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THE SOURCE FOR ASSOCIATION MEETING PLANNING MANAGEMENT

Outlook 2012 The Forecast Is Partly Sunny

PAGE 10

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President and CEO, ASAE



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Making Headway in 2012



Imagine what it's like walking through mud up to your waist: You will make forward progress, but at a painfully slow rate. That's essentially how experts sum up the economy heading into 2012. As Glenn H. Hutchins, former economic advisor to President Clinton, noted on CNBC's Squawk Box, "What we are in is a period of long-term low average growth." Not exactly a message to set the world on fire. But the slowly improving meetings industry inspires at least measured optimism. The key is to keep pushing, adapting and innovating in an age of uncertainty and rapidly changing ways of doing business.

Leading by example are exhibit industry luminaries from ASAE Foundation, PCMA Foundation, Exhibition Industry Foundation, Freeman and Gaylord Entertainment who are collaborating on Future Meet, a project designed to predict and plan for the future of convention exhibits and trade shows. IAEE President Steven Hacker, CAE, FASE, recently noted, "IAEE and its members fully understand how change may usher in new opportunities as well as new realities. ...The trade show of the future may yield valuable new insights that can help lead us along an imprecise path." We look forward to learning about these new models for exhibit and trade show success.

Our cover story on page 10, Outlook 2012, reveals trends and solutions every association meeting planner should heed to stay ahead of the curve and continue moving forward. Some of the issues explored in our feature are technology — including social media and hybrid meetings — aging memberships and multigenerational considerations, hosted buyer programs and exhibit booth "pods," sustainable meetings and changing ethnic demographics, which demand a more culturally responsive association. Otherwise, as ASAE President and CEO John H. Graham IV, CAE, (pictured on the cover) comments in our story, "...you're going to wake up one day and the train will have already left the station."

There's certainly no predicting how the economy will fare in 2012. But it is a certainty that the most agile and astute associations will continue to make headway no matter how tough the going.

Harvey Grotsky

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

ASSOCIATION CONVENTIONS & FACILITIES

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Sain Receives IAEE Chairman's Award at Annual Meeting

DALLAS, TX — The International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE) announced the 2011 recipients of the IAEE Individual Awards. The winners were honored during Expo! IAEE's Annual Meeting & Exhibition held December 6–8,



Sain

2011 in Las Vegas, NV. This year's Chairman's Award honoree was Gary Sain, president and CEO of Visit Orlando, for his dedication on the IAEE board of directors and his extraordinary efforts in raising the necessary funds to launch the IAEE public relations campaign. Other awardees include Merit Award winners Barry Brown, CEM, national sales manager at Freeman, and Barbara Stroup; Educator of the Year winner Bob Dallmeyer, CEM, president of RD International; Committee/Task Force Volunteer of the Year winner Julie Nelson, account executive at Convention Data Services Inc.; Outstanding Achievement in Marketing and Sales winner Lenny Heymann, executive vice president and group general manager at UBM TechWeb; and Young Professional of the Year winners Greg McCormack, CEM, account manager at The Expo Group and Julie Pazina, national sales manager for Edlen Electrical Exhibition Services. www.iaee.com/awards

Meeting Planners Plant 250,000th Tree in Denver



DENVER, CO — On November 11, members of Visit Denver's Customer Advisory Board, made up of top meeting planners around the nation, and Visit Denver Convention Staff (including president & CEO Richard Scharf and V.P. of convention sales and services Rachel Benedick) helped plant the 250,000th tree in front of the Colorado Convention Center. The ceremony is a huge milestone in the Mile High Million initiative, set forth by Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper in 2006 when he was mayor of Denver. The goal of the Mile High Million is to add 1 million new trees to the metro-Denver area by 2025, in order to provide a cleaner, more beautiful environment for locals and visitors, and motivate individuals to become life-long stewards of the city's natural environment. www.visitdenver.com

Paul Catoe Receives Key to City



Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn (left) presents the key to the city of Tampa to Tampa Bay & Company President & CEO Paul Catoe.

TAMPA, FL — At the Tampa Bay & Company offices, City of Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn recognized Tampa Bay & Company President and CEO Paul Catoe for his hard work and dedication to the city of Tampa, as well as the Tampa Bay community. Catoe retires effective December 31, 2011. As part of his presentation, Mayor Buckhorn presented Catoe with a key to the city of Tampa. "I'd like to thank Paul for so many years of service to this community. We are recognized around the country as not only a great destination, but also as a great community, and we would not be the city that we are had it not been for you," said Mayor Buckhorn as he presented the key to the city. "With a great deal of affection from a lot of mayors that you've served, but more importantly a grateful community, I thank you for your service and we're a better place because of you." www.visittampabay.com

Eduardo Chaillo Recognized as 2011 JMIC 'Profile and Power' Awardee

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM — The Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) announced Eduardo Chaillo, executive director, meeting industry,



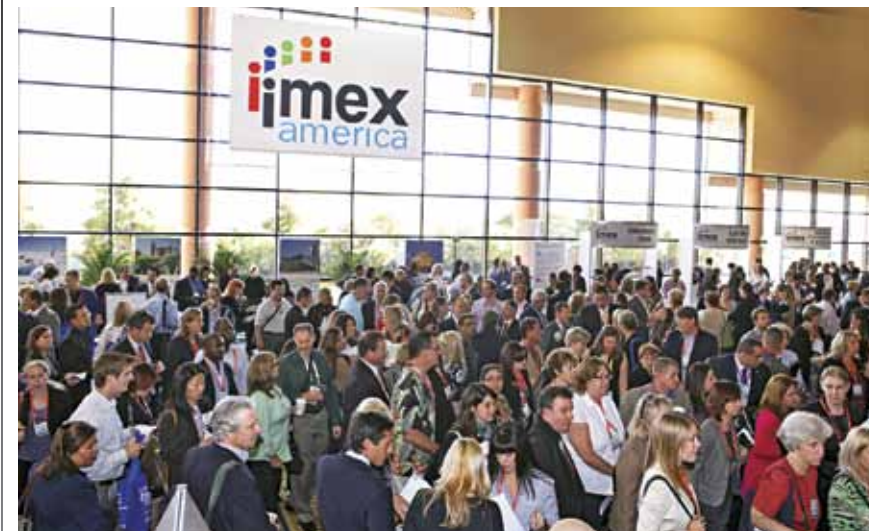
Chaillo

of the Mexico Tourism Board, as the winner of the 2011 JMIC Profile and Power Award in recognition of his work in carrying out a comprehensive economic impact assessment for the Mexican Meetings Industry and demonstrating the high values and employment associated with these events in his country. "We are increasingly realizing the importance of rigorous measurement of the benefits associated with meetings and conventions in order to document this in a form that will be convincing to government decision-makers," says Philippe Fournier, JMIC president. "The work and energy that was invested by Mr. Chaillo demonstrates a level of commitment to the industry and to his country that should be an inspiration to us all." www.themeetingsindustry.org

CEIR Releases Factors that Drive Decision to Exhibit

DALLAS, TX — The fourth fact sheet "Factors that Drive the Decision to Exhibit" in the new study series released by the Center for Exhibitions Industry Research (CEIR) reveals that the most influential factor driving the decision to exhibit (84 percent) is the exhibition's reputation for delivering quality attendance. Favorable ROI (54 percent) and positive past performance (50 percent) are the next most common factors considered. CEIR's 2011 study explores how the exhibition industry is evolving and provides key market insights on opportunities and threats. Contact Nancy Drapeau, PRC, at ndrapeau@ceir.org. www.ceir.org

IMEX America's 2011 Debut Show Helps Drive \$Billions In Business



LONDON, ENGLAND — According to IMEX America, an exit survey of the hosted buyers who attended the first IMEX America in Las Vegas in October reveals that total orders placed onsite amounted to \$281 million. Also, \$1.9 billion worth of orders are expected to be placed with exhibitors in the next nine months or so. The average value of orders placed by hosted buyers during the show was \$496,000 each, with post-show average orders expected to be worth \$1 million each. Thus, IMEX America hosted buyers have generated or will generate a total of \$2.2 billion in business with IMEX America exhibitors. A total of 2,000 hosted buyers attended IMEX America, and 1,867 companies exhibited at IMEX America representing 147 countries. An exit survey also was conducted among IMEX America non-hosted buyers or buyer attendees. This group placed roughly \$89 million in business with exhibitors during the show and expects to place \$538 million of orders within the next 10 months. The next IMEX America is set for October 9–11, 2012, at the Sands Expo, Las Vegas. www.imexamerica.com

Las Vegas Convention Center Expansion Going Forward



Ralenkotter

LAS VEGAS, NV — The planned \$890 million expansion for the Las Vegas Convention Center that was put on hold in 2008 during the recession may soon be back on track. Rossi Ralenkotter, president and CEO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) told the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* that with the LVCVA board's approval, all interested parties will determine how to best revive and rework the original plan for the project. He noted that improved meeting and convention business over the past 19 months justifies revisiting the plan. Chris Meyer, LVCVA's vice president of sales, said, "If you look at what our competitors around the country have leading up their convention centers, ours doesn't match up. Our campus and parts of our building have been around for 52 years."

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Linda E. Schwartz

The American Society for Healthcare Engineering is planning to feature an interactive ASHE Pavilion on the show floor where speakers can mingle with attendees and answer questions. A video host will conduct speaker interviews, with the completed 10- to 15-minute segments being immediately released via streaming media.

A Better Mousetrap: New Trends for 2012

There's no time like the present to try something new. If your group isn't ready for a big shakeup in 2012, consider making a few tweaks here and there that can improve the attendee experience, increase your efficiency, boost your bottom line or all three! Here are four simple yet effective strategies to help ring in the new.

A modern twist on the 'Speakers' Corner.' In 1872, an act of Parliament allowed a space in the northeastern corner of London's Hyde Park to be given over for public speaking. Nowadays, you may be able to find a little bit of the Speakers' Corner at certain annual conferences, including The American Society for Healthcare Engineering (ASHE) of the American Hospital Association's upcoming meeting in Phoenix, AZ, from March 4-7.

For the 2012 International Summit & Exhibition on Health Facility Planning, Design & Construction (2012 PDC Summit), ASHE is planning to feature an interactive ASHE Pavilion on the show floor where speakers can mingle with attendees and answer questions. A video host will conduct speaker interviews, with the completed 10- to 15-minute segments being immediately released via streaming media. ASHE is partnering with The Expo Group on the design of the Pavilion, which will include a social media lounge, cyber café, video/podcast studio and virtual streaming space.

If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there. Or maybe not: Lewis

Carroll's Alice in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* may have faced many obstacles, but she never had to negotiate a 325,000-sf exhibit hall! With 10,000 attendees plus 10,000 personnel from more than 500 exhibiting companies, the show floor is as populous as some small towns. Noting that most attendees now use smartphones, North American Association of Food Equipment Manufacturers (NAFEM) developed a mobile app for its 2011 The NAFEM Show, allowing attendees to search by exhibitor name, as well as by product category, for more than 2,000 products, from cheese knives to ice cream scoops.

