the chatter
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pcma Capital Chapter
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Every Four Years - How Presidential Elections Impact the DC Economy

Tuesday, November 8 is fast approaching and with it comes an economic experience unique to the DC Metro area. No other city in the United States, except New York City in 1789 and Philadelphia in 1793, has hosted a presidential inauguration. Every city has its large events like the Super Bowl, the Olympics, and the more popular marathons but nothing compares to the greatest, and arguably most heartening, show on Earth, the peaceful transition of power that takes place every four years in our backyards. The economic impact of presidential elections and inaugurals on the DMV is significant and manifests itself in two forms; real estate and the service industry.

Every Four Years Christmas comes twice for real estate firms and commercial property owners in our area. Analysis conducted by JLL research predicts that office space requirements will spike between November 8 and January 20. Space required for the president-elect's transition team is not even the main driver of this. Their teams have been here for months thanks to new GSA guidelines. Instead it is the 72 day window that interest groups have to pass legislation at the end of a presidential term. Ironically a lot of legislation gets passed in this "lame-duck" period. The average demand for space increases 19.7 percent in an election year which equates to 5.7 million square feet of development and at an average cost of $52.61/square foot. That's a big economic impact. Not as drastic a bump in home sales takes place when a new president assumes office, especially if they happen to be from a different party. There are approximately 3,000 presidentially appointed jobs in DC and many more support positions for those appointees. It is estimated that when a new president assumes office there is an increase in home sales of 5.5 percent which is still a nice gain for the economy.

The service industry also sees a nice gain during the election and especially the inauguration. The DC Chamber of Commerce estimated that the 2013 inauguration generated a half billion dollars for the local economy, specifically hotels, restaurants, and transportation companies. The 300,000 to 600,000 people that can be expected for this go around will have an impact. If you are interested in understanding the impact on a micro level be sure to visit the CVS at 13th and Pennsylvania during inauguration weekend, according to the store's manager they anticipate quadrupling their sales. Arguably the best CVS location anywhere every four years. •

by Kyle West, Manager , Events, Travel & Registration, WorldTEK Events, LLC

The PCMA Capital Chapter is where "You Belong"!

Mission: The mission of PCMA and the Chapter is to be the leading organization for meeting and event professionals by delivering superior and innovative education and promoting the value of professional convention management.

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If you have any comments, suggestions or would like to write an article for The Chatter, email: PCMAchatter@gmail.com

Message from the Board

Marcus Eng, CMP
Meeting Planner
American Public Transportation Association

The bottom line. We all have fiduciary obligations to our stakeholders, whether that's to members, tax payers or board of directors. We all have a role in meeting the financial bottom line. It didn't seem so long ago when this was merely the purview of hoteliers forecasting and re-forecasting revenue. Now, we are all beholden to budgets, revenue streams and delivering reports that analyze numbers every which way.

What is the definition of an accountant? Someone who solves a problem you did not know you had in a way you don't understand. I stumbled upon this old joke while doing research for this article. It reminded me that it is easy to get lost in the numbers for the sake of meeting a budget. However, it is equally important to question the reason behind the numbers. Is this project vitally important to our mission? Is there a different way to slice the pie? Do we actually need to make a profit on this meeting? These are equally important sentiments for our personal finances.

In this issue of the Chatter, we take a look at financial issues in both our professional and personal lives. How will overtime laws affect our industry? What are some great tools to help us save more money personally? When is it time to raise registration fees and how much do we increase fees?

As your Treasurer this year, I am very happy to report that our Chapter is in excellent financial condition. We have dedicated leaders that are very mindful and grateful for your membership and support. We are working diligently to offer you the best return on your investment in PCMA with cutting edge and creative educational experiences. At the same time, we are building the foundations for a bright and exciting future. Thank you again for your participation in our Chapter! •

Connect with the Capital Chapter!

Connecting with the Capital Chapter is not just about tracking what we are up to. We want to see what you are up to as well.

