

the official newsletter of the pcma capital chapter

Today's Meeting Environment

For those who have continued to ask, "When will our industry return to 2007 levels?" the answer is that we have passed our peak years and are moving ahead strong. In 2013, North America experienced an all-time record demand, RevPAR and Average Daily Rate in North American Hotels and we are on pace to exceed in 2014. As an industry, it is time to elevate the dialogue and to have a strong business acumen to understand and succeed in this new economic environment. With all-time record demand and no new major supply in the meetings market for another 18 months, pricing power has returned to the market. All forecasts are calling for this environment to remain intact for the next 2 years at a minimum. With this new environment, budget challenges exist from all facets of our business. It is important as a meeting professional to educate the stakeholders of your meetings on what is happening with market conditions. Simply stated, do your budgets for your 2015 meetings look like 2011, 2012, 2013 or do they look like your budgets from 2007 and 2008? If our market pricing in real dollars have surpassed those record years, our budgets of today should reflect that time period.

In discussions with meeting professionals in regard to the budget process, I continue to ask how budgets are processed year-over-year. The answer consistently revolves around an increase of 3% tied traditionally to a Consumer Price Index. The challenge with this methodology is that the meeting cost is actually increasing at a much faster pace. Room pricing has been growing at almost a 6% average year-over-year in the

luxury, upscale and upper-upscale arena. Food & Beverage pricing is growing at even a faster pace. So when increasing a meetings budget at 3% over the past 3 years, the meetings budget will be deficient already by 9% (knowing that rooms are growing at twice that pace). Over the long term, the growth number will balance to the 3% range, however, it is not each year. During the downturn those same budgets decreased in most cases by double digits.

Understanding these changes are critical in educating our stakeholders on the market dynamics that influence what we do each day. Too many times in our industry we discuss the "Suppliers' Market" or the "Buyers' Market". In an attempt to elevate the dialogue, let us all begin to discuss "The Market".

Economic conditions will dictate pricing as it is as simple as when the market is good the hoteliers will charge more for their services (due to demand) and when the market is in decline, so will the pricing dynamics.

Meeting Professionals and the supplier community are always dependent on each other to support and educate our respective stakeholders. With this better

understanding, together we will negotiate much more effectively and be prepared to succeed regardless of market conditions. Let us all celebrate an industry that is now showing tremendous health! (are growing at twice that pace). Over the long term, the growth number will balance to the 3% range, however, it is not each year. During the downturn those same budgets decreased in most cases by double digits.

Let us all celebrate an industry that is now showing tremendous health! •



by Michael Dominguez, Senior Vice President, Hotel Sales, MGM RESORTS INTERNATIONAL

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.

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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

Kathy McAdams, CASE

Vice President, Convention Sales

Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board



As PCMA Capital Chapter Treasurer, it is my responsibility to finalize the budget for Board approval and monitor it monthly to ensure committees are being fiscally responsible. Our budget encompasses every aspect of our Chapter activities and services, including this issue of *The Chatter*.

I am constantly amazed at how much work our committees do (as volunteers, mind you) and how they are able to negotiate and execute our chapter events, communications, and services so that our members receive the best ROI for their membership dues. As you will see in this issue, financial responsibility is something all of our members encounter in the work environment. Whether it is planning a new program on a tight budget, securing venues for a convention, or hosting events for our best customers, we are all held accountable for maximizing the return on that investment. We must be knowledgeable on all aspects of a program or event and be prepared to negotiate so that all parties see the benefit. We have to convey the importance of attending an event and show the value it will offer all participants, not only on-site, but also back in the workplace.

Knowing the latest in terms of industry trends, communicating accurately the scope of your resources, and finding partnerships that can help you meet your financial objective are key components to help you execute a financially sound and successful event. I am sure the articles in this issue will be insightful and helpful as you plan your next event and balance your budget! •



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

What Is Your Event Worth?

Meeting professionals understand that the meetings industry in the United States accounts for approximately \$280.4 billion in direct spending a year, but how much of that is contributed by a single event and more importantly, your event?

