

the official newsletter of the pcma capital chapter

## Best Practice Case Study: Partnering with your Suppliers

Planners spend a lot of time visiting hotel and city representatives on sales calls. It is easy to feel like a broken record when repeating for the hundredth time who you are, how you work, and how suppliers can earn your business. Sales calls are important; however, I found a more efficient way to disseminate company information to our supplier partners on a yearly basis.

Two years ago, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Meetings department invited national/global hotel sales representatives and CVB representatives for the first Information Session. Overwhelmingly, more than 40 suppliers joined us at our office. For our second Information Session this past year, we increased supplier attendance by 10% by adding a webinar.

The session kicks off with introductions of the suppliers and the AAMC team. I reference an organizational chart to help everyone understand AAMC's structure. I spend a significant amount of time covering what's new with AAMC – which this past year included an internal reorganization, a new software, a new site selection process and tool, our planned move to a new building next year, and changes with how we manage annual meeting registration and housing. This will vary from year to year and is valuable for repeat attendees.

I share historical data such as total revenue by hotel chain, as well as percentage of AAMC meetings each chain earned by room nights and by total number of meetings. This lets everyone know where they stand relative to their competitors. We explain the site selection criteria for both annual and other meetings including proposal requirements and what our review and decision process looks like. We also talk about our contract process and the key clauses AAMC requires.

The session's emphasis is on partnership between AAMC



and our supplier partners—enabling us to work together better. Therefore, we spend time talking about what we will do for them, and what they can do for us. While it is easy to say what we expect from them, it is important to commit to being an equal partner by agreeing to do things like hold firm on proposal and decision dates, provide a complete RFP, and keep NSO/CVB reps in the loop throughout the process. Finally, we share relevant details of AAMC's vendor policy which outlines what invitations we can and cannot accept from our supplier partners.

The presentation plus Q&A takes 90 minutes, yet we could easily fill two hours. The PowerPoint presentation is sent to everyone, even those absent. Most reps share the presentation with their key hotel partners, which eliminates the need for us to cover this information during sales calls. Some partners send the presentation out to hotels with our RFPs.

Each time, the Information Session has received rave reviews from our supplier partners. So many of our partners have said that they wish all of their clients would do something similar. So if you've been considering it, I encourage you to try it! It is a small investment of time that enables you to communicate your key messages to all of your supplier partners at once, and it ultimately enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of your relationship with them. •

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*by Kirsten Olean, CMP, CAE, Director of Meetings, Association of American Medical Colleges*

### The PCMA Capital Chapter is where "You Belong"!

**Mission:** The Capital Chapter of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) delivers breakthrough education, encourages involvement in community-based service programs, and promotes the value of professional convention and meeting management at the local level.

**President**

Kirsten Olean, CMP, CAE  
 Association of American Medical Colleges  
 202.828.0479  
 kolean@aamc.org

**President-Elect**

Annette Suriani, CMP  
 Conference Direct  
 703.261.6562  
 annette.suriani@conferencedirect.com

**Treasurer**

Joy Womack, CMP  
 Experient  
 703.239.7504  
 joy.womack@experient-inc.com

**Secretary**

Emily Rademacher, CMP  
 Nuclear Energy Institute  
 202.739.8028  
 ear@nei.org

**Immediate Past President**

Karin Soyster Fitzgerald, CMP, CAE  
 International Association of Fire Chiefs  
 703.537.4831  
 kfitzgerald@iafc.org

**Directors**

Kristin Gibson, CMP, CHSP, J. Spargo & Associates  
 202.422.4815; kristin.gibson@jspargo.com  
 Kristen Roget, CMP, Experient  
 703.239.7484; kristen.roget@experient-inc.com  
 Liz Dane, Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater  
 lizstpeteclear@aol.com  
 Jamal Hageb, American Bar Association  
 202.662.1001; jamal.hageb@americanbar.org  
 Diane Kovats, CMP, International Society for Computational Biology  
 301.634.7920; dkovats@aci.org  
 Kathleen McAdams, CASE, Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board  
 703.645.0035; kmcadams@lainc.us

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 Gail Seawright, Loews Ventana Canyon

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**Chapter Liaison to PCMA National Board of Directors**

Greg O'Dell, Events DC

Capital Chapter: [pcmainfo@ascent-management.com](mailto:pcmainfo@ascent-management.com)

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



## Message from the Board

*Kristin Gibson, CMP, Communications Liaison*



This month's theme for *The Chatter* is "Best Practices and Trends". Now, while someone's "trend" may not be your "trend" of choice it's always wise to keep updated for both your personal as well as professional growth and knowledge. Who is interested in some inflatable meeting space? That's a trend that's out there that may seem strange to some but has been embraced by others!

