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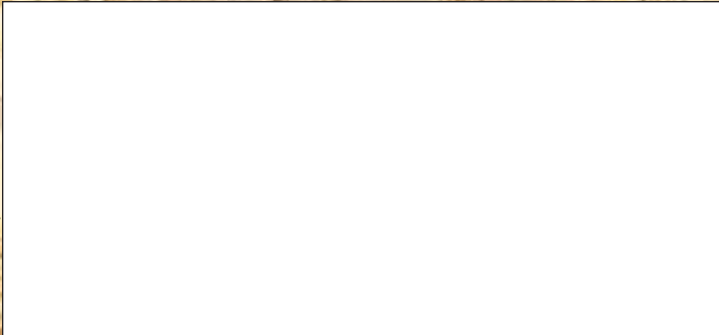


Beach Meetings

Sun + Surf + Sand = Success

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THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS
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Photo courtesy of Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort

COVER STORY

Beach Meetings

Sun + Surf + Sand = Success

By Karen Brost

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The Boardroom on the Beach

When I first started in this business many years ago, there was a distinct separation between corporate group travel and leisure travel. Today, that distinction is, of course, still there but has blurred a little because of many factors. For example, tough economic times, being on the job 24/7, lack of quality family time and other work/life balance issues deserve attention. Adding a few days pre- or post-meeting makes for a win-win experience for the meeting-goer, the family and the beach hotel/resort as well. Furthermore, one doesn't need to consult medical journals to learn that a little rest and relaxation in a destination surrounded by sun, surf and sand can result in a much happier and productive attendee. Our timely and relevant cover story, "Beach Meetings: Sun+Surf+Sand=Success," describes the limitless benefits of meeting at the beach.



For instance, Pat Mixson, senior administrative specialist for Jacksonville, FL-based Southeast Toyota, who often sets up management conferences at beachfront sites, appreciates the many options such as the opportunity to stage a sand-sculpting contest. Mixson says, "Your entertainment (the

beach) is right there in front. We have a teambuilding event, but after that, we don't have to worry about coming up with lots of activities because there are so many activities right there at The Shores (Resort and Spa, Daytona Beach Shores, FL). You can lie around the pool, you can go out on the ocean, or you can rent a chair and an umbrella and sit out on the beach."

Gloria King, director of CME for Singing River Hospital in Pascagoula, MS, says her attendees want to meet at the beach every year. "It's a great location, and we encourage them to bring their families and let them enjoy the Hilton Sandestin area when they're in meetings," says King.

But can you top this? The staff at Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach Resort & Spa in Southern California sets up a "boardroom on the beach" with beach chairs, notepads, pens and more. Business is followed by lessons in paddleboarding or surfing.

Ponte Vedra Inn & Club in Ponte Vedra Beach, FL, has the best of both worlds: golf and beach. The perennial Greens of Distinction award-winner is again featured among the winners of our 18th Annual Greens of Distinction Winners. See page 25 for more information on the best of the best golf destinations.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher



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Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate to Add New Conference Center

ORLANDO, FL — The Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate is partnering with Osceola County, Florida, to offer a new 55,000-sf conference center. Scheduled to open in January 2013, the new state-of-the-art addition to the luxury resort will add more than 46,000 sf to the existing event space, resulting in a total of more than 100,000 sf of meeting and event space. The crown jewel of the new convention center will be the 28,800-sf ballroom, which will accommodate up to 150 10-by-10-foot exhibits or break out to eight flexible meeting rooms. Advanced communications and computer technology, an open prefunction area, an event lawn and a large loading dock are included in the design of the conference center. Upon completion, Omni Orlando Resort will offer more than 128,000 sf of indoor event space and an additional 52,000 sf of outdoor space with three ballrooms ranging from 20,000 to 28,800 sf and a total of 46 meeting rooms. The 720-room Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate also features two championship golf courses, the world headquarters of the David Leadbetter Golf Academy, the full-service Mokara spa, two heated outdoor pools and a lazy river. www.omniorlandoresort.com

VisitPittsburgh CEO Craig Davis Named Chair of Destination & Travel Foundation

PITTSBURGH, PA — Craig T. Davis, CDME, president and CEO of VisitPittsburgh, was appointed chairman of the Destination & Travel Foundation at the annual



DAVIS

Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) conference held in Seattle last month. His one-year term began on July 18. Davis has been on the Destination & Travel Foundation board of directors for the last three years and a member of DMAI for 13 years. The Destination & Travel Foundation, a combined effort between DMAI and the U.S. Travel Association, is committed to serving the interests of destination marketing professionals and highlighting the impact of travel around the world. The foundation recently sponsored the "2012 DMO Marketing Activities Study" and has spearheaded or underwritten documents such as "The Future of Destination Marketing" and "ROI of Business Travel." www.destinationtravel.org

DMAI 2012 Annual Convention Deemed Huge Success

WASHINGTON, DC — The Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) 2012 Annual Convention held July 16-18 in Seattle, WA, broke attendance records and attracted more than 1,300 participants, including the most DMO attendees in the organization's history. Attendees came from 13 countries to take part in a record-breaking number of education sessions and hours of peer-to-peer idea-sharing. Also, 120 DMO industry provider organizations participated in the event, a 20 percent increase, which included 33 first-time exhibitors. In addition, the highly anticipated DMO Marketing Study, the first-ever benchmark study on destination marketing organization marketing practices, was launched at the 2012 convention. DMAI President and CEO Michael Gehrisch said the study will give all DMOs vital information that will help them to evolve and more effectively compete in the global marketplace. For information on how to purchase the comprehensive, 31-page report, go to DMAI's product store at www.destinationmarketing.org.

DuBois Leaves Fort Worth to Head IAEE

FORT WORTH, TX — David DuBois, CMP, CAE, FASAE, CTA will serve as the new president of the International



DUBOIS

Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE) effective October 4. The announcement was made last month by Doreen Biela, CEM, chair of the IAEE board of directors. DuBois resigned from his current position as president and CEO of the Fort Worth Convention and Visitors Bureau — effective October 3 — to accept the IAEE post. The 34-year veteran of the hospitality industry replaces long-time IAEE President Steven Hacker, CAE, FASAE, who is stepping aside in October. Hacker commented: "The selection of David as IAEE's next president is a brilliant choice. I have known and admired David for almost two decades, and we have worked closely together on many successful projects. I am excited to know that the IAEE staff will be led by a polished professional who knows our industry and is committed to its future." After October 4, DuBois can be reached at ddubois@iaee.com. www.iaee.com

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Photos courtesy of DMAI / RodneyChoice / www.choicephotography.com

Pictured at The Destination Marketing Association International's 2012 Annual Convention in Seattle are (l to r) **1** Corporate & Incentive Travel publisher Harvey Grotsky, Leonard Hoops, CEO, Indianapolis CVA and John Reyes, E.V.R., San Francisco Travel Association. **2** President & CEO of the Memphis CVB Kevin Kane, DMAI Chair; and President & CEO Olivia Simmons of Visit Topeka. **3** Cheryl Martel, account sales manager at USA Today Travel Media Group and Al Hutchinson, vice president of convention sales and marketing, Virginia Beach CVB. **4** STR representatives Karrie Keen and Brittany Baldwin are flanked by Ricky Rodriguez, director of Wilson County CVB (TN); Mike Applegate, director of research, Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority; and STR representatives Chris Cares and Chad Church. **5** Seattle's Convention and Visitors Bureau — headed up by President and CEO Tom Norwalk — hosted the opening celebration evening, which was filled with culinary and viticultural delights from Washington State as well as a spectacular waterfront view. **6** DMAI's Alliance Partner USA Today's booth in the DMAI Business Exchange was staffed by Alison Gonzalez digital account manager, Gannett Digital Media Network; Nadine Carter, senior director, advertising sales, Travel Media Group; Erika Fowler, senior advertising sales coordinator, Travel Media Group; and Jennifer Kent, account sales manager Travel Media Group. **7** Rich Reasons, president of Simpleview; Maura Gast, executive director, Irving CVB; Phil Bruno, consultant; and Duane Knapp, president of BrandStrategy Inc.

SNAPSHOTS



1 Meeting Professional's International's 2012 World Education Congress (MPI-WEC) staged its opening reception at Busch Stadium in St. Louis, MO, July 28. The four-day annual conference was designed around the theme of "New Connectivity," emphasizing person-to-person encounters onsite, social networking during the event or other digital means that foster human interaction at meetings. **2** Pictured at MPI Foundation's The Big Deal poker tournament held during MPI-WEC are (l to r) Michael Massari, V.P. meeting sales and operations, Caesars Entertainment; winner Trevor Lui, director of operations and sustainability for the International Centre, Toronto; second-place finisher Cindy Kramer; third-place finisher Stephanie Bodanyi; Vince LaRuffa, 2012-13 chairman, MPI Foundation Board; and Phil Cooper, CEO of Encore Productions. **3** A community service project during MPI-WEC supported Stray Rescue of St. Louis. Activities included a "Doggie Treat Baking Workshop" and "Doggie Day Spa." **4** Never at a loss for words are networking attendees at The National Speakers Association Convention July 14-17 at the JW Marriott Indianapolis. **5** Michael W. McCormick, Global Business Travel Association executive director and COO, addresses attendees at the annual GBTA Convention 2012 held in Boston last month. **6** The German team won the 8th Switzerland Meeting Trophy organized by Switzerland Tourism. This unconventional rally gave 95 MICE specialists the chance to discover Switzerland's congress facilities on a route going from Zürich to St. Gallen via Flims and Appenzell.

