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# Speaking of **IMPACT**

SUMMER 2010

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## CONNECT ON ALL LEVELS

Hybrid Conferencing Combines Onsite and Online

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE,

### **EXTENDING IMPACT AND CONNECTION**

The possibilities are limited  
only by your imagination

### **CONFERENCING FOR GEN Y**

If  $X + \text{Gen Y} = \text{Success}$ , what is X?



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Hybrid conferencing combines onsite and online

By RICH FINSTEIN

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The possibilities are limited only by your imagination

By WAYNE OUTLAW, CMC, CSP

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# Leveraging the Value of Technology



By Peri Shawn

**A**re you like me? Do you have a love-hate relationship with technology? You love it for the advantages it has to offer and hate it when it doesn't go as planned.

Several years ago, I was presenting to a room of "suits." I was the only female in the room speaking to a group of leaders in a male-dominated industry. The presentation was going well. They were engaged. During the break, some of the executives in the group discovered I use voice-recognition software (I talk into my headset and the computer types what I say). Because the executives wanted to



learn how to use it to save time, they asked me to demo the voice-recognition software in front of the group.

When they came back from break, I opened a Word document on the screen so everyone could see how the software worked. They gave me a phrase or sentence. I repeated it in my headset and the computer typed it. Everything was going along perfectly. It was working word for word. Their line – my voice. The computer typed it with no errors. Until...

One of the "suits" enthusiastically said, "We say this all the time: 'Our reputation is in our hands.'" Innocently, in my headset, I said, "Our reputation is in our hands." And the computer typed... wait for it... "Our reputation is in our pants."

As you can see, technology gone wrong can be great for comic relief. Needless to say, one of the favourite parts of the day was the demo of the voice recognition software.

In this issue of *Speaking of IMPACT*, you'll learn how to use technology to your advantage; how to demystify your audiovisual contracts; how to achieve true interaction; and how to ensure your technology is not so over-the-top that it takes away from your participants' human connectedness.

As you arrange your events, leverage the value of technology by using the ideas shared by the authors in this issue. As you know, you have access to the valuable resource of more than 500 professional speakers at [www.canadianspeakers.org](http://www.canadianspeakers.org) to help you find the perfect match for your event and professionals who will find the perfect balance between technology and audience participation.

Delivering compelling value,

Peri Shawn  
2010 CAPS National President



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Brampton’s Shnier, Gesco Limited Partnership’s Shnier Summit won the “Best Medium Meeting” in Canada; and Moncton, N.B.-based Co-op Atlantic’s August Board Tour won the “Best Small Meeting” in Canada.

The “Best Meeting in Canada” is unique as it recognizes and rewards organizations that invest in meetings as an integral part of doing business. Each “Best Meeting in Canada” winner had clearly defined goals and objectives for their meeting and was able to measure and calculate a positive return-on-investment for their event.

## Canadian Meetings Generate \$71-Billion Per Year

MPI FOUNDATION’S UPDATE TO ITS 2006 *CANADIAN ECONOMIC Impact Study (CEIS)* indicates that meetings generated more than \$71-billion in industry output per year and produced more than 673,000 meetings annually, with an average of 70 million yearly participants.

Significantly, the 2007-2008 *CEIS Update* demonstrates that the economic contributions of meetings and events activity in Canada at the end of 2008 were slightly higher than the 2006 figures released in the original study, despite the change in economic conditions over this period.

“The *CEIS* unequivocally proves that the meeting industry is paramount to the face-to-face interactions that drive business throughout Canada,” said Joe Nishi, MPI Foundation Canadian Council chairman.

## Detailed Survey Provides Meetings Industry Insight

HOSPITALITY SALES AND MARKETING ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL (HSMIA) and 2020 Assessment™ recently conducted an online survey that asked conference attendees about their views and expectations related to the planner industry for 2010 (159 attendees completed the survey).

