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# INSURANCE & FINANCIAL MEETINGS MANAGEMENT

THE EXECUTIVE SOURCE FOR PLANNING MEETINGS & INCENTIVES



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*A final-night dinner under a clear  
span tent in San Francisco's Union Square.*





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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2015 Vol. 22 No. 5



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*JM&A Group's final night dinner was held under a clear span tent in San Francisco's Union Square.*

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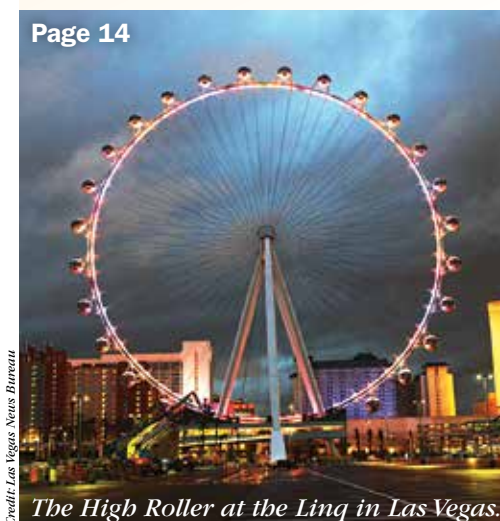
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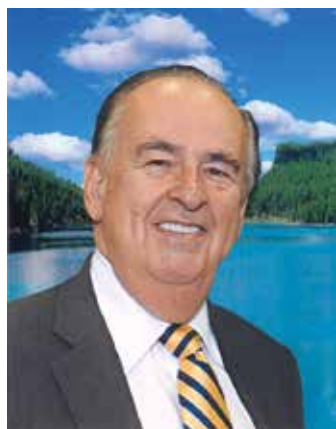
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# Publisher's Message

## Creating Powerful Memories

Professional meeting planners have a tough job. Always on the lookout for novel and exciting incentives, planners oftentimes have a tendency to go for the fun-in-the-sun destinations and avoid big cities. Our cover story this month, “Big City Incentives — Planners Create Urban Experiences Even the Well-Traveled Qualifier Will Love” on page 10, is full of excellent and enlightening examples of why planners should consider the perks of meeting in big cities such as Boston, Chicago, New York and San Francisco.



For example, Katrina Kent, director, The Event Group at TD Ameritrade in Jersey City, New Jersey, says, “As many qualifiers make these trips year over year, we’re always looking for ways to juice up the experience. Urban options can play a big part in keeping things fresh.”

What if your qualifiers have “been there, done that”? Lanie Collins, the marketing associate and event manager with Nicola Wealth Management in Vancouver, BC, says, “I think a unique experience can be had regardless

of whether the group is well-traveled. As long as I put together a program that is customized to our group, I find that is what they take away as their unique experience.”

Kent suggests another way to create powerful memories: “The key is to provide seamless access to experiences that the qualifiers can’t get on their own, and that they don’t get in other business trip environments. This can vary from the choice of venue, to activity and dining experiences, to potential guest appearances from local celebs or experts, to top-notch entertainment options, such as VIP experiences at sporting events or festivals.”

Rosie Puella Burkman, vice president, marketing for JM&A Group in Florida, really wowed their 550 guests after a full day of activities in the San Francisco area by capping it off with a dinner in Union Square (featured on our cover). Mary Carvotta-Trexler, the chief creative officer at Access Destination Services, created the powerful memories for the group. She says, “Even if you’ve been to the city many times, to be able to sit down and have a five-star dining experience under a tent in Union Square is pretty fantastic.”

For fantastic experiences in Las Vegas, see page 14. Also, check out the special Orlando Meeting & Incentive Travel Guide (page 27) as well as the 2015 World Class Award Winners on page 58.

Harvey Grotsky

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## Harrah's Atlantic City Waterfront Conference Center Opens

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — Caesars Entertainment celebrated the grand opening of the \$126 million Harrah's Atlantic City Waterfront Conference Center with a ribbon-cutting, fireworks and customer event on September 17.

With the opening, Harrah's Atlantic City Waterfront Conference Center and Harrah's Resort Atlantic City now can claim to be the largest hotel-conference center complex from Baltimore to Boston. The Harrah's Waterfront Conference Center's 100,000 sf of meeting space along with the resort's 2,590 existing hotel rooms offer guests the unique experience of being able to sleep, eat and meet all under one roof. The versatile meeting space with two 50,000-sf ballrooms can be configured 200 different ways, making more than 60 smaller rooms to accommodate meetings of all sizes.

Due to the addition of the conference center, which overlooks the Atlantic Ocean and Marina District, there has been an increase of 90,000 advance room bookings for the upcoming 12 months at Harrah's Resort Atlantic City, compared to 7,000 advance room bookings for the previous 12 months. The 97 confirmed meetings to date include Bradley Caldwell, Rita's Italian Ice and Meeting Professionals International's 2016 World Education Congress, set for June 11-14, which brings in more than 2,000 attendees.

[www.caesarsmeansbusiness.com](http://www.caesarsmeansbusiness.com), [www.meetinac.com](http://www.meetinac.com)

## Mandalay Bay Opens Convention Center's Expansion

LAS VEGAS, NV — Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino recently opened the convention center's 350,000-sf expansion. Creating the most customer-focused convention facility in North America, the \$70 million expansion allows Mandalay Bay to grow current shows and attract new groups with the added flexibility.

Based on customer demand, the resort built new exhibit space, a 20,000-sf foyer and underground parking in this first phase. The second and final phase of the expansion will transition existing space into a 70,000-sf carpeted ballroom to accommodate new corporate partners and associations as well as achieve greater utilization of the entire facility.

Upon completion of this project in January 2016, the Mandalay Bay Convention Center will boast more than 2 million total square feet and more than 900,000 sf of contiguous exhibit space. This new space elevates its ranking in North America to No. 5 in both total square feet and exhibit space.

The resort's state-of-the-art, high-density Wi-Fi has been added to the new space to accommodate more attendees, provide unique custom solutions based on the needs of the group and allow for the most advanced presentations. The system's benefits include the convenience of a one-time log-in for attendees during their stay and the seamless connectivity throughout Mandalay Bay, from the convention center to public indoor and outdoor spaces to the guest rooms. [www.mandalaybay.com](http://www.mandalaybay.com)



Key Caesars Entertainment executives and New Jersey dignitaries cut the ribbon to the Harrah's Atlantic City Waterfront Conference Center. L to R: Michael Massari, senior vice president of Caesars Entertainment National Meetings & Events; Don Guardian, mayor of Atlantic City; Steven Sweeney, New Jersey state senate president; Gary Loveman, chairman of the board of directors, Caesars Entertainment; Mark Frissora, president and CEO of Caesars Entertainment Corporation.

## San Jose Marriott Set to Complete Renovation Soon

SAN JOSE, CA — The San Jose Marriott will redefine hospitality in Silicon Valley with a chic contemporary look, cutting-edge mobile guest services, completely renovated guest rooms and suites, new meeting space and Michael Mina's revitalized Arcadia Steakhouse and Tanq Bar.

Key renovation elements will include the lobby's transformation to a clean, light-infused space with service-friendly guest registration pods; a stylish update of the hotel's 510 guest rooms and suites with new carpeting, wall coverings and draperies, artwork and accent pieces, improved lighting and a new bathroom product.

Each guest room has its own dedicated router enabling guests to operate six mobile devices simultaneously at lightning-fast speed and Marriott Hotels' in-room entertainment system.

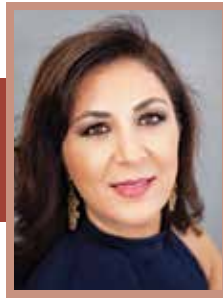
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## SnapShots



**1** Attendees celebrating at one of the two inaugural GBTA Gift of Knowledge Workshops held in China in September at the Shanghai JW Marriott Hotel and at the Kempinski Hotel Beijing Lufthansa Center. Nearly 120 attendees gathered for education and training. **2** George Aguel, president and CEO of Visit Orlando (3rd from right) joins (l to r) Lewis Sherr, chief revenue officer, US Tennis Association; Peter Kacheris, managing director, Waldorf Astoria and Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek; and Gordon Smith, executive director and COO of USA, at the 2015 US Open in Flushing Meadows, New York. Visit Orlando is the exclusive global tourism partner of the US Open. **3** Cincinnati USA Convention & Visitors Bureau President & CEO Dan Lincoln (top row, 2nd from left), joined industry leaders on a Speakers' Panel at the inaugural State of Black Tourism, hosted by The National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners on September 17 at the Carnegie Library, Washington, DC, during the annual Congressional Black Caucus. **4, 5** HSMAT's MEET National was held September 9-10 at the Marriott Wardman Park, Washington, DC. **6** Attendees pose prior to the Esprit Awards gala at the Sugar Mill in New Orleans during ISES Live, the annual international conference held by the International Special Events Society.





## The Must *Do's* and Definite *Don'ts* of Familiarization Trips

In the meetings and events industry there is a unique service offered to help professionals become familiar with a location and all it can provide, otherwise known as a familiarization or FAM trip. Since the nature of my business has evolved from providing services locally to locations throughout the world, I have been invited to more and more FAM trips. I am grateful for each tourism group that sees fit to host me in their country or at their venue.

On the other hand, I need to express my concerns and offer some pointers to the planners and others who arrange familiarization events. Because these trips are designed to encourage the meeting and event planner to subsequently return and bring their events and customers to the destination or venue, they must be conducted close to perfection from beginning to end. If a FAM trip is below par, the planner will likely cross the destination off her list of considerations.

Here are my must *do's* and definite *don'ts* when planning a FAM trip.

### The *Do's*

- **Prepare a complete itinerary that includes detailed air and ground transportation information.** This is especially important if the FAM is following a hosted buyer conference format: the details outlining airports, hotels and ground transportation companies must be clearly defined. For example, I have arrived at airports with no one to greet me, my name not on a list or the location of the hotel not clearly identified. As I am a seasoned traveler, that does not send me into a panic but I imagine a first-time FAM trip traveler would be quite unnerved. I also had an experience where my departure airport was not clearly identified and had to change my flight (at my own expense).
- **If transporting by van or bus to a location that is more than an hour away, make sure to have beverages available, especially water.** And definitely let the attendee know how long the trips are going to be so they can prepare. And don't leave out the part about traveling on unpaved roads or any other unusual situations that may occur. I spent an incredibly uncomfortable two hours in a van to a remote destination. Even though the location was extraordinary, the trip getting there was unbearable, and therefore I would not feel comfortable taking my clients on that itinerary.
- **If you showcase a product, be prepared to give it away to all attendees.** For example, if you don't have enough product to give to all guests, then give it away as part of a raffle. On a recent trip to Aspen, the local chamber of commerce really wowed the guests with a Blue Jean Bar — where they host a cocktail reception at a mobile pop-up shop and guests networked while trying on jeans and selecting the ones they would like to take home. I love ideas like this for incentives. A similar version is the sunglass setup by Maui Jim. This arrangement is particularly popular as guests have an opportunity to view the Maui Jim products at a reception and then can choose which sunglasses they would like to take home. Incentives like this go a long way.
- **Carefully map out the destinations to make the most effective use of travel time.** I spent an entire trip once going from one part of an island to another in one day and spent hours in a bus wasting valuable time.
- **Community awareness and service programs are highly desirable.** These types of CSR programs are very much appreciated, and I highly encourage their inclusion in the itinerary. Most guests of the FAM are delighted to take part, especially when the programs are organized well and conducted in a proper manner. It also is a good idea to make sure that the organization receiving help is a recognized non-profit either on a local or national level.
- **Assemble a brochure.** Try to include all the locations, venues, etc. along with photos that can be

used without copyright hassles that you can email or store on a memory disc. Email is always preferable, especially as opposed to a bunch of papers. For meeting planner attendees who have a blog and want to be able to post great photos (with full copyright use), this is a must.

- **Create very unique itineraries.** Include destinations that involve locals and experiences the guests don't have access to on their own. Private cooking lessons, art lessons germane to the locale, and the like are a must and will be talked about to potential and future clients.

### The *Don'ts*

- **You absolutely do not need to show more than two rooms on a property.** Taking the guests through seven different room types especially when they are essentially the same is a complete waste of time and not necessary. My suggestion is to show the basic run of house guest room and another suite or upgraded level.
- **Do not give out a bunch of promo items unless they are unique.** I leave way too many pens, bags and other novelties for the hotel staff. I don't wish to sound snobby but oftentimes there just isn't enough room in the suitcase for everything.
- **Don't overlook your unique attractions.** If your location is known for a special feature such as an amazing sunset, make sure your guests are not sitting on a bus going in the opposite direction at that time. This is just an unfortunate example of something that I encountered but you get the idea.
- **Do not schedule back-to-back site visits.** If programs run over due to circumstances beyond the planner's control, the next group may have to sit around and wait. For example, I was on a tour that was supposed to last two hours and ended up being four hours in a bus going back and forth on an island. It put dinner two hours behind and neither the restaurant nor the attendees were amused.

### Advice to Attendees

Always be gracious, especially if the destination has

provided you with complimentary airfare, hotel and food during your stay. Even though I have been irritated at times with FAM organizers due to an apparent lack of organization, I always contact them and ask them if I can offer a little constructive criticism in order for them to improve the experience in the future.

And remember to use social media during the trip. I actively follow each of the organizations on Twitter and "like" their Facebook pages. It only takes moments to post on their social media accounts with appropriate hashtags. I find this little effort goes a long way in establishing

If you showcase a product, be prepared to give it away to all attendees.

goodwill with the destination, venue or organization.