Since 2011, Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) has been empowering destination marketing organizations (DMOs) with a standardized tool to answer that question. Since then, the Event Impact Calculator has been adopted by nearly 150 destinations across the United States to not only reinforce to stakeholders the return on investment for a single event, but also emphasize the value of continued investment by stakeholders in growing the meetings industry in general.

For meeting professionals, the Event Impact Calculator has several benefits:

- Understanding direct spending to various segments. Delegate spending comes in various forms and the calculator estimates spending not only for lodging, space rental and food and beverage, but also transportation, retail, and other business services.
- Capturing total room demand. With event attendees increasingly turning to accommodations outside of the traditional block of hotel rooms, DMOs are able to estimate and account for these room nights and associated spend.
- Standardizing numbers across destinations. The practice of economic analysis often varies from destination to destination, but the calculator standardizes this practice by arming DMOs with a uniform methodology. You can be confident that all meeting destinations are calculating spend consistent with each other.

Needless to say, the calculator depends on reliable event details to feed the model, and therefore DMOs work with meeting professionals, hoteliers, and their own support team to gather the right data. Meeting professionals are encouraged to contact DMOs directly about understanding the total economic impact of their events, and share the most complete and accurate information that drive the calculations, such as:

- Room rate
- Overnight attendees
- Persons per room
- Total room block

For a complete list of DMOs that subscribe to the calculator, please contact Elaine Rosquist at erosquist@destinationmarketing.org.

*by Elaine Rosquist,, Director of Services
Event Impact Calculator
Destination Marketing Association International*

*Joy Lin, Content Manager
Destination Marketing Association International*

Is the Buyer's Market Gone?

What a roller coaster ride we've been on! Terrorist attacks, the recession, GSA transgression, a government shutdown, global economic unrest: all of these played a part in putting some meetings on the chopping block and forcing others to take a wait-and-see position. Whether planner or supplier, what you could historically count on was no longer true. Planners could (and did) book five-star/diamond resorts at per diem prices and those same resorts were merging into 3-star/diamond hotels' comp sets. Booking windows became much shorter and hotels were going above and beyond to earn business.

Enter 2014 and the hotel industry is finally enjoying a period of stronger demand. Leisure and business travel is up and increased room supplies remain in delay mode. Hotels are experiencing better negotiating positions than they've seen in years. Planners are encouraged to book further out to avoid availability issues and those incredible deals that they once enjoyed are fewer and far between.

Are buyers out-of-luck? Not entirely! True, rates are going up, however, with a little flexibility, planners can partner with hotels to find win/win situations for everyone. The "value" of your meeting is relative.

- Poor rooms/space ratio? Find a destination or time frame in which the hotel is more likely to fill up with transient/leisure travel or has a hole that needs to be filled. In this case, short booking windows often work best.
- Date flexibility and arrival/departure patterns. Hotels use their meeting space to fill guestrooms with the goal of creating a pattern that allows the hotel to sell out nightly. 300 rooms on Tuesday/Wednesday displaces rooms on Sunday, Monday and Thursday so the rate goes up. Book the same group on Sunday/Monday and you've created a win/win for everyone.
- Seasonality. Need to book an all work/no play meeting in the summer? Find a beautiful resort in Palm Springs, Las Vegas or Scottsdale. You'll love the deals!
- F&B and other incremental revenues will increase negotiating power. Bring dollars to the table and the conversation will flow. •

*by Marilyn Atchue-Zuill
Global Account Director, HPN Global*

Money in Your Pocket, Courtesy of your CVB

Simply stated: your Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) partner is here to help you save time and money.

First off, is it a CVB, CVC (Convention and Visitors Commission), or DMO (Destination Marketing Organization)? Mostly these acronyms are interchangeable. Whatever we are called, just call us! Your CVB rep's job is to help make your site selection process easy and offer the best deal!

