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CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

Having a Field Day

Teambuilding Trends That Boost Workplace Performance **PAGE 22**



Switch employees engaged in teambuilding during their annual Field Day.



Photo courtesy of Switch: Liberate Your Brand



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Photo courtesy of Switch. Liberate Your Brand

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Having a Field Day

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By Patrick Simms

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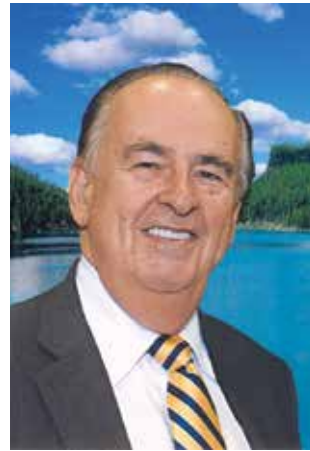
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Publisher's Message

Making the Team

Remember the exhilaration of being among the first chosen to make the team as the captain selected players one by one? Or the letdown as the only one remaining? Regardless, once the game started, those singular feelings and energies were channeled into winning the contest as a united team. And so it goes with corporate teambuilding. The value of effective teamwork is priceless and translates into improved workplace performance, enhanced business relationships, improved ROI and much more.



As last-man-standing status is rarely a good thing, most meeting and event planners charged with producing effective corporate teambuilding programs avoid certain types of physical challenges. For example, in our cover story "Having a Field Day — Physical and Mental Challenges That Strengthen Workplace Performance" on page 22, Kim Silberman, senior vice president of New York, NY-based Madison Performance Group, explains, "Typically we stay away from the very, very physical because it's not fair. You don't want to be in that situation where you're the last one getting picked at volleyball." Silberman also avoids some intellectual challenges for the same reason.

It's not an easy task. Meeting pros must find not only the ideal format but the correct balance so that face-to-face teambuilding exercises strengthen and solidify working relationships among participants. Moreover, beyond the natural learning opportunities inherent in teambuilding programs, companies also want their employees to truly enjoy the experience. Fun and laughter are encouraged.

Annie Castellano, chief creative officer at St. Louis, MO-based Switch, an experiential marketing agency that stages teambuilding for corporate clients and for its own staff, cautions, "If it feels forced, it's not going to work." Switch holds an annual Field Day (pictured on the cover) that is designed for employees to get to know the people with whom they work on a personal level, says Castellano. "Which team you play on isn't random; you've been strategically chosen by the team captain, and there is a certain commitment that you feel to your team when you know that you've been chosen," Castellano explains. She says that participants get the feeling that they've "made the team."

"It's something that people really get into," Castellano adds.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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WEBSITE

www.themeetingmagazines.com

PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Harvey Grotsky
cccpublisher@att.net

GROUP PUBLISHER

Arthur Hyman
cccgrouppublisher@att.net

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Mitch D. Miller
cccartdirector@att.net

MANAGING EDITORS

Susan Wyckoff Fell
ccceditor1@att.net

Susan S. Gregg
ccceditor2@att.net

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Michael Bassett
Karen Brost
John Buchanan
Timothy Herrick
Stella Johnson
Derek Reveron
Patrick Simms

PRESIDENT & CEO

Harvey Grotsky

VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS

David A. Middlebrook
cccoperations@att.net

ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES

cccadvertising@att.net
2700 N. Military Trail, Suite 120
Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394
561-989-0600 • Fax: 561-989-9509

NORTHEAST/MID-ATLANTIC

David Middlebrook
561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccadvertising@att.net

FLORIDA/CARIBBEAN

Arthur Hyman
561-989-0600, ext. 108 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccgrouppublisher@att.net

MIDWEST/SOUTHWEST

561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccadvertising@att.net

SOUTHEAST

561-989-0600, ext. 114 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccadvertising@att.net

LOUISIANA

Arthur Hyman
561-989-0600, ext. 108 • Fax: 561-989-9509
cccgrouppublisher@att.net

WEST

Marshall Ruben
818-888-2407 • Fax: 818-888-4907
mrubin@westworld.com

HAWAII

Marshall Ruben
818-888-2407 • Fax: 818-888-4907
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News & Notes

Rendering of New Las Vegas Arena Unveiled

LAS VEGAS, NV — Joint venture partners AEG and MGM Resorts International, developers of a new world-class indoor arena in Las Vegas, released the first images and details of the 20,000-seat sports and entertainment venue to be located near the heart of The Las Vegas Strip and adjacent to the I-15 corridor. The new arena, which is slated to break ground in April 2014 and open in Spring 2016, will feature a variety of premium seating offerings and hospitality areas for entertaining and private events. Multiple bunker clubs, bunker suites, in-bowl sponsor zones, VIP drop-off zones with private lobbies as well as an 85 foot-high atrium and an array of exterior balconies will bring the ultimate Las Vegas experience inside the venue. The centerpiece of the revitalization of the area between New York-New York and Monte Carlo resorts, the arena is being designed to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's standards for LEED Gold Certification. www.mgmresorts.com, www.aegworldwide.com



A rendering of the new arena.

Photo courtesy of AEG and MGM Resorts International

Le Méridien to Debut in Cleveland in 2016

NEW YORK, NY — Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. announced that its Le Méridien brand will open a new hotel in Cleveland, OH. Le Méridien Cleveland will open in January 2016 following the completion of a highly anticipated, adaptive re-use project that will join together and transform two adjacent, historic buildings on Euclid Avenue. Situated in the heart of the city's theater district, Le Méridien Cleveland will be adjacent to Playhouse Square and within walking distance to the newly developed Horseshoe Casino and Cleveland Convention Center. Nearby attractions include the city's vibrant East 4th Street entertainment district, Progressive Field and Cleveland Browns Stadium. The 206-room Le Méridien Cleveland will feature a full-service restaurant, signature bar, 3,000-sf lounge, indoor pool, 24-hour fitness center, and more than 12,000 sf of meeting space. Le Méridien

Cleveland will feature the brand's signature Le Méridien Hub experience, which re-interprets the traditional lobby

into a social gathering place for creative people to converse, debate, and exchange. www.limeridien.com

Exclusive Meeting Space Opens at Vdara



A rendering of the entry to the new Silk Road meeting space at Vdara.

Photo courtesy of MGM Resorts International

LAS VEGAS, NV — Silk Road at Vdara Hotel & Spa in Las Vegas has been redesigned and reimagined into a 6,500-sf contemporary and flexible meeting space ideal for gatherings such as board meetings, social gatherings, cocktail receptions, banquets and more. Adjacent to Bellagio and Aria, Vdara has become a popular choice for groups desiring a non-gaming, non-smoking, boutique-style environment that still is near The Strip. With floor-to-ceiling windows, natural light illuminates Silk Road. The space, which includes a foyer, prefunction area and a breakout room, can accommodate up to 300 attendees. Email meetings@vdara.com for more information. www.vdara.com

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Hilton Launches 'Million Dollar Booking' Sweepstakes

MCLEAN, VA — Hilton Worldwide and its 10 hotel brands have launched "Million Dollar Booking," a sweepstakes providing event planners in the U.S. and Canada a chance to win their next meeting free, a two-day New York City getaway and a chance to win \$1 million*. Planners who complete a booking at any Hilton Worldwide property in the Americas by December 31, 2013, and then execute the event and register at milliondollarbooking.com by December 31, 2014 will receive a chance entry for the grand prize drawing.

The grand prize winner will first receive a \$100,000

credit against their group's master account that can be used toward accommodations, catering and audio-visual services at any Hilton Worldwide property in North or South America. Then, the winner will go to New York City for a two-day getaway including accommodations at a Hilton Worldwide property, along with select activities and meals. The grand prize winner also will take part in an event where he/she will test their luck by choosing one of 100 golden suitcases in hopes of finding the \$1 million cash prize.

*Terms and conditions apply. Visit www.milliondollarbooking.com for full rules and regulations.

