME) meetings she plans. “They want it simple, some Kosher, but

Brain-Food Basics

By Andrea Sullivan and Chef Craig Mason

Offer whole grains and proteins at breakfast to maintain a steady level of blood glucose throughout the day. Choose whole-grain muffins and cereals, yogurt, eggs, and/or oatmeal.

Provide energizing choices at breaks. Instead of the usual carbohydrate overload at breaks, provide protein options (hardboiled eggs, cheeses, yogurt), vegetable snacks, wheat pita chips with hummus or guacamole, or fruits and nuts. Ask your chef to incorporate ground flax seeds into baked goods: This slows down the sugar rush, while also providing Omega 3s, which aid thinking and information processing.

Provide a light lunch, with abundant lean protein. Digestion requires a lot of our resources, so keep it light, no beef at lunch; light sauces instead of fatty ones. Lean proteins, such as chicken, fish and seafood, provide the amino acid tyrosine, which stimulates the brain and increases alertness. Aim for a balance of more protein than carbohydrates.

Minimize salt. Salt has an almost immediate and damaging effect on blood circulation, reducing the amount of oxygen that reaches the brain. This inhibits our ability to think clearly. Ask your chef to use spices while reducing the amount of salt in their recipes.

Generate a sense of well-being at dinner. Dinner is a time when we want attendees to relax and bask in the success of the day. A balance of higher carbohydrates to protein produces the amino acid tryptophan, a building block of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which produces a sense of well-being and peace. You can serve beef, lamb and heavier sauces as attendees relax from the busy day.

nothing creamy. They’re more health conscious than they’ve ever been. When I first started doing these CME programs, there was every kind of cream sauce on the buffet you can imagine, but not anymore.”

Better Breaks

Chef Mason also focuses on providing nutritional breaks to help attendees stay alert. “We’ve all been in that meeting at 2:00 where you can just count people nodding off,” he says. “That’s what we’re trying to help people to avoid so that the planners and the companies who we’re ultimately working for will have more successful trainings and meetings.”

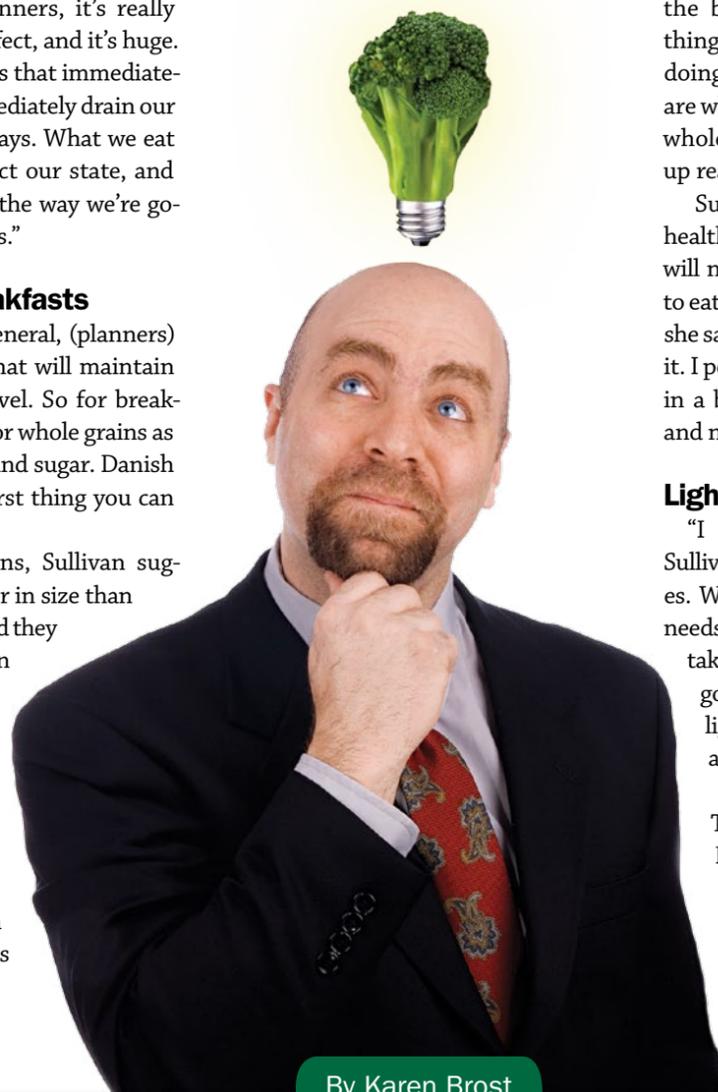
The National Conference Center provides preset break stations that offer attendees a variety of choices. “We changed from your typical gummy bears and chocolate-covered pretzel thing to a snack mix that we consider a lot healthier,” Mason says. “Now we’ve even reevaluated that snack mix and looked at going even further into this with grilled vegetable trays and hummus and tabouli versus your typical snack mix. On other days it’s something

as simple as hard boiled eggs with different flavored sea salts that give them that protein boost in the afternoon,” he adds.

“Salt has an immediate effect on state,” Sullivan says. “There has been some research done that shows that within 30 minutes, salt will have a damaging effect on blood circulation. If our blood is not circulating, we’re not getting oxygen to the brain. If we don’t have enough oxygen to the brain, we’re not thinking clearly.” She suggests speaking with the chef to limit the amount of salt used in dishes and snacks served to attendees. “They can add plenty of spices to get the flavor,” she notes.

Winding Down at Dinner

Sullivan describes how dinner menus can differ from meals consumed earlier in the day. “In the evening, we’re done with the heavy-duty thinking. We want to relax, we want to be social. When you have a balance of more carbohydrates to the proteins, it creates this amino acid called tryptophan. It’s a building block of serotonin, the neurotransmitter that they



By Karen Brost

TRINACRIA PHOTO/WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Sample Recipe Stuffed chicken breast is a favorite, and an excellent food-for-thought lunch entrée that will help to maintain your attendees' attention span throughout the afternoon.

From the Kitchen of Andrea Sullivan and Chef Craig Mason

For Corporate & Incentive Travel readers

Stuffed Chicken Breast with Asparagus, Red Pepper and Asiago Cheese (Serves Four)

For the marinade:

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 1/4 bunch fresh basil leaves
- 1/4 bunch fresh parsley
- Kosher salt & freshly ground black pepper, as needed
- 3 cloves fresh garlic peeled
- Pureé all ingredients in a blender.

For the chicken:

- 4 large boneless skinless chicken breast halves, about 7 oz. each
- 16 asparagus spears, blanched
- 3 large red peppers, each cut in strips
- 8 oz. Asiago cheese, shredded

Place chicken breast halves between pieces of plastic wrap. Pound carefully with a meat mallet to about 1/4-inch thickness. Lay chicken in a shallow dish and cover with marinade for 30 minutes. Place four asparagus spears across the chicken and add red pepper slices. Repeat with all of the chicken. Divide cheese equally among the four breasts. Roll as tightly as possible, use toothpicks to close if necessary. Place chicken roll-ups seam side down in a hot sauté pan, and sear until golden brown on all sides. Remove chicken and place in pan on middle rack of preheated 350-degree oven. Roast for 20 to 25 minutes to an internal temperature of 165 degrees. Let rest for 5 minutes before slicing.



Sample Menu This flexible menu is ideal for maintaining energy levels throughout the day. The main focus is a balance of proteins and complex carbohydrates for breakfast, and protein pairings for lunch and dinner.

Breakfast

- Local Honey and Vanilla Yogurt Parfait with Dried Pineapples and Mangos
- 12-Grain Banana French Toast with Blueberry Oatmeal Crumbles
- Grilled Turkey Bacon
- Fresh Squeezed Orange Juice

Morning Break

- Protein Energy Bars and Breakfast Bars
- Miniature Spinach Quiche
- An Assortment of Whole Grain and Flax-Seed Muffins
- Sliced Melons with Mint and Sea Salt

Lunch

- A Blend of Organic Field Greens with Grilled Artichokes, Goat Cheese Medallion, Sundried Tomatoes and Pine Nuts dressed with Virginia Apple Cider Vinaigrette
- Basil Marinated Chicken Breast Stuffed with Asparagus, Red Peppers, Asiago Cheese with Lemon Thyme Jus Lié
- Parmesan Brown Rice Pilaf

- Broccoli with Patty Pan Squash
- Miniature Dark Chocolate and Espresso Mousse Cups with Wild Berries

Afternoon Break

- Mediterranean Sampler: Assorted Grilled Vegetables, Roma Tomatoes, Feta Cheese
- Black Olive Tapenade, Hummus, Tabbouleh and Baba Ghanoush
- Garlic Pita Points and Whole-Wheat Flatbreads

Dinner

- Butternut Squash Bisque
- Beef Tenderloin Filet with Forest Mushroom Ragout, Paired with Chesapeake Crab Cake and Low Country Remoulade
- Pan-Seared Hoppin John Cakes and Braised Purple and Green Kale
- Fresh Fruit Tart with Apricot Glaze and Grand Mariner Crème Anglaise

— Andrea Sullivan and Chef Craig Mason

have in SSRIs (antidepressants). It creates a sense of peace, a sense of well-being, a little more social comfort. It's perfect for dinner. People have a sense of celebrating at the end of the day, and it's great."

