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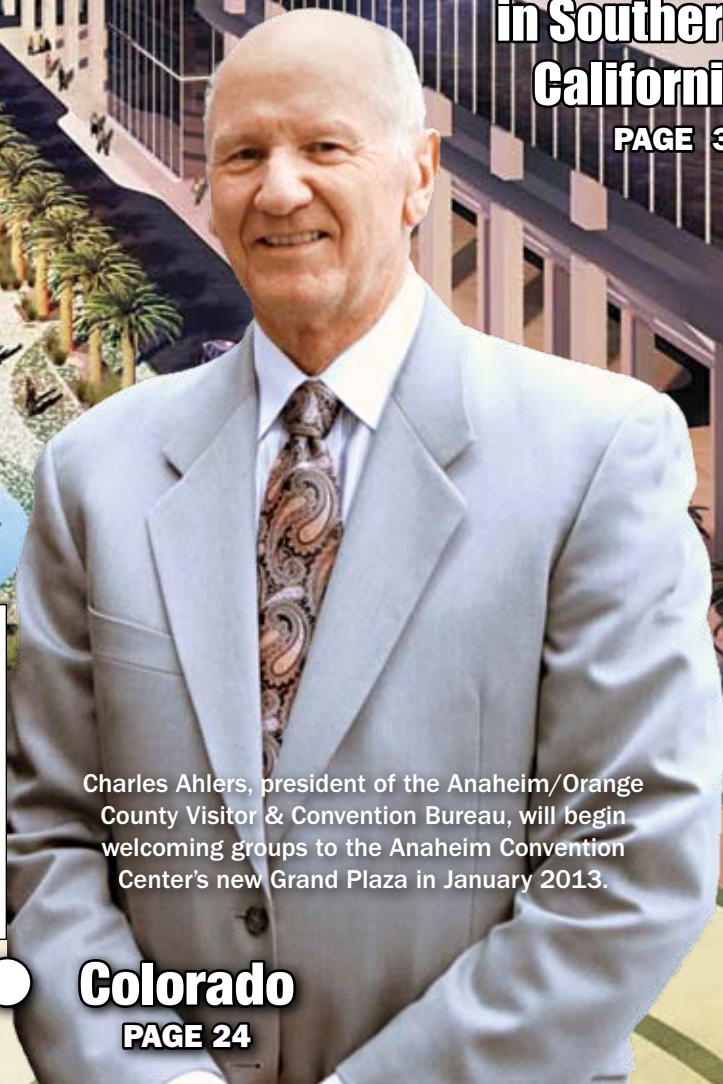
Corporate & Incentive Travel

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

SoCal Meetings

Grand Happenings
in Southern
California

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Charles Ahlers, president of the Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau, will begin welcoming groups to the Anaheim Convention Center's new Grand Plaza in January 2013.

Destinations: Asia-Pacific

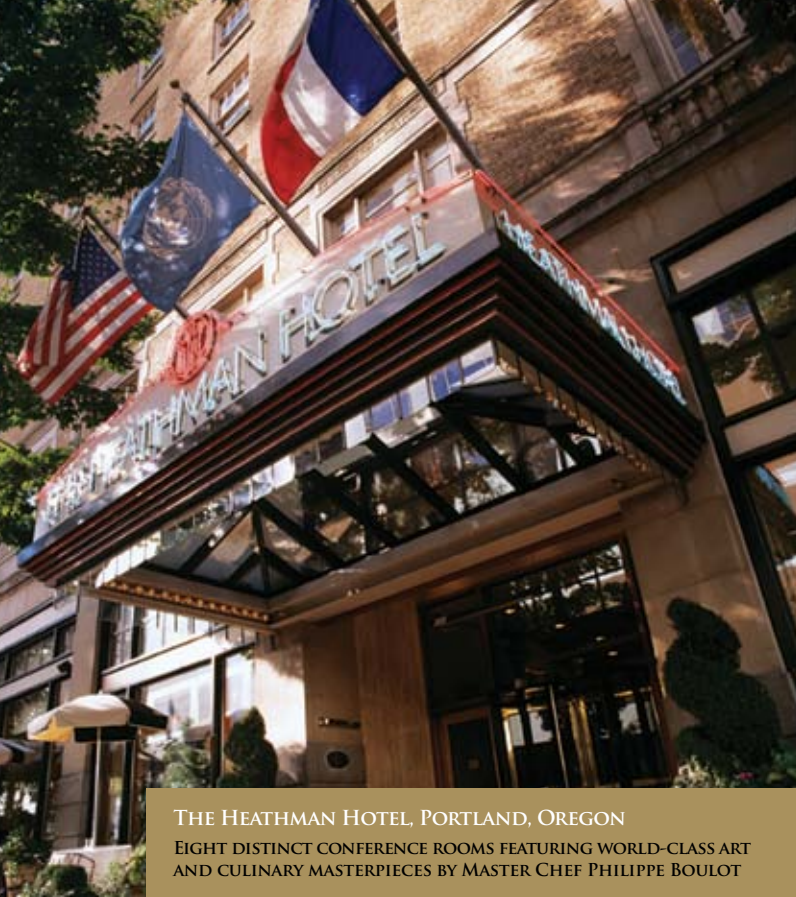
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Colorado

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Rendering and photo courtesy of Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau



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Grand Happenings in Southern California

By George Seli

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Geoteaming's teambuilding programs, such as scavenger hunts using GPS, Web-enabled cellphones and digital cameras, energize attendees.

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SAS hosts large customer events in Asia-Pacific at venues in India, Singapore and Hong Kong, destinations known for their unique experiences.



PORTA HOTEL ANTIGUA, LA ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA
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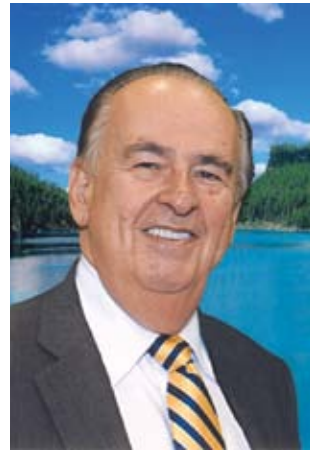
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PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

Movers and Shakers Making a Difference

What is a mover and shaker? *Barron's Business Dictionary* definition describes a mover and shaker as an "individual who has a dramatic impact on an organization or a series of events. For example, an individual may be known as a mover and shaker in a particular business activity because of his ability to get things done quickly and successfully." In this issue, we bring you news of three long-time industry movers and shakers whom I admire and respect. Rossi Ralenkotter,



the president & CEO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, is now the chairman of the U.S. Travel Association, and you can bet your bottom dollar he will make a significant impact. A true visionary, Rossi has called for a new national agenda to strengthen the future of the \$460 billion meetings and events industry: "We need to support and strengthen this industry by establishing a new agenda for change that promotes the value of business travel to the economy and to corporate bottom lines." Add Rossi's new white paper identifying three major trends that will impact the future of the meetings industry to your must-read list. Go to www.ustravel.org for a copy.

Kudos also to visionary extraordinaire Harris Rosen, president and COO of Rosen Hotels & Resorts in Orlando, who faithfully gives his time, talents and money to Rosen employees as well as the local and global community. Along the way, the philanthropist has been named a "Most Influential Executive," a "Best Corporate Citizen" and continually ranks in the top 10 of "Orlando's 50 Most Powerful People." In addition to his health-care, environmental and education projects, Harris' foundation has raised and donated significant contributions to Haiti and most recently to Japan to aid in relief efforts.

On our cover this month, Charles Ahlers, president of the Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau for the last two decades, is another astute industry veteran. Today, Charles' big news is that the innovative, one-of-a-kind Grand Plaza, 100,000 sf of lushly landscaped outdoor meeting space located outside the front doors of the LEED-certified Anaheim Convention Center, is debuting in January 2013. Next, Charles will spearhead phase two — the development of a quarter-million sf of state-of-the-art meeting space set for completion in 2015.

I salute these three leaders and all the movers and shakers who influence and shape the future of the meetings industry. Keep up the good work.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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U.S. Travel Chair Ralenkotter Calls for New Agenda for Meetings Industry

WASHINGTON, DC — Rossi Ralenkotter, new chairman of the U.S. Travel Association and president & CEO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, on March 26 called for a new national agenda to strengthen the future of the \$460 billion meetings and events industry. "Meetings and conventions are a major driver of the economy in every community across America, supporting more than six million jobs for American workers," said Ralenkotter. "We need to support and strengthen this industry by establishing a new agenda for change that promotes the value of business travel to the economy and to corporate bottom lines."



RALENKOTTER

Ralenkotter released a new white paper identifying three major trends that will impact the future of the meetings industry: perceived availability of new technology and substitutes for face-to-face meetings; pressure to cut costs in business and government agencies; and increasing challenges to long haul travel. Ralenkotter, a 40-year veteran of the travel and tourism industry, will serve as chairman of the U.S. Travel Association through June 2013. www.ustravel.org

Loews Atlanta Hotel Adds 'The Overlook'

ATLANTA, GA — Located in the heart of Atlanta's Midtown Mile neighborhood, the 414-room Loews Atlanta Hotel has expanded its 14th floor meeting and event space with the addition of The Overlook, a 14,000-sf space that showcases 210-degree views of Atlanta landmarks through floor-to-ceiling windows. With nearly 40,000 sf of multiuse function space, Loews has emerged as the leading Midtown hotel with the largest square footage of function space and 7th among the largest convention hotels in downtown Atlanta. The Overlook's loft-style space features contemporary décor in a palette of purple, gray and brown. The column-free, divisible space provides a central location within walking distance to many of the city's Fortune 500 companies, leading law firms and cultural venues. Additionally, the King Meeting Room, a boardroom-style private meeting space, provides state-of-the-art technology and full-length windows. Loews Atlanta can host nearly 4,500 guests in all of its function space. The Overlook space joins Loews Atlanta Hotels' other function and meeting rooms: Ellington Ballroom (11,070 sf); Mercer Ballroom (5,460 sf); The Terrace (4,800 sf); ample prefunction space; two designated meeting planner offices; the distinguished boardroom and nine private meeting rooms. www.loewshotels.com



Loews Atlanta Hotel.

Caesars Expands Meeting Program

LAS VEGAS, NV — Caesars Entertainment announced that its Meeting Diamond program grants meeting planners and owners automatic Diamond status when they book a meeting or event at any of the company's 38 U.S. properties, entitling them to VIP check-in, access to Diamond Lounges, discounts at participating outlets, preferred menu pricing in select F&B outlets, guaranteed priority service at property bell desks, valet, business centers and restaurants, and more. The company also integrated the Meeting Diamond program with Total Rewards, Caesars Entertainment's loyalty program. Meeting Diamonds will become active Total Rewards members with full Diamond status, so they can take full advantage of the Total Rewards program and all its benefits, including the ability to earn reward credits for their eligible meetings spending, which then can be used for future meetings or individual rewards. For information on fees, rules and restrictions, go to www.cetmeetings.com.