AMEX to Help Bridge the Gap Between Virtual and Physical Meetings

NEW YORK, NY — American Express Meetings & Events Multimedia Solutions (Multimedia Solutions) is working with NASDAQ OMX Corporate Solutions, a global provider of webcasting and other multimedia technologies, to provide meetings stakeholders with virtual and hybrid solutions that are designed to improve the quality and engagement of their meetings programs worldwide.

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Events Multimedia Solutions (Multimedia Solutions) will connect virtual and physical events by distributing live meeting content for companies worldwide. The solution offers customers a seamless meetings and events experience.

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their strategic meetings program. The solution's capabilities include managed webcasts and webinars, online video content management, venue and location services, planning and logistics management, virtual meetings executions, online meetings catalogues and production coordination. businesstravel.americanexpress.com/meetings-and-events

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Omni Hotels Provides Complimentary Golf for Group Room Bookings

IRVING, TX — Omni Hotels & Resorts announced Fairway Freedom — a new golf meeting value. Meeting planners who book a qualifying meeting for 2014 through December 31, 2013, at any of Omni's Golf Resorts will receive a complimentary round of golf for every peak room night booked. "Fairway Freedom is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for meeting planners to give their attendees something extra at their next meeting or event," said Larry Auth, regional director of sales and marketing for Omni's Resort Collection. "With the recent acquisition of our five newest iconic resorts, planners now have access to our robust Golf Collection — and the best part is that next year, the golf is free."

The offer is valid at any Omni Golf Resort including Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa in Austin, TX, the No. 1 golf resort in Texas; The Omni Grove Park Inn in Asheville, NC, featuring panoramic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains; and Omni Bedford Springs Resort in Pennsylvania — home to one of the country's first golf courses. The offer is also available at these storied locations: Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort; Omni Mount Washington Resort in New Hampshire; Omni Hilton Head Oceanfront Resort in South Carolina; Omni La Costa Resort & Spa and Omni Rancho Las Palmas Resort & Spa in Southern California; Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate; Omni Tucson National Resort; Omni Interlocken Hotel near Denver; and The Omni Homestead Resort in Hot Springs, VA.

For details, terms and conditions regarding Omni Hotels & Resorts meeting offerings, customers can contact their Omni Global Sales representative, by calling 800-788-OMNI or visit www.omniunderstands.com.

San Antonio Marriott Riverwalk Completes Ballroom Renovation

SAN ANTONIO, TX — The San Antonio Marriott Riverwalk recently completed a multimillion-dollar ballroom renovation, which encompassed the 9,800-sf Alamo Ballroom as well as the hotel's breakout rooms and prefunction areas, all of which received new carpeting, wall coverings and paint. Automated light sensors also were added to conserve energy, hang points were added to the Alamo Ballroom to enable three different meeting configurations, new linenless buffet tables were added to conserve on laundry use, and new chocolate brown suede conference tables were added. The audio-visual system was refurbished, an enhanced sound system was added, as well as a new lighting and dimming system. The Meeting Services App, a recent innovation by Marriott, is currently available at the 507-room San Antonio Marriott Riverwalk, which is located in the heart of downtown San Antonio, adjacent to the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, and three blocks from the Alamo. www.marriott.com



The new ballroom at the San Antonio Marriott Riverwalk.

Roger A. Smith, Former Visit Denver President, Dies at 73

DENVER, CO — Roger A. Smith, age 73, died on November 1. Smith, one of the key players in the development of the Colorado Convention Center, served from 1984 to 1993 as president of the Denver Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau (now Visit Denver). During his tenure, he established a new tourism department, conducted Denver's first tourism marketing campaign, created an upscale tourism visitors guide and the first Denver tourism videos and started a volunteer program.



SMITH

On the convention side, Smith more than doubled future convention bookings, opened convention sales offices in Washington, DC, and Chicago, started a telemarketing department and brought major conventions to the city. "It would be impossible to overstate what he has done in making our [Denver] bureau one of the most professional and respected in the industry," said Joy Burns, the 1993 chair of the bureau in 1993.

"Roger brought Denver into the modern era as a convention and tourism destination," said Visit Denver President and CEO Richard Scharf, who worked under Smith. "Much of the \$3.6 billion spent in Denver last year by tourists and convention delegates can be traced back to innovations and programs that Roger started. He was the consummate sales leader and knew every customer by first name and put Denver on the map for conventions."

Donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Association at: act.alz.org/goto/Roger_A_Smith



Photo credits: 1.-3., Site, 4. IMEX America, 5. Dolce Hotels and Resorts, 6. DMC Network LLC, 7. Walt Disney World Resort

1 Site International Board Members Liu Ping from China and Rajeep Kohli from India were welcomed to Site Nite North America 2013 by Las Vegas showgirls. Held in Las Vegas October 14, more than 1,200 participants raised funds for research and learning programs including the Site International Foundation Education Grant Program.

2 Also at Site Nite, 2013 Site President David Sand (c) with Site Nite guests, and **3** 2014 Site President Paul Miller greets guests at Site Nite. **4** The IMEX-CIC Inspiration Center at IMEX America 2013 in Las Vegas featured stimulating education and training limited to 10 participants at a time. **5** Dolce Hotels and Resorts partnered with the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) to design an exclusive course for each of the hotel's executive chefs. Held at CIA's Greystone Campus in Napa Valley, the event focused on product knowledge and education, including training and lectures from world-class educators. **6** MEEvents Global CEO Melissa Edwards won the inaugural DMC Network and Ovation Talent Search held at 1 Oak in the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas at IMEX America. Edwards' rendition of Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'" garnered her the most text votes to win the top prize — a trip to any Mandarin Oriental hotel in the world. The night was co-hosted by DMC Network M.D. Dan Tavrytzky and Ovation M.D. Patrick Delaney. **7** Celebrity chef Robert Irvine (l) surprised a group of senior sales executives at Walt Disney World Resort whose Disney meeting was sponsored by CEB Sales Leadership Council. Irvine, host of the hit television show "Restaurant: Impossible," created an interactive culinary adventure for the group in the banquet kitchen of Disney's Contemporary Resort. Irvine was joined by (l to r) Randy Garfield, president, The Walt Disney Travel Company and executive vice president, Worldwide Sales & Travel Operations, Disney Destinations; Brent Adamson, managing director of Executive Advisory Services for CEB; and Robert Gilbert, executive chef, Walt Disney World Resort.

Perspective

By Arthur Backal

My Top 10 Holiday Party Planning Tips

Apella at Alexandria Center is an innovative meeting and event space in New York City that offers 10 impressive private rooms with unprecedented contemporary interiors and sweeping views of the East River. With this venue in mind, I have compiled my top 10 ways to plan a successful holiday party.

- 1. Plan ahead and book early.** There are only so many days between Thanksgiving and Christmas, and prime dates at great venues book up fast as many organizations often book one year in advance.
- 2. Consider Mondays and Tuesdays.** Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays are the most popular evenings for holiday parties. If you're looking to cut down on costs, ask if discounts apply for holiday parties on weekdays.
- 3. Great atmosphere.** Creating a mood that wows doesn't need to cost a great deal of money. Consult with your venue for help. Look for a venue with special, built-in features such as those found at Apella, including sophisticated lounge furniture, a built-in sound system, existing projection screens, custom lighting on the bars and gorgeous views — all of which create a beautiful and special atmosphere for an event.
- 4. Delicious food.** A memorable party always includes great food whether the holiday celebration is an intimate cocktail party or an exquisite dinner. Go first-class whenever possible. For example, Apella's exclusive caterer is Riverpark, a Tom Colicchio Restaurant.
- 5. Interactive dining.** Holiday parties are a great time for mingling and catching up. To make sure all your guests have the opportunity to network, consider coordinating seasonal, local and/or themed food and beverage pairing stations. Learning about



An impressive private dining room at Apella at Alexandria Center in New York City set for a holiday celebration.