Let me know your *do's* and *don'ts* of FAM trips as well as your recommendations to elevate the experience. Email me at [debbie@eliasevents.com](mailto:debbie@eliasevents.com). **I&FMM**

**Deborah Elias**, CSEP, CMP, CIS, is president of Houston-based Elias Events. An award-winning Special Event Production Manager and Event Planner/Coordinator, Deborah has mastered the art of unparalleled imagination with nuts and bolts project management and budgeting. Deborah has produced events from Houston to Dubai and many places in between. She gracefully blends the keen eye and imagination of an artist with the business savvy of a utilitarian project manager to orchestrate the most recognizable and highly regarded corporate events, charity fundraisers and government events. Accomplishments include Top Event Planner as named by the *Houston Business Journal*; Award-Winning Event Planning Company 2012/2005 ISES Esprit Award, 2011 Gala Award, 2014 Crystal Icon and 2008 Texas Star. You can contact her at 713-334-1800, [www.eliasevents.com](http://www.eliasevents.com), [www.eventideaguru.blogspot.com](http://www.eventideaguru.blogspot.com)



# Big City Incentives

## Planners Create Urban Experiences Even the Well-Traveled Qualifier Will Love

Given their myriad lodging options and excellent airlift, first-tier urban destinations have often been selected to host national sales meetings, but much less often as rewards for salespeople. Incentive trips have long been associated with resort settings, likely due to the stereotypical notion that big domestic cities such as New York and Chicago are places where one goes to work, not play. Motivating destinations, it is commonly thought, are either “sun ‘n’ fun” locales, entertainment-oriented domestic cities such as Las Vegas and Orlando, or classic European cities such as London, Paris and Rome. Yet many incentive planners and groups are showing some “openness to urban programs” held in the United States, observes Katrina Kent, director, The Event Group at TD Ameritrade in Jersey City, New Jersey.

“As many qualifiers make these trips year over year, we’re always looking for ways to juice up the experience. Urban options can play a big part in keeping things fresh.”

Maritz Travel Company, whose financial services and insurance clients represent about 30 percent to 40 per-

cent of its client base, also has been experiencing this site selection trend, although “the majority of our incentive programs are still resort oriented,” notes Tom

Wilson, division vice president of sales. “But we do have a number of financial services clients that really thrive on utilizing larger U.S. cities, such as Boston, New York, Los An-



**Mary Carvotta-Trexler, Chief Creative Officer**  
Access Destination Services, Northern California & Wine Country

geles and Phoenix, for their programs, so (we choose) high-end destinations within those cities.”

### Something for Everyone

On the face of it, big cities are logical incentive choices due to their variety of recreational options, allowing most any potential qualifier to find motivating aspects. San Francisco, for instance, is “known as the city that has something for everyone: food and wine, shopping, museums and so on,” remarks Mary Carvotta-Trexler, chief

creative officer, Access Destination Services, Northern California & Wine Country. “So if you’re not a beachgoer it’s not as exciting for you to go to The Bahamas as being able to experience the brand-new Michael Chiarello restaurant, if you’re a big foodie.”

Indeed, the stereotype of the incentive destination as a “sun ‘n’ fun” locale essentially stereotypes the incen-

By Patrick Simms

*“Even if you’ve been to the city many times, to be able to sit down and have a five-star dining experience under a tent in Union Square is pretty fantastic.”*

tive qualifier as one who mainly enjoys that kind of ambience, as opposed to a cosmopolitan setting. Moreover, once representatives are “introduced” to the virtues of a city incentive, there not only will be the handful of first-tier U.S. cities to explore, but also new reasons to book those cities for incentives in the future.

Large cities always have new hotels, restaurants, recreational areas and more to entice qualifiers who want to explore the latest hotspots. Just one example is Portland’s Pine Street Market,



an epicurean’s delight that will blanket the ground floor of the historic Baggage and Carriage building, which is undergoing an estimated \$5 million renovation and will provide two upper floors of creative space for lease. Set to open this fall, Pine Street Market will neighbor the James Beard Public Market, opening in 2018.

There are, however, potential concerns with big cities as incentive destinations. One is that, due to the well-traveled nature of salespeople in the insurance and financial industries, potential qualifiers have likely been to first-tier cities multiple times, and thus may not find such a trip motivating. But as experienced planners point out, the allure comes from the experience created in that familiar city.

“I think a unique experience can be had regardless of whether the group is well-traveled. As long as I put together a program that is customized to our group, I find that is what they take away as their unique experience,”

explains Lanie Collins, marketing associate and event manager with Vancouver, British Columbia-based Nicola Wealth Management.

Kent concurs on this point: “When considering a city incentive, the key is to provide seamless access to experiences that the qualifiers can’t get on their own, and that they don’t get in other business trip environments. This can vary from the choice of venue, to activity and dining experiences, to potential guest appearances from local celebs or experts, to top-notch entertainment options, (such as) VIP experiences at sporting events or festivals.”

And speaking of “the choice of venue,” it should be borne in mind that big cities are home to many of the country’s most renowned — and incentivizing — hotels. So while a sales representative may have been to New York City countless times, he or she may well not have stayed at The Plaza or the Waldorf



Astoria. “There are great hotel brands in every major city, and they all have the luxury brand and upper upscale. So from an incentive perspective, there is plenty to choose from,” says Wilson.

### Offsetting Costs

Another potential concern with these destinations is that they are on the expensive side, particularly in terms of lodging. “Price is a consideration,” Kent says, “but often urban settings have less expensive airlift and more direct flights. There are trade-offs.” In addition, lodging costs can be ameliorated by meeting during the off-season (weather permitting), or by finding “holes” in a hotel’s calendar. Further-



more, some urban destinations (e.g., Philadelphia and Denver) are not particularly strong in the incentive market, and drawing an incentive group from a major company can be attractive to the local CVB and hoteliers. That can be a source of negotiating leverage. Says Carvotta-Trexler, “I think cities always want the incentive business because that way groups are out and about seeing more of the city, as opposed to just having a meeting. And most hotels have a dedicated salesperson for the incentive market, so that tells you how important it is for them.”

***“There are great hotel brands in every major city, and they all have the luxury brand and upper upscale. So from an incentive perspective, there is plenty to choose from.”***

**Tom Wilson**, Division Vice President of Sales  
Maritz Travel Company, Fenton, MO

Kent also has seen evidence that urban destinations are pursuing incentive groups. “We’ve definitely seen an uptick in incentive marketing from several Southern cities, like Austin, Charleston, Nashville and New Orleans,” she says. “What’s also great about these places is that the weather is conducive three-fourths of the year almost. People like to be immersed in the essence of the place they are visiting, and cities like these have such strong identities that can work really well to add value to incentives.”

### Planning Precautions

Certain precautions should be observed to ensure that attendees fully enjoy a city incentive. The first is to be aware of the city’s often-busy calendar of events and plan accordingly. Incentive winners should not have to undergo the transportation challenges and distracting commotion that can arise with these events as they are trying to explore the city. A DMC’s assistance can be useful here. “We have

so many festivals and events that shut down areas, so we keep a citywide calendar that lets us know everything from sporting events to festivals to car races,” says Carvotta-Trexler. The same DMC can work with the city to obtain permits for renting municipal venues and public spaces, allowing for those kinds of experiences that attendees could not get as tourists, and source experienced vendors for these private events. “You can get shut down pretty quickly, especially by the port authority and city fire department,”



### A Good Place to Start

Carvotta-Trexler’s team at Access Destination Services handles programs in Northern California and Wine Country, and while Napa and Sonoma certainly have incentive appeal, San Francisco also gets a share of the incentive market. Due to its generally pleasant climate and accessibility to activities beyond urban adventures, San Francisco is the big city that “tends to be the first try for planners that have been doing resort destinations all along and want



**Rosie Puella Burkman**, Vice President, Marketing  
JM&A Group, Deerfield Beach, FL

to try something a little different,” Carvotta-Trexler observes. “And I think that is because we’re a location that can offer so much outdoor recreation, such as golf, hiking, sailing and kayaking, which a lot of city destinations just can’t offer.” Apart from Wine Country, the city is a day trip away from resort areas such as Pebble Beach and Carmel-by-the-Sea, which can be reserved for a smaller, top-tier group of qualifiers, for example.

Last year, Access arranged an incentive program to San Francisco for Deerfield Beach, Florida-based JM&A Group (Jim Moran & Associates Inc.), the finance and insurance division of JM Family Enterprises. The group of 550 attendees included the winners of a four-month contest for automotive dealership owners and general managers and their significant others. They arrived at The Westin St. Francis, an emblematic San Francisco hotel that opened in 1904. The Union Square property houses 1,185 guest rooms and 56,000 sf of function space. “It is in a terrific, central section of the city with great retail and dining venues within walking distance. It also has a historic feel that we appreciated,” remarks Rosie Puella Burkman, vice president, marketing with JM&A. “The group are huge shoppers so for them it was a very big plus: You’re in the middle of a shopping mecca with Bloomingdale’s, Nordstrom, Saks, Barney’s plus 250 specialty stores,” Carvotta-Trexler adds.

### Creating Powerful Memories

The experience began with one of those personalized touches that are the mark of good incentives. “The first night we picked our travelers up from the hotel in trolley cars with side panels

***“Our group could do as little or as much as they wanted. Most took advantage of every opportunity to see the city.”***

reading ‘JM&A loves (red heart) their customers,’” Burkman relates, “and proceeded to a cruise around the Bay.” The trip included numerous activities, including day trips to Muir Woods and a full day in Napa Valley with a private lunch at Inglenook winery, built by Francis Ford Coppola. “Our group could do as little or as much as they wanted. Most took advantage of every opportunity to see the city,” she says.

Access created a powerful memory of the city for the final-night dinner, which was held under a clear-span tent in Union Square. “Even if you’ve been to the city many times, to be able to sit down and have a five-star dining experience under a tent in Union Square is pretty fantastic,” says Carvotta-Trexler. “It was under the San Francisco skyline in the middle of Union Square, where you could see beautiful lights from the buildings surrounding us. It was a private party in the park and people felt special just being under the Big Top,” notes Burkman.

### Exclusive Access

Qualifiers for Nicola Wealth Management’s financial advisor retreat to San Francisco also enjoyed an exclusive experience: The City Club of

***“Being in finance, our team was very interested to go to the Stock Exchange, as well as to see the Diego Rivera murals that the general public doesn’t get to view.”***

**Lanie Collins**, Marketing Associate & Event Manager  
Nicola Wealth Management, Vancouver, BC

San Francisco. “It is only accessible by members or if you book a group dinner (which we did),” says Collins. The club is housed in the historic Stock Exchange Tower, built in 1930 and considered the finest example of the interior art deco style in the city. “Being in finance, our team was very interested to go to the Stock Exchange, as well as to see the Diego Rivera murals

that the general public doesn’t get to view,” says Collins.

Regarding the choice of San Francisco itself, Collins comments, “The destination for the program is typical-



**Katrina Kent**, Director, the Event Group  
TD Ameritrade, Jersey City, NJ

ly a resort, but I felt that switching it up and going to an urban destination would help make the retreat more interesting, especially since San Francisco is such a great historical city.” She booked the Fairmont San Francisco for the group of about 30 qualifiers. Offering 592 rooms and 55,000 sf of function space, the Fairmont affords city views from atop Nob Hill. The downtown area, financial district, Union Square and Fisherman’s Wharf are all a short cable-car ride away.

### Iconic Venues

The availability of bastions of commerce, culture and education for private events is one of the fea-



companies still require some level of content, so (holding an event at) Harvard would be a great example,” he notes. Harvard’s rentable event venues are many and varied, including the Museum of Natural History, Museum of

Archaeology and Ethnology, Faculty Club, Plaza Tent (completed in 2013 and accommodating 1,000 attendees) and the iconic Memorial Hall, a National Historic Landmark built in 1878.

Similarly, Maritz has utilized facilities at UCLA for a brokerage company incentive in Los Angeles.

With so many event possibilities in just one major institution, planners considering a city destination truly have a “bonanza of incentive opportunity,” as Kent puts it. But the array of possible group activities can certainly be pared down by discarding the more common, touristy ones. “It’s really important to focus on giving people access to things they wouldn’t typically experience on their own,” says Kent, who is considering a New York City incentive for TD Ameritrade in the future. “That can be a backstage meet-and-greet with actors at a Broadway show, a suite at Yankee stadium, shopping at private sample sales, lunch with a New York City icon in a luxurious private penthouse, cooking seminars at the city’s world-renowned cooking schools, private world-class museum tours, trapeze lessons at Chelsea Piers or taking over a hip rooftop beer garden in an outer borough — the sky’s the limit in New York City.”

As it is with many other big U.S. cities, slowly coming into their own as incentive destinations. **I&FMM**



# Las Vegas

Meeting in the Entertainment Capital Elevates the

Experience for Insurance and Financial Meeting Attendees



The High Roller at The Linq

Credit: Las Vegas News Bureau

Much more than merely the place to exchange wedding vows or gamble the night away, Las Vegas is a preeminent location for financial and insurance meetings and events. The attractiveness of Las Vegas generates strong attendance for meetings. On average, attendance increases eight percent when conventions are held in Las Vegas. And research shows that attendees spend more time in meetings and on the trade show floor when programs are held in Las Vegas.

Among their 77 North American offices Access Destination Services has a number of strategic partnerships and long-term contracts with several financial and insurance firms — many of whom host meetings in Las Vegas.

In Las Vegas in particular, the fi-

nance and insurance business is definitely on the rise,” says Jennifer Miller, DMCP, regional president at Access Destination Services. “There are fewer and fewer planners who are reluctant to place their meeting, and that’s based on the value and offerings the destination of Las Vegas has.”

Shanon Moore-McCarthy, associate director of sales at Hosts Las Vegas has seen the financial and insurance meeting market move into more of an experiential direction that involves elevating that experience accordingly. Hosts Global Alliance was recently announced as the DMC Supplier of the Year by the Maritz Collaborative in Las Vegas.

“More educational components and corporate social responsibility have be-

come key components of meetings for the financial and insurance industry,” Moore-McCarthy says. “The meetings are experiential and financial planners are interested in creating more for less and are conscious of dollars spent in the right areas. They want to create experiences that ‘wow’ attendees that a normal tourist could not experience.”

Francine McKanna, DMCP, president and owner of AlliedPRA Las Vegas, recently planned three events in one year for different divisions of a financial company. Working with planners in this industry proved to be a very thorough experience.

“We worked with the financial company’s procurement department in the proposal phase and then had several meetings and conversations with them and the planners prior to

them awarding us the business,” McKanna says. “Once that was done, we dealt most directly with the meeting planners for each event to customize the events and activities for each particular group.”

For one group within the financial company, AlliedPRA Las Vegas was asked to create an event that was “out of the box” and something their guests had never experienced before.

“We proposed a steampunk theme, which has since grown very popular,” McKanna says. “We went straight from concept boards to contract and delivered a fabulous event. The planners and their guests loved it.”