Snowmass Resort Undergoes Transformation

STAMFORD, CT — Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. announced a multimillion-dollar renovation and reflagging of the Silvertree Hotel & Conference Center, which will reopen as The Westin Snowmass Resort in time for Colorado's winter ski season. In the heart of Snowmass Village, the resort will feature 254 rooms and 20 suites. The new Snowmass Kitchen will offer all-day dining, the gym will become a spa facility, and a brand-new WestinWorkout fitness center will overlook Snowmass Village. One pool will be redeveloped into a landscaped space for outdoor events, and the lower pool will be rebuilt to include two hot tubs. The 20,000-sf conference center will be fully renovated by June 1, 2012. www.westin.com

Gaylord Palms Unveils \$50 Million Renovation

KISSIMMEE, FL — Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center near Orlando in Kissimmee, FL, is finalizing a \$50 million renovation project slated for completion in spring 2012. All 1,406 guest rooms will be updated with luxurious furnishings, flat-screen TVs, Wi-Fi and modern conveniences in a refined Florida décor. For special events in an expansive outdoor oasis, Gaylord Palms designed the 10,000-sf Coquina Event Lawn with strategically placed conversation areas and dramatic lighting fixtures, and the two-story, Key West-inspired Wreckers Sports Bar, which will overlook the new adults-only South Beach Pool below. All these areas including the new Everglades-inspired Cypress Springs Family Fun Water Park (pictured) can be reserved for one-of-a-kind group functions. The renovations, which were based on input from the resort's many meeting planners, are in addition to Gaylord Palms' 400,000 sf of flexible convention, exhibition and prefunction meeting space. At the recently renovated Relâche Spa & Salon, the new 4,000-sf Relâche Fitness Center is outfitted with Life Fitness cardio and strength training equipment. Gaylord Palms Resort is located five minutes from the gates of Walt Disney World. www.gaylordpalms.com/meetings



Rendering of the Cypress Springs family pool at Gaylord Palms.

MEETING VALUES



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Peabody's CONNECTS 2012 offer CONNECTS you with complimentary Internet connectivity in your meeting space; CONNECTS you to your master account with a 3 percent rebate off actualized room revenue; and CONNECTS you to the community with complimentary round-trip transportation to/from your organized offsite activity. The offer is valid for bookings confirmed by September 1, 2012 and actualized by December 31, 2012. Contact Gregg Herning, V.P. sales & marketing, 407-352-4000, peabodyinfo@peabodyorlando.com, www.peabodymeetings.com

■ **Hotel Monteleone, New Orleans, LA.** The June Customer Appreciation offer, with rates starting from \$159, includes: complimentary guest room Internet; complimentary Internet access in general session room; complimentary upgrade to Vieux Carré Suite over meeting dates; 1/45 comp room; one-hour cocktail party with hot and cold hors d'oeuvres; discounted parking for official meeting dates. The offer is valid for these 2012 dates: June 3-7, June 10-14, June 17-21. Meetings must be booked by May 31, 2012. Minimum of 50 room nights for minimum of two nights required. 504-207-4156, sales@monteleone.com, www.hotelmonteleone.com

■ **The Shores Resort & Spa, Daytona Beach Shores, FL.** The "Meetings. Real Simple." package, which starts at \$209 per night based on single occupancy, includes: deluxe water-view room; full American breakfast buffet; morning break and lunch; basic AV setup; dedicated meeting space; all fees, taxes and service charges; wireless Internet access throughout the resort; self-parking; and use of fitness center and tennis courts. Offer is available for group stays through December 31, 2012. Minimum of 25 rooms per night required. 386-322-7262, groupsales@shoresresort.com, www.shoresresort.com

Harris Rosen Foundation Donates \$100,000 for Japan Earthquake Relief Efforts

ORLANDO, FL — Harris Rosen, president and COO of Rosen Hotels & Resorts and the Harris Rosen Foundation and Honorary Consul General of Japan in Orlando, presented a \$100,000 check to the Tohoku region of Japan and Urayasu, Japan, to aid in relief efforts from the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer spoke about Orlando's sister city relationship with Urayasu, Japan, which shares Orlando's roots in tourism as the home to Tokyo Disney Resort. Last spring, Rosen pledged to match funds raised by Lake Highland Preparatory School students who collected \$43,240. Rosen honored that pledge, but additional donations from Rosen Hotels & Resorts associates and other sources brought the total to \$100,000. Exchange students from Urayasu presented videos and photos illustrating their personal experiences involving the earthquake, the state of their homeland, relief efforts already in place and the resilient spirit of the Japanese people, and presented Rosen with a Japanese doll of friendship as a thank you gesture. www.rosenhoteles.com



A Japanese student presents Rosen with a friendship doll.

Sonesta Resort Hilton Head Island Opens Next Month

BOSTON, MA — Sonesta International Hotels Corporation announces its first hotel in South Carolina, the 340-room Sonesta Resort Hilton Head Island. Scheduled to come under Sonesta management on April 27, the oceanfront resort features guest rooms with luxurious bedding, high-speed Internet access, refreshment center and a private balcony. Sonesta Resort Hilton Head offers 20,000 sf of functional meeting space including an oceanfront pavilion with spectacular views. Several restaurants include fine and casual dining. Services include a 24-hour business center and courtesy van service. www.sonesta.com/hiltonhead

The Hilton Omaha Completes Expansion

OMAHA, NE — The Hilton Omaha completed a \$37 million renovation and expansion project. The property expanded its number of guest rooms from 450 to 600 and renovated existing guest rooms to offer high-speed wireless Internet access and new furnishings. The new 7,000-sf Blackstone ballroom includes 3,500 sf of prefunction space, and the main ballroom features 20-foot ceilings with glass pendant chandeliers, new artwork and extensive use of natural light. The Hilton Omaha's lobby has also been revamped to showcase a more modern décor, and its health club and spa have been upgraded as well to feature new equipment and a saltwater pool. The hotel is connected via skybridge to CenturyLink Center Omaha. www1.hilton.com

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www.TheMeetingMagazines.com

EVENTS CALENDAR

MAY 30-JUNE 3, 2012

IRF FOUNDATION ANNUAL INCENTIVE INVITATIONAL

JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort
San Antonio, TX
Contact: 314-473-5601
invitational.theirf.org

MAY 30-31, 2012

HSMIA'S MEET WEST 2012

Anaheim Marriott
Anaheim, CA
Contact: 914-421-3270
www.hsmaimeet.com

JUNE 5-6, 2012

DMAI FOUNDATION DINNER

Walter E. Washington Convention Center
Washington, DC
Contact: 202-296-7888
www.destinationmarketing.org

JUNE 18-20, 2012

INCENTIVE TRAVEL EXCHANGE

THEhotel at Mandalay Bay
Las Vegas, NV
Contact: 312-321-5148
www.siteglobal.com

JUNE 19-21, 2012

THE AMERICAS MEETINGS & EVENTS EXHIBITION (AIBTM)

Baltimore Convention Center
Baltimore, MD
Contact: 203-840-5975
www.aibt.com

JULY 22-25, 2012

2012 GBTA CONVENTION

Boston Convention Center
Boston, MA
Contact: 703-684-0836
www.gbta.org

SEPTEMBER 5-6, 2012

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OCTOBER 9-11, 2012

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Photo credits: 1. Chuck Fazio, 2. Site, 3. GBTA, 4. metroConnections Inc., 5. GBTA, 6. Visit Denmark

1 Michael Gehrisch, president and CEO of Destination Marketing Association International at DMAI's 2012 Destinations Showcase, held February 28 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. **2** Stephen Powell (back row, far right), president of the Site International Foundation, along with Site board members at the 2012 Site Executive Summit March 4-6, held for the first time in a South American country, in Bariloche, Argentina in the Andes mountains of Patagonia. **3** The Global Business Travel Association's (GBTA) 15th Annual Gala Dinner & Silent Auction, held March 5 at the Crowne Plaza Times Square in New York City. **4** DMC metroConnections accepted the International Special Events Society 2012 Minnesota Star Award for Event Design & Decor (\$25,000 and over) and Best Corporate Event for the Syngenta Capital Markets & Demonstration Days. **5** The GBTA 2012 Technology Symposium, held March 5-6 at the Crowne Plaza Times Square in New York City. **6** Convention bureaus, DMOs, venues and agencies from the five Scandinavian member countries of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) signed an accord to create the world's first sustainable meetings region on March 15. Follow #ICCASCAN.



By Terri Morrison

Avoid Blunders When Staging Meetings in Asia-Pacific

While there are more than 7 billion people on our planet, the most populous nations are in Asia. This makes them an irresistible market for Western companies. Even if you just consider the Asian nations that border the Pacific, you are talking about nearly 2 billion people (more than 1.3 billion are in the People's Republic of China alone). Also, Japan hosted more international conventions in 2010 than any other country except the USA.

These are highly competitive, expensive markets, filled with sophisticated executives who are determined to get the best possible deal. Since conventions and trade shows in Asia are pricey, it's important to avoid preventable mistakes in these culturally diverse locations.

Tattoos and Other Blunders

Blunders happen even to experienced, well-financed exhibitors. For example, everyone knows that tattoos are gaining popularity around the world. However, highly visible tattoos can still be unappealing to many Asian businesspeople. Confucian principals espouse preserving the purity of the body, and tattoos were historically associated with criminal activity. Besides the traditional connotations, if your fabulous Japanese kanji or Chinese hanzi inscription has not been rendered perfectly on your neck, hand or ankle, it will be painfully obvious to every native speaker whom you meet. And we all know that bad translations and reversed characters abound. Hopefully you don't have a permanent problem on your epidermis...but just to be sure, you might want to use some makeup to cover your body art while at work in Asia.

As you develop your marketing materials,

be sure to avoid incorporating any video, commentary or graphic elements that may be politically incorrect in each target country. This can be a challenge in China. Pro-Taiwan, pro-Tibet, highly religious or patriotic remarks, or virtually any other data that can be considered politically charged can get your materials confiscated before they ever pass through customs. To be safe, firms often have their collateral materials for China developed, vetted and printed in Shanghai and Beijing.

In Indonesia and Malaysia, Muslim sensibilities are predominant. Indonesia is now well-known as having the largest population of Muslims in the world. Planners must be careful not to violate Muslim sensibilities. Pork and alcohol are prohibited under Islam so avoid depicting bacon, pepperoni, sausages or hot dogs made from pork in your materials. Also, in your printed materials images of people should be modestly clothed.

Clearly, it is vitally important that you do not violate the local sensibilities. With the exception of Japan and South Korea, you will find that business in many Asian countries is dominated by people of Chinese descent. So it is worthwhile to adjust to Chinese sensibilities and folk beliefs.

In addition, when setting up a large booth at your expo, it should be in accord with the principles of feng shui. An expert in feng shui will insure that you have avoided clutter, that the flow is auspicious, and that you do not have any unlucky objects or "poison arrows" (sharp angles) in the booth. Certain symbols, numbers and colors are also considered lucky or unlucky. For example, do not use the number four because it is so inauspicious that new construction in Hong Kong usually does not even have a fourth floor. Eight, on the

other hand, is a lucky number (remember that the Beijing Olympics started at exactly 8 seconds past 8:08 on 8/8/08). Red and gold are considered auspicious colors. However, do not print anyone's name in red: Some Buddhists only write a name in red when a person is deceased.

Tea and Hospitality

You may find hot tea served in booths at conventions in Asia and the Middle East. It is a way to encourage visitors to stay a little longer and enjoy your hospitality.