Photo credits: 1.-3. Orange Photography, 4. National Speakers Association/Flash Gordon Murray, 5. Global Business Travel Association, 6. Switzerland Tourism

Omni Hotels & Resorts Receives High Honors in J.D. Power Study

IRVING, TX — Omni Hotels & Resorts ranked highest among nine upper-upscale hotel brands, according to J.D. Power and Associates 2012 North American Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study. This year's highest ranking marks Omni's fifth time as the leading hotel brand in this study. Omni has consecutively outperformed the industry average for the past 12 years. The results are based on 61,716 responses from guests who stayed in a hotel from June 2011 through May 2012. "Our No. 1 priority is guest

satisfaction, which is reflected in everything we do," said Mike Deitemeyer, president of Omni Hotels & Resorts. "We congratulate and thank each associate for his and her continued dedication to this promise which is undoubtedly a key contributor in enabling us to earn this prestigious award for a fifth time." The study measured overall guest satisfaction in seven areas, of which Omni received the highest score in six of the seven areas including reservations, food & beverage, guest room and hotel facilities. www.omnihotels.com

Jason Fulvi Promoted to VisitPittsburgh Executive Vice President

PITTSBURGH, PA — VisitPittsburgh, the official tourism promotion agency for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County,

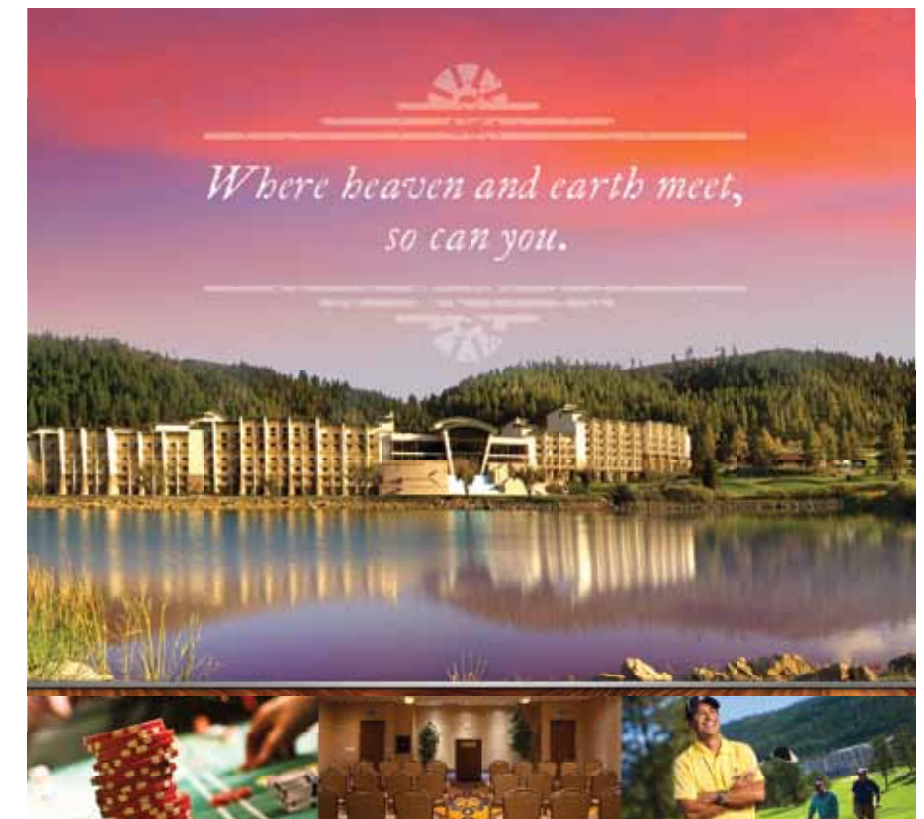


FULVI

recently promoted Jason Fulvi, CDME, to executive vice president from executive director of convention sales. Fulvi oversees VisitPittsburgh's convention sales, convention services and partnership development departments. In addition, he is also responsible for day-to-day operations of VisitPittsburgh in the absence of Craig T. Davis, CDME, VisitPittsburgh's president and CEO. Jason joined VisitPittsburgh in 2002 as senior national sales director and quickly advanced to executive director of convention sales. His background includes more than 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Fulvi recently completed his second term as chair of the Destination Marketing Association International Sales and Marketing Committee and currently serves as a committee member for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.

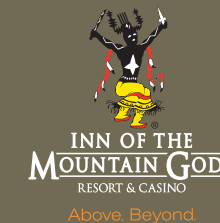
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By Stacy Fantauzzi

Teambuilding: An Effective Tool

Many organizations have been forced to streamline their events and conferences due to tough economic conditions. However, many of them still recognize the importance of teambuilding activities that serve to build morale and teamwork. However, the recent GSA debacle that included a bike-building activity at a lavish price tag of approximately \$80,000 resulted in groups taking a careful look at future teambuilding activities. As such, it is more important than ever before to ensure that the scope and perception of your chosen activity is appropriate.

The Big Picture

To begin, the key to success is starting with the desired outcome from a big picture perspective and designing a custom session that works for your group and event. Too often, teambuilding is simply incorporated into an event for the sake of having an activity. However, identifying a goal is as important a step as selecting the activity itself. Sure, most activities promote employee or member camaraderie, but what about the new sales team collaboration or managerial style in a certain department? Can you hone in on specific group dynamics? Whether participants realize it or not, games may be formatted to achieve specific results or deliver a distinctive message.

With the goal clearly identified for the activity, it should be treated like every other aspect of that meeting/event in terms of preparation, budget and coordination to ensure a positive experience. For example, many teambuilding activities can be structured in different formats in order to accomplish different objectives. Case in point is an activity called Light Art (*see opposite page*). Each team takes a position around a large 4-by-

6-foot light board that has a grid on the top. The teams are supplied with small colored tiles that fit in the grid to create images on the light tables. Then, each team must function in a creative environment, as they are asked to create a landscape on their light board. Once all teams have completed their landscape, the boards are displayed. Next, the team is challenged to work on a process-oriented task and create a predetermined image. Each team receives a grid that shows them where to place tiles and what color tiles to use. This requires the team to completely switch gears and formulate a plan. The team will need to assign roles, split into sub groups and work closely with each other to follow the pattern. When the teams have completed their grids, the light tables will be displayed and the images will come into focus.

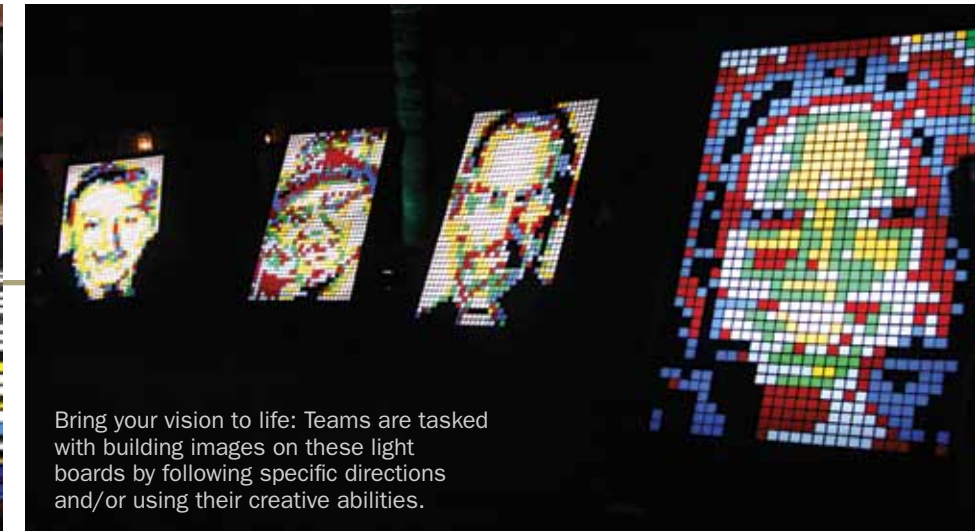
This teambuilding activity requires the team to work together in a variety of ways: the team must collectively agree on their vision and then work together to bring the vision to life. For a group that simply wants to encourage networking, the teams can be assigned at random, after which they are given detailed instructions and set free to have fun executing their goal. But, if the objective may be to identify the leaders of a group as well as their leadership style, the teams may be divided more strategically, after which they are given very little direction. Once the activity is complete, a healthy discussion can occur related to leadership styles, struggles and more.

Dream Big

When goal-setting, it is also important to think beyond the traditional objectives of networking, sharing and leadership development. Many organizations have pushed their objectives



Photos courtesy of metroConnections



Bring your vision to life: Teams are tasked with building images on these light boards by following specific directions and/or using their creative abilities.

to also and/benefit the community. For example, one popular activity involves teams competing to build the best wheelchair. Small groups work together to answer a series of questions to earn “bucks” to purchase wheelchair parts. Once all required pieces have been earned and wheelchairs have been assembled, they will have to run through the obstacle course to become eligible for inspection. After teams create a custom license plate, final judging will take place in which teams will be rated on quality and creativity.

In addition to the obvious benefits of teamwork, this activity offers the organization the opportunity to give back by donating these chairs. For example, one group recently completed this activity and the wheelchairs were then donated to a local nonprofit organization. The day after the event was over, the wheelchairs were on a truck making their way to a hospital in Jamaica.

Location and Group Size Matter

Many teambuilding activities can be catered to a variety of group sizes and event locations, but these are key pieces of information when considering options. For example, some food-themed events are best executed outdoors.