The NAFEM Show floor also had eight designated "Wayfinder" stations where attendees could look up exhibitors and/or products using a touch-screen application and get directions to any exhibitor's booth. SmithBucklin Event Services Senior Manager Benjamin Rabe shares that NAFEM is enriching this app for the 2013 show. "The 2011 app was Web-based, so users needed to get a signal on the show floor to use it appropriately. For 2013, we plan to use a native app that attendees can download in advance of the show. Using this type of technology negates the worries about possible dead spots on the show floor and should lead to an even richer experience for attendees."

Can you cut off the crust? While no one goes to a conference just for the food, attendees are increasingly vocal about what they do and do not

find acceptable onsite. Hannah Baysden, Courtesy Associates senior coordinator, has seen a tremendous increase in the number of requests for special meals. "It is not just vegetarians or vegans driving this change," states Baysden, "but attendees who want gluten-free, peanut-free, low- or no-salt, sugar-free, low-fat and low-calorie choices. While you still see people choosing bagels and pastries for breakfast, you will find at least an equal number looking for fruit, yogurt and granola."

To avoid budget-busting F&B charges, Kate McCarthy, Courtesy Associates manager, recommends serving lunch family-style. "Hotels are open to lowering per-person meal costs when serving family-style since their staffing requirements are significantly decreased. The key is to choose a menu, down to the beverages and breads, that can be elegantly pre-set for attendees. We have gotten great feedback from both corporate and government clients who have noted more conversations at the tables. Another added benefit: There is less interruption from service staff when there is a speaker during lunch."

Another way to save, adds McCarthy, is to serve desserts at the afternoon break. "Most attendees won't miss dessert at lunchtime, but will be looking for a pick-up by mid-afternoon. Moving dessert to the afternoon lets you eliminate the snacks you would have purchased for the break."

So many venues, so little time. Site selection

is one of the most crucial, as well as most time-consuming, activities facing meeting planners. Increasingly tech-savvy attendees expect any convention facility to be Wi-Fi capable and to have fast, high-quality Internet connections at a low (or even no) cost. Additionally, preferred facilities will have state-of-the-art telecommunication services, as so many attendees rely on smartphone apps.

Keeping track of site features has become increasingly complex. To improve and streamline this process, SmithBucklin and Courtesy Associates partnered with Meeting Evolution to use its Web-based system in planning future client organization events. According to Baysden, "This system brings greater efficiency to RFP activities and allows us to track and compare a wealth of information for our associations. Instead of sending out 30 emails to different venues, we now send RFPs through one site. The hotels and convention centers send their responses back through the same site so we can easily and quickly access the data we need." Baysden further adds that, "Your history is maintained in the system, so you aren't starting from square one next year."

AC&F

Linda E. Schwartz, senior director, marketing and communication services for SmithBucklin, an association management company headquartered in Chicago, has worked with associations and their members for more than 30 years to develop, implement and manage a broad range of membership programs.

Outlook

2012

By George Seli



Brad Weaber
Executive V.P. Event Services
SmithBucklin
Chicago, IL

“While 2012 is looking to be a little stronger for our industry, we’re still not out of the woods, so to speak, to that pre-2008 level.”

There are reasons to be enthusiastic about the meetings industry next year, but there are also reasons to “curb your enthusiasm,” per the title of the popular TV show. Convention attendance numbers have rebounded for many associations, and many cities are enjoying near pre-recession levels of group business. Still, the economy underlying that improved industry isn’t exactly “fixed.” The most obvious signs are the persistently high unemployment rate and national deficit, but another barometer is median household income, which fell almost 7 percent, to \$49,909, between June 2009 and June 2011, according to a recent study by Gordon W. Green Jr. and John F. Coder. That’s compared to a 3 percent fall during the recession itself, from December 2007 to June 2009. Such a factor is evidence for a chronic problem, and we may be mischaracterizing our economic struggle by thinking in terms of a recession, a recovery and a possible “double dip.”

“We are not in a cyclical set of problems,” asserted Glenn H. Hutchins in October on CNBC’s Squawk Box. “We were not in a robust recovery before. Neither are we in some plunge following that. What we are in is a period of long-term low average growth.” Hutchins is well-positioned to make that assessment, as co-CEO of Silver Lake, one of the world’s largest private investment firms in the technology industry, a board member of the Federal Reserve Banks of New York, and a former economic advisor to President Clinton.

NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET

The slow economic performance Hutchins foresees at the national level points to a lingering chal-

The Forecast Is Partly Sunny

lenge for associations in making their events both affordable and as relevant as possible to members’ professional needs. It also suggests that business travel, often vying with association groups for prime lodging space, may not be enjoying a prolonged upswing. As Brad Weaber, executive vice president of event services with SmithBucklin and president of Courtesy Associates, observes, “While 2012 is looking to be a little stronger for our industry, we’re still not out of the woods, so to speak, to that pre-2008 level.” Weaber notes that airlines are “predicting their profits will go down because of softening business travel, for the last quarter of this year and particularly the first quarter of ’12.”

And while it’s often said that softer business travel means more booking opportunities for association groups, a weakened corporate sector also hurts convention attendance. With healthy corporations, professionals overall will be more financially able to attend conventions (in some cases with their employers’ support) and budgets for exhibits will grow. “There’s no question that a healthy corporate sector is a tide that raises all ships, in a number of different ways,” remarks John H. Graham IV, CAE, president and CEO of the ASAE. “And right now companies have strong balance sheets. They may not be hiring, but they’re not cutting back.” Thus, putting aside worries about the long-term health of corporate America, planners can at least take heart in the current vitality of both corporate and association meetings. “Obviously there are still some industries that are hard hit coming out of the recession, but life is not bad in the association space,” Graham adds.

HEALTH CARE MEETINGS IN STABLE CONDITION

Health care is one of those areas that’s holding steady. The American Pharmacists Association (APhA), for example, stages both a national meeting and a federal meeting annually, and “we’ve had a record year for our federal meeting in October as far as support opportunities and exhibitor participation. The national meeting is remaining on track; we’re not seeing any significant fall or increase,” reports Windy Christner, senior director, meetings and expositions.

Meanwhile, the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) predicts its annual meeting in Chicago in March 2012 will just about match the 2011 meeting’s attendance of more than 17,000, according to Linda M. Still, CMP, director, meetings and exhibits. “I talk to my peers all the time and it seems that many of the medical meetings are steady or slightly increasing” in attendance, she observes.

However, some exhibitors may have established a “new normal” of making do with smaller booths and fewer staff, practices retained from the recession. “A couple of years ago when the economy hit rock bottom the exhibitors consolidated, and they came with less space and people, and then they realized they could do it with less,” says Christner. “Some of them are now going up in booth size. But for the smaller companies, if they had a 10 by 20 they’re typically sticking with a 10 by 10.” Nonetheless, selling out floor space is the bottom line, and that happens with strong exhibitor participation, whatever the booth sizes. Still says, “We are finding that there are new exhibitors that want to attend AACR’s show as well as many other shows. “So we have not seen a decline, and our revenue is holding.”

HOTEL RATES RISING

Revenue is also holding on the supplier side, if not on the rise. U.S. growth in revenue per available room for 2011 is estimated in the 7 percent range by both STR Global and PKF Hospitality. The research firms report that room rate increases and higher occupancy are contributing to the growth in RevPAR. Especially for tier-one cities, “occupancy is strong, pretty much driven by leisure and corporate,” notes Graham. “And as that impacts the association space, two things happen: No. 1, the price point becomes too high for some associations, and No. 2, they have to get more hotels in their block because hotels aren’t willing to give the size room blocks they were before, since corporate

and leisure are more lucrative than association business. The good news there, though, is that second-tier cities tend to pick up business in that situation, because their price points are more reasonable.”

Vicki Hawarden, CMP, president and CEO of the International Association of Venue Managers, offers a similar analysis: “Although I wouldn’t call it a seller’s market yet, first-tier cities are starting to stabilize and get stronger. They made some pretty big cuts to be competitive, and now they’re starting to ease those rates up again, which puts the second- and even third-tier cities back into their competitive position.”

Several of them offer or are developing new and improved convention centers and surrounding hotels, such as Nashville, St. Louis, Indianapolis and Dallas. “During the booming economy many second-tier cities went to great lengths to upgrade their destination with better airlift and more facilities, so they are very viable for many organizations that perhaps no longer feel like they can afford some of the cities that they used to go to,” according to Weaber. Associations bringing groups of around 5,000 make a big impact on second-tier cities. “It’s easier to ask for upgrades, concessions and special services in second-tier cities,” Christner says. “They’re more willing to do whatever it takes for your attendees to walk away and say, ‘Wow, that was a great meeting.’ Not that the first tiers don’t, but it’s just easier overall with a second tier.”

DIVERSITY MATTERS

Making a great impression on attendees takes more than a great meeting site, of course; it also takes sensitivity to members’ ethnic demographics. Many associations can expect, if they have not already experienced, more Hispanic professionals joining their ranks, as a consequence of the general growth of that ethnic group in the U.S.

“The white and black populations have basically flat-lined, and what’s growing is the Hispanic population,” Graham observes. “So 1 in 7 Americans is Hispanic today, and every 10 years that ramps up. Ten years from now it’s going to be 1 in 6, and 20 years from now 1 in 5. So associations are going to have to be more culturally responsive to a Hispanic population from a member standpoint as well as a staffing and volunteering standpoint,” he says. Depending on their level of assimilation, making Hispanic members more



John H. Graham IV, CAE
President and CEO
ASAE
Washington, DC

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President and CEO
International Association of Venue Managers
Coppell, TX

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Linda Still, CMP
Director, Meetings & Exhibits
American Association for Cancer Research, Philadelphia, PA

“We are finding that there are new exhibitors that want to attend AACR’s show as well as many other shows. So we have not seen a decline, and our revenue is holding.”

comfortable may mean having materials in Spanish available, as well as bilingual and culturally competent staff. Mixing in Hispanic speakers where possible, deploying marketing materials that show diversity, and including Spanish cuisine on occasion also promote a feeling of inclusiveness at the convention. “It’s a mindset,” says Graham, one that associations should begin to adopt. “Is this demographic trend going to impact your association next year? Probably not. But you’re going to wake up one day and the train will have already left the station.”

AN AGING MEMBERSHIP

The other major demographic trend that associations are facing is aging memberships, according to the ASAE. That’s driven by two dynamics, Graham explains: baby boomers working into their 60s and 70s, and the relatively small size of the post-boomer population, since the birthrate was roughly cut in half by 1977. Given the first factor, “our numbers suggest that over the next 10 years, all things being equal, 39 percent of professional society memberships will be over 65,” says Graham. “And since the cohort coming behind the boomer population is basically almost half the size, associations are going to have to work harder to get those people in.” The two trends call for a two-pronged strategy of creating relevant programming for both senior-level and Gen X and Gen Y professionals.