Gil Cardon, convention manager for the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) in New York, knows that some types of tea may be more appealing than others for different events. "Personally, my favorite is a casual tea called genmaicha. It is a green tea with a flavor of roasted brown rice and a great aroma," he says. "Whatever

you do though, do not pour sugar into it, or into any tea in Japan." Saké was also served at a JNTO booth at an IMEX conference in Frankfurt: "Of course, we offered tea and coffee, but our saké-tasting bar was very well received," says Cardon.

Clearly, tea and coffee are an important part of the convention business. Since different countries have different traditions for preparing and presenting tea, you should hire a local caterer and take their advice. And if your caterer suggests that the prestige type of tea isn't green but traditional black tea from an English company, they may be right. In the past few years, high-end British tea companies have had success importing traditional varieties such as Darjeeling and Earl Grey into China and Japan, where they command premium prices. It may seem counter-intuitive to bring tea to China, but that (and the saké) may be exactly what sets your convention booth apart! *C&IT*

“Since different countries have different traditions for preparing and presenting tea, you should hire a local caterer and take their advice.”



Terri Morrison

is a speaker and co-author of nine books, including *Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands: The Bestselling Guide to Doing Business in More Than Sixty Countries* and her new book *Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands: Sales & Marketing*. She is president of Getting Through Customs, developers of the Kiss Bow or Shake Hands Database — available through McGraw-Hill Digital. Twitter @KissBowAuthor. 610-725-1040.



Photo courtesy of Geoteaming.com

By Stella Johnson

Geoteaming's effective and fun scavenger hunt teambuilding event uses GPS, Web-enabled cellphones and digital cameras.

“Teambuilding is an early indicator of economic recovery. That is, as soon as the corporate cuts are done, my phone starts ringing off the hook in order to help companies rebuild,” says CEO John Chen of Seattle, WA-based Geoteaming, an innovative teambuilding company. And recovery or not, Chen adds, “As long as a company is in business and has at least two employees, they need teambuilding activities to get the most value of one constant, paid resource — their employees.”

Let’s make that engaged employees because, according to Gallup Inc., engaged workers are the heroes that drive performance outcomes for companies. They are more productive, more profitable, more customer-focused, practice safer work habits and are more stable.

Gallup suggests that in the best orga-

nizations, engagement is not just a human resources initiative but a strategic foundation for the way they do business.

Experts and planners agree. For example, Susan Cain, Ed.D., a partner at Chicago-based Corporate Learning Institute suggests teambuilding activities give us the opportunity to “hit the rest button and rebound, regroup, rethink, engage, enhance, rebuild and remotivate.”

Christy Lamagna, CMP, CMM, CTSM, president of Strategic Meetings & Events located in northern New Jersey, is a proponent of teambuilding. Lamagna witnessed time and again how teambuilding activities expanded the horizons of entry level employees, staff members and management officials when she served as the vice president of events and operations for the Cendant Corporation and directed

trade shows and events at the Ziff Davis Publishing Company.

Lamagna says, “Teambuilding events at meetings leave attendees thinking about a lot of positive things to take back to the office afterwards.”

Teambuilding and Technology: Perfect Together

Chen states that connecting current technologies with teambuilding events results in the greatest of all outcomes. Chen, a Meeting Professionals International Supplier of the Year award recipient (2010) and one of *Training* magazine’s Top Young Trainers (2008), is the founder of Geoteaming, which provides teambuilding experiences that combine the latest technologies with outdoor adventure to create a high-tech treasure hunt.

Chen’s company has created more than 950 high-tech teambuilding events for more than 50,000 people for such companies as Microsoft (where he worked for 10 years), Booz Allen Hamilton, U.S. Bancorp and more.

At a national conference, Chen introduced for the first time TweetTeams or Twitter-based teambuilding. From that point, he claims technology “magic” was born. “More than 120 people attended this session, and many remarked that I opened new ideas on how they could use social media for their own teambuilding events,” he says. “And then, a representative from John Wiley & Sons approached me and asked me if I wanted to write a book on digital teambuilding games.”

(Chen’s new book, *50 Digital Teambuilding Games: Fast, Fun Meeting Openers, Group Activities and Adventures using Social Media, Smart Phones, GPS, Tablets, and More* (Wiley, 2012) is due out in May.)

The rewards of successful teambuilding are great, says Chen who believes that technology can enhance the process. “If you have the technology, you can engage in teambuilding at any time, from anywhere in the world, without the expense and time to travel. In addition, you can engage in digital teambuilding events, live, to inspire more online interaction when you’re not face-to-face. You can open or close meetings with these initiatives, too. Best of all, when properly executed, your group can reap the rewards of increased communication, trust and results,” he says.

One of the Geoteaming’s many popular programs is Goose Chase, a cellphone photo scavenger hunt using GPS, Web-enabled cellphones and digital cameras, which can be executed anywhere around the world. Participants download an app and log into a corporate customized photo scavenger hunt. Then, the teams are off on their mission, to gather photographic evidence of whatever is required of the hunt and upload it. Competition is spurred by real-time Facebook updates so each team knows its place in the contest.

Goose Chase participants learn how to gain group consensus quickly, see new leaders emerge and create bonding among team members. Other benefits

include learning new technology skills to bring back to the office, building new relationships that develop trust and create results, and improved morale.

Omni Bedford Springs Resort in Bedford, PA, also offers geocaching teambuilding programs. Groups use GPS navigation tools to create an advanced scavenger hunt through the resort’s 2,000+ acres. Groups can also bond during paintball competitions, glow-in-the-dark putting contests, bonfires, beach

Segway tours, nature hikes, kayaking excursions, cooking lessons, tennis clinics and fishing charters.

The Dallas, TX-headquartered Omni Hotels & Resorts, a portfolio of 50 hotels and resorts in leading business gateways across North America, features teambuilding programs in many of its resorts and convention properties.

How to Teach Hostile Groups to Play Nice

Lamagna’s most recent teambuilding experience was a horse of a different color. She was tasked with transforming a company that was “very disgruntled internally.” Three strong divisions were facing a reorganization, and no one was happy about it as many were losing authority, control and status as a result of the merger to one entity.

Lamagna describes the assignment: “We were asked to bring these executives together and get them to interact, collaborate and, yes, play nicely. We understood the challenge we were tasked with and were clear on the corporate objective. We realized that the true end goal, even if the client could not articulate it, was to have the executives realize that the good of the organization was the most important thing and that their individual agendas

had to be reframed to include working in an environment that included others.”

From the start, they were a hostile group. “They were angry, they felt justified for being angry, and most of all they were content to stay that way,” Lamagna adds.

To encourage the attendees to think outside the box, Lamagna decided on a corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity involving underprivileged children. First, members of the group were asked to build and paint a wall of cubby holes but were left in the dark as to why until halfway through the project.

According to Lamagna, they showed a short video about a local family who had 16 high-risk foster children in their small home — a family who would use these brightly painted cubby holes to store the children’s shoes, gloves and hats. “We then gave them the names of each child so they could customize each cubby. When they saw that what they were building was part of a much larger plan that went beyond them and their individual agendas, and that it wasn’t just about teambuilding as it was about doing something good for someone else, they shifted their stance and became enthusiastic about what they were doing as a team,” Lamagna adds.

“When the project was finished, we took the group to lunch, which was a refreshing break for everyone to discuss and review what had been accomplished. When they returned to the room where they had built the wall, they found we had put puppets in each cubby hole for each child. The kids and the foster parents were then brought in to meet the team that made it all happen and to see their new cubby wall, with their names on it and with the gifts inside.”



“Teambuilding events at meetings leave attendees thinking about a lot of positive things to take back to the office afterwards.”

Christy Lamagna, CMP, CMM, CTSM, President Strategic Meetings & Events, Bernardsville, NJ

The end result was positive. Lamagna says the once disgruntled executives, who were now sitting on the floor playing games with the children and their puppets, saw themselves in a different light. They bonded with their fellow executives, and altered their egos in positive ways that mattered for the company and a greater cause.



Photo courtesy of Squeeze In Holdings Inc.

All of the Squeeze In restaurant managers now have a uniform frame of reference after successfully completing a four-day teambuilding training retreat.

Teambuilding as Training Tool

Squeeze In Holdings Inc. is a restaurant group of breakfast eateries about to open its fourth operation. Family-owned and operated, president Misty Young explains, "The Squeeze In is very laid back and comfortable and has an easygoing vibe. We like it that way and work hard to create the feeling. The difference is that once the doors are closed for the day, we're as focused as Apple in our strategic efforts and relentless pursuit of creating a wow experience for our guests and our associates."



"The objective was for them to really understand what they're rated on and why it matters. And they got it, too, big time."

Misty Young, President/CEO
Squeeze In Holdings Inc., Brookings, OR

Young uses a variety of teambuilding training programs for its general managers. "Before we took them on a special four-day retreat at corporate headquarters in Brookings, OR, we had the three managers rotate through each other's restaurants for a full day's shift, with the special assignment to bring back from that experience three new ideas and observations of each other's restaurant to the retreat."

For instance, the company sought praise where it was due, something to be improved, and new ideas they could take back to their own restaurant. Since the managers were driven to the corporate retreat in Brookings, a drive that took 7½ hours, the time was

spent listening to popular audiobooks on leadership.

"The idea was that later on at the retreat they could spend time discussing the ideas presented in the books and how they might incorporate them at personal and professional levels, as well as make their managing styles more effective and uniform — one of the desired effects of the corporate outing," notes Young.

And, at a later point in the meeting,

each manager also had to submit a one-page book report answering these basic questions about the audiobook:

What were the three biggest concepts learned from this book? What are the three ways you will be able to use this material meaningfully with your associates? How will this book make you a better leader?

Later, there was room for open-ended questions and comments. "The biggest benefit we've found is that all the managers now have a uniform frame of reference and way of discussing concepts and ideas they know, understand and can use with confidence," says Young.

While on the retreat, the Squeeze In group dined at various restaurants such as casual breakfast places, pizza

parlors and fine-dining establishments. "And, because we're restaurant people and secret-shop our own restaurants and managers, we had our three attendees complete a rating sheet with every aspect of the service they experienced for six separate meals," Young adds.

"The attendees rated everything from curb appeal to how they were greeted upon entering. They also rated timing, food presentation and overall cleanliness of the establishment — everything that could be rated at a restaurant from the customer's perspective, they rated."

Since the goal was to get everyone to see the bigger picture, particularly during a crucial period of expansion, Young believes these exercises helped unite the managers.

"It was fun to watch that happen. The objective was for them to really understand what they're rated on and why it matters. And they got it, too, big time," she says.

Toot Your Own Horn!

Chen reminds corporate meeting planners to toot their own horns. "Share your success stories," he says.

"After a teambuilding event, if you are able to create a tangible story of success, make sure to broadcast it internally and externally if possible and talk about the key factors that made that success possible," he urges.

For instance, one of Chen's corporate clients had a flagship store that operated as five separate stores under one roof. After completing just one of Geoteaming's day-long, customized teambuilding events that focuses on cross-team collaboration, the five departments worked together and came up with some new and successful ideas.