@PCMACC

PCMA Capital Chapter has become the first PCMA chapter to have an Instagram account because we believe in being creative and having fun with our communication. However, it is only as good as our members make it, so start shooting and posting today!

Follow us @pcmacapitalchapter and remember to tag us in your spring meeting photos as well by adding us into the comments or tag section. •

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When to Raise (and When to Hold) Registration Fees

Each year, the cost of producing conferences increases as food and equipment costs escalate making it more challenging to book group business at previous rates. Nonprofit Organizations face the challenge of balancing their operating budgets, often with significant influence coming from conference registration revenue.

The question of when, or if, to raise registration fees differs from organization to organization and for some groups, the answer is a matter of basic math. As expenses increase, so must revenue, and the registration fee is a prime contributor.

"Our budgets do not increase automatically when there are changes in the economy, or when group business becomes less attractive to venues" says Kristin Ray, CMP of the PIAA. After an assessment, her organization made the difficult decision to increase their registration fees in response to rising costs at venues nationwide. This assessment process took months to complete, and resulted in a standard, static increase to all registration types. Fortunately, attendance levels did not suffer and the organization was able to continue providing the resources and programming their attendees expect.

For other groups, raising registration fees is not an option due to resources. AFOP's Naomi Romanchok, CMP explains that attendee funding is often an issue. "Many of our attendees rely on grants to attend our conferences, and the government tends to give one year what they gave the year before; if we raise registration fees, many may not be able to attend." Naomi focuses on surviving cost increases by growing sponsor numbers and contributions and using her industry experience to save money through creative F&B ordering and assessing reduction in spend after every meeting. Examples include reducing (or eliminating) afternoon breaks, no canned or bottled beverages on consumption, and organizing one day of "lunch on your own" with attendee-targeted discounts in venue outlets.

While the decision to increase fees is not the same for every group, a fair assessment must be made and the option should be carefully considered. The best advantage planners can have is to know when the time is "right" for their organizations. •

by Mark Harvey, CMP, CMM,
Principal, Ethos Meetings and Events

The Battle for Sponsorship/Marketing Dollars

Sponsorships are incredibly important to the success of conferences and events. With corporate budgets getting tighter every year, organizations are competing with other groups for a company's marketing dollars and must offer different and creative sponsorship opportunities, which will hopefully provide your vendors with more value and a greater ROI than your competition.

Vendors are asking which organizations are taking the time to understand my needs and are concerned with my ROI. It's the old tagline – "WIIFM: what's in it for me." When soliciting new sponsors, ask yourself why should this company be investing in our space and what will they get out of investing in our organization? In addition, be sure to ask your attendees what they are looking for from their conference experience and which corporate partners they would like to see investing in your organization. Communicate the responses to your vendors as this will help them with their pre-conference marketing strategy.

Be sure to follow up with sponsors during the pre-planning, on-site and post-conference stages to ensure their questions are answered and they have everything they need to be successful.

The following are a couple of unique ways to show your sponsors appreciation:

- Invite new sponsors out for social time. Many times, new sponsors are not that familiar with your community and don't know anyone. While the onus is on them to meet attendees, asking your leadership (and their friends) to invite a new sponsor out for dinner, is a great way to show appreciation and help them meet more people in your community.

- Host a thank you reception for exhibitors and sponsors immediately preceding the welcome/opening reception, which officially kicks off the conference. So even before the event has started, the vendors are incredibly happy and in great moods to meet attendees!

The bottom line is be flexible, think out of the box and ask questions…lots and lots of questions of both your attendees and corporate partners. Those organizations that help their vendors with a ROI, show them a little bit of love and treat them as strategic partners will win the battle of the marketing dollars! •

by Andy Falter, President, Sponsorship Reliance Group

Overtime Law – How will it impact our industry?

The Reader's Digest version of the new overtime ruling (fully outlined by ASAE in a recent article) is that salaried employees earning less than $47,476 are no longer exempt from over-time pay. This new threshold, effective December 1st, is more than double the current figure of $23,660 and will have a significant impact on many non-profit organizations. The ruling does not affect hourly or other non-exempt employees who are already eligible for overtime pay.

