THE MEETING PROFESSIONAL®
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MPI
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MPI Northeastern New York Chapter

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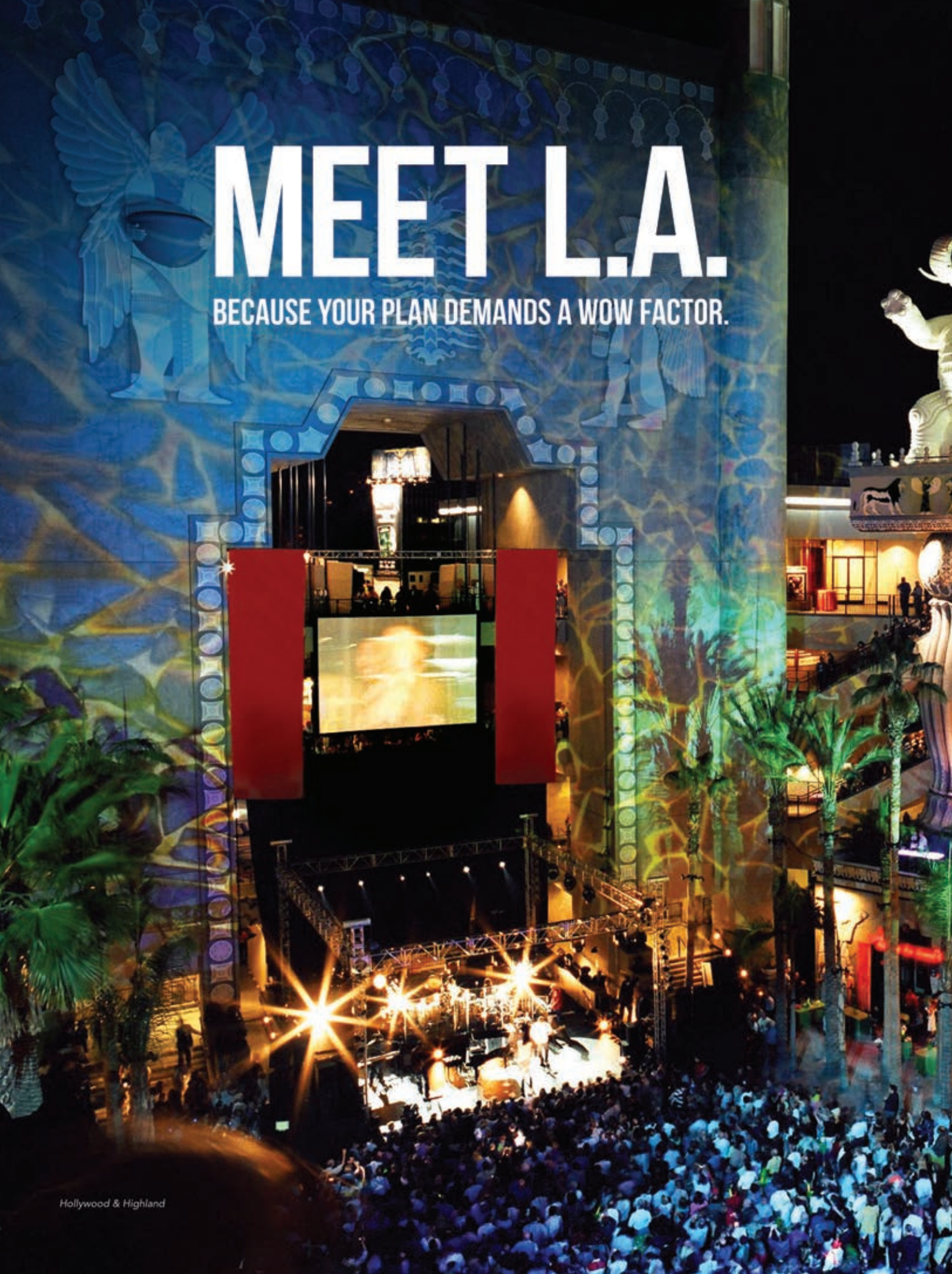
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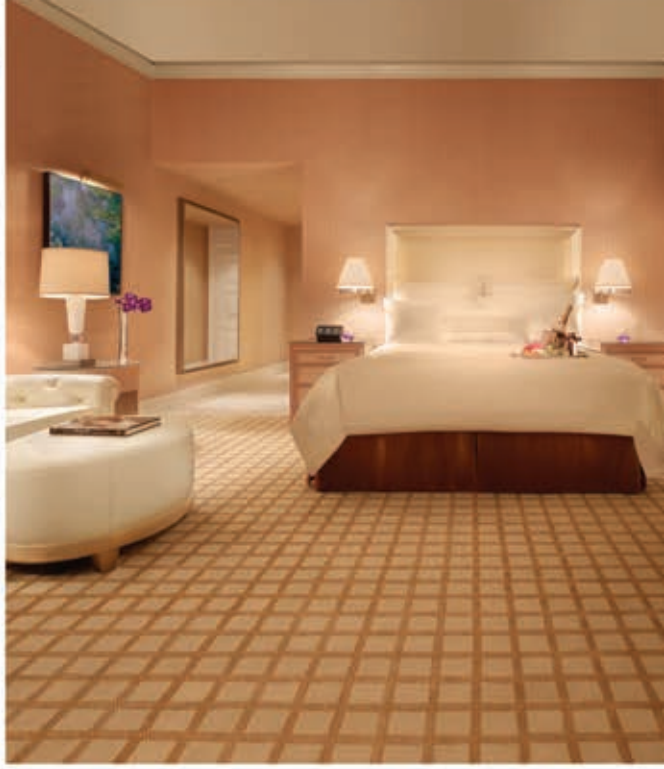

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THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

WHEN IT COMES TO TECHNOLOGY, I like to think of myself as darn savvy. Yep, done 'em all. Texting, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram—even dabbled a couple of times in that newfangled Snapchat, or is it Vine?

Now ask my kids (Alex, 22; Austin, 17; and Abby, just turned 11 going on 25 it seems) and they all collectively cringe at my techno knowledge. "Oh no, there goes dad again on Facebook. You're only supposed to write a few words, not paragraphs, and you don't need proper punctuation!" Kids. Don't they know why I have a journalism degree?

My daughter Abby checking out the latest technology in my office.

Need more proof? Ask the technology support team at MPI global about my tech prowess. I just don't know why they always pick up the phone when they see me coming down that hall saying, "You have a minute?"

Ok, well maybe I'm in a bit of a stupor at times with technology, always fascinated by the newest and latest gizmo or app and seemingly behind the curve. Technology, as we all have come to accept, is impacting our lives and the way we do business, all of which is reinforced in this month's issue of *The Meeting Professional*.

Our editor Michael Pinchera pulled back the curtain on drones in the meeting and event industry. Yes, drones, officially called unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), will likely be part of your meeting or event soon. His report (Page 64) explores how those flying machines can become a tool we'll use for monitoring attendance (including indoors) and security to evaluating infrastructure, and even taking some aerial selfies. Legal experts weigh in on the still-evolving rules and regulations, but drones are coming fast.

"It's incredibly new technology and it's evolving every day both from a capability side but also the FAA and regulatory side," says Barry Rabkin, CMO of Identified Technologies. "And I'm sure in the next five years we're going to see a lot of changes. It's a little wild. But I think for a lot of the technology, it's just a question of when, not if."

Technology is also the theme in a hosted buyer report penned by our editor Rowland Stiteler. He writes (Page 20) that while technology is changing the trade show experience, face-to-face interaction is what gets the business.

"Hosted buyer is the core of what we do, and it is very much a face-to-face experience," says Carina Bauer (MPI United Kingdom and Ireland Chapter), CEO of IMEX Group. "But it is made much more efficient by the software we use today and it would be very difficult to operate in the way we do today without the evolution of the software."

Bauer, who has been behind successful and growing trade shows in Frankfurt, Germany, since 2003, and in Las Vegas since 2011, says the core of the IMEX shows is human interaction, the appointment-driven, hosted-buyer format, but software enables both the buyers and sellers to learn about each other before they make appointments, a big time saver. The hosted buyer program is also a key component of our own 2015 World Education Congress (register now at **www.mpiweb.org/wec2015**).

Technology was the focus at the recent MPI TechCon, put on by the MPI Chicago Area Chapter and highlighted in our digital newsletter, *MPIpulse*. Wearables, event mobile apps, charging furniture and wireless infrastructures are further proof of how technology is further entrenching in the meeting and event industry.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of *The Meeting Professional*. Then spend a few moments looking up to the sky and pondering the possibilities, and smile for the drone.

Until next time …

Rich

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THE POWER OF WORD OF MOUTH

HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU seen a friend seek a restaurant, hotel or vacation recommendation on Facebook or Twitter? Just last week, a family friend set out to find new summer camp ideas for her children on Facebook, and the flurry of comments generated within a couple of hours brought forth more than a few strong options. We have all probably seen this very common practice on social networks and have happily engaged in the call for advice, opinions and personal expertise. At some point, we may have initiated the practice ourselves, and we do so because we value the insight of friends, colleagues, old college buddies, family, special business contacts and others that we trust.

There's no denying the power of word-of-mouth marketing, and studies confirm its influence on the decision-making process. According to one study, 74 percent of consumers identify word of mouth as a key influencer in their purchasing decisions. We all have a voice and can collectively promote the significance of our industry, positively influencing perceptions of those outside the meeting and event community through word of mouth.

Imagine if all MPI members regularly promoted the value of the work we do. Could we inspire someone to become a meeting planner if we shared our personal stories? Might we convince key stakeholders to increase annual budgets for meetings and events? Would we be able to win over the detractors and naysayers within governments? And could we help another meeting professional grow in their career by sharing what we've learned?

Our words have power, so let's put them to use this month in support of our industry and each other.

First, promote North American Meetings Industry Day (NAMID), which will be held on April 16, via your social media channels using #NAMID and #MPI. And plan to attend a local NAMID event as well. If there is not a local event planned in your area, or you reside outside of North America, you can still support this effort by sending a shout-out via Facebook or Twitter to peers and MPI chapters in the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

Second, tell people in your social networks why you love being a meeting professional. Develop a short list of three to five reasons why you enjoy the work you do and post your list with a photo from a meeting or event with relevant hashtags (e.g., #MPI or #MMBusiness) on social media, including LinkedIn. Personally, I'm going to use this event as my catalyst to jump on Twitter and promote the industry.

Finally, share details of your journey as a meeting professional with other meeting pros. Recommend industry resources and tell them about techniques, tools of the trade and best practices you've learned over the years. Tell them why you joined MPI, share how your membership experience has helped with your career and encourage non-members to join you at upcoming chapter events and to attend the 2015 World Education Congress (WEC) in San Francisco (Aug. 1-4).

Paul Van Deventer
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MICHAEL PINCHERA is an award-winning writer and editor for *The Meeting Professional* and a speaker on future tech and trends. Read more of his work at **www.whatmemeworry.com**.

Growing up on Florida's Space Coast, I was mesmerized by the giant devices launched into the heavens from Cape Canaveral—viewable from my own back yard! Encouraging this interest, my father created a custom launch pad, and soon we were blasting model rockets—and anything else onto which we could affix fins and a hobby rocket engine—into the sky. I prefer the mystery and lack of control that comes with such a rocket ("How high will it go? Where's it going to land?") as compared to the refined maneuverability of modern drones ***("Game of Drones," Page 64)****, but can only presume the lizard astronaut we sent to 1,000 feet in the Nova Payloader would have preferred a less dramatic flight.*

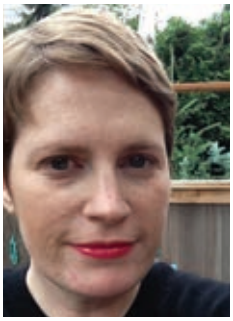
MITRA SORRELLS is an Orlando-based freelance writer and associate editor for *BizBash*. She primarily writes about conferences, trade shows and technology products and strategies for event professionals.

Nuclear waste management is such an important topic worldwide. It's a tribute to the United States that the esteemed WM Symposia started here more than 40 years ago and continues to attract a large international audience every year. And yet, even though the conference's subject matter is so critical, everyone I interviewed for ***"If It Ain't Broke…" (Page 42)*** *seemed most proud of the event's outreach to the next generation of nuclear scientists: the fact that they have dispersed millions of dollars in scholarships and that they have such a large contingent of students, educators and young professionals that attend every year for learning and networking.*

PAUL CULLUM is a freelance writer from Austin, Texas, currently living in Los Angeles. He has written for the *L.A. Weekly*, *Texas Monthly*, *The New York Times*, *Arthur* and thousands of tiny subversive publications that pay comically little.

My favorite toy as a child was a promotional item my dad brought home from the office. It was a keychain that worked like a single side of a View-Master: By removing the translucent cap, you could swap out postage stamp-size photos of Keds sneakers or the like. I quickly tired of those and realized with a light source behind it, I could put anything in there—dimes, real postage stamps, live ants or bees. Loosen the cap, and you could pull successive images through it—the Sunday funnies, comic books cut into continuous strips. It was like a cross between an animation stand and a slide projector, and I'm sure it instilled in me a lifelong fascination with movies. Perhaps sustainable only in its functionality ***("Tchotchkes. Knick-knacks. Schwag. Trade-Show Giveaways." Page 54)****, I wish I knew where it was now.*

JENNA SCHNUER is a regular contributor to *The Meeting Professional* and other business and travel publications. Read more of her work at **www.jennaschnuer.com**.



As a fairly frequent conference goer (usually journalism conferences), I got pretty darn excited thinking about Elliott Masie's ideas for attendee-driven peer-to-peer meet-up sessions ***("11 Tips That Will Ensure You're Offering the Best Session Styles to Your Attendees," Page 58)****. The thought of walking out of a room excited by an idea and immediately scheduling a session to get other people together to talk about it? That is good stuff. All too often, I end up shutting my notebook and, sadly, that's the end of the idea for a good long while. I think I'd push a lot more ideas into my work life if I were able to get follow-up sessions going on the ones that got me all hyped up. I have a feeling the same would go for other kinds of conferences.*

ROWLAND STITELER, a veteran meeting industry journalist, is a writer and editor for *The Meeting Professional*.

Almost without exception, every article I research has one or two surprises. ***"Holding Court" (Page 46)****, about the annual Capitol Hill Volleyball Classic tournament, provided two big jaw-dropper moments for me.*

Initially, I thought it might involve a couple of dozen teams competing in a park somewhere while maybe 200 parents watched. Not quite. Try 920 teams, booking every square inch of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center and bringing 40,000 parents and fans to the city on one of the coldest weekends of the year.

The second revelation: The tournament is not unlike an MPI event in a significant way—it's all about education. Turns out that volleyball provides more college scholarships for women than any other sport except basketball. About 200 college women's volleyball coaches were there to look for recruits. The girls could "win" a college education with their athletic skills. This is serious business, but also fun.

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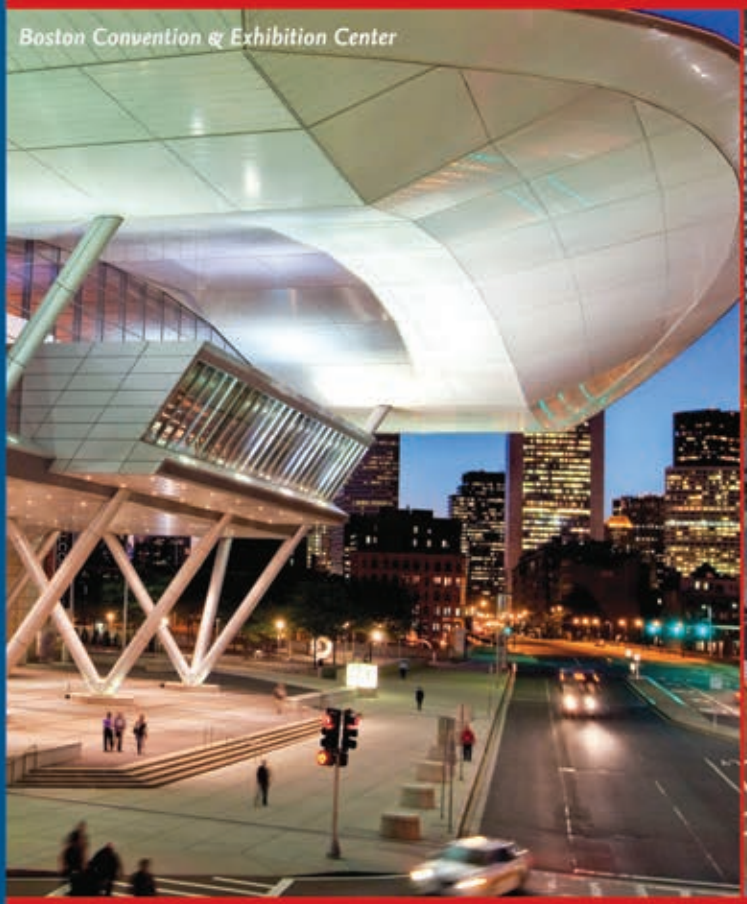
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FROM THE CEO

ARE YOU READING THIS?