"This happened 10 years ago and, even in the economy that existed in 2002, they were able to hit an aggressive multimillion dollar sales goal because of this one simple idea. This success story is still lore today, and they now have years of cross-team collaboration experiences behind them and many more stories of what works and what doesn't." **C&IT**

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The Future of Meeting Planning

The New Competency Standards Elevate the Business and Solidify the Professional Status of Meeting Planners

The question, "What does it take to be a meeting planner?" received a very meticulous answer in 2011 thanks to a major initiative led by Meeting Professionals International (MPI) and the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC). And it couldn't come at a better time: *U.S. News & World Report* just ranked "Meeting, Convention & Event Planner" at the top of its list of "Best Business Jobs of 2012." Furthermore, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects employment growth of 43.7 percent between 2010 and 2020, adding 31,300 more such jobs.

The Meeting and Business Event Competency Standards (MBECS), a 100-page "canon of competencies" for the event-planning profession, has been more than two years in the making and inspired the participation of consummate planners in its development such as Barbara Cummins, CMP, CMM, director, office of the senior partner and chairman, PricewaterhouseCoopers. "To see this growth in formal education for our industry is exciting," she says. "We didn't

By George Seli

have that 25 to 30 years ago." As a source of formal education that complements the CMP body of knowledge, MBECS serves to solidify the professional status of meeting planning. "In the corporate world, I deal with people who know exactly what it means to be a CPA, and

Didier Scaillet
Chief Development
Officer
Meeting Professionals
International
Luxembourg



"To define the profession, we used a transversal group of volunteer leaders...from various countries."

the more we can elevate and standardize our business, it's going to do nothing but help us," she adds.

Cummins was on the Body of Knowledge Task Force, which worked during 2009 and 2010 to develop the standards. "They did a good job of balancing the representation of the different types of planners and suppliers" on the committee, she notes.

Didier Scaillet, chief development officer of MPI and the MPI Foundation, confirms that "to define the profession, we used a transversal group of volunteer leaders, including corporate, association and agency meeting and business event planners, academics and suppliers, from various countries (Canada, Germany, South Africa, People's Republic of China, United States). That ensured a comprehensive view from a vertical and geographical standpoint." The CTHRC "helped us with the process and facilitation, since they are specialized in defin-

ing competency standards for tourism and hospitality-related professions."

In fact, the CTHRC provided a major resource for the Task Force: the International Events Management Standards (IEMS). The Canadian council had developed IEMS for the events sector construed more broadly to include festivals, concerts, sports events and so on. "I think that because the Canadians had done such a wonderful job putting together the body of knowledge that they had already for the hospitality-related professions, many people (at MPI) looked at that and realized it was needed" for meetings and business events specifically, says Diana Rogers, MPI's director of professional development.

12 Major Competency Areas

According to Rogers, the idea for MBECS had been germinating several years before 2009. "There were two or three different iterations of the task force. The first ones were more tactical in nature, while the last one had a real academic focus, since we really needed to think about how to teach people" the standards, Rogers explains. And while all participants could have a say in each of the myriad skillsets MBECS covers, their individual areas of expertise were naturally reflected in their contributions.

For instance, as a longtime planner for PricewaterhouseCoopers, Cummins says she "was most comfortable and provided most of my input on Strategic Planning, Project Management and Financial Management. I also provided a document on Risk Management. Many planners are not as fortunate as I am to have a dedicated security team to go to, due to our global firm." Cummins also praises Dr. Cecil's "leadership as the chairwoman of the Task Force" and CTHRC Senior Vice President Phillip Mondor's "patience, knowledge and subtle 'drive' to deliver a quality and all-encompassing standard for the meetings industry."

Amanda K. Cecil, Ph.D., CMP, is as-

sistant professor, tourism, conventions and event management department at Indiana University's School of Physical Education and Tourism as well as a certified meeting planner. She explains that MBECS is intended to address all types and experience levels of meeting



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"The standards define mastery of all the levels. It's written as an inclusive document for all planners; not every planner will have all the skillsets."

planner. "The standards define mastery of all the levels. It's written as an inclusive document for all planners; not every planner will have all the skillsets." That's quite likely given the breadth of the work, which subsumes 12 major competency areas and a variety of skills and subskills under each. Following are just a few examples of the skills under each category:

- 1. Strategic Planning.** Defining objectives, measuring ROI; creating a sustainability plan.
- 2. Project Management.** Developing quality standards, policies and procedures; developing a procurement plan; managing contracts.
- 3. Risk Management.** Identifying and analyzing risks; developing and implementing an emergency response plan.
- 4. Financial Management.** Developing financial resources; managing a budget; managing monetary transactions.
- 5. Administration.** Coordinating office administration, managing

- an information system; writing reports.
- 6. Human Resources.** Establishing work force policies and procedures; interviewing candidates; training staff and volunteers.
- 7. Stakeholder Management.** Identifying and assessing stakeholders; managing stakeholder activities.
- 8. Meeting or Event Design.** Engaging speakers and performers; coordinating F&B services; developing a plan for managing the movement of attendees.
- 9. Site Management.** Identifying and inspecting sites; creating a logistics action plan for site setup and take-down; managing onsite communications.
- 10. Marketing.** Defining target market segments; distributing marketing materials; coordinating sales promotions.
- 11. Professionalism.** Demonstrating ethical behavior; working in a diverse environment; participating in professional development activities.
- 12. Communication.** Using communication tools; making effective presentations; establishing and conducting business relationships.

Career Path Benchmarks

For 31 skills, MBECS identifies (a) the time it takes to master the skill or task, (b) the frequency with which it is performed or manifested, and (c) its relative importance (on a 1-5 scale) to the total job. Management tasks, for example, can vary significantly on all three parameters:

- **Managing a Strategic Plan:** (a) eight years (b) occasionally (c) four.
- **Managing a Budget:** (a) three years (b) routinely (c) five.
- **Managing Meeting Merchandise:** (a) two years (b) occasionally (c) two.

The authors also arrived at some overall statistics for the skills. For instance, 62.5 percent of them are ranked at the highest level of importance (five), and more than two-thirds are ranked at five or fewer years for mastery. "Some of

Janet Sperstad, CMP
 Director, Meeting and
 Event Management
 Degree Program
 Madison College
 Madison, WI



“So there wasn’t anything we threw out from the CMP curriculum; we just improved the continuity with MBECs.”

the skills a junior planner could master in the first couple of years,” says Cecil. “You’re not going to be expected to write a crisis management plan the first year, but as you move up your career path you should be able to identify risk and eventually put together a strategic risk management plan for your organization. So we give you milestones to benchmark yourself against in a career path.”

Another academic participant on the Task Force was Janet Sperstad, CMP, director, Meeting and Event Management Degree Program at Madison College in Wisconsin. “In the past our profession has focused a lot on logistics,” says Sperstad. But in developing MBECs, “the areas that came out much more in depth than we thought were marketing and project management. So I think it allows planners to be more flexible in defining what they do and their role.”

Sperstad’s 25 years in the meetings industry include working on the corporate side for Monsanto and currently serving on the CMP board. The CIC revamped the CMP Blueprint in June to become the CMP International Standards, taking both IEMS and MBECs into account. “We went through all the competencies of MBECs and adopted many of them into the CMP body of knowledge,” Sperstad explains. “There were just a few categories, for example strategic planning and financial management, which we split apart and renamed. And we fine-tuned and extracted (from the MBECs skills)

based on the level of someone from 0–5 years experience, since you need to have three years’ experience to sit for the CMP exam. So there wasn’t anything we threw out from the CMP curriculum; we just improved the continuity with MBECs.”

The standards also will eventually become part of MPI’s CMM curriculum, according to Rogers. “My guess is that when MBECs is revised, which I think will be a lot sooner than a two-year window, it will be along the same lines as the CMP International Standards, because we don’t want people to be confused.”

Speaking in One Voice

Indeed, the major meeting industry organizations are “really trying to be more cohesive, speaking in one voice, one body of knowledge,” says Sperstad. Even the CIC’s APEX glossary is referenced in MBECs, and the PCMA’s Principles of Professional Performance was used as a source. “One thing I think has been great that’s come out of this Body of Knowledge committee is the collaboration not only between the team, but also between the different associations,” Cummins remarks. “There seems to be more collaboration, because they realize that we have to have common goals. We agree that we’re not everything to everybody, and we need to take a little from every association. So we incorporated different chains of education into an overall picture for the industry.”

MPI also is aiming to release the MBECs Curriculum Guide this spring, and “several academic institutions have revised their curriculum based on the standards,” according to Scaillet. Cecil, for one, says she has started to assess how the standards can support event-planning courses at Indiana University’s School of Physical Education and Tourism. “We want our students to have the skills and the knowledge necessary to go into the marketplace and be successful. So we’re identifying gaps in our

curriculum [with the help of MBECs], figuring out if we need a specific course in risk management, technology and so on. And students themselves will start benchmarking themselves against” the standards, she affirms.

Changes in Academia and the Work Force

It’s a sign of the times in academia, where meeting planning is growing as an area of focus. “Many programs had one class in meeting planning; now we’re seeing programs expand to multiple courses with tracks, minors, certificates and emphases, and some event-planning degree programs,” Cecil observes. “That results in a real change in the work force, where many students are coming in with that base knowledge.” Sperstad would like to see meeting planning not be limited to schools of hospitality and tour-



Barbara Cummins
 CMP, CMM
 Director
 Office of the Senior
 Partner and Chairman
 PricewaterhouseCoopers
 Fort Worth, TX

“I deal with people who know exactly what it means to be a CPA, and the more we can elevate and standardize our business, it’s going to do nothing but help us.”

ism: “Hopefully we’ll see more degrees in the school of business, and with MBECs there will be more unification with what is being taught for the next generation, to what is out in the marketplace for employers, and to what is offered in the field for continuing education.”

Yet MBECs is not only intended to become part of the education pipeline; it also is of immediate value to corporations, for example, by serving as a basis for job descriptions in event planning.

“We have already some of our corporate planner members who gave these to their HR departments to inform recruitment, training needs and retention,” notes Scaillet.

Cummins gives a case in point for PricewaterhouseCoopers. “We have used the document as a guide in developing job descriptions and evaluating employees: in order to get from level A to level B you need these kinds of skills. And I do think it’s very valuable when recruiters can look at the standards, so they really know what we do and can use the information in their interviews.”

Sperstad and Cecil are developing a categorization scheme of planner job types, “a stratification from coordinator to manager to director around knowledge and skill level,” Sperstad explains.

The Beauty of MBECs

The standards also are of use to the planner writing or rewriting his or her SOPs, providing “a framework to think of the tasks that need to be included or

excluded by choice,” says Rogers, “and how to do the division of labor across all those different areas and skillsets. Which things do I turn over to my junior planner? And the beauty of MBECs is that it tells you how long you had to be in the industry to master certain skills.”

It also can enlighten a senior planner on any skills he or she may need to brush up on or acquire. “If you’ve been in the industry 20-plus years, there may be areas that weren’t necessarily on the radar when you were in your junior or mid-stage,” says Cecil. “Sustainability and social media would be examples. The standards give you an opportunity to identify some gaps where perhaps you can get some additional certification or training. They encourage you to stay current.”

Lastly, MBECs serves to validate acquired experience, documenting in detail what a professional meeting planner brings to a corporation, thus increasing his or her credibility and respect among upper management.