That's why Mason prefers to save heavier meal items, such as beef, for the dinner hour. "You're having your last meal of the day, you want to feel full. It helps them to close out the day."

Reinventing Receptions

Mohr describes how tight budgets have had an impact on the cocktail receptions she plans. "With some clients, we're going more toward the cash bar rather than an open bar or drink tickets. A lot of times, we'll have just a beer and wine bar, and one signature cocktail that's usually tied to the theme of the evening." She describes one event that had the word "celebrate" in its theme, so they served a signature drink called a "Celebratini." During the welcome, waiters were there passing out these signature drinks," she explains. "People love it. They always ask 'what's the signature drink this year?'"

Whatley is seeing a call for lighter fare at cocktail receptions. "I'm doing a lot of shrimp cocktail, crabmeat cocktail," she notes. "Not too much meat. A lot of fish, some pasta, some pizzas. Not as heavy. I'm definitely lightening up the load a lot."

Just Desserts

People still love their desserts, but Mason is seeing an increasing number of people asking for sugar-free desserts. "Then, it's fruit, fruit and fruit," he says. "Especially for lunches, everyone is trying to keep themselves light. But, he notes, "we still have our diehards who want the chocolate cake and the raspberry sauce."

Mohr has discovered a new way to serve dessert that she's looking forward to trying. "I often do special events," she says. "One of the things I've seen, and I'm going to be doing it for an event this fall, is instead of having dessert at the end of the dinner, we'll have a dessert reception. We'll start with a pre-reception, go into

the dinner and program, and then have a dessert reception afterwards. It will be hand-held mini-type desserts with a coffee bar. It's a little more cost-effective, and it allows for more networking."

Farm to Fork

The farm-to-table movement is also playing a big role in meal planning for many group events. "One of our biggest things that we're pushing now is the availability of everything local," Mason says. He describes one of the great relationships he has with local farmers. "On Monday morning, he shows up with my 200-300 pounds of strawberries, and he hands one to me and says, 'I pulled this out of the ground this morning at 9:00 a.m., and he's on my property at 11. He'll actually call me up on a Friday and say, 'Hey I'm sitting up on my tractor. What do you feel like planting this week?'"

Mason compared buying local to purchasing produce from a commercial supplier. "Who knows when it was taken out of the ground, and who knows how long it was on the truck before it got to where it's going? And how long does it sit in their warehouse? (When I buy from local farmers) I know how long it's been out of the ground, and it makes a big difference. The sooner you can consume it, the more nutrition it's going to have. And, it's promoting my community. There are so many benefits to doing it, it's amazing that it doesn't happen more."

What about the cost difference of going local? "We've found some of the product is a little bit more expensive," Mason notes, "and we've found some of the product is less expensive. For us, it's a trade-off. We're willing, I think, to absorb a little bit of that cost because for us it's the right thing to do and because I think it's something that the clients are looking for."

The National Conference Center makes it easy for attendees to identify local items served on its buffets. "We label everything,



"We've all been in that meeting at 2:00 where you can just count people nodding off. That's what we're trying to help people to avoid."

Craig Mason

Executive Chef
The National Conference Center
Leesburg, VA

and we've got a new signage program," Mason explains. "When you come into the dining room, there's a list of what's local for the day. Each item (on the buffet) that is local also has our logo next to it."

Sustainable Seafood

California's Monterey Bay Aquarium operates a program called "Seafood Watch" designed to help consumers and businesses choose sustainable — abundant and well-managed — seafood sources. Planners can visit www.montereybayaquarium.org for a list of Seafood Watch's best choices and good alternatives as well to find out which seafood items to avoid. Seafood Watch also maintains a "Super Green List," which identifies wild and farmed seafood that's healthful for people as well as the oceans. A handy pocket guide is available for downloading from the site, and Seafood Watch now offers apps for tablet PCs and smartphones.

Offsetting Brain Drain

Sullivan gave a few more reasons why it's important for meeting attendees to consume foods that will provide that all-important brain fuel. "The other thing people don't realize is that mental (activities) use up blood glucose. I will often hear from people, 'I don't know why I'm so tired, I've done nothing but sit all day.' I say that's not true, you've been thinking all day, and you've been focusing in a way that you're not used to, because we don't multitask as

“What we eat and what we drink affect our state, and state, of course, affects the way we’re going to be in our meetings.”



Andrea Sullivan, M.A.
President
BrainStrength Systems
Media, PA

She also explains that in-action requires blood glucose just as much as action does. “When our blood sugar is low, our willpower is weaker. So at meetings, if you do breaks that are mostly carbs, you get to lunch and there are all of these wonderful foods that we’re trying to resist, but we

don’t have the fuel in our brains to resist it. Then we go into this ‘deserving’ thing. ‘I deserve to have something good. I’ve been working hard all morning.’ You think it’s going to make you feel better, and it does...for 15–20 minutes!”

When Sullivan speaks to groups about the connection between nutrition and brain function, she offers to do a free meal consultation so that the food served at the event will be in alignment with the educational content of her pre-

sentation. “That’s a value-add I will do with any meeting because I think it’s really important,” she says.

“People are beginning to understand that our brains matter,” she continues. “It’s not rocket science. You can make a big difference with little changes. You don’t have to go into deprivation. You don’t have to all of a sudden become a health food junkie. The balance thing (between lean protein and healthy carbohydrates) is easy enough. The salt thing is easy enough. So is having spinach instead of iceberg lettuce or having a handful of blueberries. Dark chocolate is fantastic for us. The hard part is having only one ounce.”

The results of ramping up nutrition at meetings speak for themselves. “People have told me they’ve gotten rid of their afternoon slump,” Sullivan says. “You can’t ask for more.”

C&IT

Smart Solutions for the Brain-Food Challenge

By Andrea Sullivan and Chef Craig Mason

Meeting planners and chefs seeking to introduce brain-friendly menus often encounter challenges, from additional costs to sourcing fresh, healthful foods in quantity. Here are tips on how to meet some common challenges.

Research flexible venues. Choose a venue that already provides healthful food options and is willing to be flexible to accommodate your requests. If your venue of choice doesn’t offer food-for-thought options, request dietary accommodations such as smaller muffins. These requests should be made as far in advance as possible.

Be open to suggestions. Too often in the hospitality industry, we become accustomed to what we think the attendee will like instead of listening to what they really want. We’ve noticed that Danish and pastries are often left on the buffet table, while whole-grain options are quickly snatched up. Consider adding food preferences to the attendee registration form.

Utilize cost-cutting options. Smaller portions not only reduce cost, but also minimize waste. Tap water, bulk juices and portion-controlled glasses cut your costs while also being more healthful for attendees and the environment. Add nuts, a bit of cheese or ground flax seed to recipes for an inexpensive way to offset blood sugar issues caused by white flour and sugars.

Go local with your produce choices. Local produce

found within 150 miles maintains more of its nutrient value than non-local, providing greater beneficial effects.

Ask your chef to reduce salt content. Flavor can be gained without adding salt by using reductions and herbs prolifically.

Keep costs down by sourcing unique items. For example, costs can be reduced by sourcing lesser-known species of sustainable seafood. You can use this as an opportunity to educate your attendees and guests about the benefits of sustainable fishing.

Be conscientious of product choice. Select menu items that require less cooking time. The shorter the cooking time, the higher the nutrient levels.

Reverse engineering of menus. Typically a chef creates a menu and then sources the product. If a particular vendor does not have the product, then the chef searches for another vendor. As an alternative, work with local suppliers to discover what’s available, and then design your menus around their freshest items. This way of designing menus not only supports the farmer, but gives your guests the very best of the season and in particular, the benefits of food for thought.

Maintain flexibility and get started! The key to making this a success for everyone is flexibility. Start small with a few items, and watch the momentum increase as the buzz of food for thought reaches your attendees.

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Artist Rendering—Proposed



Pyrotechnics and giant-sized LED ribbons (backing the stage) in Atlanta's Georgia Dome capture attention at Primerica's corporate meeting.

Photo courtesy of Steve Smith—The Switch

Maximum Impact

New Tech Tricks to Keep Attendees Engaged

Like all things technological, the variety and quality of audio-visual equipment is improving so fast that it's difficult for meeting planners to keep track of it all. There are seemingly endless varieties of LCD screens, projectors and lighting; high-definition and plasma monitors; video walls; microphones and speakers; computer-based presentations; and AV combined with video-conferencing and webcasting. Meeting planners needn't be AV experts, but they should know enough to communicate their needs and ask the right questions of AV providers to obtain equipment that satisfies meeting goals.