Most respondents (83.7 per cent) rely on current technology to run their businesses. The common uses are online registrations, social networking, eRFPs, e-mail blasts and marketing and blogs. Respondents also report such technologies typically make their job easier. However, 57 per cent of respondents reported that the incorporation of technology is not making their jobs easier. Open-ended comments suggest that technology lessens the quantity of phone calls and hard mail, while at the same time streamlining business processes, organizing information and allowing a database of legacy data to be built.

Price was not the strongest driver in the site selection process. The top five reasons that planners selected specific venues for events were (in descending order by average rating): size of the meeting space, guest room cleanliness, customer service, location and, lastly, price.

The survey respondents did not perceive any clear value to the trend for sales agents to move from property-level to a regional-level representation. In particular, 67 per cent of respondents indicated that regional sales agents are not more responsive than property agents, 78 per cent indicated that meetings booked via regional agents are not better executed and 77 per cent noted that regional sales agents do not provide better service.

ROI is a topical subject in the industry, and almost half of the sample (48 per cent) indicated that they feel increased pressure to show metrics/statistics to attest to the success of events.

With respect to suppliers, respondents overwhelmingly agreed (89.6 per cent) that credentials do not significantly impact the selection decision. The formal credentials preferred by the survey respondents include industry certifications like CMM, CMP, CASE, MBA and CSEP. However, informal credentials were cited just as frequently.

Pre-scheduled vendor appointments are another topical trend for conferences, and respondents identified nine general incentives aimed to increase attendance at these meetings.

- Tangibles like discounts, raffles, samples or point system
- Networking lunch with vendor
- Re-scheduling fee for missed appointments
- Pre-meeting conversations with vendors to set expectations
- Convenient meeting times that do not conflict with popular seminars
- Reminders via e-mail or text one hour prior to the appointment
- Creation of integrated schedule of events for attendees at time of registration
- Centralized layout for the meetings so it is easy and quick for attendees to locate and visit
- Ensure that vendors prepare succinct and targeted presentations so time is not wasted.

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## ESCAPE THE CITY AND EXPERIENCE HIGHLAND CONFERENCEING

# Montréal Ranks at the Top of North American Host Cities

IMAGE: TOURISME MONTRÉAL

MONTRÉAL IS NOW NORTH AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE HOST CITY, according to the recent results from the 2009 preliminary rankings of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA). As the city's principal venue for major international meetings, welcoming thousands of participants each year, the Palais des congrès convention centre confirms once again its leadership status on the global stage.

The findings to date speak volumes. Montréal ranks first among all North American destinations, ahead of major U.S. and Canadian cities including New York, Boston, San Francisco, Washington, Miami and Chicago, as well as Vancouver and Toronto.

Montréal jumps eight spots from the 2008 rankings. "These results are a great win for Montréal and reflect the city's energy and drawing power among the world's major associations, especially in light of the increasingly wider offering out there in recent years," says Palais' president and CEO, Marc Tremblay. "As the city's principal venue for international meetings, we are pleased to see how the efforts and passion of our industry partners such as Tourisme Montréal, Montréal International, the research centres and the City of Montréal are bearing fruit."

The ICCA 2009 preliminary rankings also show that Montréal is clearly well ahead of the other major Canadian cities.

During the 2008-2009 financial year, the Palais hosted a total of 16 international conventions (including U.S. conventions) and 15 Canadian and Québec conventions, generating an overall sum of more than \$168 million in economic spinoffs for Montréal, and this does not include the outcomes from other major events such as trade shows.



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# CONNECT ON ALL LEVELS

Hybrid Conferencing Combines Onsite and Online

By Rich Finstein



**W**hat are hybrid conferences and why is there so much interest in incorporating them into a professional development strategy?

Hybrid conferences provide remote participants access to real time, onsite presentations and meetings. It is the creation of a teaching environment suitable for both onsite and online participants where each is able to have the same opportunity to learn, engage with the presenters and achieve the same educational outcomes.