As to the latter, the effort begins with recruitment at college campuses. APhA, for example, has a “huge participation from members in their 20s,” says Christner, and part of the reason is its active student branch and marketing at pharmacy colleges. “Having them become actively engaged and involved (as students) is what’s going to keep them when their schools no longer pay their memberships. If they have a loyalty to your association, you have yourself a new member,” she explains.

TOOLS TO ATTRACT NEW BLOOD

Social media is another avenue for reaching Gen X and Gen Y, one that is continually being explored. “There certainly is a gray-ing going on in the membership bases, but by the same token associations are more active right now

in creating tools to attract the members of tomorrow,” says Weaber. And social media tools are so ingrained in some younger professionals that even meeting via Skype counts as “face-to-face,” observes Weaber, who has his finger on the pulse of social media usage among associations. “LinkedIn is the one I’m seeing really make a surge in the marketplace right now; it has really become a dominant business tool. We have seen the volume of requests for (integrating that tool) increase threefold in the last six to eight months,” he says.

Overall, Weaber finds that associations “are still trying to figure out how to best use the Big Four (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube). There really are separate strategies for each of them. Some organizations use Facebook more for social interaction, while LinkedIn is starting to take on the business side of it. YouTube is quick-hit video messaging, and the one area I’m seeing less activity is Twitter, which seems to have leveled off and in some cases is declining.”

Mobile apps, however, are in full swing, enabling attendees to generate personalized conference agendas and receive updates from the host organization during the event. One growth area Weaber points to is apps that facilitate attendees’ interaction with exhibitors, such as show schedulers whereby they can make appointments with exhibitors in advance.

As associations continue to delve into social media and mobile apps next year in the effort to be cutting edge, any technological hurdles faced by the “graying” contingent of their memberships must not be forgotten. “We’re very sensitive to the multigenerational work force at this point,” says Shelby Englert, senior director of education with the APhA, “and for the most part we do find that the older generation is less comfortable with technology.” She notes that APhA’s senior members have no difficulty with webinars. However, “once members who are not comfortable with technology enter the online systems, that’s when our customer service starts getting more phone calls,” she relates.

HYBRID MEETINGS

At the same time, APhA tries to keep technological pace with its younger members, for example by providing audio capture of meeting sessions that can be played on iPods. Audio capture will make the APhA’s 2012 annual meeting, scheduled for New Orleans in March, essentially “hybrid” with on-demand virtual

content complementing the face-to-face experience. Only select sessions will be recorded and made available in that format, particularly those dealing with immunization, which is considered a specialty of the association. “APhA will never be able to do a complete meeting (virtually),” says Englert. “We are currently planning on providing 85 course sessions throughout the four days in addition to seven of the premeeting sessions. Our education is so robust there’s no way to do it 100 percent virtually.”

Partial virtual capture is the way to go for many associations, for various reasons. Some sessions may be offered only in face-to-face format to entice members to attend in person, other sessions may not lend themselves to a virtual format, or there may not be enough demand to justify the cost of full virtual capture.

Even in 2012, associations are still largely exploring virtual meetings and their pros and cons. “The entire concept around virtual and hybrid meetings is I think still in its infancy stage,” says Weaber. “We’re definitely seeing a major uptick; we’re getting more and more requests for it. The key, though, is to define the strategy. If you’re looking to drive attendance, for example, you might send people just enough information so that they scratch their head and say, ‘Wow, look what I missed.’”

Graham observed that very phenomenon during the ASAE annual meeting in Los Angeles last year, where about a quarter of more than 100 educational sessions were captured in video. “We did the evaluations, and what happened is that those members who opted for the virtual sessions in real time, what they saw and experienced was their friends and colleagues having fun at the face-to-face event,” says Graham, likening the situation to being invited to a party but watching it from a distance instead. Thus, Graham maintains that virtual content can engage remote attendees and “cause them to be more likely to attend the face-to-face meeting in the future. You have the opportunity for more engagement, which at the end of the day is what we’re looking for.”

FROM HOSTED BUYERS TO PODS

Associations surely want to engage their members, but so do exhibitors, and one trend that Hawarden sees developing at more U.S. conventions is “hosted buyer.” It’s essentially a way for exhibitors to secure time with attendees they particularly want to attract. “Exhibitors pay a premium price that covers the full cost of the customer to come to the

show,” Hawarden explains. “So once the customer is approved, their airfare, hotel, registration fee, etc. are taken care of. In exchange for that, however, that buyer who’s being hosted agrees to X number of appointments with X number of exhibitors.” From the buyer’s perspective, she says, the process eliminates the “hit or miss” aspect of connecting with key exhibitors during a busy show.

Another trend she cites involves booth layout. Collaboration between MPI and Freeman resulted in exhibits at MPI’s convention being comprised of several “pods” instead of a single booth. “You didn’t have these walls blocking your view; you could see the whole exhibit hall,” says Hawarden, former V.P. of knowledge and events for MPI. “It was a mind shift for some of the exhibitors who wouldn’t have the monster booths, but maybe a group of eight pods. The layout was very open and inviting, and our attendees and exhibitors loved it.”

SUSTAINABLE MEETINGS

Greening events is far beyond a trend and into the stage of refinement. One initiative assisting that refinement is the Convention Industry Council’s APEX standards for sustainable meetings, which were being reviewed by ASTM International for final approval at press time — with eight of the nine standards complete. “I think every association now, to some extent, is incorporating sustainable practices in their meetings, and there’s a lot of interest in the industry for the standards to finally come out,” says Karen Kotowski, CMP, CAE, chief executive officer of the CIC. “We took the approach that both the planners and the suppliers have a role in making meetings more sustainable and obtained feedback from non-hospitality professionals as well, such as engineers and material developers.” CIC has structured its green meeting standards in four levels. “We hope that our standards become just as recognizable, so a planner could go to a hotel and say, ‘I’m working on APEX Level 3 for my meeting, so I need to know whether you do X, Y, Z.’”

How well the economy will sustain itself throughout 2012 is anybody’s guess, and Glenn Hutchins’ educated one suggests there is no easy fix in sight. But sustaining the environment over the long run is something that associations can — and are — working toward, right down to their meetings. AC&F



Windy Christner
Senior Director, Meetings and Expositions
American Pharmacists Association
Washington, DC

“Having (members) become actively engaged and involved (as students) is what’s going to keep them when their schools no longer pay their memberships.”

Meet in the Middle

Find Central Convenience and Heartland Hospitality in the Midwest

By Karen Brost



Harry Kegler
Vice President
ProHelp LLC
Fernandina Beach, FL

***“We’re booking meetings
2½ to three years out...
but from the time you
contract to the time you
have the meeting, a lot
of things can change.
(Grand Geneva’s sales
department) bent
over backwards.”***

The saying “I’ll meet you halfway” takes on a whole new meaning when it comes to meetings held in the Midwest. That’s because the meeting destinations in this region make it so easy for attendees from across the nation to gather in one convenient central location.

WISCONSIN

Harry Kegler, vice president of ProHelp LLC, and meeting planner and consultant for the National Insulation Contractors Exchange, found his Midwest meeting success at the 355-room Grand Geneva Resort & Spa in Lake Geneva, WI, conveniently located one hour from Milwaukee and 90 minutes from Chicago. His group

has met twice at the AAA Four Diamond property, which began its hotel “life” as the Playboy Club Hotel back in the late ‘60s.

“I love that resort,” he says. “The service is excellent, the food is just unbelievable, it’s got two great golf courses, and it’s convenient to Chicago and Milwaukee, so it’s relatively easy to get into.”

Set on 1,300 rolling acres, the Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired Grand Geneva offers 62,000 sf of meeting space, two championship golf courses (alert your golfers

that one is named The Brute), a spa and three restaurants. The resort is family-friendly, as well, since it has a separate property, the Timber Ridge Lodge & Waterpark located onsite that has a 50,000-sf indoor/outdoor water park.

The resort’s other recreational offerings include a swimming pool, skiing and snowboarding, trail rides, canoeing and kayaking. The fitness center also offers indoor basketball, tennis and volleyball courts along with a 35-foot rock-climbing wall.

The Grand Geneva completed a multimillion-dollar makeover of its guest accommodations last year. One of the most unique features of its newly revamped luxury accommodations is the TV monitor hidden in every bathroom mirror.

“I think the accommodations are terrific,” Kegler notes. He also had high praise for Brissago, the resort’s fine-dining Italian restaurant where he planned a private board dinner. “It is just fantastic!” he exclaims.

“The sales department was great,” he continues. “The conference services people are just marvelous to work with. The meeting space was terrific.” While his group included approximately 160 attendees, he adds, “There is no question that they can handle a group of just about every size. They were very accommodating. We’re booking meetings 2½ to three years out, and you think you know what the general agenda is going to be, but from the time you contract to the time you have the meeting, a lot of things can change. They bent over backwards.”



Photo courtesy of St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission

The Lake Geneva area gained a reputation as “the Hamptons of the Midwest” back in the 1800s when wealthy families such as the Wrigleys, Maytags and Schwinnns came up from Chicago to build what were quaintly called “summer cottages” on the shores of Geneva Lake. Many of these sprawling mansions still exist today and can be viewed from the popular boat tours that are offered on Geneva Lake, which stretches nine miles long and three miles wide. These historic homes also can be seen from the public access walking trail that hugs the shoreline all the way around the lake.

One of these so-called “summer cottages,” a 17,000 sf Queen Anne mansion built in 1885 has recently found a new life as the Baker House, a luxury inn and restaurant. The lakefront mansion offers a variety of settings for private events, including an English-style lakefront garden, wraparound porch, four parlors with working fireplaces and a private dining room that can accommodate up to 35 guests.

Another option for meetings in the Geneva Lakes area is the 283-room Lake Lawn Resort in the nearby town of Delavan. Set on 275 acres along the shoreline of Delavan Lake, Lake Lawn has been in operation for more than 130 years. The resort reopened under new management this year and offers 22 meeting rooms with more than 30,000 sf of indoor/outdoor space, a spa, championship golf, and indoor and outdoor pools.

In Milwaukee, more than 1,500 hospitality em-

ployees recently completed a week-long customer service training program. The theme of the training, which was led by hospitality industry consultant Bob Brown and sponsored by Visit Milwaukee, area hotels, restaurants and technical colleges, was “Say Yes!” Visit Milwaukee’s goal for the program was to go the extra mile for customer service training in a city already known for its friendliness.

MICHIGAN

Anita Rankin, meeting planner for the African Methodist Episcopal Church, had a big goal for her organization’s biennial gathering of approximately 3,000 attendees. It was to keep everyone under one roof, both for accommodations and the meeting sessions.