Getting the Word Out

The MBECs initiative has come a long way, yet it is “far from being over,” Scaillet says. MPI is busy raising awareness of the standards with presentations at conferences such as those of ICHRIE (International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education).

“We have also run several articles, interviews and sessions through our channels and will continue to do so. Obviously, the fact that CIC has endorsed the standards and aligned the CMP International Standards blueprint with them is an essential component driving industry-wide adoption. The two main certifications in the industry (CMP and CMM) will be fully aligned with them, and this should give credibility for the industry to rally behind the standards.”

He adds that MPI training programs based on MBECs are being deployed in the U.S. as well as Canada, France, Greater China, Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, Qatar and soon Brazil. The “rally,” it seems, will be heard far and wide. **C&IT**

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Asia-Pacific

The Fast-Growing Region Is Becoming a Meetings Powerhouse

By John Buchanan

A night view of Marina Bay Sands from Singapore's Merlion statue.



When it comes to meeting destinations, hot spots have historically ebbed and flowed with the regularity of tides. No particular wave of popularity has endured for long, as tastes and preferences of the moment shifted across the globe over the past four decades.

Today, however, a genuine sea change is afoot. That's because not only does the Asia-Pacific region offer some of the most exotic destinations on Earth — but it can also claim elite status as the most important and fastest-growing geographic sector of an ever more global economy.

And that, combined with its unique allure and long list of diverse options, is making it an emerging powerhouse in the meetings industry, too.

As a result, major international suppliers such as Starwood Hotels & Resorts have made major commitments in the region. Last November, CEO Frits van

Paasschen announced that Starwood had surpassed the milestone of 200 Asia-Pacific properties with a flurry of recent openings in China, India, Thailand and Malaysia. "The opening of our 200th hotel in Asia Pacific underscores the vitality of this market and its importance to our future growth," says van Paasschen.

Starwood plans to operate 320 hotels in Asia-Pacific by 2014. Other major hoteliers such as Hilton are following suit, even if at a slower pace.

One of the key reasons Asia-Pacific is thriving is that global companies are moving toward truly global meeting strategies now. "A trend for global clients is that they are looking more than ever now for brand consistency and customer experiences," says Rhonda Brewer, vice president, group business manager, sales at Maritz Travel Co. "They want to make sure that on a global basis they can make

sure they are consistent across the board. And that means that a lot of companies are doing things more now on a regional basis. And that regional work used to be more independent. But now it's more global, and it's being driven by headquarters to support the brand as a whole."

SAS, the giant global business software provider, exemplifies that trend. "We host a large event in Asia-Pacific each year," says Ken Bland, the company's Cary, NC-based events program manager. "It's a major, invitation-only customer conference with 500 to 600 attendees from the region. And over the past four years, we have used India, Singapore and Hong Kong as the destinations. Last year, we returned to Singapore. And each of those destinations was very unique and very different from one another. Each one offered a very unique experience."

Bland is not alone in finding Asia-

Pacific appealing. According to data compiled by Meeting Professionals International (MPI) last year, the number of planners who cited increased bookings in Asia-Pacific increased by 28 percent, to 1,900. "That's just because Asia-Pacific is where the business is right now," says MPI president and CEO Bruce MacMillan. "It's the primary area of growth on the planet."

Experience Counts

At the same time, however, Asia-Pacific offers an additional draw — its experiential component, says Maritz Travel Co.'s director of marketing Jim Ruzsala. "You don't fly people to Asia-Pacific to spend all their time in a meeting room," he says. "You incorporate the destination into the meeting objective and content to take advantage of a more integrated program, versus the traditional model."

And, adds Brewer, that experiential element is particularly important to high-end incentive programs or senior-level executive retreats. "The experience is extremely important in terms of being able to deliver on your business goals, because the experience is what is going to make the meeting memorable," she says. "It makes all the difference in terms of engagement."

However, says Ruzsala, the engagement equation is also different in selecting an Asia-Pacific destination. "It's less about picking a destination and then getting everything else about the meeting to conform," he says. "It's more about making sure that everything else conforms to the specific needs of that meeting, based on the audience, their interests, and how you get away from the 'same old, same old' to make sure you break through the noise and find something that has long-term value."

Beyond that consideration is a third key factor, says SAS senior campaigns and events specialist Janice LeBeau, who works alongside Bland to plan the company's annual excursion to the region.

And that is the extraordinary commitment to truly exemplary service that is ingrained in the cultures of Asia-Pacific and goes far beyond people simply doing their jobs well. "As a first-time planner in Asia-Pacific, I was definitely surprised by that," LeBeau says.



"We have used India, Singapore and Hong Kong. And each of those destinations was very unique and very different from one another."

Ken Bland, Events Program Manager
SAS, Cary, NC

China

While Asia-Pacific is constantly gaining momentum as a go-to region, no individual destination within it is hotter than China.

"The meeting infrastructure China is building is just amazing," says MPI's MacMillan, who recently hosted back-to-back board retreats and executive meetings in Beijing and Shanghai. "And now, they're also making investments in their humanware, because they realize they have to meet a global standard so that groups will come there from all over the world."

As a key part of that effort, MPI has been working in China to extend CMP certification there, as well as its own Global Certificate in Meetings and Business Events (GCMBE) program.

That's important, MacMillan says, because China is also attracting more and more incentive business from around the world, including the U.S. "The cultural aspect of China is absolutely fascinating," he says. "It's a 5,000-year-old culture and civilization. It is not only relevant to the past, but it's relevant to the future. And it is much more relevant internationally now than it has ever been. That's why their meeting and incentive business is skyrocketing."

For SAS's Hong Kong meeting in 2010, hosted at the 399-room Four Seasons Hong Kong, LeBeau enjoyed another pleasant surprise. "What really stood out for me was how cosmopolitan, how metropolitan Hong Kong was," she says. "It was just an awesome city. For example, there are these amazing laser shows going on at night. And they really use their architecture more than just architecture. They use it as an entertainment feature."

She and Bland also found the food culture interesting and exotic. "The food was very good," LeBeau says. "They eat

a lot of fish, including at all three meals of the day. And that was something very different for me. But the food at the Four Seasons was very good."

India

India rivals China as one of the largest, most diverse and most fascinating places in the world. And like China, it boasts a very old culture.

The SAS meeting a few years back was held in Mumbai because it is a growth market. "One of the things we look at from a corporate point of view is where the growing markets are for our business, which is business analytics," Bland says. "And we are the category leader in that market. So we always look for growth markets, and then work with our contacts in that country to host the event there. We network with the local office to determine how we can meet their needs. For us, that is an important part of the process."

Singapore

Although virtually all of Asia-Pacific is attracting more meetings now, perhaps no single destination is more well established or revered than Singapore, a city-state located off the Malay Peninsula.

Today, it is both a high-tech hub and global business center. But for meeting planners, it is best known for its incomparable level of service. "The service in Singapore goes way beyond anything I've ever seen in the U.S.," says Dawn Slykhouse, president of Santa Clara, CA-based Face to Face Events Inc. She hosted a five-day meeting there earlier this year for 1,000 global attendees from a major electronics client. "They are all about taking care of their guests. They are there to make sure you feel welcome and assist you with any need you have. And they want you to experience everything Singapore has to offer."

“The service in Singapore goes way beyond anything I’ve ever seen in the U.S. They are there to make sure you feel welcome and assist you with any need you have.”

Dawn Slykhouse, President
Face to Face Events Inc., Santa Clara, CA



As her venue, Slykhouse and her client selected the new Marina Bay Sands, which opened in 2010 and features nearly 2,500 rooms and suites, as well as the 1.3-million-sf Sands Expo and Convention Center, sister venue to owner-developer Sheldon Adelson’s Las Vegas complex. The company also owns and operates The Venetian Macao and the Sands Macao in the People’s Republic of China Special Administrative Region of Macao. In addition, Adelson’s company owns the Four Seasons Hotel Macao. “We have a technology relationship with Sands Corp. in Las Vegas,” says Bland. “So, once the Marina Bay Sands in Singapore was open, and we had a chance to use it, we did. It’s one of the hottest spots in Singapore. It’s the place to be and just an amazing venue.”

In addition to Marina Bay Sands, there’s another big reason why Bland is so fond of Singapore after two experiences there. “Even though it has a very interesting culture, you also feel like you could be walking down the street in Chicago,” he says. “You wouldn’t really know you were in Singapore, except for looking at the people. You see McDonald’s and a lot of other symbols of the U.S., so it’s a very comfortable destination to be in for a lot of people, especially from the U.S.”

Cultural Challenges

Because Asia-Pacific offers a range of fascinating and compelling cultures, it also poses some unique challenges for planners unfamiliar with some of their more practically relevant peculiarities. And although they can be equally potent for unprepared planners, they also vary from country to country.

“The Asia-Pacific region is highly diverse,” says Newtown Square, PA-based cross-cultural expert Terri Morrison, author of the *Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands*

series of books that explore and explain such cultural mysteries and conundrums. “South Korea is different from Japan or Indonesia. There are significant cultural variables in each country.”

For example, negotiating styles are quite different from those found in Indonesia or Malaysia. And by comparison, Chinese negotiators are so forceful that they can come off to the uninitiated as hostile. “They can seem very abrupt sometimes,” she says. “But that’s actually because they are such strong negotiators, they can use blunt phrases that can almost make it seem like you’re coming to blows. And they will also know your weaknesses. So you have to understand that and act accordingly to create a relationship. You might have what seems like a minor confrontation while you’re negotiating. But in China, that is perceived as normal. In Japan, they are also very good negotiators. But they would consider anything rude or confrontational to be shameful, so they would not do that.”

But one broad cultural component of Asia-Pacific is how final deals and contracts are negotiated and finalized. “In the U.S.,” Morrison says, “we can agree to basic things initially very easily. You’ll almost get a superficial kind of agreement, like ‘Yes, I’ll do that for you.’ In Asia-Pacific, they want to analyze every aspect of what you’re asking for and be comfortable with all of them. Then they want to make sure that the contract is in accordance with every aspect of that agreement before they actually agree to the terms. So, it takes longer. However, once they say yes, they’re in all the way, and you’ll get everything you asked for without any problem.”

Yet another caution for neophyte planners of Asia-Pacific meetings is gifting or giveaways for attendees or visitors to exhibits. “There are things you avoid,”

Morrison explains. “For example, one of the things I’ve noticed is that planners or hosts will bring things with them as giveaways that have been made in another country in Asia, and they’ll then try to give them away somewhere else. But, for example, if you’re in Japan, and you give away an item made in China, that’s a horrendous mistake. And in China and some other places in Asia, you want to avoid items that are white. That’s because in China, those are things that have connotations of death or a funeral.”

Finally, she advises, avoid anything with sharp edges, such as knives. “In Asia-Pacific, they signify the cutting off of the relationship.”

Practical Considerations

As a planner, Slykhouse cites two other important issues related to Asia-Pacific meetings.

“The big one is managing risk,” she says. “It’s much more complex than for a meeting in the U.S., because you need to understand the overall level of risk in the specific destination. You not only have to make sure it’s safe for your attendees, but you also need to know what kind of insurance you should have if a disaster happens. You also have to know how to take care of the tax issues and especially the value added tax (VAT). And every country has their own individual rules for VAT. So, you really need the help of an expert to deal with that.”