Photo courtesy of Apella at Alexandria Center

- the food and wine you're consuming can be a great conversation starter!
- 6. Specialty cocktails.** Specialty cocktails are a great way to incorporate the festive spirit in a fun way. Make sure your venue has a mixologist who can assist in creating custom cocktails. White chocolate and candy cane martinis have been popular at Apella.
- 7. Lighting.** Lighting is a relatively easy and cost-effective way to transform the look and feel of a room. Consider lighting in warm colors and/or projected graphic imagery like pine trees and snowflakes for your next holiday party.
- 8. Be the disc jockey.** Music can make all the difference at a party! Many venues offer built-in sound systems and use Pandora or Spotify to easily arrange the perfect mix for the evening. This can offer considerable cost savings.
- 9. Teambuilding.** A holiday party is the perfect time for teambuilding such as Build-a-Bike. Teams work together to build bicycles and then donate them to underprivileged children. Teambuilding exercises offer the perfect feel-good activity prior to imbibing at the after-party.
- 10. Seasonal favors.** Offer guests warm apple cider or hot chocolate as they depart. Pair with sweet treats for a delicious note to leave on.

C&IT



Arthur Backal

is CEO and founder of Backal Management Group, which brings exceptional event management services to Apella. With more than 20 years of experience in the event and hospitality industry, Backal is the new senior advisor and investor in Union Square Events (USE), the events business of Danny Meyer's restaurant family Union Square Hospitality Group. Backal has worked with some of New York's most renowned hotels and venues, including The Pierre, The Plaza, The Waldorf-Astoria and The Rainbow Room. Since 2003, Backal has served as the consulting director of catering for the Mandarin Oriental, New York. www.backalgroup.com

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By Brooke Sommers, CMP, CMM

Relationship Sales: Where Has it Gone?

No matter what the industry, the No. 1 most important part of sales is *building the relationship*. However, relationship building seems to be dwindling due to higher quotas, more clients, limited time and lower sales budgets.

What I miss the most is the sales touch: the actual building of the relationship.

- When a hotel salesperson took the time to get to know the meeting planner.
- When the national salespeople came to our meeting planning departments and spent time getting to know our needs and us.
- When we became friends with our sales reps.

I still get the sales calls. The problem is they are impersonal, and no effort is expended toward building the relationship. They usually go something like this: “Hello Brooke, I see that you were at my hotel in 2010. Do you have anything coming back this way?”

Really, did you do one iota of research on me? Salespeople can take advantage of the age of technology by checking out my LinkedIn page and/or other social media streams where I have a presence. Then they may be able to catch my attention by starting the conversation with, “Hello Brooke, I just read your article on your “Top 10 Meeting Planning Pet Peeves.” (See *C&IT* March 2013). Now you have my attention.

The Trust Factor

I buy from people I know and trust, and I believe that is the case with most meeting planners. The best sales relationship I have had was with my national sales rep from Hyatt Hotels & Resorts, Jane Jordan. My relationship with Jane was different. No matter where I was in my career, Hyatt did not change my sales rep. Jane and Hyatt knew the importance of the relationship and discovered along the way that the relationship, more than anything else, was what drove me to want to do business with them.

After many years and promotions, Jane has continued to check in on me. Bringing me up to speed on what's new with Hyatt, helping to set appointments for her hotel counterparts, and generally making sure I am taken care of. Jane is no longer my national sales representative with Hyatt, but by staying in touch, she continues to demonstrate that taking the time to build a strong relationship outweighs all other sales activity.

I book business with hotels, chains and third-party rep firms that have taken the time to build a relationship with me.

However, I do not book hotels, chains, and third parties that instead choose to place roadblocks in front of me and insist that I conform to the way they want to do business. For example, there is one large hotel that has chosen not to give me a salesperson because I don't have an IATA number. I do not have an IATA number as I do not accept commissions. Instead, this chain insists I go through their booking center, which for me is an absolute *no*.

I miss the days of the Gaylord Hotels national sales organization. They got it! Gaylord *really* believed in relationships. The salespeople developed a relationship with the client together. It didn't really matter which Gaylord they represented, it just mattered that the brand was being represented and that the client needs were being looked after. This Team Sell approach is what made Gaylord unique and easy to do business with.

Hotel booking centers are *not* relationship tools. They are widget producers. The few times I have called into these centers, I find that I know more about the property they are selling than they do. The only information they have that I do not have is the availability.

In the world of technology, it's easy to forget about relationships.

Both Sides of the Fence

Having been on the hotel side of things and now as a planner, I understand how territories change. Newer salespeople are typically assigned territories that impact the hotel the least. As they grow and enhance their value, they are assigned more lucrative territories. That appears to me to be the natural progression. The conundrum however is that as they become successful and move into other territories, the account where a strong relationship may have been developed is then passed into the hands of another “green” salesperson. I don't understand how this makes sense. Shouldn't the relationship transcend all territories? The planner at some point will just turn to another brand if they are continually being assigned new salesperson after new salesperson.

I think that hotel sales management needs to rethink how they are asking their reps to sell. They should stop the cold calling — a wasteful type of sales. They should educate their sales teams to do their due diligence, research the potential clients and then after a little more qualified study, reach out with more knowledge. That will get the foot in the door... mine anyway. The hotels tend to believe that equal oppor-

HOW TO KEEP THE CUSTOMER!

tunity quota distribution is more important than the relationship that

crosses territories. This philosophy means that business will be lost.

Mentoring as a Building Block

Lastly, I believe that hotels should have a mentoring program. There are plenty of seasoned meeting planners who would love to step in and help. Not only would this give the new salesperson an opportunity to work with local planners but it would also develop an immediate relationship. Isn't that what it all comes down to?

Management teams would do well to not take their eyes off of what is right in front of them. Listen to your clients. When you are about to move sales folks around, take your time to contact the clients who have a long-term relationship with your salesperson. Get some skin in the game, it should not be up to me, the client, to call you and beg for my salesperson.

Business is coming back with a gusto, but don't be short-sighted. Although our industry ebbs and flows, it is the relationship that ends up keeping everyone grounded and doing business together regardless of the economic realities.

Build the relationship! It is the best advice this planner can offer. (Read more in “Dear Sales Manager: How to Win a Meeting Planner's Business” on the following pages.)

C&IT

“I think that hotel sales management needs to rethink how they are asking their reps to sell. They should stop the **cold calling** — a wasteful type of sales.”



Brooke Sommers, CMP, CMM

is owner/strategist of Strategic Conferences & Events LLC. She has been planning meetings for more than 20 years and is currently focusing on Strategic Meetings Management and the value of meetings and events for corporations. www.strategicconferences.net
Hospitality veteran David Rayment, national account director at Experient in Denver, provided additional hotel sales insight for this column. www.experient-inc.com

Dear Sales Manager

Business Relationship Management

Nancy Nachman, CMP, CMM
Chief Connecting Officer
The Meetings Concierge
Scottsdale, AZ



"Sales managers are inundated with the flow of requests they receive. So they can barely get back to you with an answer since they're trying to decipher who really has a serious piece of business."

By
Michael
Bassett

How to Win a Meeting Planner's Business

The economy is rebounding, and the hotel industry with it.

A recent analysis by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) predicts that revenue per available room will increase by 5.9 percent this year and 6.2 percent in 2014. Occupancy rates are expected to climb to 62.2 percent in 2013, the highest level since the pre-recessionary days of 2007.

At the same time, PwC expects companies to book even more meetings and events going for-

ward. All in all — as it's becoming increasingly apparent to corporate meeting planners — we are in the midst of a strong seller's market, and some planners feel as if they've become very junior members of a partnership with hotel sales managers who no longer need their business the way they did a few years ago. It's making them a bit peevish as they wonder whether hotel sales managers are doing all they can to win their business.

The Power of Personal Connections...the Hilton Way

Even in today's digital world, the value of face-to-face connections has not been lost, according to Hilton Worldwide. Thus, earlier this year, the company introduced Connect at Hilton Worldwide, which gives planners instant access to event management tools and everyday business solutions through one convenient site — www.hiltonworldwide.com/connect.