WHAT IS MPI?

["Are You Reading This?" Feb. '15 issue]

Paul, I loved your piece in the February edition of *The Meeting Professional*. I can feel the passion in your words as you call our members to engage and expand their MPI experience. I believe you are spot on regarding relevancy. The volume and clutter of messages and value propositions bombarding our members is accelerating at alarming speeds. So how does MPI rise above the cacophony and remain true to who we are and (to your point) evolve to remain relevant?

I'm interested to learn more about our expanded live event/vertical offerings. Our scale is such an asset and yet creates complexities that few industry associations deal with. Is it possible to have "one thing" that MPI builds on? Can we be THE authority on ____? Or the community of ____? Or the place in your career for ____? Our diverse membership screams for mass customization and that's a tall order for any brand.

Is an MPI membership a defining experience in a professional portfolio?

What does MPI uniquely give members? Where is the future of MPI's growth coming from? Demographically? Functionally? Geographically?

What is MPI? Is it an intersection of buyers and sellers? A gathering place for those who love the meetings industry? Is it a clear voice shaping, defining and celebrating the value of meetings? Is it a model of the diverse career paths available given the breath and reach of its member base? Is it a wellspring of intellectual capital? The standard for excellence in meeting execution? Is it a vibrant heart that pumps encouragement, support and aid to those in need?

Are we all of these things? Are we aspiring to be all of these things? Can we be all of those things? Do we need to be all of those things?

At our core…who are we? A diverse patchwork that when separated can appear to be nothing more than isolated chapters. But when united or aligned around a common cause/purpose/pursuit, we are THE global ____! (WHAT?)

What is our purpose? Our cause? What's the "so what" of MPI (and I believe it's more than just our size/scale/reach)?

Not sure these musings/questions are helpful, but I wanted you to know your article certainly struck a cord in this MPI member. Thanks for leading.

KEVIN OLSEN
MPI NEW JERSEY CHAPTER

WHAT'S YOUR MPI VISION?

Kevin brings up many important questions. How *can* MPI evolve to stay relevant? What does MPI mean to *you*?

Start a conversation with MPI:

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REMEMBERING COREY BIZZELL

Corey Bizzell (MPI Carolinas Chapter) passed away suddenly on February 22. Bizzell, a 13-year veteran of the Durham CVB who most recently served as vice president of sales and business development, was featured on the cover of the December 2013 issue of *The Meeting Professional* and shared his essential skills for CVB professionals with our readers.

"A loss like this is just devastating," says Shelly Green, president and CEO of the Durham CVB. "Corey had many friends here and throughout the country. We are all taking this hard."

The CVB is establishing a scholarship in Bizzell's name for students pursuing careers in hospitality.

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The Peabody Hotel

TEXAS
At&T Executive Education and Conference Center
Hotel Valencia Riverwalk
InterContinental Dallas
La Cantera Hill Country Resort
Omni Dallas Hotel
The Adolphus
The Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa

UTAH
Little America Hotel
Montage Deer Valley
The Grand America Hotel

VERMONT
Stowe Mountain Lodge

VIRGINIA
Colonial Williamsburg Hotels
Lansdowne Resort
Salamander Resort & Spa

WASHINGTON
Motif Seattle
Pan Pacific Hotel Seattle

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Loews Madison Hotel
Mandarin Oriental, Washington DC
Omni Shoreham Hotel
The Washington Court Hotel
Willard InterContinental

WEST VIRGINIA
The Greenbrier

WISCONSIN
The American Club Resort

DESTINATIONS OUTSIDE THE USA

ANTIGUA
Sandals Grand Anitgua Resort & Spa

BAHAMAS
Atlantis Paradise Island*
One&Only Ocean Club
Sandals Emerald Bay
Sandals Royal Bahamian

BERMUDA*
Elbow Beach Resort
Fairmont Hamilton Princess
Fairmont Southampton
Newstead Belmont Hills Golf Resort & Spa
Rosewood Tucker's Point
The Reefs Resort & Club

CANADA
Loews Hotel Vogue Montréal
Pan Pacific Vancouver

CURAÇAO
Santa Barbara Beach & Golf Resort

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
Paradisus Palma Real Resort
Paradisus Punta Cana Resort

GRENADA
Sandals LaSource Grenada Resort & Spa

JAMAICA
Half Moon
Sandals Grand Riviera
Sandals Royal Plantation
Sandals Whitehouse European Village & Spa

MEXICO
LIVE Aqua
Fiesta Americana Grand Coral Beach
Fiesta Americana Grand Los Cabos
Paradisus Playa del Carmen La Esmeralda
Paradisus Playa del Carmen La Perla

PANAMA
InterContinental Playa Bonita Resort & Spa

ST. LUCIA
Sandals Grand St. Lucian

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YOUR COMMUNITY **28** | HAVE A MOMENT **30**

DATA SPECIFIC

So, what do you do with all the business data you've collected? You give it purpose and direction in the form of a data scientist. **PAGE 24**

WHAT'S TRENDING IN TRADE SHOWS?

These days, it's all about technology—but face-to-face human interaction still rules. **By Rowland Stiteler**

Technology is changing the trade show experience, just as it has almost every other aspect of how business is done on this planet.

Some of the ways in which technology plays a role in trade show business these days have critics who make good points, but the fact that technology continues to make trade shows a bit more effective year in and year out is a view shared almost universally.

Carina Bauer (MPI United Kingdom and Ireland Chapter), CEO of IMEX Group, which has been conducting highly successful and constantly growing trade shows in Frankfurt, Germany, since 2003, and in Las Vegas since 2011, says the core of the IMEX shows is human interaction—the appointment-driven, hosted-buyer format—which has been made increasingly more efficient year after year by the evolution of software used to schedule appointments.

"Hosted buyer is the core of what we do, and it is very much a face-to-face experience," she says. "But it is made much more efficient by the software we use today and it would be very difficult to operate in the way we do today without the evolution of the software."

The nutshell of hosted buyer is that it is designed to ensure everyone's time is spent in a very efficient manner through appointments that couple buyers with exhibitors who offer precisely what the buyers are seeking in the way of goods and services.

"The software we use today offers lots of information that both the buyers and sellers can see about each other before they make appointments with each other," Bauer says. "The time of both the buyers and exhibitors is very important to them, so the more information we can provide each of them before the trade show, the better off they are."

Bauer says the most recent evolution of the IMEX software allows buyers to attach "mini RFPs" to their appointment requests so exhibitors can research the specifics of what the buyers are looking for before the two parties ever meet in person

DAVID PAUL MORRIS

at the trade show. Once appointments are made, buyers and exhibitors can communicate with each other one-on-one via the IMEX software well before the show begins.

Experienced trade show professionals like Garfield Brown (MPI Toronto Chapter), senior manager of events for Canadian telcom giant Allstream, are exhibitors at some trade shows and buyers at others.

"As a buyer, I really appreciate the hosted-buyer format," he says. "With targeted appointments that meet my specific needs, I can now see as many as 10 suppliers in the amount of time it might take me to find one good match for my needs by walking around the trade show floor looking at booths."

Brown says as an exhibitor and producer of trade show components for Allstream, he finds that buyers who are walking the trade show floor physically looking for products that are a match for them seem to be getting smaller in number and so the floors appear to be getting less busy.

That observation is in keeping with what some professional trade show analysts are predicting going forward in 2015. Most industry studies predict moderate growth in spending on trade shows as a marketing method in the coming year, but larger growth in digital media as a marketing method.

"Let's face it, trade shows and digital media are both marketing tools for the corporate world," says Candy Adams, CTSM, CME, CEM, CMP, CMM, owner of **Boothmom.com** and a trade show industry strategist for more than 20 years. "Right now, the studies I am reading show that corporate marketing departments are ranking digital marketing as No. 1 and trade shows as No. 2 in the pecking order.

"Trade shows are, of course, not going away," she says. "Face-to-face interaction is never going to be replaced. But the perception is out there in the corporate world that digital media is more effective, and your value is never going to be greater than your stakeholders' perception of your value."

San Diego-based Adams, who has been running what she calls a "rookie course" for trade show exhibitors for 18 years, predicts that 2015 will be a year in which all marketing spend will be under closer scrutiny from those who control the budgets. And she disputes the validity of the ways in which the value of social media is often measured against the value of face-to-face interaction.

"You are not only talking about apples vs. oranges, you should also throw in pears, bananas, grapefruits and peaches, because there are so many things being measured that don't relate to each other," she says.

"Face-to-face interaction is never going to be replaced. But the perception in the corporate world is that digital media is more effective, and your value is never going to be greater than stakeholders' perception of your value."

Adams cites a recent trade show at which someone tweeted that her booth was serving coffee. The staff at the booth scanned the badges of everyone who was served coffee—a group that grew exponentially after the tweet. The stakeholder was happy with the amount of data—names and contact information—that was gathered.

"But my question is this: Do we really have hundreds of leads, or just information about a lot of people who wanted a free cup of coffee?" she says.

Adams, who writes a column for *Exhibitor* magazine and has been a trade show exhibitor herself since 1991, says that despite the many trends that have occurred in the trade show industry in the past couple of decades, most of the principles she teaches in training new trade show exhibitors have not changed.

"I would say 80 percent or more of what I am teaching is unchanged in the 18 years I have been teaching the course, because the fundaments of the industry have not changed," she says.

Among those key fundamentals are to know what type of information your stakeholders want you to capture and know how to capture it correctly, and also to staff your booth with people knowledgeable about the product being marketed while also being skilled at human interaction.

"That speaks to the face-to-face part of the equation that will always be important," she says. "You must have people in your booth who know what they are doing and who are good at interacting with people. That's not going to change."

MEGAN HIGGINS, CMP

MPI NORTHEASTERN NEW YORK CHAPTER

During college I began volunteering for charity events and simultaneously launched a small wedding consulting business. I continued to work in non-profit development raising proceeds through golf tournaments, black-tie galas, auctions and destination marathons. I continued to dabble in wedding planning mainly for friends but when I relocated to the East Coast with my husband I saw greater sustained value in organizing business events or meetings rather than social occasions.

In 2010 I worked for a contractor for the U.S. Department of State. We were fortunate to be asked to expand our work scope to include housing management for security teams in Vancouver during the 2010 Winter Olympics. I found my time spent in Vancouver to be some of the most memorable, in part because of its physical beauty. The Sea to Sky Highway is breathtaking. Investigating this multicultural gem I fell in love with their fresh, local foods and appreciation for nature in all their architecture. Despite the personal sacrifice of living in an unfamiliar city for three months, it was one of the best life and career lessons in how large, global events are organized. My very small piece of the very large event that is the Olympics included managing 17 hotels accommodating more than 700 U.S. security personnel, as well as a last-minute visit by U.S. Vice President Joe Biden!

I am looking at earning more advanced certifications such as the CMP-HC, CMM or HMCC to assist me in pursuing the medical and pharmaceutical sector of the meeting industry. Recently I've been supporting pharmaceutical meetings with logistics and financial transparency. Regardless of all the regulations changing the landscape of medical meetings today, this is an exciting time to be an expert on healthcare compliance. It's a far cry from buttons and boutonnieres but it's one I find challenging and interesting right now.

My celebrities of choice are the creative professionals who make amazing events real. They transform empty beaches, sparse warehouses and make dreams come true. I am in awe at how the hospitality industry continues to innovate and inspire us all with their imagination and passion for events and experiences. I realized this early on in my career while assisting with a Hollywood wedding after striking up a conversation at the Beverly Hills Hotel with the photographer and videographer who were scheduled to shoot the upcoming (circa 2001) Jennifer Lopez wedding.

My most impactful literary inspiration so far has been the author Paulo Coelho. His novel *The Alchemist* came to me soon after college when I was finally reading for pleasure again rather than textbooks. In the book, the main character Santiago is an average shepherd who is on a journey to find his Personal Legend, but what starts out as a treasure quest turns into a discovery of the values found within. This fiction, Coelho's most famous work so far, inspired me to take more risks in life and to go after my dreams. Even when jobs in more lucrative or less stressful environments were suggested for me, I stayed true to my passion for the hospitality industry and to myself.

Attending an informational session as our MPI chapter was forming, I saw that this was an organization that could propel my career. It offered opportunity for mentors and professional development. At the time, I was working in an association where my role was to singularly manage and execute all aspects of a conference but I felt grossly under trained for the responsibility of business outcomes. Now more than 10 years later I have a career path that includes advanced certifications and hopefully a seat at the table.

I enjoy trying new technologies each year. Mobile technology has quickly advanced our professional over the last 15 years—from iPads for onsite registration and RFID badges to, hopefully soon, augmented-reality headwear like Google Glass on the trade show floor.

Megan Higgins, CMP, *is an independent meeting professional and vice president of communications for the MPI Northeastern New York Chapter. She has been an MPI member since 2004.*

Photo by Stock Studios Photography

MAKE WAY FOR THE DATA SCIENTIST (SHE'S REALLY IMPORTANT)

BY ROB COTTER

American scientist and author Isaac Asimov wrote, "Science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom." This is probably truer of today's digital world with its burgeoning stock of information than ever before. Databases bulging to bursting point continually challenge us as to how we can become wiser about utilizing the vast quantum of data being amassed.

A project primed to get under way in London, England, is taking up this challenge head on. Three cultural institutions—the Barbican, the National Theatre and the English National Opera—are to partner on Arts Data Impact, a unique initiative delivered by consultancy group The Audience Agency working with technology partner Magic Lantern that will be providing a world-first "data scientist in residence" to better understand and be able to engage the data they store. (In February, the first two of these data scientists were announced, each to do a six-month stint in residence.)

"Arts organizations have more and more data in front of them and whether it's marketing, social media or Web data there are difficult problems of 'how do you understand it?' and 'how do you get anybody to do anything about it?' at the senior management or the board level," says Anthony Lilley, CEO of Magic Lantern, co-developer of the initiative. "The data scientist in residence concept came from the position where once we have all this data, we need to think about what questions we then ask. Do we ask all the same ones we used to, or do we need to go about asking questions in different ways and, if so, do these organizations have the skills or the perspective to do that?"

Helping to hone these skills, the data scientists will spend up to a year across all three of the project partners to understand and become attuned to how they operate as an entity and then apply his or her specific data analysis prowess to them to start asking new questions and bringing about organizational change.

"Most of the data held is in marketing and sales, which is where a lot of the focus will fall, with overlaps into areas of large quantities of data such as digital media and social networking," Lilley says. "In better understanding this data, one would then hope that for venue operations there could be greater efficiency in the way that marketing spend is used, better customer service in the sense that you're targeting and personalizing your communications better, and in the digital area it might help affect investment decisions about how much time and effort to put into social media. Abstractly, it'll also end up being interesting but more difficult to track things like front-of-house behavior and things that play into those traditional areas of venue operations, which can take you into bar and hospitality operations."

Alongside this broad landscape of change that could arise from the data excavation, partner facilities also believe that in making better sense of their existing data the data scientist can help them expedite and deliver on current organizational aims and begin to chart out future working practices.

"For us, understanding audiences through our data is a big, ongoing project and we're trying to build up a fuller picture of it," says Claire Round, director of marketing and brand at the English National Opera. "At the moment, we work across about eight datasets—box office records alongside an email database, social media channels, and other routes where we talk to the consumer—and pulling these all together in a way that links and that you can make a decision from will be incredibly helpful. The data scientist will know how to structure that better with a really specialized knowledge and find the way to look at it and review it so that you make good decisions as a result. That will help us put audiences more at the heart of the business and be able to understand them rather than make assumptions about them.

"As a marketing director, I also want our CRM activities to be more sophisticated," she continues. "I therefore think that from this project there is learning to be had about what kind of roles we want to have in the future and knowing what the marketing team of the future and its skills look like. The digital world is having more of an impact on the arts, so there are skills that we perhaps haven't developed as much that we will need to bring in."

While the volume of data available and strong technological framework held by the three national-scale pilot organizations have lent themselves easily to the scope of the data scientist task, the aspects of organizational change and new skill sets for future venue management it may highlight will be of relevance to any data-holding entity or arts body seeking to optimize output from its information base.

"The data scientist is unusual enough as an idea and the partner institutions will all respond differently—the idea beyond that being that we can take the learning and tell cultural organizations that aren't so big and aren't so national some of the many useful lessons about how you can think differently about data," Lilley says.

"The data scientist will know how to structure [datasets] better with a really specialized knowledge and find the way to look at it and review it so that you make good decisions as a result."

What is already clear is that the prospect of the data scientist bringing purpose and direction to a vast collection of data has already generated a positive buzz about what new wisdom might be gathered from the data stores of the participating partners.

"From evidence all over other sectors, getting better at understanding your data can actually make you quite a lot better at your job and lots of different things can become possible by being able to understand it," Lilley says. "The outcome of this project is an input into thinking by understanding what this data might tell you."

"While part of the project will be about pulling the data together, a lot of it is also around data visualization and telling stories through data as well," Round says. "What the data should be doing is inspiring you to take action and not losing time at just looking at data."