Other activities simply require a lot of space or an area that allows for “getting dirty.” For ex-

ample, Playing Picasso is an activity that starts out by dividing a painting into smaller sections and giving each team a photo of a section to replicate on a blank canvas using paint, brushes and sketching tools. Once the teams are finished, the individual canvases are pieced together to create a reproduction of the full painting. The activity demonstrates that even when working separately, all contribute to the bigger picture. Further, by incorporating a specific theme, location or image as your graphic, the activity can be personalized. For instance, one group gave a local spin on their activity by replicating a mural of the Minneapolis skyline originally created by a local artist. Small canvases, which are less expensive, also allow organizations to keep and display the art they create.

Communication Is King

As in all aspects of planning an event, communication with the event planner is crucial. In addition to clearly outlining the objectives, it is key to communicate changes in terms of group dynamics, personalities and size — all of which can drastically change the effectiveness of an activity. However, with proper communication, teambuilding can be an effective component of your next event.

C&IT



Stacy Fantauzzi

is an account manager at metroConnections, which since 1984 has utilized its expertise and resources to specialize in the design and implementation of branded online registration websites, themed events, stage productions, conference planning and transportation services. The company is located in Bloomington, MN, and has an office in Orlando, FL. info@metroconnections.com, www.metroconnections.com

SITE SELECTION



Rendering of the Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort, which is undergoing an \$85 million renovation that will include the addition of 20,000 sf of meeting space.

Photo courtesy of Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort

Beach Meetings

Sun + Surf + Sand = Success

By Karen Brost

The staff at Southeast Toyota, headquartered in Jacksonville, FL, has firsthand knowledge of the power of meeting at a beach destination. The company has held its management conference at The Shores Resort & Spa in Daytona Beach Shores, FL, every year since 2005. Pat Mixson, the administrative supervisor who plans the event, listed a few reasons that make this beachfront property such a popular choice for her program for approximately 170 attendees.

"Number one, The Shores Resort is the only four-star resort in that area," she notes. "The amenities and the rooms are top notch, and yet it is small enough that when I take this group there, the employees know all of our people. We feel like we get special attention. That's why we keep going back." She adds that even when there is staff turnover, which is common in the hospitality industry, the caliber of the employees the resort brings in is always "top notch."

The Shores Resort & Spa offers 212

spacious guest rooms, each offering more than 500 sf of living space. The beachfront property also features the Indulge spa and more than 20,000 sf of meeting space, including two oceanfront executive boardrooms and the 3,700-sf Ocean Terrace. Guest rooms offer views of the Atlantic or the Intracoastal Waterway.

The purpose of Southeast Toyota's event is to bring management members from different divisions of the company

together to get to know each other better. "It's not like we see each other every day," Mixson notes. "That's why we do this management conference every year to bring all of these groups together to



Photos by Kim Conklin



Southeast Toyota's management conference at The Shores Resort & Spa in Daytona Beach Shores, FL, included a sand-sculpting teambuilding contest. Four vice presidents judged the sculptures that best represented the company, and the winners were announced the following evening in the Grand Ballroom.

enjoy each other on a relaxing level because they work so hard every year. It's the kind of a perk for the invitees, and they get to bring their spouse and everything is paid for."

She describes a key advantage of planning a beachfront meeting. "Your

on the ocean, or you can rent a chair and an umbrella and sit out on the beach. The Shores puts up volleyball nets so you can get a group of friends to play volleyball, then there's the town of Daytona Beach."

The Shores recently

"Your entertainment (the beach) is right there in front. We have a teambuilding event, but after that, we don't have to worry about coming up with lots of activities because there are so many activities right there at The Shores."



Pat Mixson, Senior Administrative Specialist
Southeast Toyota, Jacksonville, FL

entertainment (the beach) is right there in front. We have a teambuilding event, but after that, we don't have to worry about coming up with lots of activities because there are so many activities right there at The Shores. You can lie around the pool, you can go out

launched complimentary shuttle service for groups staying at the resort. A stretch limousine and two 14-passenger vans are available to provide transportation to and from Daytona International Airport and to a variety of other locations, including the Ocean

Center convention center, Daytona International Speedway and local shops and restaurants.

For Southeast Toyota's teambuilding event, Mixson hired the destination management company Hello Florida! to stage a sand-sculpting contest. "We divided our team into eight teams of 10," she explains. "It was just our associates. The spouses and the guests got to watch. We gave everyone parameters of what we wanted our sand sculptures to represent, which was our company. Every team got together and brainstormed, and then we built our sand sculptures. We had four vice presidents who judged the sand-sculpting contest, and we announced the winners that evening in the Grand Ballroom."

The winning team had created a sculpture of the "family tree" of Southeast Toyota's parent company, JM Family Enterprises Inc. "All of the



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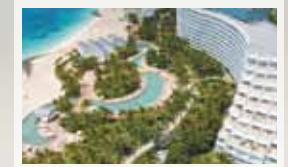


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sculptures were good," Mixson notes. "One of our groups sand-sculpted a car that was so detailed."

Mixson immediately noticed the impact that the teambuilding activity had on the group's interactions compared to the previous night when they arrived. "When we went back to the ballroom for dinner, all of these people were talking and rubbing shoulders with each other and introducing spouses. It had paid off."

Destin-ed for Success

"What dates are we going back next year?" is one of the first questions Gloria King, director of Continuing Medical Education (CME) for Singing River Hospital in Pascagoula, MS, gets after she wraps up the continuing medical education program she plans at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa in Destin, FL. The question usually comes from spouses who want to

make sure they get next year's dates on their calendars. "Everybody wants to go there, so we kind of call it the 'family CME meeting,'" King explains. "It's a great location, and we encourage them to bring their families and let them enjoy the Hilton Sandestin area when they're in meetings." The hospital has held this program at the Hilton Sandestin every year since 2000.

Located on a pristine white sand

beach, the Hilton Sandestin contains 598 guest rooms and suites housed in two towers. Included in that room inventory are a number of junior deluxe suites that are especially family-friendly because they feature bunk beds and a separate media center for the kids. The resort also has multiple pools and dining outlets and the Serenity by the Sea spa. For meetings and events, the resort offers more than 32,000 sf of indoor function space along with 20,000 sf of beachfront deck space.

King appreciates the ease of planning meetings at the Hilton Sandestin. "I like the fact that it is very predictable," she notes. "I know I'm going to get great service and not have to worry about anything once I get there. They're all so good at what they do that I can concentrate on what I'm there to do and not worry about all of the other logistical problems you can run into when you're onsite. They're so professional, but then they're so warm. They make you feel like they're glad to have you back."



A reception setup on the Emerald Deck at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa in Destin, FL, on the Gulf of Mexico.

The staff at the Hilton Sandestin can also arrange to host a Beach Olympics competition as a teambuilding event. It includes events such as beach volleyball, castaway beach bowling, a Frisbee toss and a crab crawl relay.

"I can't imagine a better place to host a meeting," King sums up. "It's

the truth or we wouldn't be going back every year, I guarantee you. There are so many other options. I just like going there."

Soaking Up the Sun in SoCal

It's no surprise that attendees love to head for the beach as soon as the

America's Best Beaches

Each year, Dr. Stephen Leatherman, a professor at Florida International University who is also known as "Dr. Beach," undertakes the enviable task of naming America's best beaches. He bases his assessments on 50 criteria, which include factors such as the softness of the sand, water temperature, size of the waves, cleanliness and safety. Some of his top beach picks for 2012 have the added bonus of being located near large meeting hotels and resorts. Here are a few choices to consider that are located on or near Dr. Beach's top picks:



The Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Resort

No. 2 — Kahanamoku Beach, Oahu, HI. The 2,860-room Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort is easily recognized by the brightly colored mosaic featured on the side of its Rainbow Tower. The resort recently completed a \$45 million renovation of all 800 rooms in this iconic tower. The Hilton offers more than 150,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space.

No. 7 — Waimanalo Bay Beach Park, Oahu, HI. Located just 10 minutes away from the attractions of Waikiki yet tucked away in a quiet residential neighborhood is The Kahala Hotel & Resort. This luxury oceanfront property features 388 guest rooms, five restaurants, a world-class spa and more than 24,000 sf of indoor and outdoor function space. It is also home to the Dolphin Quest program where guests can arrange to swim with Atlantic bottlenose dolphins in the resort's 26,000-sf lagoon.

Continued on page 16



The Hotel Del Coronado

No. 1 — Coronado Beach, Coronado, CA. This iconic beach fronts an equally iconic meeting property, the historic Hotel Del Coronado, which dates back to 1888. The property, which is set on 28 oceanfront acres, offers a total of 757 guest rooms, cottages and villas, and recently completed an \$8 million renovation of all 368 of the guest rooms in its original building. The Hotel Del, as it is fondly called, offers more than 65,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space.

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From flip-flops to formal, beach outings are becoming more elegant, like this one at the Hotel Del Coronado in Coronado, CA.

day's meetings are over, but why not just have the meeting there in the first place? The 517-room Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach Resort & Spa in Southern California will be happy to create a "boardroom on the beach" by setting up beach chairs and providing notepads and pens. The resort already has more than 110,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting areas, but this sandy space may be hard to top. When the meeting is over, the resort staff can arrange for the group to take lessons in stand-up paddleboarding or surfing.

Access Destination Services operates offices in several beach areas, including South Florida and Northern and Southern California. Tatiana

Lotufo, director of sales for the company's San Diego office, says she has recently seen a shift in style from the more casual type of beachfront outings to more elegant events with lounge furniture and other upscale amenities. "It's like The Hamptons-meet-Miami-meet-something else," she describes.