KOMINE

“We believe in the power of personal connections. We understand the impact of a handshake, and the value of customer relationships,” said Mark Komine, senior vice president, head of sales - Americas, Hilton Worldwide. “We are committed to the success of each individual planner, which led us to consult with leading meeting professionals in the development of Connect+.”

Beyond a comprehensive hotel search engine, products and offerings accessible through Connect at Hilton Worldwide include:

Meetings Simplified: Recently introduced, Meetings Simplified provides planners with the facilities and services ideally suited for smaller groups, offering simplified, bundled packages with per person pricing.

Connect +: This enhanced online platform, located at hiltonworldwide.com/connectplus, offers a high level of event expertise and planning support at 115 of the largest hotels within the Hilton Worldwide portfolio in the Americas.

Each of the Connect+ hotels are located in a destination city and either have 450+ rooms or 40,000 sf or more of meeting space.

For more information on Connect, visit www.hiltonworldwide.com/connect, or join the Hilton Worldwide Meetings & Events group on LinkedIn. **C&IT**

Actually, points out Nancy Nachman, CMM, CMP, chief connecting officer with The Meetings Concierge in Scottsdale, AZ, this brings up another question — do sales managers really feel that they have to “win” a meeting planner's business?

“Sometimes I think that the sales managers are getting younger and younger, and just don't remember 2008 and 2009 when the crash came,” she chuckles. “Business is booming everywhere, and there doesn't seem to be a destination that I can call that's either available or doesn't cost much more than a year ago. Perhaps sales managers just don't have the time to remember what happened in 2008 because the pressure is on right now to fill the pot.”

Nachman says that as someone who formerly worked in hotel sales she was trained to find and take care of customers. “When I was on that side of the fence I always thought that all hotel salespeople were created equal, meaning that all of us had the hotel's best interests at heart, were hospitable, and always got back to the customer in a timely manner,” she says. But now that she's a meeting planner, she's afraid that's no longer the case.

She's particularly annoyed that she can't get hotel sales managers to respond to her queries quickly, although she comprehends why that happens. “Sales managers are inundated with the flow of requests they receive,” she says. “So they can barely get back to you with an answer since they're trying to decipher who really has a serious piece of business.”

Jacqueline Edwards, senior sales executive with the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel, agrees that in order to win meeting planner business, “speed to market is critical.” Meeting planners want to know rates, dates and space as quickly as possible, she said, adding that it's in her hotel's best interest to turn leads around fast in order to get its foot in the door.

Electronic RFPs don't necessarily help the situation, Nachman says, since they don't tell the sales manager how many different countries a meeting planner is considering for a meeting, how many different cities within those counties are being considered or how many hotels within those cities are being looked at.

“So right now, with the economy the way it is and with demand so high, it's hard to get answers from hotels

quickly,” she points out. “And for me that means within 24 hours. And that just happens too frequently so that we have to go begging for answers.” She adds that while this could be the result of a salesperson not being well trained or not being particularly good at his or her job, it's more likely that “they're just so out-of-control busy that they don't have time to respond.”

Asking the Right Questions and Giving the Right Answers

Edwards points out that meeting planners get frustrated with a hotel sales office that isn't thorough with a response and hasn't covered or asked the right questions.

Nachman agrees that's a problem. “Sometimes they just don't seem to pay attention to all the questions we ask,” she says. “I may submit an RFP and come back to them with a list of five questions and just get an answer to three of them, so I'll have to track them down to get answers to the other two questions.”

“Really read the RFP,” says Christine Cunningham King, CMP, a meeting consultant with Site Solutions Worldwide in Burnt Hills, NY. “We put a lot of time

and effort putting them together, so we want you (the sales manager) to really read it and make sure it fits.” She wants to know “right off the bat” what clauses a hotel can include and ones it may have trouble with “because I don't want to get to the contract stage and have you tell me that you can't agree to a clause in the RFP.”

Sales managers “need to be completely transparent, communicative and completely honest,” King says.

Edwards agrees and points out that it's also important to accurately portray a property so that the meeting planner has a good understanding of what that meeting is going to be like from the time the attendee registers for a conference to the time he or she checks out of the hotel.

“How far is it really from the airport to the hotel?” she asks. “What's there to do in the hotel's neighborhood, and how does that align with what a planner is trying to accomplish in a meeting?”

Getting a misleading portrayal of a hotel property is definitely a pet peeve of Andrea Michaels, president and owner of Extraordinary Events in Sherman Oaks, CA. “The one thing they should do is to be totally honest,” she says. “If I'm planning an event in a beach location, and I'm told it has rooms with an ocean view, a view to me doesn't mean that you have to lean out of the window and have someone hold you by the ankles so you can see the beach — and then get charged an extra \$200 for that luxury.”

Meeting planners want to know exactly what they're getting, Michaels says, relating an experience she had in Europe that demonstrates what happens when a hotel fails to give her the full picture. She took a group to an extremely expensive hotel in a European city, booking more than 300 rooms for four nights. Before she booked the hotel she specifically asked about the possibility of any kind of construction going on at the hotel during her event and was assured there wouldn't be any.

“When I arrived at the hotel on a site inspection a month before the event, the entire street in front of the



Andrea Michaels
President/Owner
Extraordinary Events
Sherman Oaks, CA

“I want to know that the person I'm working with will be the one I'll continue to work with, and that I won't be passed through five different people and end up with someone who has no idea who I am or what I need.”

hotel had been ripped to shreds,” she recalls. “They were installing a subway, so you know that just didn't happen overnight. When I brought this up I was told, ‘Well, you didn't ask about construction outside of the hotel.’ If I had known I never would have held that conference there because, on top of that, (my client) was a construction firm, and the subway construction was being done by a competitor!”

“That's why I say, just be honest,” adds Michaels.

Michaels is also turned off when during the course of a negotiation she is passed off from one sales manager to another. “I want to know that the person I'm working with will be the one I'll continue to work with, and that I won't be passed through five different people

and end up with someone who has no idea who I am or what I need,” she says.

Which leads to another pet peeve for meeting planners, says Nachman about sales managers who in the middle of a negotiation leave the office without giving them notice. “I'll call the next day and get a ‘Hi, this is John — I'm away until next Tuesday, and I'll call you when I get back,’” she says. “And I'm left hanging.”

Solid Advice and Pet Peeves

Michaels has a few bits of advice for sales managers looking to win her business, followed by pet peeves.

Advice

- **Identify all potential charges associated with a program.** “If there's a resort fee, identify that with the room rate. If you say you have cable television, tell me it only has three channels, or if you're in Mexico, inform us that while you have 54 channels, 52 of them are in Spanish.”
- **Tell the meeting planner what they're getting.** “Inform me if the hotel is on a busy street so I'll know it could be noisy. Is the area around the hotel safe? Has there been crime in the area? Is public transportation readily available?”
- **Make sure the staff is educated about the hotel.** “I recently went on a site inspection and asked how many rooms the hotel had and they couldn't tell me. They had to look it up.”



Thanking Customers...the Marriott Way

Many Marriott International customers such as corporate group meeting planners around the world may receive an unexpected phone call like this from Bill



MARRIOTT

Marriott: 'Hi, this is Bill Marriott, and I really appreciate the fact that your company has held so many meetings and overnight stays at our hotels this year.' According to company statement, Bill Marriott, executive chairman of Marriott International Inc. is one of the many senior executives and associates making phone calls to say "thank you" to more than 125,000 customers across the globe during the company's annual Global Customer Appreciation Week.

Blogging on the importance of building relationships, Marriott said, "As we continue to grow, it's important

to always thank our customers. A personal touch goes an even longer way in this age of tweeting and texting. Pick up the phone or grab a cup of coffee with a customer. It builds personal bonds that hopefully lead to repeat business."

Stephanie Linnartz, Marriott's executive vice president and chief marketing and commercial officer, stated, "This is our 20th year of rallying our associates and executives to personally tell our customers how much we appreciate their business, support and loyalty. Starting with Mr. Marriott Jr. and our CEO Arne Sorenson, we engage thousands of Marriott associates worldwide to reach out to all types of customers to express our gratitude for their business. Global Customer Appreciation Week is a tradition at Marriott and an important part of our culture and strong focus on the guest."