This article originally appeared online in July 2014 in *Facility Manager*, a bimonthly publication from the International Association of Venue Managers.

"How can I create valuable partnerships?"

For Kathleen Cochran and Ned Blair, it's about understanding goals, collaboration and flexibility.

PEOPLE PREFER TO DO BUSINESS with those they know and trust. That's why personal connections are such an important part of the planner/supplier relationship. But once you make that connection, how do you continue to build on that partnership and open new doors of opportunity? A planner and a supplier discuss how to cultivate and/or grow valuable professional relationships in today's meetings environment.

As a meeting planner in today's industry, what is the biggest obstacle you face as it relates to working with suppliers?

Kathleen Cochran: There are still suppliers who don't do their homework and/or are not respectful of my time, particularly when making "cold calls." Please visit our association's website. If our annual convention is in three weeks, you should assume that it's not a good time to call me. And when you do call, please ask, "Is this a good time for you?" before launching into your sales pitch. And please don't ask if I'm the person who plans meetings for our organization. You should know that before you call. I'm amazed that I still get calls like this.

As a supplier in today's industry, what is the biggest obstacle you face as it relates to working with planners?

Ned Blair: In today's market, we are all expected to do more with less, and because of this we're all leaning more on technology in order to become more efficient and effective at our jobs. In a time where we are more connected than ever via email, e-proposals and social media, I find that sometimes my greatest obstacle is simply having a conversation with the meeting planner. We are in a relationship-based industry, and I believe that people buy people. It's important that we continue to have phone conversations and, more importantly, face-to-face interaction with our planner partners whenever possible.

Why is it beneficial for a planner to have a good working relationship with suppliers?

KC: When you have a good working relationship, you and your supplier can work together as a team. If your suppliers understand your goals, objectives and needs, they can be proactive in suggesting ideas you might not have thought of. I love hearing

When you have a good working relationship, you and your supplier can work together as a team. If your suppliers understand your goals, objectives and needs, they can be proactive in suggesting ideas you might not have thought of.

suggestions for new locations, venues and even creative food and beverage ideas. And, let's face it—there's nothing like having a supplier partner in your corner when you need help to find a quick solution to a pop-up challenge.

Why is it beneficial for suppliers to have a good working relationship with planners?
NB: The key to any relationship, whether it's personal or professional, is trust and good communication. Without a good relationship, it is hard to have either. By building a strong working relationship with a planner, I feel that it allows them to have "buying confidence" when selecting a venue and/or destination. A good working relationship is ultimately a partnership, and the partnership is only as strong as the two halves.

As a planner, what elements are critical to creating a successful planner/supplier partnership?
KC: I think this is all about communication and respect. As a planner, I need to communicate my association's needs as honestly and specifically as possible, and to indicate areas where I have or don't have flexibility. Suppliers need to do the same.

As a supplier, what elements are critical to creating a successful planner/supplier partnership?
NB: The most critical elements of a successful partnership are integrity, trust, communication and collaboration. Each of these elements are equally important when it comes to building not only a successful partnership, but a sustainable one.

Kathleen Cochran, CAE, CMP (MPI Potomac Chapter), is vice president of meetings for the National Association of Health Underwriters.

Ned Blair (MPI Potomac Chapter) is senior national sales manager for Visit Charlotte.

This article originally appeared in the Potomac Chapter's Engage *magazine.*

What are the common misperceptions of your needs as a planner?
KC: Possibly it's the timeline under which association planners work. We often need a lot of information or proposals very quickly, and yet we may not be able to get back to our suppliers with decisions very quickly. In many associations, certain decisions are made by a volunteer board of directors, and there may be a considerable gap between when a supplier provides a proposal and when the board or a committee makes a final decision. Sometimes this is just out of the planner's control, and sometimes a board or a committee isn't as flexible as suppliers would like.

What are the common misperceptions of your needs as a supplier?
NB: That we just want their business and that we're not flexible. A good salesperson is not just focused on "what can you do for me," but on "what can I do for you." We have to depend on each other in order for either party to have success. Successful suppliers and meeting planners are the ones that understand the importance of building strong relationships.

If you could tell your suppliers one way in which they could help make your job easier/save you time, what would it be?
KC: Please read my RFP and provide the information I've requested. Don't submit a proposal that doesn't match our needs. Please don't prepare a 10-page proposal if I've only asked for dates and rates. If you don't have any meeting space on a day when we need meeting space, please do not submit a proposal.

If you could tell your planners one way in which they could help make your job easier/save you time, what would it be?
NB: Make sure that your RFPs have as much detail as possible and have a good open line of communication. Especially in the world of e-proposals, it's important that planners provide suppliers as much detail as possible.

How can suppliers work with you as a planner to help you save money and meet tight budgets?
KC: Know your customers. Suggest creative ideas that can help us keep our costs within budget.

What do you wish planners knew about how suppliers can help them save money and meet tight budgets?
NB: This is something that all suppliers can assist planners with; however, as a CVB representative, I wish that more planners would take advantage of the free and valuable resources we have to offer. When sourcing a meeting, CVBs can assist you with lead distribution and collection, site inspections, venue procurement and, of course, help you to find ways to save money while still accomplishing your goals.

BUILDING HER SKILLS

STEPHANIE RAPKO (MPI TORONTO CHAPTER), project manager for Myriad Marketing Inc., says an MPI Foundation scholarship helped her bolster her skills immediately prior to starting a new job. She earned an International Centre Scholarship that enabled her to attend the 2014 World Education Congress (WEC) in Minneapolis.

"I had attended WEC the previous two years as a Level 3 hosted buyer," she says. "Unfortunately, for 2014, my application for hosted buyer was turned down. As I was on a very tight budget (between jobs), I could not afford the conference pass as well as travel fees to attend WEC. I applied for the scholarship in the hope that some or all of my costs to attend would be covered."

Upon being awarded the scholarship, Rapko was able to attend WEC and network with industry peers, advance her knowledge of meetings and events through great education sessions and even discuss potential job opportunities with companies on site.

"On my way home as I was sitting in the airport waiting to board my plane, I received a phone call offering me a position that I had applied and interviewed for just prior to WEC," she says. "The skills and education I gained at WEC were immediately put to use in my new role. Being able to attend WEC and take full advantage of the education and networking opportunities helped me to be more confident in the knowledge and expertise I have of our industry and put me on the right path to start off in my new position."

Rapko says working in an industry that is always evolving and requires constant creativity is inspiring.

"Working in this industry has made me a more patient and understanding person," she says. "In our industry, things happen that are completely out of your control. There is no need to get completely stressed out; just relax and go with the flow as everything always works out in the end."

Interested in attending the 2015 World Education Congress on a scholarship? Submit your application by May 1. Visit **www.mpiweb.org/foundation/grantsandscholarships**.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Here's a look at your upcoming industry events:

IMEX IN FRANKFURT ✓

Frankfurt
www.imex-frankfurt.com

MAY 19-21

IBTM AMERICA

Chicago
www.ibtmamerica.com

JUNE 9-11

wec 2015 ✓
World Education Congress
August 1-4 • San Francisco • USA
MPI

San Francisco
www.mpiweb.org/wec2015

AUG. 1-4

✓ MPI providing education

WIN FABULOUS PRIZES WITH THE NOT-SO-SILENT *Auction*

You can bid on fabulous prize packages through the MPI Foundation's online Not-So-Silent Auction. Bidding for the next auction begins at **www.benefitbidding.com/mpif** on April 20, and concludes May 20 at IMEX in Frankfurt. Proceeds from the auction will help the Foundation achieve its mission of fueling the growth and advancement of MPI members. Here's a look at just a few of the great prize packages available.

- A three-night stay at any Caesars Entertainment-owned property in Las Vegas, as well as one round-trip limo transfer to/from the airport, two tickets to any Caesars-owned show and dinner and spa reservations for two.
- A two-night stay at Walt Disney World in Orlando (see auction listing for eligible hotels), plus four park-hopper passes.
- A VIP one-night stay for two at a four-star hotel during the 2015 Montreux (Switzerland) Jazz Festival, as well as a backstage visit.
- One night for two in the five-star Hotel Breidenbacher Hof, including two hop-on/hop-off bus tickets, dinner for two in a traditional brewery and a visit for two to the Rheinturm TV tower.

PASSION AND COMMITMENT

MEET MICHAEL WOODY

Family: Married to Ellen for 22 years; daughter Lauren, 14

Birthplace: Richmond, Va. "I am an Army brat—my father served for 22 years, so growing up I moved about every two to three years." He moved to Dallas in 1984.

Pet: Chloe, a Morkie (cross between a Yorkshire terrier and Maltese)

Hobbies: Golf, boating (sail and power), snow skiing

Favorite destination: "Working for American Airlines, we had the chance to travel extensively. With each adventure we really took the opportunity to embrace the location and the culture, and as a result fell in love with the people and the place. So the favorite destination…is truly a compilation of both treasured memories and anticipated journeys." At the top of the current wish list: Martha's Vineyard, Tofino, Salzburg and the Amalfi Coast.

Collects: Cufflinks (he owns about 50 pair)

Michael Woody can be reached at **mwoody@mpiweb.org**. *He encourages members to reach out to him.*

SPEND A FEW MINUTES with Michael Woody, MPI's new chief operations officer, and be prepared to take up the meeting and event industry mantra wholeheartedly, drawn in simply by his infectious smile and charismatic personality.

He'll also win you over with a vision steeped in key substantive elements he believes will resonate soundly with members and within the industry.

"We want to be inventive, strategic and first-to-market with programming," he says. "It is imperative that we understand what the industry and our members need. What excites me most about working for MPI is the focus on education and professional development, and the way it is delivered by our team with passion and commitment. We are dedicated to making sure the educational components we bring forward not only resonate with our members, but address what the employers in our industry find valuable.

"Additionally, we will look for new creative ways to bring members together. Having been a supplier, we were always looking for unique engagement opportunities and not just something expected or off-the-shelf. The team at MPI has been delivering distinctive experiences that benefit all parties involved and we will continue to explore and develop new programs that foster member interaction."

Woody has more than 27 years of experience in the meeting and event, hospitality and tourism industries. A graduate of the University of North Texas (where he currently serves as chair of the College of Merchandising, Hospitality Management & Tourism Board of Governors), he began his career as front desk clerk/trainer at the Hyatt Regency at DFW (Dallas-Fort Worth) Airport. He managed three restaurants before moving into roles as group/convention sales coordinator for the City of Farmers Branch (Texas) and leadership roles at American Airlines between two tours with the Grapevine (Texas) CVB, where he most recently was assistant executive director.

"I like to get people involved in how we move programs and initiatives forward. I love having the opportunity to take a deep dive with proponents and opponents alike."

"I've had many defining professional experiences over the last 27 years, from national restaurants and hotels to legacy airlines and CVBs, which have provided me a wide snapshot of our industry and an understanding of the possibilities, where we can take it from here," he says. "As for what makes me tick…being intentionally inclusionary. I like to get people involved in how we move programs and initiatives forward. I love having the opportunity to take a deep dive with proponents and opponents alike. We can capitalize on a good idea and take it to the next level, or collaborate until we find a solution."

MPI President and CEO Paul Van Deventer says Woody brings passion for MPI and our community.

"We believe Michael's strategic planning experience with repositioning American Airlines' publications and hands-on approach to promoting and differentiating the Grapevine CVB will be instrumental as we continue to grow our association," he says.

THE YEAR OF THE YANG

WHERE:
Bellagio, Las Vegas

WHEN:
January 22 - March 15, 2015

WHO:
The Bellagio's Conservatory & Botanical Gardens celebrated the Chinese New Year with a display commemorating the Year of the Yang. The display featured 22,000 flowers in hues of red and gold, an assortment of silk-lantern chandeliers and Asian vignettes that incorporated elements of Chinese design.

To secure a successful tomorrow, it's important to strengthen you today.

The MPI Foundation wants to extend a BIG THANK YOU to all our 2014 contributors—corporations, MPI chapters, and individuals. Your generosity was unprecedented and together we broke our own fundraising records.

Your contributions to the MPI Foundation Education Endowment has opened up many more opportunities for members to receive professional development through grants and scholarships in 2015. Thank you for supporting us and the industry we love!

To learn more about the MPI Foundation, go to
www.mpiweb.org/foundation

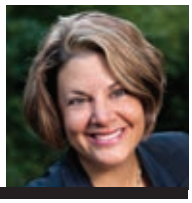
MPI
FOUNDATION

VIEWPOINTS

Steering Your Career Online 34 | Quality Control Your Destiny 36

"What was a disaster of an event was also an awakening for me professionally. **I put my foot down with my boss and said 'never again.'** I would never again be willing to be responsible for an event in which I did not have control of the planning details." PAGE 36

BY DAWN RASMUSSEN, CMP, CARW
Dawn is a professional résumé writer, the author of *Forget Job Security: Build Your Marketability* and a frequent national speaker. She was recently recognized as one of the top 100 social human resource experts on Twitter by *Huffington Post*.



STEERING YOUR CAREER ONLINE

Don't wait to build your online portfolio. Create searchable content on an ongoing basis.

A FEW YEARS AGO, HONESTLY.COM quietly launched and quickly drew the ire of the Internet and caused a firestorm. What was so scary? The site allowed people to rate their co-workers.

Yes, you read that right. You could rate your co-workers…and they could rate you. Fortunately for all of us the website folded fast, but it has left an indelible mark on the online recommendations psyche. If people are saying good things online about others, what happens when bad things are written, too? Which is why I say don't wait to build your online portfolio. You need to generate the content first, before someone else does it for you.

Reputation and career management are becoming ever more intertwined, so don't just create an online profile and call it good. Instead, create searchable, keyword-optimized content on a regular basis. It helps people find you, and by adding to it, you can boost and validate your reputation and bury the bad stuff (if there is any).

Here are some tips on dealing with the Big Three (LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook).

LinkedIn

It's like beating a dead horse, but every time I speak to a group, I ask how many people are on LinkedIn and most hands go up. But when I ask, "When was the last time you updated your profile or added content?" most hands go down.

LinkedIn is still considered the main platform where prospective clients (and employers) go to validate who you are. Therefore, it's important to keep your profile current. Here are some ways to accomplish this.

- Share an article.
- Write a post (a quick update).
- Write an article.
- Attend a conference? Put that under "Courses" to show professional development.
- Join your MPI chapter's LinkedIn group.
- Field questions or ask your own within that group.
- Update your photo.
- Recommend or endorse someone.
- Comment on someone else's post.
- Keep adding connections that matter.
- Update your work experience to include big wins that help your company.
- Consider making your summary a passive recruiting tool by changing it slightly to reflect how much you like your job and include your company's career page.
- Include links to articles you've been featured in or written, presentations you've delivered and videos or slideshows that you have developed to showcase your projects.
- Include volunteering opportunities (hint: MPI is a great source for these!).
- Update work experience if you change jobs.

"Reputation and career management are becoming ever more intertwined, so don't just create an online profile and call it good."

Don't try to do all of these at once; simply adding slowly yet consistently is how you win the race.

Twitter

Twitter is much more casual than LinkedIn, but I like to call it more responsive and nimble. The best part: the more active you are, the more you build up content about yourself, which attracts people and brings opportunities your way. Here are some tips.

- Search out Twitter chats via **http://tweetreports.com/twitter-chat-schedule/**. Conversations happen all the time on Twitter, and using the hashtag (#) as your "channel changer," you can find all kinds of conversations happening. Twitter chats in particular are like regularly scheduled "shows" that happen at a set time/date using a specific hashtag for that topic.

- Use Twitter chats as a way to participate in conversations about common ideas or topics.
- Usually, someone will be a moderator and questions get tossed out—you can provide your own response, retweet others' responses or even ask your own questions.
- Meeting and connecting with people on Twitter, and sharing ideas this way, can also create a bigger aggregate picture of who you are, what you know and how you relate to others.

Facebook

- Lock down your content to be friends only.
- Better yet, post only content that you aren't afraid of potential or current employers seeing.
- "Like" companies that you want to work for to show brand affinity.

Beyond these platforms, you might consider writing an article or content for your local MPI chapter's newsletter or website.

By contributing, your content usually gets posted (and therefore is searchable online), so you not only get some extra "Google juice" for optimized search results, but also demonstrate your subject matter expertise.

But also be aware that your conduct online can follow you everywhere…you aren't as anonymous as you would like to think. Anonymous online comments have even gotten people fired, and can become part of the aggregate snapshot of who you are…and a pattern of being professional, positive, proactive and, more importantly, helpful will go a longer way than being rude, critical or snarky.

So by being proactive, you can take control of the direction of your career by shaping how people see you and how you attract opportunity. ■

"The more active you are [on Twitter], the more you build up content about yourself, which attracts people and brings opportunities your way."

BY MARGARET H. WILLIAMS, CMP
Margaret is president of the Pizzazz Meeting & Event Planning Group, with offices in New York and Tampa, Fla. A former president of the MPI Tampa Bay Area Chapter, she has also served as an adjunct professor in the meeting and event planning certificate program at the University of South Florida and earned a master's degree in education from the State University College of New York in Buffalo.