Why will it matter? According to Convene's 2016 Salary Survey, the average pay for Meeting Planners is more than $47,476 per year with more than half (56%) making over $70,000 per year; however, senior salaries vary according to association size, demographics and, sadly, male vs. female.

What about the junior staff members? Payscale.com and GuideStar's 2016 Compensation Report for Non-profit organizations support that some senior executives of smaller associations and entry level staff fall below the new threshold.

When preparing for a conference and on site, it's not uncommon for staff to work 15 hour days. Following are strategies and possible repercussions.

- Increase budget to account for overtime pay.
- Have senior executives work additional hours packing and unpacking boxes, handling registration, etc.
- Hire an outside company to handle work previously handled by entry level staff
- Closing the office so all staff can attend the conference is both a perk and a training ground for entry level staff. If the practice is curtailed, entry level staff loses out on professional development; the flipside, hiring a professional company already trained to handle BEO's, registration, shipping, etc. while junior level staff keep the office open and running, could turn out to be a more productive option.

December 1st is soon upon us so it's certainly something all associations should plan to address. •

by Marilyn Atchue-Zuill, Global Account Director, HPN Global, and Vicki Johnson, CMP, Principal, Vicki Johnson & Associates, LLC

Navigating Concessions in A New Economy

We have evolved into experts on technology, labor, food trends and AV and it is a challenge to train our boards that as we have evolved so has the way we do business! We are required to show our value by revealing savings negotiated through concessions or discounts.

I'll get right to the point because space for this article is no different than trying to book space for your meeting…It's running out fast!

Concessions! Event professionals need concessions to show a successful bottom line and suppliers offer them to put a destination at the top of the list.

Navigating the process can be tough but creating realistic expectations and communicating regularly are keys to a successful negotiation.

It is true that if you don't ask you don't get. Ask for ALL concession requests up front but don't expect to get everything. Be clear about those concessions you NEED vs. those you WANT. Every hotel, destination and business has a value period and the best values are often achieved when you can match timing and the need periods together.

Knowledge is power in negotiating the best offer! For example, asking for a 15 percent discount on food and beverage in a multi-city RFP might not prove successful. Food, labor, menu choice and location impact the final cost making a 15 percent discount different for all venues. Instead, understand what price per person your budget can handle and have a discussion with the chef/caterer. Handling this during the RFP process can be challenging as you won't confirm a menu six years in advance; however, offering history, an understanding of your meeting's current food trends and a willingness to discuss it during the selection process can ensure everyone is on the same page about your specific budgetary needs.

This example should be applied and shared for all segments of your meeting; communicating specific needs allows your vendors to provide you with the best value.

Ask, create realistic expectations, communicate and arm yourself with your own history—you are your own best advocate. •