That's the strategy of Marc Silverstone, principle of Equilibrium Events Inc., a corporate meeting and event planning

firm with offices in New York City and Hollywood, FL. Silverstone took that approach when planning a tablet PC product launch for a technology company. The launch took place earlier this year during two meetings that were held simultaneously in hotel ballrooms in London and New York City. About 350 company executives and salespeople attended each meeting, which included a reception and product introduction.

Just Like Being There

Both ballrooms displayed two giant video walls, consisting of HD LCD monitors on opposite sides of each room. One video wall in each room depicted live feeds from the other ballroom. "The goal was to make participants feel as if they

were in the same place. The walls made each room look double its size. The enormous screens almost made you feel like you could walk through the wall into the other venue. They used several cameras in each room that made people in each room feel a part of the other room," says Silverstone. To bolster the illusion, the food service staff in each location wore the same uniforms, and the bands in both ballrooms dressed in tuxedos, alternately playing the same genre of music.

The second video wall in each room showed the president of the company introducing the new PC product from a separate location in New York City. "We did that because we wanted both meetings to feel his presence without feeling like they were missing out on some-

thing, as they would have if he were in London or New York," says Silverstone. "Attendees raved about the event. It was more cost-effective than bringing everybody from both sides of the Atlantic into one place," Silverstone adds.

Silverstone met the meeting's goals by clearly communicating his AV needs. "The typical way I work is that I give AV companies the big picture of what I envision, and then I'm very specific about the exact needs and how people should see and hear each other. Once you do that, give them the ability and freedom to come up with a plan, but make sure you review it and see samples of it. That way, there are no surprises," says Silverstone.

AV professionals agree that planners must clearly explain the impact they want AV equipment to have on attendees. That's some of the advice that planners received during a session entitled "The Power of AV for Meeting Planners" at InfoComm 2011,

the annual conference of InfoComm International, the Fairfax, VA-based AV association. Bill Thomas, InfoComm director of education and one of the session's presenters, says he offered planners the following advice. "If the goals are to have people understand a complex technical issue or set of requirements or knowledge that requires detailed description, then you want to make sure the equipment supports that. If the goal is persuasion or general information, and not highly detailed, the equipment should support that," he says.

The Latest and Greatest

Experts cite several AV trends in meetings:

- More meeting planners are looking to use AV equipment with handheld devices. "With the advent of the iPhone, smartphones and tablet PCs, we are seeing more planners looking for ways to integrate these devices into meetings. They want to allow instant two-way communication between attendees and presenters during PowerPoint presentations," says Tim Brady, executive vice president and COO of Swank Audio Visuals, a Scottsdale, AZ-based provider of onsite AV services to hotels, resorts and conference centers nationwide.

planners extend the reach of their meetings. Participating in meetings remotely will become easier through more types of devices and from more places as the operating platforms of different systems become more compatible," Thomas observes.

- High-definition screens, as singular displays and large "video walls," will become part of more meetings. However, many projectors can't be used with HD screens. "When most people see a wide screen, the first thing they think of is HD, but some projectors are compatible with it and some are not. That's a bigger factor than the size of the screen. Eventually, the compatibility issue will be ironed out. Meanwhile, projectors keep getting brighter and smaller," says Brady.
- LED lighting is changing the way planners create different "looks" in meeting rooms and on stages. LED lighting uses less voltage than traditional lighting and is more economical. "In the past, if you wanted to turn, say, pillow walls on sets three or four different colors, you would need three or four different fixtures and use lots of voltage. LED lighting has reached the point where it's more cost effective and provides several colors, logos or

"As a planner, it is part of your task to know what's out there to keep meetings new and exciting. ...I choose to be involved and learn about it. I'm not as knowledgeable as our production people, but I want to read up on it and ask lots of questions of them."



Jim Sharpton, Vice President of Meetings and Conventions
Primerica, Duluth, GA

- Audio-visual videoconferencing and teleconferencing will become more common. "You will not only be having a live meeting, you will also have a virtual presence of more external groups as companies and

other looks. Setup time is shorter, voltage requirements and cabling are easier so it's more cost effective, even for smaller meetings. This gives you a simple look that grabs attention," Brady notes.

By Derek Reveron

LED Magic

Advances in LED technology provide planners with a range of options and formats. Primerica, the Breckinridge, GA-based financial services marketing

“When you are working with AV vendors with whom you have a history, you can build up a trusting relationship that helps in negotiating.”

Carol Cazessus, CMP

CAZ Meetings & Incentives, Merritt Island, FL

company, used giant LED ribbons at its biennial corporate meeting. The five-day meeting took place in June in Atlanta and included about 40,000 of the corporation's employees, independent contractors and strategic partners. During the general session in the Georgia Dome, the LED ribbon effect — produced by the St. Louis, MO-based experiential marketing agency Switch — dominated the giant stage, says Jim Sharpton, Primerica's vice president of meetings and conventions. “They had motorized panels and were flexible so they could move around, up and down and undulate, almost like a flag. They could be moved together as one giant panel, or they could be separated into multiple panels, and each of those panels could have different information or different colors. They moved around and changed the look of the stage,” says Sharpton.

The LED ribbons depicted the names of incentive winners during incentive award ceremonies. At one point, the ribbons were brought together as one large panel to announce an incentive trip to Orlando next year. “It was great for showing details about the destination because it was a giant panel with sharp imagery. It was mostly LED material in front of a pipe and drape wall, so it wasn't the static wall that you usually have at meetings,” Sharpton adds.

HD Image Mapping

Primerica used another cutting-edge AV technology during a meeting in July at

The Breakers Palm Beach in Palm Beach, FL. The five-day meeting covered new products and training for about 270 salespeople. During one session, presenters used HD image mapping. The technology,

produced by Boca Raton, FL-based Multi Image Group, allowed presenters to stand in front of a large screen and interact with the information on it. “Image mapping involves using multiple projectors tied to multiple computers, and you can literally touch the flat screen and move information and objects around on the screen. It's about keeping presentations exciting and different so they aren't the same flat-panel, boring presentations,” says Sharpton.

What Planners Should Know

Using the latest AV technology doesn't necessarily require planners to be AV experts. For example, planners needn't know detailed technical specs, such as the amount of lumens (visible light) emitted by different types of projectors, in order to shop for the latest model. However, planners should know that lumen capability impacts which projector to use for a specific purpose in meeting spaces of different sizes. Meeting planners such as Sharpton have knowledge of such basics and use it to meet their meeting goals. Sharpton advises meeting planners to continually improve their knowledge of AV. “As a planner, it is part of your task to know what's out there to keep meetings new and exciting. It's an aspect of your job that will always be there. I choose to be involved and learn about it. I'm not as knowledgeable as our production people, but I want to read up on it and ask lots of questions of them,” Sharpton says.

Despite advancing AV technology, visual and audio communication needs for

most meetings remain relatively simple. However, even meetings using basic AV equipment require meeting planners to provide a detailed description of AV needs to equipment providers. Carol Cazessus, CMP, owner of CAZ Meetings & Incentives Inc. in Merritt Island, FL, once prepared a 14-page proposal for a training and educational meeting involving more than 200 attendees at a Florida hotel. The proposal was provided for the hotel's in-house AV provider. “We just had LCD projectors, screens, laptops and microphones. It took two inches on the page just to say there is going to be a 7-foot tripod screen in the room. It wasn't lengthy because we required a lot of equipment, but because (the AV provider) required a lot of details. I usually go through and check what I need in each room and it hopefully eliminates mistakes,” says Cazessus.

Avoid AV Horror Stories

Mistakes with AV equipment aren't uncommon. Many meeting planners have AV horror stories to tell about setting up the wrong or faulty equipment. Thomas cites the following crucial factors to help planners avoid mistakes in selecting the right AV equipment to meet their communication goals.

- **Spend strategically.** This is crucial for meeting planners on tight budgets. Save money and still create a special AV experience by asking the following question: “How can I save money in one area and put it in another area for a bigger impact and still meet the communications goals of the meeting?”

- **Focus on attendees and their experience.** The basic purpose of AV is to help people see and hear information and people well, but some meetings overlook that. Thomas cites an all-too-common occurrence at meetings. “If you have a tiny screen and a big audience and detailed information you're sharing, that doesn't work well for attendees. There

will be eyestrain. You have to turn the lights down to see the contrast on the screen. It's fatiguing for attendees,” says Thomas.

- **Build trust with AV providers.**

“Create a long-term relationship with good partners. They get to know how you work and what your expectations are, and that makes it easier to work through issues,” Thomas advises.

Survey Says...

