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The People Issue!



Here's What's *Really*
On Their Minds

Plus...



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The People Issue!

**The 2010 Class
Of Meeting Pros
To Watch
Reveal What's
Really On
Their Minds**



"The most satisfying thing about being a meeting planner is the ability to see the end result of all the hard work you put into an event."

—Tara Morrison, CAE
President, Association Management Executives Inc.

"The future for the meetings industry is bright, but it is changing. As meeting planners, we have to be ready to adapt to the changes in the industry and our clients' needs," said Jordan Mancini of the South Carolina Association of Realtors and one of the dozens of meeting professional who are being recognized in the following pages as a Meeting Professional To Watch in 2010.

Mancini's opinion about the future health of the meetings industry was echoed by several planners like Amanda D. Scott, manager of the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors Inc. Scott believes the changes within the industry are, simply put, good.

"The meetings industry has dealt with some serious challenges over the past year or so. These challenges have been good in that they have forced people to continue to focus on service, which is essential to successful meeting planning. As the economy begins to grow stronger, I believe that the industry will also grow stronger with a renewed emphasis on providing excellent customer service and building partnerships between suppliers and customers."

The health of the meetings industry is just one of many issues on the minds of meeting pros. Cost cutting, budgets, attrition, negotiations, partnerships, strategic meetings management and finding professional success are some of the topics they're talking about today.

From their positive outlook on the health of their industry to their insight on how to find creative ways to cut costs while also enhancing the attendee experience, the 2010 class of meeting pros to watch have a commendable insight on their profession. While their titles, organizations and industries vary in scope, they are committed to overcoming their own, unique challenges. This year's class underwent an interview process and were asked to share their memorable experiences, thoughts on success and words of advice. The following comments are excerpted from these interviews and are our way of congratulating these outstanding individuals.

Additionally, you'll find information on events that were nominated as some of the most creative and successful gatherings in the South as well as the top new and renovated facilities. Readers were also asked to nominate outstanding meetings sites for our Readers' Choice Awards. These are listed on the following pages as well. ■

—Data compiled and edited by Katy Petrovics, Ashley Wright and Marlane Bundock.

that has ever happened is not meeting our room block and facing attrition costs. After that experience, we have become much more conservative in estimating our sleeping room needs and work to negotiate future meetings with the facility in lieu of paying attrition fees. Not meeting your room block can be very costly, but having good relationships with the hotel can help overcome this.

Marketing To The 'New Gen': My biggest challenge at this moment is getting our younger members to attend our meetings. We have to market to them in an entirely different way—Facebook, Conference Blog, Twitter and webinars. The professional brochures do not always work with our younger members.



As the executive director of the Georgia Association of CVBs, **Julie Ford Musselman** "has been wonderful at planning the Georgia Tourism Conference," her nominator said.

Practice Makes Perfect: One of the things that I learned while planning a meeting happened at the Inaugural Georgia Tourism Summit at Callaway Gardens in 2002. It was one of my first meetings, and I was a bit anxious. As the meeting planner, I was the liaison for President Jimmy Carter who was our keynote speaker. The committee made some good-natured jokes during the planning about me checking my etiquette books and practicing my welcoming remarks in front of a mirror. And, when the Secret Service vehicle arrived and Carter stepped out of the car, the practice paid off. I was immediately speechless, but then the rehearsed speech came to mind. After I spoke, he replied so warmly that I was able to relax a bit and continue our conversation normally. I remind myself that even if it's your millionth meeting, a little practice doesn't hurt.

Double Booked: One of the worst things that happened to me in the planning of a meeting was realizing that the municipality had double-booked an event for the same city park at the exact same time. I decided to drive to the city and meet with the city personnel in person. I

went without an attitude of blame but one of cooperation to figure out how could we make these two groups happy in their city. That very day, we were able to work out a solution that did not involve moving to another venue. I think of that experience when the unexpected happens during a meeting and remind myself that there is always a solution.

Dr. Sam V. Dauzat has been planning meetings since 1976, is the owner and manager of Louisiana-based Advanced Hospitality Services LLC, and is responsible for planning meetings for professional associations at local, regional, state and national levels, as well as planning meetings for various business and civic entities.

Word To The Wise: With institutions cutting back on expense accounts for conference attendees, it is likely to result in smaller conferences, smaller and more competitive venues, more conservative menus, and more attention to cost and value. So, encourage attendees to bring families and provide meeting sessions with value, not extravagance.