by Kim Allison, CAE, CASE, CTA, Associate Director of Sales, Visit Baltimore


MEETING'S OVER.
Heartland of America Park, Carolina Cedar Boat Ride
Ahh, it's time for the un-winding, un-business portion of your event. And lucky you, you've found Omaha, a city that understands planning a convention or meeting is a delicate dance, balancing convenience, comfort and cost with new, memorable experiences. Discovering a fresh destination that will delight and surprise your attendees – that's a good reason to put your feet up.
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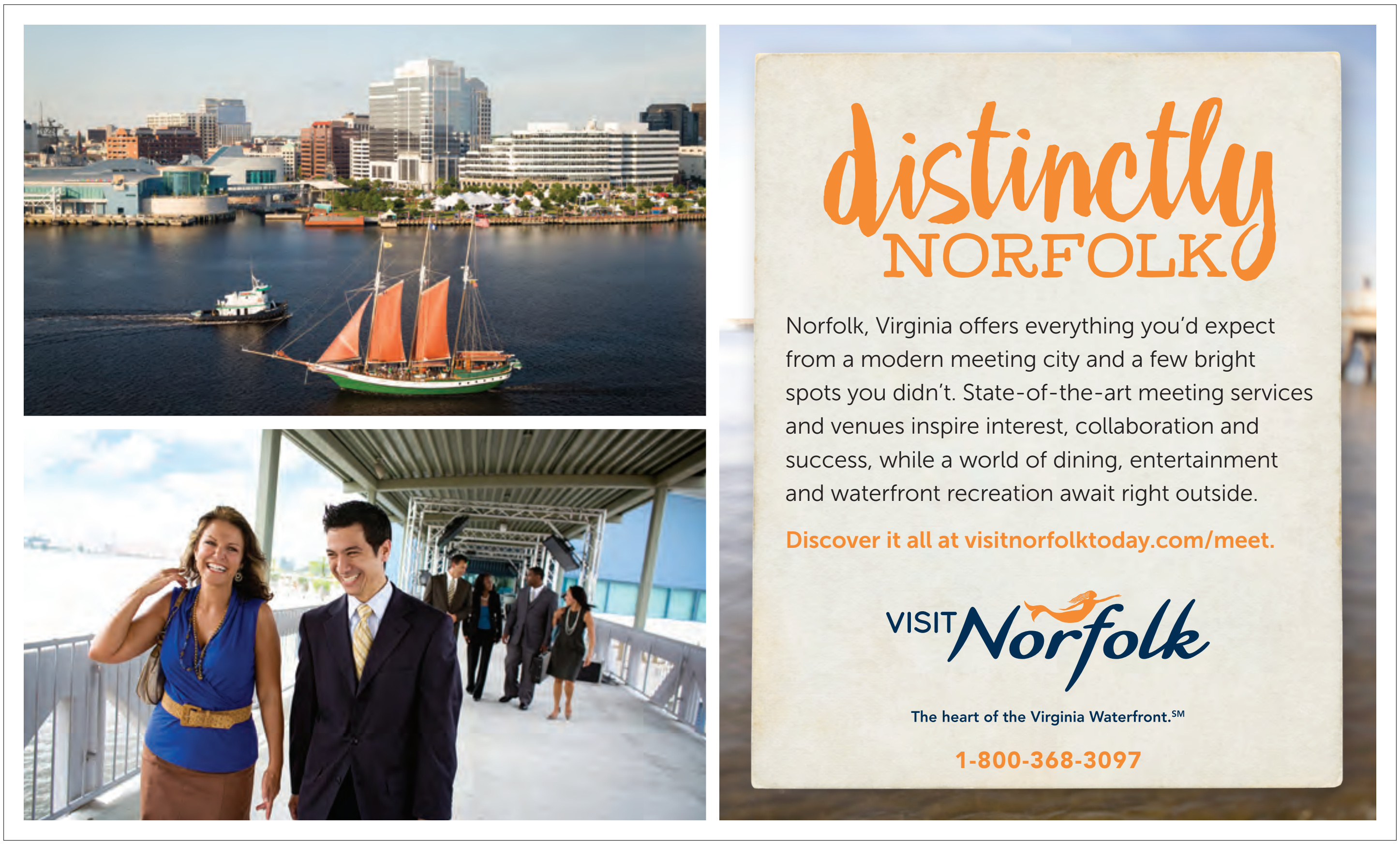

Per Diem and the Planner

According to the General Services Administration (GSA) "Per diem is the allowance for lodging (excluding taxes), meals and incidental expenses." (http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104208#9) Rates in standard areas of the country do not change as often as non-standard areas, which are reviewed on a yearly basis. Lodging is considered a separate expense from meals and incidentals, so the two rates cannot be combined for reimbursement of a meal or hotel room that is higher than the given per diem rate.

For planners, it is important to know two details. Hotels are not required to offer per diem rates. Some hotels offer a Government rate, but that rate may be higher than the government per diem rate. It is important to check the per diem rate in an area to ensure the listed Government rate does match the per diem allowance for that area. If not, call the hotel directly to see if they are able to honor the per diem rate for that area.