Whether you are sourcing a self-contained program or a citywide convention, DMOs have staff allocated to help you. Sending out leads to our partners is our main job! As always, the more detailed your RFP the more information we include to our partners. Once the bid details are received, your DMO partner consolidates the information including your requested parameters into a summary or even into your spreadsheet. Additionally a CVB can provide air lift, public transportation routes and costs, unique venues, hot restaurants etc. The clear advantage is: YOU don't have to do the research! The CVB rep can answer questions regarding the bid or potentially negotiate a better offer after getting your feedback before you take it to your Board or Committee, saving lots of time and emails.

Site inspections! Let your CVB create a home-run for you! While not every city completely funds every trip, it is still advantageous to work with the CVB on your site visit. Your CVB partner knows the most efficient way to see the city and can help to arrange a schedule that works best. By efficiently helping schedule the site and transportation you can save money and time out of the office, ultimately showing how your event can be the most successful in the city.

Once selected, a bureau continues to provide real value. CVBs are a one-stop shop for many things including marketing support, city collateral to be used during the event, transportation providers and housing services. Suddenly your largest exhibitor decides to do an excursion for their best 50 customers and asked you to research and get pricing at the same time you are putting your program guide together? Your CVB contact already knows the best places to go. Just ask. In many cases you can turn the communication over to the CVB taking this off your plate. Need a customized hotel map for your website? We do that too! Many CVBs also help with pre-promoting your event the year before. There are different parameters in each city for this service. Why not ask? Having your delegates make a connection a year out certainly helps build attendance.

None of this works of course without good communication. This is the essence of the partnership! Take a few minutes to talk with your CVB rep and answer their questions. You can never give too much information. If your DMO partner has read your RFP and done their research, your conversations can be efficient and quick. By completely understanding your needs, your DMO partner can put together the best deal offering the best incentives for your organization.

Have we mentioned all of this is at NO COST to your organization? Find your local CVB partners at www.cvbreprs.com or www.destinationmarketing.org. •

*by Kim Allison, Visit Baltimore,
Kyla Knudson, Travel Alberta
Will Trokey, Visit Charlotte*

Going Undercover with Government Per Diem

Federal Per Diem is a mystery and at times a source of frustration for meeting professionals on both sides. How are those numbers created? How can those allotments possibly cover the costs (much less the revenue projections) for this meeting?

Federal Per Diem rates were never created with the intention to be used for setting a budget for a meeting. Per Diem rates were created to control transient travel costs.

To set the lodging rates a comparison of upper upscale/upscale/upper midscale hotel rates are compared each quarter. A formula to average these rates during each quarter is compiled. This average includes advertised rates and rates charged on hotel bills. For example: if a rate of \$350 was advertised for the week of 8/10-14/2014, and if a traveler secures a rate of \$240 for the same week, the \$240 rate will be factored into the averaging formula that the federal government uses.

For the meals calculation, a combination of prices is compiled from a mix of fast food chains and very moderately priced restaurants. These prices are also entered into the averaging formula creating the M&IE allowance (meals and incidental expenses).

The key factor is that Federal Per Diem rates are created each year with the intention for use with government transient travel. The fact that Per Diems are used to calculate meeting budgets is an area of tension, and a resolution has not yet been created.

Want to know more about Federal Per Diems? Visit the General Services Administration website on this topic: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/104711>. •

*by Tamela Blalock, MTA, CMP
National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors*





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Tricks of the Trade: Saving \$\$\$ with Creative F&B

In today's ever-changing marketplace, planners are being asked to do more with less, and when it comes to F&B, these planners came up with great ways to save money while still giving attendees and staff a pleasant experience through the F&B aspect of their meetings.

Kamala Srikar with AFSCME worked with a first tier destination's convention center to allow AFSCME to bring in breakfast items (cereal, oatmeal, peanut butter and jelly) for their staff office to cut breakfast costs. She also reduced her costs for beverages by avoiding bottled beverages and opted for fruit infused water, iced tea and lemonade for attendees.



Alison McIntyre with the American Physical Therapy Association asks hotels to identify hors d'oeuvres that they are willing to offer at a discount (10%) and then encourages her staff and other partners to order mostly those items.