She found her answer at the 1,246-room Marriott Detroit at the Renaissance Center, which offers 35 meeting rooms and a combined total of 100,000 sf of function space. “It worked out very well,” she says. “It’s nice to have everyone under one roof. The property itself seems a little intimidating at first, but the meeting space is pretty quick and easy to get to because of the way the building is designed. We tend to have a good contingent of elderly, so it’s helpful to have a place that isn’t so confusing to get around.”

She noted one of the top advantages of keeping everyone under one roof: “It’s a blessing, let me tell you, not having to decide who goes to the headquarters hotel and who goes to the others.”

The Gateway Arch in St. Louis anchors the Core of Discovery district, which runs from the riverfront to Citygarden.



Photo courtesy of the Greater Columbus Convention Center

The Greater Columbus Convention Center claims Ohio's largest multifunction ballroom, the Battelle Grand.

The Marriott is located in the GM Renaissance Center, a complex containing dozens of shops, four movie theaters, restaurants and a 1,100-seat food court. "It was an added plus for us to have the additional features that you have in that building with the food court and the shops all onsite under one roof," Rankin notes. "It's really nice."

Rankin worked with the Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau to help her narrow down her choices before selecting the Marriott. She also appreciated the fact that the bureau spread the word to local businesses that her group was going to be in town. "They were also very helpful in other areas," she added, "because at one point we required some overflow facilities and it had to happen really fast. They also provided materials that we needed and were able to hand out to the convention attendees. It was just a lot of information that we may not have known about the city just going straight through the hotel."

OHIO

Jim Holmes is president of the non-profit CodeMash, an annual conference for software professionals. When his organization launched the event in 2007, its goal was to bring software professionals from completely different domains together to discuss common problems. "We needed a special place which was conducive to fostering communication between these different groups," he says. "The software development industry is extremely fragmented and stovepiped. Such communication is rare and often breaks down to 'My shiny toy is great and yours stinks!' style confrontations."

CodeMash's solution was to book that first event at the 884-room Kalahari Resort in Sandusky, OH, which is located midway between Cleveland and Toledo. What began as a conference for 230 attendees has grown to an event for 1,450 that features 138 different sessions. CodeMash has been held at Kalahari every year since 2007 and is now in negotiations for contracts through 2016. The event is so popular that this year's conference sold out in 20 minutes.

"From the start, the small group of folks who envisioned CodeMash wanted a unique, quirky environment for the conference," Holmes explains. "The Kalahari completely fits this vision. The conference venue is superb and has a tremendous number of spots where folks can relax and have great discussions in the hallways. The Kalahari's convention center has couches and armchairs! What better atmosphere can you imagine for relaxing, productive discussions?"

"The meeting space is extraordinarily flexible," he continues. "There are a number of different styles of meeting rooms which perfectly fit our conference's needs: keynotes with thousands of attendees at dining tables, large breakout rooms for 350 folks listening to presentations, smaller hut rooms for 50 folks engaged in a collaborative discussion, and quiet spaces for small group discussions."

"We also have a meeting room reserved for jam sessions, because the software industry has lots of extraordinary musicians, another for gamers and another for quiet hands-on software development practice sessions."

"We also have a number of sessions from KidzMash, a side conference targeted to young children," he adds. "CodeMash actively encourages attendees to bring their families, including a CodeMash-only waterpark party Thursday evening."

Guest rooms at the Kalahari are African-themed, and the resort is home to America's largest water park. It encompasses 173,000 sf, which is the equivalent of more than 3½ football fields. The resort currently has 100,000 sf of meeting space and is now completing a \$22 million expansion project that will more than double the size of its convention center. The expansion is expected to be completed early in 2012. The Kalahari has a sister resort in Wisconsin Dells, WI, that has 750 guest rooms and 100,000 sf of meeting space.

Holmes comments, "We could not be successful without the absolutely amazing professionals at the Kalahari. They are extremely detail-oriented, very experienced at what they do, and are always on the lookout for ways to help us improve our conference during the planning phase. Perhaps even more importantly, the Kalahari staff completely gets the tone of our event."

He gave an example. "This year we've got a sponsor who wanted to create a bacon bar. There's a long-running joke about the mountains of great bacon on the breakfast buffets. Again, the Kalahari staff jumped in and helped us create something that's going to be quirky, wonderful, and right in the tone of the conference. I've been at conferences large and small, and I've never, ever run into a staff that was so outgoing and totally vested in ensuring every tiny detail exceeds expectations."

In Columbus, the new 532-room Hilton Columbus Downtown is currently under construction and expected to open in the fall of 2012. It will connect to the Greater Columbus Convention Center via a glass skybridge. It is anticipated that the property will achieve LEED and Green Seal certification after its opening.

Last year, the 1.7-million-sf convention center completed a 16-month, \$40 million renovation of its Battelle Grand function space. The venue offers 50,000 sf of space on its main floor and an additional 24,000 sf on its mezzanine, making it the largest multifunction ballroom in the state of Ohio.

INDIANA

Earlier this year, Marriott launched an innovative concept with the opening of Marriott Place in Indianapolis. The hotel complex contains five Marriott brands all under one roof and all connected by sky-bridge to the Indiana Convention Center: the 1,005-room JW Marriott Indianapolis; the 622-room Indianapolis Marriott Downtown; the 297-room Courtyard by Marriott Indianapolis Downtown; the 156-room SpringHill Suites by Marriott Indianapolis Downtown; and the 168-room Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott

Indianapolis Downtown. Overall, the complex offers 145,000 sf of meeting space, most of which is spread between the JW Marriott and the Indianapolis Marriott. Having five brands under one roof gives planners the flexibility to offer meeting attendees a variety of price points for accommodations.

The Indiana Convention Center recently ex-

MEET & GREET

A CITY THAT'S AS TIMELESS AS IT IS TIMELY. WHERE WE'RE DOWN TO BUSINESS AND DEFINITELY INTO PLEASURE. WITH A TIME AND A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING, IT'S TIME TO LOOK INTO THIS PLACE. WE'RE BUSINESS-MINDED AND WARM-HEARTED. HARD-WORKING AND EASY-GOING.

COOL & WARM



  **Oklahoma City**
VISITOKC.COM



Photo courtesy of Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association; visitindy.com

A skybridge connects the Indiana Convention Center to the Marriott Place Indianapolis hotel complex.

panded, adding 254,000 sf of exhibit space, 63,000 sf of meeting rooms and 103,000 sf of registration and prefunction space. The center, which offers a total of 749,000 sf of meeting and event space, is connected by bridge to Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the 2012 NFL Super Bowl.

According to the Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association, Indianapolis now has more hotel rooms (a total of 4,700) connected to its convention center than any other city in the U.S.



Terri Sweet Ribble
Director of Global Accounts
ConferenceDirect
Carrollton, TX

"I have worked with the Oklahoma City CVB many times. ...They know their hotel product well and have great relationships within their hotel community."

MISSOURI

The America's Center Convention Complex in downtown St. Louis recently wrapped up a three-year, nearly \$100 million renovation project that included a new catering kitchen, new signs and energy-efficient signage lighting, upgraded elevators, improvements to indoor air quality, and updates to interior finishes. The center offers 1.2 million sf of meeting space.

The 212-room Embassy Suites St. Louis Downtown recently opened in the historic Laurel Building near the convention complex and the Edward Jones Dome, home of the NFL's St. Louis Rams. The new hotel, which offers 5,000 sf of flexible meeting space, is located in the city's new Mercantile Exchange District, a dining, entertainment and shopping area which is now under development.

The St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission promotes the city as being highly affordable, stating that the average price of a hotel room in the metro area is \$81 and a round trip domestic airline ticket to the city averages \$300.

OKLAHOMA

The Skirvin Hilton Hotel in Oklahoma City recently celebrated its 100th anniversary, making it the oldest hotel in the state. Over the years, this historic property has hosted all kinds of dignitaries from oil barons to movie stars to presidents. Located in the heart of downtown, the 225-room AAA Four Diamond hotel offers 18,500 sf of meeting space.

Terri Ribble, director of global accounts for ConferenceDirect in Carrollton, TX has booked many meetings in Oklahoma City, and she relies on the Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau for assistance. "I have worked with the Oklahoma City CVB many times," she says, "and found them to be most helpful. They know their hotel product well and have great relationships within their hotel community. So when I need help...whether it is getting a special concession or response, they have proven to be very effective advocates. They also work in partnership with ConferenceDirect and understand the relationship and role we have with our clients. They do their best to help us deliver on that responsibility and get our clients what they need."

Oklahoma City looks forward to the construction of a new downtown convention center (still in the planning stages), which will nearly double the 153,600 sf of sellable space currently offered at the 40-year-old Cox Convention Center. The total sellable space at the new convention center will total 258,000 sf, enabling the city to compete with comparable markets such as Kansas City, Indianapolis, Nashville and Fort Worth. The convention center is expected to open in 2018.

LET'S AGREE TO MEET IN THE MIDDLE

All in all, it appears that a combination of a convenient central location and service standards driven by a strong work ethic is what keeps groups coming back to the Midwest. As Holmes commented, "We get tremendous feedback from our attendees. As we've grown more and more, attendees bring their families or significant others along for the conference. The environment is wonderful, the hotel amenities are superb, and we constantly get positive comments regarding customer service from Kalahari staff."

Kegler shares a similar feeling about his experience at the Grand Geneva. "I'd love to go back," he says.

AC&F



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Second to None

First-Class Destinations That Make Your Group the Center of Attention

By Derek Reveron

A rendering of the proposed update of the promenade for the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center.



Photo courtesy of Long Beach CVB

The old Avis ad campaign “We Try Harder” could very well describe select smaller cities that roll out big welcomes for association business. Often called second-tier cities, these destinations are far from second rate. They offer great value, especially for planners on tight budgets seeking to justify meeting costs in an uncertain economy. Most important, they can offer unmatched personal service, as an association group is likely to be the one and only convention in town on a given date. Date availability is often greater, especially for small and mid-sized groups. These destinations continue to expand and modernize convention centers, hotels, airports and other infrastructure to better compete with their big-city cousins.

Second-tier destinations are narrowing the gap with first-tier competitors. That’s why some people view the term “second tier” as outdated. “It’s an old term,” says Steve Goodling, president and CEO, Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau. “In today’s environment, what really counts is what city fits your needs. Any time you use second tier and first tier to delineate, it has the connotation of some specific offering

(that other destinations don’t have), which isn’t necessarily true these days.”

LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

Whatever label one uses to describe Long Beach, the destination has everything that planners and attendees need for successful meetings. “When it comes to competing with (first-tier destinations), we are on the waterfront, we offer sophisticated city amenities in a small-town atmosphere. A meeting can own the city, and there are more than 100 restaurants in an eight-block radius around the convention center. We bill ourselves as the urban waterfront playground,” says Goodling.

Most of all, Long Beach has ample meeting and hotel space. Located in the heart of downtown, the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center (LBCEC) provides more than 400,000 sf of flexible meeting and exhibit space, including 34 meeting rooms and a grand ballroom. There’s also a 13,500-seat arena. The LBCEC is currently undergoing its latest upgrade, an \$8 million project that includes new seats in the 3,000-seat Terrace Theatre and Savor Cafe; new carpeting in the promenade area, including meeting rooms and the grand ballroom; and an upgraded green room.