There are a lot of trends out there and, recently, a speaker at an industry event stated "After speaking with several top industry leaders, it's obvious that even if we had 300 hours to cram in to discuss the latest and greatest trends impacting the world of destination and event management, it still wouldn't have been enough."

PCMA's mission statement is "to deliver superior and innovative education and promote the value of professional convention management" and by utilizing best practices and innovative new trends we are all on our way to help achieve this goal.

Enjoy this issue and all the articles the wonderful *Chatter*/Communications team has put together this month! •



### Connect with the Capital Chapter!

Fall is one of the peak times people connect. This is peak season for meetings across the country and world! We wish all our planners & suppliers healthy and successful fall events season. Undoubtedly we always learn for our experiences regardless of tenure and we can all learn from each other's experiences. The Capital Chapter will culminate the year with THE EVENT! It's a time to network and learn from our experiences from the year while honoring those who have worked so hard to make our chapter the best in the country! See you November 18th at the Arena Stage! •

PCMA CAPITAL CHAPTER PRESENTS:

# THE EVENT

SETTING THE STAGE FOR RE-INVENTION

NEW VENUE | NEW VIBE | NEW VISION

# Things to Consider for Successful Media Relations & Getting Media Coverage at Your Event

Are you curious about how to receive press coverage for your event? Knowing how to tell your story and who you should tell it to is a good place to start.

Spend some time making a list of the media outlets in which you would like your story to appear, and identify the reporters who cover topics related to your subject matter.

Before pitching, understand what a reporter covers and what their show or publication looks like. If you think a reporter has written a great story send them an email telling them that. This can create good will and shows you are not just interested in their work when you need something from them, but read them regularly to stay informed.

Know when deadlines are for the reporter you are contacting. Pitch them at the time they need to bring story ideas to a meeting, not when they are on air or on deadline.

Think about how your story is unique. Create and distribute a press release covering the basic who, what, why, when and where. Be creative about facts you include, but don't give away all the information about the story – remember you want them to attend the event. Be sure to let them know of noteworthy speakers or celebrities participating in the event.

Know what success looks like for you and your client before you begin. Imagine the outcomes you are looking for, what media coverage is best to achieve those goals, and who would likely take on the assignment at a particular paper. Do some research on who has covered this kind of story in the past.

Choose a great venue for your news conference, that is easily accessible to reporters and has a staff with lots of experience in setting up rooms, AV, etc. for successful events. Venues that host news conferences on a daily basis can be a better choice if space is available. •

“**Imagine the outcomes you are looking for, what media coverage is best to achieve those goals, and who would likely take on the assignment at a particular paper.**”

— by Michelle Licht, Assistant Director of Events and William McCarren, Executive Director, National Press Club



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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Lead With Your Strengths And Win!

Free people to go in the direction their strengths lead them. This was some of the advice that Joanne L. Smikle had for the Capital Chapter during the Education Program held on October 2 at the Marriott Wardman Park. Smikle posed several questions to consider when in a leadership role. "Am I leading in a way that takes into account everyone on the team's strengths?" "Do I help people find their strengths and incorporate what we can into our office environment?" It is critical as leaders to look at things from others' perspectives and realize there is no right or wrong way of doing things. Through some interactive exercises we learned about the Standpoint Theory which shows that people can be in the same place experiencing the same things and formulate entirely different impressions of their surroundings. Smikle also offered ways to identify our own strengths during this very entertaining and informative session.