Since her office is located in San Diego, Lotufo says her company plans many activities and events on the beach at the Hotel Del Coronado (see "America's Best Beaches" on page 14. One of the team-building activities they do is a boot camp led by former Navy

SEALS. The SEALS train at the Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, which is located just south of the resort.

For groups interested in activities that focus on the environment, Access' Orange County office can arrange for a nature walk and tide pool tour led by a local naturalist. For each activity booked, Access arranges for a donation to be made to the Pacific Marine Mammal Center in Laguna Beach.

Access Destination Services, Orange County, CA, produced a spectacular beach party for a corporate group of 50 people at historic Crystal Cove State Park, situated between Laguna Beach and Corona del Mar, CA. The park has been preserved since the 1930s: Quaint beach cottages from the era line the Newport coastline. According to Access Marketing Director Taya Paige, "This particular event was held in a clear tent on the beach promenade, so guests stayed warm while enjoying the stun-



The boardwalk at Virginia Beach, VA.

Continued from page 14

No. 8 — Cape Florida State Park, Key Biscayne, FL. Key Biscayne is the only South Florida location to make Dr. Beach's list for 2012, and it is home to The Ritz-Carlton Key Biscayne. This luxury resort offers 450 guest rooms, including 113 suites and 64 club-level rooms and suites, along with more than 30,000 sf of indoor and outdoor function space and a 20,000-sf spa.

No. 9 — Beachwalker Park, Kiawah Island, SC. The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island, which combines a great beach and great golf, has been ranked the "No. 1 U.S. Resort Hotel" by Andrew Harper's "Hideaway Report." The Forbes Five Star resort offers 255 guest rooms and suites and 18,000 sf of event space.

Dr. Beach's complete top 10 list:

1. Coronado Beach, Coronado, CA
2. Kahanamoku Beach, Oahu, HI
3. Main Beach, East Hampton, NY
4. St. George Island State Park, St. George Island, FL
5. Hamoa Beach, Maui, HI
6. Coast Guard Beach, Eastham, MA
7. Waimanalo Bay Beach Park, Oahu, HI
8. Cape Florida State Park, Key Biscayne, FL
9. Beachwalker Park, Kiawah Island, SC
10. Cape Hatteras, Outer Banks, NC

— KB

ning sunset views," she says. "Access is knowledgeable and mindful of the state park conservation and use directives, and maintains a strong and respected working relationship, allowing them the opportunity to design and produce exciting yet effortlessly elegant events at this venue time and again."

Variety in Virginia Beach

Darrin Meigs, director of special events for Liberty Tax Service, plans many events in Virginia Beach, VA, including his company's annual convention for 2,500 franchisees. He has used many properties in the area, including the Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront, the DoubleTree Virginia Beach, Holiday Inn & Suites North Beach and the Crowne Plaza Virginia Beach Town Center.

For the meeting portion of his programs, he often uses the Virginia Beach Convention Center. It is certified LEED Gold for Existing Buildings and offers more than 500,000 gross sf of meeting space, including a 150,000-sf column-free exhibit hall, 28,000 sf of meeting space and a 31,000-sf ballroom with LED lighting.

"There are just so many convenient aspects of using that property," Meigs explains. "It's in a very central location, it's easily accessed, it's easily recognizable, and the facilities are just a few years old, so there's always everything that we need there. And, it's only a mile from the beach, so that's a big plus for a lot of our meetings."

He notes that his attendees from across the country enjoy coming to the destination. "One of the things they love about Virginia Beach is that they can attend a meeting or convention, then turn it into a family vacation.

"One of the reasons that we continue to have our convention in Virginia Beach," he adds, "is there are so many amenities available. For instance, we incorporate a variety of activities for our franchisees. We'll have a golf tournament and a deep-sea fishing tournament on the beach. We've done river cruises, we've done museums and nature cruises.

There are just a lot of things for us to access in Virginia Beach, and that's one of the big appeals. The other thing is that we can offer our attendees oceanfront accommodations, and they love that."

What's New on the Beach

Northeast Florida's Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort is undergoing an \$85 million renovation that is being positioned as a "re-imagination,"

because the project goes well beyond a renovation, according to a spokesperson. To be completed in the spring of 2013, the work will add 155 new oceanfront rooms and suites steps from the ocean.

Also part of the project will be the addition of 20,000 sf of meeting space — increasing total capacity to 70,000 sf. The new lobby, with floor-to-ceiling ocean views, will provide quicker and easier check-in to guests. Capping off

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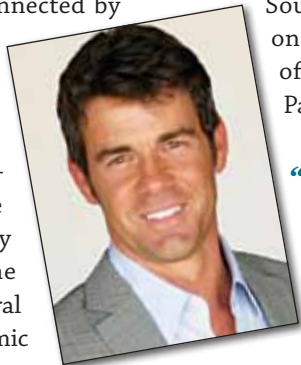
AAA Four Diamond Award



The Grand Lucayan, Bahamas, a 375-acre oceanfront resort on Grand Bahama Island, is just a 20-minute flight from South Florida.

Photo courtesy of Grand Lucayan, Bahamas

the redo is an infinity-edge adult pool just off the lobby area cascading down to the family pool with two hot tubs, a poolside bar and expanded poolside dining options — all with ocean views. The meeting space will be contiguous, and guest rooms will be connected by a covered walkway right next to the conference area. Existing guest rooms also will be upgraded. “This will broaden the kinds of meetings we can accept,” says the spokesperson. “The new lobby will completely change the sense of arrival. And in general this changes the entire dynamic of the resort.”



Darrin Meigs, Meeting Planner
Liberty Tax Service, Virginia Beach, VA

After acquiring the former Trump Marina Hotel Casino in 2011, the restaurant, hospitality and entertainment company Landry’s Inc. recently completed a \$150 million transformation of the property, which is now known as the Golden Nugget Atlantic City. The renovation project included giving the property a fresh new look as well as the addition of several new restaurant concepts, lounges and a spa. The hotel contains more than 740 rooms and suites and 45,000 sf of meeting space.

Groups that enjoy having a lot of room to spread out may want to con-

sider having their meeting at The Sea Pines Resort on Hilton Head Island, SC. The oceanfront resort, which has more than 500 suites, villas and beach houses, is set on 5,000 acres on a peninsula between the Atlantic Ocean and Calibogue Sound. The property’s two onsite conference centers offer a Complete Meeting Package, and when it’s time

the-box opportunities for attendees — including shark feeding dives and dolphin encounters — as well as more traditional options such as jet-skiing, parasailing and kite-boarding. Of course there’s championship golf, spa services and fine dining in eight restaurants and bars (including a Cigar Bar). A multitude of meeting configurations is possible indoors and out at the conference center

“One of the things (attendees) love about Virginia Beach is that they can attend a meeting or convention, then turn it into a family vacation.”

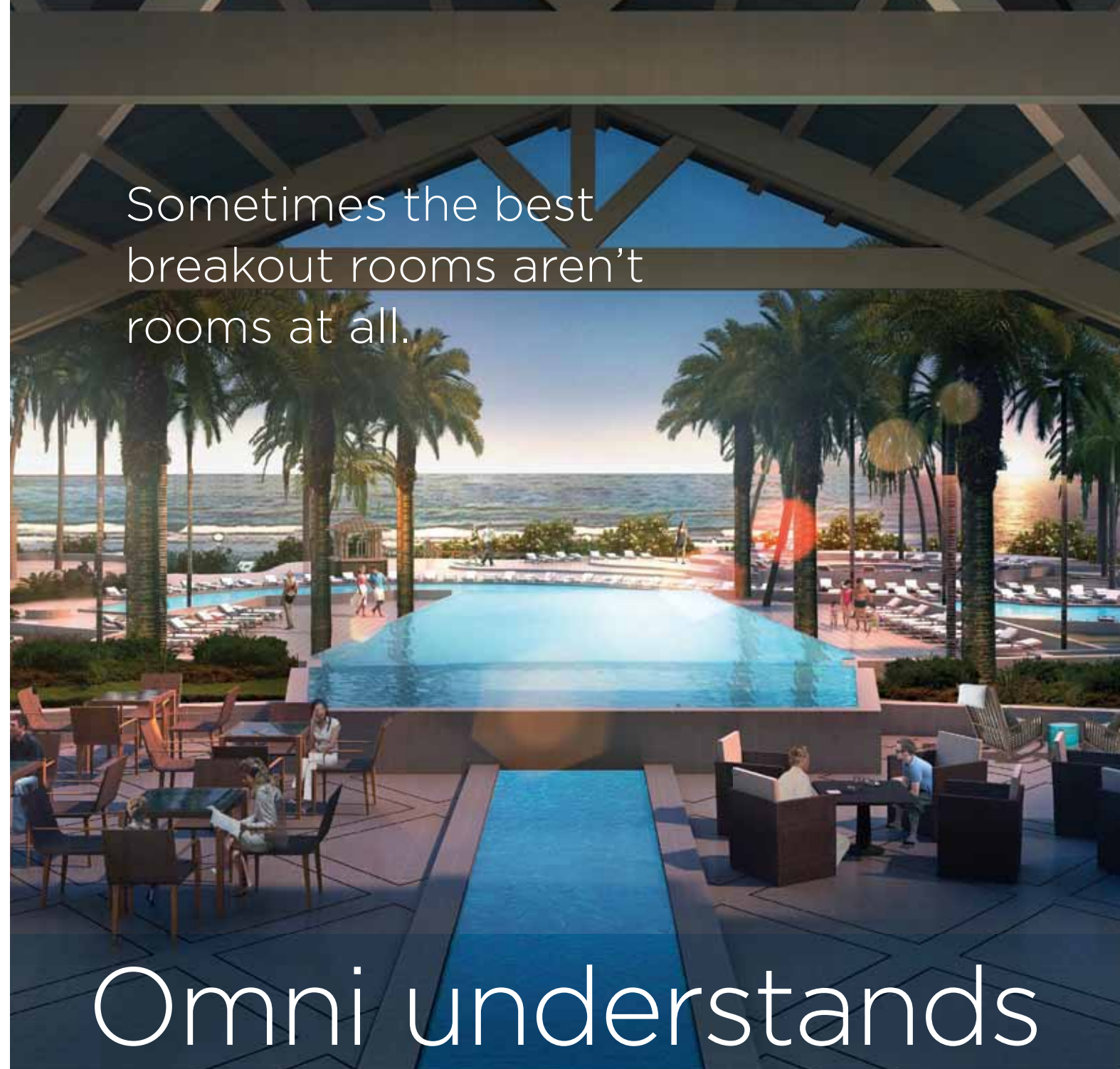
to relax, attendees can head for the resort’s five miles of pristine beaches, 20 miles of biking trails and nature paths or one of three championship golf courses, including Harbour Town Golf Links, home of the PGA Tour’s Heritage of Golf.