The LBCEC project also includes new furniture in the promenade area installed in mini-pod configurations, which, according to Goodling, was designed to encourage networking among attendees. “When you are coming out of a meeting you may want to touch base with colleagues



Photo courtesy of The International Deli-Dairy-Bakery Association

The International Deli-Dairy-Bakery Association held its 2011 Dairy-Bake conference in Anaheim, CA, because of the quality hotel product and abundant space for exhibits at the Anaheim Convention Center.

or follow up on a comment by someone. We are creating an environment where, if you see somebody you want to talk to, you can sit down and have a conversation like you do in a living room,” explains Goodling. “It’s something most planners don’t think about because we are used to the ordinary environment of creating vast amounts of space and standing to talk.”

Some popular Long Beach hotels are also undergoing renovation. The 469-room Westin Long Beach is involved in a \$10 million renovation that consists of two phases. The entire project includes new carpet and furniture in the lobby and restaurant, followed by renovations of the 51,000 sf of meeting space, pool deck and elevators. The first phase will be completed by February 2012, and the second will be finished by February 2013.

The 528-room Hyatt Regency Long Beach is proceeding with a \$21 million renovation set for completion during the first quarter of 2012. Renovations include guest rooms, bathrooms, corridors, carpets, wall covering and window treatments. A short walk from the LBCEC, the Hyatt has 22,000 sf of function space.

The 308-room Long Beach Marriott recently underwent a \$10 million renovation. The project includes meeting rooms, ballrooms, prefunction areas, fitness center, indoor pool and grand corridor. Additionally, the hotel added a 1,700-sf courtyard and is converting administrative offices into four meeting rooms. The Long Beach Marriott offers 10,000 sf of meeting space.

The Long Beach Transit Gallery is undergoing a renovation. The gallery, a transportation hub for bus, train and bicycle commuters, is located a few blocks from the LBCEC. Upgrades include bus shelters, street lighting, landscaping and kiosks.

A \$136 million renovation program is proceeding at Long Beach Airport. The project, scheduled for completion in 2013, includes a new parking building as well as ramp and gate improvements.

When it comes to unique venues, Long Beach has it all: Visitors are a short ride from Disneyland, Universal Studios Hollywood and a brief cruise from Catalina Island and its many attractions. The Aquarium of the Pacific, one of the largest in the nation, accommodates more than 3,000 guests in six event spaces. The Queen Mary, docked in Long Beach harbor, provides 80,000 sf of function space, several restaurants and more than 300 guest rooms.

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

Located in the middle of the Eastern Seaboard, Greensboro, welcomes visitors with Southern hospitality. The city offers ample space for large and small meetings. Greensboro has more than 80 hotels, including at least 11 with 5,000 sf or more of meeting space.

Convention and meeting venues include the Greensboro Coliseum Complex, which consists of several facilities. The 167,000-sf Special Events Center offers three exhibit halls, eight meeting rooms and a 4,500-seat mini-arena.



The Greensboro Coliseum Complex consists of several facilities including the Greensboro Coliseum (pictured), which accommodates 23,500 delegates.

The War Memorial Auditorium seats 2,376, and the Greensboro Coliseum itself accommodates 23,500 people. Small meetings may choose the 300-seat Odeon Theater. Earlier this year, the coliseum complex debuted its 7,688-seat White Oak Amphitheatre and 78,323-sf Aquatic Center.

The Joseph S. Koury Convention Center, located at the 1,016-room Sheraton Greensboro at the Four Seasons, provides 250,000 sf of flexible meeting space including 71 meeting rooms and three ballrooms.

Julie Mower-Payne, conference and exhibition manager for the Salinas, CA-based Refrigerating Engineers and Technicians Association (RETA) was leaning toward another destination until she toured the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center.

Photo courtesy of Greensboro CVB

Emerging Destinations: Brazil Is Booming

Over the Thanksgiving holiday, a business associate awaiting a domestic flight at a major metropolitan airport was amazed at the number of flights — overbooked flights — to Beijing, Shanghai and several other Asian cities. Not surprisingly, many of the passengers boarding flights to these in-demand Asian cities seemed to be American business people. The explosive growth of emerging markets like China is reflected in the pace of new hotel openings by Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc., which recently surpassed its 200th hotel milestone in Asia Pacific. Starwood plans to reach more than 320 hotels by 2014.

Many of the Latin American countries are also experiencing skyrocketing growth. Chief among them is Brazil — one of the “world’s most exciting emerging markets.” According to a report in *The New York Times*, “China is slowing. Europe is crashing. The U.S. is dipping. But Brazil is booming.”

Brazil’s drawing power is in part due to its geographical diversity, tropical climate, exotic activities, sports and unique culture. Moreover, the country will welcome the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016. Real estate in Rio has grown 385 percent in the past four years, and occupancy is at 85 percent or higher.

According to the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), Brazil has established itself as the event leader in Latin America as it is among the top 10 countries for hosting trade shows and international conventions. With a much improved infrastructure and services for events, hospitable Brazil also boasts the largest biodiversity on the planet and an astonishing mix of cultures, as well as memorable dining and musical experiences. Furthermore, since 2003 the Ministry of Tourism through Embratur, the Brazilian Tourism Board, has provided international associations and corporations substantial support in organizing their events in Brazil.

Embratur Tourism Goals

- By 2020, the goal is to double international tourists from 5 million to 10 million.
- Brazil currently attracts between 600,000–700,000 visitors from the U.S. The goal is to double tourists to Brazil by 2020.
- Tourism revenue from international tourism was \$5.9 billion in 2010. The goal is to increase it to \$18 billion by 2020.
- The goal for the 2014 World Cup is to bring 600,000 foreign tourists to the country and encourage 25 percent of these visitors to extend their stay and travel around the country.
- Embratur is expecting 380,000 international tourists to visit Rio de Janeiro for the Olympic Games in 2016 and more than 10,500 athletes from 205 countries worldwide.

Airlines

Currently, there are 231 flights from the U.S. to Brazil per week on domestic carriers. There are also direct flights from additional cities on TAM — the largest Brazilian airline and part of Star Alliance — including Orlando and Chicago. TAM announced they will invest \$3.2 billion in new aircraft to meet the growing demand for air travel over the next 20 years. Also, the U.S. and Brazil signed



Marcelo Pedrosa,
Director of International Markets
Embratur, the Brazilian Tourism Board

RETA held its 2011 conference and exhibition at the center in September, attracting about 800 people. “It was mostly because we could be under one roof that we elected to move our conference to Greensboro,” says Mower-Payne.

Creating a conference experience in one facility is a key to keeping costs and registration fees in line and enabling members to justify attendance at their organizations’ meetings and conventions, Mower-Payne explains. “Upon interviewing the staff at the facility, their willingness to accommodate me and the desire to create an experience allowed me to choose Greensboro. The facility was willing to work with me so I could fulfill sponsorship obligations. They allowed me to hang banners and hand out goodie bags at the registration desk at no cost,” she adds.

a transition agreement to increase more routes and flights between the two countries by 2015.

Hotels

Brazil has 28,000 hotels including 16 of the world’s 20 major hotel chains. More than 300 new properties representing approximately 70,000 rooms are in the pipeline and scheduled for completion by 2017. In Rio de Janeiro alone, there are currently 26,000 hotel rooms, and 10,000 rooms will be added in time for the Olympic Games in 2016.

Q & A with Marcelo Pedrosa, Director of International Markets, Embratur, the Brazilian Tourism Board

C&IT *Most of the publicity and news reports about Brazil are very positive. How does this favorable publicity help you in your position with the Tourism Board to promote the country? How will you balance the tremendous growth with availability of hotel rooms and venues so that meeting planners are assured of places and spaces to meet, especially if they are booking three to five years in advance?*

Pedrosa Embratur and I are aware of the positive publicity and news reports in the U.S. and are very pleased with this. In general, I think that Americans have a favorable view of Brazil and are interested in visiting the country. It remains important that Embratur, the Brazil Tourism Board, provide additional information to potential visitors on the diversity of tourism offerings available countrywide. As the country’s economy, popularity and real estate grow, Embratur’s “Brazil is Calling You. Celebrate Life Here” marketing campaign targets U.S. media to showcase all the country has to offer in the way of lesser known destination offerings (other than Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo), its massive diversity and rich culture, along with meetings and conventions information, eco-tourism opportunities and diverse geographical landscapes for conventional and adventure sports. ...Attracting meetings and conventions to Brazil is part of the “Brazil is Calling You. Celebrate Life Here” campaign. Our goal is to publicize the depth of hotel and convention offerings in place in Brazil, particularly in the major urban centers such as Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

C&IT *On the other hand, drug violence is up. What are you doing to improve the safety and security of attendees?*

Pedrosa This coverage discusses Brazil’s northeast region with specific reference to Salvador. Considering Salvador is one of the region’s largest cities, in the fifth largest country in the world, it does not face any social or urban challenges that similar destinations do not also have to manage. We take safety very seriously, especially with our tourists, and given the vast amount of travelers coming from around the world, we know that they feel safe while visiting Brazil’s major cities. To specify, tourism from the U.S. has increased in past years as Americans represent the second largest source of tourists to Brazil — in 2010, 641,377 American tourists visited Brazil, an increase of more than 5.8 percent from 2000.* Additionally, 82.5 percent of tourists in 2010 who visited Brazil positively viewed the country’s public security efforts.** Lastly, as with any major urban destination in the world, travelers should do their research to find the most tourist-friendly locations throughout their trip.

* Source: International Trade Administration — Office of Travel and Tourism

** Source: International Tourism Demand

Mower-Payne reiterated that the cooperative staff made her vision a reality, especially working with F&B Director Rod Swanson: “He worked with me to make each event a culinary delight without breaking our budget and worked with us to create



The giant, iconic Christ the Redeemer statue atop Corcovado mountain oversees all of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil — well known for its beautiful beaches and carnival celebrations.

Photo courtesy of Embratur, the Brazilian Tourism Board

AC&F



Photo courtesy of RETA

a unique atmosphere for each of our events from breakfast through the awards banquet," she says. In addition, Swanson and his willing staff "worked their magic" to help Mower-Payne set up a special evening that was reminiscent of the three areas of North Carolina.

"Never have I had the general manager make

several appearances each day to ensure that all was well. That personal interest and attention to detail is a lost art that I was delighted to rediscover is alive and well at the Koury," she adds.

Greensboro also offered RETA an array of local activities. During the conference, attendees played golf at the Grandover Resort's course, toured the city and attended an autograph-signing session with NASCAR driving legend Richard Petty. Attendees also enjoyed a "moonshine" tasting session.