Special thanks to Marriott Wardman Park for sponsoring the event followed by a fabulous reception. In addition we would like to thank the other sponsors, Experience Columbus and Tourism Vancouver as well as the Keystone Resort and Conference Center who was the sponsor for our speaker. •

*by Lisa French,  
Senior Sales Manager, Hilton Baltimore*

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October 2 Program with Joanne L. Smikle, Marriott Wardman Park, Washington, DC, Photos courtesy of Christie's Photographic Solutions

## Keeping it Together While on Travel

Have you realized that it's time to bump up your fitness plans? Are you ready? It's important to continue your goals when you travel, but it's very easy to get off track with your hectic travel schedule. Here are a few tricks when traveling that can help you meet your fitness and nutritional goals:

### Fitness:

- Don't worry about fitting in your full workout routine into your conference schedule. Try and accomplish a few simple exercises that offer big rewards! Push-ups, jumping jacks, crunches, sit-ups, body weight squats, plank, and lunges can easily be done in your hotel room or at the hotel gym. Do each exercise as many times as you can, without stopping. Repeat. Don't forget to stretch before and after!
- Ask your CSM if they have any discounts arranged at a local gym outside of the hotel. This will help lessen those awkward run-ins with attendees at the hotel gym.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator when walking to your room or between meeting rooms.

### Stress Release:

- Before flying home consider taking advantage of the spa facilities within your hotel. Consider it your reward for a job well done!
- Find time for yoga. Your hotel may offer classes onsite or recommend a close by studio.
- You can also preload videos on to your laptop/smart phone. iTunes has a great collection of 10 minute work-out video's – some are even free!

### Nutrition:

- Research local restaurants that offer healthy food options, gluten-free meals or use organic and/or local ingredients.
- Make sure your meals/breaks during the conference offer protein and/or a healthy option. Add whole fruit and individually packed nuts to your afternoon break. Not only are they good for you, but they work for attendees who are gluten free as well!
- If your meetings tend to offer a continental breakfast only, add ala carte hard-boiled eggs to make sure that you and your attendees start the day off right.

The most important thing to remember is if you get off track while traveling – don't be discouraged. Simply start up again as soon as possible. You can't go backward if you're constantly moving forward! •

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—by Jodi VanWoerkom, Senior Meeting Planner and Exhibit Specialist, Association of American Medical Colleges

## Healthy Travel Tips

If you're in the meetings industry, you're probably a frequent traveler. Travel often creates a struggle to stay healthy – from catching a cold to very serious consequences. What can you do to stay healthy? Here are some reminders:

**Eating:** Limit portions – particularly liquid calories. Try to avoid excess sugar. One soda can suppress your immune system by 30 percent for several hours. Strawberry shortcake at Gibson's in Chicago may be worth it, but not a soda.

**Exercise:** Most hotels have gyms. One hotel chain offers workout clothing rental, so you don't even have to take up room in your suitcase! Deep Vein Thrombosis is a threat on long flights. Prolonged sitting increases the risk of blood clotting in your legs, potentially causing serious health conditions like pulmonary embolism. Get up and walk around, consider compression socks, and limit alcohol to maintain proper blood flow.

**Hydrate:** Try to increase your recommended daily eight glasses of water. Planes and hotel rooms are notoriously dry, and high altitudes or dry climates will drain your body of needed fluid.

**Avoid Germs:** Colds and flu are spread primarily by people sneezing into their hands and then touching a shared surface. Wash hands often – particularly after being in public places, and avoid touching your mouth. Don't be shy about using antibacterial wipes and gels. Consider traveling with zinc lozenges and use immediately if you feel a cold coming on. Saline sprays are a magical way to help your body avoid airborne germs.

**Sleep:** There's no surefire way to avoid jet lag, but you can reduce side effects. Begin to adjust your sleep schedule to your destination's time zone prior to travel, and avoid sleeping pills during flight. Avoid alcohol, which dehydrates and is more potent at higher altitudes. If possible, rest upon arrival, and get to sleep early.

Finally, remember to pack prescription medications, and bring over-the-counter options that work for you. •

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—by Karin Soyster Fitzgerald, CMP, CAE, COO/ Deputy Executive Director, International Association of Fire Chiefs





## Member Spotlights

### Spotlight on a Supplier

*Gene Thomas, National Sales Manager, Freeman*



- **Where did you grow up?** Rockville, Md
- **School attended?** Rockville High School and University of Maryland at College Park
- **Favorite Job?** Sales at Freeman
- **Why did you join PCMA?** The reason I joined PCMA was to meet new and

energetic people in my field and also the amount of education that is given is a huge plus.