For more information, visit www.marriott.com. **C&IT**

Pet Peeves

- **Food in the rooms.** Fruit trays that attract fruit flies, along with too many huge, tempting cookies.
- **Bathrooms.** Not enough room on a sink or cabinet to put toiletries; make up mirrors with no lights; bad lighting so that a man cannot shave, and a woman cannot apply make-up; and old and inaccurate scales.
- **Wake-up calls.** The ones that don't come.
- **Employees.** The ones who are taught to address you by name but don't know if you are a man or a woman and therefore don't do it correctly; those who say, but don't mean, "it's my pleasure"; and those who knock on your door and then without waiting even a half second, enter the room.

Overall, Michaels says, she wants a hotel salesforce to give her as much information as possible so she can make a good decision about whether to book a property or not, adding, "I really can't think of anything I don't need to know."

Trying to Fit a Circle Into a Square

For the relationship between meeting planner and sales manager to be one that

is a "win-win" for both, says Edwards, "you have to work the way they want you to work, while still protecting the business needs of your hotel. But you also need to know when it makes sense to walk away," she adds.

Instead of booking a meeting for the sake of booking it, if the meeting isn't a good fit for the hotel, a capable sales manager will provide a different solution and suggest a different location and explain, Edwards says. "And the planner will appreciate that and come back to you time and again."

King says she wants to deal with sales managers who don't "try to fit the circle into the square." If her group isn't going to fit into a property, she doesn't want a proposal that isn't going to work.

"Usually my RFP is very specific, with date ranges and patterns," she explains. "If the hotel can't meet these dates, but still wants to give me a proposal with alternate dates from what's in the RFP, then it had better be damn good."

Communication Is Key

According to everyone interviewed for this article, communication between the sales manager and the meeting planner is the key to a successful and lasting business relationship.

While the development of processes such as electronic RFPs make interactions between sales offices and meeting planners potentially a little more distant, direct lines of communication should be open and explored.

"I still like the phone," says Nachman. "I might send out the RFP electronically, but within moments I'll probably call the hotel and find out who my sales manager is because I want a first and last name, the email address and a direct phone number. If I can reach out directly, then there's a relationship being built."

And there is still room for relationships in this business. "I think my job is to build relationships and close business for my hotel," says Edwards. "And it's through those relationships that you get customers for life, or through referrals. It's just critical to my success."

And it's critical to meeting planners as well. "I've worked with some great sales managers, the kind you want on your side when you're in a bind, and you're running into attrition or a potential cancellation," says King. "Those are the people — not the convention services manager — who go to bat for you because they see the benefit of your meeting and the potential of future sales." **C&IT**



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Teambuilding Trends

Having a Field Day

Physical and Mental Challenges That Strengthen Workplace Performance

By Patrick Simms



The Switch employee Field Day (opposite and above), which has been held annually for the past seven years, features “at least one activity that involves a social component, and I don’t mean social media,” says Switch Chief Creative Officer Annie Castellano. “I mean getting to know the people that you work with on a personal level.”

Much of the teamwork that happens in corporate America today is through virtual communications, with the work force becoming increasingly remote and decentralized. But it is teamwork nonetheless, and when employees do gather for a face-to-face meeting, it bears emphasizing the value of effective collaboration. A teambuilding activity, one that serves as

can be prohibitive because it is an added expense. And for incentives, since most companies have cut back on their incentive travel, they elect to reward individuals with leisure time instead of a structured activity, which they would rather include in a meeting,” she explains.

Indeed, teambuilding has a hard time competing with leisure as a reward for top producers. Yet a key to success-

it’s not going to work,” explains Annie Castellano, chief creative officer at St. Louis, MO-based Switch, an experiential marketing agency that stages teambuilding for corporate clients as well as for its own staff. When the activity is successful, it strengthens working relationships among participants, often cultivating numerous other qualities as a side effect, such as leadership ability, problem-solving, patience and communication skills.

But for Switch, skill development isn’t the focus of teambuilding; rather, it’s the development of those working relationships and camaraderie. If teambuilding becomes too centered on teaching specific skills, it crosses over into training, and that can compromise the fun and the socializing that should be integral to the activity. Teambuilding can certainly be part of the value proposition of face-to-face meetings: It is more deeply interpersonal than a reception or conference, as participants are collaborating face-to-face, not merely communicating.

Although teambuilding and training

should arguably be conceptualized differently (as Castellano suggests), they both often fall under the corporate umbrella of “learning and development.” As such, they are implemented in response to certain business needs.

Learning Opportunities

At San Francisco, CA-based Banana Republic’s learning and development division, “we are looking at how to accelerate business results through our people,” says Tina Richards, senior manager. That basic objective has been carried out in a finer-grained way in recent years, with a focus on specific individuals who have shown promising qualities, adds Ben Putterman, director of the division. “We have moved away from a broad sort of training for everybody to more targeted learning solutions for people that we have identified as either high-potential or must-keep talent. It sounds like moving from a more democratized approach to an elitist approach, but I don’t really think that’s what it is; I actually think it is a more strategic and thoughtful way that you allocate money and training efforts

to the people that you think are either adding the most value or have the potential to add the most value. That trend has probably been the biggest shift for us.”

While teambuilding is focused on group cohesiveness, it certainly can foster the professional development of particular individuals by placing them in roles that are outside of their “comfort zone.”

Self-Discovery and Integration

For example, an employee who does not normally assume a leadership position can become a team leader and thereby acquire a new perspective and perhaps undergo a little self-discovery. “The activity might be very natural for some, and they might have the best skills of the group, so it gives them an opportunity to step up and lead their team,” Silberman observes.

Teambuilding also can support company-wide integration when teams mix together participants of different levels within the firm, and from different departments. “It’s good to put people with others whom they don’t interact with too

often, and build relationships that maybe don’t exist but that you want to encourage,” she adds.

When Switch conducts its internal teambuilding, the organizers ensure that each team represents a cross-section of the entire agency. “We don’t want, for example, a team of creative persons versus a team of accountants, or a team of planners versus a team of production people,” says Castellano. “People know their own department members pretty well. It doesn’t make for effective teambuilding if the teams are the same groups that always interact with each other.”

Well-diversified teams will invariably include some participants who know little to nothing about each other, and that’s why Switch’s employee Field Day, held annually for the past seven years, features “at least one activity that involves a social component, and I don’t mean social media,” says Castellano. “I mean getting to know the people that you work with on a personal level.”

Challenges

The 15 Switch employees who are ap-

“(Teambuilding has) clear business benefits, but the way that we try to approach it is much more organic so that it feels like genuine fun.”

Annie Castellano, Chief Creative Officer
Switch, St. Louis, MO



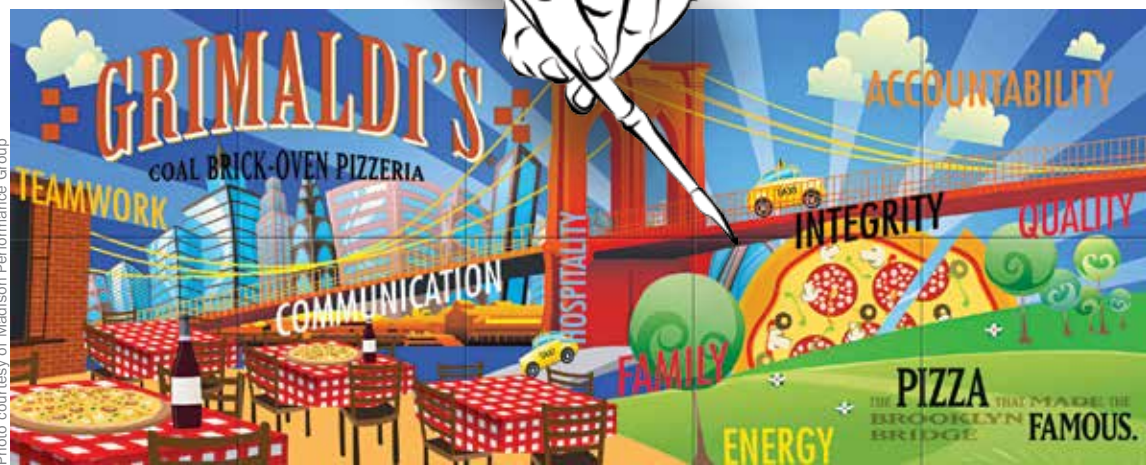
a metaphor for workplace performance, has long been a means to that end.