Cathy Chenevey with the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics considers smaller meal sizes to help reduce costs. "I asked if we could use the luncheon buffet menus with a slight upcharge for dinner, as the dinner menus were WAY too much food for our guys. I've also asked venues to downsize the number of choices or options on the buffets to help reduce costs." Instead of a full bar, Cathy works with the F&B Manager to create a signature drink at a negotiated price point. Cathy also suggests being honest with the chef about budget and type of attendee experience her organization is looking to create. Her best experience was with the chef at the Doubletree in Portland, OR. "Chef created an amazing tasting menu for our group, where if I'd have picked off the menu, we would have had half of what we did. He sourced local, seasonal items, as well as what he had on-hand, so the overall cost was much less, and yet our attendees were treated to items they had never had before." Judy Brazel, CMP with Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging recommends, "serving a la carte breakfast options and order the amounts you know you specifically need for your group verses a full continental where the yogurts or cereals may not necessarily be consumed by your group. For lunches, remove items from box lunches and ask that the price be reduced proportionately as you don't need a salad, chips, fruit

and cookie for most box lunches. The savings is often small but may help with a tight budget. Remove the labor intensive ones such as the salad and the expensive ones such as fruit vs more economical chips and cookies."

John Rubsamen with the Americans for the Arts suggests separating out dessert from the plated lunches. "I have a tight window of time (and budget) to set and serve a plated lunch before our opening Keynote speaker. We do an extended exhibit time after the opening lunch and Keynote and I have the dessert and coffee served during that time with our exhibitors. This saves us time and literally thousands of dollars on having to service coffee by the gallon and pay for an afternoon snack item. Exhibitors love it! We make sure our attendees know that dessert will be served with the exhibitors after the session, so they don't feel cheated!"

Our planner members are great at being creative, managing budgets and sharing their ideas...thanks Kamala, Alison, Cathy, Judy and John for sharing a few words of wisdom to help our members stay within budget while creating an enjoyable attendee experience! •

*by Mary Gallagher, CMP
Director, Convention Sales, LA Tourism & Convention Board*

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Capital Chapter Classroom Scores A+

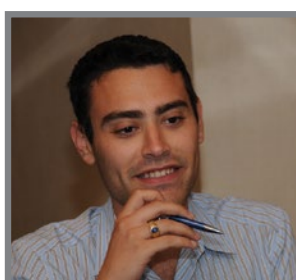
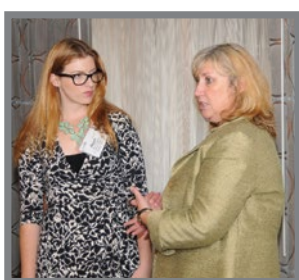
In August I had the opportunity to attend my first Capital Classroom hosted by the PCMA Capital Chapter, a roundtable discussion on “The Importance of Engaging the Conference Attendee and Addressing Their Specific Needs”. My expectations were high, and PCMA Capital Chapter delivered!

I am a recent graduate of George Washington University’s Master’s in Tourism Administration program where I studied event and meeting management. I appreciate any opportunity to supplement my education and network with other industry professionals. The PCMA Capital Classroom addressed a wide range of topics including special meal requests, attendee learning styles, and ADA standards. All three topics interested me, so fortunately the classroom was a round robin and I didn’t have to choose just one.

One of my main interests, and my unofficial minor at GWU was attendee engagement. Naturally, I was drawn to the discussion about attendee learning styles. The group discussed the differences between visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners and how we can engage each type at our events. We shared our experiences with creative and innovative teaching techniques.

Although I learned about ADA standards in school, I discovered tips and tricks of the trade that I had previously been unfamiliar with. Who knew you could use a luggage scale to measure the amount of pressure needed to open a door? My mom has celiac disease and certainly would have appreciated the last discussion about the ever-growing list of special meal requests. I feel much more comfortable working with chefs to customize menus having heard from professionals who’ve been there and done that.