The Grand Lucayan, Bahamas, a 375-acre oceanfront resort on Grand Bahama Island, is an easy-access island paradise — just a 20-minute flight from South Florida. Translucent crystalline blue waters and pure white sand beaches create irresistible allure and out-of-

and the elegant Manor House, which accommodates up to 287 attendees for a memorable oceanview event.

Bliss on the Beach

Happy attendees make for happy planners, and what’s not to be happy about when you’re at the beach? Just ask Pat Mixson. She sees it as a sure sign of success when, every year, her management team says, “We’re going back to The Shores, aren’t we?” “They love it,” she says. **C&IT**



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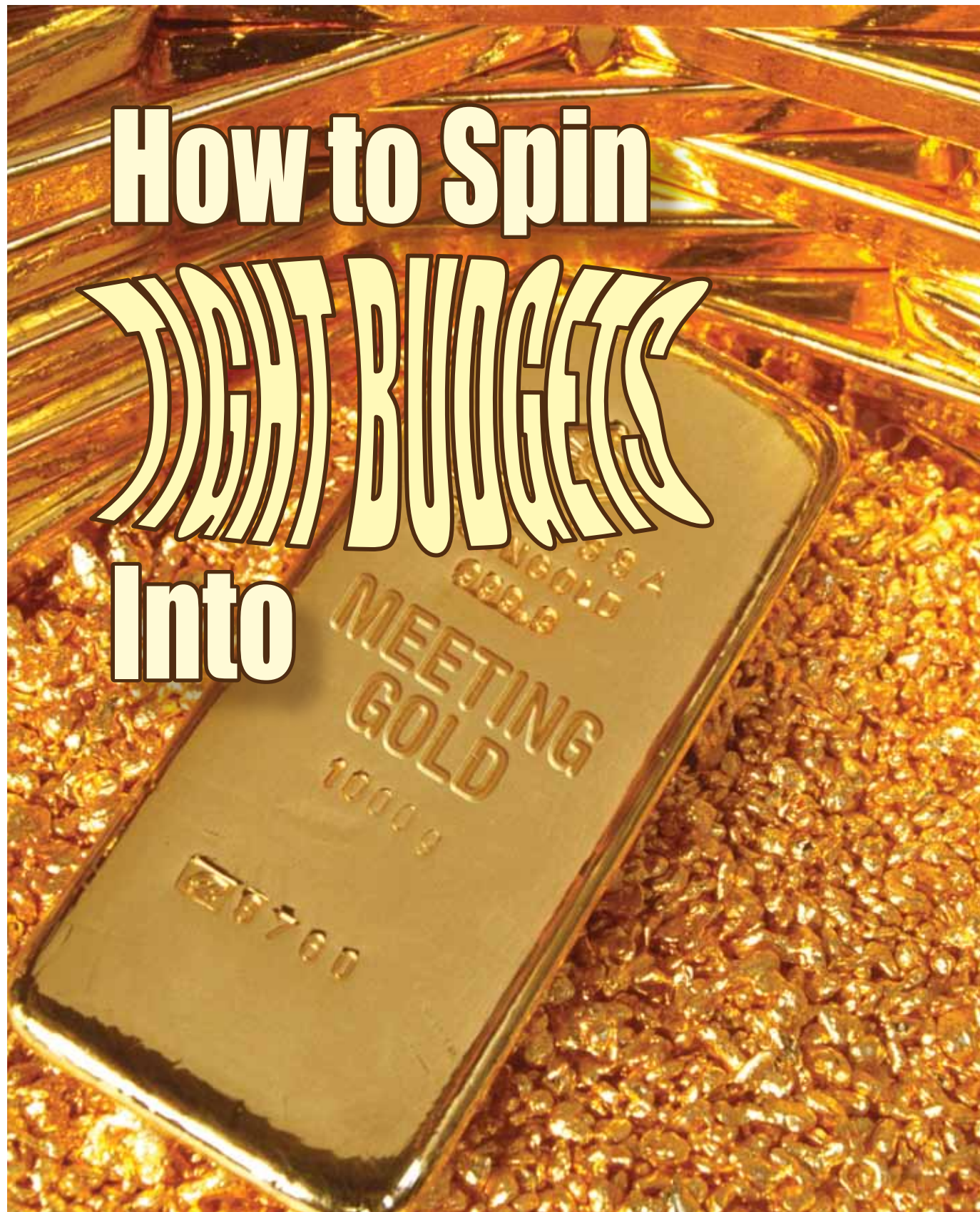
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How to Spin TIGHT BUDGETS Into

✦ By Derek Reveron ✦

A large budget surplus? You must be kidding. But that's what happened to Lisa English, CMP, CMM, marketing manager, strategic meetings management at Cvent. "I ended up with a surplus for a large corporation because of some things that happened in the organization, and meetings weren't executed. We were fearful that if we didn't spend the money by the end of the current year they would say we need less and cut the budget for the next year. We spent the money. Because of that, we had challenges with the meeting budgets being accurate the next two years," says English.

These days, meeting planners might prefer the problems stemming from budget surpluses. Providing more value on shrinking or flat budgets is becoming more challenging as hotel rates, fuel prices and other meeting costs continue to rise due to many factors, including the improving economy.

Meeting budgets no longer benefit from the buyer's market for hotel rooms and meeting space that existed during the economic downturn as the pendulum slowly swings back. As a result, meeting planners will be hard pressed to maintain their reputation as budget miracle workers. Cat Carlos, CMP, CTA, senior account manager, AlliedPRA Orange County, a full-service destination management company in Costa Mesa, CA, says, "Budgets are staying the same while prices are increasing. Some larger companies, such as those in the Fortune 1000, are seeing growth in meeting budgets in some areas. But for the most part, you continue to work with the same budget in terms of providing more for the money." English agrees: "I don't see budgets ratcheting up as quickly as

hotel and gas prices. And hoteliers feel more comfortable increasing their rates. It will continue to be tougher. This is a time when meeting professionals need to show their strategic value. We should still work under the assumption of the past few years that we will do more with less," says English.

Budgeting challenges are becoming more acute as hotel and gas prices continue to rise. The revenue per available room (RevPAR) will increase 5.8 percent this year as average daily room rates rise 4.1 percent and occupancy edges up 1.6 percent, according to first quarter 2012 statistics from PKF Hospitality Research. Meanwhile, rising oil prices are increas-

for unexpected onsite expenses. Taking a scalpel to budgets helps when planning for emergencies, says Sally Webb, CSEP, CEO of The Special Event Company, a Raleigh, NC-based strategic meeting and event planning company with offices in the U.S., U.K. and Australia. "Most of the time, because our budgets are so detailed from the get-go, there are few elements that we don't take into account. Occasionally, if it's a really big budget, we will have a contingency in there," says Webb. She allows a client's budget history to help guide budgeting for the unpredictable. "When we have been with a client for many years, we pretty much know what the unexpected



"The biggest tip...is to document the cost savings you provide to clients and have a column at the end detailing the savings."
Sally Webb, CSEP
 CEO, The Special Event Company, Raleigh, NC

ing airfare costs. Airlines raised fares earlier this year after nine hikes in 2011 and more hikes are predicted. United Airlines recently raised prices between \$4 and \$10 per round trip and other airlines are expected to follow. But what about surprise costs? How do planners plan for those?

Unexpected Expenses

It's more difficult for meeting planners to reserve a small part of budgets

will be and plan for it. Some clients have occasionally, during the meeting, asked for a separate meeting room or an executive lunch. So we have a contingency because there is a history of that happening," says Webb.

But there are some meeting emergencies that knowledge of budget histories can't predict. Webb planned a pharmaceutical company's three-day meeting on an island in Greece for 345 executives, sales executives and medical

professionals. As the meeting opened, Greece was hit with one of the worst heat waves in the country's history. "It went to almost 130 degrees practically overnight. Air conditioning didn't keep up with the heat and was breaking down. They closed Athens except for emergency services, and airplanes were being used for emergencies. We looked into finding charter planes to get our people out to places where they could catch flights home. We estimated what the costs would be, and the client had to make quick budgeting decisions on the spot. It cost several thousand dollars but everybody got home," says Webb.

Webb and fellow meeting planners offer the following advice when budgeting for the unexpected: Try to budget at least five to 10 percent of expenses for contingencies. These include overlooked expenses, under-budgeted items, phone and computer connections, bad weather and extra meeting space. Planning a small budget reserve is especially important for first-time clients that don't have — or decline to provide — a meeting budget history, planners say.