- **If you could have dinner with anyone living or deceased, who would it be and why?** My mother, Eugenia Elizabeth Thomas. The reason is that she was such an inspiration in my life and hers was taken way too early at age 44 (Complications from Multiple Sclerosis). I would give anything to have a little more time with her.
- **Book on nightstand?** Tic Toc James Redman. I love the Alex Cross series. I also have *In Touch* magazine and *Sports Illustrated*.
- **Most memorable moment?** When the University of Maryland Football and SID gave my mother a special seat in the stands so that she could watch me play up close. With her eyesight deteriorating it was very difficult for her to see.
- **Accomplishments?** First to graduate from college in my family, played pro football and baseball, 2nd runner for Man of the Year for the Leukemia Lymphoma Society 2012, Nominee for best dressed Washingtonian for Washingtonian Magazine.
- **What do you do for fun?** Take my nephews all over, travel and play golf! •

*by Jake Smith, National Accounts Manager, Freeman*

### Spotlight on a Planner


*Ayuko Kimura-Faye, CMP, Director of Meetings, The Endocrine Society*



Ayuko Kimura-Faye, CMP, is well known in the Meetings and Hospitality circles! Ayuko, an alumna of Emory and Henry College in Emory, Virginia has an esteemed professional history as the former Director of Meetings for the American Society for Hematology, Director of Conference Services for the American Dental Education Association, and Assistant Director of Convention Services for the Omni Shoreham Hotel. For the past 2 years Ayuko has served as the Director of Meetings for The Endocrine Society and says that she has finally found her dream job! Given her professional credits, I think it is safe to say that there is nothing this lady can't handle.

Ayuko is truly a favorite of many in the Meetings and Hospitality industry, she is indeed a quiet giant that may not speak very loudly, but knows how to get her point across and somehow, with that quite demeanor is always heard! One of Ayuko's favorite pastimes is something most of us can relate to "wine" in as much as we can appreciate a great glass of Pinot. Ayuko took her passion a little further and studied to become a legitimate Sommelier! Although, she would never claim to be a match maker, Ayuko has played 'Cupid' on more than one occasion. Happily married for, let just say a few years, I think that she believes in others being as happy as she is and knows that companionship can play a significant role in lifelong fulfillment! Ayuko has served on a number of committees, panels, and focus groups and has proven her commitment to continued learning by doing so, as well as through mentoring others in numerous ways. If you have not had the pleasure of meeting this incredibly humble and interesting lady, do yourself a favor and make it a priority. •

*by Victor Robinson, Senior Director of Meetings and Exhibits, American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology*



# SEE WHAT WE CAN DO...

## General Session Production

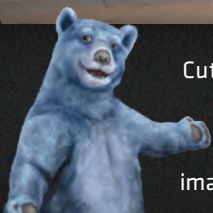
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# Truth

DENVER HAS MORE THAN 40 MUSEUMS.