Hybrid conferencing has become popular because onsite attendance appears to be one of the first impacts of the recession we began to experience in 2008. Our community of members and stakeholders are thinking twice about absorbing expense for travel, accommodations and onsite registration. There is also a concern about leaving one's place of work in such a challenging economic climate. Given these circumstances, it is important to remain relevant and accessible to those who choose not to attend. So how do you go about creating a successful and engaging hybrid program?

#### **UNDERSTAND THE BUSINESS PROPOSITION OF INTRODUCING AN ONLINE OPTION TO YOUR ONSITE CONFERENCES**

The last thing anyone wants is to introduce web access to our conferences and have onsite attendance diminish. It is critical to understand why people make the decision to come and the impact of a providing remote access. When I speak on this subject, I always ask the onsite audience: If certain sessions were available online, would you still attend the conference? I hear a wide range of responses. In some sessions, most participants indicate that they would still attend onsite while in other sessions, more than half of the attendees indicated that they would not. Understand the impact this could have on your event.

- Know the reason why people come to your onsite event and where it fits in your organizational strategy.
- If you make the decision to provide a hybrid conference, understand how you can make it unique from the onsite program. As you do this, think about the experience of participating from one's desk vs. moving around, networking and socializing at a venue. What enhancements should be included to improve the online experience?
- Be aware of the distractions people participating from their offices will have. How are you going to keep them engaged?
- How do you create value? It is important that you carefully consider the value proposition to entice people to participate. The key to building attendance and revenue is creating a different experience for remote attendees that includes unique value, separate marketing messages and special enhancements.

All hybrid conferences can be recorded and archived for later access. Subsequently, the cost to offer archives of your programs to your membership is very small. This means there are two potential revenue streams: the event itself and your post-event sales. There are several ways to create value with hybrids.

- Provide a complete virtual conference package that includes live and an on-demand version of each session you are producing. There is a good chance that when someone signs up they will not watch each session live. With limited time, they will watch some live sessions and then find an alternative time to watch others.
- Offer individual session packages at a higher rate and still include the archives for free.
- Promote the conferences as a "site fee," offering – one in which attendees can invite their entire office for one price.
- Add enhancements, such as an interview with the presenters after the program or an online forum for remote participants.
- Run a Twitter feed for remote participants to follow.

#### **SELECT RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR HYBRID EVENTS**

Once you have decided which conference is appropriate to offer as a hybrid event, it is time to begin assembling the pieces to your production. Typically, there is an audiovisual company involved in producing sound and video for the onsite audience. Some of these companies may also offer live streaming of programs. The question is, will they be able to support your hybrid conference objectives? There are several things to think about.

- Do you have the resources to host registration internally, or do you need to outsource?
- How will you develop and host session archives? Can you create the proper access to match your business objectives (i.e., shopping cart, merchant account, hosting location, etc.)?
- Are your events interactive (learning labs) or general sessions? You will want to create the appropriate remote experience to match the onsite format.
- What will you use to present the sessions? Does your technology partner provide access through software that can support questions, polls, annotation, sharing of websites and instant feedback? Do you have to manage these features or will they be managed by your technology provider?

#### **PLAN YOUR HYBRID PRODUCTION**

Once you have determined the business case, selected who you will work with and the resources you will need, then it's time to create the hybrid conference structure and production plan. There are several things to consider.



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What equipment would an AV company provide and what components will your hybrid company provide? Do you require both? What equipment and access will you need? Typically, there is a sound board, encoder, one or multiple cameras, sound monitoring equipment, a device to connect the phone line to the sound system and several wired Internet connections. These connections will have certain bandwidth requirements depending on the technology that is being utilized.

Will you be producing multiple concurrent sessions? If so, you will need a crew for each program. If not, it will be wise to have the production group stay in one room and simply schedule all hybrid events in that room.

There needs to be ample time for testing of all components, to allow for necessary adjustments. The critical element is the encoding of the audio signal to ensure the best possible audio quality.