Brady says that planners cited the importance of trust and relationships during focus groups that Swank Audio Visuals conducted with Meeting Professionals International last year. Two groups of 20 planners were asked to rank factors they considered most important when looking for an AV partner. The factors included price, equipment, technical expertise, creativity and the relationship with the AV professional. “Unanimously, every meeting planner said what's most important for them is the relationship. I asked the moderator to ask them about price. They said that relationships come first because if they have trusting relationships, they could get a good price,” says Brady. Cazessus agrees. “When you are working with AV vendors with whom you have a history, you can build up a trusting relationship that helps in negotiating,” she says.

In-house Versus Outside Providers

Planners shouldn't let a good relationship with a provider stop them from shopping for the best price. Many planners forego this step because it's customary and more convenient to work with a hotel's in-house AV provider. Cazessus uses in-house and outside AV providers. “Whenever I can, I try to use an in-house AV company just because of the simplicity of it and getting additional equipment if you need it, especially if I have a relationship with the company. When I have a new meeting, I typically will get three bids. And it isn't always the in-

house company that we use. Sometimes an outside company will give you a better quote. The downside of this is that you have to make sure they have a staff person there and have extra equipment on hand,” Cazessus says.

Because today's world of whizbang

technology has revolutionized nearly every aspect of our lives, it's more challenging than ever to keep attendees engaged. But planners who stay ahead of the curve in audio-visual advances will gain not only their attention, but some points from the C-suite as well. **C&IT**

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2011 Greens Of Distinction Award Winners



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 17TH ANNUAL GREENS OF DISTINCTION WINNERS

Here's a brief rundown of what our superb 2011 Greens of Distinction winners have to offer. Designed by Donald Ross, **The Broadmoor** Golf Club opened with the hotel in 1918. Today, there are three courses, including the East Course, which recently hosted the 2011 U.S. Women's Open. **Doral Golf Resort & Spa, A Marriott Resort**, boasts five championship golf courses, including the acclaimed TPC Blue Monster at Doral. **Grand Geneva Resort & Spa** is home to 36 holes of championship golf on The Brute and The Highlands courses. **The Greenbrier** also sports three championship golf courses and hosts The Greenbrier Classic, a PGA Tour Event. **Hammock Beach Resort** features two award-winning golf courses. The **Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa** is just steps away from four championship golf courses. Twin Warriors Golf Club at the **Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa** hosted one of the qualifying rounds for the 111th U.S. Open Championship. **Loews Ventana Canyon Resort** boasts two 18-hole championship golf courses designed by Tom Fazio: the Canyon Course and the Mountain Course. **PGA National Resort & Spa**, the host of the PGA Tour's Honda Classic, features five tournament-ready courses. A Florida landmark since 1928, the **Ponte Vedra Inn & Club** offers 36 holes of championship golf. **Reunion Resort** is the only destination in the world to boast three Signature golf courses designed by Palmer, Nicklaus and Watson. Five championship golf courses await attendees at The Sanctuary at **Kiawah Island Golf Resort**. Shingle Creek Golf Club offers guests of **Rosen Shingle Creek** a challenging David Harman design and the Brad Brewer Golf Academy. **Talking Stick Resort** features the Talking Stick Golf Club's North and South courses. **Turtle Bay Resort** offers courses by Arnold Palmer and George Fazio as well as the Turtle Bay Golf Academy. **Walt Disney World Resort** features four outstanding championship golf courses and a par-36 practice course. **C&IT**



- The Broadmoor**
Colorado Springs, CO
- Doral Golf Resort & Spa, A Marriott Resort**
Miami, FL
- Grand Geneva Resort & Spa**
Lake Geneva, WI
- The Greenbrier**
White Sulphur Springs, WV
- Hammock Beach Resort**
Palm Coast, FL
- Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa**
Destin, FL
- Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa**
Santa Ana Pueblo, NM
- Kiawah Island Golf Resort**
Kiawah Island, SC
- Loews Ventana Canyon Resort**
Tucson, AZ
- PGA National Resort & Spa**
Palm Beach Gardens, FL
- Ponte Vedra Inn & Club**
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL
- Reunion Resort**
Reunion, FL
- Rosen Shingle Creek**
Orlando, FL
- Talking Stick Resort**
Scottsdale, AZ
- Turtle Bay Resort**
Kahuku, HI
- Walt Disney World Resort**
Lake Buena Vista, FL

Ponte Vedra Inn & Club

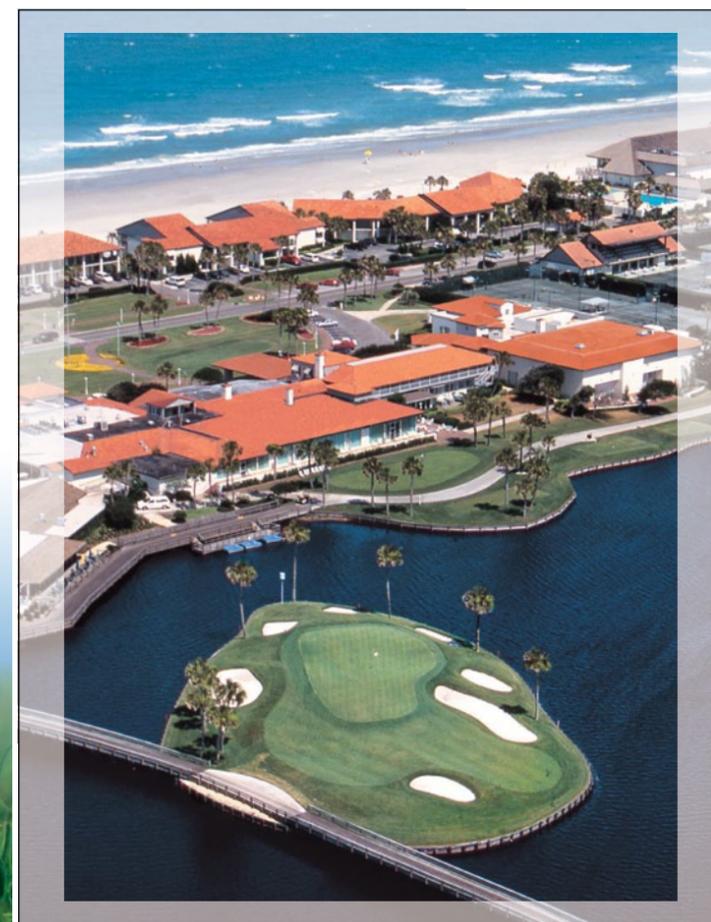
TWELVE-TIME WINNER

Framed by graceful palms and rolling dunes, the oceanfront Ponte Vedra Inn & Club is nestled in the tony seaside village of Ponte Vedra Beach, just 20 miles southeast of Jacksonville, FL. Since its celebrated opening in 1928, this AAA Five Diamond-honored resort has served as host to some of the nation's most influential meetings and conferences. Ponte Vedra's stunning coastline is the dramatic backdrop for 250 luxurious rooms and suites, most enjoying breathtaking ocean views. The resort's two picturesque golf courses offer a distinct seaside links flavor and feature a dazzling array of water hazards, bunkers,

undulating fairways and elevated Bermuda greens. Other recreational pleasures include the Atlantic surf, beach, pools, tennis, gym, biking, fishing, sailing, horseback riding and the region's largest pampering spa. Ponte Vedra features more than 25,000 sf of function space (17 meeting rooms), ideal for groups of up to 450 participants. Ponte Vedra's three restaurants cater to a variety of tastes and moods in a variety of distinctive and imaginative locations. For more than 80 years, guests have come to appreciate the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club's complete spectrum of amenities, great golf and its uncompromising level of personal service. **C&IT**

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Hammock Beach Resort

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Hammock Beach Resort offers more than 15,000 sf of indoor event space, additional outdoor space including numerous event lawns and private dining facilities ideal for both large and intimate gatherings. With state-of-the-art, audio-visual capabilities and an onsite Conference Services Team, you can rest assured your event will run smoothly.

Hammock Beach lodging options also create a private feel for your group. There are no "standard" hotel-style rooms at the resort. Instead, the resort offers fully furnished Tower Suites with ocean and resort views; one-, three- and four-bedroom suites with fully equipped kitchens offering plenty of room; villas with all the comforts of home; and oceanfront guest accommodations.



Ultimate Golf Experience

Hammock Beach Resort provides the perfect location for the ultimate golf experience. Our two immaculate golf courses have been host to PGA Tour events and tout some of the highest rankings in the state by *Golf Magazine*, *Golf Week* and *Golf Digest*. Designed by legends of the game, each course offers a distinctive style of play surrounded by spectacular views of the natural landscape.

The Hammock Beach Resort experience is built upon a unique private club-style blueprint, ensuring guests a personalized experience with unparalleled hospitality. Only resort guests and property owners have access to Hammock Beach's golf courses and beach amenities. The resort is cashless and tipless,

making your group's stay even more convenient.

In addition to the Atlantic Ocean just steps away, conference attendees and their families will want to check out Hammock Beach's Water Pavilion where you can float down the lazy river, ride the twisting water slide and grab some rays. Pair that with poolside food and beverage service, colorful tropical landscaping, sunny or shaded lounge areas, and you have something to please kids and adults of all ages.