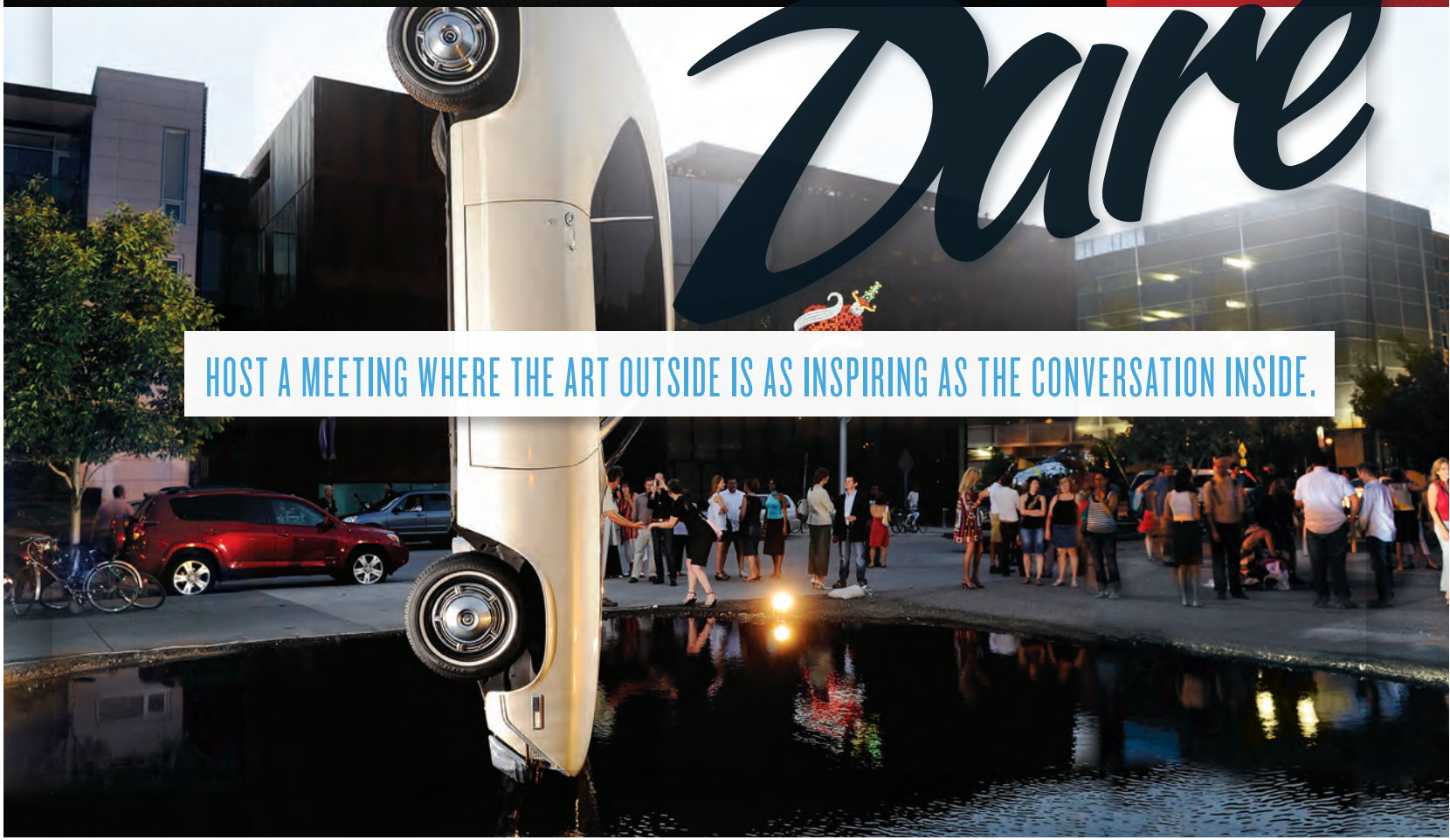
Cutting-edge work can be found at Denver's many museums and galleries. But did you know that they also offer creative meeting options? Stimulate your attendees' minds with fresh spaces, stunning rooftop views and innovative catering. There's more to Denver than you imagined. A lot more. We dare you to see the city in a whole new way at [TruthOrDareDenver.com](http://TruthOrDareDenver.com)

The Colorado Convention Center's 40' Blue Bear, *I See What You Mean*, by Denver artist Lawrence Argent, has become a Mile High City icon.



# Dare

HOST A MEETING WHERE THE ART OUTSIDE IS AS INSPIRING AS THE CONVERSATION INSIDE.





# What To Consider When Booking An Outdoor Venue

Hilton Orlando's General Manager, Doug Gehret, knows what it takes to host an outdoor event. Here, he shares 10 tips with meeting planners.