Where will the camera(s) be positioned? It is important that they are positioned as to not obstruct the onsite audience but provide a clear view of the session. If possible, it is best to put the camera on risers positioned approximately 100 feet from the front of the room. A second camera can be used to capture the onsite audience and provide a sense of the entire venue.

#### PLAN EACH SESSION

Some hybrid events can be extremely challenging to produce. With two audiences to engage, the session must be carefully planned. Typically, this requires an increased level of planning and coordination with the presenters.

Prepare the presenters to think about how they can involve the remote audience. They might want to provide an introduction to welcome them, create poll questions, or plan remote breakout groups that match what is happening in the room.

To bridge the two audiences, you may want to show the hybrid (webcast) window to the onsite audience instead of the typical PowerPoint slide show. This way the audience in the room can see remote audience poll responses, questions posed and possibly a remote presenter.

Have the presenters prepare an opening and closing that addresses the remote audience. Remind them to fol-



### 10 Tips for On-Camera Presenters

- 1 Use specific language to address both your onsite and online audience.
- 2 Practice staying in one position for the camera.
- 3 During a discussion or Q & A, remember to tell your online audience to join in by "typing your comments into your chat window," or whatever the exact instructions are for them.
- 4 Mention if your session is being shared via Twitter, or if it can be accessed via any other social media outlet.
- 5 At the end of your session, remind both audiences they can access archives online, and instruct them how to do it.
- 6 Remind online audiences to download any supporting resources, if needed.
- 7 Be sure to thank your online audience as well as your onsite audience at the end.
- 8 If you are not used to being on camera, practice in the mirror, or, before hand, looking directly into the camera when talking to your online audience.
- 9 Make sure you wear clothes with simple, clean lines. Do not wear black and white, bright colours (except for perhaps a small item like a tie), shiny or busy fabrics, busy patterns (especially herringbone), and, if you have darker skin, wear darker colours.
- 10 Look at yourself on the computer screen before the session starts so you can see what your online audience will see. This will reinforce where you should be standing and what is actually seen online.

low the event on Twitter, if you are using this outlet, or to download any necessary handouts or supplements prior to the session if they haven't already done so.

Decide how you will incorporate remote questions into the session. Options include having participants text their questions and having them read by a producer or moderator, or having them ask their questions verbally over their phone connection and announcing them through your sound system.

Determine how you will accept onsite questions. Ideally, there are people with roaming microphones where attendees can raise their hand and have a microphone brought to them. You want to have enough microphones to support a natural verbal exchange for the size of audience you are addressing. Typically, a group of 100 people requires at least two people with microphones. Alternatively, questions can be written down and submitted to a moderator.

A primary benefit of hybrid events is that you are capturing the content while showing it live. Therefore, the cost to record and produce an archive is relatively small. Once the session is completed, you have the opportunity to extend the life of the event and create an enduring learning opportunity by offering the recorded session for sale through your website. The archive can be a great value to first-time viewers purchasing the program, or as a resource for those who attended.

Hybrid conferences have emerged as a viable component in reaching a greater percentage of member communities with meaningful and relevant content. They are finding a natural, permanent place in many organizations, regardless of the economy. This success is attributed to the positive response from their membership, with some experiencing an increase in overall attendance of up to 50 per cent, and increases (or no decreases) in revenue attributed to easier access to the conference and the sale of archived sessions. For so many, hybrid conferencing just makes good sense and using the right combination of content, venue, presenters, technology and technology partners, hybrids can be the event of choice.