Incorporating corporate social responsibility and focusing on local charities, while customizing those experiences and engaging the recipi-

ents, also is a very popular meeting approach among financial and insurance meeting planners. Moore-McCarthy has worked with several financial-based companies in which each component, program and event is customized based on the charity itself.

“They also have families of attendees present to be engaged and to help elevate the experience,” Moore-McCarthy says. “We simply adjust this type of meeting experience based on the needs and wants of the financial client, as well as the charity.”

## Key Considerations

When working with financial and insurance companies to plan a meeting or event, there are unique considerations that need to be made.

“There are definite differences be-

tween our Financial and Insurance Conference Planners (FICP) planners’ needs and some of our other groups,” says Miller, who works with a myriad of financial and insurance-related companies. “The FICP planners tend to be more savvy and have a greater handle on the program needs. Their needs can vary depending on the scope of the program, but overall the planners are well-versed and knowledgeable about their requirements. They look for a partner to showcase the destination and advise on the unique offerings as opposed to starting from square one. These financial- and insurance-based planners often have very specific guidelines and history, which can expedite the planning process.”

What’s more, many financial and insurance companies have procure-



ment departments that planners are required to work through during the bidding process.

“It’s a very organized process for them to collect proposal and cost information in order to make a fair price comparison,” McKanna says. “In addition, financial and insurance companies have strict controls regarding activities because they themselves are in the risk management business. They typically don’t opt for perceived high-risk activities such as helicopter rides and anything to do with high speeds, so when we are proposing ideas to them, we know not to include that type of thing. We also ensure that entertainment and servers are dressed in corporate-friendly, conservative attire, which may also be the case for other types of clients, but even more so for insurance and financial clients.”

When the financial companies

***“We proposed a steampunk theme, which has since grown very popular. We went straight from concept boards to contract and delivered a fabulous event. The planners and guests loved it.”***

**Francine McKanna, DMCP**  
President/Owner  
AlliedPRA Las Vegas  
Las Vegas, NV



come to Las Vegas as part of industry conventions and meetings, AlliedPRA Las Vegas is often asked by company planners to develop unique ideas and to find venues that are the “latest and greatest” because they want to attract customers and illustrate their leading-edge vision.

“On the other hand, they don’t like to draw attention to themselves from the general public and rightly so, due to the risk of people making assumptions about the industry as a



Wynn Las Vegas

Credit: Wynn Las Vegas

whole and any one particular company,” McKanna says.

The security requirements, due to the nature of the business of financial and insurance companies, also can add a unique element to the planning and orchestrating of events for this industry segment.

As Miller says, the level of security typically depends more on the activities of their program, the policies of their individual companies, and the speakers or entertainment they bring in.

McKanna and her team have had insurance and financial company planners ask for how they handle data management and how secure their network is.

“They have also asked very IT-specific questions,” McKanna says. “In addition, we have been required to submit a thorough emergency preparedness plan.”

Thanks to Las Vegas’ advances in technology and sophistication, tech-savvy financial and insurance partners can conduct their day-to-day business as usual, while focusing on their specific security needs.

And due to the perception of the finance and insurance industries, their incentive travel programs are far less grand and luxurious than might be expected. “They are often more cautious about their spend and value their experiences,” Miller says. “Finance and insurance clients tend to be a bit more under the microscope in terms of spend versus value and experience versus return, so we make it our role to be an extension of their

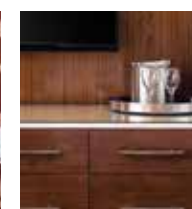
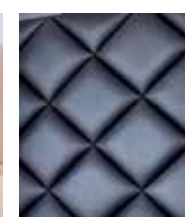
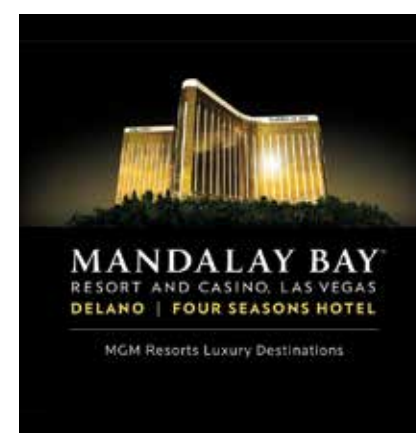
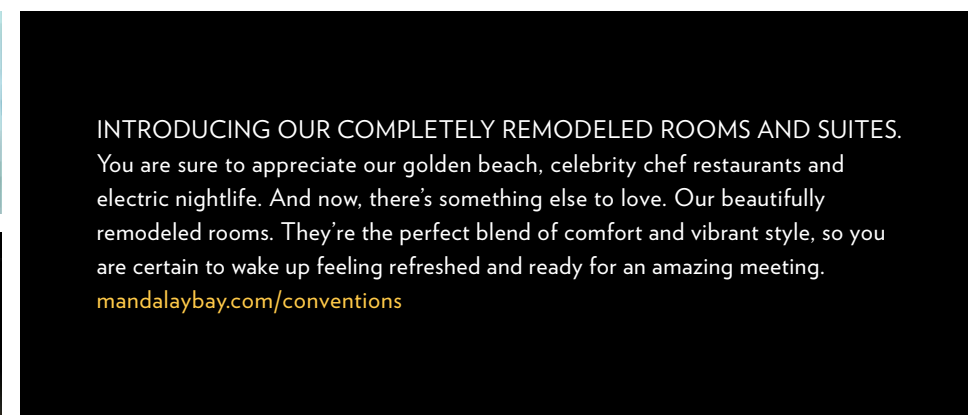
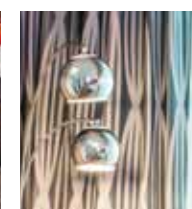
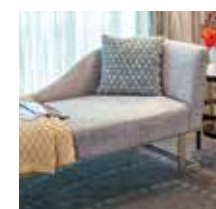
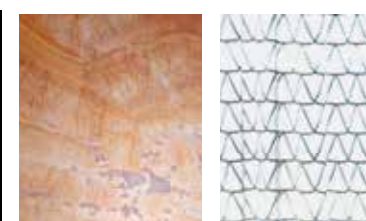
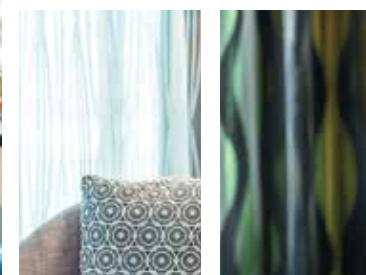
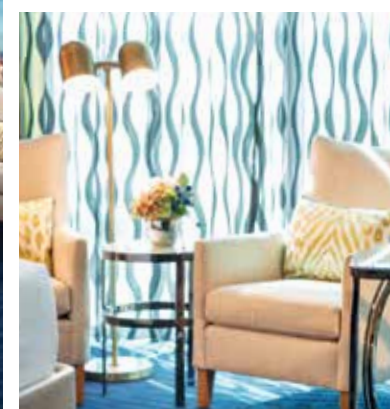
teams, to understand their hot buttons and why they choose what they do so we can be sure that the end result is what was originally conceptualized. Access prides itself on customizing programs for our clients, and the creativity element is a true value add for our finance and insurance clients who want to ‘wow’ their guests but not their accounting teams.”

### The Las Vegas Draw

Las Vegas offers companies within the financial and insurance sector a wealth of options for hosting meetings and events and is conducive to these unique types of events.

Miller stresses that Las Vegas has always been a great option for meetings and conventions. As the city continues to grow and expand, the options that come along make the city an even better option because there truly is something for everyone — every industry, every budget.

“There is something for everyone in Las Vegas — it is one of the reasons why we love ‘selling’ the destination,” Miller says. “From mountain and water activities to celebrity chef experiences, to megastar shows and concerts, and creative teambuilding and CSR options, Las Vegas will always be a place people can live out their dreams in whatever form that may take. Big or small, Las Vegas will make the meeting memorable. It is a city that prides itself on hospitality, reinvention and celebration. The weather is good. Flights are affordable and accessible from all over. Las Vegas is high value and low risk — a perfect fit for the finance and insurance markets.”







Tropicana Las Vegas, a DoubleTree by Hilton

## New & Noteworthy

Two new property openings that McKanna is looking forward to are Resort World and the Alon Resort, both scheduled to open in 2018. “The current venue that we propose quite often and have been excited about is the new Downtown Las Vegas and Fremont Street East, including the Container Park, many new boutique restaurants and a revitalized area unlike anything else on The Strip,” McKanna says.

Wynn Las Vegas also is enhancing its appeal to the meeting and events crowd. The Encore Resort and the Encore Tower Suites at Wynn Las Vegas will undergo a design refresh, which includes updated furnishings, floor coverings, technology, aesthetics and custom bed linens. The room modifications include 55-inch 4K TVs, convenient USB ports, and outlets for mobile phones and tablets at bedside and desk with environment controls, allowing guests to adjust curtains and lighting from the comfort of their Wynn Dream Bed.

The New Tropicana Las Vegas, a DoubleTree by Hilton offers a casually elegant experience on the Las Vegas Strip and a convenient location just minutes from the airport, major convention centers and top entertainment stadiums. With a unique South Beach vibe after a \$200 million complete transformation, the hotel features all-new rooms, suites and luxury villas that evoke the sentiment of a breezy beach house or penthouse in Miami, a fresh redesign of the 50,000-sf casino, several award-winning restaurants, a new race and sports book, and Glow, a Mandara Spa and fitness center. And after a recent expansion, the Trinidad Pavilion and Meeting Rooms at the Tropicana now boast 42,000 sf of space. New Wi-Fi technology including wired and wireless Internet access

is now available throughout the property’s approximate 100,000 sf of convention space as well as in the resort’s 1,467 guest rooms and suites.

Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino also is undergoing a resort-wide transformation with the upcoming \$100 million redesign of more than 3,000 guest rooms and suites. Created by the MGM Resorts International Design Group, the new rooms and suites will feature vibrant colors and bold statement pieces. Reservations for select remodeled rooms are now available. The project is expected to be completed by spring 2016.

Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino also opened a 350,000-sf expansion to its convention center. The expansion includes new exhibit space, a 20,000-sf foyer and underground parking in this first phase of the project. Construction began in October 2014 and upon completion of the project in January 2016, the Mandalay Bay Convention Center will boast more than 2 million total sf and more than 900,000 sf of contiguous exhibit space.

Raising the standard in guest service and luxury accommodations yet again, Bellagio recently completed the remodel of the final 403 suites in the



Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino

resort’s main tower. This marks the conclusion of an approximately \$165 million remodel that began in 2011 and encompassed all 3,933 of the resort’s rooms and suites.

Financial and insurance companies interested in making a social impact during their Las Vegas event, will

be happy to hear that The Venetian and The Palazzo, as part of the Sands Company’s Sands Cares corporate citizenship initiative, introduced a new concept to Las Vegas by featuring One-Hope Wine as one of the wine selections available to groups at the convention center. They will be pledging a donation to the Three Square Food Bank for every bottle sold. The Sands team has committed to 2,000 cases, which in turn will provide 36,000 meals to those in need in the Las Vegas community over the next 18 months.

This year, the final phase of the multi-year renovation of The Venetian and The Palazzo Congress Center and Sands Expo was completed. Recent improvements at Sands Expo included a new \$6 million, 12,000-sf kitchen designed to provide higher quality food for trade show attendees, support show growth and increase energy efficiency by 35 percent. This is in addition to the recent total remodel and redesign of all lobbies and common spaces; construction of a 60-foot central atrium with a 30,000-sf, 3-D articulated ceiling; reconstruction of meeting rooms and business center; renovation of the building facade and porte cochere; and upgrades to the ex-

hibition halls. Also, attendees will find upgrades to the technology and Wi-Fi infrastructure throughout the resort and convention center.

The Mob Museum introduced a new display that explores the alleged corruption of the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA),

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the world's governing organization for soccer. The display, entitled "The 'Beautiful Game' Turns Ugly," features photos, media clippings and cover stories about FIFA's alleged corruption. The exhibition comes after U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch charged FIFA officials with taking bribes and kickbacks.

Aria Resort & Casino recently introduced Sky Pool, an upscale pool offering personalized service, including complimentary refreshments, a private guest entrance and 125 single and 15 double chaise lounge chairs.

The Delano opened its new Delano Beach Club, a South Beach-inspired outdoor venue with a luxurious pool and 16 private cabanas. The entire venue is available for evening group rentals.

South Point Hotel, Casino & Spa opened a new 60-lane, state-of-the-art tournament bowling and event center. As part of a partnership between the United States Bowling Congress and the LVCVA, the venue will host 122 days of professional bowling tournaments through 2017.

The Mandarin Oriental Las Vegas introduced The Gallery, a loft-style meeting venue that offers 1,900 sf of space accommodating up to 200



The Venetian, The Palazzo, The Sands Expo

Vegas in September. The Lavo Casino Club will create a new type of nightlife and gaming experience where guests can enjoy a deejay and dancing, along with amenities not offered in typical nightclubs or on the casino floor, such as classic premium cocktails served directly to the gaming table from a butler's cart; an opportunity to order from Lavo's award-winning Italian menu; and featured sporting events, including college and NFL football games on the flat-screen TVs.

Red Rock Resort's Race and Sports Book announced new cutting-edge video displays — just in time for football season. The 2.5MM Nanoslim Engage LED displays are the largest of their kind ever installed in North America, and take the viewing experience to an unparalleled level with a sharpness and clarity that brings all the action on the screen to life. The new displays, measuring 17 feet tall by 31.5 feet wide each, which totals nearly 32 yards of wall-to-wall race and sports book action, replace projector screen technology. The screens showcase 4K video content for viewing in ultra high definition, the most sophisticated and best viewing technology currently available.

The Westin Lake Las Vegas Resort & Spa is billed as a refreshing and inspirational retreat from the neon lights of The Strip. Located on the shores of Lake Las Vegas in Henderson, Nevada, which is about 30 minutes from The Strip and McCarran Las Vegas International Airport, the resort is a picturesque environment for meetings and events.

In addition to Spa Mulay, the full-service resort features AAA Four Diamond Japanese cuisine at the signa-

ture restaurant, Marssa. With more than 90,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space, The Westin Lake Las Vegas has customizable offerings for any meeting or event.

The new adventure boutique Outdoor to the Core, provides guests with standup paddleboarding, kayaking or pedal-boat riding around the lake. Adventures on land include mountain biking, zip lining, hiking trails and more.