Groups seeking unique venues will find a variety in Greensboro. Blandwood Mansion, built in 1846, accommodates more than 300 guests in its Carriage House. A chic meeting atmosphere is available at Studio B at the Broach, a downtown meeting venue designed like a New York City loft. Studio B's largest event space is 2,400 sf.

Greensboro recently broke ground on the National Science Center's Carolina SciQuarium, a modern aquarium. The 23,000-sf facility is scheduled for completion by 2013.



Carol Christison
Executive Director
International Deli-Dairy-Bakery
Association
Madison, WI

"Anaheim has it all. The hotel community there is outstanding. They spend a lot of time and money doing things I need as a meeting planner."

ANAHEIM/ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Anaheim/Orange County offers some of Southern California's top entertainment, shopping, dining and beaches. The region is home to more than 40 golf courses and Disneyland Resort, which includes Disneyland Park, Disney California Adventure Park and the Downtown Disney District. Adventure Park is undergoing a \$1 billion redevelopment that includes new rides, restaurants, shops and a facelift for the facility's entrance.

Led by the Anaheim Convention Center (ACC), the region has a good variety of meeting facilities.

The LEED-certified ACC offers more than 800,000 sf of exhibit space and 130,000 sf of flexible meeting and ballroom space. Free Wi-Fi will be offered beginning in January 2012. Construction begins in spring 2012 on a new outdoor special event space, the 100,000-sf Anaheim Convention Center Grand Plaza, which will open at the end of 2012.

Meeting planners can choose from a range of hotel properties in Anaheim, including more than 80 hotels located near the ACC. These include the Hilton Anaheim, which offers 76 meeting rooms and more than 100,000 sf of meeting space, and the 1,030-room Anaheim Marriott, which has 82,000 sf of meeting space and 43 meeting rooms.

Hotel space and the ACC are two main reasons why the Madison, WI-based International Deli-Dairy-Bakery Association (IDDBA) held its 2011 Dairy-Deli-Bake conference in Anaheim. According to Carol Christison, executive director of the IDDBA, the three-day convention drew more than 8,000 attendees, split mostly between the Anaheim Marriott and Hilton Anaheim. It was at least the fourth time that the group has met in Anaheim, largely because of the ACC. Christison explains, "It has one of the largest facilities on the West Coast for exhibits. We had more than 1,600 exhibits. Some convention centers are a challenge because they don't have a lot of loading space. I need 40 docks, and that eliminates some places."

Anaheim "has it all," Christison says. "The hotel community there is outstanding. They spend a lot of time and money doing things I need as a meeting planner. There are a number of airports in the area, and I need a number of hotel rooms and upscale eating spaces."

Christison, whose group has met in destinations such as Orlando, Denver and Atlanta, is not a fan of the term "second tier." "They may not be as big as some of the others, but they are absolutely wonderful. Also, in my segment of the business there is no such thing as second-tier. My show is a must-have, and any place we take it is first class or first tier," says Christison.

Anaheim offers many unique meeting venues, including the OC Fair & Event Center. The facility is undergoing a \$25 million upgrade that includes new buildings, renovated facilities and refurbished public areas. The project includes a 31,000-sf exhibit hall. Among historical venues, the 235-year-old Mission San Juan Capistrano provides space

for up to 1,000 guests. The world-class Bowers Museum of art and culture offers four meeting and exhibit rooms, the largest of which is 3,400 sf. Old Western culture is on full display at Stockyards City, which showcases a live cattle auction and more than 70 businesses selling western-style apparel, foods and cuisine.

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

The country music capital of the world is evolving into one of the top meeting centers in the United States. Nashville, often referred to as Music City, is rich in meeting facilities.

Located downtown, the Nashville Convention Center (NCC) is adjacent to the 20,000-seat Bridgestone Arena and connected to the 673-room Renaissance Nashville Hotel. An additional 3,000-plus hotel rooms are located downtown. The NCC provides an 118,675-sf exhibit hall, 25 breakout rooms and an 11,000-sf ballroom. The Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center sits on the banks of the Cumberland River — a short drive from downtown. The Gaylord Opryland features 2,881 guest rooms, more than 600,000 sf of meeting space as well as acres of indoor waterfalls and gardens.

The new convention center, the Music City Center (MCC), is scheduled to open downtown in early 2013. The MCC will sit next to both the Bridgestone Arena and Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, which is undergoing an expansion. The MCC will offer more than twice the meeting and exhibit space of the NCC, providing 350,000 sf of exhibit space and 90,000 sf of meeting space including a 57,000-sf ballroom and an 18,000-sf ballroom. The 800-room Omni Nashville Hotel, also scheduled to open in 2013, will serve as the headquarters hotel for the MCC.

The Nashville Medical Trade Center in downtown Nashville is scheduled to open in 2013. The 1.2-million-sf international trade center and medical marketplace will utilize the existing convention center with new construction of multiple stories on top to house permanent showrooms, and medical conference facilities and exhibition space.

Nashville attracts many association groups. During November 2011, the Loews Vanderbilt Hotel hosted a meeting of the National Governors Association (NGA). About 100 governors, state officials and experts held a meeting on economic development and work force issues. The NGA,

which holds many meetings nationwide each year, has met in Nashville at least four times over the last four years. Why Nashville? Jan Dunlavey, CMP, director, center conference management, National Governors Association, explains, "We find that the rates in Nashville are favorable. We always have to justify costs. We are a state instrumentality, and costs are very important to us."

Quality of service, air accessibility and meeting space are also important factors. "For us, primarily doing regional-type meetings, the location is good, and there are a lot of options to get there from surrounding states. The Vanderbilt has great meeting space, and the guest rooms are beautiful. It all contributes to the overall well-being of meeting



Photo courtesy of Nashville CVB

attendees. And we always feel special when we go to Nashville," Dunlavey adds.

Nashville is home to some of the most unique music venues in the U.S. The historic Grand Ole Opry House is an iconic country music performance facility that seats more than 4,000 people. Live music and Southern cuisine are all the rage at B.B. King's Blues Club and Restaurant, which accommodates 30 to 800 people. The ever-popular Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum offers five event spaces, the largest of which is 11,000 sf.

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA

Attendees will find much more than wide beaches and auto racing in Daytona Beach. The destination has the meeting infrastructure to handle meetings of all sizes. The linchpin of Daytona Beach's convention business is the Ocean Center (OC),

Nashville's new Music City Center is scheduled to open in downtown Nashville in early 2013 as will the new Omni Nashville Hotel — the headquarters hotel for the Music City Center.



Photo courtesy of Daytona Beach CVB

"The World's Most Famous Beach" — Daytona Beach, FL — boasts 23 miles of sandy, white beaches.

which sits about 400 feet from the Atlantic Ocean. The OC handles groups as small as 10 people up to conventions of 10,000 delegates. The facility provides more than 205,000 sf of interior meeting and exhibit space and a 9,600-sf arena as well as 42,000 sf of meeting rooms and a 12,000-sf banquet hall.

Hotels are varied and plentiful. The Daytona Beach Resort & Conference Center has 17,000 sf of meeting space, and the 212-room Shores Resort & Spa features 20,000 sf for meetings. The 232-room Plaza Resort and Spa features 32,000 sf of meeting space, while the 744-room Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort has 60,000 sf of meeting space.

Daytona Beach is especially popular among small, mid-sized and regional groups such as the Florida League of Cities. During September 2011 and September 2010, the league's trustees held a two-day meeting for about 100 people in Daytona Beach at The Shores Resort & Spa, according to Barbara Solis, CMP, the league's associate director, meetings.

"With The Shores, I know my group is going to basically take up the meeting space, and we will be the focus of attention. That's what I like. Plus everything is right there, and we don't need to go outside the hotel, which is about three or four miles from Daytona Beach itself. It's a quieter atmosphere, which we like," says Solis.

The league's trustee meetings are among about 50 that the group holds in cities throughout Florida every year. According to Solis, second-tier Florida

destinations such as Daytona Beach are very competitive with larger cities in the state. "With second-tier cities, you can negotiate better, depending on the time of year. You can get more value for your money. I think they need the business, but they also want to keep the business," says Solis.

When it comes to unique venues, Daytona Beach has a stellar lineup: Bruce Rossmeyer's Destination Daytona is a self-contained meeting and event venue. The facility includes a 35,000-sf amphitheater and a 56-room hotel with 700 sf of meeting space. The Ormond Beach Performing Arts Center accommodates groups of up to 600 people for concerts, plays and other performances. Of course, few venues are more unique than Daytona International Speedway. The iconic facility features two event rooms that accommodate 500 and 170 guests, respectively, and overlook the speedway.

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque has much to offer attendees, including Southwestern culture, skiing, mountain desert scenery, hot-air ballooning and art venues. A variety of meeting venues are available, including the Albuquerque Convention Center (ACC). The facility is undergoing a \$55 million facelift that includes renovations to the building's front façade and new furniture, lighting, paint and carpet. The ACC provides 167,562 sf of exhibit space, 27 meeting rooms and a 31,000-sf ballroom.

Properties near the ACC include the 395-room Hyatt Regency Albuquerque, with 26,000 sf of meeting space. The 261-room Crowne Plaza Albuquerque, formerly a Hilton, recently completed a \$14 million renovation. The property offers 26,000 sf of meeting space, including an 8,000-sf conference center. Albuquerque boasts more than 16,000 hotel rooms.

Albuquerque is among the second-tier cities that have hosted meetings planned by AMR Management Services, a Lexington, KY-based association management company. AMR planned the September 2011 national conference of the National Association of Government Defined Contribution Administrators (NAGDCA) in Albuquerque. The four-day conference attracted about 700 attendees to the ACC, which provided top service, says Joy Kirschner, CMP, NAGDCA's director of conferences and events. "The convention center was eager to please and do everything right. They wrote custom menus for us. The food and beverage rates were reasonable. They made sure that our signage worked well and added addi-

tional signage as we needed. They didn't nickel and dime us with extra charges," says Kirschner.

The city's unique venues reflect its unique culture. The Albuquerque Museum of Art & History showcases the Southwest's past. The museum offers eight indoor and outdoor spaces for meetings. Golf aficionados can enjoy parkland, desert and mountain golf courses, some of which rank among the best in the U.S.

In the area of outdoor activities, the annual Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta attracts more than 500 hot-air balloonists and hundreds of thousands of spectators from around the world. The Anderson-Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum features exhibits on the history, science and culture of hot-air balloons. The museum's seven event spaces include a 10,000-sf room.

The uniqueness of second-tier cities such as Albuquerque appeals to many planners. "There is a difference between the culture in the New Mexico area and most of the cities that our attendees have been to in the past," says Kirschner.

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Texas

A Strategically Important Destination for Associations

By Mike Bassett

The saying still goes that “everything is big in Texas.” The state continues to grow — its gross domestic product grew by 52 percent between 2000 and 2010, and Texas now has a GDP of more than \$1 trillion. Fifty-one companies found on the Fortune 500 are headquartered in Texas.