**Sol**

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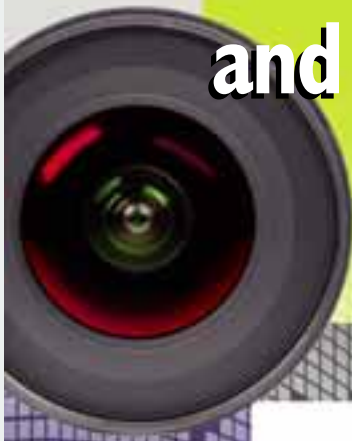
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*spent twenty years addicted, homeless and abused. When she woke up, she began climbing the corporate ladder. Sue is now one of North America's top paid trainers and works with Fortune 100 clients. She has been published in over 50 North American periodicals and hosts a Voice America radio show.*

# EXTENDING IMPACT and CONNECTION

THE POSSIBILITIES ARE LIMITED  
ONLY BY YOUR IMAGINATION

By Wayne Outlaw, CMC, CSP



Several years ago, it was predicted that video and the Internet would dramatically reduce in-person meetings, making them almost obsolete. This, like many other predictions, has not been accurate. Even with post-9/11 travel issues and a challenging economy, the ability to meet face-to-face, network with colleagues, hear great speakers in person and learn from others is still a very strong attraction. The collegial effect of meeting with others that are in similar situations and with similar interest is still a key part of our personal and professional life. It can be enriched by the sharing of information using video.

Our ability to connect over distance has made life easier and richer. With the phone in the past to present day with everyone having their own mobile communication devices (much more than cell phones), communication has become easier and more immediate. In the same way, live video can make the experience of hearing a speaker, viewing a PowerPoint presentation or sharing ideas much better. Today's meeting attendee is accustomed to the media-rich world of TV, music videos and video games. If your communication is not engaging enough, it will not educate, motivate or inform. Adding video is a great way to increase engagement and make it more enjoyable.

In addition to enriching the experience, live video ensures that meetings – even those with the greatest obstacles to overcome – take place. As a speaker who has never missed an engagement, despite a number of difficult circumstances in the past, often I would have loved to have had a backup plan to ensure the meeting went on as planned. It would have made my life – and that of the meeting planner – a little more stress free.

With today's video capabilities, a speaker can easily provide an alternative if he or she cannot be present due to travel considerations or other factors. Including the option of a live video presentation in a speaking contract and providing instructions in the event of an emergency will provide the meeting planner with a great sense of security.

We have the capability to connect with our clients anywhere in the world with just a few clicks of the mouse – as long as they have a high-

speed Internet connection. Even in the event that my travel is stopped en-route, I can still use my laptop to provide a live video program that can be easily projected onto a screen in the meeting room. While this impromptu presentation may not be broadcast quality, the content will be the same and the meeting will take place on time. We have added this as an emergency backup option for our clients.

Live video provides more benefits than just as a backup when a speaker is unable to make it to an engagement. It easily enables regional meetings to reduce travel for groups that are dispersed in wide geographical areas. It also allows for more frequent meetings between people in different locations. We have found that combining an in-person presentation and live video presentations provides a great way to enhance and extend the experiences. By eliminating the barrier of distance, communication, learning and connection increases. The applications for live video and its capability are too numerous to mention. Just use your imagination to see how easily you can use this medium to communicate.

Using today's technology, live video is inexpensive, requires no specialized equipment and is easy to use. A number of years ago, we attempted to use videoconferencing but despite the high cost of the equipment (\$50,000) and special telephone lines, our success was very limited compared to today's capability. For the monthly cost of our specialized ISDN telephone lines needed in the early 2000s, you can buy an unlimited annual use license of hosted software providing a much more capable system. Today, the cost is inexpensive and its applications are numerous.

For example, recently we presented an in-person workshop to a company's sales force and followed it up with five monthly live video workshops. This format not only provided great information, but allowed for reinforcement and application between sessions to build on and improve value. The added value to the client was significant.

We know that live video capability is available from several sources, so how do we select the best one for our needs? Frequently, we see newscasters and talk show hosts connect by video with people in remote locations using Skype. Skype utilizes Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP)

technology that began as a telephone application and has expanded to video. To make a Skype video call is relatively easy: all you need is an Internet connection and a web cam. You simply download the free Skype software, register as a user and create your username. Just turn on your web cam, ensure that your room is well lit, sign in and you're off and running. Skype's strengths include low-cost and ease of use.