QUALITY CONTROL YOUR DESTINY

Attention to detail and knowing where to find reliable resources are essential to producing successful events.

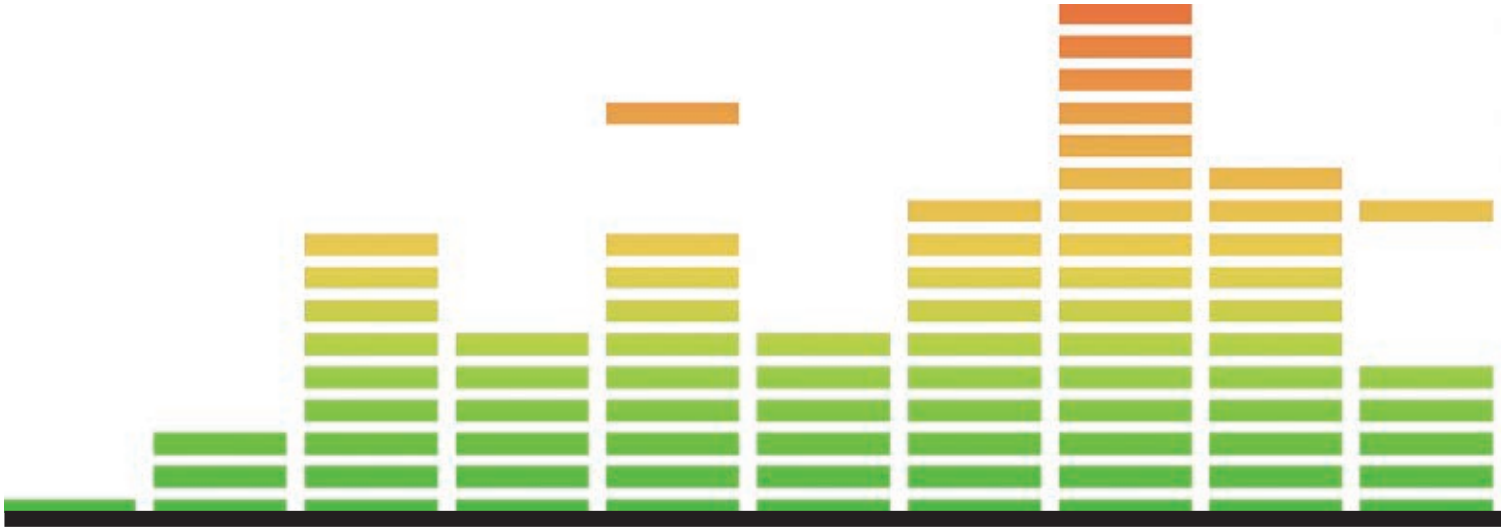
I HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE to meet a lot of talented people eager to learn how to be skilled meeting professionals in my 20-plus years as an MPI member. We share a common passion for executing successful events. Many had been functioning as meeting and event planners for their employers long before they knew this was a profession.

It's not unusual, especially if one happens to be a "detail person," to get tagged with the responsibility of planning your company's events in a fashion that requires you to figure out how to do that job as you go along. You know, "trial by error."

Although I have met hundreds of people eager to be students of our profession, I have never met a single person whose professional entry into the industry was exactly like mine. For a decade that began in the mid 1980s, I worked for major labels in the record industry—starting at CBS Records as promotions coordinator and later, after I essentially became a self-taught meeting professional, serving as director of conference and event sales for PolyGram Group Distribution.

When I started with CBS Records there was a big thrill factor to my job. I was responsible for promoting our label and our recording artists at industry events and also when our artists were out on the road. I got to meet household music names such as LL Cool J, Donna Summer, Julie Andrews, Queen Latifah, Bon Jovi, Vanessa Williams and many more. It was pretty easy to get star struck at first. Since I had no formal training as an event planner, it was also easy to be overwhelmed with the day-to-day details of planning those events.

Does this sound familiar? While my job was in the recording industry, other



planners have had similar experiences in banking, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals and retail. Since the corporate world has not always been aware of meeting planning as a profession that requires talent and training, the notion that anybody could do it persisted. In fact, the title "meeting planner" didn't exist because the planning and execution of meetings was often delegated to executive assistants, HR personnel or the head of sales who, while trying to do their day jobs, were also tasked with another full-time job. Again, trial by error.

One "memorable experience" occurred in the late 80s when my boss at CBS and I transitioned to PolyGram Records with the mission of building up what was then a fledgling label. I was given the task of planning a big sales meeting in Miami at a legendary golf resort.

Even though this was a well-respected resort, the experience was something of a nightmare for the person responsible for the event—me. This was due, in no small part, to the fact that although I was responsible for planning the event, I was not allowed to go to Miami for a site visit. That task was left up to some higher-level executives and their travel agent. They came back to New York and told me, "Don't worry; we have it handled." Just how the planning had been handled became obvious when, once on site, we found the lobby was also a construction site for a remodeling project—complete with the deafening sounds of jackhammers—and the CSM was nowhere to be found.

Since the corporate world has not always been aware of meeting planning as a profession that requires talent and training, the notion that anybody could do it persisted.

While doing everything I could to try to make the best of a bad situation, it got rough as the week unfolded and the lack of attention to detail was glaring. What was a disaster of an event was also an awakening for me professionally. I put my foot down with my boss and said "never again." I would never again be willing to be responsible for an event in which I did not have control of the planning details—including, of course, a timely and thorough site visit and a very specific contract in place well before the event date.

At that point I learned about MPI and the professional training that was available. I became active in the Greater New York Chapter and saw the value of getting my CMP. I learned all about the wonderful world of hotel contracts that protect meeting planners and their companies, how to plan healthy meals and the value of great suppliers. I learned the same principles for planning an event for 200 people apply to planning an event for 2,000 or more—which my company, Pizzazz Meeting & Event Planning Group, has been doing for the past 15 years.

My relocation to Tampa in 2006 occurred after visiting both the city and the MPI Tampa Bay Area Chapter, and concluding this place in the sun would be the perfect home. For years, my passion has been the education offered to our members, and I encourage my peers to take advantage of the training offered by MPI both at the chapter and international level.

For those of you reading this who might be at the beginning of your careers, your timing is perfect. There are plenty of great opportunities out there now, especially through MPI, to get solid classroom education, hands-on-learning experiences and mentoring through seasoned professionals at a time when our industry continues to grow. If your heart is in this work, all of the tools are there for you to deliver your own successful events. ■

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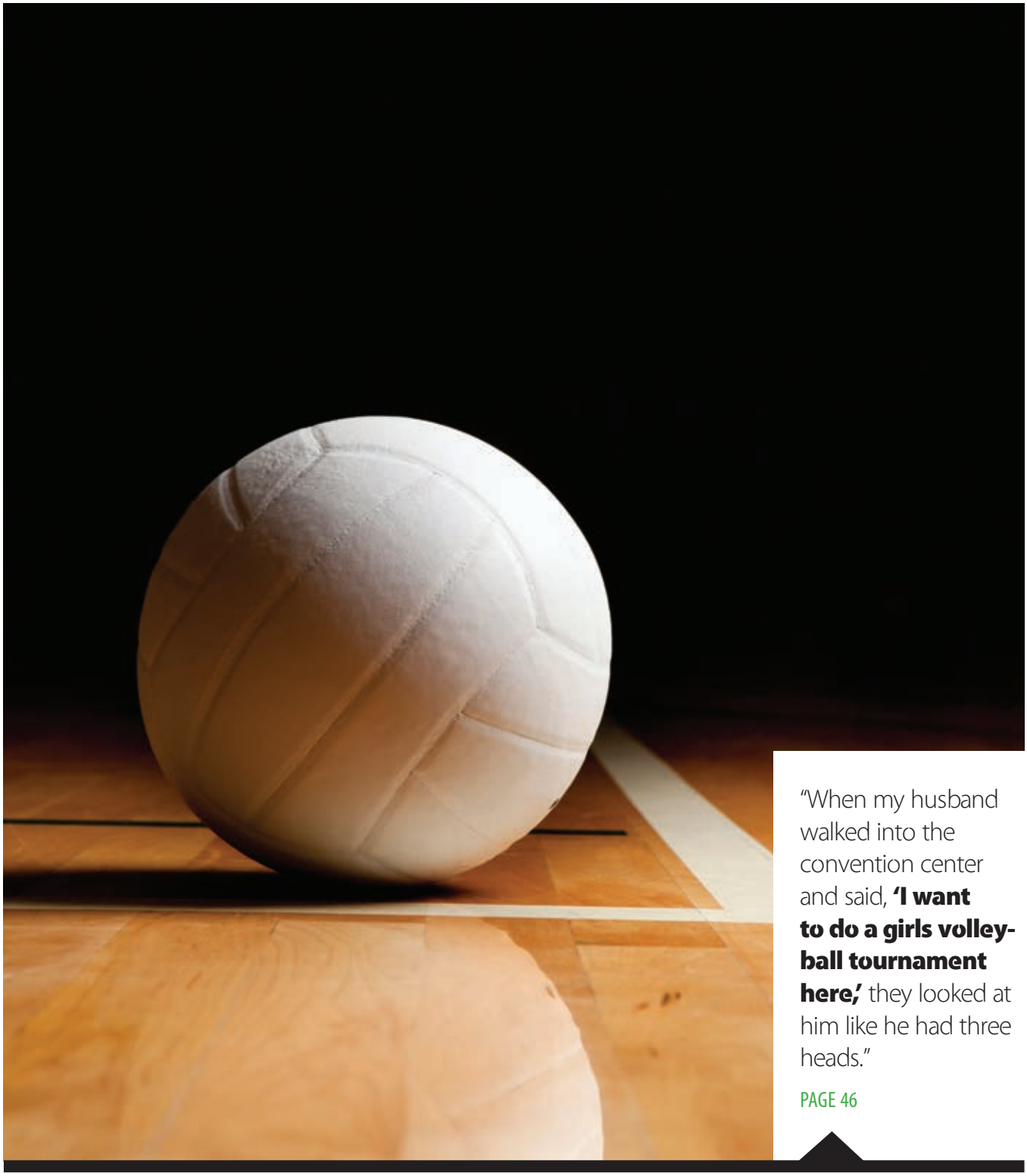
SHOWCASE

Success Through Consistency 42 | Girls Volleyball Fuels Convention Center Growth 46



"When my husband walked into the convention center and said, **'I want to do a girls volleyball tournament here,'** they looked at him like he had three heads."

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If It Ain't Broke ...

Some meetings must be reinvented year after year, whereas a nuclear waste symposia and conference in Phoenix has found success through consistency.

BY MITRA SORRELLS

The saying "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" could be used to describe the philosophy behind the WM Symposia and its annual conference on radioactive waste management. Unlike many professional events that try to continually reinvent themselves year after year—new locations, new speakers, new entertainment, etc.—this conference's success is grounded in its sameness and stability.

The WM Symposia began in 1973 in Tucson, Ariz., and stayed there every year until 2008, when it moved to Phoenix (where it is now contracted through 2020). Organizers say that consistency in location and quality of content has helped the event become the largest international gathering on the topic of nuclear waste management and a must-attend conference for those in the industry, attracting more than 1,900 people in 2014.

"Our audience is largely comprised of engineers," says Jim Voss, executive managing director of WM Symposia. "Engineers don't like change. It's somehow built into our DNA."

The consistency of the event is also a reflection of the longevity of its organizers. Voss began as a student assistant in 1973, joined the board of directors in 1999 and became managing director in 2003. Gary Benda, deputy managing director of WM Symposia and chair of the program advisory committee, first attended the conference in 1979 and has been involved in the planning ever since. Board member Larry Camper has attended every session of the event since 2000. Most of the other board and executive committee members also have a long history with the event, as do many of the more than 600 volunteers who plan and facilitate onsite activities.

"It's very stable," Camper says. "The continuity is incredible because we all know what has to be done to make this thing work."

The original Tucson event was under the

leadership of the nuclear engineering faculty at the University of Arizona, located in that city. Within a few years organizers decided to create a nonprofit organization to run the event. The WM Symposia is unique in that it is not a member organization or association—its sole function is to produce the annual conference, which then generates money that is used to provide scholarships to students in the field of nuclear energy. A few years ago the conference outgrew the convention center in Tucson, prompting organizers to seek a new location. Conveniently, nearby Phoenix had just completed a massive convention center expansion.

"Phoenix has done a tremendous job of revitalizing the downtown area," Voss says. "There's a vast infrastructure of restaurants, light rail and hotels. The other thing that makes Phoenix ideal is a headquarters-size hotel near the convention center; consequently, most attendees don't need a rental car."

"Familiarity is a nice thing. We stay at the same hotel. I know the folks at the convention center. I know exactly where our booth will be. **It's almost in a lot of ways like having it in your own back yard when you become so familiar with it."**

Mary Young, CMP (MPI Arizona Sunbelt Chapter), CEO of M.Y. Events Inc., has been assisting WM Symposia with production of the conference since 2004. She is based in Phoenix, so the event's move there has also been convenient for her.

"It's been a really positive thing because we are able to spend a lot more time on our site visits and working with our vendors and creating the support system for the conference," Young says.

In addition to the amenities the city offers, the region's climate is also a draw, particularly since the event takes place in late February or early March. Attendees come from all over, including from federal agencies such as the Department of Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, both based in Washington, D.C. Also in the mix are private contractors located around the

WHAT I LEARNED

MARY E. YOUNG, CMP
President,
M.Y. Events Inc.
MPI Arizona
Sunbelt Chapter

"We usually try to offer a tour to the Grand Canyon, because you really can't come to Arizona and not go to the Grand Canyon if you've never been. We also sometimes offer shopping tours, because so many people come from Europe and Asia and they want to shop. And we've done a couple of different hikes over the years. We have some great hiking areas in Phoenix, so 15 to 20 minutes from the convention center we can take you to some of the low-lying mountains. It's great for people to get out and see the area."

country and attendees from outside North America, who represent about a third of the crowd.

"Our customers are always pretty excited to be able to get where it's warm," says Mark Walker, vice president of marketing and media relations for EnergySolutions, a company that has been exhibiting at the conference for more than 15 years. "Familiarity is a nice thing. We stay at the same hotel. I know the folks at the convention center. I know exactly where our booth will be. It's almost in a lot of ways like having it in your own back yard when you become so familiar with it."

But the primary appeal for Walker and the other 200 exhibitors is the fact that the conference convenes all the major stakeholders in the business of nuclear energy management, from federal agencies and senior policymakers to research laboratories and companies providing support services.

"Our sales guys can meet with 10 to 15 customers in that week versus 10 to 15 separate flights to get to them," he says. "It's a central area where our customers are coming and we can accomplish a lot of work in a week's time, so it's cost-effective for us."

Exhibitors are not the only ones benefitting from the efficiencies the conference offers. As it has developed into the "must attend" event in the nuclear waste management industry, it has attracted a variety of people to Phoenix to conduct meetings unrelated to the conference itself. Young and her staff now coordinate logistics for about 25 add-on meetings each year.

"A couple of years ago everybody figured out if you wanted to talk to anybody in the Department of Energy that's in a high position, they'll be at this conference," she says. "So we started capitalizing on that and adding meeting space so they could hold meetings all day. It's also the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Department of Defense and entities from other countries that add on meetings. They are already in Phoenix, so why not use the schedule to your advantage? It's grown from just this [four-day] conference where people come, attend and leave to being just about seven full days of nuclear energy work."

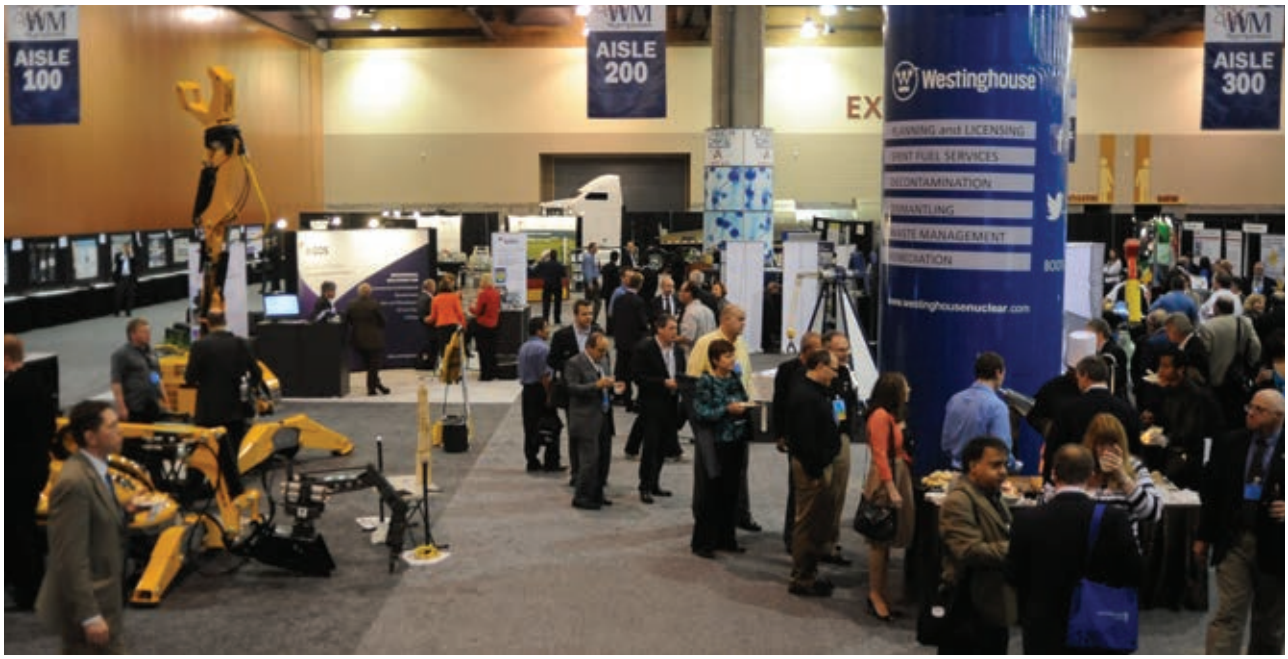
The WM Symposia program consists of four days of technical sessions. Benda coordinates a group of more than 300 volunteers who screen more than 600 abstracts for oral and poster presentations.