Hotel Costs

Rising hotel costs are eating up

growing shares of meeting budgets and weakening the negotiation leverage that planners held during the economic downturn. Now, Webb says it's more of a seller's market for hotels. "They aren't quite as hungry for our business. A few years ago, hotels knew that if they didn't sell to us, they wouldn't sell to anyone. Now they know that somebody else will always come along. Plus we were getting a lot of free meeting space and upgrades and amenities, which helped our budget. Now, they aren't as readily offered. Sometimes, we have to make budgets work by taking more from other services," adds Webb.

According to Cat Carlos, there are many ways to lessen the impact of rising hotel costs on budgets. "From our side of the business, we see more budgets being allocated to hotels," she says. "We try to offset costs by using hotel catering rather than working with an outside caterer at offsite events. It helps the client achieve the hotel food and beverage minimum because the catering costs are put toward the minimum. Say for example there is a \$200,000 food and beverage minimum for the program, and the client is going offsite for the final night. Typically, we would get a

caterer and that might be \$50,000 for food and beverages that the hotel lost. Now hotels are promoting their offsite catering. The hotel gets the food and beverage money, which counts toward the group's minimum. It's a win-win for both," says Carlos.

Planners also can trim budgets by piggybacking and combining meetings or by booking multiyear contracts. English advises, "Take a look at the number of meetings you do across a year. If there are two meetings that occur around the same time, can you hold them back-to-back at the same location, leveraging your business to save on hotel costs? We have contracts with clients where we are their event and program supplier for a one-, two- or three-year period. It helps us budget and buy effectively. It makes hotels value your meetings more and creates more buying power for other hotel services such as administrative staff, AV and meals." Another bonus, says English, is that planners also can negotiate long-term contracts with vendors and transportation for those meetings at less expense.

She also suggests that corporate meeting planners reach out to peers within their companies to ask about meetings

they can bundle to leverage negotiations with hotels and stretch budgets.

Attrition

Three years ago, meeting budgets were helped by low hotel attrition rates. Contracts with zero attrition rates were not unheard of because hotels needed the business. Now it's more important to accurately manage attrition

overlapping transient business that has benefits for them, helping with occupancy over a weekend."

Budgeting Mistakes

There are relatively simple things that meeting planners sometimes do — or don't do — that impact budget accuracy. One of the biggest mistakes involves being too willing to provide draft budgets.

"I don't see budgets ratcheting up as quickly as hotel and gas prices. And hoteliers feel more comfortable increasing their rates. It will continue to be tougher."

Lisa English, CMP, CMM
Marketing Manager, SMM, Cvent, McLean, VA

to prevent budgets from being hit with payments for not living up to room-block commitments. English suggests that planners "look at the attrition history and talk to stakeholders about the appropriate room block numbers" because hotels need that information. Also, English adds, "Keep in consistent communication with your hotelier, whether you're booking a meeting 18 months in advance or 18 weeks in advance, let the hotel know so they can sell empty rooms."

Although it's swinging back to a seller's market for hotel rooms, budgets can still benefit from attempts to negotiate attrition rates says English. "We need to get back to negotiating, where a hotel might start at 20 percent and you might have to negotiate to around 10 percent, which was the industry standard five or six years ago. I think that's where we are at again," she says.

Booking meetings on non-prime or shoulder dates also can help to trim budgets. English advises, "Perhaps line up a meeting where it ends on a Friday and strategically invite attendees to bring family for the weekend, thereby creating something more dynamic for the hotel. You are giving them some

The practice is often imprecise, provides false expense expectations and leaves room for budget surprises, cautions Webb. "When a client says I want a draft budget, you should plan the event from start to finish to get the 'draft' because you have to be very accurate about the bottom-line figure. So the concept of providing a draft budget is not really feasible unless you know the meeting so well that you can give the cost because you've done it on so many occasions," says Webb. "When we present a budget, whether they ask for a draft budget or not, we will always do a complete line item budget for everything," adds Webb.

Another common budgeting error involves depending too much on the previous year's budget as a guide. Some planners use the prior budget as a template and plug in numbers instead of examining expenses overall, says English. "I think that is the No. 1 overarching budget error that I see is rampant across the industry. When your boss comes to you in the fourth quarter and says we have to come up with our budgets for next year, and you are already swamped, you tend to take a look at last year's budget and keep it flat or mark it up by a percentage and submit that. That might

work in some cases these days, but we have to be more strategic in our thinking," English advises.

Meeting planners should also avoid the mistake of failing to ask new clients for a detailed meeting budget history. When new clients don't provide details about previous meeting budgets, planners should ask questions to determine spending in each area, says Carlos. "Some clients are very straightforward about their budgets and say they have X dollars to spend on each meeting activity and ask for ideas that fit their budget. Others will give you a bigger range or overall program budget. You may end up scaling back in one area and putting more money to something that is more important to the client," says Carlos. It helps to have a formal list of budget-related questions to ask new clients. "We have a list with over 40 questions we ask to help put together an accurate budget. A lot of times, the questions are answered in the RFP, but some are not," adds Carlos.

Fiscal Responsibility

Webb advises planners to brag to clients about delivering value with tight budgets. "The biggest tip I can give to planners is to document the cost savings you provide to clients and, on your budget, have a column at the end detailing the savings. It's important that clients realize you are being fiscally responsible for them. It's a simple thing that many planners don't do," says Webb.

Looking ahead, Webb observes, the good news for budgets is that at least some costs will continue to decline. "Years ago we booked a plasma screen for \$1,000. Now the same screen costs \$500. A lot of intelligent lighting was once very expensive because the equipment was costly and the people to program it were far and few between. Now everyone has the program and equipment, and it costs much less. You have to budget for lower costs as well," says Webb.

But after all is said and done, no matter which way the pendulum is swinging, meeting planners must continue what they do best — spinning tight budgets into meeting gold. **C&IT**

Little Things Mean a Lot

Meeting planners routinely focus on squeezing the most out of budgets by focusing on big-ticket items such as hotel rates, food and beverage, transportation and more. But budgets can be trimmed by zeroing in on smaller expenses that are sometimes overlooked. "There are a lot of small cost savings you can make that individually don't dramatically impact the overall program, but can account for a lot of money when you add them up," says Sally Webb, CSEP, CEO of The Special Event Company, a Raleigh, NC-based strategic meeting and event planning company.

- **Don't use sit-down tables during cocktail receptions.** Or put tables against the walls, farther away from the food. People who stand are likely to network more and spend less time eating and drinking, thereby reducing consumption and costs. Also, put the most expensive food closer to the front door, farther away from people seeking seconds.
- **Don't pay for what is not consumed.** During breaks, service staff often refill coffee and tea containers even if the time-out is about to end. That means meetings pay for unconsumed beverages. Ask that servers check with meeting staff before replenishing snacks and beverages toward the end of breaks.
- **Piggyback menus.** Check whether the menu of your group is similar to that of another group meeting around the same time. It may be possible to piggyback on the group's menu and cut food and beverage costs.
- **Inquire about discontinued wine labels not on the menu.** The labels may still be on property and cost less than those on the wine list.
- **Re-serve unused food when possible.** Wrap pastries that are uneaten during morning breaks and serve them at lunch or during breaks later in the day. Ask that leftover lunch desserts be served at evening breaks. — DR



2012 Greens Of Distinction Award Winners

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 18TH ANNUAL GREENS OF DISTINCTION WINNERS

Here's a brief rundown of what our 2012 Greens of Distinction winners have to offer. Designed by Donald Ross, **The Broadmoor Golf Club**, Colorado Springs, CO, opened with the hotel in 1918. Today, there are three courses, including the East Course, which hosted the 2011 U.S. Women's Open. **Hammock Beach Resort, a Grand Golf Resorts of Florida Collection**, Palm Harbor, FL, features two award-winning golf courses. **The Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa**, Destin, FL, is just steps away from four championship golf courses. **The Homestead**, Hot Springs, VA, features three award-winning golf courses: The Cascades, the Old Course and the Lower Cascades. **Innisbrook, a Grand Golf Resorts of Florida Collection**, Palm Harbor, FL, is home to four championship golf courses and a golf school. **Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate**, Orlando, FL, features two championship 18-hole golf courses designed by Greg Norman, a lighted nine-hole, par-3 golf course, and the World Headquarters for the David Leadbetter Golf Academy. **PGA National Resort & Spa**, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, the host of the PGA Tour's Honda Classic, features five tournament-ready courses. A Florida landmark since 1928, the **Ponte Vedra Inn & Club**, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL, offers 36 holes of championship golf. **Reunion Resort, a Grand Golf**

Resorts of Florida Collection, Reunion, FL, is the only destination in the world to boast three Signature golf courses designed by Palmer, Nicklaus and Watson. Shingle Creek Golf Club offers guests of **Rosen Shingle Creek, Orlando, FL**, a challenging David Harman design and the Brad Brewer Golf Academy. **Turnberry Isle Miami**, Miami, FL, is home to two Raymond Floyd-redesigned 18-hole championship golf courses. **Talking Stick Resort**, Scottsdale, AZ, features the Talking Stick Golf Club's North and South courses. *C&IT*