And the state’s population has one of the fastest growth rates in the country. Steve Clanton, vice president of sales and services at the San Antonio Convention & Visitor’s Bureau points out that Texas, with its population of 24 million people, has become a strategically important destination for associations.

So, not coincidentally, Texas has much going for it when it comes to the association meetings market. It boasts some of the largest convention facilities and hotels in the country, and it doesn’t hurt that it is located in the middle of the U.S. and is equally accessible from both coasts. When you add to the mix world-class cities, hundreds of thousands of miles of open space offering all kinds of opportunities for recreational activities, and some pretty good weather, it’s easy to see why groups flock to the Lone Star State.

SAN ANTONIO

When talking about his city, Steve Clanton likes to reference the immortal Mark Twain, who, legend has it, called San Antonio one of the four



The world-famous River Walk in San Antonio, TX, is also known as the “world’s largest hotel lobby” and an ideal setting for networking, nightlife and entertainment.

unique American cities (along with Boston, San Francisco and New Orleans).

“It just has a lot of character and lots of flavor,”

says Clanton. “It’s a destination that people like to visit on their own, so when there is a meeting here, people show up.”

For that reason — among others — San Antonio is a prime destination for association groups. “We always get good attendance here,” Clanton says, pointing out that the San Antonio River Walk is one of the prime attractions for groups. “We call it the world’s largest hotel lobby. One of the reasons groups like to come here is that their people, whether they’re going to restaurants or clubs on the River Walk, are constantly interacting with each other because it’s such a self-contained area.”

The River Walk, which is one of the top tourist attractions in Texas, is also in the middle of a 13-mile extension project. One portion of the project is a nine-mile stretch that will connect the original River Walk with four of San Antonio’s Spanish colonial missions to the south. Scheduled for completion in 2014, this addition emphasizes ecotourism and historic preservation and will offer an enhanced aquatic habitat with 20,000 new trees, acres of native landscaping and trails for hiking and biking.

Most of the city’s downtown hotels are within easy walking distance of the River Walk. The Hotel Valencia Riverwalk is close to the convention center and San Antonio’s other top tourist attraction — the Alamo. The hotel has 213 guest rooms and 7,000 sf of outdoor and indoor event space, and is located near the 250-seat Empire Theater.

There are a number of properties outside of the city, including the Westin La Cantera Resort. The hotel contains 508 guest rooms, all of which were renovated in 2009. Most of the guest rooms are located in the main building but if guests are seeking additional privacy the Casita Village offers 38 villas in a secluded tree-shaded hillside location near the main hotel.

The Westin La Cantera has eight dining options and multiple event areas scattered throughout the resort. There is more than 39,000 sf of function space, including a 17,000-sf ballroom, eight separate meeting rooms and three boardrooms. The Westin La Cantera also recently celebrated its 12th anniversary with the unveiling of the newly renovated signature bar — Steinheimer’s Lounge.

The Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center recently completed more than \$40 million in renovations, including an extensive \$26 million refurbishment of the Lila Cockrell Theatre. The

“It’s a magnificent destination. It’s one of those cities that’s fun for everyone. When people hear the name San Antonio, they know about it, and it brings a smile to their faces.”



Bitsy Burns
Director of Operations
Southwest Veterinary Symposium
Dallas, TX

Plaza Acequia — the convention center’s newest outdoor event space — will accommodate up to 1,500 people in 20,000 sf of usable space. Other improvements include solar film for the center’s many windows, energy-efficient lighting, as well as new carpeting, exterior upgrades, interior digital event boards and meeting room signage.

Another set of improvements — new digital wayfinding stations spread throughout the convention center — really impressed Bitsy Burns, director of operations of the Dallas, TX-based Southwest Veterinary Symposium, who brought her group of 450 veterinarians to San Antonio in September. The wayfinding stations made getting around the city — already a pretty simple proposition — even easier says Burns.

Burns brings the annual meeting to San Antonio on a rotating basis. “It’s a magnificent destination,” she says. “It’s one of those cities that’s fun for everyone. When people hear the name San Antonio, they know about it, and it brings a smile to their faces.”

HOUSTON

Houston is “ever-evolving,” says Greg Ortale, president and CEO of the Greater Houston Convention & Visitor’s Bureau. Ortale points out that since his arrival in Houston in 2008, the city has seen the opening of the 12-acre downtown park Discovery Green, the launch of a light rail system and the investment of millions of dollars in the Buffalo Bayou beautification program. “So we continue to evolve and offer meeting planners more and more.”

One of the most important factors accounting for Houston’s popularity as an association destination is its hotel product. With 65,000 hotel rooms located in four different clusters around the city,

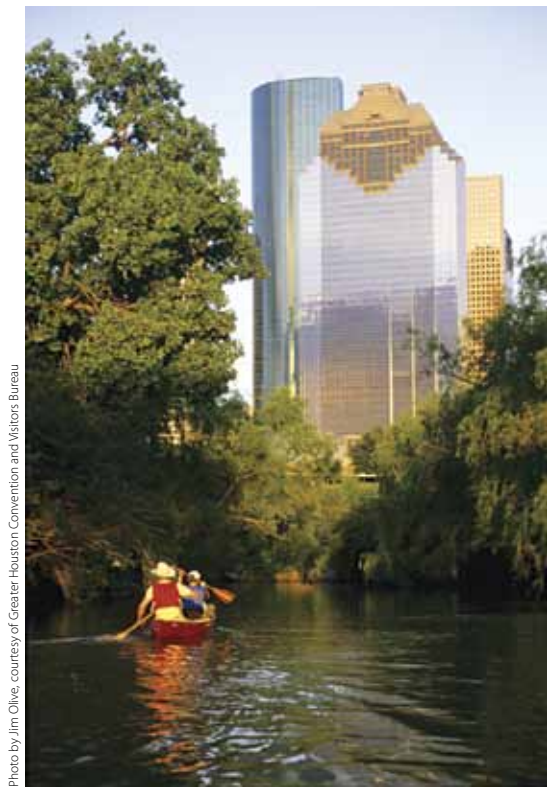


Photo by Jim Olive, courtesy of Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau

Canoeists paddle down Buffalo Bayou in the shadow of Houston's downtown skyline.

"there is a quality of product that offers association planners a great selection of venues," Ortale says. "We're a destination of choices, and that's a strength of ours."

The Houstonian Hotel, Club and Spa is uniquely situated on 18 wooded acres across from Memorial Park, meaning that views of Texas glades and gardens are visible from all 289 guest rooms and suites, as well as 21 of the 26 meeting rooms. The more than 32,000 sf of meeting space features expansive windows offering wooded views

and natural light, executive conference chairs, and extensive audio-visual equipment. Venues range from the Houstonian Grande Ballroom and the executive-style Mahogany Boardroom to the covered Gazebo by the pool.

Houston has become a major player in the international convention and meeting market. It just became the first city in the United States to be granted membership to the Best Cities Global Alliance, an international collaborative of convention and visitors bureaus.

Criteria for membership include having inter-



Photo courtesy of the American Association of Professional Landmen

The NAPE Expo, which is held in Houston twice annually, attracts oil and gas industry professionals to the city in August and February.

national class convention facilities, a minimum of 10,000 hotel rooms and a history of hosting international conferences. Other cities in the alliance include Berlin, San Juan (Puerto Rico), Cape Town, Copenhagen, Edinburgh, Melbourne, Singapore, Dubai and Vancouver. Ortale says that Houston's reputation as the world's energy capital,

as well as its demographic diversity, make it a very appealing international destination.

The NAPE Expo (created as the North American Prospect Expo in 1993 by the Fort Worth, TX-based American Association of Professional Landmen) is held in Houston twice annually, attracting 16,000 oil and gas industry professionals to the city in August, and 6,000 in February.

Since the expo is related to the energy business, Houston makes sense as the host site, says Martin J. Schardt, executive vice president of the AAPL. "The strong position Houston has in the (energy) industry makes it a big draw," Schardt says.

Houston's international reputation is also helping the expo attract more international attendees, particularly to its February expo, which has a large international component, says Schardt. Attendees also appreciate the George Brown Convention Center, "which is really conducive to business."

DALLAS

The big meeting and convention news in Dallas is the opening of the 1,001-room Omni Dallas Hotel. With its opening, Dallas finally has a convention center hotel that connects to the Dallas Convention Center, and this is having an incredible impact on the city's convention business, says Phillip Jones, president and CEO of the Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau.

In the two years leading up to the approval of the Omni Dallas, the city booked 18 citywide conventions, says Jones. In the two years following that approval, Dallas tripled that number, booking 55 citywide conventions. "It took us 30 years to get a convention center hotel attached to the convention center," says Jones. "So this really is a big deal."

The opening of the new Omni with its five dining options, the Mokara Spa, an urban pool deck, and 110,000 sf of meeting space, has had a domino effect on surrounding properties, says Jones. "The Omni is such a phenomenal new hotel that all of the other hotels have had to up their games to be competitive."

For example, the Hilton Anatole Dallas recently completed a \$120 million renovation, which included the transformation and updating of its 1,606 guest rooms and 600,000 sf of meeting and exhibition space.

A new conference registration area and separate meeting planner offices were added to the

redesigned Atrium II. Prefunction areas, breakout rooms and ballrooms were renovated to include new carpet, lighting, architectural appointments, furniture and artwork. The space also features updated audio-visual and IT capabilities. The hotel has also added an executive lounge on its 25th floor and three new dining options.

Other hotel renovations include The Sheraton Dallas, which recently completed a \$100 million renovation and the Hyatt Regency, which completed a \$50 million renovation of its public spaces and is in the process of renovating its guest rooms.

"We have some of the nicest downtown properties of any city in the country," Jones says, adding that with the addition of a new opera house, theater, performing arts center, new museum product and a new terminal at Love Field, "folks who haven't been to Dallas in recent years are in for a pleasant surprise when they show up."

FORT WORTH

According to David DuBois, CMP, FASAE, CAE, CTA, president and CEO of the Fort Worth Convention & Visitors Bureau, balancing the city's brand as a place of "cowboys and culture" is important to cementing the destination's appeal.

"We've got the stockyards, and we've got world class museums as well," says DuBois. "Different markets are going to be attracted to different parts of our brand. For example, international meeting attendees will be intrigued by the cowboy side of our branding, while at the same time they'll appreciate the cultural side." And DuBois points out that the ever-increasing number of international flights into Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport means that Fort Worth has become a more attractive destination for international associations.

DuBois also notes that domestic associations have "always been familiar with North Texas as



Photo courtesy of Fort Worth CVB



Martin J. Schardt
Executive Vice President
American Association of
Professional Landmen
Fort Worth, TX

"The strong position Houston has in the energy industry makes it a big draw. (Attendees also appreciate the George Brown Convention Center), which is really conducive to business."

a destination." In the case of Fort Worth, DuBois says, a compact and pedestrian-friendly downtown, as well as a reputation for being one of the safest large cities in the U.S., makes Fort Worth particularly attractive.