The other important issue, she says, is shipping. “You have to make sure you have someone who knows how to navigate customs within the destination,” she says. “They not only have to make sure your stuff gets through. They also have to make sure it gets delivered on time. And again, every country has its own rules and regulations, so you need someone who specifically understands the rules in the destination you’re using.”

Enthusiastic assistance, from tourist boards, venues, convention facilities and other vendors, is by no means unique to Singapore. It’s a trans-regional characteristic that has helped make Asia-Pacific a hot spot for the ages. And the future.

For more on Asia-Pacific meetings, see page 10. **C&IT**



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Colorado A Peek at What's Happening By Karen Brost

The "I See What You Mean" Blue Bear peers into the Colorado Convention Center, with The Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center in the background. The 40-foot bear's curiosity is a reminder that when people meet, exciting things can happen.

According to the Colorado Tourism Office, "A world of scenic wonders awaits in a land called Colorado." That's certainly true. These scenic wonders include more than 50 mountain peaks that top 14,000 feet along with hundreds of lakes and rivers, so when it comes to providing a spectacular backdrop for meetings, Colorado is a natural choice.

Colorado Springs

Jan Lane, director of purchasing and firm event coordinator for the law firm Stinson Morrison Hecker LLP, found her spectacular views at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs. This elegant, historic resort has earned the distinction of being the longest-running consecutive winner of both the AAA Five Diamond and the Forbes/Mobil Travel Guide Five Star awards.

The Broadmoor offers 700 rooms and suites plus 44 cottage bedrooms and 185,000 sf of meeting space. For groups that need a larger room block or a wider variety of accommodations, the hotel offers The Broadmoor Connection, a unique partnership with other hotels in the area, including Cheyenne Mountain Resort, Hilton DoubleTree World Arena and the Crowne Plaza Colorado Springs Hotel.

Hall's program was a partner retreat that combined business with socializing for 171 guests. "It's a beautiful resort," she says. She appreciates The Broadmoor's efforts to preserve its heritage. "So many places modernize so much. The one thing The Broadmoor has done is maintain the original feel."

The Broadmoor has begun an enhancement project for Southlake, one of the original five buildings that date back to the resort's opening in 1918. The changes, which are expected to be completed in early spring, include the addition of balconies, a new foyer, lighting, carpeting and furnishings. The enhancements will give the building a fresh, new look while preserving its historic ambience.

Hall described some of her group's activities. "Friday afternoon we had an all-partner meeting, and then Friday evening we had cocktails out on the terrace by the lake, and then we had a nice plated dinner in the most formal ballroom there is there. It gave (our event) a lot of class, a lot of history, with the age of the resort. One of the most wonderful parts of the whole program is that they closed off the Golf Club dining room and gave it to us as a hospitality suite, so that was really perfect. Everybody just kind of congregated there and stayed up too late."

She also organized an afternoon of recreation for her group. She planned a golf tournament, and she worked with destination management company Rocky Mountain Connections to schedule a choice of other activities. "I had an excursion to Pikes Peak. I had an excursion to Garden of the Gods. There was hiking. They went to the Air Force Academy. The destination company took all of these different small groups to whatever they wanted to do."

Hall was pleased with her group's first experience at The Broadmoor. "It was very, very nice. I had no complaints whatsoever, and nobody else did." The best testimonial of all may be the fact that the group immediately contracted to go back again in 2013.

Late last year, the hotel launched The Broadmoor Meetings Blog at www.thebroadmoormeetingsblog.com. The blog is designed to help meeting professionals leverage the property's capabilities to the fullest and make their meetings more productive.

The 316-room Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs completed a \$20 million resort-wide renovation last year in honor of its 25th anniversary. In addition to renovations to the guest rooms and common areas, more than 40,000 sf of meeting space was revamped. The resort is certified by the International Association of Conference Centers (IAAC) and offers 38 meeting rooms including a tiered amphitheater.

Historic Hotel Debuts

The Mining Exchange, a Wyndham Grand Hotel in downtown Colorado Springs, debuts this month. The 117-room boutique hotel is housed in three historic buildings faithfully restored to maintain original architectural embellishments as well as the charm and tradition of the property's glory days more than a century ago as a stock and commodities trading center. Modern luxuries in the guest rooms include granite desks, oversized showers, 42-inch flat-screen HDTVs, high-speed Internet access and more. The 10,000 sf of meeting space boasts the only downtown function space with hardwood floors, exposed brick walls and windows. On the second floor is an indoor/outdoor terrace event space. In addition to on-property dining and imbibing at Springs Orleans and the Lobby Bar, there are a multitude of eateries, shops and entertainment venues within walking distance. The Mining Exchange is currently accepting group reservations for June 1, 2012 and beyond.

The Colorado Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau recently launched SpeedRFP, a universal online RFP system that makes it easy for meeting planners to submit requests for proposals (RFPs) directly to full-service properties in the Colorado Springs area. The RFPs are then stored on the system so planners can access and modify them for future use.

Frontier Airlines has announced that



The Broadmoor's West Course is one of three championship golf courses at the five-star Colorado Springs resort. Last year, the hotel launched The Broadmoor Meetings Blog.



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it will begin offering nonstop service from Colorado Springs Airport (COS) to four key U.S. cities. Beginning in May, the airline will offer flights to and from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX), Portland International Airport (PDX) and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA).

Denver

As the largest city in Colorado, Denver is a prime meeting destination with a wide range of amenities. The city offers easy air access through Denver International Airport (DIA) which is located just 23 miles northeast of downtown Denver and is served by 30 airlines.

Dee Burner, president of the event planning firm Burner and Associates Inc., says that Denver's location, its people and the beauty of the Colorado Rocky Mountains are what make the city an ideal meeting destination. "Denver is also a year-round destination. Some of the top ski resorts in the world are within an hour's drive, and it has the best mountain biking, river rafting and hiking in the summer."

She also notes that downtown Denver has more than 150 restaurants offering virtually any cuisine imaginable, as well as nightlife and one of the most prestigious performing arts centers in the U.S., The Denver Center for the Performing Arts.

Burner says, "It's one of the most accessible cities from anywhere, conveniently located in the middle of the country, a modern city with a Western flair, and it has the nicest and most friendly people around."

High on the Hyatt

Amy Kreps, senior corporate events manager for the information services company IHS Inc. in Englewood, CO, plans a sales conference in Denver each year that attracts 1,200 attendees from around the globe. "We have it at the Hyatt Regency in Denver, and this past year we also used the convention center," she explains.

The Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center offers 1,100 guest rooms and more than 60,000 sf of function space. The property is located adjacent to the convention center. "The Hyatt works really well for our sales conference space-wise," she notes. "The hotel staff there does a phenomenal job with customer service and support. I've been very happy with that particular hotel. It has lots of light, and all of the prefunction and common spaces are really nice.

"The food and beverage there is outstanding," she adds. "The chef there is the best chef I've ever worked with. He's very accommodating and open to ideas. He's great." Kreps says she has joked with the staff that she's not coming back unless her favorite chef is still there.

Transporting 1,200 attendees to and from the airport is a big task, and Kreps works with the destination management company the Workshop to handle ground transportation. "They just take over and do everything for you. It's seamless. They do an amazing job."

Kreps' group used the Colorado Convention Center for an expo and some breakout sessions. "It worked out well," she notes. "It was the first time for our colleagues to have to go to another space for meetings, but we didn't get any negative comments on our survey."

The Colorado Convention Center offers 2.2 million sf of meeting and exhibit space. The center is easy to find, thanks to the playful, 40 foot sculpture of a blue bear that is peeking into the building's lobby. Titled "I See What You Mean" as a nod to the exchange of ideas that occurs at meetings, the sculpture was designed by Denver Artist Lawrence Argent.

Kreps adds that two other Denver properties have impressed her with outstanding service: the Four Seasons Hotel Denver and The Ritz-Carlton, Denver. "They have gorgeous sleeping rooms and banquet facilities that incorporate a Colorado look and atmosphere," she says. "As usual, from the business center attendant to the banquet captains, these hotels exceeded our expectations."

Burner also has used the Hyatt/Colorado Convention Center combination for a 450-attendee franchise owners convention for the Qdoba Mexican Grill restaurant chain. She rates the Hyatt among the top five convention/business hotels she's ever had the pleasure to work with. She says, "The Colorado Convention Center, recently expanded, is beautiful, high-tech and has some of the best staff in the world, which



"I've worked with several hotels in Denver, and they're all very accommodating and easygoing. Even with changes to your contracts or your program, they've been very easy to work with."

Amy Kreps, Senior Corporate Events Manager
IHS Inc., Englewood, CO

shows when you consider that Denver is now rated as one of the top 10 cities in the world to hold conventions."

Kleinfelder, a science, architecture and engineering consulting firm headquartered in San Diego, has also chosen the Hyatt based on its close proximity to the convention center. The company moved its annual professional development and technical training seminar to Denver because of the city's excellent airlift. Nearly 900 company employees attend the event.

"Our event has a lot of people flying in for a compressed period of time," says Kleinfelder's Dan Kurkoski, MBA, ACB. By day, he's a senior financial analyst, but he also serves as the administrative lead for the annual seminar. "As such, we chose to move our event to Denver back in 2008 because of the availability of flights across the country that allowed us to move such a large amount of people in a short period of time. Also, we usually hold the event in February, which ironically is not the worst month for weather in Denver."

"Our event is an internal company event, which means nearly all of the attendees are our own employees. This is a true technical conference, where our employees submit abstracts and present selected papers, posters and practicums. Our event this year required 10 large breakout rooms and several smaller breakouts, which is why the Colorado Convention Center was an ideal choice. All of this occurs within about 33 hours, starting with lunch on Friday and ending with our banquet on Saturday. (Then) attendees begin their journeys home, some starting with a red-eye right after the banquet."

Hyatt Hotels operates another downtown property, the 516-room Grand Hyatt Denver. Since both Hyatt hotels offer a combined total of more than 120,600 sf of meeting space and 1,616 guest rooms in the downtown area, the company has joined the sales teams of both properties to create a single point of contact for planners.

Burner also notes that "offsite locations for events abound in downtown Denver, including the Denver Museum of Art, Sports Authority Field at Mile High (the home of the Denver Broncos), Coors Field (home of the Colorado Rockies). I have staged offsite events at all of these locations. I've also done a dine-around in downtown Denver where attendees were able to experience 10 different types of cuisine in one night."

New to Downtown

Downtown Denver is investing \$14 million to enhance 14th

"It's a beautiful resort. So many places modernize so much. The one thing The Broadmoor has done is maintain the original feel."

Jan W. Lane, Director of Purchasing and Firm Event Coordinator, Stinson Morrison Heckler LLP
Kansas City, MO

Street, a pedestrian-friendly corridor that includes the Colorado Convention Center, the Denver Performing Arts Complex, the Hyatt Regency at Colorado Convention Center and other hotels. Sidewalks are being expanded to attract more outdoor dining and shopping opportunities, and improvements are also being made to lighting, landscaping and signage.

The historic Colorado National Bank Building in downtown Denver will soon be home to a new 230-room Marriott Renaissance hotel that is scheduled to open this year. One of the most unique features of the hotel's event space will be a meeting room inside the bank's vault.