It is also important to note that anyone that books a room at the government rate or per diem rate, will be required to show official government ID at time of check in to qualify.

The GSA offers a variety of tools to help conference and meeting planners work with these financial restrictions. The Strategic Meeting Management tool helps source and manage meetings comprehensively. Planners can do market research using the FedRooms Groups and Meetings Tool. The Federal Meeting Facilities tool lists meeting space controlled by the Government that is available at little to no cost to agencies. More information on these tools, and others, can be found at http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/27090. •

by Beth Pernerewski, CMP, Manager - Seminars, Partnerships and Programs, National School Public Relations Association

Globalize your Meeting State Side and Take the Leap Internationally

If you've ever planned an international meeting or considered planning one or even set it as a goal in your career, according to our esteemed panelists at the recent education meeting, the first question you need to ask yourself is "Does it make sense?"

The panel included Kristin Mirabal, VP of Meetings, Heart Rhythm Society, Larissa Tishevskaya, International Convention Sales, Destination DC, Leslie Zeck, CMP, CMM, HMCC, Director of Meetings, International & American Associations for Dental Research and moderator, Johnnie White, MBA, CAE, CMP, Sr. Director, Global Education, Meetings and Strategic Partnerships, American Academy of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery. The panel concurred, if you are interested in holding a meeting outside the United States, you really should ask yourself the simple question if it makes sense. With this comes additional questions: Where is your membership base? What type of program are you trying to bring to another country and why? Who is your target audience?

Once you've established that, there are several steps you should take:

1. Speak to another planner who has international experience. Everyone on our panel offered to be available to talk whenever you wanted.
2. When you've decided which country you wanted to hold your meeting, put together a local host committee that can assist you if there is a language barrier, one that can help you with local customs and laws.
3. Be sure to work with the local CVB or DMO but keep in mind that they are not like the US DMO's. Their interest is more in protecting their country and its suppliers whereas in the US, the DMO serves as your partner.
4. Consider putting enough money in your budget to hire a local Professional Congress Organizer (PCO). They know how to navigate the negotiations and the differences in what we as American meeting professionals consider standard contract clauses.
5. Find out if the country you are working with has a Value Added Tax (VAT) and if it is reimbursed at the end. This can provide a huge cost savings to your organization.

More importantly, do your homework. Know that you will be paying meeting room rental. Know that your sales person is going to want to deal with your boss or someone in a higher position than you. Lastly, provide information to your attendees on visa requirements to enter into the country. Help make it as easy as possible for them. •

by Annette M. Suriani, CMP, Chief Meeting Strategist, AMS Meetings Solutions

Member Spotlights

Spotlight on a Planner

Tiffany Melton, CMP
Senior Director of Meeting Logistics
SPARGO, Inc.

In talking with Tiffany, it is no wonder why she is in the hospitality industry. Growing up the child of two Marine Corp parents, Tiffany moved around a lot in her formative years. In fact, when asked to claim home, she had to think a bit, but then settled on Hawaii since that is where she finished high school and attended college.

Tiffany fell into the business more than 15 years ago by working for a catering company part-time. After graduating college, she was sought after by her previous bosses wanting her to make a career in the business. Wedding planning led to corporate meeting planning, which led her to Fairfax-based Spargo, Inc., where she has spent the last eight years managing primarily healthcare association meetings.

Tiffany is a big believer in unplugging when possible. How does she unplug? Through her passion for international travel. In fact, this past year she traversed solo to Morocco where she rang in the New Year in the Sahara Dessert (camel by her side), followed by trips to Bali and Taiwan. She will be ending the year with an excursion to South Africa. When asked what is next to do and see, trips to Antarctica and Australia were the last two continents on her bucket list. Whether with friends or on a solo trip, Tiffany is all about the adventure and her energy is contagious. •

by Caroline Gardner, CMP, Senior National Sales Manager, Destination DC

Spotlight on a Supplier

Brian Kesseck
Market Assistant Director of Sales
Richmond Marriott Downtown, Courtyard Marriott Richmond Downtown, and Residence Inn Richmond Downtown

Brian oversees two sales managers that sell all three properties while he manages all Association and Government group business. He loves the diversity of the three properties. "Richmond is a city that should appear on every planner's radar. We're a capital city, two hours from the nation's capital with great airlift options."