Over the years we have experienced web seminars, usually known as webinars. Their strengths include being able to communicate with a large number of people at once. They allow you to share a PowerPoint presentation or desktop applications and communicate by telephone or VOIP. This is a medium and format that people have used many times and have become very comfortable in doing so. WebEx and GoToMeeting are two of the top providers.

We wanted to provide our clients with the easiest and best experience in live video capability, so our company selected Adobe Connect Pro which not only provided the ease of video calling (like Skype) but also the applications that people are comfortable with. We chose a hosted application from a third-party provider because of the level of support. We obtained our license for Adobe Connect Pro from Clarix Technologies, and purchased a high definition Web Cam from Logitech for approximately \$150. For about \$50 per month, we were ready to start web conferencing and presenting video seminars on the web.

Once we established our account, we were able to set up meeting rooms for clients and specific purposes that provide a video window (or pod), a content pod for typical PowerPoint presentations, live chat pod with participants and even create breakout sessions. We selected it because it was a very features-rich application and did not have a substantial learning curve. Most important, it is very user-friendly for the

participant so the message, not the medium, is what is seen. The participant receives an e-mail invitation and simply clicks on an enclosed link to check their computer and attend the presentation.

Our license provides us with the ability to have 99 participants viewing a live, one-way video broadcast. This capability enables us to present workshops and presentations to large groups with a live video broadcast making the experience much richer. There is no limit to the number of presentations we can do each month. The presentations can be recorded and made available for viewing by the participants afterward.

For smaller groups, we can provide live two-way video to four other locations at any one time. This enables easy collaboration with any group such as a committee or even teams of people in different locations. We have found collaboration is much easier when you can see and hear each other.

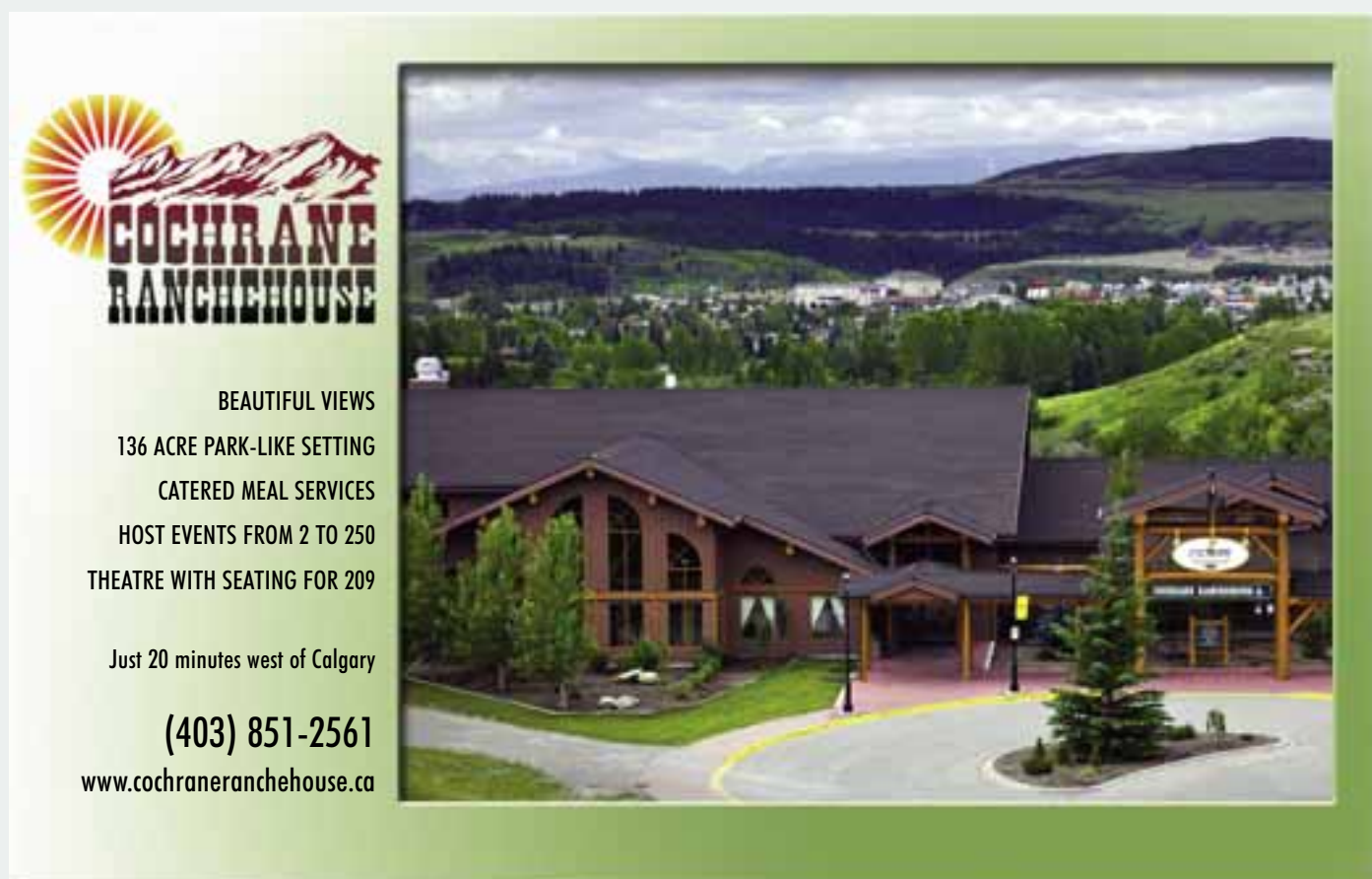
Adobe Connect Pro allows for recording and posting of a presentation on the web. If someone cannot be present, they can review the presentation or meeting later. This is especially valuable in training to enable the participant to review the material covered, or when working with group members that cannot always be present for the workshops.