By 2016, a comprehensive multibillion-dollar transit expansion project called FasTracks will connect downtown Denver to DIA and the city of Golden. Plans call for 122 miles of new commuter rail and light rail, and 18 miles of bus rapid transit.

Denver's Union Station will serve as the hub for the new rail lines. Redevelopment plans also call for the construction

The Mining Exchange, A Wyndham Grand Hotel, Colorado Springs

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of a new 130-room hotel that will occupy the second and third floors of the Union Station building. The new hotel, which is scheduled to open in the spring of 2014, will be affiliated with the historic Oxford Hotel, which is located across the street. They will be the only hotels in Denver's hip, 26-square-block dining and entertainment district known as "LoDo."

Gaylord Entertainment has announced plans to develop a new 1,500-room hotel and conference center in Aurora near DIA. Current plans call for the property to open in 2015. It will contain 400,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space and an atrium, which will offer dramatic mountain views that span from Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park down to Pikes Peak in Colorado Springs.

In late April, the \$110 million History Colorado Center will make its debut. The goal of this new Smithsonian affiliate is to make learning about Colorado history fun through interactive experiences such as a "Jules Verne-like" time

"Denver is a year-round destination. Some of the top ski resorts in the world are within an hour's drive, and it has the best mountain biking, river rafting and biking in the summer."

Dee Burner, President
Burner and Associates, Dumont, CO

machine, traveling across the plains in a Model T Ford, and soaring off the world's first ski jump in Steamboat Springs. The museum will offer multiple spaces for corporate events, including an auditorium.

Mountain Resorts

Colorado's mountain resort areas offer additional choices for meeting venues that combine spectacular Rocky Mountain views with plenty of recreational opportunities. One of them is the 292-room Vail Cascade Resort & Spa in Vail that contains a 45,000-sf conference center. When it's time for recreation, groups have plenty of options depending on the season, ranging from mountaintop picnics to white-water rafting and sleigh rides.

Vail Cascade is part of Destination Hotels & Resorts and participates in the company's Destination Earth green meetings program, which includes a long list of initiatives the resort has implemented. For example, recycling stations have been placed in meeting rooms and white boards are used instead of flip charts when possible. Leftover binders and other conference supplies are donated or reused. Condiments are offered in service vessels instead of individual packets, and disposable plates and cutlery have been eliminated.

Vail Cascade offers other environmentally friendly options for an additional charge. For example, organic foods and beverages can be selected as well as sustainable meat, fish, pork



Photo courtesy of Vail Cascade Resort & Spa

Vail Cascade Resort & Spa respects its Rocky Mountain home by participating in the Destination Earth green meetings program.

and chicken. Groups also can purchase Renewable Energy Certificates, called RECs or Green Tags, from a nonprofit organization to offset three-quarters of the emissions from their events. The resort also offers free parking and charging stations for overnight guests who arrive in hybrid vehicles.

The Keystone Conference Center in Keystone, CO, offers more than 100,000 sf of event space, making it the largest meeting facility in the Colorado Rockies. Wireless Internet is available throughout the meeting rooms and in the common areas.

As a steward of the surrounding National Forest Service land, the conference center has put several conservation programs in place. These include the installation of energy-efficient lighting and recycling and composting programs.

The Keystone Conference Center is located in the Conference Village which includes the 152-room Keystone Lodge & Spa. Shuttle service is available to the ski lifts, and the lodge offers easy access to other recreational activities such as rock climbing, mountain biking, white-water rafting and ice skating.

Kreps has done site inspections at mountain resorts, and she has been impressed by what she's seen. "There's a Park Hyatt in Beaver Creek and a Ritz in Bachelor Gulch. They're beautiful hotels. From my experience, the staff there has been great, even when they don't know I'm a planner."

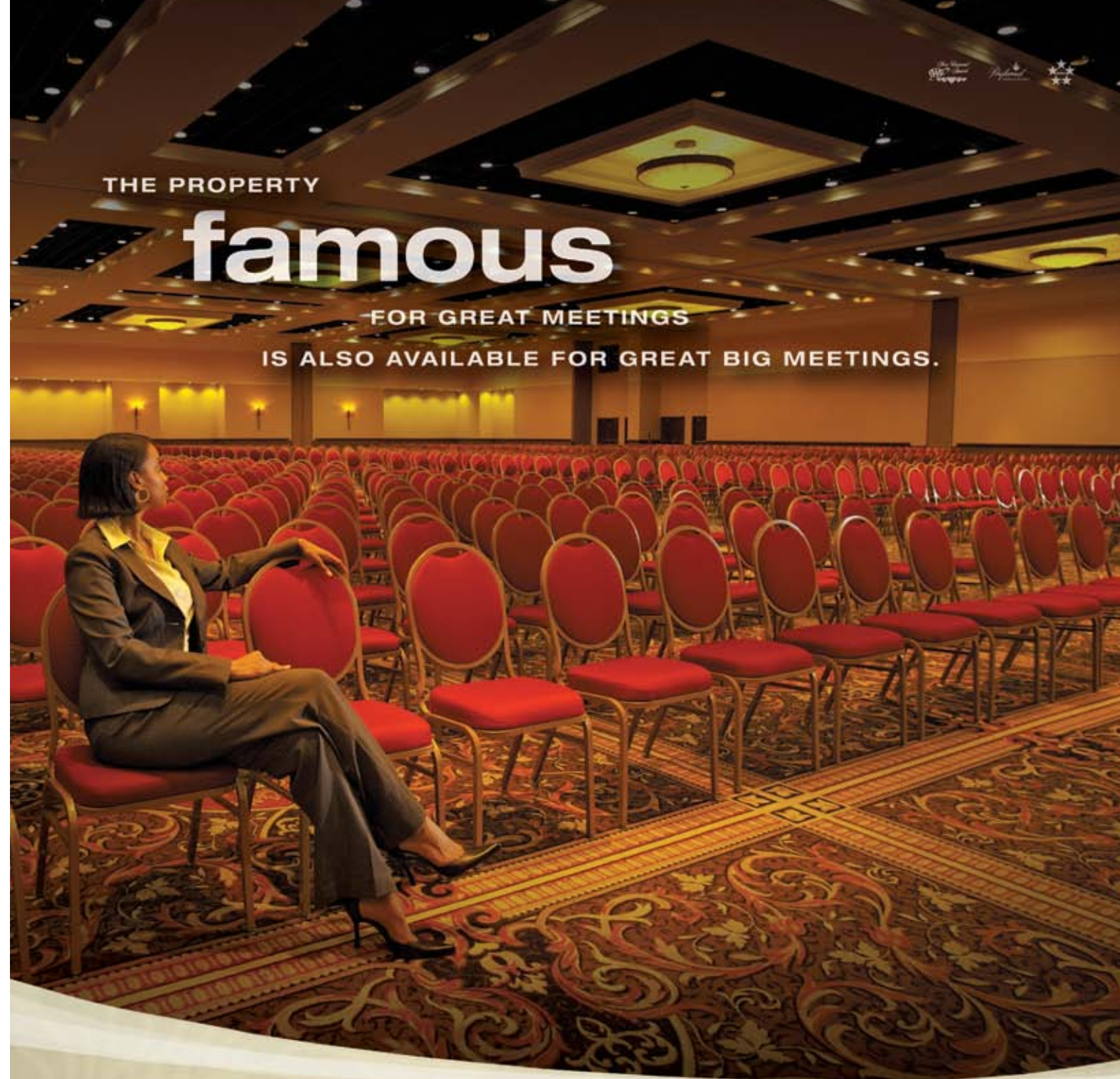
The Park Hyatt Resort and Spa, located in the heart of Beaver Creek Village, offers 190 guest rooms and more than 20,000 sf of event space. The Ritz-Carlton in nearby Bachelor Gulch contains 180 guest rooms and more than 13,000 sf of event space.

Hospitality, Colorado-Style

"I've worked with several hotels in Denver, and they're all very accommodating and easygoing," Kreps notes. "Even with changes to your contracts or your program, they've been very easy to work with."

She describes another advantage of holding meetings in Colorado. "Our colleagues take advantage of extending their stay and going to the mountains or just staying in Denver and going to basketball games or whatever event might be taking place. They really research the town and look forward to coming to Denver."

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Southern California

Why SoCal Is So Ready for Your Meetings

Two trends emerge from Southern California's meetings industry: convention center renovation and eco-consciousness. The latter is not particularly surprising, since California has always been known for healthy living, and that goes hand-in-hand with "green" living. One city in the region, Pasadena, exemplifies both of these trends with its convention center. Not only did the facility complete a \$150 million renovation and expansion project just a few years ago, but it has now been awarded LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold Certification, making it one of only three U.S. convention centers to earn the designation to date.

Yet meeting in Southern California is about much more than business sessions and environmental stewardship. Corporate groups are enticed by the multicultural environs of Los Angeles, the thrilling rides and tours at Universal Studios Hollywood, idyllic escapes like Coronado Island and Palm Springs, and, of course, the magic of Disneyland.

By George Seli

Ahlers adds, "The new Grand Plaza is only phase one of a two-phased expansion. The second phase is the development of a quarter-million sf of flexible meeting space, which will be available in 2015. State-of-the-art features and a contemporary look will further increase Anaheim's desirability."

The LEED-certified convention center also has much to offer eco-conscious groups, including a new 2,000-sf garden with an array of herbs on top of its Arena Box Office. The roof garden's harvest will supply Aramark, the Anaheim Convention Center's food caterer, with fresh herbs to be used during the year for a variety of food functions. Meanwhile, the city's Honda Center is breaking ground this fall on a grand development of its own: a 12,000-sf Grand Terrace and a 250-seat full-service restaurant.

Complementing the Anaheim Convention Center's green initiatives, The Hilton Anaheim, a 1,500-room property offering 120,000 sf of meeting space, has recently become the largest hotel in Southern California to be awarded the Green Seal Bronze certification.

The 969-room Disneyland Hotel (which recently completed a two-year renovation) and the 745-room Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa (20,000 sf of meeting space) are now Anaheim's only AAA Four Diamond hotels. Disneyland Hotel, which offers 120,000 sf of meeting space, was the site of Ottawa, Canada-based Harris Computer

"The Grand Plaza's impact on corporate meeting business will be huge."

Charles Ahlers, President
Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau

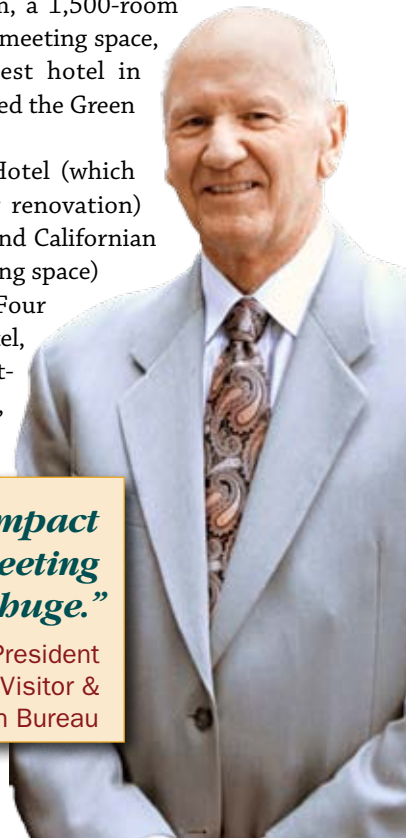


Photo courtesy of Anaheim/Orange County CVB



Terry Valliquette, HR coordinator and meeting planner with Harris Computer Systems, poses with Disney's Chip & Dale during the company's conference last November at the Disneyland Hotel.