After a long day of meetings, unwind with live music and good times at Loggerheads or savor the finest single malts, ports and cognacs and a fully stocked walk-in humidor at the Cigar Bar. Meeting participants can sit oceanside and dine on contemporary world cuisine at the Atlantic Grille or meet fellow attendees and clients for Italian cuisine at Delfinos.

Located between historic St. Augustine and Daytona Beach, Hammock Beach Resort is a short drive to theme parks in nearby Central Florida and close to Marineland.

Hammock Beach Resort is Northeast Florida's premier location for meetings, conferences and events, offering a rare combination of an oceanfront setting, two signature golf courses, ultra-modern conference facilities, luxury amenities and unrivaled service. **C&IT**

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Reunion Resort

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Reunion's lodging options also create a private feel for you and your group. There are no "standard" hotel-style rooms at the resort. Instead, the resort offers fully furnished tower suites, villas and private homes for guest accommodations.

Unparalleled Golf Experiences

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ination in the world to boast three Signature golf courses designed by legends Palmer, Nicklaus and Watson. Combining the beauty of their natural landscaping with unique and challenging layouts, these courses have won numerous awards and followers over the years.

In addition to private neighborhood pools, conference attendees and their families will want to check out Reunion's Water Park where you can float down the lazy river, ride the twisting water slides and take a stroll on the wooden boardwalk. Pair that with poolside food and beverage service, colorful tropical landscaping, sunny or shaded lounge areas, and you have something to please kids and adults of all ages.

The Reunion Resort experience

is built upon a unique private club-style blueprint, ensuring guests a personalized experience with unparalleled hospitality. Only resort guests and property owners have access to Reunion's three golf courses. In addition, the resort is cashless and tipless — everything is covered on one tab — making your group's stay even more convenient.

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In addition to being less than six miles from The Walt Disney World Resort, Reunion Resort is convenient to all of Central Florida, including Legoland, which opens in October 2011.

Reunion Resort is one of Orlando's premier locations for meetings, conferences and events, offering a rare combination of three signature golf courses, ultra-modern conference facilities, luxury amenities and unrivaled service. Reunion Resort is where meetings and leisure come together. *C&IT*

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Rosen Shingle Creek

SEVEN-TIME WINNER

For a luxurious, upscale and naturally beautiful Florida experience, planners need look no further than Rosen Shingle Creek, a AAA Four Diamond premier meeting destination conveniently located 10 minutes from the Orlando International Airport and within one mile of the Orange County Convention Center North/South building.

Rosen Shingle Creek is one of the largest full-service convention hotels in Central Florida, and offers 1,500 guest rooms and suites and 445,000 sf of dedicated, state-of-the-art meeting and event space, including three column-free ballrooms — the 95,000-sf Gatlin Grand Ballroom; the 60,000-sf Sebastian Ballroom and the 40,000-sf Panzacola Ballroom. In addition, there are 99 meeting rooms, 55,000 sf of breakout meeting rooms, more than 100,000 sf of prefunction space, 50,000 sf of outdoor space, a 40,000-sf outdoor event lot and 250,000 sf of exhibition space.

Meetings at Rosen Shingle Creek are a technological breeze: There is wireless Internet connectivity capability in all public meeting spaces, and two phones, high-speed Internet capability and NXTV technology in every guest room.

Award-Winning Golf

Named a "Four Star Best Places to



Play" by *Golf Digest* magazine, the Shingle Creek Golf Club is a David Harman-designed, 18-hole, 7,149-yard championship golf course featuring undulating fairways and interconnecting waterways bordered by the natural backdrop of dense oaks and pines along historic Shingle Creek. With five sets of tees, the challenging course plays fair and provides an exceptional test of golf. Named as one of the "Top 40 Best New Golf Courses in the U.S." by *Golfweek* magazine, the club is home to the onsite Brad Brewer Golf Academy, rated as one of the "Top 25 Golf Schools" in the nation by *Golf Magazine*. Brewer is one of *Golf Magazine's* "Top 100 Instructors" and the Golf Channel's online instructor. His PGA staff can orchestrate the ultimate golf program for meetings and events of all sizes.

The full-service, 13,000-sf Spa at Shingle Creek features nine treatment rooms and a fitness center. Amenities include lighted tennis courts, four swimming pools, several hot tubs and much more. The area's major theme parks and attractions are nearby and easily accessible.

Home to two of Orlando's hottest new restaurants, Rosen Shingle Creek recently opened Banrai Sushi and Tobias Flats, bringing its total in-house dining options to a whopping 14. Banrai features signature items, such as the Shingle Creek Roll with gator meat, along with more than a dozen traditional sushi dishes. At Tobias Flats, "old Florida" meets a new world of tastes in all forms of flatbreads, from appetizers and salads to sandwiches and pizzas. These new, on-the-go options provide a quick and convenient complement to the hotel's award-winning fine dining restaurants, A Land Remembered, a classic steak house, and Cala Bella, an Italian bistro.

The Rosen Promise

"At the end of the day, it's all about service," asserts owner/hotelier Harris Rosen, whose company celebrates its 37th anniversary this year. The staff will move mountains to satisfy the needs of every attendee, which is the hallmark of a Rosen property. *C&IT*

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New Orleans

The Crescent City's Comeback Is Official

The post-Katrina skyline of New Orleans is brighter than ever with the reopening of landmark hotels.

Photo © Alex Demyan, courtesy of NewOrleansOnline.com

One could say that the Katrina-weary city of New Orleans officially turned the corner in 2010. That's the year the Saints won the Super Bowl and the nation witnessed the massive celebration back home in news coverage of downtown revelers in full swing. Five years earlier, the Crescent City was nearly brought to its knees following the devastating effects of the infamous hurricane, which took lives and homes, and closed 273 hotels.

Following the Super Bowl win, according to Stephen Perry, president and CEO of the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau (NOCVB), cars were honking and strangers were embracing, as people poured into the French Quarter, packed the restaurants and clubs, and fireworks lit up the evening sky over the Louisiana Superdome, home of the Saints. "If there ever was an event that demonstrated the unwavering spirit of this city, the Saints' victory was it," he said at the time.



"Right now, the city is probably in better shape than it's been in 20 years."

Stephen Perry, President and CEO
New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau
New Orleans, LA

Meeting Numbers

Recovery of the meeting and convention business has been slower than leisure, which surged post-Super Bowl, but 2011 numbers are encouraging. A total of 676 meetings have been booked so far this year (not including meetings booked directly into hotels), according to Smith Travel Research (STR), compared to 705 meetings in 2008.

Commenting on the STR report, Nikki Moon, vice president of convention sales for the NOCVB, told *HotelNewsNow.com*, "The city has hosted several attendance-breaking citywide conventions this spring and is anticipating 2011 to be at or above the same level of convention room nights as last year. With a robust calendar of conventions as well as the list of premium sporting events here in 2012 and 2013, New Orleans has the strongest convention calendar we have seen in years over the next 24 months."

"Today," Perry says, "from the C-level at corporations on down, companies are more conscious of costs and return on investment than they've ever been in the management of meetings. Many budgets have been reduced. So one of the things we focus on is providing an extremely high-quality set of locations and venues at a very affordable price. And that makes New Orleans a good business decision, in addition to a good branding decision."

Perry continues, "Compared with many other destinations, what really differentiates New Orleans is the fact that the culture here is authentic and real. It's not a manufactured, artificially created sort of pomp-and-circumstance for a big meeting. It's who we are. And that lends itself to corporations being able to take advantage of a real local culture, whether it's the chef and cuisine scene or our music or art scene."

In addition, the NOCVB offers groups many community service activities: Meeting groups have painted schools, repaired playgrounds, built houses for Habitat for Humanity and performed numerous other volunteer projects.

"The city is more vibrant than it's ever been," Moon says, noting that a key element of the resurgence was the reopening of the landmark Roosevelt Hotel two years ago after a \$170 million restoration. The grand historic hotel, which offers 60,000 sf of meeting space, helped usher in New Orleans' own version of the Jazz Age behind local hero Louis Armstrong. An icon of that era is a magnificent, historic mural in the Sazerac Bar. "The hotel has all of those historical touches," says Moon. "But this time, it also brought the Waldorf-Astoria name with it. And they brought in things we didn't have before, like a Guerlain spa. They didn't spare any expense in returning the hotel to its glory days."