Food Trucks at Outdoor Venue at Hilton Orlando

1. **Why consider outdoor?** Attendees love outdoor events, stars, sun and fresh air - attendees stay longer and have substantially increased levels of satisfaction with your event.
2. **Creativity** - Outdoor events offer creative opportunities not found indoors – A huge smoker to fill the air with the smell of barbeque? Fireworks? Food trucks, sporting events --- all are possible.
3. **Think Day and Night** - When you think outdoors don't just think nighttime – daytime events work well in the right outdoor venue.
4. **Quick recovery in case of rain** - Drainage can make all the difference in standing water and wet walking surfaces. Hilton Orlando installed high-end artificial turf and an extensive drainage system to assure no mud or puddles and very quick recovery in case of rain.
5. **Do you have the power?** Ask about “power drop boxes”. If the outdoor venue has these, you'll know there won't be power cords running across the lawn to indoor plugs.
6. **Light their fire!** People tend to gather near fire pits or fountains – both are welcoming assets, often with built in seating, and can set a tone for the evening. Add S'Mores to the menu!
7. **To tent or not to tent?** Use tents when you want a more intimate atmosphere, where you have a speaker and want to contain the noise or when you are concerned about the weather.
8. **Food and beverage** - Select foods that stand up to the outdoor environment; consider foods that have enticing aromas.
9. **Bathrooms** –The rule of thumb is that bathrooms should be as close to your outdoor venue as they are to any indoor venue you could use.
10. **Just in Case** - Be flexible and creative when dealing with different weather conditions, particularly if no back up space is available. Tenting or altering your theme to incorporate the weather will all work too. •

*by Doug Gehret, General Manager, Hilton Orlando*

## Creating Memorable Customer Experiences: Six Lessons from the Mouse

How does an organization earn the reputation as the “happiest place on earth?” After a week in Disney World, it all came down to superior customer service and outstanding experiences—both of which showcase the Disney brand. A few lessons are applicable to any size meeting and will make the experience memorable for attendees while showcasing the brand promise:



**#1: No problem.** “It may not be your fault...but it is your problem,” is a key lesson from Disney. Bottom line: Fix what you can – replace the lost badge, lend a spare power cord, issue a refund – and be the “no problem” person at your events.

**#2: Ask Me.** This is simple: arm your team with information and make sure they know where to find the restrooms, coffee or a place to make calls. And make your team identifiable with matching shirts, a scarf, necktie, etc.

**#3: Be Assertively Friendly.** Approach guests who look confused instead of waiting to be approached. This is ideal at meetings – if you make eye contact, smile and greet people by name, you'll make that connection.

**#4: Anticipate Needs.** Disney cast members are armed with bandages (convenient when my daughter skinned her knee!). They anticipated my needs – you can do the same for attendees. Have a supply of notebooks, pens, post-its and other items on hand so they can focus on learning and networking and not what they forgot.

**#5: Encourage Fun.** It's impossible not to have fun at Disney; the same can be true for your events. Offer fun badge flair to make name badges more interesting; show photos from events on video screens; post a funny question and share poll results; host an ice cream break in the exhibit hall.

**#6: Listen.** Imagine how many complaints that Disney cast members listen to all day. Two simple words, “I understand,” are the best way to acknowledge that you heard the person and to start your response. The person who needs your help will know that you are working to solve their problem and that you care. •

*by Denise Gavilan, Owner and Marketing Strategist, Gavilan & Associates, LLC.*



## Rewind – Let’s Audit the IRS 2010 Conference I.G. Report – Part 3 & Final!

Welcome to the final article in this series to review the IRS Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration Audit for the August 2010 Conference from the hospitality industry perspective. This article examines the use of **Third Party Planners**.

**Fact 3 – The Third Party Planners used by the IRS WERE NOT UNDER CONTRACT!** This is the most important fact revealed in this audit. This is an example of how professionals in our industry project a very unprofessional image by engaging in relaxed operational processes.

According to this audit report “Despite having no contractual agreement with the IRS, these event planners were responsible for issuing [RFPs] to hotels and receiving the hotel responses.” The work performed by third party planners was not at issue with the IRS. The IRS highlighted that there was lack of documentation in two critical areas. First – there was no contract. Second – there was no documentation on the methodology used to choose Anaheim over the other considered sites: San Francisco and Dallas.

This was a heartbreaking lost opportunity for our industry. Had these third party planners had a contract and shared documentation to reveal the business rationale, we would have had documented proof of the value of the professional expertise of the members of the hospitality and tourism industry.

