

Economics of Meetings

[Re: "A Defining Moment," March 2009] Have you noticed while attending recent meetings that you may be the only group utilizing the banquet rooms, or there seems to be a lower amount of staff on hand compared to the previous year? With the economy taking a downward spiral these days, a major area affected is the meeting industry. Once a striving industry booming with meetings, it has been reported that in 2008 business has declined by 35 percent. The meeting industry can often be seen as very profitable and lucrative but it should be known for its importance, job stability and contribution to stimulating the economy.

—Katie Andrade
PRIME Inc.



EDITOR'S NOTE: We appreciate the feedback on MPI and your magazine, One+. Your ideas and thoughts are important to us. Let us know what you think. E-mail the editorial team at editor@mpiweb.org.

You Tell Us

What green technologies are you using to optimize the eco-friendliness of your events? Send us an e-mail at editor@mpiweb.org.

Correction

It's true. *One+* Assistant Editor Jessie States was taken in by a hoax! Apparently, the Hotelicopter (*One+* May issue) isn't really a flying hotel, it's just a hotel-booking engine. Very funny, guys.

Low-Cost Travel

The airline industry has undergone a shift in the past few years. The move has been toward the near-universal adoption of the low-cost carrier operating model, which is marked by lower, unbundled fares and a reliance on ancillary revenues. **Though the institution of new fees has made headlines and created a negative impression of this fundamental shift, the unbundling of the standard airfare and the increase in available options is actually of great benefit to meeting planners.**

The low fare, obviously, allows for transportation costs to be kept in check. But the availability of ancillary offerings means that a customizable flight experience is available for each individual within a group. What's more, because many of the airlines' new offerings are centered around the travel experience (the three most important ancillary offerings being car rentals, hotel room reservations and trip insurance), airline Web sites are becoming extremely useful tools for meeting planners looking for a centralized booking engine for the entire trip.

—Raphael Bejar
Airsavings

Security Tips

[Re: "A Defining Moment," March 2009] With the recent backlash against corporate meetings, many companies are cancelling their meetings or taking them under cover. **Planners are concerned with security and ensuring that the company maintains a low profile. Because of the public nature of a hotel, many planners are looking for alternative venue options, but it's completely unnecessary.** If a hotel is capable of supplying adequate meeting space, then security and privacy are well within grasp.

First, ensure that security personnel with proper communication will be on-site during your event—almost every large hotel has a dedicated security staff. These personnel are also responsible for securing your meeting space after hours and overnight.

Also, make sure that internal hotel signage referencing your group is limited or eliminated, to reduce the possibility of "crashers" and drop-ins by media looking for their next big corporate meeting story.

Meeting planners must also do their homework. Conference

pre-screening is invaluable, as are branded nametags, check-in and -out at the meeting space and updated room lists. When possible, know your attendees by face. Follow these common-sense hints and have a safe, secure, productive hotel meeting for your next event.

—Jean Francois Mourier
RevPar Guru

Vacation Rentals?

The current economic downturn has presented many difficulties for meeting planners. But the quest for value is something that will most likely continue long after our economy has recovered. Where can this value be found when everyone is just trying to stay afloat? **Vacation rentals are an excellent value proposition for meeting planners and can provide accommodation for your group with the privacy and seclusion that encourages real productivity.**

They also inherently provide a unique experience for groups, something that can't be replicated in other venues. All of these qualities make vacation rentals a valuable option for meetings and group travel.

—By Rob Kall
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