Given its value, one might wonder why a company would eschew teambuilding at an internal meeting, assuming that the agenda allows for it. Economic factors can influence that decision, according to Kim Silberman, senior vice president of New York, NY-based Madison Performance Group. “The cost of a teambuilding event

ful teambuilding is that it should not be diametrically opposed to leisure; it should not feel purely business-related, from the attendee’s perspective.

Working Relationships

“(Teambuilding has) clear business benefits, but the way that we try to approach it is much more organic so that it feels like genuine fun. If it feels forced,



Madison Performance Group organized a "Big Picture" teambuilding art project for the Grimaldi's Pizzeria chain that incorporated the company's core values.

pointed Field Day commissioners oversee the day-long event and design nine team challenges with both intellectual and physical aspects. "We try to do things that are universally accessible, so no matter what shape you are in, you can still participate in a way that can contribute to the success of your team. We don't want anybody to feel like they just brought the team down," says Castellano. "Typically we stay away from the very, very physical," Silberman remarks, "because it's not fair (to some participants). You don't want to be in that situation where you're the last one getting picked at volleyball." By the same token, excessively cerebral challenges are not usually a good choice either.



"When you see the final (Big Picture) product it's amazing, but when you're actually doing it, it's hard. It definitely pushes the comfort level of those who are not artistic."

Kim Silberman, Senior Vice President
Madison Performance Group, New York, NY

Innovation and Creativity

Challenges that involve creativity, however, are especially in vogue, even if they do somewhat disadvantage participants who lack that quality as a forté. "The work that we do around innovation and creativity with teams is probably the trendiest thing we do," says Putterman. "It's a super-hot topic in corporate America right now, and in learning and development functions. For example, we bring in improvisational acting groups to teach our teams. Improv provides a great framework for how to communicate and build off one another's ideas in the moment; it has an incredible application to the way that teams work in a corporate environment."

The Big Picture

Creativity comes in many forms, of course, and one of those is painting. A very popular kind of activity today has each team painting a single tile that will be interlocked with those pro-

duced by other teams so as to produce a giant painting.

Silberman recounts an event of this type, appropriately called "The Big Picture," that Madison Performance Group conducted for Grimaldi's Pizzeria, a New York City chain. The final painting usually depicts an image of significance to the company, and "in this situation the company had eight core values, and we basically created a beautiful photo

explains. "The old model that the people at the top with the big titles have all the ideas and all the answers is ludicrous, and (the mixed character of the teams) highlights that. We need ideas more than we need anything else, and we believe that great ideas can come from any part of the company and from any level. Actually, to some degree you can make the argument that some of the youngest and newest members of the team are going to have the best ideas."

that incorporated the words communication, quality, accountability, etc., within a New York City setting.

"We had 10 teams of six participants, so the mural was divided into 10 square canvases," she continues, "and each team had a color photo (of what their square was to look like). And the colors they saw on the photo they actually had to make. They also had to work with other teams that had a square next to theirs to make sure that when they make a color that bleeds over to their square, that it's the same.

"These photos are very detailed, and it takes about an hour and a half for six to 10 people to paint their square as perfectly as they can. And then when all the pieces are done, the facilitator puts

them together (they snap together) and it makes this huge canvas. The company can then take it to their corporate headquarters and hang it up."

"The Big Picture" can be quite rewarding for participants, but it's not the easiest teambuilding activity. "When you see the final product it's amazing, but when you're actually doing it, it's hard. It definitely pushes the comfort level of those who are not artistic," Silberman says. "But there is definitely a lot of teamwork involved. Team members even visited other teams who were having a hard time with their square. And there was strategy to figure out who they had to work with outside of their team."

Culinary Events

With the ongoing foodie trend and the proliferation of TV cook-offs such as Top Chef and Iron Chef, it's seldom that



"The work that we do around innovation and creativity with teams is probably the trendiest thing we do. It's a super-hot topic in corporate America right now, and in learning and development functions."

Ben Putterman, Director of Learning and Development
Tina Richards, Senior Manager, Learning and Development
Banana Republic, San Francisco, CA

a planner can go wrong with cooking as a teambuilding medium. "Cooking teambuilding is extremely popular, and it's very easy to build into meal functions," notes Silberman. "And while some types of events are better with smaller groups, you can do a cook-off with 100 people, dividing them into 10 teams of 10, for example," she says.

Still, not all attendees will have a culinary streak, and so it's advisable to include competitive elements besides the actual cooking. "We did a chili cook-off this year for an IT company where not only did they have to make a chili with X number of ingredients, but they also

had to name their team, come up with a brand, create an advertising board, and present their team and their product," Silberman relates. "And they could earn points based on all the different things that we asked them to do, not just for how good their chili was."

Performance Adventure

So just as it's a good rule of thumb to diversify the composition of teams (across departments, levels of seniority, etc.), it's also sensible to try to vary the skills and activities involved, thus creating more opportunities for each participant to shine. One way to do this is to



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Ferguson Enterprises' Performance Adventures include Tarps and Balls and Helium Hoop, both of which require group collaboration and communication to complete the tasks.

offer a variety of competitions through several hours or even a day, as in the case of Switch's Field Day or Newport News, VA-based Ferguson Enterprises' Performance Adventure. "Our training department holds 12-15 Performance Adventure events annually, onsite at Ferguson headquarters, distribution centers or branches," says Mark McNitt, director of training. "Activities include putting together a puzzle blindfolded, getting your entire team across the room using stepping stones, etc. The average number of participants per event is 24."

The company considers the "adventures" a kind of experiential learning.

After conducting participant surveys and gathering managers' feedback regarding observed changes in associates' behaviors, McNitt's team cites positive results for Performance Adventure. "Teams are working more effectively, communicating better and achieving more consistent results," he says. "Areas impacted include building trust, managing conflict, understanding commitment and defining accountability."

Proving ROI

ROI measurement for teambuilding is often taken with a grain of salt, however. A variety of factors can lead to better performance in the work-

reactions via post-event surveys. Onsite debriefings also allow them to discuss any personal benefits they derived from the activity, what they learned about coworkers, how they envision the activity translates to the workplace, how they felt about the activity's duration and level of difficulty, and so on. Ideally, reactions and assessments are also gathered while the teambuilding is in progress. "Oftentimes we can measure performance in real time so that if something isn't going as well as we hoped, we can make a course correction before it is too late," says Castellano.

Company Engagement

Some of the most significant reactions to teambuilding don't need to be "gathered" because they're more or less obvious: excitement and enjoyment. These emotions drive engagement with the company. Participants want to work for a company that takes

the trouble to design a fun, creative activity for them, and they are more motivated to work with professionals with whom they have shared an exhilarating team experience. For Switch, that experience begins well before Field Day, with the drafting process. "Which team you play on isn't random; you've been strategically chosen by the team captain, and there is a certain commitment that you feel to your team when you know that you've been chosen," Castellano explains. Participants thus get the feeling that they've "made the team." "It's something that people really get into," she says. **C&IT**



Mark McNitt, Director of Training
Ferguson Enterprises Inc., Newport News, VA

"Teams are working more effectively. ...Areas impacted include building trust, managing conflict, understanding commitment and defining accountability."

"We started offering such programs in 2010," McNitt says. "Our motivation was to help new Ferguson teams, formed either through acquisition or expansion, to work more effectively and realize their full potential. We also wanted to offer a broader range of learning options for our associates beyond traditional classroom or Web-based training.