"The technical program is so strong," Young says. "This is the conference in this industry that you have to attend. People are continually planning to be at the conference, to participate, to write papers. It's very prestigious to present."

To highlight the international aspect of the conference, each year organizers select one or two countries to feature. Organizers focus on attracting government and corporate speakers and exhibitors from those countries. The featured countries also get recognition at a reception on Monday evening in the exhibit hall.

"We bring in about 50 teachers and they go through a one-day, **very detailed training on what radioactivity actually is and how it's managed. It's a wonderful part of our program."**

Young works with the convention center catering company, Aventura, to design a menu that includes some food and beverage selections common to those countries. In 2014, the featured countries were Sweden and Finland and the menu includ-



ed Swedish meatballs, cabbage rolls and *Laskiaispulla*, a Finnish sweet roll.

Networking is also an attendance driver. Each day ends with a reception that includes food and beverage and gives attendees time to interact in a casual atmosphere. The Wednesday night reception takes place off site and is focused on highlighting some of the culture of Arizona, which in past years has included Western-themed dinners and rodeos.

For the past two years, organizers have held the reception at the Heard Museum of Native Cultures and Art.

"It's really a nice location because it has indoor and outdoor space," Young says. "And March is the high season here, so we want to be outside as much as possible, especially for everyone visiting from colder places. We usually bring in some of the aspects of the culture. We've had a sand painter and a musical group. And we have docents take people around the museum."

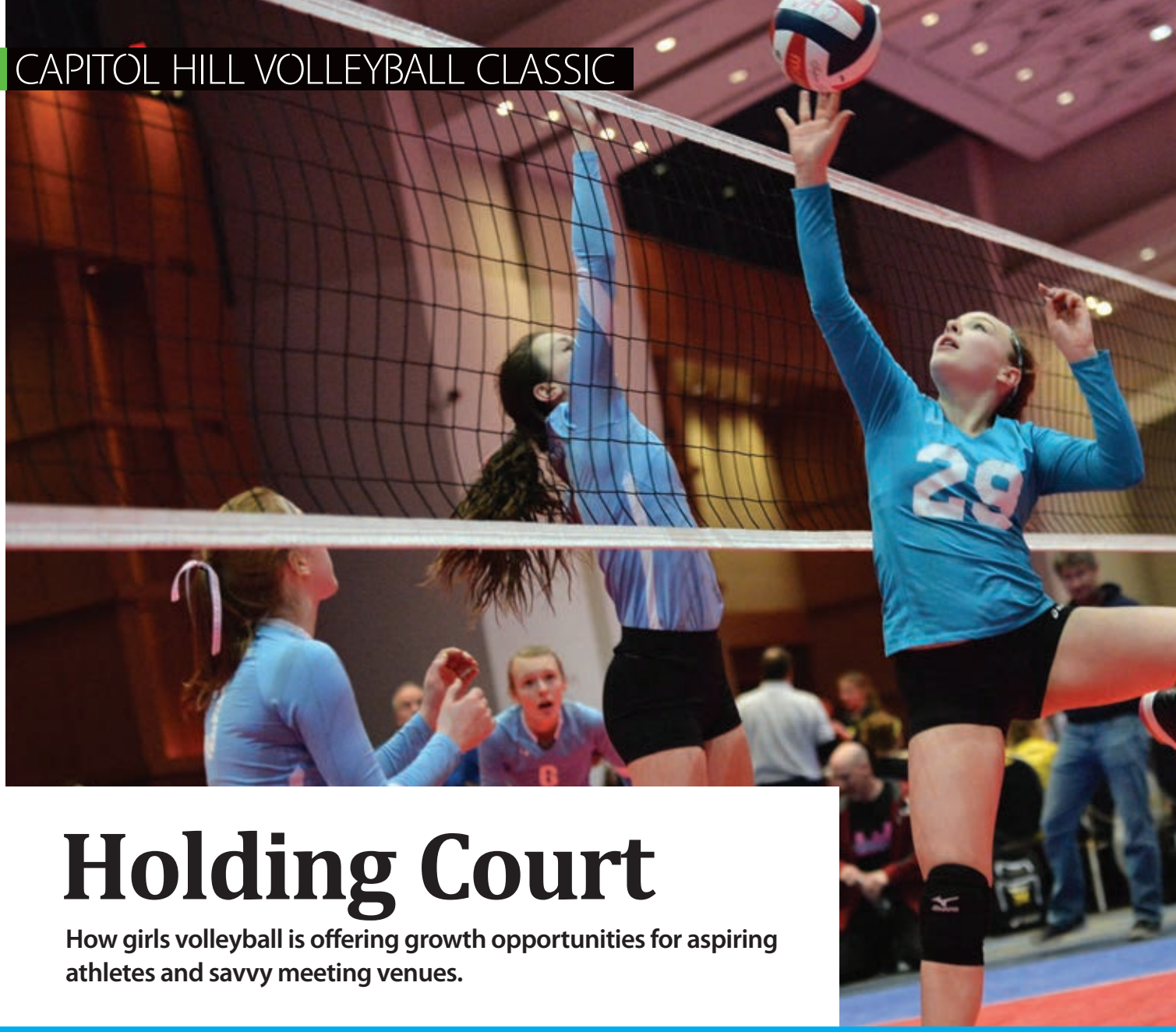
The conference also offers a few offsite excursions such as hikes, shopping tours and trips to the Grand Canyon, with about 200 participants each year. Attendees also go to Phoenix Suns basketball games and spring training games from the 15 teams in Major League Baseball's Cactus League.

Because the fundamental purpose of the WM Symposia is "to raise and disperse income for engineering scholarships and educational support for the safe management of nuclear materials," according to Voss, a highlight of the conference is the annual awards luncheon. At this event, organizers present a variety of awards to industry professionals as well as scholarships ranging from US$2,500 to $10,000 to students studying nuclear engineering. In addition to those that receive scholarships, the WM Symposia also sponsors 30 to 75 students to attend and participate as presenters.

"Many of them find internships and jobs directly from this event," Voss says. "We also bring in about 50 teachers and they go through a one-day, very detailed training on what radioactivity actually is and how it's managed. It's a wonderful part of our program."

By offering consistency—in its location, in the quality of its education program, in the prominence of attendees and in the expertise of its leadership—the WM Symposia conference has become more like a reunion than strictly a business event. Benda says that aura of reliability and comfort has become the intangible, underlying ingredient driving the success of the conference.

"In a way it's not just going to a conference, it's going to see the family again," he says.



Holding Court

How girls volleyball is offering growth opportunities for aspiring athletes and savvy meeting venues.

BY ROWLAND STITELER

The phenomenon of girls club volleyball has become so popular across the U.S. that it is filling up major convention centers such as the 2.3 million-square-foot Walter E. Washington Convention Center in the nation's capital.

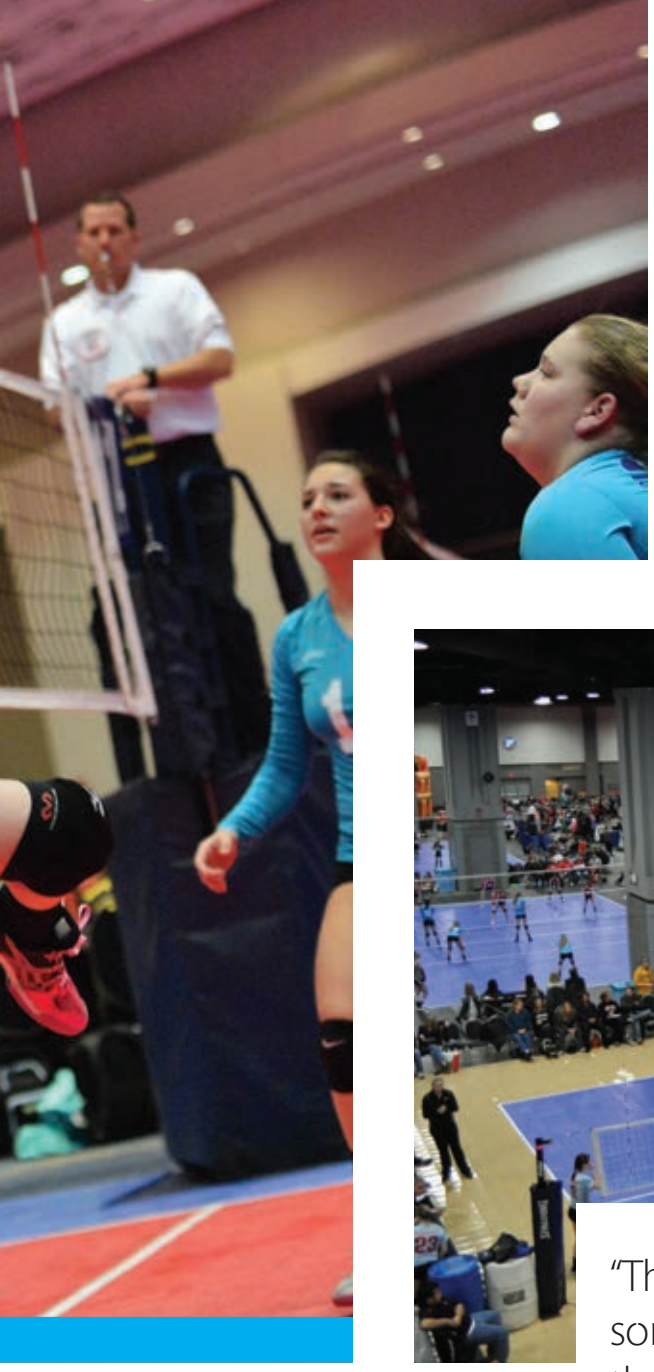
But you are not alone if you have not heard of Girls Club Volleyball. The burgeoning sport is still under the radar in many circles.

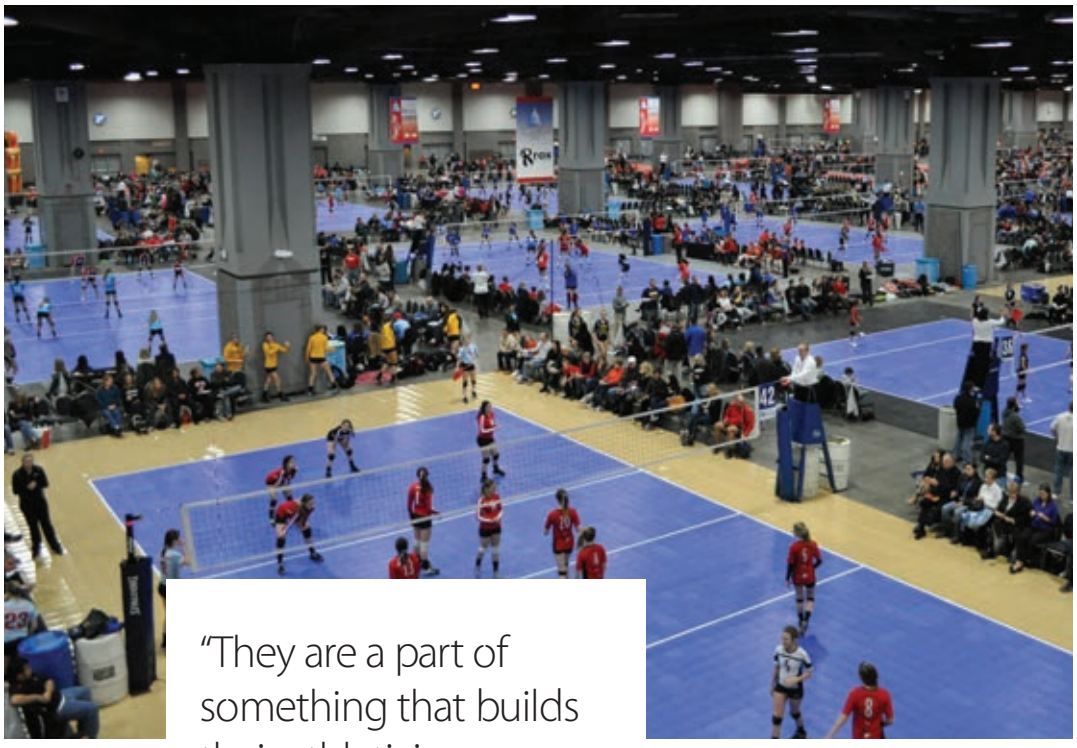
"When my husband walked into the convention center seven years ago and said, 'I want to do a girls volleyball tournament here,' they looked at him like he had three heads," says Bonnie Goldberg, tournament director of the Capitol Hill Volleyball Classic. "They simply said, 'We do not do sporting events here in the convention center.' And he said, 'Well, call down to the Atlanta convention center and talk to them a minute because they are doing it. Please ask them about the economic impact in their city.'"

(The annual ASICS Big South National Qualifier, held at Atlanta's Georgia World Congress Center, has been filling up the venue for years, with more than 1,300 teams attending last year.)

Goldberg says that by the time her husband Barry, who is tournament director of the Capitol Hill Classic and head volleyball coach at American University in Washington, D.C., got back to his office that day after meeting with the Washington Convention Center, there was a phone message from staff at the center saying, "Let's discuss this volleyball tournament idea."

That was the beginning of the Capitol Hill Classic, which shared the convention center with a boat show the first two years and has bought out the entire center every year since then. With 144 teams attending the classic the first year, it has grown to an amazing 920 teams this year, bringing 40,000 visitors to the nation's capital over President's Day weekend. (This year, the tournament set up a record 119 volleyball





courts within the building.)

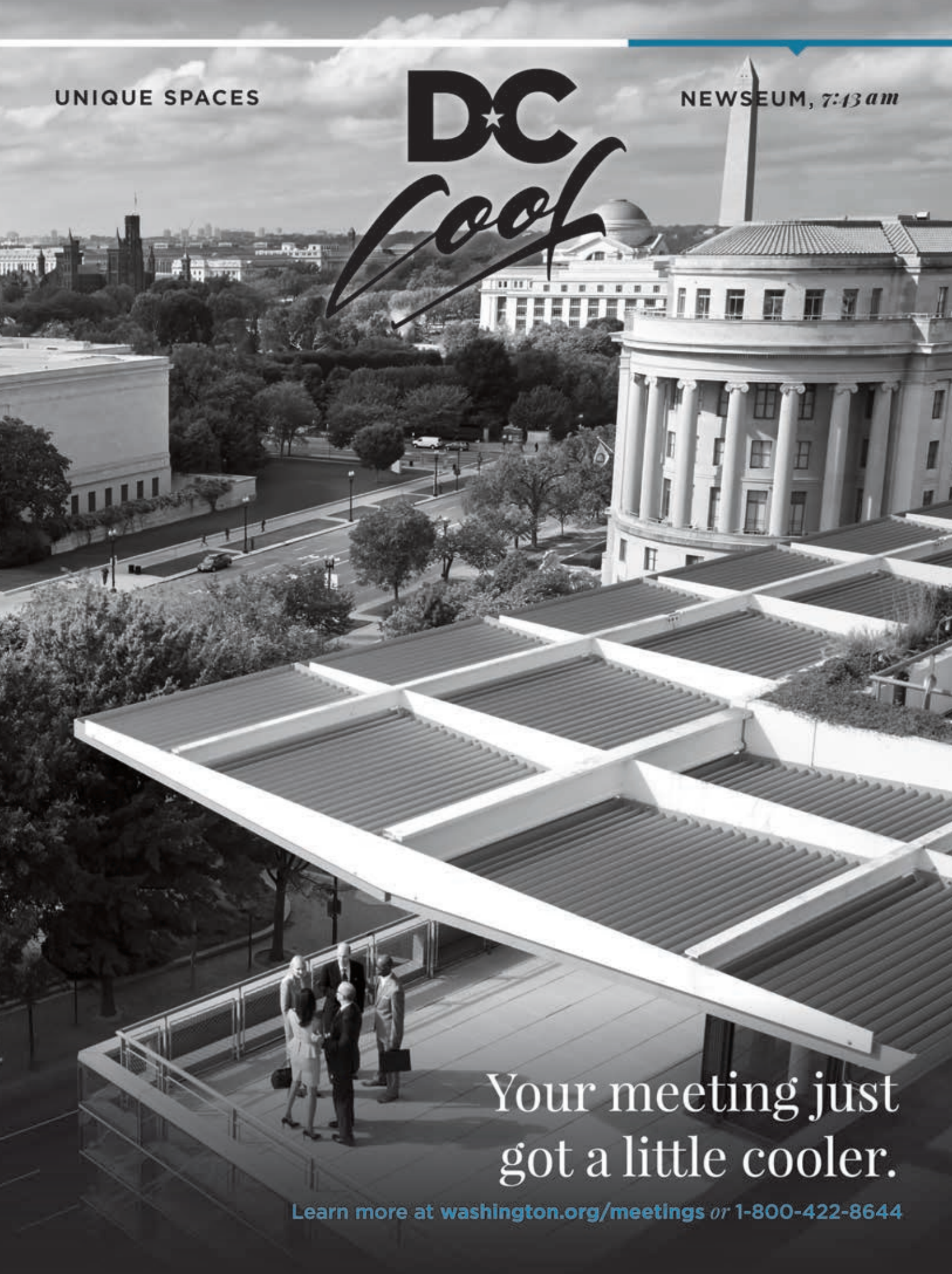
"It's optimum timing both for us and for the D.C. metro area," says Bonnie Goldberg. "We are bringing 40,000 people to the city on what is usually one of the coldest and dreariest weekends of the year. The local hospitality industry likes that because it fills up lots of hotel rooms, and as planners we like that because it is at a time when we can get really good rates. Many of those hotel rooms are being filled by families who are coming here on their own money to watch their daughters compete in the tournament. I heard the economic impact of our tournament on the local economy this year was US$20-25 million."