Symbol of the Comeback

If the Super Bowl win signaled a comeback, the reopening of the Hyatt Regency New Orleans this fall will officially confirm it. Situated next to the Louisiana Superdome, the Hyatt served as the headquarters for disaster recovery in the months following the storm and was closed to visitors for six years. After a \$275 million redesign, the hotel will welcome its first guests on October 19, 2011, and stand as a testament to the city's resilience. "The Hyatt Regency is so important because it's located adjacent to the Superdome, which is the first thing you see as you come into the city from the airport," Moon says. "They're completely redoing the hotel. It's going to be a tremendous property with great food-and-beverage and fantastic ballrooms. It will be a symbol of the post-Katrina skyline." Upon comple-

tion, the hotel will boast 1,193 all-new guest rooms and suites, including five meeting planner suites; expansive F&B options; and 200,000 sf of state-of-the-art, flexible event space — the most of any hotel in the city. The event space includes two 25,000-sf ballrooms, 64 meeting and banquet rooms, 21 executive level meetings rooms, seven permanent boardrooms and more than 80,000 sf of exhibition space. According to STR, the Hyatt's opening will boost the city's guest room inventory to 36,394 rooms, down only 2,326 from the peak in 2005.

Hotel Monteleone, another storied landmark property, is currently celebrating its 125th anniversary, having stood proudly in the French Quarter since 1886. The historic, AAA Four Diamond hotel has recently completed a major renovation to the Wi-Fi system throughout the hotel and meeting rooms. A spokesperson for the hotel notes, "Each guest room is now a Wi-Fi 'hotspot' equipped with its own wireless access point (WAP). Additionally, meeting rooms can now support more than 3,000 simultaneous users on the fastest Internet connection in the French Quarter." Hotel Monteleone features 600 newly renovated guest rooms and suites, and 25 meeting rooms, and boasts a meeting-friendly location as the closest French Quarter hotel to the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. The Queen Anne Ballroom, and the Vieux Carré and Riverview meeting rooms are being refurbished and redecorated. In early June the hotel started a multimillion-dollar renovation and expansion of the famous Carousel Bar, which will remain open throughout the project. Also, a new restaurant, created by reconfiguring two existing restaurants, will debut this November and showcase Louisiana cuisine.

Other property news:

The W New Orleans-French Quarter will unveil a multimillion dollar renovation this fall that will feature revamped restaurant space and guest rooms. The downtown W New Orleans recently renovated its 13,000 sf of meeting space.

The Ritz-Carlton New Orleans is set to undergo its first renovation since opening in 2000. The hotel, which offers 35,000 sf of meeting space, will update all 527 guest rooms.

The Hotel New Orleans, which is located across from the

Record Spending

Now, six years post-Katrina, 200 of the closed hotels have reopened and, according to the NOCVB, 2010 visitor numbers (8.3 million) are nearing pre-storm and pre-recession levels (10.1 million in 2004), with a whopping \$5.3 billion in visitor spending, the highest in the city's history.

The more than \$1.1 billion in capital improvements invested throughout New Orleans, including millions spent at the convention center, Superdome and elsewhere, has given the city an updated, clean look it never had before. "Right now, the city is probably in better shape than it's been in 20 years," Perry says.

An ambitious new master plan for the city's tourism industry, launched in 2010, focuses on the city's "core assets," such as the French Quarter, Louis Armstrong International Airport, the riverfront and Canal Street, among other areas. The goal is to attract 13 million visitors and \$11 billion in direct spending by 2018.

"The strategic master plan is all about making New Orleans the most attractive destination in the nation for leisure trips, meetings, conventions, festivals and special events," explains Perry. "No city has the culture, appeal or visitor experience of New Orleans, so we must have the most comprehensive master plan and shrewd business model of any destination marketing

By John Buchanan and Stella Johnson

Morial Convention Center, will be renovated and reopened as a Hyatt Place hotel. The 170-room Hyatt Place New Orleans Convention Center is slated to open in early 2012.

The Morial Convention Center will begin a \$50 million renovation project in December that will feature the Great Hall, the largest ballroom in New Orleans at 60,000 sf. The project is expected to be completed in 2013.

"In many cases, it is truly the meeting and hospitality industry that continues to fuel our recovery."

Nancy Trosclair, DMCP
President/Owner, Destination New Orleans,
New Orleans, LA



Culinary Tradition

In addition to the return of landmark properties, New Orleans continues to debut new restaurants that create the next generation of local culinary tradition. "We continue to have new restaurants," Moon says. "We have more great restaurants right now than we've ever had in the entire history of the city."

New Orleans has a handful of historic restaurants that date back a century or more, including Galatoire's, Arnaud's and Antoine's. More recent but still landmark eateries include Commander's Palace, where future superstar chefs including local heroes Paul Prudhomme and Emeril Lagasse got their first starring roles, and Mr. B's Bistro, an exceptional steak, chop and seafood house from a younger member of the legendary Brennan family, which owns a range of the city's most successful restaurants, including Commander's Palace and Brennan's.

Meanwhile, Moon says, New Orleans boasts a fine crop of new restaurants for planners. For example, she says, one of the best new restaurants is The Roosevelt's Domenica, operated by current local superstar chef John Besh. Meanwhile, chef Donald Link, who operates Cochon, one of the city's most acclaimed Cajun restaurants of recent years, has opened a private dining facility for groups above the main dining room. Other tried-and-true standbys include Bon Ton Café, where a table is always coveted by local foodies, and Acme Oyster House, famous for po-boy sandwiches and raw or charbroiled oysters.

And while the food alone will make for a memorable experience, Perry notes, planners also can add unique elements to a dinner by having a "second line" jazz band, known for enlivening the city's famous jazz funerals, march attendees from their hotel to the restaurant in the French Quarter. Or planners can opt for a horse-and-buggy ride. "It's just special to sit there and hear the clip-clop of hooves on the ground," Perry says. "That's something attendees will remember for a long time."

Dine-arounds and Other Delights

Planners who want to take full advantage of the destination should do a dine-around program, says Jill DiMarco, CMP, DMCP, director of accounts and partner at Signature Destination Management in New Orleans. She has seen more and more corporate planners exploit that option because it establishes a fixed total cost for meals, and exposes attendees to the city's finest restaurants. "A dine-around is also good for our local tourism economy because it spreads the money around," DiMarco says.

One engaging way to experience local culture and history, DiMarco says, is to stage an event at Houmas House Plantation & Gardens, recently renovated and located an hour from the center of the city. "The grounds are just gorgeous, and they offer several individual venues on the property, based on group size," she relates. "You should really plan a full day that includes a luncheon and then a Creole-Cajun cooking class, followed by a nice reception or dinner."

Another major plantation, also an hour away, is Oak Alley, named for the dramatic rows of old-growth oak trees that run from the Mississippi to its entrance. "It's different from Houmas House because it's a little bit more rustic," DiMarco says. "You can stage a Civil War re-enactment or a Southern cotillion outdoors there, where everybody dresses up in costumes. It's like being in 'Gone with the Wind.'"

Another of DiMarco's tried-and-true offsite entertainment options is a swamp tour followed by a gumbo and crawfish feast at nearby offsite meeting venue Bayou Barn, located 30 minutes from major hotels.

Moon highly recommends Patton's, another offsite venue that's about 40 minutes away and popular with planners. Located on the Mississippi, it offers a spectacular setting for outdoor and indoor lunches, dinners and events.

In town, Moon, Perry and planners agree that Mardi Gras World, a longtime offsite venue where spectacular events can be staged amidst Mardi Gras floats and marching bands or jazz ensembles, is even better now that it's been relocated next to the convention center, alongside the Mississippi. "Now planners can come here and stage a real street festival that brings in Mardi Gras," Perry says. "That's yet another example of something unique you can do here if you want to be creative."

For planners who want the most contemporary, intimate taste of New Orleans, there is the Faubourg Marigny neighborhood, a short taxi ride from the French Quarter. It features new and eclectic cafés, and live music venues where you can enjoy homemade gumbo and listen to live jazz or blues. Buyouts are available at some of the venues.

Meeting With a Purpose

James Thompson is vehicle merchandising manager for Toyota's luxury brand, Lexus, based in Alpharetta, GA. His

office normally plans up to seven meetings a year for sales managers from car dealerships across the Southeast region. Recalling an annual production meeting held in New Orleans a few years ago, Thompson says, "The sales managers flew into New Orleans to participate in a production meeting in the afternoon, which was very business-oriented. That was followed by a program in the evening that consisted of live music, high-end cuisine and a chance to win \$1,000 to \$15,000. There were approximately 100 guests in all," says Thompson. "We chose New Orleans because of its rich history and culture, and because it had a great casino (Harrah's) that we particularly enjoy as a group. The highlight was the Cash Bash portion of the program, which we outsourced to Destination New Orleans to produce. That organization changed what was an ordinary ballroom into a Venetian masterpiece. It also hired excellent local talent, so that my clients could get a real feel of what New Orleans was all about."