"We launched this program without a specific request from management or departments; rather, we started knocking on doors and took the learning opportunity to the departments and managers, and then based on their needs customized the training deliverable."

place, and it can be hard to conclusively attribute the improvement to the teambuilding. "Often this need to prove ROI is a self-inflicted sort of pursuit that training people put on themselves," Putterman says. "The problem is that you are trying to put a scientific measure on an unscientific body of work, and if you show that kind of measurement to business leaders that are very analytical and numbers-driven, they are going to punch holes through it. I do think (ROI measurement) is valuable in some cases, such as technical training."

So in the case of teambuilding, many organizations simply gather participant

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Destination



The distinctive, three-towered Marina Bay Sands in Singapore features SkyPark, a rooftop venue the size of three football fields.

When a global powerhouse like Starwood chooses Macau, China, as the site of its largest property in the world, it's a sure bet that this destination is worth a closer look. As the gaming capital of Asia, Macau is filled with glamorous hotels and exciting nightlife. In fact, its gaming revenue is reported to be six times that of Las Vegas. But there's much more to this intriguing destination than slot machines and gaming tables. Macau was a Portuguese colony for hundreds of years, so it offers a unique blend of Chinese and Portuguese cultures, earning its historic city center a well-deserved place on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Macau

Nu Skin, a global direct selling company that develops and distributes personal care products and nutritional supplements, brought its 2013 incentive training academy to Macau in September. "The event attracted over 5,000 business partners from mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan with a total investment of HKD 80 million (the equivalent of more than \$10 million U.S.), and it took a taskforce of 500 company event specialists to manage and arrange the event," says a Nu Skin representative.

One reason Nu Skin chose Macau is that it is easily accessible from mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. "Besides, Macau has a lot of large venues with completed MICE facilities

to choose from," the representative notes. "High quality services and facilities in every aspect and a crew of professionals with MICE expertise are important elements that our organization looks for when choosing the destination for this event."

By Karen Brost

Since the company's attendance doubled over the previous year, the company needed a larger venue that could accommodate all of their needs. "The company reserved half of the Sheraton Macao Hotel," the planner explains. "All of the rooms and services are excellent quality. Moreover, the MICE facilities such as meeting venues, banquet rooms, catering services, etc. fit our company's high quality standards for our business partners. The staff of the hotel also provided us very good and professional service during our three-day, two-night incentive training program."

"It featured an array of exciting activities, including the breaking of the Guinness World Record for the 'Most people sitting on one chair,' a key business strategy announcement for 2014, a fashion show, as well as two exclusive sessions of the House of Dancing Water show." The show, which is filled with dazzling special effects, was developed by former Cirque du Soleil director Franco Dragone at a cost of \$250 million.

The Nu Skin representative reports that the company's business partners were very pleased with the outcome. "The smooth and excellent quality of the event's organizing left all of the participants with good memories of their experience."

The 3,896-room Sheraton Macao Hotel opened in Macau in 2012 as the largest property in Starwood's global portfolio. Featuring two towers named Sky and Earth, the expansive hotel is located on the glittering Cotai Strip and offers more than 160,000 sf of meeting space, including a pillar-free ballroom the size of 11 basketball courts.

The Sheraton Macao is part of the Sands Cotai Central complex, which also includes more than 100 world-class retail stores, 20 restaurants and cafés, and live entertainment along with the 636-room Conrad Macao and the 1,224 Holiday Inn Macao. Overall, there are more than 12,000 hotel rooms within walking distance on the Cotai Strip, all less than five years old. Thousands more hotel rooms now under construction soon will be flagged with familiar names like Wynn and MGM. The Cotai Strip also is a shopper's paradise where designer goods can be purchased duty-free from hundreds of luxury stores.

Macau's rich cultural heritage also makes it an ideal destination for incentives. Attendees can immerse themselves in the local culture in a variety of memorable ways, such as cruising around Macau's inner harbor on a Chinese junk, learning how to perform a traditional lion dance or taking lessons from a tai chi master. For a fun teambuilding activity, groups can go on an iPad Discovery Tour of Macau's historic city center where teams are armed with iPads as they search for clues and complete challenges in an area that dates back to Macau's colonial days.

In addition to owning and operating the Sands Cotai Central complex, Sands China Ltd. also owns The Venetian Macao just across the street. The 3,000-suite property contains 108 meeting rooms and 1.2 million sf of exhibit space along with a 15,000-seat CotaiArena and 1,800-seat Venetian Theatre. The luxury venue also includes more than 30 restaurants offering a wide choice of international cuisine, more than 300 stores at The Grand Canal Shoppes, four swimming pools and three canals where gondola rides are offered. The Venetian Macao is also home to Asia's first Malo Clinic Spa, an 85,000-sf facility that offers an array of spa, wellness and healthcare services.

The Venetian was the site of an incentive trip for the Chinese subsidiary of Mary Kay Cosmetics organized by U-MICE of Shanghai. As one of the event's highlights, guests at the welcome cocktail reception were treated to performances by a group of street entertainers called Streetmosphere, and the hotel created a custom pink cocktail to celebrate the group's arrival. The hotel staff created another custom touch for the event's final gala dinner, an elaborate pink cake showcasing the Mary Kay logo.

Like Hong Kong, Macau is considered a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, so it has its own government and currency, and visas are not required for U.S. visitors. The Macau government offers a Convention and Exhibition Stimulation Program, which provides basic assistance and/or financial support for confirmed or potential

meetings, conventions or exhibitions. For example, support for a potential event may include transportation and accommodations for a site inspection. Additional details and contact information are available at www.economia.gov.mo.

Mainland China

Veronica Scrimshaw, director of corporate communications for NPA, The Worldwide Recruiting Network in Grand Rapids, MI, planned an owner's meeting for her company that took place in Beijing. "Beijing is interesting because the language barrier is a real problem," she notes, admitting that it was a bit daunting to sign a contract that was written in Chinese even though she had an English translation of it. While her company often uses a third-party planning company to assist with their meetings, they relied on a local representative of their company who was willing to guide them through the site selection and negotiating process in Beijing.

Scrimshaw shares some insights she learned from him about negotiating in China: "If you want to work with a Western-focused company with really great English, you are not going to get a great price. If you want to get a good price, you're going to have to find someone who is native



"You want to make sure you have a quality translation of that native language. If not, it can hinder the actual productivity of the event."

Jeremy M. Luski, Director of Event Operations and Registration Services, Breakbulk, New York, NY

Chinese that can speak Chinese, that's going to work with a Chinese agency that works with groups, and we'll barter like the Chinese.

"I think that that is probably true," she adds. "We've worked in Asia for a long time, and it is a very different culture for negotiating than what we're used to in the U.S. It's a much longer, slower process; more is on the table. People will say, 'They never really say no, or no doesn't mean no. It might also not mean yes.' Everything is negotiable. Everything. I find that you just haggle over everything. It's just part of the culture."

Scrimshaw also notes that another cultural difference is that the presentation of business cards is more formal in China. Business cards are presented and received with both hands, and writing on a business card or tucking it away carelessly such as in a back pocket should never be done.

For its meeting, NPA used The Lakeview Hotel, which was built for the Beijing Olympics. Since the hotel was about 45 minutes away from central Beijing, NPA decided to put together an all-inclusive package for the first time to make it easier for attendees to experience the destination. The pack-

age included meals, a day trip to the Great Wall of China and a city tour. "Our members really enjoyed that bonding time to do sightseeing with a group of people they knew or wanted to get to know better," she explains.

Jeremy M. Luski, director of event operations for Breakbulk Events & Magazine, has a great deal of experience planning conference, exhibition and meetings in China. He agrees that the language barrier can be a challenge, but says, "You can work through it as long as you have the proper staff and resources."

He notes that quality translation and translation services are essential. He also stresses that it's important to find a translator who understands your industry's terminology, which, in his case, involves the maritime transportation logistics industry. "Every industry has specific terms and terminology that translators need to know how to translate, so what I found was best was finding translation companies through my references, and then having someone who is knowledgeable in our industry come out and interview them. Sometimes you may have to pay a little more for quality, because you want to make sure you have a quality translation of that native language. If not, it can hinder the actual productivity of the event."