"They are a part of something that builds their athleticism **and often builds a network of friendships that may last a lifetime."**

Goldberg says Girls Club Volleyball, which involves girls ages 12 to 18 and is sanctioned by USA Volleyball, is a growing phenomenon due to a couple of key reasons.

First, it's a wholesome, friendship-building, athletically enriching sport for girls. Kids get together under adult supervision to learn a sport that becomes a way of life for them as they grow up. Second, a little-known fact is that for motivated girls who develop good athletic skills, it can become an avenue to landing a college scholarship.

"We had upwards of 200 college women's volleyball coaches at this year's tournament, and they were there for recruiting purposes," says Goldberg, who played volleyball in college, went on to play professionally in Europe and then came back to the U.S. to coach at the college level. "They are there to watch the girls, get information about their skills from the club team coaches and all that can result in scholarship offers—full scholarship offers to an NCAA Division I university. Clearly that is a significant,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THE LOGISTICS OF IT ALL

Large volleyball tournaments are for-profibusinesses and require management skills that become more complex based on size.

"The key these days is to have a really good software system to manage all this," says Bonnie Goldberg, tournament director of the Capitol Hill Volleyball Classic (CHVC). The CHVC uses a cutting-edge software program called Sportwrench to manage registration and scheduling of teams and officials. "When you have 920 teams that are going to play during a three-day tournament and be pared down to the divisional winners at the end of the third day, you really need to be on top of things."

A very useful part of having big tournaments with every age-level of girls involved is the learning experience for the younger girls, says Ahen Kim, a coach with the Metro American Volleyball Club.

"The typical regional tournaments are just one-day events in which a limited number of participating teams go, play and go home all in the same day," he says. "But with three-day tournaments like the CHVC, the younger girls get to watch the older, more experienced players in action."

The size of the tournament offers big opportunities for the trade show element of the event," says Jeremy Rubin, managing director of his own consulting company, Synergies21, and director of the trade show and sponsorship division of the CHVC (one of more than 10 tournaments Synergies21 supports).

"When you have 40,000 relatives and friends of the team members coming through the building in a three-day period, and also the girls themselves at the venue, this makes a great opportunity for exhibitors and vendors," he says.

Rubin says the vendors and exhibitors include those who have products to sell directly to the players and spectators, entities that simply want to market their products by handing out pamphlets and coupons and corporations that want to spread brand awareness.

potentially life-changing opportunity for a female athlete."

Goldberg says there are 351 Division I colleges and universities affiliated with the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association). And of that, 334 of those schools have women's volleyball teams that compete on an inter-collegiate level. Between Division I, II, and III there are more than 1,000 women's volleyball programs in the country.

"What many people don't realize is that volleyball is second only to basketball as a sport that offers college scholarship opportunities for young women," she says.

Under NCAA regulations, each college may offer 13 scholarships per year for women's basketball, in which the team roster is usually about 15 to 20 players. Women's volleyball teams at the collegiate level can offer 12 full scholarships.

"We only have six girls on the court at a time, so that equals an entire starting team and an entire team's worth of backup players on full scholarship," Goldberg says.

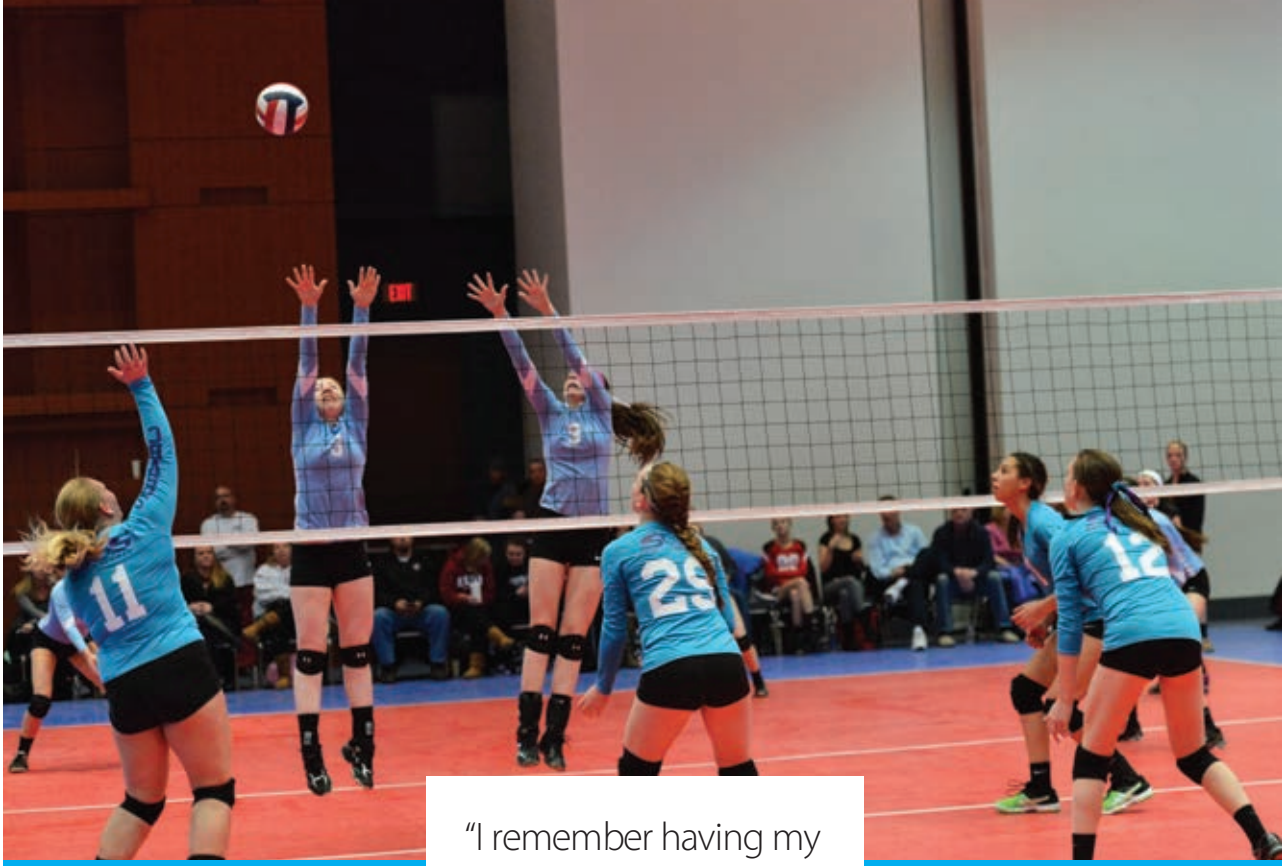
Another example of growth in women's volleyball opportunities at the college level is evident with sand volleyball teams. There are now about 40 NCAA Division I schools with sand volleyball teams (competing for the NCAA Sand Volleyball Championship and the number of colleges adding the sport is growing, Goldberg says.

An advantage of sand volleyball is that it is played in the spring, while indoor volleyball is played in the fall and winter, so a girl who participates in both can play, get training and improve her skills all year long.

Another appealing aspect of Girls Club Volleyball is that USA Volleyball, the sanctioning organization, picks players for the U.S. National Team and for Olympic volleyball competition, both winter and summer, which now includes the increasingly popular sand volleyball. It becomes a good group to associate with if one aspires to be an Olympian.

Goldberg says it is that strong range of developmental opportunities for girls that tends to make their parents highly supportive of their daughters' participation in the sport. And that parental support seems to offer huge potential for the sport's growth.

"We started the tournament two years



before the big recession hit," Goldberg says. "And I remember having my fingers crossed during the registration process for the third tournament and saying, 'If we can only have as many teams sign up as we had last year, it will be a miracle.' Sure enough, we had 100 more teams. And that has continued to happen, no matter what the economy is like. This shows me that parents will give up a few things, maybe the Starbucks coffee or something like that, but they will not stop supporting their children's opportunities."

Goldberg teamed with her husband Barry, who has been highly successful as an NCAA Division I volleyball coach at American University—taking his team to a 173-11 record in the past 13 years, winning a conference championship in 14 of his last 17 years and posting two NCAA Tournament victories in 2013 (taking American to the Sweet 16)—to start a volleyball club for girls in the Washington, D.C., area 15 years ago. The Metro American Volleyball Club now has 18 teams with girls aged 10 to 18 who live all over the Washington metropolitan area.

The reason behind that venture was obvious: love for the sport.

"We both go way back in volleyball," says Bonnie Goldberg, who not only played in college and then professionally, but has coached at Georgetown University and then American University, where she met her husband. "It offers great developmental opportunities for young people, even those who don't necessarily go on to get a college scholarship or make a career out of it."

"I remember having my fingers crossed during the registration process for the third tournament and saying, **'If we can only have as many teams sign up as we had last year, it will be a miracle.' Sure enough, we had 100 more teams."**

Ahen Kim, coach of the team called "17 Travel" (because its members are 17 years old and travel to many tournaments during the season), says that by the time the girls are old enough to participate on his team, "they embrace volleyball as a way of life." Kim's team, part of the Metro American Volleyball Club, won its division and a gold medal at the Capitol Hill Classic.

"By the time they get to the level of my team, they have typically been in club volleyball for a long time; many of them start learning the volleyball lifestyle when they are 12 years old, and two of the members of our team have already signed letters of intent to go to colleges with NCAA-level volleyball programs," he says. "But some of our team members started only two years ago. Girls start at various ages, and they not only have the possibility of college scholarships out there in front of them, they are a part of something that builds their athleticism and often builds a network of friendships that may last a lifetime."

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EFPIA and the US Medical Meetings Industry - Are you ready?

The EFPIA—the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations—Disclosure Code is a system of self-regulation that requires all member associations within 33 European countries to disclose and publish all payments and other transfers of value made to any medical, dental, pharmacy or nursing professional or practice. Requirement for disclosure started on January 1, 2015.

There is a strong ongoing worry that the implementation of the EFPIA Disclosure Codes will affect EU physicians' ability to attend medical meetings, both within the U.S. and worldwide, and the effect that this will have on the U.S. medical meetings industry. Concerns about attendance from the EU decreasing due to the new EFPIA Disclosure Codes are justified. There is evidence that several major EU pharmaceutical companies have already shifted their budgets in anticipation of the implementation of the new guidelines in 2015.

Global meetings and convention services company ABTS Convention Services (ABTS) published *EFPIA and the US Medical Meetings Industry*, a guide to understanding the new European EFPIA Disclosure Code and the effect it will have on the U.S. medical meetings industry. ABTS has over 20 years of experience in international meetings.

> ABTS has over 20 years of experience in international meetings.

The seven-page guide is freely available on ABTS' website at **www.abtscs.com** and gives readers a full understanding of the challenges to be faced by medical meetings worldwide. This guide gives the U.S. medical meetings industry a playbook to follow to help counteract falling revenue from EU and even surpass current expectations by opening new revenue sources in new markets.

"The U.S. medical industry must start to take steps to protect itself from decreasing revenues due to decreasing attendance from EU delegations to the U.S. medical associations' annual meetings," Davide Veglia, president of ABTS, said at the Healthcare Convention & Exhibitors Association Marketing Summit last month. "With a plan and a clear objective we can move forward and make our industry stronger."

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FEATURES

How will attendees react to your sessions? Will that big name leave them thinking about the topic—**or will they leave thinking about how said big name was, well, kind of dull?**

PAGE 58

Tchotchk Knickkna Schwag. Trade Sh giveaways.

Whatever you call them, the sustainability movement is increasingly impacting the promotional products market.

BY PAUL CULLUM

rade show giveaways may be the most ephemeral element in the planned-obsolescent, attention-deficited realm of disposable capitalism. Often possessing the half-life of however long it takes you to fly home from Las Vegas, they may however bring issues of environmental sustainability to the foreground.

One enterprising California company, Yiftee Express, even seeks to do away with promotional products altogether, instead allowing companies or event marketers to gift potential customers free cupcakes, lattes or cocktails through their smartphones, just as if the sales rep had followed them out of the convention center and down the block to a bar. Do we really need another branded keychain when hotels we're staying at no longer use keys?

Anne Lardner-Stone, director of public affairs for the Promotional Products Association International (PPAI), prefers the term "promotional products" to its more colloquial counterparts ("A couple of them kind of make our skin crawl," she admits), and only partly accepts this premise. Compared to radio, TV or print ads, "promotional products tend to be the longest-lasting elements in the advertising sphere," she says.

"The key is to select the right product for the right audience so that they will hang onto it—so that it will be of value to them."

You need look no further than your own desk or the confines of your office to prove her point.

Lardner-Stone confirms a growing awareness throughout the industry of environmental sustainability—manufacturing practices, ecological impact, recyclability; what she calls "the entire cradle-to-cradle life of a product," from inception to renewal. Whether it's a municipality or public company with a mandate to make a certain percentage of its purchases environmentally friendly or a good corporate citizen who chooses to wear their conscience on their sleeve, sustainability is now a permanent part of the conversation. She estimates the bulk of her time is spent working within the constructs of corporate social responsibility educating association members on how to comply with standards set forth in the U.S. Federal Trade Commission's *Green Guides*, for example—the road maps for how to responsibly label and market green—through things such as their product responsibility action group, product responsibility summit and ongoing series of webinars.

"We don't tell our members how to run their businesses or how to go to market," she says, "but we do try to provide all the tools that they need to do so successfully."

Julia Wright, founder and CEO of Wright Choice Promotions in Phoenix and a 21-year veteran of the promotional products industry, says the overarching rule in the *Green Guides* is 'Don't lie.'

"But because people aren't so good at following that one rule, they have pages and pages of rules and regulations."

She remembers vetting a manufacturer as recently as seven years ago who argued that his ceramic coffee mugs were green because they were "reusable," a claim that the rising tide of public awareness has made all but impossible.

"The promotional products industry has traditionally trailed retail," says Wright, a member of PPAI's board of directors. "It used to be by as much as a year or more, but now the world is moving much faster. The big trends in the promotional products industry right now are full-color digital printing and a lot of technology items. But since you're seeing a lot more sustainable items on the retail side of things, it makes sense that more of them are coming into our industry as well."

Rather than rising or falling like other market trends, she sees the interest in sustainability expanding concentrically, much like the ripples in a pond. Just as it no longer seems transgressive to see someone with their own canvas tote bag shopping for groceries, it is *de rigueur* for Fortune 500 companies to contain the phrase "environmental stewardship" in their mission statement, traditional manufacturers to now offer a quarter of their product line as green and clients to routinely default to greener choices when offered the option because it's now on their radar. And she is hard-pressed to name any sustainable trends she has seen fall out of fashion.

"We're getting smarter as consumers, and as an industry," Wright says. "If you're Disney, it's going all the way to the source. If you're the local municipality, typically they rely on the supply company like me… Some people have to buy green and some people want to buy green, and I welcome both."

With its newfound legitimacy, at least partially driven by federal guidelines and municipal mandates, sustainability becomes one more factor vying for corporate attention as a counterbalance to cost, or a means to reflect brand philosophy. But within the microcosm of mission-based or impact brands, those vanguard or socially progressive companies whose corporate identity and corporate philosophy seamlessly merge, sustainability awareness seems to have risen at warp speed, and to be uniquely client-driven.