The Reflection Bay golf course at Lake Las Vegas was completely restored last year, guided by the original course designer, Jack Nicklaus.

Genting Group recently broke ground on Resorts World Las Vegas, a new \$4 billion, Chinese-themed resort on the site of the former Stardust Hotel. The property will include three hotels with more than 3,500 rooms; more than 100,000 sf of gaming space; several retail outlets; and an outdoor amphitheater. Genting Group, which operates casino resorts worldwide, plans to open Resorts World in 2018.

Caesars Entertainment has completed its Linq Complex with the opening of The Linq Hotel & Casino after renovating all 2,253 guest rooms and adding two loft-style penthouses and 25 poolside guest rooms. The Linq Hotel also added an automated valet retrieval system, an automated check-in process and a new lobby bar. The Linq complex also includes the Linq Promenade and High Roller observation wheel.

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority plans to build the Las Vegas Global Business District. Once completed, the district will host the largest exhibition and meeting space in North America and is within a short distance of more than 150,000 guest rooms and just minutes from the world-famous Las Vegas Strip. The project will add 100,000 sf of general session space and 100,000 sf of meeting space to the Las Vegas Convention Center.

MGM Resorts International plans to build a 5,000-seat theater at Monte



The Mob Museum

guests for a reception and 80 people for a seated dinner.

The new Lavo Casino Club is a modern gaming experience fusing blackjack table games with Vegas-style VIP bottle service, mixology and Italian cuisine. The new concept will launch in partnership with The Palazzo Las



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The Westin Lake Las Vegas Resort & Spa

Credit: The Westin Lake Las Vegas Resort & Spa

Carlo Resort and Casino. The new theater will anchor the burgeoning entertainment district on the west Las Vegas Strip and feature special appearances by top music performers. The theater will be adjacent to the new Las Vegas Arena that MGM and AEG are developing on Las Vegas Boulevard. The Arena is expected to open in April 2016, while the theater opening is planned for the end of 2016.

Speedvegas was recently given approval to transform 100 acres of South Las Vegas Boulevard into the destination's newest, adrenaline-inducing supercar experience. The Speedvegas experience will feature a welcome center, event center and supercar course. Located just 10 minutes from the world-famous "Welcome to Las Vegas" sign, Speedvegas is scheduled to open in January 2016.

## Dining & Entertainment News

Las Vegas keeps them coming back to sample new dining options such as the following:

Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino recently opened Edge Steakhouse, a fine-dining restaurant with a new twist on the traditional steak house concept. Award-winning chef Nick Lees and his staff blend traditional American steak house dishes with creative entrées, specialty appetizers and innovative side dishes.

Aria will this fall debut its own version of New York City's critically acclaimed Carbone restaurant, a finalist

for the 2014 James Beard Award for "Best New Restaurant." The Italian-American restaurant serves classic dishes from the mid-20th century such as Fra Diavolo and Chicken Scarpariello. Meeting planners will be able to utilize the chic Private Dining Room for larger meetings of 40 guests or transform the room for smaller groups. The entire restaurant — including the back dining room and front loggia with a massive bar and intimate seating areas — can be used for meetings of more than 250.

Red Rock Resort will introduce Salute, an authentic Italian-inspired restaurant that will feature traditional Italian dishes. Internationally known chef Luciano Sautto, a native of Naples, Italy, will offer cuisine passed down through Italian generations and focus on freshness.

Delano Las Vegas will introduce Rivea, a restaurant featuring casually elegant but simple Mediterranean cuisine from the French Riviera and Italian Riviera. A 50-seat private dining room with floor-to-ceiling windows will offer views of The Strip. This intimate and secluded room, as well as the restaurant in its entirety, will be available for hosting truly memorable events.

Therapy Las Vegas recently opened in the Fremont East Entertainment District of downtown Las Vegas. Therapy combines the best elements of downtown dining and imbibing into one destination complete with an American gastro-style menu by executive chef Daniel Ontiveros and a full bar

program with more than 40 craft beers and signature drinks.

Anchor Bar, the iconic Buffalo, New York, institution opened its first West Coast outpost in the Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian. Inventors of The Original Buffalo Wing, Anchor Bar boasts creating the prized recipe that started a nationwide sensation.

Top shows are returning to Las Vegas due to popular demand.

After a year off, Celine Dion returned to the Las Vegas stage in late August with her new show "Celine at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace," which features her biggest hits directed by famed Grammy Awards producer Ken Ehrlich. One of the most highly recognized, widely respected and successful performers in pop music history, Celine has sold nearly 250 million records during her more than 30-year career.

Reba, Brooks & Dunn added more shows for their residency at Caesars Palace. The country music powerhouses will take the stage for additional performances on December 1 and December 8, with tickets on sale now. The superstar entertainers sell out crowds night after night since they debuted their show in June.

The legendary Diana Ross returns to The Venetian Theatre for another residency in November. Last April, the renowned superstar sold out nine shows, wowed audiences and received rave reviews at The Venetian Theatre. Diana Ross once again returns for another nine shows, between November 4–21.

Legendary comedian and impersonator Rich Little will return to the Las Vegas Strip with the debut of his new autobiographical one-man show, "Rich Little Live" at the world-famous Laugh Factory inside The New Tropicana Las Vegas, a DoubleTree by Hilton. The show features a compilation of impersonations, sketches and interactive video of the actors, musicians, politicians and personalities Little has worked with throughout his more than 50 years in entertainment. "Rich Little Live" premiered July 14. **I&FMM**

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# Meeting in the Middle

## Try These Contract Negotiation Tips From the Experts on Both Sides

By John Buchanan

**A**lmost unprecedented demand for meeting hotels is driving room rates upward. As a result, hotels are demanding strict F&B minimums, increasing F&B service fees, driving hard bargains on attrition and using traditional concessions as part of a larger horse-trading process to get what they want.

So what can planners do today to arrive at a contract that meets their needs and their budget?

The answer, planners say, is to pay careful attention to the issues that matter most.

### Flexibility Is Key to Success

With planners facing the significant and conflicting obstacles of spiking costs and tight budgets, the only clear path to a contract that is good for buyer and seller is flexibility on the part of the planner, says Andy Anastasi, vice president/team director at major third-party planning company ConferenceDirect in New York City.

“Booking patterns are very important,” he says. “Hotels love Sunday arrivals. It’s their favorite booking pattern, because historically Sundays are the slowest day of the week for them. We advise our clients that if they can arrive on a Sunday, we can typically get them better pricing. On the other hand, the most difficult booking pattern is a mid-week arrival. And the Tuesday to Thursday or Tuesday to Friday patterns are the toughest now, because that’s when transient demand is at its peak. The challenge is these midweek patterns are attractive to corporate groups because they don’t want to have to ask their attendees to travel over a weekend.”

Faith Ferguson, owner of Warwick, New York-based independent meeting and event planning company Faith Ferguson Productions, agrees with Anastasi that flexibility on the part of planners and meeting hosts is now more important than ever. “For example, if you’re booking Monday through Thursday, you’re going to get a better deal than booking Thursday through Sunday,” Ferguson says.

Yet another aspect of the broader question of flexibility is the strong post-recession trend toward the use of second- and even third-tier destinations as budget-sensitive alternatives to top-tier cities.

“Everybody is watching the bottom line now, so if you’re looking at a top-tier destination but it doesn’t fit your budget, then you have to say, ‘OK, let’s go to the second-tier level and see what is available in my price range,’” Ferguson says. “The fact is that planners have to make

their budgets. And that’s what drives everything now. And that means you need new kinds of options.”

Anastasi concurs that second-tier destinations are becoming more and more popular as top-tier destination costs continue to rise. The bad news, Anastasi says, is that today’s demand means that even many second-tier destinations are becoming more expensive or have limited availability for a planner’s preferred dates, especially if the meeting is being booked in a short window.

“Even in some airport locations, where you used to be able to find availability as needed, we now find that availability is tight and rates are up because demand is so high,” Anastasi says. “Rosemont, Illinois, outside of Chicago’s O’Hare is a perfect example of this. I was recently shocked by the rates they were quoting for an event we were looking to book in June. I don’t recall a time during my tenure in the industry where even airport hotels are seeing such demand.”

### F&B Minimums and Service Fees

Another major issue of current concern to planners is strict F&B minimums and rising F&B service fees. The consensus among planners is that hotels are being more strict about F&B guarantees than they are about room rates.

Anastasi says that resort properties, in particular, are becoming much more stringent with what they will allow as an F&B minimum. “Sometimes they’re pushing back harder on F&B minimums than they are on room rates,” he says. One reason: The resort business model is based on keeping more dining revenue onsite, versus a downtown major city hotel where catering-only opportunities are more abundant. “Some hotels are flexible on just how far out you have to give your F&B

guarantee, but they’re not flexible on what that guarantee has to be,” Ferguson says. “And when the deadline comes to commit to a guarantee, the hotels want a hard number. And they will hold you to that no matter what. And I understand that. They base their decisions in terms of what the chef buys for your group on that number. And I totally respect that as a business decision the hotel has to make in order to be able to service the meeting. That’s why you have to be careful in your planning, because once that decision is made, you’re going to pay the amount you agreed to, whether the food is actu-

***“The fact is that planners have to make their budgets. And that’s what drives everything now. And that means you need new kinds of options.”***



**Faith Ferguson**  
Owner  
Faith Ferguson Productions  
Warwick, New York

ally used or not. So you have to really stay on top of your event.”

Cori Dossett, CMP, CEM, president of Dallas-based independent meeting planning firm Conferences Designed, also finds that hotels are strictly enforcing their stated F&B minimums. “I always try to push back, just to get a little more wherever I can,” she says. “And I find lately that some hotels actually are willing to go down a little bit on their F&B minimums. But then if they go down on F&B minimums, they take away something else. For example, they’ll say, ‘OK, but we’re going to take away your suite concessions.’”

F&B service fees also have increased sharply over the last year or so.

“In my experience, F&B fees are ranging from 18 to 22–24 percent,” Ferguson says. “I think 20 to 22 percent is reasonable. The hotel does



# The Hotel Perspective

Nathan Karsten, director of sales and marketing at the Hilton Chicago/Oak Brook Hills Resort & Conference Center, an International Association of Conference Centers-certified meeting center with more than 42,000 sf of meeting space in one of the country’s highest-demand meeting destinations, addresses some of the concerns cited by meeting planners.

**Q. Many planners say hotels are inflexible and strict on F&B minimums. What is your response?**

**A.** In general, the planners are right. It’s hard for us to negotiate on F&B minimums. But what we do here, and many Hilton properties do, is that we will work with you to manipulate what you’re getting to help you reach the price point you need. But if you want a full hot breakfast, a full lunch and a full dinner — and you have prerequisites in terms of what you want those meals to be, at a price of X dollars per person — I really can’t do much more than quote you a price for that. There’s no room for negotiation because there’s nothing I can do to manipulate that. But if you give me your budget and tell me you’re flexible on the types and amount of food you get, then I will work with you to get you to your budget number.

**Q. Planners also feel that the only real leverage they have these days is flexibility on dates or booking pattern during the week. Do you agree with that?**

**A.** I agree that flexibility in terms of dates or booking pattern really is the only way planners can find a better price for what they want. But what we’re finding to be the biggest challenge for meeting planners is that they are not willing to be flexible with dates.

**Q. Why do you think they are not willing to be flexible in order to save money?**

**A.** In my personal opinion, I think it’s because for several years after the recession, they didn’t have to worry about being flexible. They were able to pick their dates and get whatever they wanted when it was a buyer’s market. But that’s not the case now. So to get what they want and need, they have to be flexible.

**Q. Do planners still expect the same kind of sweetheart deals they got during the depths of the recession?**

**A.** A year ago, I think a lot of planners still thought that. Now they know the pendulum has swung back to a seller’s market and is more in our favor. But it’s their job to try to negotiate and get the best deal they can. So I also think it is the right thing for them to be doing. They just have to be realistic. And they also have to recognize that a lot of this business is based on relationships. We want partners. If a planner has brought a meeting here for five consecutive years, he or she is going to get a better deal than someone coming in for the first time.

**Q. What about attrition clauses? How do you perceive that issue these days?**

**A.** Corporate customers are not reluctant to sign attrition clauses, because they are getting more exact and specific about what they are going to need. So we typically don’t find ourselves getting into an attrition situation. We actually find the opposite — meetings going over their room block and needing more rooms. For the last several years, we were usually able to meet that need. Now, with demand continuing to go up, we can often no longer offer more rooms because I either don’t have any availability, or I can get a higher rate from someone else. But then the client gets upset and they insist they want their rate. But I cannot always guarantee that.

**Q. What do you consider most important about the contracting process today from a meeting planner’s perspective?**

**A.** Everybody now knows the ins and outs of contracting, better than they ever did before. And I also think planners and hotels are more willing to work with each other. But one opportunity that I don’t think a lot of companies consider is the value of sharing your big picture with us. If you have multiple meetings you could bring to us within the next year, share that with us up front and then maybe we can offer you an “umbrella” opportunity for the entire year, as opposed to bringing us two or three meetings on a piecemeal basis during that same 12-month period. Tell us everything we need to know about you and your future plans at the beginning. Then we can give you more for your dollar. And if you give me a multiyear commitment for a good meeting, then I’m going to lock and load and give you a deal you would not otherwise ever get.

— JB

have to pay their staff fairly with gratuities. So I don’t dispute those fees up to 22 percent. But if you start going over 22 percent, then I think it’s too much.”

Ferguson says that based on her experience, planners can successfully push back against F&B fees above 22 percent. “That’s when you can say, ‘I understand your F&B guarantee and

the price of your food. But when it comes to your service charge, 22 percent is the maximum I’m willing to go,” she says. “And then they will usually give you what you want, or something else as another concession.”

Anastasi also is concerned about rising service fees and hasn’t seen any wiggle room here. “We used to see 22 percent as the norm,” he says. “Now

we’re seeing 24 percent as the norm. And when you try to push back on that one, there is no negotiating by the hotel. It just is what it is.”

For larger meetings, he notes, a two percent increase in F&B service fees represents a significant amount of money and strains limited budgets even further.

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## Attrition: The 800-pound Gorilla

When it comes to contract terms, attrition remains the most daunting and potentially expensive issue.