Nancy Trosclair, DMCP, president/owner of Destination New Orleans, says that Thompson appreciated the city's convenient location, as well as its affordability. "More than that, after the Katrina disaster, James Thompson also wanted to bring their business to a city that would truly appreciate the business." She adds, "The characteristics that made New Orleans such a unique and memorable destination for meetings and conven-

tions prior to Hurricane Katrina are even stronger and more dynamic than before," she states. "In many cases, it is truly the meeting and hospitality industry that continues to fuel our recovery. Our unique culture, music, cuisine, architecture, variety of tour and activity options, corporate responsibility programs, overall Southern hospitality and joie de vivre provide meeting planners with a win-win situation when hosting their meetings and conferences here."

For Jeffrey O'Hara, DMCP, CMP, president of PRA New Orleans, the city is actually faring better than before Katrina hit town. "Of course, the recession has had an impact, as it did to all destinations, but there is an all-new hotel product as every hotel went through a major renovation within the last (six) years," he says. "The work force is improved, too, as the people that are in New Orleans now feel that they have an investment in the success of the industry and the city. We also have a new sanitation company keeping the French Quarter clean, one of the most common complaints pre-storm."

Perry promises that New Orleans is a destination that will deliver every time. "That's because attendees have a unique, fun experience here in addition to getting business done. And they leave energized and enthusiastic. That's what a successful meeting is all about." What better way to revitalize attendees than to choose a destination that's been there, done that? **C&IT**

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A prelude to the Capital One Bowl on New Year's Day, the Orlando Citrus Parade winds through downtown. Volunteers adorn the floats with oranges, tangerines and grapefruits.

Photo courtesy of Visit Orlando

Florida's No. 1 Destination

Orlando has been on a roll in recent months. The Orlando/Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau changed its name to Visit Orlando, introduced a new logo and redesigned its website. More significantly, Orlando is the first destination in the United States to draw more than 50 million visitors in a year, attracting 51.4 million visitors in 2010, up 10.5 percent from 46.6 million in 2009.

The milestone affirms Orlando's status as a unique global destination that provides blue-ribbon service to visitors. "Those numbers are something we use internally to judge our performance with our key stakeholders and consumers," says Visit Orlando president and CEO Gary Sain. "If you come to Orlando, you don't want to be treated as one of 50 million. You want to be treated as family and have a special experience that lasts a lifetime, whether you are one person, part of a group of 10, a corporate meeting or convention."

JoAnn Mitchell got a little help from her friends at Visit Orlando earlier this year. Mitchell, MBA, CMP, PMP, senior project leader for Fair Lawn, NJ-based Sandvik Coromant USA, received assistance from the CVB with two smaller meetings held before and after a gathering for 400 at Disney's Yacht Club Resort. "The larger meeting was preceded by a very high-level meeting for 12 executives followed by a meeting for another 30 people. Anything I needed to go along with those meetings, like golf or a tour of an alligator theme park, they got for us. The CVB keeps me informed of what's going on at the various theme

Is Riding High

parks and properties. They help me with collateral to support my meetings. It's an excellent CVB. I rely on them a lot," says Mitchell.

Sandvik Coromant's three-day strategic business meeting for 400 took place almost entirely on Disney's Yacht Club Resort property. "Disney designed a custom program to help us bring out aspects of the business agenda that we were trying to communicate to our people. It was very effective to do one-stop shopping at a high level to communicate our vision," says Mitchell.

Disney provided audio-visual equipment and designed the stage, lighting and logos placed on meeting materials and meeting room walls, curtains and backdrops. The stage in the main meeting ballroom changed with each day's activity. "One day we did talk show presentations. Another day we brought in an entertainer from off property. During a meeting of senior leaders, Disney characters engaged and entertained the audience by serving as impromptu 'guest speakers.' On the final day, we had a business presentation and a game show format with audience members as contestants. At the end of the day, Disney converted the room into a setting for a gala dinner within two hours," says Mitchell. Following the meeting, many attendees remained to enjoy Orlando with their families. "People were encouraged to bring their families. We held a breakfast on the last day with relatives, and a photographer took pictures," Mitchell says.

Mitchell says they selected Disney's Yacht Club Resort

"We get a very good return on our investment. We hold many varieties of meetings of different sizes in Orlando and several with Disney. The feedback from attendees was excellent. On a scale of 1-10, attendees rated the meeting higher than nine."

JoAnn Mitchell, MBA, CMP, PMP, Senior Project Leader
Sandvik Coromant USA
Fairlawn, NJ



for several reasons, including service, quality of the meeting venues and value. "We get a very good return on our investment. We hold many varieties of meetings of different sizes in Orlando and several with Disney," says Mitchell. "The feedback from attendees was excellent. On a scale of 1-10, attendees rated the meeting higher than nine."

Premier Destination

Orlando, one of the world's top destinations due to its uniquely high concentration of theme parks and top resorts, boasts more than 100 attractions of varying sizes. The area is packed with fine dining restaurants, nightclubs and bars. Also, Orlando is within short driving distance to some of the state's best beaches, including Clearwater Beach on the Gulf Coast and Cocoa Beach on the Atlantic side.

The Orange County Convention Center (OCCC), located 13 miles from the Orlando International Airport, is surrounded by 113,000 hotel rooms. The West Building and the North/South Building provide a total of 2.1 million sf of exhibit space, 74 flexible meeting rooms and the 63,000-sf multipurpose Valencia Room. Six of Orlando's most popular theme parks and more than 100 hotels and resorts are located along the city's famed International Drive. Orlando is also packed with more than 450 meeting hotels, which continue to expand and modernize.

New and Newsworthy

Located in the Bonnet Creek Resort Complex next to Disney World, the Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek is scheduled to open in October 2011. The Mediterranean-inspired lakeside property will feature 400 rooms and 25,000 sf of meeting space set amid Bonnet Creek's 500 acres of woodlands. There are also five restaurants, a lagoon-style pool as well as the Blue Harmony Spa and a fitness center. Guests can enjoy an onsite Disney Planning Center and complimentary transportation to Disney's theme parks.

Among existing properties, the 720-room Omni Orlando at ChampionsGate plans to open a new 55,000-sf exhibition center by January 2013, adding to the resort's 70,000 sf of function space. The facility will include eight meeting rooms, a 30,000-sf main exhibit hall and prefunction space. An event lawn will allow outdoor functions.

Located just 10 minutes from Orlando International Airport, the 1,094-room DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld offers 60,000 sf of flexible indoor and outdoor meeting space, including two grand ballrooms. The Tower Terrace provides outdoor space that overlooks tropical landscaping complete with native palm trees.

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort includes a total of 2,265 guest rooms and 329,000 sf of indoor meeting space that includes 84 meeting rooms, four ballrooms and a 128,000-sf convention hall. Guests can also enjoy five swimming pools, two health clubs and 17 restaurants and lounges.

The Swan and Dolphin Resort hosts corporate meetings of all types. Last year, a pharmaceutical company held a four-day national sales meeting at the property for 350 attendees. The meeting included a teambuilding treasure hunt at the Universal Studio attraction based on the movie "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and afterwards held a private dinner on the site, says Andy McNeill, CEO of Fort Lauderdale-based American Meetings Inc., a full-service corporate meeting planning company. Attendees also held a private dinner at Epcot, had free time to explore at Downtown Disney and enjoyed a round of golf.

Why was the Swan and Dolphin Resort chosen? "We do site selection to determine needs, and price points come into consideration, especially coming out of a recession. It was a slower time of the year, so we got a good rate, and it's a beautiful venue," says McNeill. The meeting was one of about 20 each year planned in Orlando by American Meetings Inc. "We like the concentration of hotels. It's easy to fly in and out of, it's very price competitive, and we get good rates," says McNeill.

The Peabody Orlando recently completed a \$450 million renovation and expansion that increased the number of guest rooms to 1,641 and meeting space to a total of 300,000 sf. A new covered walkway connects the Peabody Orlando to the OCCC. The property also features the 22,000-sf Peabody Spa & Athletic Club, three pools and 10 dining and entertainment options.

Universal Orlando Resort offers three onsite hotels, the largest of which is the 1,000-room Loews Royal Pacific Resort, featuring 85,000 sf of meeting space. Other amenities include a 5,000-sf fitness center and six restaurants, including

By Derek Reveron



“Rosen Shingle Creek sourced many types of decorative fountains. They brought in props and rearranged furniture that is part of the décor of the hotel to create fresh looks for our functions. That’s added value.”

Al Geismar, Director, Corporate Meetings and Travel
Enterprise Holdings Inc.
Saint Louis, MO

Emeril’s Tchoup Chop, which serves Asian cuisine. The Loews Portofino Bay Hotel has 750 rooms and 45,000 sf of meeting space, and the 650-room Hard Rock Hotel has 6,000 sf of flexible meeting space.