Denise Taschereau is co-founder and CEO of the Vancouver-based Fairware, whose client roster reads like a who's who of progressive commerce in North America: Patagonia, AVEDA, Ben & Jerry's, Nature's Path Foods, Amnesty International.

"We position ourselves to our clients as sustainable brand strategists, and merchandise is our medium," she says.

"We kind of work in a bubble," Taschereau says. "For most of our clients, it's baked into their DNA. We work with UNICEF USA, Greenpeace; we work with universities who have huge anti-sweatshop lobbies on campus. But for us, our clients are just getting more and more sophisticated."

In that group, she includes clients who are looking to ensure a continuity of their mission and mandate through all of their channels, those for whom sustainability is one more factor in a conversation about quality, as well those driven more by risk mitigation—predominantly lifestyle brands for whom an ill-considered cost-cutting measure can squander a company's hard-won authenticity.

"These are sophisticated brands," Taschereau says. "They don't want to end

up on *60 Minutes* because of a T-shirt."

As an example, she cites the issue of supply-chain integrity, which clients have only begun to view less as a compliance issue than an opportunity in the last couple of years.

"When the Rana Plaza factory collapse happened in Bangladesh two years ago, we had clients calling us the next day, saying, 'Did we have anything in there? Do we have any merchandise coming from that factory—or from Bangladesh? What are we going to do?' And these weren't little nonprofits that called us; [at least one] was one of Canada's largest financial institutions."

"The big trends in the promotional products industry right now are digital printing and tech items. But you're seeing a lot more sustainable items on the retail side of things, so it makes sense that more of them are coming into our industry as well."

Taschereau identifies three current trends within Fairware's client base.

1) Product Safety – "We get more questions about lead and thalites and BPA, and I think it's because it's been in the news more—the cadmium in the *Shrek* glasses, where products don't meet North American safety standards."

2) Local Provenance – "Over the past 10 years [of the company's existence], there has been a bit of a resurgence in local—people wanting 'Made in USA' or 'Made in Canada,' or even made in their own community. 'Do you have anything made in Vancouver? Made in Toronto?' People are really looking more and more for that."

3) Story – "I would say the larger trend we're seeing is that marketers are recognizing merchandising as a part of strategy. I think that buyers are getting more sophisticated and looking for the story. What's the story of this product? What's the story it's helping to tell? What's the story of the supply chain, or of the material? And they're working with us to develop and source products that animate their brand story."

For a women's empowerment conference organized by a global nonprofit, Fairware suggested having the bags made by a social enterprise employing disadvantaged women, with this narrative replicated on the hangtag and in the conference brochure. For Nature's Path at the Natural Products Expo West in Anaheim, Calif., they made the media bags out of upcycled grain bags that initially held the natural grains for the company's signature organic cereal. Ideally, the promotional merchandise becomes the product narrative.

"We've taken these grain bags, we've cleaned them, we've cut them and we've made these gorgeous tote bags for the media kits," Taschereau says. "That's so rich with story. This obviously isn't everybody, but from a trend perspective, the people who are really staring to get it and think about it—the brands that we're seeing within our portfolio that are driving the change—they want to know what's the story. And they're really working with us to develop products and source products that animate their brand story. They don't just replicate a logo on a product; they really help drive brand difference in the marketplace."

Taschereau claims her company no longer hears many requests for union-made products, which they might have historically. In its place, she finds an intensified consumer awareness of the global implications of products, no matter how small or inconsequential, one that is finally translating into measurable demand.

"I think the marketplace has been there for years," she says of sustainability in general. "We're continually working with our supply chain to be motivated to catch up, to be honest. It hasn't been hard to find clients who care about this; it's been harder to find suppliers."

11 TIPS THAT WILL ENSURE YOU'RE OFFERING THE BEST SESSION STYLES TO YOUR ATTENDEES

BY JENNA SCHNUER

You've lined up the big names. You've made sure the conference room chairs provide enough comfort to keep people from squiggling but aren't so comfy that nod-offs take place. You've printed the sign asking people to mute their cell phones. You've done everything you can think to do to help make those conference sessions a hit.

But, the real questions: Will attendees return home having learned something? Will that big name leave them thinking about the topic—or leave them thinking about how said big name was, well, kind of dull? And, in this age of info via the Internet, how much of what goes on at your sessions could have been accessed by just a few keystrokes—without attendees having to board a plane to your event?

"I think in particular for longer-duration events we get more and more feedback from people [who say], 'Wow, I want to go deeper on that' or 'That was superficial,'" says Elliott Masie (MPI Greater New York Chapter), chair of the Learning CONSORTIUM. "Because there's sort of a view that they can get the superficial view pretty easily on the net somewhere."

No matter how much good stuff you have planned for your meeting, it's really the takeaway that matters.

"In the instructional world … [we] try to think about it as a process with an end result," Masie says. "So now what I think has happened, and it's good, is the meeting industry and the learning industry on some level are closer together in that setting."

Though, in the past, the term "learning style" was popular, recent research suggests that when people say, *I'm a visual learner* or *I learn best by listening*, well, it may not be that straightforward.

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"There's, right now, no scientific evidence that organizing your instruction based on learning styles…improves learning in some way," says Charles Hodges, associate professor of Instructional Technology at Georgia Southern University. "In fact, there's a lot of evidence that it just doesn't work."

Of course, that doesn't mean that people don't learn best through different formats and manners, or that certain styles aren't preferred, says Will Thalheimer, PhD, president of Work-Learning Research.

"If you tried to take learning styles into account, that [probably] was not your best learning strategy," he says.

Instead, he suggests, focus your conference sessions on "The Decisive Dozen," a list of what he deems to be the most important learning factors.

"These are things like feedback, spacing, repetitions over time, giving people practice retrieving from memory like you have to do on the job—these basic sorts of fundamentals," he says. (For the complete "Decisive Dozen," see Page 62.)

Your best bet is to offer a mix of conference sessions, including lectures, interactive and peer-to-peer, but play each to its strengths.

Masie encourages conference organizers to think about the way people watch TV nowadays.

"[We're] personalizing our own experience," he says. "And that's what we see happen at conferences now. They're aggregated communities where people can then have some fun. Picking the content that works best for them."

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MAKING THE MOST OF LECTURE SESSIONS

Encourage storytelling.

"If you're going to show me 12 ways to get my invoice approved, let me watch it on a video," Masie says. "If you want to tell me a story about why invoices often don't get approved, I want to hear that. Now I'm getting the backstory, the context and the like."

Make room.

"I'm someone who likes to move around and step out into the first few rows of the crowd," Hodges says. "If [planners provide] a funky little stage with wiggly steps and a podium, I am trapped. They can take a good presenter and box him in." Think theater—not podium.

Book opposing viewpoints on panels.

"The unfortunate thing about panels is everybody starts out to get people who disagree," Masie says. "There seems to be a narcotic in the air where they all end up modestly agreeing with each other. I often wish you could really get somebody saying, 'You despicable person, I hate when you do that.' But actually that's kind of what the learner wants. They kind of want to hear opposite, competing or even different points of view about something."

Explore failure.

Though it can be hard to get people to fess up about what didn't work, it's one of the best lessons you can provide in a presentation. "I often like to have what I call autopsy or CSI sessions," Masie says. "It's a session about something that failed. And you've got to go to get more chairs [because attendees flood the room]."

MAKING THE MOST OF INTERACTIVE SESSIONS

Offer something new.

For presenters whose speeches are already available elsewhere—think TED Talks—go interactive instead of lecture style. "Turn that session into a Q&A instead of a lecture," Hodges says. "Let the technology do what it does best—and the in-person work [shine] in top-form."

Give them time.

You can't build skills in an hour, Masie says. Instead, build an interactive track instead of single sessions. "It's intensity. It's practice because I think a lot of learning something at a skill level is where you get to try it," he adds. "I think it's where you get to go through multiple cycles of something. So I could tell you how in my estimation you could get a really good deal on buying a new car." But the audience won't absolutely "get it" just by hearing the story. "Now ideally we either together go to a car dealership or we set up an environment where there are cars or pseudo-cars and you get a chance to practice, fail, explore. I just think skill takes a little bit more time."

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Dr. Will Thalheimer's **Decisive Dozen**

BASIC ENABLERS

1. Content: Offer "content that is correct and true and relevant to their future needs."

2. Exposure: Expose learners to "relevant or targeted learning content or learning events."

CREATING ENGAGEMENT AND UNDERSTANDING

3. Guiding Attention: Focus learners on "the most critical information or contextual stimuli" to improve their learning.

4. Creating Correct Conceptions: "Structure learning so that learners can quickly build correct understandings…"

5. Repetition: When provided in an engaging manner, it helps people "understand and remember" the material.

6. Feedback: Used correctly, it helps correct "misconceptions and support correct retrieval."

7. Variation: Helps memory retrieval and engagement.

SUPPORTING REMEMBERING

8. Context Alignment: Integration of workplace and task-related cues into the learning process improves future memory retrieval.

9. Retrieval Practice: Advance practice helps future retrieval.

10. Spacing: Space out the repetition to best support memory retrieval in the future.

ENABLING FUTURE APPLICATION

11. Persuasion: Helps learners put what they've learned to work.

12. Perseverance: Enables learners "to engage with goal-directed meta-cognitive effort."

Download Thalheimer's complete "Decisive Dozen" free at http://tinyurl.com/TheDozen.

MAKING THE MOST OF PEER-TO-PEER SESSIONS

Make it real.

"This is really a subtle kind of thing," Thalheimer says, "but you want to make sure that some of the stimuli that people will face on the job are some of the same stimuli that you have in learning." He says research done on scuba divers has found that "people who learn 30 feet underwater are better able to remember 30 feet underwater than on land and vice versa. So what this means is you want to sort of do anything you can to make it more realistic. It's interactivity to support realistic practice."

Don't be fooled by the "energy in the room."

Says Thalheimer: "This energy, people are talking to each other, but are they really...are we creating the kind of learning environment that's actually going to help them understand, remember and apply?" He recommends structuring peer-to-peer sessions in such a way that it's going to be supportive of "The Decisive Dozen (see sidebar).

Let your attendees drive the sessions.

Masie started using scheduled-on-the-fly meet-ups at his conference. They "allow any individual at our event to suggest ... a conversation with other participants about a topic." He says some topics were better attended than others, but the feature was incredibly popular, with some topics suggested on the heels of lecture sessions. "After Bobby Flay spoke, somebody wanted to do a conversation about the recipe as a model for learning," he says. "[The attendee] told our meet-up crew and an hour later [the new session] was up on some digital boards. An hour after that she was meeting with a few people about that topic. It was not curriculum based [and] we made sure it couldn't be done by a vendor so it wasn't a sales pitchy thing."

Do some perception busting.

"You don't want to teach people stuff they already know," Thalheimer says. He recommends questions that many people are likely to get wrong. Then introduce the new research on it, several different perspectives and let the conversation—and debate—fly.

Skip the "trust falls."

As much as we all may have wonderful childhood memories of summer camp, Masie says, "I don't think people want to go to summer camp [at events]. I don't want to sit around and sing 'Kumbaya' with other folks. Sometimes I'm really interested in having lunch with a group of people—and we might share an awful lot of on- and off-topic conversations. But put me in that same group in a room where we're now supposed to have a meaningful pre-planned dialogue and I kind of keep playing with my iPhone to pretend I had a message so I have to leave the room." ■

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Unmanned aerial vehicles will intersect with the meeting industry in countless ways. But with proposed U.S. Federal Aviation Administration regulations, the use of drones faces a changing horizon.

GAME OF DRONES

BY MICHAEL PINCHERA

Even though they aren't everywhere, it sure looks like drones soon will be. Near-future trends in the usage of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, or more commonly, drones) at meetings and events will include attendee traffic flow (indoors and outdoors), infrastructure evaluation and security, delivery and, yes, aerial selfies. Here's a rundown on what UAV experts envision as you and your attendees start encountering drones, as well as the legal landscape of this thriving new industry as it relates to your business.

Attendee Data and Flow

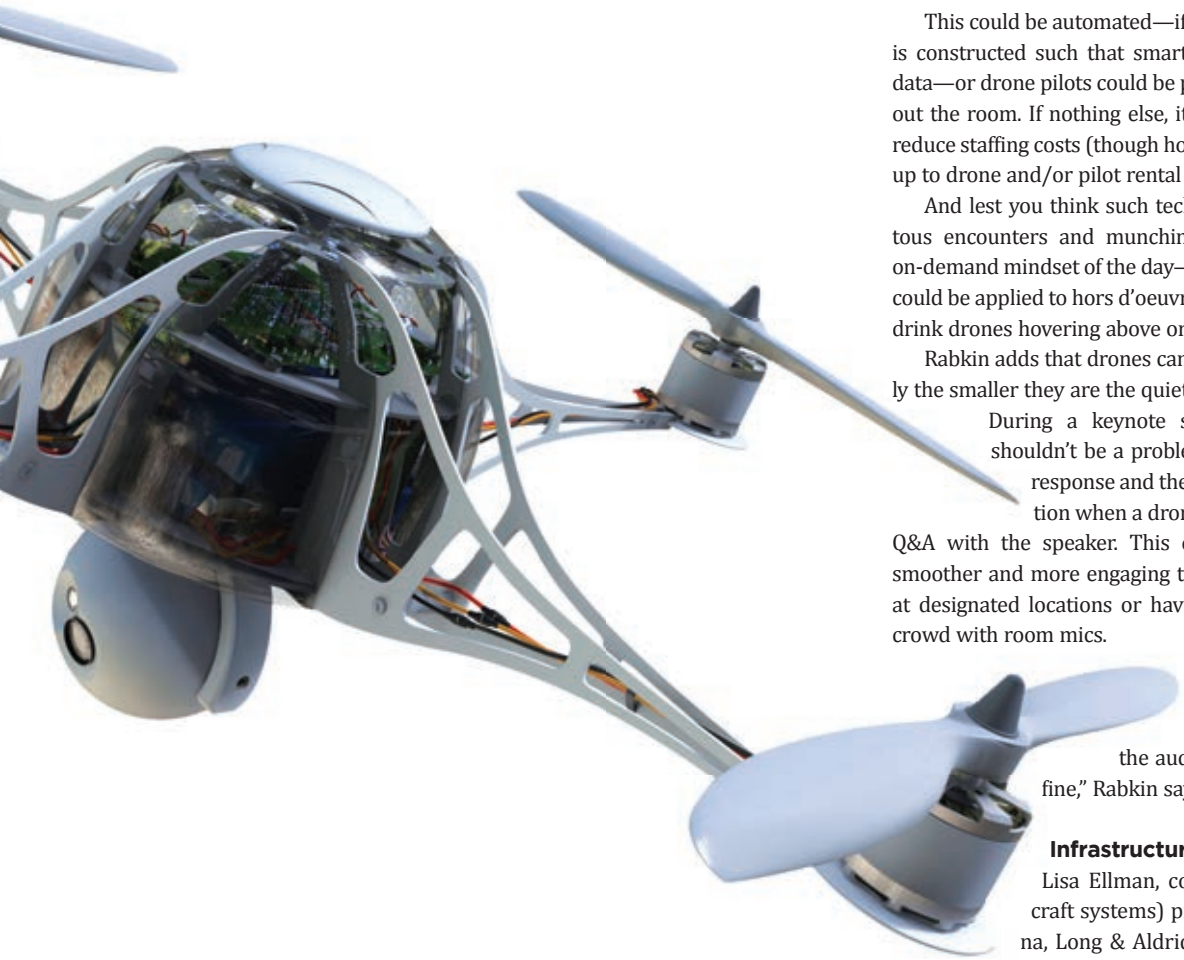
You scan badges as attendees enter session rooms. You ask them to complete post-event surveys so you can improve subsequent events. But drones can provide much deeper information. Think about aerial cameras with thermal imaging that can reveal which speakers and components are the most valuable or effective—or that can literally gauge the pulse of attendees.

"You can really know exactly which speakers, which times, which areas are bringing in the crowd," says Barry Rabkin, CMO of Identified Technologies (**www.identifiedtech.com**), a three-year-old drone-focused business. "You could potentially also measure heart rate, too. Some cameras are good enough that by just looking at someone they can actually see their pulse and heart rate, so you could actually detect when people are sort of zoned out and falling asleep, as well as when they're really getting into [the content]."

Rabkin adds that this same approach could be used to identify high-traffic bottlenecks without the need for staff to be stationed at every corner.

The other flow of your event—depending on its size—could be vehicle traffic. Seshu Kiran, founder of XAir, a terrain-mapping company he founded last year, sees drones as ideal for helping to manage parking lot flow more efficiently.

"For larger events, we see people trying to coordinate using wireless systems to know which spots are available," Kiran says. However, security-style cameras only allow certain areas to be seen clearly—that's where the drone comes in.



"You really need to have something that moves," he says. "It is really easy to command a drone to lock into position [and] navigate to certain coordinates. Obviously, you'd have advanced image-processing elements that can identify an empty spot from a used spot."

Onsite Courier

In February, Infinium Robotics announced plans to use drones as wait staff at Timbre Group restaurants in Singapore—partly as a result of governmental efforts to slow down immigration, which has led to a shortage of inexpensive laborers. Now apply this tactic to your event.