New to Richmond, VA, Brian is impressed with the emerging downtown area. "Richmond is a very walkable city with dozens of new restaurant and shopping options opening up." Having just recently relocated from Las Vegas, this area is a big change and one he is excited about.

Brian moved to Las Vegas in 2010 where he worked for Caesars, The Venetian and The Cosmopolitan. Before Vegas, he was the director of sales for the Albuquerque minor league hockey team, Scorpions. While they would seem very different, Brian points out that both industries involve finding ways to combine fun with a business purpose and deliver the return on investment the company or organization is looking for.

He has been a PCMA member since January of 2014 and plans to get more involved with the Capital Chapter now that he's close. "Networking with both colleagues and clients is crucial to success in this industry." •

by Jennifer Haire, CMP, Director of Association and Conference Services, National Center for State Courts

Members recommendations on money saving...

I love Ibotta. I use it mainly for groceries but they offer other discounts for retail stores. If you use jet.com, shop through the Ibotta app and you'll earn even more money for your bank!
Geralyn Krist, CMP, CTA, Sheraton New Orleans Hotel, New Orleans, LA

I use a Chrome Extension called Honey (joinhoney.com) which automatically finds and applies coupon codes when you shop online. I just ordered a book on Amazon for $18.00 but before I could get it, honey alerted me that I could find it elsewhere on Amazon for $6.00! Even with shipping I saved $9.00! Color me a fan!
Kimberly Coerr, Marketing Design Group, Washington D.C.

Check out long term parking facilities in your city at the airport- they get competitive by offering memberships frequent flyer deals and often give extra discounts for AAA memberships (15% where I live). It adds up for savings for the company. Some I have seen have other perks as well like free car washes, the newspaper and water.
Anne Abbott, Tradeshow Multimedia, Cleveland, OH

One of the best things you can do is to get to the max on your 401k or 403b. Each year that you get a raise, give your savings part of the raise before you even get a paycheck. Once you reach the max, start direct depositing increased amounts to a savings account.
Karin Soyster Fitzgerald CMP, CAE, International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), Fairfax, VA

News Bytes

Email your news: PCMAchatter+news@gmail.com

Mary Kreins, CASE, has been promoted to Senior National Sales Director at Disney Destinations.

Geralyn Krist, CMP, CTA, formerly with Visit Kansas City, is now an Account Director at the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel.

Margaret Miller, CMP, is now a Strategic Sales Executive with Experient, a Martiz Global Events Company.

Congratulations to the PCMA Convening Leaders Scholarship Winners:

-**Elsbeth (Beth) O'Brien, CMP**, Manager, Conference and Meetings, Association of Clinical Research Professionals
-**Kelly Ferrante**, Education and Training Events and Programs Manager, National Association for College Admission Counseling
-**Brigid Greaney**, Student, James Madison University

Mark Your Calendar

Please join us for these upcoming events. Visit our chapter website for details and to register: www.pcma.org/connect-and-grow/chapters/capital

10/26 **Team Work Makes the Dream Work - Uniting Meetings and Education**
4:00pm–7:00pm
AUSA, 2425 Wilson Blvd, Arlington, VA

11/10 **2016 Service 'N Sync - Food Bank**
9:00am–4:00pm
Capital Area Food Bank, 4900 Puerto Rico Ave, NE, WDC

11/21 **REWIND 2016 - Year in Review**
5:00pm–8:30pm
Marriott Wardman Park, 2660 Woodley Rd, NW, WDC

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