The Broadmoor
Colorado Springs, CO

Hammock Beach Resort, a Grand Golf Resorts of Florida Collection
Palm Coast, FL

Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa
Destin, FL

The Homestead
Hot Springs, VA

Innisbrook, a Grand Golf Resorts of Florida Collection
Palm Harbor, FL

Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate
Orlando, FL

PGA National Resort & Spa
Palm Beach Gardens, FL

Ponte Vedra Inn & Club
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

Reunion Resort, a Grand Golf Resorts of Florida Collection
Reunion, FL

Rosen Shingle Creek
Orlando, FL

Talking Stick Resort
Scottsdale, AZ

Turnberry Isle Miami
Miami, FL



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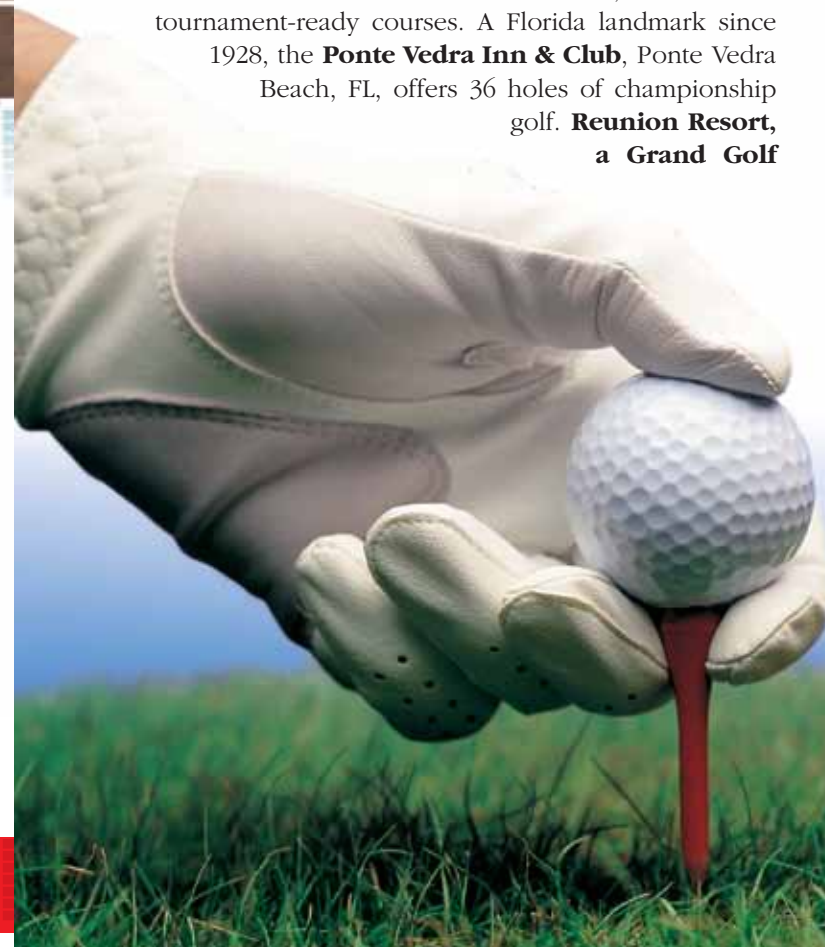


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Framed by graceful palms and rolling dunes, the oceanfront Ponte Vedra Inn & Club is nestled in the tony seaside village of Ponte Vedra Beach, just 20 miles southeast of Jacksonville, FL. Since its celebrated opening in 1928, this AAA Five Diamond-honored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

ing fairways and elevated Bermuda greens. Other recreational pleasures include the Atlantic surf, beach, pools, tennis, gym, biking, fishing, sailing, horseback riding and the region's largest pampering spa.

Ponte Vedra features more than 25,000 sf of function space (17 meeting rooms), ideal for groups of up to 450 participants. Ponte Vedra's three restaurants cater to a variety of tastes and moods in a variety of distinctive and imaginative locations. For more than 80 years, guests have come to appreciate the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club's complete spectrum of amenities, great golf and its uncompromising level of personal service. *C&IT*

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steven.horowitz@
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Colorado

The Land of Picturesque Beauty, Boundless Options and Proven Value

By John Buchanan

Colorado, conveniently located in the middle of the country and offering a handful of distinctly individual destinations ranging from the urban sophistication of Denver to the rustic charm of Colorado Springs and exclusive intimacy of its famous ski resorts, has steadily gained popularity in recent years by combining spectacular beauty with a proven value proposition.

Denver

World-famous as “the Mile High City,” Denver has become increasingly popular as an easily accessible, surprisingly cosmopolitan meeting destination in recent years.

“Groups come to Denver because the city has fabulous hotels, including a lot of variety, a lot of good meeting space and a lot of high-end options to choose from,” says Ashley Robertson, sales and marketing manager at destination management company Destination Services. “It’s also easy to get here. We have a lot of nonstop flights in and out at good fares. Denver also offers good choices for activities for incentive programs, as well as meetings. It offers a lot of outdoor activities, and the mountains are just two hours away. So there are a lot of options.”

Angie Gunter, vice president of marketing at Alpharetta, GA-based business software provider Infor, enjoyed Denver’s charms in April when she hosted a four-day user conference for almost 5,000 attendees.

“Denver was selected by a company we had since acquired, called Lawson Software,” says Gunter, who used a half-dozen hotels including the Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center. “But as we began to move forward with



The skyline of Denver, CO — the Mile High City.

the consolidated meeting, we discovered there were a lot of things we liked about Denver. For example, it’s easy for attendees to get to. And the more we started working with the city and planning the event, we just liked it more and more. And we ended up getting a lot of great comments from our attendees. They really liked Denver.”

Gunter had particular praise for notoriously well-planned downtown Denver. “The way everything is set up just makes it a great destination for meetings and conventions,” she says. “For example, they have a public trolley as transportation and very good pedestrian walkways. And there are so many hotels, restaurants and bars, all within walking distance of the hotels.”

Infor also found good value in Denver. “It was very cost-effective for us, both for airfare and hotel rates,” Gunter says. “All of the hotels actually gave us great rates, so we got very good value for our attendees, who pay their own way. The total cost of doing a meeting there is very reasonable.”

Gunter also found the Colorado Convention Center, located in the heart of downtown, perfect for her needs. She used 190,000 sf of exhibit space for 50 exhibitors, as well as close to 100 demo stations hosted by Infor.

“It’s a great facility,” she says. “The layout is excellent. And one of the best things for us is that they have quite a large number of small breakout rooms, in combination with the expo space. They also have a phenomenal theater that seats 5,000, so that was the perfect venue for us for general sessions.”

Gunter also took advantage of several of the city’s most unique offsite venues. She hosted a day-long series of sessions and a lunch at the Denver Art Museum. She staged

a reception and dinner for 275 customer executives at the Wings Over the Rockies aerospace museum. And prior to her opening night reception at the convention center, she held a cocktail reception for 400 elite customers at the Denver Opera House.

A new offsite venue cited by Robertson is the History of Colorado Museum, which opened downtown last fall. “It has a wonderful atrium and state-of-the-art sound and video capabilities,” Robertson says, adding that it really fills the bill for planners who want to exploit and showcase the uniqueness of a particular destination.

Yet another appeal of Denver, Robertson says, is its constantly evolving dining scene. Among her favorite new restaurants are ChoLon, serving Asian fusion cuisine and available for buyouts for groups of 80–100 attendees. She also favors District Meat, a local steak and chop house. “It has a private dining room that can accommodate 25–30 people,” she says. “It also has a community table right in front of the open kitchen that you can use for a small party. And it’s also available for buyouts.”

On balance, Gunter says, she was pleasantly surprised by all that Denver has to offer. “It has a little bit of everything,” she says. “As a planner, you have amazing opportunities with the convention center, plus there’s easy walkability to a lot of good restaurants and entertainment options, and offsite venues. Denver is a very workable destination that offers a lot of options for a major meeting.”

As awareness of the city continues to grow, Denver also is attracting attention to its major meeting hotels — and planning for more.

In May, the 516-room Grand Hyatt Denver, with more



Photos courtesy of Infor



“Denver is a very workable destination that offers a lot of options for a major meeting.”

Angie Gunter
Vice President of Marketing
Infor
Alpharetta, GA

Angie Gunter (center) says the Colorado Convention Center (above) is an excellent facility with many small breakout rooms, expo space and a phenomenal 5,000-seat theater — perfect for Infor’s general sessions.

than 60,000 sf of meeting space, was named by Cvent as one of the top 100 meeting hotels in the U.S., coming in at number 28.

Colorado Springs

Located 65 miles south of Denver, Colorado Springs is a more rustic and laidback destination that attracts meeting groups more interested in wide open vistas and outdoor activities.

“Colorado Springs is just another example of the outdoor appeal of Colorado,” Robertson says. “That’s a consistent theme throughout the state.”

Maria Rosa-Madruga, CMP, CMM, director of corporate events, North America, for Santa Ana, CA-based Ingram Micro, the world’s largest technology distributor and a leading technology sales, marketing and logistics company for the IT industry worldwide, hosted a major meeting in May for more than 800 attendees at the Forbes Five Star, AAA Five Diamond The Broadmoor, one of the world’s most



A breakfast of mini burritos was served to attendees in the International Conference Center at one of Ingram Micro's events held at The Broadmoor this spring.

Photo courtesy of Ingram Micro

fabled meeting resorts. It was Ingram Micro's second time at the property in five years.

“This group, which includes customers, manufacturing partners, executives and associates, has been in existence for over 10 years,” Madruga says. “And the goal has been to try to take them to a different city every year, in the spring and fall. But because of the demand we have for meeting space and sleeping rooms

and date availability, there are only so many real options out there for us to have. And for this year's spring meeting, The Broadmoor communicated that they really wanted to partner with us and because it had been so long since we had been there, we exercised it as an option. And in this particular instance, our people really wanted to go back to Colorado Springs and especially go back to The Broadmoor.”