"If you're at an event, maybe sitting at a table, and you get hungry or thirsty, there's no reason you couldn't call up a drone on your smartphone; you put in your order and it would fly over to you with whatever you want," Rabkin says. "It automatically charges your card and flies away. Obviously, you'd need high ceilings and it wouldn't be somewhere super dense."

This could be automated—if the room is digitally mapped or is constructed such that smartphones can reliably share GPS data—or drone pilots could be positioned strategically throughout the room. If nothing else, it would free up floor space and reduce staffing costs (though how staff-reduction savings match up to drone and/or pilot rental fees is an important variable).

And lest you think such technology would harm serendipitous encounters and munching—focusing too much on the on-demand mindset of the day—consider that the same process could be applied to hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, with snack and drink drones hovering above or amidst your attendees.

Rabkin adds that drones can be somewhat loud, but typically the smaller they are the quieter they are.

During a keynote session, he says, drone noise shouldn't be a problem. And imagine the audience's response and the increased possibility of interaction when a drone delivers a microphone during Q&A with the speaker. This could make for an experience smoother and more engaging than asking attendees to line up at designated locations or having staff weave throughout the crowd with room mics.

"If it's a giant hall and you're only turning the microphone on when [it has been] given to the audience member, I think you'd be fine," Rabkin says.

Infrastructure and Security

Lisa Ellman, co-chair of UAS (unmanned aircraft systems) practice for the law firm McKenna, Long & Aldridge and a professional speaker on the topic, says infrastructure inspection is a super place for drones.

"I can imagine drones being very, very useful for some of these venues, before and after the event, being able to examine the stage or things that are hanging or any kind of infrastructure," she says.

It's safer than manually inspecting the entire facility, so drones might disrupt some tasks that are currently being performed by humans in that respect, says Ellman, who most recently spoke about drones and privacy at SXSW in Austin.

Identified Technologies, and many other companies, are already building out the capabilities to do such inspections.

"The goal is to be able to go over pipelines and buildings and detect early warnings of potential issues before they happen so they can be prevented," Rabkin says.

Daniel Ford, a consultant at Rook Security, envisions drones being utilized to an even greater security capacity, more in line with the original purpose for which they were developed.

"When it comes to meetings and events that are located outside, drones can be used for reconnaissance and monitoring," he says. "With the use of software like Pix4D, a 3D modeling software for drones, you can quickly create a 3D model by flying the

As of February 5, the FAA has only granted **24 exemptions** for the commercial use of drones.

66%

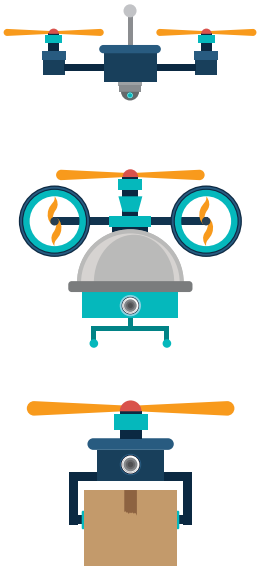
of Americans expect drones to deliver packages within the next five years.

Source: Walker Sands Future of Retail Study 2015

drone around and capturing pictures. This in turn gives you the visibility and intelligence needed to identify a possible attack vector and control it. Also during the event, a drone can be used in place of stationary cameras to monitor the whole area. A drone has no blind spots, is mobile and has little to no set-up/tear-down time. Drones can also give you the ability to follow a potential security threat from a secure location."

In this way, drone technology won't significantly disrupt current businesses; rather, it works in tandem with the standard man-on-the-ground security business model.

"It is a tool that can help existing security to monitor and track threats," he says. "It can also help reduce the use of manpower on the ground by replacing them with an agile overhead drone."



Aerial Selfies

Although reminiscent of the most controversial use of drone technology—the U.S. military's remote killing of enemy combatants, its own citizens and the associated collateral damage—event attendees could soon be able to call in a drone strike for aerial selfies using the coordinates from a smartphone's GPS. All but one source for this story identified on-demand aerial selfies as a clear and obvious use at meetings and events.

"Maybe you run into a bunch of friends or your whole team is there—you could call in an on-demand selfie drone, and you would pay 'x' to have it come by and take a fun, unique overhead shot for you," Rabkin says.

To accommodate the over-sharing generation, the image could then be automatically uploaded to the attendee's social media account of choice. And beyond asking attendees to pay for this specialized service, this represents an incredible opportunity for sponsorship while adopting sickeningly hip new jargon: "This dronie brought to you by…"

Legally Speaking

You now have a clearer idea as to what's possible with drone technology at meetings and events beyond simple aerial photography and video. But before you get too excited and book a drone circus for your next gathering, it's essential to understand current and proposed U.S. law as it relates to UAVs.

"It's legal, but it ain't 100 percent legal…they want you to [use it] in your home or certain designated places… It breaks down like this: OK, it's legal to buy it, it's legal to own it, and if you're a proprietor…it's legal to sell it." Yes, *Pulp Fiction*'s Vincent Vega might as well have been explaining the current legal landscape of drone use at meetings and events rather than the Amsterdam hash scene.

"The first thing to know is that you [currently] have to get permission from the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in order to operate drones commercially [outdoors] for any purpose," says Ellman, who joined the law firm McKenna, Long & Aldridge in 2014 after leaving the U.S. Department of Justice, where her most recent role was running the department's drone policy.

"So if [you] want to use drones, for example, for the parking flow issue, thermal imaging or taking photos, [the activity] would have to be signed off on by the FAA right now," she says.

Stephen Hartzell, a media, communications and technology attorney with the firm Brooks, Pierce, McLendon, Humphrey & Leonard in Raleigh, N.C., says that the current legal status of commercial drone use must be made absolutely clear.

"Meeting and event professionals need to keep in mind the FAA's current ban on the commercial operation of drones in the National Airspace System—use of drones by meeting professionals as part of an event (even if the drones are purchased privately from a retailer like Amazon) would constitute a commercial use," he says.

The way in which to legally incorporate outdoor commercial drone use is through a Section 333 Exemption, which, Ellman says, requires organizations to have someone on staff with a private pilot's license—a high bar for companies that have no other need for staff pilots. As of February 5, the FAA has granted such exemptions to 7 percent of all applicants.

"[Applying for a 333 Exemption] was described to me as fairly tedious and I believe it's taken literally months of back and forth, but that may be just because we're new to it," Rabkin says. "So maybe after a while, it'll be a very easy process. But right now it's been fairly burdensome. [The FAA] wants a lot of information."

Ellman describes her firm as "the biggest, most established drones practice in the country—basically a one-stop-shop for everything drone, drone policy and anything related to the use of UAS in the U.S." and has applied for plenty of 333 Exemptions for clients ranging from universities to startups and established companies. Still, she says the process is tedious.

"It's not even that they're that hard to get, it's that [the FAA is] pretty strict," she says. "What the FAA is going to look for is the use of drones in sparsely populated areas. For something like a concert or somewhere there's going to be large crowds of people, I don't know whether the FAA would [issue a 333 Exemption]."

She adds that the FAA is working with news organizations such as CNN to determine how to best engage the use of drones in newsgathering.

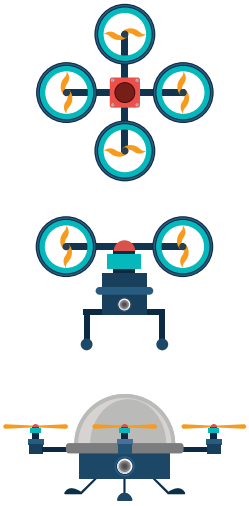
"So it's going to get there, but a key will be perhaps stating that you're going to get a blanket waiver or signed permission from all of your [attendees] that they know there are going to be drones flying overhead and they're OK with that risk," she says. "Something like that could be important [for attempting to get a 333 Exemption for group event drone use]."

It's essential to understand that despite all of this discussion about the hassles of securing approval by the FAA to use commercial drones, indoor usage of drones is not affected.

"The use of drones indoors would not run afoul of the FAA's prohibition, but caution should be exercised with any indoor use of drones, as safety, privacy and nuisance issues would all be present," Hartzell says. "Loss of control of a drone in an auditorium, arena or conference room could result in injury, and the very presence of a drone flying around indoors where people are could create experiential problems, which is to say that attendees may find the flying robot to be a nuisance and it could impact attendees' enjoyment of the event, particularly if the drone is shooting video."

"It's incredibly new technology and it's evolving every day both from a capability side and a regulatory side. And in the next five years we're going to see a lot of changes. But I think for a lot of the technology, it's just a question of when, not if."

—Barry Rabkin, CMO of Identified Technologies



Proposed Regulations

The drone landscape currently being stymied by the need for 333 Exemptions is changing, however. In February, the FAA released proposed regulations that would make commercial drone use significantly more accessible.

"The proposed FAA regulations were a very big deal for the community—and very good news," Ellman says. "There have been some folks who think the proposed rules don't go far enough, but the commercial UAS industry was by and large very pleased with [this first step]. Basically, under the proposed rules, a company would be able to get its employees certified to fly a drone for less than US$300 [each] by taking a knowledge test—a pretty low burden."

Rabkin admits that his company was nervous prior to the release of the proposed regulations.

"We definitely had our fingers crossed," he says. "[But] we use tiny drones—what [the FAA] would classify as mini or micro drones or small UAVs—so all of the proposed policies actually enable us to continue to do everything we already do. As long as what [the FAA] is proposing is what ends up happening in their final regulations, we'll be in great shape."

But that may play out differently for certain meeting professionals and certain situations.

"The proposed regulations are for small UAS, which are defined as unmanned aircraft that weigh 55 pounds or less," Hartzell says. "The rules, as proposed, would not permit small UAS to be operated above persons who are not engaged in the operation of the aircraft. If adopted, that restriction does have the potential to hinder drone use at meetings and events. For example, it would not be permissible to fly a drone over a crowd at an outdoor event for any purpose. However, the FAA has also proposed to create a 'micro' class of UAS, which would apply to drones that weigh up to 4.4 pounds. If adopted as proposed, the micro UAS rules would allow eligible unmanned aircraft to be operated above the heads of people. Use of a micro unmanned aircraft would be allowed for flying over a crowd at an outdoor event."

As is standard government operating procedure, the proposed regulations won't change the business of commercial drones for a while. First up is a lengthy public review and comment period, followed by the rulemaking process, all of which Ellman expects will take at least two years.

"So we're looking at 2017 before we have a final rule in place," she says.

So until then, being granted a 333 Exemption will remain, in its own mildly Kafkaesque way, the only manner by which to legally operate commercial drones outdoors.

"I think most of what we see [in the proposed regulations] will become the final rule, but it'll definitely be tinkered with and it could become more permissive or it could become stricter," Ellman says. "We'll see how things go over the next two years. But the good news is that this is a great first step in terms of opening the national air space to drones in a safe way that builds the public trust and allows this exciting industry to move forward."

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Vice President of Conventions
Huntsville/Madison County

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VisitNorfolk has an award-winning staff ready to ensure that your meeting is the best it can be. Through a comprehensive online Convention Services Directory, VisitNorfolk can assist with conference registration, housing, event planning, photographers, caterers, requests to the mayor's office and other local dignitaries and much more. VisitNorfolk also provides meeting planner guides and promotional materials for groups as well as assistance with coordinating press releases and local media coverage.

DINING

Norfolk's Granby Street, also known as "restaurant row," and the historic Ghent neighborhood are teeming with talented chefs and ambitious restaurateurs. A unique epicurean experience for a mid-Atlantic city, Norfolk offers a diverse gastronomic experience, from a repertoire of vegan fare to a highly lauded seafood selection to culinary offerings from around the world. Gaining popularity are Norfolk's culinary and pub tours! Attracting groups of various sizes, the tours are a perfect way to taste the city's gastronomic highlights and mingle with fellow food lovers.

ACTIVITIES

It's hard to find another city that offers both the excitement of a downtown and water and outdoor activities. You can learn to sail at Nauticus' sailing school, take a tour of the Elizabeth River harbor aboard the *Tall Ship American Rover* or tour the naval base aboard the *Victory Rover*.

No visit to Norfolk would be complete without a visit to the famed Chrysler Museum of Art. This world-class museum contains an envied collection of contemporary art, photography, Tiffany glass and historic works of art. Norfolk has gained notoriety as one of the major players in the worldwide glass-making industry with the opening of the Chrysler Museum Glass Studio, where you'll see public glassblowing demonstrations and be able to sign up for classes.

History enthusiasts can tour the Douglas MacArthur Memorial, the final resting place for General Douglas MacArthur and his wife, and Naval Station Norfolk, the world's largest naval base. Norfolk is also home to Battleship *Wisconsin*, one of the largest battleships in the world, which is docked in the city's picturesque harbor and has served in both WWII and the Gulf War. To take advantage of Norfolk's beautiful weather, plan excursions to the popular Norfolk Botanical Garden. Multiple outdoor activities are offered throughout the historic gardens, such as hiking the nature trails or embarking on a sunset kayak tour on Lake Whitehurst.

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Traveling throughout Norfolk has never been easier with Virginia's first light rail system, The Tide. Visitors can now easily maneuver the city sans car and experience some of the area's greatest attractions including the baseball stadium Harbor Park, Nauticus, the Chrysler Museum of Art, MacArthur Mall, restaurants, retail shops and much more. Getting here has never been easier with Amtrak service to the city and an international airport.

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Small groups, large groups and every size in between are warmly welcomed at Ocean Reef Club. Meeting planners and guests may select from one of 300 splendid accommodations, including ocean-view rooms and suites, spacious villas and beautiful homes, many with private pools. Blending contemporary comfort with advanced capabilities, Ocean Reef now offers 30,000 square feet of meeting space, including a 7,500-square-foot ballroom perfectly suited for a sumptuous welcome or inspiring send-off. Overall, there are an eclectic variety of meeting spaces, indoors and out, including Buccaneer Island, featuring its own saltwater lagoon, sandy beach, pools and Jacuzzi. It's the perfect setting for cocktail receptions, dinners, theme parties and unique team-building events.

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- **Grow Attendance:** Groups want to come to the Myrtle Beach area because their attendees want to come here! With proven success in growing group attendance, the Myrtle Beach area is also known for its 60 miles of beautiful beaches, gracious Southern hospitality, ocean breezes and a sunny and mild year-round climate. Watch your group attendance numbers climb to new heights in Myrtle Beach!
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Let's face it. With all the productivity that comes with meetings, downtime for conference attendees is a must. After your sessions are over, check out the nation's largest open-air butterfly house at Huntsville Botanical Garden or take in those breathtaking valley views for yourself at Huntsville's first museum, Burritt on the Mountain, which sits atop Monte Sano Mountain.

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IN SUMMARY

SUSTAINABILITY

"Tchotchkes. Knickknacks. Schwag. Trade-Show Giveaways."

By Paul Cullum
Reading Time: 6 min.

Learn about how the sustainability movement has and continues to impact the business of branded giveaways. Due to government mandates, corporate citizenship initiatives or client demand, the desire for and breadth of sustainable promotional products is growing.

"I think the marketplace has been there for years," says Denise Taschereau, co-founder and CEO of Vancouver-based Fairware, regarding sustainability in general. "We're continually working with and trying to motivate our supply chain to catch up, to be honest. It hasn't been hard to find clients who care about this; it's been harder to find suppliers."

In closing, Taschereau explains the top three trends in the promotional products market that she's seeing within her prestigious client base: product safety, local provenance and story.

MEETING DESIGN

"11 Tips That Will Ensure You're Offering the Best Session Styles to Your Attendees"

By Jenna Schnuer
Reading Time: 7 min.

People learn and thrive through a variety of media and presentation formats. In this story, you'll learn about the rationale behind session formats including lectures, interactive and peer-to-peer. As such, it's a safe bet to avail a variety of such formats to your attendees to ensure the most valuable experience is had.

"[We're] personalizing our own experience," says Elliott Masie (MPI Greater New York Chapter), chair of the Learning CONSORTIUM. "And that's what we see happen at conferences now. They're aggregated communities where people can then have some fun and picking the content that works best for them."

Also, pick up tips from Dr. Will Thalheimer, president of Work-Learning Research, and his "Decisive Dozen"—a list of what he deems to be the most important learning factors to consider.

TECHNOLOGY

"Game of Drones"

By Michael Pinchera
Reading Time: 11 min.

Increasingly in headlines for positive reasons, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)—or drones—have an evolving place within the meeting and event industry.

From traffic flow (foot and vehicular) and security to courier services and dronies, explore how this technology can enhance your events right now as well as its potential impact on your future. And with attendee feedback incredibly valuable, wouldn't you be interested in a non-invasive way in which to measure and quantify attendee engagement?

Very few drones can be flown outdoors commercially in the U.S. right now—and there's a lot of red tape to reach that point. However, the Federal Aviation Administration has proposed a wise first attempt at regulations for a future that's looking to be increasingly more inhabited by drones.

The legal aspect of this topic is essential reading for any meeting professional—planner or supplier—interested in how their work will mesh with drones.

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