No event would have been complete without networking. As a recent graduate, I value the opportunity to make solid connections. Ultimately, I can say my first taste of a PCMA Capital Classroom was sweet and I look forward to the next bite. •



*by Alex Plaxen, Emerging Professionals Committee Member
Photos by Christies Photography*



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Contact: Kristie Chang • Director of Events & Account Management • 703.476.9152 • kchang@vjmeetings.com

Capital Chapter Busy with Helping Others

The Community Service Committee expanded our outreach and volunteered with the Washington Humane Society this year. We provided 23 volunteers to support their Annual Bark Ball for the 1,000 guests and 500 of their four-legged friends on June 14. The event made history by raising nearly \$625,000 (a new record!) to benefit the critical programs and services of the Washington Humane Society (WHS). <https://www.flickr.com/photos/washhumane/14259000348/in/set-72157645211602861>

We also held our 1st Food Drive for the Capital Area Food Bank in conjunction with the half-day education conference. The Capital Chapter collected 162 pounds of food which will provide 81 meals for those struggling with hunger in the Washington metro area. Hunger never takes a vacation and we thank everyone who donated! We will be returning to the Capital Area Food Bank in November for Service N Sync. We hope you will consider volunteering your time to help those in need.

If you would like to be added to our list of volunteers, are interested in joining the committee, or have a suggestion for a great volunteer activity, please contact Regina Rink at regina88@live.com. We want to get as many members involved as possible.

by Regina Rink

READY, SET, BID!

2014 SILENT AUCTION, NOV 18TH

The Capital Chapter's third annual Silent Auction will have lots of exciting items, so come to bid at The Event: Capital Chapter Annual Meeting on Nov. 18 at the Hard Rock Café DC. Proceeds will be going to the chapter's charity of the year, N Street Village, and the PCMA Education Foundations.

If you would like to contribute an item to the Silent Auction, please contact Linda Worthington at LWorthington@VisitRichmondVA.com, or 804-783-7405.

Meet our 2015 Convening Leaders Scholarship Winners...

"Quick to Volunteer." "...amazed by his drive, passion and desire to succeed and engage in our industry." "His dedication and involvement in PCMA has helped us learn more about our members, build relationships and attract new members through friends sharing with friends." These are just a few of the reasons that our 2015 Convening Leaders scholarship winners were selected.

Carly Bushong, Meetings and Education Manager with The Gerontological Society of America has won the PCMA HQ Scholarship. She not only manages a busy work schedule but volunteers her time on the Communications Committee. "By attending PCMA Convening Leaders in Chicago, I will be able to meet fellow industry professionals, recruit individuals to contribute articles to *The Chatter* and be exposed to educational content that I'll be able to share with Capital Chapter members by writing articles for *The Chatter*."

The Capital Chapter, through our sponsor PRG, was able to award 2 full scholarships to Convening Leaders. A recent graduate of George Washington University with a Master's degree in Event and Meeting Management, Alex Plaxen has won a scholarship to attend his first Convening Leaders. This

year, he was an active member of the Emerging Professionals Committee. "Sharing the knowledge with those who aren't fortunate enough to get the opportunity to attend Convening Leaders is my way of paying it forward."



Brian Knaack, Meetings Coordinator for the United States Pharmacopeia has been an active member of the Marketing Committee over the past year. He is the Social Media Subcommittee leader and created the Capital Chapter's YouTube channel and Goggle+ pages. "A goal of mine for attending Convening Leaders is to meet active volunteers in other chapters so that I can bring back new ideas to the committee on which I serve and to the chapter as a whole."

On behalf of the entire Capital Chapter, congratulations to Carly, Alex and Brian. We look forward to seeing you in Chicago and reading about your experiences in an upcoming edition of *The Chatter*.

by GERALYN KRIST, CMP, CTA, National Account Manager, Visit KC

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Member Spotlights

Spotlight on a Planner

Ellen Shortill

*Director, Convention & Meetings
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association*



The eldest of five kids, Ellen Shortill grew up on the seacoast of New Hampshire in a town called Dover and she is a true New Englander. She attended American University studying International Relations with plans to become a diplomat, but government inefficiencies and red tape made her crazy!