Rosen Hotels & Resorts operates seven properties in the Orlando area. The four convention hotels include Rosen Shingle Creek, Rosen Plaza Hotel, Rosen Centre Hotel and Rosen Inn at Pointe Orlando. Collectively, the four hotels offer more than 600,000 sf of meeting space and 4,500 guest rooms. All four hotels are located within a 15-minute drive from Orlando International Airport. The 1,334-room Rosen Centre Hotel connects to the OCCC via a pedestrian bridge. The Rosen Plaza Hotel offers 800 rooms and sits next to the OCCC. Located a half mile from the OCCC, the Rosen Inn at Pointe Orlando includes 1,020 rooms. Rosen Shingle Creek, located a mile from the OCCC, covers 230 acres and is one of Florida’s most luxurious properties. The resort features 1,500 guest rooms and suites as well as 445,000 sf of meeting and event space as well as the championship Shingle Creek Golf Club.

In April, Enterprise Holdings Inc., the St. Louis-based parent of Enterprise Rent-A-Car, held a national meeting at Rosen Shingle Creek. More than 1,400 Enterprise employees attended the four-day meeting, which included training sessions, 45 breakouts, a general session and two award banquets. All of the meeting’s events were held on property. “That’s the benefit of working with Rosen Shingle Creek. They can handle the diversity of events and keep it fresh so that we don’t have to put people on a coach and transfer them somewhere else,” says Al Geismar, director, corporate meetings and travel, Enterprise Holdings Inc..

Events included a Havana-themed cabana party on the pool terrace and a casino night. During the meeting, hotel staff started setting up a series of extreme games on Rosen Shingle Creek’s outdoor event space. The games included inflatable human foosball, Wii technology games, BMX bike riders, magicians and acrobats on trampolines. “As we were setting it up outside, the threat of rain required us to start bringing it inside about three hours before it was scheduled to start. The hotel staff brought everything into one of the ballrooms and did it seamlessly and impressively,” says Geismar. The games started on time. Due partly to such service, attendees gave the meeting

rave reviews. According to an attendee survey, 97 percent rated the meeting good or excellent, and the hotel service received 98 percent, says Geismar.

Enterprise is a loyal Rosen Shingle Creek customer because the resort consistently exceeds expectations. “Rosen Shingle Creek sourced many types of decorative fountains. They brought in props and rearranged furniture that is part of the décor of the hotel to create fresh looks for our functions. And they didn’t charge us for any of that. That’s added value,” Geismar notes. Enterprise also gets good deals. “They are very competitive for that marketplace. They deliver fair value,” Geismar added. The meeting in April was the second installment of a three-year deal for the event that Enterprise signed in 2010. Enterprise has been so satisfied with the Rosen Shingle Creek that four of the company’s business units have held 10 meetings at the property over the last five years, says Geismar.

Other leading Orlando properties include the Reunion Resort, conveniently located near Walt Disney World and other Orlando attractions. Reunion Resort offers 400 guest rooms as one-, two- and three-bedroom villas and homes. Reunion’s Superior Villas are upscale resorts with private balconies that overlook the property’s golf course or lush plantings. The Superior Villas have large dining areas, living rooms and fully equipped kitchens. The property offers more than 25,000 sf of flexible meeting space, which includes a grand ballroom that accommodates groups of 1,000.

Located across from the OCCC, the 315-room Westin Imagine Orlando is an art-deco style property located near the city’s major attractions. The property provides more than 7,100 sf of state-of-the-art meeting and conference facilities, including five meeting rooms, the largest of which is 1,650 sf.

The Hilton Orlando is an award-winning resort-style hotel connected to the North/South Building of the Orange County Convention Center. The 1,400-room hotel is convenient to Orlando’s airport, major attractions as well as theaters, museums, shopping and dining. A serious meeting and convention hotel, Hilton Orlando was designed to be conducive to productivity and relaxation. The 175,000 sf of versatile function space offers an easy flow between general sessions, catered events and breakouts, yet is separated from the resort areas.

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Hilton  Orlando



“We like the concentration of hotels (in Orlando). It’s easy to fly in and out of, it’s very price competitive, and we get good rates.”

Andy McNeill, CEO
American Meetings Inc.
Fort Lauderdale, FL

Golf

Many attendees enjoy Orlando’s nearly 200 golf courses while meeting in the area. Orlando features a range of prime golf properties that are popular among corporate meetings. The 720-room Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate boasts the National Course and the International Course. The world-class courses were designed by Greg Norman and feature a total of 36 holes.

At the 500-room Reunion Resort, attendees can choose from three courses designed by Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Tom Watson.

Arnold Palmer’s golf design company also designed the courses at the Arnold Palmer Bay Hill Club and Lodge, the home to the PGA Tour’s annual Arnold Palmer Invitational.

Walt Disney World features the Osprey Ridge Golf Course designed by Tom Fazio; the Palm Golf Course designed by Joe Lee; Lake Buena Vista Golf Course; and the Oak Trail Golf Course.

Other courses include the Shingle Creek Golf Club; Marriott’s Grand Pines Golf Club; the Ritz-Carlton Golf Club; and the Grand Cypress Golf Club’s course designed by Jack Nicklaus.

Attendees can learn to play or sharpen their golf skills at premier facilities such as Reunion Resort’s Annika Academy, headed by retired LPGA golfer Annika Sorenstam; Shingle Creek’s Brad Brewer Golf Academy, which offers lessons for beginners and tailors programs for groups such as teambuilding; and the David Leadbetter Golf Academy headquartered at The Omni Orlando at ChampionsGate. Other top schools include the Faldo Golf Institute by Marriott and the Grand Cypress Academy of Golf.

Theme Parks and Recreation

While Orlando boasts attractions, arts, sports, shopping, dining and entertainment options, the city’s major theme parks truly set it apart from other destinations worldwide. Universal Orlando, Walt Disney World Resort and SeaWorld are always a hit with attendees from the U.S. and abroad. The theme parks offer meeting space, catering, restaurants and “wow” entertainment for large and small corporate groups. Most of the area attractions and parks offer meeting planners the option to buy out restaurants and venues for exclusive use.

Walt Disney World Resort’s major theme attractions include Typhoon Lagoon, Pleasure Island and Epcot, Magic Kingdom Park, Disney’s Hollywood Studios and Disney’s Animal Kingdom Theme Park. In addition to golf, recreation activities include water parks, horseback riding, parasailing, fishing, tennis and racecar driving. Attendees can relax at the Grand Floridian Spa and Health Club and The Spa at Disney’s Saratoga Springs Resort. This fall, in Downtown Disney, construction will begin on Splitsville, a 50,000-sf upscale entertainment center that combines bowling with billiards, dining, music and nightlife. On Pleasure Island, Disney put previously announced plans for Hyperion Wharf on hold for further evaluation.

SeaWorld features a stunning array of shows, rides and exhibits that showcase marine animals. The theme park includes Ports of Call, a dedicated banquet facility that caters functions and meetings of 100 to 750 attendees. The venue includes a 12,000-sf ballroom that can be divided into three sections, a covered patio and tropical gardens. SeaWorld also offers a two-hour teambuilding program for 15 to 250 participants.

Universal Orlando Resort’s two theme parks are Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure, which features the Wizarding World of Harry Potter attraction. Universal also offers more than 60 shopping venues, many of which are located at Universal CityWalk, a 30-acre site featuring stores that sell everything from surfing accessories and toys to handbags and watches.

Meeting Makeover

Orlando is truly on a roll and riding high. Now one lucky winner has a chance to bask in the glory of meeting in Orlando. Gary Sain and his team at Visit Orlando are so sure that meeting planners will find exceptional value and an excellent return on investment when they meet in Orlando that they’re awarding one winner a \$50,000 meeting overhaul. Meeting professionals are invited to submit by September 30, 2011, a maximum 350-word essay on why their meeting needs a makeover to www.OrlandoMeeting.com/makeover. The winner will have Visit Orlando’s expert destination meeting services team at their disposal to redesign, enhance or augment their meeting experience through a combination of \$50,000 in goods and services. **C&IT**

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Offer applicable to “NEW” meetings booked after August 1, 2011 only. Both meetings must be booked at same hotel, within same seasonality (same month each year), be of similar size/revenue and meet revenue minimums, which vary by property. 2011 meeting must be consumed by January 31, 2012, and 2013 meeting must be consumed by January 31, 2014. Based on offer and date availability and not applicable with any other discounts, definite business or citywide groups. Booking code: ROSENROL



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Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association	317-262-8211	www.visitindy.com	Michelle Travis	mtravis@visitindy.com
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Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority	877-847-4858	www.lvcva.com	Michael Goldsmith	mgoldsmith@lvcva.com
Loews Hotels at Universal Orlando	888-322-5531	www.uomeetingsandevents.com	Group Sales	meetings@universalorlando.com
Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau	800-452-7829	www.visitlongbeach.com	Iris Himert	irish@longbeachcvb.org
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Walt Disney World Resort	321-939-7112	www.disneymeetings.com	Anne Hamilton	meetings@disneyworld.com
The Westin Casuarina Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa	702-836-5934	www.westin.com/lasvegas	Sandra Horvath	shorvath@westinlv.com
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