Systems' first Disneyland conference, held last November. The customer-facing event brought in 686 attendees, 110 partners and 110 staff, according to Terry Valliquette, HR coordinator and meeting planner for the utility billing software company. The group actually overflowed the hotel, and the 481-room Disney's Paradise Pier Hotel was used as well. "It was wonderful that they could accommodate that. I actually didn't even know we had oversold the hotel, and the hotel was just taking care of moving people to the other property. It was seamless," remarks Valliquette. The event included 32 breakouts per day, and groups were housed in three separate towers. Breaks were arranged in the towers so participants didn't have to return to the ballroom.

The Harris group held its offsite banquet at Disneyland's Stage 17 and bought out Soarin' Over California. "We also had a private viewing area for our 'World of Color' show. The area was black and they draped it with white spandex, and we had the light show and a DJ. The energy was phenomenal. I've never seen our customers up and dancing like that before," says Valliquette, who worked with the Disney Event Group to stage offsite activities. "We also worked with the Disney Institute. One of their speakers did a 45-minute presentation at our opening address, focusing on Disney customer service, and it was absolutely incredible. He was very entertaining."

Disney California Adventure Park will be completing its five-year expansion this summer with the unveiling of Cars Land and the Buena Vista Street entry into the park. Buena Vista Street will feature Red Car Trolleys, inspired by the transportation system that once served Southern California, and the Carthay Circle Theatre, modeled after the site of the 1937 world premiere of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." Last summer, the park debuted The Little Mermaid, Ariel's Undersea Adventure, which can be rented for private events for up to 4,000 attendees.

Los Angeles

The centerpiece of the "City of Angels" is the Staples Center and the adjacent L.A. Live sports and entertainment district, which includes the Grammy Museum and Nokia Theatre. Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) recently announced plans to build a new pro football stadium Farmers Field next to the LEED-EB Gold certified Los Angeles Convention Center

(LACC), the largest solar energy-generating convention center in North America. AEG also has plans to expand and improve the LACC with a new West Hall that will connect the existing South Hall with Farmers Field.

Across from the Staples Center and the LACC is the recently opened Icon LA, a contemporary restaurant and event venue. The rooftop lounge can seat up to 350 attendees for a formal sit-down dinner, or up to 500 reception style. Also downtown is the historic Belasco Theater, which was graced with a \$12 million, three-year restoration and reopened in March of last year. The venue features a towering domed ceiling, multi-tiered balcony and a 200-attendee capacity ballroom. Another recently renovated theater in L.A. is Grauman's Chinese Theatre, which can seat more than 1,000 attendees.

For a different kind of visual experience altogether, planners might book the new Dinosaur Hall that has opened at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. Located downtown in Exposition Park, the museum is the oldest cultural institution in L.A. and the largest natural and historical museum in the U.S. A 25-foot-long Triceratops greets participants who enter the gallery, which can accommodate 1,200 attendees inside and 600 outside.

San Diego

San Diego has embarked on phase one of its \$28.6 million North Embarcadero Visionary Plan, a two-year overhaul of the North Embarcadero waterfront district along San Diego Bay in the downtown area. It will include the construction of Ruocco Park, near the intersection of Pacific Highway and Harbor Drive. Another major improvement project was begun last fall, when Westfield University Town Center, one of San Diego's premier shopping destinations, broke ground on a \$180 million renovation and expansion project slated for completion by December. The phase one revitalization plans are designed to meet LEED Gold certification standards for environmental sustainability.

Also in the works is a proposed \$520 million expansion of the San Diego Convention Center, which would add nearly 1 million sf of meeting and ballroom floor space.

Julie Martinez, director of meetings and events for Richardson, TX-based Lennox Industries, notes that she has been with the heating and cooling company nearly 16 years and "we've been meeting in San Diego off and on throughout my time at the company. You can have many different experiences in the city, whether in the downtown, Coronado Island, the historic Gaslamp Quarter, La Jolla or out in Del Mar." Yet traveling to all these hotspots is quite easy, she adds. "You can be on the coast, and in about 30 minutes on a tour bus you're inland, where the climate is different and attendees get a different experience." In the downtown area, Martinez has partnered with the 1,190-room Hilton San Diego Bayfront (165,000 sf of meeting space) when it was still fairly new, and remarks that it is among the city's most logistically convenient properties.

In May, an exclusive group of Lennox's top 25 customers (out of more than 8,000) will be visiting The Grand del Mar, a 249-room hotel with 20,000 sf of meeting space. The group's

activities, however, will be in the upscale seaside community of La Jolla, says Martinez. Back in San Diego proper, “we’re going to Balboa Park for a dinner and an outside reception. It’s of course where the San Diego Zoo is, but so many of our attendees have been to the zoo. So I thought I’ll do a dinner where they can actually see the beauty of the park.” Next, the



Lennox meeting professionals Julie Martinez, CMP, CMM (left) and Cecilia Daddio, CMP, pose with a helicopter pilot at San Diego’s Marine Corps Air Station Miramar during a company event.

group will visit Orfila Winery and the Stone Brewery, which are outside of San Diego in Escondido, and then sail from San Diego to Coronado Island aboard the America, a replica of a historic racing yacht offered by the city’s Maritime Museum.

Martinez describes the legendary Hotel Del Coronado, located on 28 oceanfront acres on Coronado Island, as “an attraction unto itself.” The hotel was built in 1888 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1977, but it’s more than a throwback, having just completed a multimillion-dollar renovation of its 368 guest rooms and suites in the original Victorian building.

In January, New York City-based Platts held its national customer meeting for the first time on the West Coast, and the energy products and services company chose San Diego and the Hotel Del Coronado. Utility professionals come in from across the U.S. and even internationally for the event, which is in its 10th year. “Every year so far it’s been on the East Coast, usually in Florida,” says Samantha Ranks, conference operations coordinator. “We’ve never gotten a great number of West Coast utilities to come to Florida, so last year it was thrown out as an idea to move the event to the West Coast. Our attendees do enjoy going to more of a resort area with a warmer climate, especially in January. So San Diego seemed like a good option for us. We thought it would be a comparable location to Miami.” The result was fairly balanced East Coast and West Coast attendance (about 160 total attendees). “One of our concerns going in was whether we would still draw the East Coast attendees, and we had no problem. It ended up being a great gamble,” she adds.

Participants heard from industry experts at the event, which included a variety of panels. “The meeting space was perfect; we got a top floor all to ourselves,” says Ranks. “And we didn’t have any issues with the AV, which is always a concern going into an older property. Everybody really enjoyed the Del’s charm. It’s a great location right on the beach, and the hotel has a great garden patio area and a sundeck where we had lunch, which was lovely. You’re right next to the Naval Bay, so there is a lot of activity on the water with ships and submarines, and aircraft activity as well, which is fun to see. And you can walk into Coronado, which has a great little downtown area with tons of restaurants, where our sponsors often took attendees out for dinner.”

Opened in 1965, the La Costa Resort and Spa, north of downtown San Diego in Carlsbad, completed a \$50 million resort-wide makeover last fall that included its 611 guest rooms and suites, 43,000-sf spa, and its approximately 100,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space, which now includes Meeting Planner

Suites. La Costa’s conference center, renamed The Coastal Events Center, now offers digital touchscreen way-finding applications as well as built-in large screen TVs in boardrooms. In addition, the Valley Promenade and the Legends Lawn have opened for scenic outdoor functions.

Other significant renovation projects include: The Manchester Grand

Hyatt (125,000 sf of meeting space) will soon begin renovating its 1,625 guest rooms and Grand Club, as well as expanding 32 Bayview Terrace. Loews Coronado Bay Resort (65,000 sf of meeting space) has begun a resort-wide renovation, slated for completion in December. The 450-room Westin Gaslamp Quarter, San Diego has completed renovations on 35,000 sf of mixed-use meeting and event space, part of a \$25 million property remodel that will be completed this year.

Long Beach

Long Beach, located about 100 miles north of San Diego, has invested more than \$75 million in hotel and convention center renovations, including more than \$20 million in upgrading and redesigning The Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, which offers more than 400,000 sf of event space. “I hold it in high regard compared to other convention centers that we’ve used across the country,” says D.J. Paganoni, manager of sales support for Collierville, TN-based Juice Plus+, an NSA company. From 5,000 to 6,000 Juice Plus+ distributors have met at the center every other spring since 2007, says Paganoni. “With many convention centers, when you walk up to them you see a whole lot of concrete, a building that doesn’t look very welcoming. Long Beach did it right where it’s just a beautiful building with colorful displays outside and flags. It looks like a place that you want to go in and check out.”

One of the prime logistical advantages of Long Beach is its accessibility from three airports. Most Juice Plus+ attendees flew into LAX, with others using either John Wayne Airport or Long Beach Airport, says Paganoni.

Juice Plus+ distributors used the Hyatt, which is connected to the convention center, and the 360-room Renaissance Long Beach Hotel (21,000 sf of meeting space) for sleeping rooms, and found the area to be “very walkable,” remarks Paganoni. “We also invite the cream of the crop of our sales field to come to Huntington Beach a couple days before the conference starts. They stay at the Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach Resort & Spa, where they can enjoy themselves, use the spa, play volleyball and so on. It’s an incentive that they earn by reaching a certain sales level in our business.” The 517-room Hyatt offers more than 100,000 sf of meeting space.

With renovated convention centers, upgraded hotels and urban improvement projects in many of its major cities, Southern California is emerging stronger than ever in the corporate group market. The “SoCal” lifestyle may be laid-back, but its meetings industry is definitely on the move. **C&IT**



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The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club, Naples, FL, has announced two sales appointments: **Charles Mullins** was named director of group sales responsible for the mid-Atlantic region. He was senior national sales manager for Station Casinos in Las Vegas. **Elizabeth Kintzing** was named sales manager responsible for the Southeast region. She formerly served as sales manager at the Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel in Norfolk, VA.

Mary Hutchcraft was named director of sales and marketing at Reunion

Resort in Orlando, FL. She most recently served as director of sales at The Shores Resort & Spa in Daytona Beach Shores, FL.

Nancy McFadyen was named national director hotel sales, Midwest, for LA INC. The Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau. She formerly served as senior national sales executive for Visit Orlando, Orlando, FL.

Ana Fonseca was named director of sales and marketing for ONE Bal Harbour Resort & Spa, Miami Beach,

FL. She was previously global sales manager for Aman Resorts in Turks and Caicos.

Colleen Pace was named director of sales for Cheyenne Mountain Resort, Colorado Springs, CO. She most recently served as director of group sales for the Vail Cascade Resort & Spa, Vail, CO.

Michael Aylmer was named mid-Atlantic regional director of sales for KSL Resorts, La Quinta, CA. He was director of sales and marketing at The Homestead, Hot Springs, VA. **C&IT**

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