The openings within the last three years of hotels such as the Omni Fort Worth Hotel and Sheraton Fort Worth Hotel & Spa have added to the number of hotels within walking distance of the Fort Worth Convention Center. The convention center, which spans a 14-block area in the heart of downtown Fort Worth, has a total of 253,226 sf of exhibit space, with meeting rooms totaling 58,849 sf. The center also contains a 28,160-sf ballroom and a multifunctional arena with a seating capacity of 13,500.

The addition of the more hotel rooms helped make 2011 Fort Worth's best convention year ever, says DuBois. "We've basically been able to double the number of conventions we've been able to hold."

PLANO

Even though it is situated within the greater Dallas/Fort Worth Metropolitan area, Plano has become a meeting and convention destination all its own.

Named after the Sundance Kid, who used the Fort Worth area as a hide-out, Sundance Square is a 35-block commercial, residential, entertainment and retail district located in the heart of downtown Fort Worth.



The Rainforest Pyramid at Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa and Convention Center, Galveston, TX, provides a beautiful botanical setting for meetings and events.

"It's strategically located, close to the airports and within a short driving distance of anything in the metropolitan area," says Karen Fogle, CMP, association and corporate sales manager for the Plano Visitors and Convention Bureau. "And Plano is an extremely safe city with lots of dining, shopping, and offsite venues — the kinds of features that support conventions."

The Plano Convention Centre contains more than 100,000 sf of event space and provides attendees with complimentary Wi-Fi and free parking. The city has 34 hotels, the largest of which is the Plano Marriott at Legacy Town Center.

Janet Morrow, CAE, CMP, executive director of the Austin, TX-based Texas Association of Nurse Anesthetists, brought her association's annual convention to the Plano Marriott in September. "Plano is conveniently located, and I can't say enough good things about the Marriott," says Morrow, adding that its location at Legacy Town Center was a real benefit as well.

"We were right next to really good restaurants and stores, and it's located in a nice park-like setting," she says. "So after sitting in meeting rooms and going to seminars, you have the chance to go outside and sit in the sun, look at the lake and just relax for a bit."

Internationally renowned as the filming site for the television series "Dallas," Southfork Ranch Event & Conference Center has more than 63,000 sf of indoor event space, 10 ballrooms and more. "It's a huge tourist attraction," says Fogle, even more so now that the series is going to be revived in 2012.

GALVESTON

Galveston's location on the Gulf of Mexico, just 50 miles south of Houston, makes it an attractive

place for groups looking for a destination on the water but near a major airport (Houston's Hobby Airport is a 30-minute drive from Galveston, while George Bush International is 90 minutes away).

The island has more than 150,000 sf of combined meeting space available at a variety of hotel properties, while the Galveston Island Convention Center at the San Luis Resort, contains a 43,100-sf exhibition hall, a 15,500-sf grand ballroom, 12,000 sf of breakout meeting space and 29,000 sf of pre-function, exhibit and reception space.

Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa and Convention Center has 428 guest rooms and more than 100,000 sf of meeting and convention space.

ARLINGTON

Arlington is centrally located between Dallas and Fort Worth, 15 minutes south of Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. As such, it's become the home to some major sports and entertainment venues.

The two-time defending American League champion Texas Rangers play at Rangers Ballpark, while in 2009 the Dallas Cowboys opened the state-of-the-art \$1.2 billion Cowboys Stadium, which features more than 300,000 sf of meeting space.

The Arlington Convention Center contains 50,000 sf of column-free exhibit space, a 30,000-sf Grand Hall and 8,500 sf of meeting space.

IRVING

The new Irving Convention Center opened its doors in January 2011. Located in the Las Colinas Urban Center, the 275,000-sf Irving Convention Center features a 50,000-sf, column-free exhibition hall, a 20,000-sf ballroom, 20 different meeting rooms, 11 dedicated conference rooms as well as more than 20,000 sf of meeting space.

Phase two of the project includes the development of a performance venue, 10 themed restaurants, along with retail shopping and a headquarters hotel adjacent to the convention center with an additional 15,000 sf of meeting space.

The list of reasons to consider Texas for group meetings and events is as long and wide as the state itself. Accessibility and affordability are at the top of the list, and the variety and quality of meeting properties are right up there, too. Clearly, Texas offers something for every size and type of association group.

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ZIMMERMAN

The Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau, Philadelphia, PA, has named **Dan Miller** as executive director, hotel sales, and **Katie Bender** as Midwest national account sales director. Miller was director of sales at the Hyatt Regency Philadelphia at Penn's Landing. Bender was Midwest regional citywide director for the Toronto Convention and Visitors Association.

Grand Hyatt New York, New York City, has named **Eamon O'Brien** as director of sales. He formerly served as associate director of sales for the Hyatt Regency in Chicago.

The San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Jennifer Bumbalo** as national sales director, based in the Washington, DC, office, responsible for corporate and government accounts in the Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia markets. She most recently served as director of global accounts for Omni Hotels & Resorts - Washington, DC.

Ken Williams was named director of trade show sales for The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, CO. He most recently served as director of marketing and sales for a Denver, CO-based international trade center.

Rosen Hotels & Resorts, Orlando, FL, has named **Karen Brand** as national sales manager for the mid-Atlantic states, Georgia and the Carolinas for Rosen Centre Hotel, Rosen Shingle Creek, Rosen Plaza Hotel and Rosen Inn at Pointe Orlando. She most recently served as a regional account executive for Visit Orlando.

MGM Resorts International, Las Vegas, NV, has promoted **Mary Ann Sena-Edelen** as director of regional sales-diversity. She most recently served as director of diversity and training at Monte Carlo, Las Vegas, NV.

Amy Pfeiffer was promoted to director, resort sales for the Walt Disney World Resort. She most recently served as senior sales director.

The Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau has promoted **Robin O'Connor** to director of sales and services. She was assistant director of sales for the CVB.

The Louisville Convention & Visitors Bureau, Louisville, KY, has named **David Kinney** as director of Midwest sales, based in Chicago. He most recently was the Chicago-based regional sales manager for the Puerto Rico Convention Bureau.

Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau, King of Prussia, PA, has named **Mark Zimmerman** as senior vice president of sales and marketing. He was most recently a transportation consultant to the Syracuse (PA) Convention and Visitors Bureau.

JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa, Tucson, AZ, has named **Kimberly Dunnegan** as a remote senior sales executive responsible for the Chicago/Midwest area as well as all central states. She formerly served as senior sales manager for the Marriott Western Southwest Sales Office in Irvine, CA.

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Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau	714-765-8888	http://meetings.anaheimoc.org	Mindy Abel	meeting.inquiry@anaheimoc.org
ARIA Resort & Casino	866-718-2489	www.ariaslasvegas.com	Tony Yousfi	meetings@ariaslasvegas.com
Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa	609-317-7729	www.theborgata.com	Group Sales	meetings@theborgata.com
The Broadmoor	719-577-5777	www.broadmoor.com	John Rovie	jrovie@broadmoor.com
Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau	800-933-8448	www.miamimeetings.com	Ileana Castillo	ileana@miamimeetings.com
Greensboro Area Convention & Visitors Bureau	800-344-2282	www.visitgreensboronc.com	Ava Pope	apope@visitgreensboronc.com
Hilton Orlando	407-313-4300	www.thehiltonorlando.com	William McKay	orloc-salesadm@hilton.com
The Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa	800-231-2759	www.houstonian.com	Mark Lupton	sales2012@houstonian.com
Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino	800-545-6040	www.innofthemountaingods.com	Jo Kazhe	jokazhe@innofthemountaingods.com
Jack Fiala's Corporate Sidekicks	877-856-1160	www.corporatesidekicks.com	Jack Fiala	jack@corporatesidekicks.com
Kalahari Resort and Convention Center, Sandusky, OH	419-433-7759	www.kalahariresorts.com/oh/conventions	Group Sales	OHGroups@kalahariresorts.com
Kalahari Resort and Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells, WI	608-254-3314	www.kalahariresorts.com/wi/conventions	Kevin Shanley	WIGroups@kalahariresorts.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
MGM Grand Las Vegas	800-929-1112	www.mgmgrand.com	Ruth Leis	hotelsalesleads@lv.mgmgrand.com
The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club	800-866-1946	www.naplesbeachhotel.com	Group Sales	groupsales@naplesbeachhotel.com
New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center	504-582-3023	www.mccno.com	Keith Levey	m-s@mccno.com
Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau	405-297-8912	www.visitokc.com	Robin O'Connor	roconnor@visitokc.com
Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate	407-238-6526	www.omnihotels.com/findahotel/orlando-championsgate/meetingfacilities.aspx	Group Sales	mcocha.leads@omnihotels.com
Ponte Vedra Inn & Club	800-234-7842	www.pontevedra.com	Tony Fitzjohn	sales@pvresorts.com
Reunion Resort & Club	407-396-3183	www.reunionresort.com	Linda Scott	lscott@reunionresort.com
Rosen Centre Hotel	407-996-9840	www.rosencentre.com	Todd Frappier	tfrappier@rosencentre.com
Rosen Plaza Hotel	407-996-9700	www.rosenplaza.com	Victoria Hall	sales@rosenplaza.com
Rosen Shingle Creek	407-996-9939	www.rosenshinglecreek.com	Leslie Menichini	sales@rosenhôtels.com
Royal Caribbean International	800 762-0458	www.royalcaribbeanincentives.com	Lori Cassidy	royalmeetingsandincentives@rcil.com
South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa	702-797-8050	www.southpointmeetings.com	Maureen Robinson	sales@southpointcasino.com
Team San Jose	408-792-4521	www.sanjose.org	Mark McMinn	mmcminn@sanjose.org
Turkish Culture and Tourist Office in New York	877-For-Turkey	www.goturkey.com	Group Sales	ny@tourismturkey.org
Universal Orlando Resort	888-322-5531	www.uomeetingsandevents.com	Group Sales	meetings@universalorlando.com
The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino	702-414-4202	www.venetianpalazzomeetings.com	Chandra Allison	chandra.allison@venetianpalazzo.com
Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau	800-700-7702	www.vbmeetings.com	Al Hutchinson	ahutchin@vbgov.com
Walt Disney World Resort	321-939-7112	www.disneymeetings.com	Anne Hamilton	meetings@disneyworld.com
Washington Hilton	202-328-2080	www.hiltonsofcd.com	Group Sales	dcawh-salesadm@hilton.com
The Westin Casuarina Las Vegas Hotel, Casino & Spa	702-836-5934	www.westin.com/lasvegas	Sandra Horvath	shorvath@westinlv.com
The Westin La Cantera Resort	210-558-2229	www.westinlacantera.com	Group Sales	info@westinlacantera.com
Wild Horse Pass Hotel & Casino	520-796-4923	www.wingilariver.com	Denise Heintz	denise.heintz@wingilariver.com
Wynn/Encore	888-320-7117	www.wynnmeetings.com	Steve Blanner	hotelsales@wynnlasvegas.com

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