“Attrition has always been the meeting planner’s cross to bear,” Ferguson says with a pained laugh. “That is always something we are very mindful of, and I am in particular, in terms of making sure that your room block commitment is accurate and that you do not get into an attrition situation. I find that most hotels are willing to do an 80 percent requirement, where they’ll let you walk away from 20 percent of your rooms. But you’re definitely going to be held to that 80 percent number.”

But, she quickly adds, attrition is always challenging. “It’s very, very hard to plan a meeting and pick up almost all of your room block,” she says. “For example, I just did a meeting that had attrition. The pickup of the room block came in a lot lower than the company thought it was going to, and we are now working with the property to try to alleviate some of that attrition. For example, we’re talking about whether we can

book another program at the hotel within 12 months. And in that situation, if it’s a good program and the hotel likes your dates, they will usually work with you to handle a percentage of the attrition from the earlier meeting.”

## Practical Tips

Given the dual challenges of a seller’s market and mostly flat budgets, smart thinking and forethought are essential to the development of a contract. Planners have varying ideas of how best to overcome market obstacles.

“Always look at multiple options,” Anastasi says. “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket, because for the most part, somewhere, somehow, you might find a hotel that has a real need period during the dates you want. And if you’re willing to take the time to really look, you might find an opportunity when you didn’t think there was one. It’s important to look at several options. And I’m not saying you should look at

50 hotels. Just be strategic and try to think outside the box.

Ferguson advises that planners must be “very mindful of your deadlines, your room blocks and exactly what you are committing to — and what your penalties are if you don’t

*“Even in some airport locations, where you used to be able to find availability as needed, we now find that availability is tight and rates are up because demand is so high.”*



**Andy Anastasi**  
Vice President/Team Director  
ConferenceDirect  
New York, NY

meet your commitments. You have to really focus on room block, attrition, F&B guarantees and your costs. Those are the four things that are really going to determine the success of your event from a budget and contract perspective.”

And despite rising costs and tougher negotiating stances from hotels, Ferguson says there is nothing that she really finds unduly frustrating or challenging about the contracting process these days.

“I think that everybody really does want to make things work for both sides,” she says. “I think everybody understands now that meetings are a two-way street, a matter of give and take. The hotels are going to give you some of the things you want, but they’re also going to say, ‘No, on those two things I can’t negotiate. They are what they are.’ And on our part, as planners, we have to understand and respect that hotels are a business and they have to make as much money as they can. So as long as both sides understand and respect each other — and understand what the other party really needs — then I think you can always meet in the middle, as partners, and get a good contract done.” **IFMM**

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# THE NEW CVB Sales Pitch

## DestinationNEXT Is Helping DMOs Build a Better Meetings Business

This year a survey conducted by Financial & Insurance Conference Planners (FICP) resulted in 91 responses, about one-fifth of FICP's total member companies. It was interesting to note that 100 percent of the conference planners hire a Destination Management Organization (DMO) for at least one service, with transportation (100 percent) and activities/tours (98 percent) coming in as the most-used services. More than 75 percent of respondents also use DMOs for décor, entertainment and meet-and-greet services.

### DestinationNEXT

Obviously, most large DMOs, or CVBs (convention and visitors bureaus), as they're commonly known, play integral roles in assisting meeting planners with not only their choice of a destination, but meeting management as well.

When the Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) launched its DestinationNEXT initiative (in two phases), many DMOs and their local stakeholders were eager to learn about new ways to assess their destination and use this information to

better present their product to meeting planners from every industry.

"One of the best tools to come out of the DestinationNEXT effort is a destination 'self-assessment' that, if addressed with candor, really allows a DMO to see where the destination itself fits in to the competitive landscape," says Maura Allen Gast, FCDME, executive director of the Irving (Texas) Convention & Visitors Bureau. "This is far more in-depth than a routine SWOT analysis. When the DMO and its stakeholders actively participate in the assessment, you have no choice but to see where the opportunities for enhancement and improvement truly are. From a corporate perspective especially, corporate meetings are driven by efficiencies, not just in the meeting design and content, but in the location choices."


Gast, a member of the DestinationNEXT Phase Two Advisory Group, feels that with an honest and in-depth assessment of a destination's pros and cons, using past successes and past failures as examples, DMOs will have a better chance of attracting corporate meetings in this very competitive climate.

"Choices that maximize attendees'

time, and thus the bottom line, matter," Gast says. "Destination weaknesses, whether they be in airfare, traffic management, limited hotel or meeting product, insufficient marketing resource, impact the success of the destination. Address those, and overlay them on top of your lost business reasons, and you start to map out a plan to better build the destination. Better build the destination and you stand a far better chance in successfully attracting corporate meetings, including more corporate headquarters development, relocations and corporate expansions in the region," she explains.

### Engaging Stakeholders

One of the main ingredients in DestinationNEXT is the inclusion of stakeholders in the DMO's assessment process. Stakeholders include economic development officials, hotels, restaurants, meeting and exhibition venues, and thousands of local residents involved in the hospitality business, as employees or owners. What are the needs of the DMO's stakeholders and what is the potential of each of the stakeholders to participate with the DMO to attract large meetings?



*"Better build the destination and you stand a far better chance in successfully attracting corporate meetings, including more corporate headquarters development, relocations and corporate expansions in the region."*

**Maura Allen Gast, FCDME**  
Executive Director  
Irving Convention & Visitors Bureau

"DestinationNEXT is a powerful assessment tool that gives DMOs and their stakeholders a candid assessment of their destination's strengths and opportunities," says Brad Dean, president and CEO of Visit Myrtle Beach. "One aspect of that assessment is understanding the needs of all stakeholders and effectively engaging them in all facets of the marketing process. By evaluating our local industry's needs and potential, we have strategically increased our investment in group sales and marketing.

"We have also expanded the scope of services that our stakeholders need to grow their individual businesses," Dean says. "Here in Myrtle Beach, this has led to a record level of achievement for our group sales team. Look-

ing forward, we will be using DestinationNEXT as a full-scale destination assessment tool to explore other areas of our destination that can be enhanced or grown."

Many DMOs were already using some of the tools that DestinationNEXT proposes, including becoming more involved with local companies, large and small, to ensure that everyone is on the same page regarding the importance of organizing local meetings as often as possible, and recognizing the potential of hosting out-of-town subsidiaries of major local firms.

### Pursuing Insurance and Financial Meetings

This is being done to a great ex-

tent in Virginia, where the meetings and conventions sales managers at Richmond Region Tourism have been actively seeking out insurance and financial meeting planners from local companies for many years.

"Phase One of DestinationNEXT identified evolving the DMO business model through collaboration and partnerships as a key transformational opportunity," said Kristin McGrath, CDME, Richmond Region Tourism's vice president of sales and services. "Richmond Region Tourism was ahead of the curve in this regard having created our Community Relations (CR) department in 2012 to specifically address these opportunities. The CR department has been quite successful in forming strategic alliances outside of the traditional hospitality community. The Richmond Region has six Fortune 500 companies (10 Fortune 1000 companies), and part of our mission is to ensure that our local corporate senior executives understand the importance meetings and conventions have on our economy. Keeping meetings local, and working together to bring additional meetings to Richmond, benefits the entire community."

Working with local economic development groups also has been one of Richmond Region Tourism's priorities, especially in their efforts to attract outside meeting groups to the region, which often includes insurance and financial-related organizations.

"We have recently started to work more closely with the Greater Richmond Partnership (GRP), the economic development team representing the Richmond region," says McGrath. "We partnered financially with GRP a couple of years ago on our Richmond Region video, for which we received a Virginia Tourism Corporation grant. Various edits of this video are used by both Richmond Region Tourism and GRP for attracting not only meetings, sports and leisure visitors, but corporations and industry as well.

"Most recently, we worked together to secure the 2017 Industrial Asset Management Council (IAMC) Fall





*"Finance and insurance is a target market for the Greater Richmond Partnership. ...Because our city is a regional banking center... there are many advantages to meeting in Richmond."*

Kristin McGrath, CDME, V.P. Sales & Services  
Richmond Region Tourism

Forum," McGrath continues. "Finance and insurance is a target market for the Greater Richmond Partnership, and we will continue to collaborate to bring additional meetings to Richmond. Because our city is a regional banking center and home to the Fifth District Federal Reserve, there are many advantages to meeting in Richmond."

Rachel Benedick, vice president of sales and services for Visit Denver agrees that conducting an honest as-

essment and bringing in all the stakeholders, especially the corporate meeting planners that mean so much to a city's bottom line, is an important tool for DMO staffers.

"DestinationNEXT is part of a new generation of tools that Visit Denver can draw on to evaluate our effectiveness as an organization and assure that our goals are aligned with the broader goals of economic impact and infrastructure development in Denver,"

says Benedick. "This study reminds us of our need to be authentic to our customers and draw upon local resources to help the city's unique benefits and appeal stand out."

### Brand Marketing

Brand marketing is another facet of DestinationNEXT that DMOs are concerned with, especially as it applies to persuading meeting planners that their destination offers more than just a nearby airport and high-tech meeting rooms. Not only must a meeting destination for insurance and financial industry planners communicate quality, but firms in these industries also are interested in making sure the destination is concerned about environmental sustainability, social responsibility, safety and security, and health and cleanliness. These areas of concern are prominent in the California coastal city of Monterey.

"DestinationNEXT has been an incredible source of inspiration," says Tammy Blount, president and CEO of the Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau. "The three transformational opportunities — dealing with the

new marketplace, building and protecting the destination brand and evolving the DMO business model — are key, and have been woven throughout our strategies for more than a year.

"In the fall of 2013 we launched our new brand campaign — in the consumer market, the tagline is 'Grab Life by the Moments' and in the meeting space, it is 'Inspired Moments in Meetings,' says Blount. "In collaboration with our customer advisory board, we have integrated brand messaging and content marketing strategies with traditional sales approaches to have a more personal relationship with our customers, both existing and prospective. We have enhanced our services, we have listened to our customers and implemented tools that help them have more inspirational and successful meetings, and we have seen business grow significantly."

### The Brand Promise

Insurance and financial management firms seem to especially like Monterey, and the CVB makes sure that meeting planners working with these firms have all the information

they need for a successful event. "We have two big criteria when looking for a destination, and the first is always 'travel' related," said Moira McGinty, president of Moira McGinty Consulting, who works closely with the Monterey CVB when planning insurance and financial industry events in the Monterey region. "A rule that we like to use is 'one flight and a one- to two-hour drive' as our maximum travel time for group meetings. We don't want people getting frustrated with traveling, and most of our clients like that rule, which can get them to the destination in the fastest and most comfortable way possible no matter which major U.S. city they are flying from. Monterey is great, because most big cities have non-stop service into San Francisco, and the CVB has been great about notifying us about new flights and helping with ground transportation options from the airport. "The other big (criterion) is 'desire', selecting a site where our clients would want to go on a vacation, and may not have gone before," says McGinty. "These people are seasoned travelers; they have been to a lot of places, and that's why Monterey has been such a

lovely choice; it has a certain charm to it that few other destinations can match. The CVB is very up-to-date on local activities: They told us about the skydiving there, which we never knew existed in Monterey, and their personal service is so honest in their reviews of local services. I deal mostly with the C-suite-level clients, but the great thing about the Monterey area is the diversity of meeting venues ranging from beautiful, moderately priced accommodations to the upscale Post Ranch Inn, just 33 miles down the coast in Big Sur, so any type of group can find a high-quality venue there, whether it's in the mountains, along the coast or in downtown Monterey."

### Economic Impact

When it comes to Puerto Rico, which has been in the headlines lately for its economic woes, it's especially crucial that all stakeholders are included in DMO marketing and operational planning decisions so that the island remains on insurance and financial company meeting planners' site selection lists.

"We let our stakeholders know how

## Meeting Venue News

### Northeast

Although the W New York Downtown is the newest hotel in the city's downtown financial district, it doesn't have the largest meeting space. That honor goes to the three-year-old, all-suite, 463-room Conrad New York, which offers 30,068 sf of flexible meeting space. The meeting venues are spread over two floors with open foyers, a 6,200-sf ballroom and 14 versatile meeting rooms. Located in the newer northern end of Battery Park City, just a five-minute walk from the 9/11 Museum and the Freedom Tower, the property is close to the major financial institutions in lower Manhattan. It's also a short walk to the new Sergio Calatrava-designed transit hub, where nearly every subway line crosses, so the rest of Manhattan is easily accessible.

### South

Orlando's Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel is currently undergo-

ing a \$125 million renovation, the largest makeover in its history. The project, which will be completed by the end of 2017, includes every guest room in the 758-room Swan hotel and the 1,509-room Dolphin hotel.

The new 454-room Westin Nashville opens January 2017. The hotel will be located across the street from the recently opened Music City Center and will include a spa, swimming pool and bar on the roof, along with multiple event spaces.

### West

Omni Hotels and Resorts, in partnership with the NFL's Dallas Cowboys, is building a property in Frisco, Texas, a fast-growing Dallas suburb. The 300-room Omni Frisco Hotel will have plenty of meeting space, a huge ballroom, several restaurants and bars, and a rooftop pool deck. It will be adjacent to the Cowboys' new training facility and Frisco's new 12,000-seat, multi-use event center. The total city and privately funded 91-acre development project is expected to cost \$2 billion when it opens in 2017.

The largest JW Marriott hotel in the U.S. opened in Austin, Texas, this year with 1,012 guest rooms. The property offers 120,000 sf of flexible meeting space and outdoor event

facilities, including the unique 6,000-sf Congress Avenue Terrace outdoor event deck. In addition, the Austin Convention Center is just two blocks away.

Encore and the Encore Tower Suites at Wynn Las Vegas are undergoing a design refresh, with a projected completion date of fall 2015. The project includes updated furnishings, floor coverings, technology, aesthetics and custom bed linens.

In summer 2015, the meetings and events industry welcomed IPEC, a first-of-its-kind freestanding events facility located near McCarran International Airport and the Las Vegas Strip. There is more than 20,000 sf of flexible space suitable for groups of 50 to 720 attendees, plus 200 overnight accommodations available exclusively for guests booking an event. The property offers a 5,000-sf front foyer, with 29-foot-high ceilings and a 10,000-sf ballroom.

### Southwest

Scottsdale's Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain Resort & Spa is transforming one of its private Mountainside Estates, Casa del Sano, into a spa-centric oasis, boasting four new ca-



sitas. Debuting in early 2016, the new wellness retreat will include a movement studio and accommodate groups of up to eight guests. The property also has recently added new Camelback Casitas and Camelback Suites, now available for booking, that are designed to showcase views of Paradise Valley.