"The other thing I find is very important," Luski continues, "is when you're in a specific destination, you should be charging in the local currency. Credit cards are not a common source of payment in China. They have their own local bank card that a lot of people pay by. A lot of people like to pay in cash onsite, as well, so doing your research and preparing yourself and your team is very important. Bank wire transfer is also important. So make sure when you're setting up your registration system that you accommodate your local markets."

He also mentions that in China they have something called a "fapiao." "It's a Chinese invoice that a lot of Chinese people require for tax purposes. It has to be officiated from your company and also have an official stamp on it," he explains.

Hong Kong

Luski also has planned conferences and workshops in Hong Kong. "It's a great destination," he comments. "The difference with Hong Kong is that English is very well recognized there." He says it's important to be culturally respectful when organizing events and publishing materials. "It's not U.S. Western English. It's British-style English." So he suggests using the proper British spelling for words such as programme instead of program and organiser in place of organizer. For dates, the day comes before the month as in 24 October 2013.

Hong Kong continues to be a popular choice for international conferences and exhibitions. From July 2012 to June 2013, nearly 1,200 events were held at the 3-million-sf Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The waterfront venue, which is an iconic landmark in Hong Kong, is owned by the Hong Kong SAR government and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council.

Singapore

"We've also done business in Singapore," Scrimshaw says. "Singapore has a very formal dress code. You don't wear jeans in Singapore. You don't chew gum in Singapore." She says that Singapore is very Western and that English is the dominant language there like it is in Hong Kong. "Both are huge international banking and finance centers; there are lots of big multinational companies there," she adds.

The three-tower, 2,561-room Marina Bay Sands Hotel in Singapore recently became the first venue outside of the U.S. to be certified for green meetings by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). The resort achieved Level One certification relating to the evaluation and selection of venues for environmentally sustainable meetings, events, trade shows and conferences. The Marina Bay Sands, which overlooks the South China Sea, Marina Bay and the Singapore skyline, is also known for its innovative rooftop SkyPark. The lushly landscaped venue, the size of three football fields, is home to restaurants, lounges and a massive infinity-edge pool, which features panoramic views of the city. Across from the hotel are three performance theaters, the ArtScience Museum and the Sands Expo and Convention Center, with more than 1.2 million sf of meeting and exhibition space.

Thailand

The Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau recently introduced a new marketing campaign — called Thailand Connect — to the U.S. Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) market. The campaign is designed to highlight three specific strengths of the country: The first is the diversity of its destinations, with Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket, Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen being named as the country's five officially designated MICE cities. The campaign also promotes Thailand's business opportunities and the strength of its MICE industry.

Malaysia

A study conducted by Taylor's University's Centre for Research Innovation in Tourism, Hospitality and Food Studies found that the destination has a positive impression in the MICE market. Delegates surveyed reported that they had positive experiences at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, citing its facilities, service, retail options and accommodations. The delegates also appreciated the friendliness and hospitality of the local people in Kuala Lumpur, and its cultural diversity, cleanliness, tourist attractions and reasonable prices for shopping and dining.

Japan

The options for meeting venues in Japan continue to expand. The 272-room InterContinental Osaka opened in June at the Umeda Grand Front Osaka, a business and entertainment complex. Also in Osaka, the new 360-room Marriott Miyako Hotel is scheduled to open in March and will occupy the 38th to 57th floors of the Abeno Harukas cultural complex, a landmark in the city. Another new property, The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto, will

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offer 136 rooms and a Japanese-inspired design when it opens in February. Kyoto is known for his beauty, history and culture, and is the site of 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Australia

Scrimshaw also plans meetings in Australia and noted an interesting difference from the U.S. “In Australia, we have very few people that stay at the host hotel. If we have 150 people coming to a meeting, we might use 20 guest rooms because travel is sold as a package, so you’re buying lodging and airfare together. Lodging is sometimes at the host hotel, but frequently not. It might be across the street, it might be nearby, but we just can’t guarantee heads in beds.

“That’s not such a huge part of the contract,” she adds. “Sometimes, what I’ve found to be true in Australia and Asia is that you don’t really have a room block. It’s kind of a courtesy block. They just won’t guarantee that there’s a rate available for any specific length of time. Typically, what I will find is that if I really want to have a guaranteed block available, I will have to assume all of the payment, but we’re not a corporate group. We’re not booking it or paying for it (other than staff). It’s definitely a different thing to get your head around.

“We have used all kinds of different properties (in Australia),” Scrimshaw continues. “We are using a casino hotel gaming property in Cairns. In Sydney, we’ve used a Four Points by Sheraton this year; we’ve used Marriotts; we’ve used Novatels; we’ve used independent properties. Those meetings will run 100–150 people.”

Scrimshaw says she doesn’t see a lot of cultural differences between Australia and the U.S., but she did mention one thing they do differently there. “One thing that is common is when

you book a meeting and you’re going to have lunch, the lunch will always be a standup lunch. So it’s a buffet, and you eat in the hallway standing up, and that seems to be very normal.”

The former Ritz-Carlton and Stamford hotel in Sydney has undergone a major refurbishment and rebranding and will make its debut as the InterContinental Sydney Double Bay in January. The 140-room property is conveniently located near the city and famous Bondi Beach.

Sea World Resort, located on Australia’s Gold Coast, has announced that it is constructing a multimillion-dollar conference center, which will be able to accommodate events for up to 1,000 attendees when it opens in 2015.

Top Asian Destinations

According to MasterCard’s 2013 Global Destination Cities Index, the top 10 Asia-Pacific destination cities by international overnight visitor spend are as follows: Bangkok, Singapore, Tokyo, Seoul, Sydney, Taipei, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Melbourne. Bangkok and Singapore retained their top slots from last year, while Tokyo moved up to third place (from seventh) from the previous index. Bangkok also ranked No. 1 worldwide for international visitor arrivals, surpassing last year’s top ranked city, London, by a slim margin.

Success Is in the Details

Even some of the smallest details can be different when planning a meeting overseas. “We had a hard time finding conference supplies like pocket folders and badge holders,” Scrimshaw notes. “Paper size is a huge thing. We use the imperial paper in the U.S. and Canada, but I don’t think anybody else in the world uses it. They all use A4 paper, and you can’t get A4 paper easily here.” She noted that A4 paper is just a bit narrower and longer than standard U.S. paper, so it’s too long to fit in a pocket folder. “I’ll (also) think I’ll lay out all of the name badges, and I’ll just email them ahead to be printed. No, I won’t, because they’re formatted for 8½ x 11 badge paper that nobody has over there. There’s a lot of little picky things that just crop up, and you learn by fire.”

“Do your due diligence,” Luski advises. “It’s little things that you wouldn’t think about that are very important to prepare yourself for in advance because they do take time to set up, and communication is a challenge sometimes. With China (for example), it’s a 12-hour time difference for a Western individual from the East Coast, so working non-traditional hours might be important. With a lot of destinations, you have to work around their time. And you have to work around the challenges and barriers to have an efficient, organized and well-respected event.” **C&IT**

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Loews Coronado Bay Resort, San Diego, CA, has named **George Allen** as the director of marketing. He was director of sales and marketing at Sheraton Carlsbad Resort and Spa and Grand Pacific Palisades Resort.

Brad C. Mettler was named director of sales and marketing for the Grand Hyatt New York in Manhattan. He was director of sales and marketing at Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa, Oahu, Hawaii.

Grand Wailea, Maui, has named **Scott Boyer** as director of sales and marketing. He was director of sales and marketing at Four Seasons Hotel Pudong, Shanghai.

Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa, Destin, FL, has named **Elyse Graver** as regional sales manager responsible for the Texas and West Coast territories. She was an independent hotel contractor.

Park Hyatt Beaver Creek, Beaver Creek, CO, has named **Tom Puntel** as director of sales and marketing. He was director of sales and marketing at Hyatt Regency Denver Tech Center. **C&IT**

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