Because the third party planners did not establish a contract for services with the IRS, the Audit Report speculates whether the \$133,000 worth of hotel commission fees received by the third party planners were nefarious in nature.

**Conclusion:** Documentation, accountability, and transparency are essential practices in all business transactions. If we desire fellow Americans to care that the 2013 Government Shutdown cost our industry \$152 million a day, we must demonstrate our value in all of our actions. •

—by *Tamela Blalock, MTA, CMP, Director of Membership, National Association of Wholesalers-Distributors*

## EMERGING PROFESSIONALS

### EPC’s Mentorship Program

I never would’ve guessed just how great the PCMA Mentorship Program and my mentor have been. After learning my mentor would be **MALENE WARD, CMP, CEM**, Director, Education & Conferences, Direct Marketing Association, we reached out to each other to set up a face-to-face meeting. Deciding to meet in person was a great decision; it really gave us a chance to get to know each other. I explained to her that one of my goals was to earn my Certified in Exhibition Management (CEM) certification. At our second meeting we outlined a plan of action to complete the nine necessary CEM courses. I planned an ambitious goal of finishing it in one year but was unsure. Malene listened and told me that she believed that I could accomplish my goal. Throughout the year we met in person, or over the phone, and she always asked me for an update on the classes. Also, she was always willing to proctor an exam for me. Having a mentor who was so flexible and always encouraging was more than I could’ve hoped for.

Once I completed my final class and received my CEM award letter, Malene was the first to know. I owe a lot to her for always being there for me throughout this process. I can’t thank her enough for all the advice and encouragement Malene has given me in the short time we’ve known each other. We continue to speak and meet occasionally to stay up to date. She has been, and will continue to be, an indispensable mentor to me!

To become a mentor or participate in EPC’s Mentorship Program, contact: Mindy at mhalpert@cosn.org. •

—by *Clayton Moore, CEM, Meetings Coordinator, The American Association of Immunologists*



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## News Bytes

Email your news: [PCMAchatter+news@gmail.com](mailto:PCMAchatter+news@gmail.com)

The National Association of Wholesalers-Distributors welcomes **TAMELA BLALOCK** as the Director of Membership.

**PAUL GRIFFIN** is now the Director of Recruitment & Business Development for ConferenceDirect. He will be based out of DC and Boston.

**SCOTT WEINER** has joined the Westin Lake Las Vegas Resort & Spa as the Director of National Accounts.



## 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](http://www.pcma.org/connect-and-grow/chapters/capital)

### 11/18 **THE EVENT** (formerly known as the Annual Meeting)

5:30-8:00pm  
Arena Stage  
1101 6th St. SW, Washington, DC

### 12/5 **Capital Classroom – Roundtables**

3:00–5:00pm  
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Alexandria, VA  
Nearest Metro Station: King Street

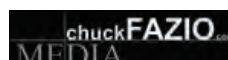
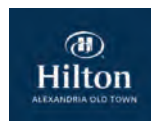
### 1/12 - 1/15 **PCMA Convening Leaders** Boston, MA [www.conveningleaders.org](http://www.conveningleaders.org)



Join a new breed of meeting professionals at PCMA's 2014 Convening Leaders. Leaders will gather in Boston to transform our industry, our work, our lives. We'll ignite passion, alter perspective and revolutionize the world of meetings and event. The [R]evolution will not wait. The [R]evolution starts now. Join at [conveningleaders.org](http://conveningleaders.org).

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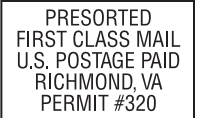


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**Chatter Info...**

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PCMA Capital Chapter  
Attn: Kara LaMay  
3337 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-5219  
Phone: 703.370.7436 x401, Fax: 703.342.4311  
Email: PCMAinfo@ascent-management.com

**Issue Editors...**

Cathy Chenevey  
AIAA  
cathyc@aiaa.org  
Patricia Swift  
Independent Planner  
pswift33@gmail.com

**Production Editors...**

Kari King, CMP  
National Defense Industrial Association  
kking@ndia.org  
Shannon Burke, CMP  
National Assn. for College Admission Counseling  
sburke@nacacnet.org

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