Next summer, the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess will open an additional 102 new guest rooms for a total of 750. The property's latest expansion includes three luxury suites, a new feature pool, Great Lawn and new Western town event venue.

### Midwest

Conrad Hotels will open a Conrad Chicago property in spring 2016, a 20-story, deluxe property with 287 rooms, 12 of which are large suites. The property will offer insurance and financial groups more than 10,500 sf of state-of-the-art conference facilities, as well as fine-dining outlets and the ability for conference participants to communicate with the property for pre-check-in and other hotel services using the Conrad Concierge mobile app.

— RB





***“We have enhanced our services, we have listened to our customers and implemented tools that help them have more inspirational and successful meetings, and we have seen business grow significantly.”***

**Tammy Blount**, President and CEO  
Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Nights and Percentage of Qualified Meeting Venues and Number of Profile Views) still has to work hard to attract large meetings and conventions.

“The last time we met in Orlando was in 2003, before I was with the association, when we had over 5,000 attendees there,” says Kristina Mechelis, CMP, director of meetings for the Association for Financial Professionals. “Visit Orlando has been a great partner for our upcoming 2016 meeting as well. I am always interested in anything new and exciting coming to a city, and the Visit Orlando folks offered a lot of exciting information about the city and the new dining venues and hotel renovations that are taking place there, so it seems like our meeting next year, with 6,000 participants booked in over 15 hotels, will be a great experience for everyone attending the event.”

When DMOs do an assessment of their destination’s inventory of attractions, hotels and activities, passing that information on to meeting planners is good business practice, not only for the DMO but the information passed on often can make or break a meeting planner’s ultimate site selection decision.

“When planning client events, Miami continues to be our top choice for a destination,” says Sandra Edstrom, FLMI, client relations and events manager for the Hannover Life Reassurance Company of America. “Miami is easy to get to, offers unlimited activity options and the white sand beaches easily lure our clients to attend our event year over year. With so many restaurants and an endless list of unique and exciting things to do and places to visit, we can provide our clients with a fresh, exciting experience each year. To help with planning, I turn to Ileana Castillo at the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau (GMCVB). Her knowledge of

the ocean beach resorts that best fit our group quickly turns into a list of available properties to choose from. I also look to the GMCVB for guidance on restaurants and activities and find that with every interaction, I’m treated as their most important customer.”

### **A Planner’s Right Hand**

The best DMOs not only work with insurance and financial company meeting planners on the large meetings and conventions, but their willingness to assist individual attendees and exhibitors planning separate, off-site functions is equally as important. Staffers at Visit Indy were busy getting things ready for this year’s annual American Society for Healthcare Risk Management Conference (October) in Indianapolis when they received a query from Betsy Van Alstyne of Integro Insurance Brokers about finding a suitable reception site for 300 guests, most of whom would be attending the ASHRM conference and exhibition the same week.

“Visit Indy took the time to arrange site inspections at a number of properties, and came along as host on many of those visits, driving me from site to site and handling introductions,” says Van Alstyne. “In addition, they helped identify a caterer once I had chosen the desired property, and will provide customized maps and visitor information packets to our group. They were extremely helpful during my site search and saved me a lot of unnecessary legwork.” Van Alstyne’s reception will be held at the Indianapolis Artsgarden, a beautiful glassed dome venue downtown.

When all is said and done, perhaps the most valuable service a CVB can provide is an inspirational experience. **I&FMM**

much of an economic impact hosting corporate meetings can be to Puerto Rico,” said Milton Segarra, president and CEO of Meet Puerto Rico. “For every \$17 we spend marketing our island, it generates \$561 dollars for Puerto Rico. Engaging our members, and working together to create a prefect meeting environment, helps us stay relevant and competitive, and our experience hosting insurance and financial company meetings at our quality resorts on the island means that not only will the meeting be productive and successful, but that many of the participants will want to return to Puerto Rico for a vacation.”

Segarra went on to say that the island is buzzing with new, high-quality venues and expansion projects, including the transformation of the privatized San Juan Airport with millions of dollars invested in infrastructure and customer services. “The recommendations that emanated from the DMAI Destination-NEXT initiative validated our thinking, and now we are putting it all to work with a renewed sense of enthusiasm and dedication in our effort to increase our corporate meetings business.”

### **No Resting on Laurels**

Even Orlando, recently rated the top meetings city in the country for 2015 by Cvent, which used a variety of qualifiers (Unique Request for Proposals Received, Total Room Nights, Awarded Request for Proposals, Awarded Room

# INNOVATION REINVIGORATED



The Monterey Conference Center has played host to some of the world’s most innovative thinkers and progressive companies since its opening in 1977. This ‘hub’ of innovation is soon to undergo an amazing \$45 million transformation to prepare it for the next generation of breakout thinking.

The renovated Monterey Conference Center will be a state-of-the-art, LEED®-EB certified facility with 40,000+ square feet of flexible meeting space — over 70,000 square feet if you count the adjoining hotels.



**The Grand Reopening is in early 2017.**

For more details about the venue and the Monterey Conference Connection, please visit [MontereyConferenceCenter.com](http://MontereyConferenceCenter.com).

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# 2015 World Class Award Winners

## CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAUS

**Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
Austin, TX

**Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
Miami, FL

**Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau**  
Honolulu, HI

**Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
Long Beach, CA

**Meet AC**  
Atlantic City, NJ

**Meet Puerto Rico**  
San Juan, PR

**Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.**  
Nashville, TN

**New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
New Orleans, LA

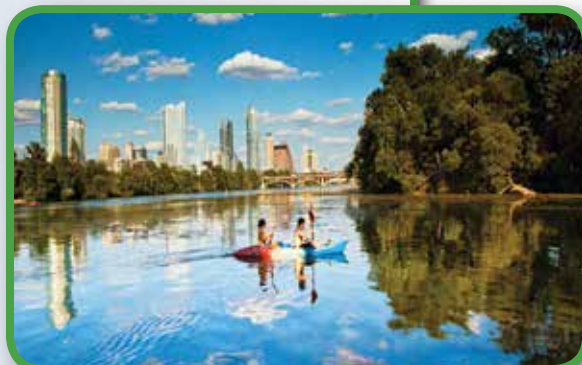
**San Francisco Travel Association**  
San Francisco, CA

**Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
Scottsdale, AZ

**VISIT DENVER**  
Denver, CO

**Visit Jacksonville**  
Jacksonville, FL

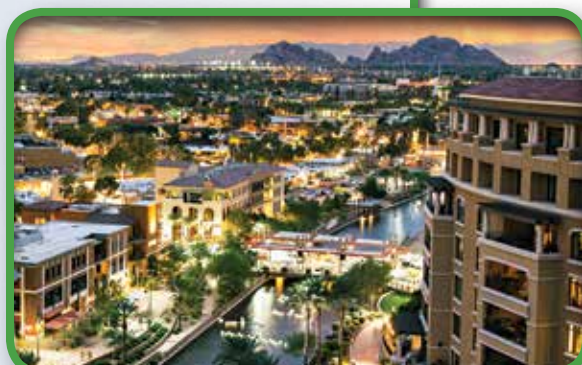
**Visit Orlando**  
Orlando, FL



Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau



New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau



Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau



The Broadmoor

## HOTELS, RESORTS & CONFERENCE CENTERS

**ARIA Resort & Casino**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Atlantis, Paradise Island**  
Paradise Island, Bahamas

**Bellagio**  
Las Vegas, NV

**The Broadmoor**  
Colorado Springs, CO

**Caesars Palace Las Vegas**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Hyatt Regency Orlando**  
Orlando, FL

**Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando**  
Orlando, FL

**M Resort Spa Casino**  
Las Vegas, NV

**MGM Grand Hotel & Casino**  
Las Vegas, NV

**The Mirage**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Orlando World Center Marriott**  
Orlando, FL

**Ponte Vedra Inn & Club**  
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

**The Resort at Pelican Hill**  
Newport Coast, CA

**Trump National Doral Miami**  
Miami, FL

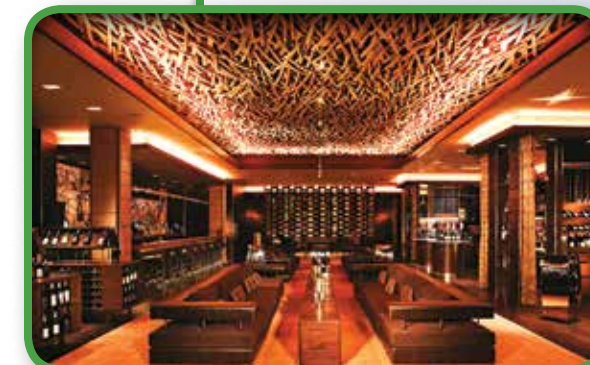
**Vdara Hotel & Spa**  
Las Vegas, NV

**The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino**  
Las Vegas, NV

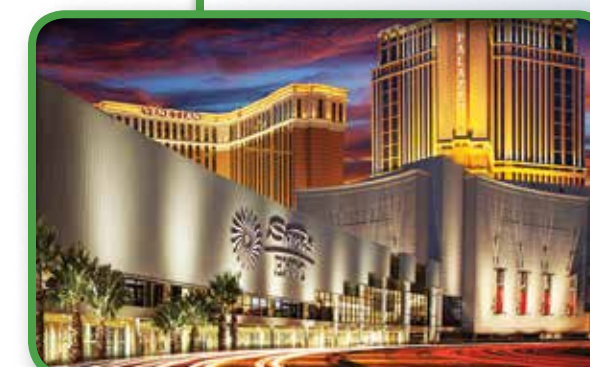
**Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel**  
Lake Buena Vista, FL

**The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa**  
Tucson, AZ

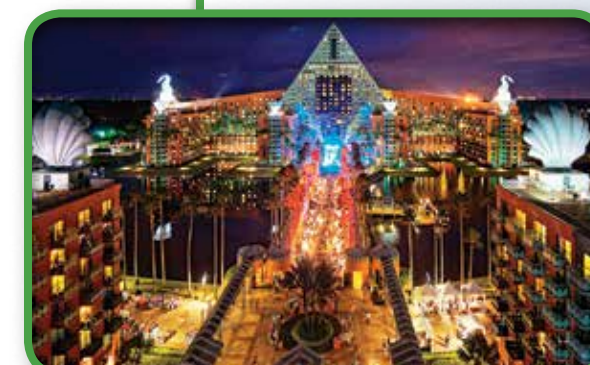
**Wynn Las Vegas**  
Las Vegas, NV



M Resort Spa Casino



The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino



Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel







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#### Citywide Facts and Features

**Guest Rooms:** 8,300 downtown; 33,000 citywide (by 2017, 11,000/36,000)

**Meeting Space:** Austin Convention Center, 246,000 gross sf, 54 meeting rooms

**Convention Center FYI:** The Austin Convention Center boasts 900,000 sf of high-tech, highly desirable meeting space in the heart of downtown.

## Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau

Austin, Texas. It evokes something different for every person. Boots and barbecue, festivals and flower power, smart startups and established tech, and some of the best innovative music, craft beer, wine and food to be found. It's the perfect, inspired spot to host your next meeting or event. Here are 15 reasons meeting in Austin is incredible.

**1. Downright friendly.** True to Texas, people are friendly here. Visiting here is like accidentally stumbling onto 100 friends you just haven't met yet.

**2. Unconventional convention center.** Built of native materials, the LEED Gold-certified Austin Convention Center boasts an infrastructure capable of moving data at 1 billion bits per second.

Meeting rooms are designed for maximum flexibility, an in-house AV team is on tap, and there's free Internet, too.

**3. High value.** Austin is one of the most affordable cities in the nation. Attendees can walk to restaurants spanning a range of price points, access affordable airport transportation and more.

**4. Safety first.** Austin is one of the safest cities in the U.S. Attendees will feel very comfortable here, in a group or on their own.

**5. Local flavor.** Sites such as the Cathedral of Junk, the bats under the bridge and the Hope Graffiti gallery barely scratch the surface of quirky stuff you'll encounter. Boredom banished.

**6. Staying here.** Modern boutique hotels, luxurious big brands, resorts and bed and breakfasts abound. With so many options, finding your ideal price tag and location is simple. The Hilton Austin, adjacent to the convention center, offers 80,000 sf of meeting space. The

JW Marriott Austin, two blocks from the center, provides 110,000 sf of meeting space. The Fairmont Austin, which will open in 2017, will have 106,000 sf of meeting space.

**7. Easy being green.** Carbon neutral by 2020, Austin Energy's goal to power the city solely on clean energy is within reach.

**8. Unique meeting space.** Host your gathering at a race track, a rooftop, in a food truck park, overlooking the lake or any other fun hot spot.

**9. Ease of arrival.** The Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is centrally located, close to downtown and hosts 230 daily flights serviced by more than 10 airlines.

**10. Live music.** With more than 2,000 recording artists living in the area, it's easy to incorporate live music elements into your meeting.

**11. Food and drink.** Award-winning chefs, innovative newcomers and enthusiastic experimenters are clamoring to show guests the latest and greatest.

**12. High tech.** There's a rich mix of established industry leaders and startups in Austin.

**13. Getting around town.** Guests easily navigate Austin using efficient public transportation, taxis, pedicabs, Uber, Lyft and a bike-sharing program.

**14. Nurture nature.** Attendees' free time should factor in fresh air such as hiking and biking the 50-plus miles of trails or taking a trip through the rolling Texas Hill Country.