Instead she got her start in the industry by working at the International Human Rights Law Group and planning their huge awards gala. She then moved to an education association and realized she was born to be a meeting planner. Ellen has been a member of PCMA for many years now, depending on employer support. She was on the Chapter Board a few years ago and currently serves on the national PCMA Honors Committee.

She is in love with HGTV and recently bought an old Craftsman home built in 1916 and has been slowly rehabbing it. Ellen's passion for her job is the people. "I truly feel like our convention is like having 13,000 people as personal guests in my home, and I want them to have the very best experience." •

— *by Ryan Barth, CMP
Global Account Executive, ConferenceDirect*

THE EVENT

PCMA Capital Chapter Annual Meeting

November 18th, 2014

5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Hard Rock Café

999 E Street NW, Washington, DC

Join us Tues., Nov. 18, 2014, from 5:30-8:00 pm, as we ROCK the year in achievements for the PCMA Capital Chapter and our members.

Register: bitly.com/THEEVENTPCMA

Spotlight on a Supplier

Karla Kelly

*Vice President of Sales and Marketing
Audie Expo Services Inc.*



Karla is a veteran in the Hospitality Industry with over 20 years of experience in sales and exposition management. She has held sales positions with several destinations as well as Marriott and Hyatt. She has built a unique knowledge base of the industry balancing the supplier side with 13 years of meeting planning experience as well.

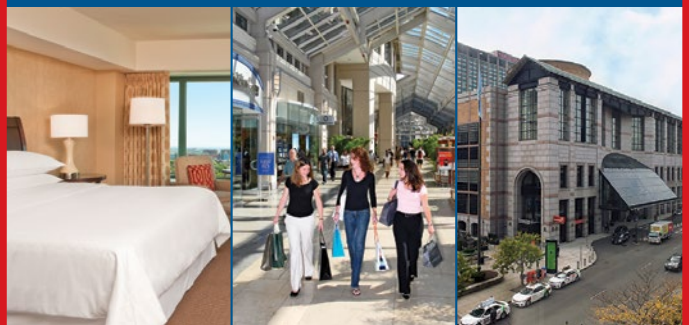
She is the mother of a 15 year old daughter, Kelly, who is an avid soccer player. When she is not working, you can find Karla spending time with friends who are mostly in the hospitality industry. A member of PCMA Capital Chapter for over 10 years, Karla enjoys giving back to our industry by participating in community services committee work.

Karla has some great advice for emerging professionals. "Never burn a bridge, DC is a very small town and Facebook is forever!" •

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

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KIRSTEN OLEAN, CMP, CAE, HAS JOINED THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR MICROBIOLOGY AS THEIR DIRECTOR OF MEETINGS. CONGRATULATIONS!!!

SPECIAL SHOUT OUT TO **STEPHANIE BROWN**, VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION AND CONFERENCES AT THE AMERICAN WIND ENERGY ASSOCIATION, ON BEING SELECTED ONE OF PCMA'S 2014 40 UNDER 40 RECIPIENTS. WAY TO GO, STEPHANIE! YOU DO THE CAPITAL CHAPTER PROUD.



Mark Your Calendar

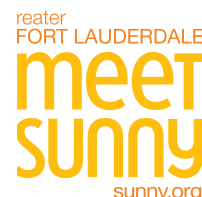
Please join us for these upcoming events. Visit our chapter website for details and to register:
www.pcma.org/connect-and-grow/chapters/capital

CAPITAL CONNECTION

- 11/18 The Event: PCMA Capital Chapter Annual Meeting**
5:30 pm - 8:00 pm
Hard Rock Café
999 E Street NW, Washington DC
Register: <http://bit.ly/TheEventPCMA>
Sponsored by The Hard Rock Café DC, Visit Norfolk, PRG and Greater Miami & The Beaches
- 12/18 PCMA Capital Chapter Capital Classroom**
3:00 PM- 5:00 PM
Hotel Monaco
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Sponsored by Kimpton Hotels & Resorts and the Fort Worth Convention and Visitors Bureau
- 1/11/15 Capital & Chesapeake Chapter Reception**
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Capital Chapter of PCMA
3337 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-5219

Chatter Info...

The Chatter is published by the
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