Despite the resort's acclaimed facilities and amenities, the most important highlight of the meeting was The

Broadmoor's singular standard of service. “The most important highlight for me and for our attendees is the service that we get,” says Madruga, who plans more than 800 meetings a year with her team. “And we have had just a couple of instances where I really saw the kind of service that becomes a real highlight of the meeting. One indicator of that, something that shows that there is that level of commitment to service, is when the staff can remember guests' names. I know that can't happen with everybody, but the fact that The Broadmoor staff recognized that there was a large group in-house, and they knew who the specific key people were made a big difference. It means a lot when a staff member says, ‘Hello, Mrs. Madruga. How are you today?’”

She cites a particular example of why The Broadmoor has such a peerless reputation. “We had a guest who was having a meeting in his suite late at night,” she says. “And he wanted a particular brand of soda. So he called room service. And it took a little bit longer than he expected for the staff member to bring the preferred beverage. But when he knocked on the door, he had a six-pack in his hand. And he said to our attendee, ‘I'm sorry for the delay, sir, but we didn't have this on property, so I ran out to get it for you.’ That is a huge indicator of the level of service at The Broadmoor.”

Madruga, whose agenda included a major general session and a lot of breakout sessions, also has high praise for the resort's meeting space. “For example, for our general session, which was done in the International Center, we had a pretty elaborate stage,” she says. “And the room for our general session and the stage were set up beautifully. And the lighting was excellent. All of the meeting space was just perfect.”

Although golf played no official role in the meeting, a number of attendees came in a day or two early or stayed a day or two late to play on one of The Broadmoor's three championship courses, one of which hosted the 2011 U.S. Women's Open. And like the hotel's general ambience and meeting facilities, the golf courses are an enduring symbol of why The Broadmoor remains perennially popular.

“Events are experiences in today's world,” Madruga says. “And I think that The Broadmoor can offer meeting attendees an experience from which they'll walk away thinking, ‘Wow, that was great. I'd love to come back here.’ And that's really one of the things that sets The Broadmoor apart.”

In May, The Broadmoor completed the first phase of a \$60 million, multiyear renovation that recently included the re-opening of its Southlake Building rooms and suites, as well as a new exterior for the 6,300-sf Cheyenne Lodge, one of the property's premier meeting and event facilities, offering both indoor and outdoor event space.

Opened in 1918, The Broadmoor features 744 rooms and 185,000 sf of meeting space. The ongoing renovation project will include a facelift for all guest rooms and suites, as well as extensive updates to its meeting and event facilities

“Groups come to Denver because the city has fabulous hotels, including a lot of variety, a lot of good meeting space and a lot of high-end options to choose from.”

Ashley Robertson

Sales and Marketing Manager
Destination Services, Denver, CO



ties and food and beverage operations. The elaborate master plan also includes a new activity center.

Colorado Springs also boasts a trio of one-of-a-kind off-site venues — the spectacular outdoor Garden of the Gods, the U.S. Air Force Academy and the U.S. Olympic Training Center. “Those are all great venues that are unique to Colorado Springs,” Robertson says.

In April, the city announced a new Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving, being developed in partnership with Pikes Peak International Raceway.

Colorado Springs also debuted its first new full-service hotel in 27 years, the 117-room The Mining Exchange, a Wyndham Grand Hotel located downtown, with more than 10,000 sf of meeting space including two ballrooms and a 3,000-sf outdoor terrace.

Beaver Creek

Best known for its celebrated and exclusive ski resort, operated within White River National Forest, Beaver Creek is among Colorado's most popular ski resorts. But the appeal of it and its sister resorts, such as Vail, Aspen and Snowmass, is year-round, with relative bargains available in the summer.

Beaver Creek is most popular with small, high-end incentive groups, notes Robertson. “For those groups,” she says, “it is a spectacular and very exclusive destination.”

Beaumont Health System, a Royal Oak, MI-based health system affiliated with the Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine, has used Beaver Creek each year for the last 21 years for one of its most important meet-



The Lakeside Terrace Patio at The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs' legendary resort, offers breathtaking views of the Rocky Mountains.

Photo courtesy of The Broadmoor



“Last year, attendance was at an all-time low. But as a result of the working relationship between Beaumont and the Park Hyatt, attendance tripled this year. As our relationship continues to grow, I expect attendance to do the same.”

Shannon Herrington, Manager, Heart and Vascular Education
Beaumont Health System
Royal Oak, MI

ings: “Innovations in Cardiovascular Medicine” is a conference for surgeons, internists and health-care providers within the scope of cardiovascular medicine from across the U.S.

Shannon Herrington, manager, heart and vascular education, held her last meeting there, a five-day, four-night event for 150 attendees at the Park Hyatt Beaver Creek, in February.

“Beaver Creek is a great setting for educating our doctors,” says Herrington. “Not only does it offer the amenities that I and our doctors look for in a destination, it also provides the families an option for a ski vacation either before or after the conference. It’s just a great ski destination, and we are fortunate that our meeting is held in the midst of the ski season.”

Beaumont Health System also has a longstanding and very successful relationship with the Park Hyatt. “The hotel has really worked with us,” Herrington says. “This particular meeting, for which attendance is voluntary from a national invitation list of doctors, had taken a real turn for the worse in attendance back in 2007 and 2008. And the downward trend continued into the recession. Last year, attendance was at an all-time low. But as a result of the working relationship between Beaumont and the Park Hyatt, attendance tripled this year. As our relationship continues to grow, I expect attendance to do the same.”

How unusual does Herrington find that kind of relationship with a hotel? “To the extent that the Park Hyatt worked with us to make sure the meeting was a success, it’s unusual,” she says. “Hotel management took the time to understand our situation and how important this meeting is to the medical community and the possible economic contribution to the Beaver Creek community. They went far beyond my expectations.”

The upscale dining scene in Beaver Creek is especially appealing to her attendees, Herrington says. “There are so many great restaurants located right in the village. There

are a lot of wonderful options for excellent dining, a lot of unique little places with wonderful food.”

Favorite examples she cites include the flagship 8100 Mountainside Bar & Grill in the Park Hyatt. “The food is amazing, great ambience, and the wine list is astounding,” Herrington says. “Another popular option for our attendees is Beano’s Cabin on Beaver Creek Mountain. But we cannot forget the NY-style pizza at Blue Moose Pizza in the village, which offers a great casual Italian atmosphere and specialty brewed Colorado beer on tap.”



A group hiking in Colorado’s Rocky Mountain National Park, which surrounds Estes Park Center on three sides, chose this extraordinary vantage point to capture their memorable accomplishment.

Photo courtesy of YMCA of the Rockies

New and Renovated

The 273-room DoubleTree by Hilton Grand Junction is in the midst of a \$1.4 million renovation that will include a facelift for its 12,000 sf of meeting space. The DoubleTree by Hilton Breckenridge completed phase two of a three-phase

renovation of the entire hotel. The pool area has been refurbished, along with all of the guest room hallways. 9600 Grill restaurant and the adjacent private dining room have been remodeled with new flooring, entrance, furniture, bar and fireplace. The hotel has 9,000 sf of meeting facilities, including a ballroom.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide has begun a multimillion-dollar renovation of the 254-room Silvertree Hotel & Conference Center in Snowmass, which will reopen as a Westin property in time for the 2012–13 ski season and feature an updated, 20,000-sf conference center.

The 651-unit YMCA of the Rockies — Estes Park Center, located in the pristine mountain enclave of Estes Park, adjacent to Rocky Mountain National Park, has completed a series of renovations and expansions over the past two years. This summer, the complex, with 92,607 sf of meeting space, will debut a new promenade and miniature golf course. Estes Park Center provides a variety of accommodations, from hotel-style lodge rooms to large eight-bedroom retreat cabins, and a multitude of group activities from hiking to sand volleyball. **C&IT**



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ON THE MOVE



THOMPSON

The Curtis, a DoubleTree by Hilton, Denver, CO, has named **Kate Thompson** as director of sales and marketing. She was director of sales and marketing at the Loews Denver Hotel, Denver, CO.

Frank Lonardo was named director of sales for Turtle Bay Resort, Oahu, HI. He was hotel sales task-force manager for multiple luxury properties in markets on the East Coast and West Coast of the U.S. mainland.

The Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau has named **Neal Carter** as corporate sales manager, primarily responsible for the West Coast market. He most re-



CARTER

cently served as sales manager at the Hilton McLean Tyson's Corner in the Washington, DC, area.

Palace Resorts has named **Susan Hanlon** as vice president of meeting and incentive group sales at seven oceanfront resort properties in Cancun, Cozumel, Isla Mujeres and Riviera Maya. Hanlon, who will lead the U.S.-based sales team, was Northeast regional director of group sales for Palace Resorts.

Karl Pietrzak was promoted to vice president of convention sales for VisitPittsburgh. He formerly served as senior national sales director for VisitPittsburgh.



HANLON



PIETRZAK

PGA National Resort & Spa, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, named **Darin Riggio** as director of mid-Atlantic sales. He most recently served as national sales manager for the Fontainebleau Miami Beach, FL.

The Westin Lake Las Vegas Resort & Spa, Henderson, NV, has named **Jeffrey Spaccio** as director of sales. He was director of sales and marketing, special projects, for the Hilton Miami Downtown.

Paramount Hotel, New York, NY, has named **Jeanette Stancato** as director of sales and marketing. She most recently served as director of sales with The Leading Hotels of the World. **C&IT**



RIGGIO

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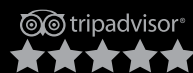
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