**15. Authentic attendee experiences.**

Austin's visitors do as the locals do. Multiple entertainment districts appeal to most, and the city doesn't shut down at the end of the work day. Meeting planners enjoy access to key business resources, the opportunity to launch new ideas, appeal to young attendees and build long-term attendee loyalty. **I&FMM**

# WE'LL HELP YOU PACK THE HOUSE.



Photo Credit: Alison Narro

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36,000 HOTEL ROOMS  
CITYWIDE IN 2017

250 MUSIC VENUES  
ACROSS THE CITY

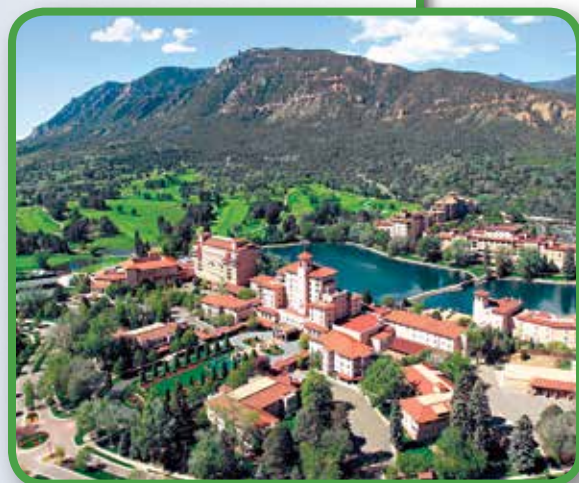
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#### Facts and Features

**Guest Rooms/Suites:** 779

**Meeting Space:** 185,000 sf

#### Special Services & Amenities:

Three championship golf courses; Forbes Five Star spa; nationally recognized tennis facility; 26 retail boutiques; and 20 restaurants, including Colorado's only Forbes Five Star, AAA Five Diamond restaurant, Penrose Room.

## The Broadmoor

The Broadmoor is the longest consecutive winner of the Forbes Five Star and AAA Five Diamond awards for excellence. The first convention held at The Broadmoor was in 1918 for the American Institute of Mining Engineers, just three months after the hotel's grand opening. Since then, the "Grande Dame of the Rockies" continues to stand at the forefront of world-class facilities, amenities, and service, combining state-of-the-art comfort and convenience with an elegant and luxurious charm guests could only find in a classic international resort.

Situated at the gateway to the Colorado Rocky Mountains in Colorado Springs, the resort encompasses 5,000 acres, with rooms, suites and cottages; three championship golf courses; a Forbes Five Star spa, salon and fitness center; a nationally recognized tennis facility, staff and program; 26 retail boutiques; and 20 restaurants, cafés and lounges including Colorado's only Forbes Five Star, AAA Five Diamond restaurant, Penrose Room.

#### Meeting Facilities

The Broadmoor offers 185,000 sf of meeting space, including the 60,000-sf Broadmoor Hall, the Colorado Hall with 15,000 sf of space, the International Center with 18,000 sf of space, and the potential of another 35,000 sf in a portable structure adjacent to Broadmoor Hall.

In total, meeting space on the property can accommodate upwards of 9,000 attendees. For groups needing a large venue with a variety of guest room offerings and pricing, The Broadmoor offers The "Broadmoor Connection," a coalition of hotel partners all within

five minutes of Broadmoor Hall that extend the number of sleeping rooms to more than 1,700.

#### Wilderness Experience

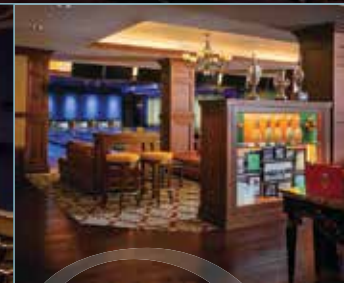
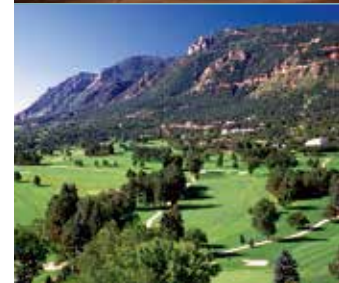
In addition, The Broadmoor's growing "Wilderness Experience" properties encompass The Ranch at Emerald Valley, Cloud Camp, The Broadmoor Fishing Camp and Seven Falls, all of which offer exceptional options for planners of small meetings who are looking for places where big ideas can be developed in a setting only found in Colorado. Having these locations within minutes of The Broadmoor offers an advantage unlike any other resort in the country.

- An intimate guest ranch, The Ranch at Emerald Valley offers accommodations for 32 and is ideal for small corporate groups.
- Cloud Camp offers accommodations for 56 guests with meeting space for up to 70.
- Perfect for executive retreats, The Broadmoor Fishing Camp offers world-class fishing on the Taryall River and hosts accommodations for 26.
- Seven Falls includes Restaurant 1858 and "The Broadmoor Soaring Adventure" and is available for private events.

The Broadmoor's high level of service, attention to detail and unflagging commitment is to provide the best meeting experience in the industry. What becomes a legendary resort most is the ability to anticipate, meet and exceed needs. The flexibility and creativity afforded to planners through a wide variety of options and venues means more can be done to deliver quality experiences for attendees on budgets that have not expanded as rapidly as the demand for meetings.

**I&FMM**

GRAND ENOUGH FOR YOUR  
BEST PEOPLE AND THEIR  
BIGGEST IDEAS.



Meetings and events take on a special energy at The Broadmoor. Our magnificent Colorado setting will inspire your people. Our world-class golf, spa, dining and more will refresh them. The unique venues and activities of our new Broadmoor Wilderness Experience will challenge them and change their perspectives. Our 185,000 square feet of meeting space is flexible enough to meet your most demanding requirements. And amidst it all, The Broadmoor's legendary tradition of quality and service will ensure a successful event. Contact us today and start planning your meeting now at [broadmoor.com](http://broadmoor.com).

THE  
BROADMOOR



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#### Facts and Features

**Guest Rooms:** 390

**Meeting Space:** More than 92,000 sf

**Special Services & Amenities:** Affordable luxury; Forbes Four Star accommodations, amenities and service; business-to-business environment; multiple opportunities for branding; in-house production team; no resort fees.

## M Resort Spa Casino

**D**riven by personalized service, progressive architecture and luxurious offerings and amenities, the M Resort Spa Casino offers an unrivaled Las Vegas experience. The luxury boutique resort and casino is situated on South Las Vegas Boulevard, 400 feet higher in elevation than other resorts on the Strip, offering expansive views from 390 guest rooms and suites. Well-appointed guest rooms showcase floor-to-ceiling windows and rich amenities such as imported Italian marble and comfortable beds with pillow-top mattresses and luxurious linens. M Resort's 92,000-sf casino offers a variety of gaming entertainment including table games, slot and video poker machines, a high limit area and a Race & Sports Book operated by CG Technology. Hotel amenities also include Spa Mio, a world-class spa, salon and barber, and two sprawling pools, including DayDream, a high-energy pool club for guests 21 and over.

#### Meeting Facilities

For a truly unforgettable meeting planning experience, the Forbes Four Star award-winning property features more than 92,000 sf

of open and dynamic meeting space along with multiple reception areas. For large-scale events, the 25,000-sf M Pavilion with its capacity of 2,300 attendees is an ideal venue for expositions, high-energy concerts and catered events, while the 100,000-sf Villaggio Del Sole is an outdoor pool and entertainment piazza showcasing a built-in stage, separate bar and restaurant, and can accommodate up to 6,000 guests.

Additional meeting space comprises

the 17,000-sf Milan ballroom, a boardroom, separate breakout rooms and a convenient business center.

#### Spectacular Venues

Three spectacular venues include LUX, VUE and Signature Room, each offering unique interiors with scenic outdoor terraces for unforgettable special events.

Located on the 16th floor, the 7,200-sf LUX offers a customizable function space with stunning views of the Las Vegas Strip, perfect for hosting dinners and intimate receptions. VUE is another multifaceted space that can accommodate up to 240 dinner guests with indoor and outdoor terrace seating, and convenient escalator and elevator access to the spa/convention level.

Located right on the casino floor, Signature Room features 1,800 sf of space, ideal for events and gatherings of up to 70 guests.

Step outside the meeting and conference area and planners have the convenience of utilizing any of the resort's seven restaurants and five bars as alternative event space for unique gatherings. Anthony's Prime Steak & Seafood, Anthony's Gourmet Burgers & Brews and Jayde Fuzion each offer impressive views of the Las Vegas Strip and alfresco dining on multilevel terraces that surround the sparkling pools.

The 5,000-sf Hostile Grape wine cellar, bar and tasting room is another vibrant setting featuring more than 400 bottles and 160 wines by the glass using the unique Enomatic wine dispensing system.

For seamless event planning, M Resort's in-house production team offers services to optimize any event, which include strategic consultation through large-scale productions.

**I&FMM**

# After a Productive Day, Enjoy the Fruits of Your Labor.



The M Resort service team is there from start to finish and creatively delivers the maximum experience on time and on budget, but there are more reasons why you'll choose this Forbes Four Star resort.

After the mixing, mingling, negotiating and hand-shaking, celebrate your day in a dynamic environment that works hard for you by day and lets you unwind by night.



Here are just a few reasons you'll be confident that M Resort is the right place to host your meeting AND impress your guests!

- More than 92,000 sf of dynamic and flexible spaces including a 25,000 sf pavilion
- Built with environmental sustainability
- Built-in business to business atmosphere
- Exceptionally appointed guest rooms
- Innovative dining choices
- Forbes Four Star Resort, Spa & Conference Facilities
- Non-exclusive in house audio visual offerings
- Shuttle transportation
- No resort fees



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#### Citywide Facts and Features

**Guest Rooms:** 24,185

**Hotels/Resorts:** 124

**Meeting Space:** 4 million+ sf  
(including MCCNO)

**Special Services & Amenities:**  
The Convention Center District Development Project will revitalize 47 acres and feature a new linear park, headquarters hotel, venue space and much more.

## New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau

Imagine meeting in a city where cultures collide in a brilliant explosion of flavors, emotions and sounds.

New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz, home to Creole cuisine and a place rich with history and culture.

### New Developments & Improvements

As New Orleans approaches its tricentennial in 2018, the city is bustling with new developments and improvements.

From the expanding BioMedical District to the historic French Quarter, New Orleans is one of America's most walkable cities boasting more than 22,000 hotel rooms within a two-mile radius of the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center (MCCNO).

Take advantage of the 1.1 million+ sf of contiguous exhibit space at MCCNO or host your event in one of New Orleans' one-of-a-kind venues such as Blain Kern's Mardi Gras World or The National World War II Museum, which is nearing completion of a \$320 million expansion.

The New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center has embarked on a major redevelopment of 47 acres of

property upriver from the center.

The Convention Center District Development Project will feature a linear park, headquarters hotel, music venue and much more. The project will revitalize the area benefiting residents and visitors alike.

Louis Armstrong International Airport continues to add new direct flights as it expands to add a new world-class terminal on the north side of the existing airport. The \$826

million project is slated for completion by the city's tricentennial celebrations in 2018.

### A Feast for the Senses

After an engaging day of sessions, networking and education, take to the streets and immerse yourself in all of the sites, sounds and flavors that make New Orleans a one-of-a-kind city. Find out for yourself why New Orleans has been ranked as the top U.S. destination for business travelers and among the friendliest cities in the country.

Take a haunted history tour, enjoy one of more than 140 festivals throughout the year or head out to the swamp for an alligator encounter. Step outside the French Quarter and Follow Your NOLA through the up-and-coming Bywater, Faubourg Marigny and Uptown neighborhoods. And don't miss out on the 1,400 restaurants throughout the city.

Be sure to come early or stay late and make it a family affair. Take the kids to the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas or enjoy a romantic cruise on the mighty Mississippi River. From the rich flavors of culinary excellence to the intoxicating sounds of jazz, funk and blues music flowing through the streets, the Crescent City is truly a feast for the senses.

### Let the Good Times Roll

In New Orleans, you will always find a little lagniappe — something extra — to go alongside your meeting. Whether it's a brass band welcoming your guests in the airport or a second line out of your closing session, meet in New Orleans and laissez les bon temps rouler — let the good times roll! Your attendees will thank you.

**I&FMM**

# GET DOWN TO BUSINESS. THEN JUST GET DOWN.



Bringing your meeting or convention to New Orleans means you have access to one of America's largest exhibition spaces—over 1.1 million contiguous square feet. It means coming to a city that knows how to do big events. It means staying in some of the nation's finest hotels with meeting spaces designed just for you. It means you're coming to the home of the hospitality pros. And it also means when business is done, you can loosen your tie or kick off your heels in a city like no other. It means a walkable city with world-class cuisine and a chance to toast your success in the place that does business better than anywhere else.

**Contact us today to get started.**



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#### Citywide Facts and Features

**Guest Rooms/Suites:** 13,400+

**Hotels & Resorts:** 74

#### Special Services & Amenities:

Scottsdale boasts more than 600 restaurants citywide and 90 bars and lounges in downtown. There also are more than 100 art galleries and 45+ off-property event and meeting venues.

## Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau

Scottsdale welcomes groups with a stunning Sonoran Desert setting, idyllic weather, top-tier accommodations and meeting facilities, and hassle-free transportation both in the air and on the ground. Top it all off with a hospitality community that extends VIP-level service to both planners and their clients, and it's easy to see why Scottsdale is a top choice of meetings professionals from around the world.

### Discover What's New in Scottsdale

With more than 70 distinctive hotels and resorts from which to choose, Scottsdale offers groups a wide range of accommodations and meeting spaces that can be customized to fit any size group or budget. On-property meeting facilities run the gamut from high-tech boardrooms to expansive resort conference centers. And for groups that require an abundance of flexible meeting and event space, Scottsdale boasts three properties offering more than 150,000 sf of total indoor and outdoor space, and more than 12 properties offering in excess of 50,000 sf of indoor and outdoor space.

The coming year will see the completion of extensive renovations at three of Scottsdale's most popular meeting-centric resorts. In summer 2016, The Fairmont Scottsdale Princess will add 102 guest rooms, including three luxury suites, for a new property total of 750 rooms. This expansion complements the resort's roomy Princess and Palomino conference cen-

ters, which offer a combined total of 156,000 sf of meeting and event space.

The Boulders Resort & Spa is set to complete a multimillion-dollar makeover in December 2015 that includes new architectural elements as well as new furnishings and a sophisticated palette of earthy desert tones in its 160 airy casitas. The Boulders' inspired desert setting and 50,000+ total sf of indoor and outdoor meeting and function space make it ideal for groups looking for a spacious, secluded setting.

In fall 2015, The Scottsdale Resort at McCormick Ranch, a Destination Hotel (formerly the Scottsdale Resort & Conference Center) will debut a \$9 million transformation. The renovation introduces a Mexican hacienda-style theme, new color palette and furnishings, and a 10,000-sf outdoor lawn function space showcasing views of Camelback Mountain. The resort also offers nearly 60,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space and a prime central Scottsdale location.

### Recreational Options

And when the day's business is done, Scottsdale offers a wide range of incentive and recreational options. Treat your group to an afternoon of high-tech fun at TopGolf, a private tour of Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West or a guided culinary tour of downtown's trendiest restaurants. You can even indulge their adventurous side with exciting Sonoran Desert excursions by Hummer, horseback, river raft and seaplane.

### Easy Accessibility

Phoenix Sky Harbor is located less than 10 miles from downtown and offers nearly 1,200 daily flights. Once on the ground, options range from executive coaches to free trolleys and horse-drawn carriages. **IFMM**



Go beyond convention.

#### Interested in Meeting in Scottsdale? "Site See" and Fly Free!

Fly free on us to experience a customized site inspection and you'll see first-hand all the award-winning resorts, outstanding meeting facilities and world-class amenities that consistently make Scottsdale one of the top U.S. meetings destinations. Customized. Time-efficient. With free air. Visit [FlyFreeonUs.com](http://FlyFreeonUs.com) for conditions and details.

  
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**CHANDRA ALLISON**  
Vice President of Sales

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www.venetian.com/conventions



#### Facts and Features

**Guest Suites:** 7,100

**Meeting Space:** 2.25 million sf

**Special Services & Amenities:** 298 meeting, conference and boardrooms; Sands Expo; FedEx Business Center; Sands Showroom; Three Broadway-Style Theatres; Canyon Ranch SpaClub; 40+ restaurants.

## The Venetian and The Palazzo Las Vegas

The comfort and productivity of attendees is front and center at The Venetian and The Palazzo, two landmark resorts in the heart of the famed Las Vegas Strip, where networking opportunities abound and every guest room is a plush suite. Add the seemingly unlimited all-in-one-place resources of 7,100 guest suites and more than 2.25 million sf of meeting space, and you've got the ultimate convention destination.

#### The Congress Center and Sands Expo

The Venetian and The Palazzo Congress Center also features one of the world's largest pillar-less ballrooms at 85,000 sf, with an additional 298 meeting, conference and boardrooms. In addition, the adjacent Sands Expo features state-of-the-art convention facilities, with 1.9 million sf of newly renovated meeting and show space.

Together, The Venetian and The Palazzo create the largest green-certified hotel property in the world. The resorts feature an unrivaled green meeting and convention program that offers a selection of standard environmentally responsible services.

#### Final Phase of Renovation Now Complete

This year, the final phase of the multi-year renovation of The Venetian and The Palazzo Congress Center and Sands Expo was completed. Recent improvements at Sands Expo included a new \$6 million 12,000-sf kitchen designed to provide higher quality food for trade show attendees, support show

growth, and increase energy efficiency by 35 percent. This is in addition to the recent total remodel and redesign of all lobbies and common spaces; construction of a dramatic 60-foot central atrium with a 30,000-sf, 3-D articulated ceiling; reconstruction of meeting rooms and business center; renovation of the building facade and porte cochere; and upgrades to the exhibition halls.

Also, attendees will find upgrades to the technology and Wi-Fi infrastructure throughout the resort and convention center.

On the hotel side, The Venetian suites have received a dramatic face-lift. These iconic standard guest suites, which (at 650 sf) were named the "world's largest standard guest room" by the *Guinness Book of World Records*, now have a brighter, more contemporary design. The extensive suite renovation included newly decorated suites, a replacement of furniture and carpeting, and the installation of larger format televisions. In addition, the desks were fitted with a new media "hub" system and USB charging capabilities for phones and laptops.

#### Delectable Dining and More

To facilitate networking, attendees can enjoy delectable dining created by a host of James Beard Award-winning chefs in more than 40 onsite dining and lounge outlets, more than 130 shops and boutiques, dazzling entertainment, and the calming retreat of Canyon Ranch SpaClub.

The Venetian, The Palazzo, the Sands Expo and The Palazzo Congress Center form the ultimate all-in-one venue, where everything is in reach. This multifaceted destination creates extraordinary experiences that your guests will remember for years to come. **I&FMM**

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MEETING SPACE

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ECO 360°

7,000 ALL-SUITE  
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TEAM MEMBERS

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Director of Sales and Marketing

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meetings@swandolphin.com  
www.swandolphinmeetings.com



#### Facts and Features

**Guest Rooms/Suites:** 2,267

**Meeting Space:** More than 329,000 sf

**Special Services & Amenities:** Onsite DMC; Balinese-inspired Mandara Spa; 17 Restaurants and Lounges; within walking distance to Epcot and Disney's Hollywood Studios; Special Disney benefits offered.

## Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin is nestled in an exceptional location, among spectacular surroundings, where excellence in service and creativity combine to deliver a world-class meeting destination.

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin was designed by world-renowned architect Michael Graves as a one-of-a-kind meeting facility where art and architecture combine to inspire creativity and collaboration. The resort offers more than 329,000 sf of meeting space and 2,267 guest rooms and suites.

#### Meetings

When it comes to the business of meetings, the award-winning team is highly regarded for their ability to exceed expectations. Successful meetings are created from environments and moments that blend to support content, resulting in greater ROI with your meeting objectives. It is in this meeting experience that the resort is truly distinctive by design.

Meetings are supported by an award-winning banquet, catering and culinary team that delivers customized solutions with a passion for each client. For the adventurous, nothing beats a private event in the parks to add that magical touch while supporting your meeting theme.

There are many reasons to choose the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin, and high among them are the exclusive benefits available to support your programming. The resort brings together resources to make planning both easy and memorable. From the Disney Institute learning and development opportunities to entertainment and pro-

duction support from the Disney Event Group, the team is ready to raise the experience level at your next event.

#### Accommodations

The resort offers rooms and suites with the finest amenities in comfort and convenience with newly designed guest rooms featuring stylish furniture, chrome fixtures and all of the latest technology. Additional power outlets provide travelers more options for use of personal electronics. The guest rooms blend a beautiful combination of whites, blues and grays creating a tasteful ambience that is appealing. Accommodations also feature the Westin Heavenly Bed and Heavenly Bath.

#### Amenities & Dining

The resort is situated in the heart of the Walt Disney World Resort, within footsteps of Epcot, Disney's Hollywood Studios and the shopping, restaurants and nightlife of Disney's Boardwalk.

In addition to advance tee times at nearby Disney championship golf courses, guests can take advantage of Extra Magic Hours and experience select Disney attractions before or after the public as well as FastPass+ service to reserve select Disney attractions, entertainment and character greetings in advance. The resort boasts five pools, two health clubs, tennis courts and the luxurious Balinese-inspired Mandara Spa. Complimentary transportation is provided throughout the resort.

Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin is recognized as a top foodie destination in Orlando. Guests will discover 17 world-class restaurants and lounges, including the famed Todd English's bluezoo, Il Mulino New York Trattoria, Shula's Steak House and more.

**I&FMM**



OUR NEWLY DESIGNED  
**GUESTROOMS**  
THE WALT DISNEY WORLD SWAN



**DISTINCTIVE**  
*by design*

*Imagine* your next meeting in a place where unforgettable surroundings *inspire creativity*. Newly designed guest rooms and state-of-the-art facilities provide the perfect backdrop for meetings from 15 to 15,000. With over two decades of *service expertise* backed by *award-winning* accommodations and dining, this is the world you'll experience at the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort.

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DOMINGUEZ

**John Dominguez** was named director of sales and marketing for Waikoloa Beach Marriott Resort & Spa on Hawaii Island. He was director of sales and marketing at Sheraton Kona Resort & Spa at Keauhou Bay on Hawaii Island.

Turnberry Isle Miami has appointed **Joseph M. DeMille Sr.** as director of sales and marketing. With more than



DEMILLE



BRIGHT

30 years of experience in the hospital-ity industry, DeMille formerly served as regional director of sales and marketing for Dolce Atlanta-Peachtree in Atlanta, Georgia.

Benchmark Hospitality International has named **Diana Bright** as director of national accounts for Santa Barbara Beach & Golf Resort in Curacao, Netherlands Antilles. She was account



PRANIS

director, Northeast, for the St. Regis Aspen Resort Hotel in Colorado.

The Shores Resort & Spa, Daytona Beach Shores, Florida, has named **Chris Pranis** as director of sales. He most recently served as senior sales manager at Casa Monica Hotel in St. Augustine, Florida.

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Hotel has named **Austin Bagwell** as group sales account director for the New England market. She previously was part of the group sales teams at Aria Resort & Casino and The Cosmopolitan in Las Vegas. **Alan Enns** was named group sales account director for the Washington, DC, Virginia, Maryland association markets. He formerly served as director of sales at The Peabody Orlando, now the Hyatt Regency Orlando. **I&FMM**

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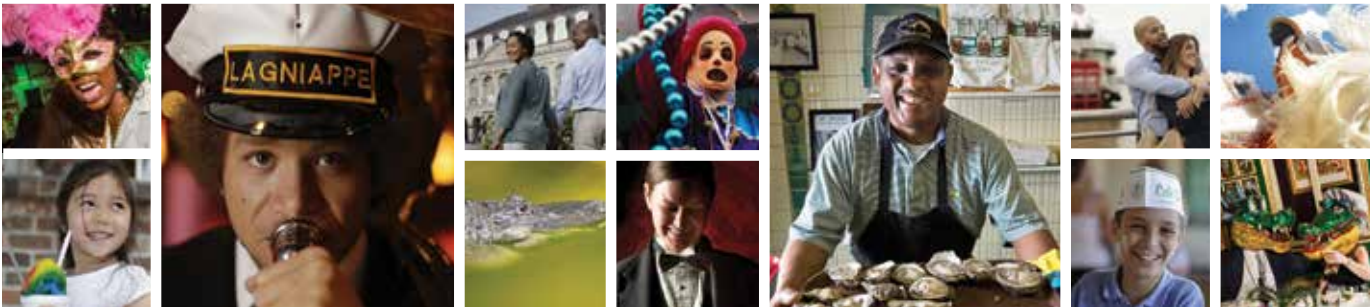
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OS: ORLANDO SUPPLEMENT

AS WE REFLECT ON THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY of HURRICANE KATRINA, WE WOULD SINCERELY LIKE TO SAY...



THANK YOU America



Thank you for bringing your meetings back to our city when our future seemed uncertain. When you chose New Orleans, you reaffirmed that others believed in us. With each meeting that returned, we got stronger. Every attendee that came to New Orleans was a vote of confidence in us and our recovery. You gave us the impetus to reopen our kitchens and fire up the burners, dust off the instruments and find the beat.

Now, we are moving through rebuilding and on to recreating New Orleans in ways we never imagined before the storm. For the hope you instilled in us in those dark, early days, we are eternally in your debt. A grateful city invites you, once again, to come, be our guest, and let the city you helped rebuild thank you in person.

forever yours,  
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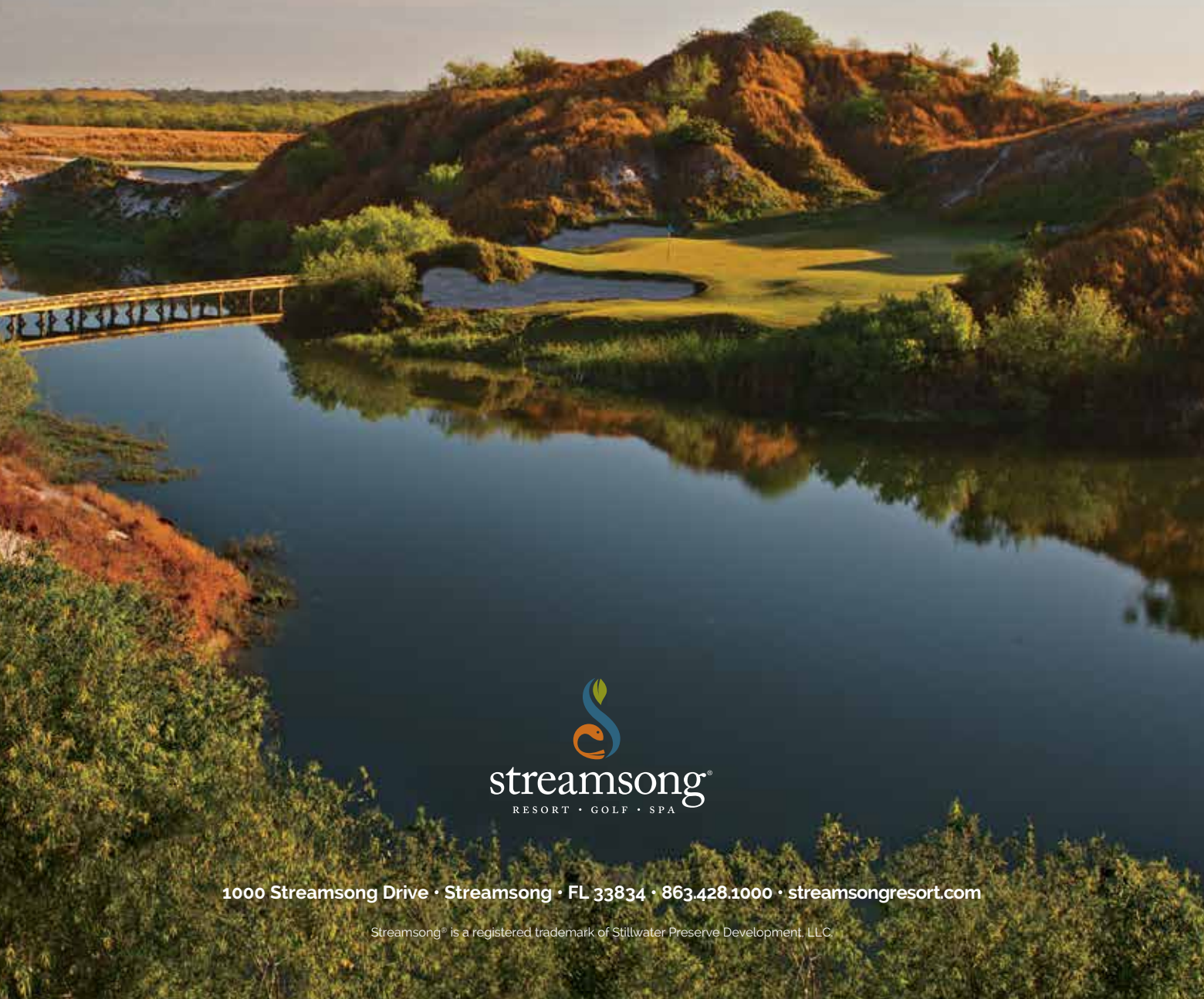




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