While Skype, GoToMeeting, and WebEx are good alternatives, we selected Adobe Connect Pro because it provided the most capability for the investment. With a small investment for a high-quality web cam and a modest license fee, we have great point-to-point live video capability to present a program anywhere in the world. I can be in my office studio and present a live video workshop to up to 99 people.

Technology is always moving forward and prices fluctuate. Consider the technology but look beyond it to expand your thinking about what is possible.

**Sol**

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# CONFERRING FOR GEN Y

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By Lisa Larter

## IF X + GEN Y = SUCCESS, WHAT IS X?

I attended a conference in 2008 with 3,000 of my non-closest friends. I met a couple people (okay two) that I keep in touch with from that event, and I do admit to hiding in my room at one point because talking to all these strangers was a bit too much effort. I was not having fun.

How could I make this a better experience? How could I make it fun and enjoyable? I needed a different approach if I was to go back in 2009.

I decided to take things into my own hands. I found as many e-mail addresses as I could for people who attended the previous year (my friends met lots of people) and I uploaded them all to LinkedIn and sent them a request to be my friend.

I was going to use social media to *find* and be *found*. I was on a mission to make this conference outstanding and to maximize my opportunities to meet and connect with the right people.

After engaging in some social media “art of war,” I accomplished the following:

- More than 100 new connections on LinkedIn within 24 hours
- Personal e-mail addresses and phone numbers of people who were attending who wanted to meet up at the conference
- My own conference event planned for two

different evenings with a hash tag assigned on Twitter creating lots of buzz

- More than 50 people in attendance each night including most (if not all) of the main stage speakers
- Relationships and business opportunities with countless people as a result of this event.

The moral of the story is: if you want to make conferences more effective for my age group you need to pay attention to how we do things. We love conferences, but we have a different idea on how they should unfold.

### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ME

I am socially savvy and unafraid to make friends with people online. I know this is the best way to build stronger relationships when I get to a conference, so I will actively seek out speakers and other people who are attending via my social networks.

I am super pro-active and, as such, I am more concerned with the hash tag on Twitter than I am with the conference agenda, because it is the people like me who are attending the conference that I want to meet. The hash tag on Twitter helps me connect with them. This is really important to me because it allows me to drill down and see what is really happening pre-conference.

I am going to utilize technology to share my experiences at the conference with my networks. Don't try and scold me for using my Smartphone – this is how I break down barriers and share information with my tribe.

I am always going to organize my own non-conference event in order for like-minded people to come together, and you should expect me to invite your speakers. I want to meet great people when I am at a conference. Don't take this the wrong way; it is how I demonstrate my independence.

I am also only going to attend conference sessions that are of value to me. I am resourceful and know that there is an opportunity for me to do business and gain clients at your conference, too. I will take advantage of this. You can be sure, though, that if you are a speaker, and I connected with you in advance of the event, I will be there to show my support when you are on stage.

You see, I am not the traditional conference goer of the 80s who arrives on time, sits quietly and pays attention. I know you have your agenda, but I also have mine.

My agenda includes sharing great content with my social networks; it includes meeting speakers face to face after I have met them online and helping my tribe feel as though they have attended virtually.



You see, I don't just talk about what I have for breakfast. Those of us who really influence our social networks are known for sharing and providing great content. If you give us great content, content that is useful and helpful, not just the what, but the how-to when your speakers talk to us, we will be sharing it the entire time we are there.

#### WHAT YOU MIGHT CONSIDER DOING

Create a space on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn where it is easy for me to connect with other people attending the conference. This makes it easier for all of us, and if you don't do it, one of us will do it for you and, when we do it, we do not always have all the information you would like attendees to have. Include links to all of these places on any e-mail marketing you send me, please.

Give me permission at the beginning of every session to Tweet. I know this may sound corny but if you understood Twitter you would get that every time I post a message, I am marketing your conference. There is as much value in it for you as for me, so embrace it instead of making me feel like I have to use my

mobile device under the table. The content you are providing is going straight from your event out to my tribe, which is helping you gain interest for your next event.

Schedule and promote a Tweet up at the bar the evening before the conference starts. Give us name badges we can write our Twitter handles on, because most of us know each other by our Twitter handles, not our real names. This will help start the conference off on the right foot. Many of us would even arrive early just to attend this pre-conference event.

Give me your speaker Twitter handles in your conference agenda. I am most likely going to read it when I get there. This is an added value for me because now I don't have to search for the person and it will help me to talk to the speaker directly. Most of your speakers are looking for feedback from smart, savvy people like me and are already active on Twitter.

Finally, when you use social media to try and capture my attention, talk to me not at me. I am tired of being spammed and marketed. I want to engage in conversation with you – can you help me to do that? **Sol**

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# Use All the Tools in the Box

## Successful meetings require another look at the lost art of social contact

By Ed Rigsbee, CSP

**T**echnology-enhanced meetings can be a wonderful thing when the technology drives attendee engagement and learning. However, when technology becomes the controller and the audience becomes the controlled, its value quickly diminishes.

### WHY WE MEET

My research suggests that networking first and education second, are the primary reasons for live meeting attendance. This research, conducted across a wide assortment of trade associations and professional societies, has also revealed the yearly sustainable real-dollar value of networking to be worth just over \$4,000 in reference to annual membership. Yet, the conventional wisdom among meetings industry publications is that the networking-

Ed Rigsbee, CSP, is the author of three books on alliance relationships and nearly 2,000 published business and relationship articles.

• [www.Rigsbee.com](http://www.Rigsbee.com)



capable number of attendees is decreasing. This could offer possible proof that the art of social contact is disappearing.

### TECHNOLOGY DOWN-SIDE

The drawbacks of technology can be many. The simplest meeting technology is PowerPoint. Unfortunately, this helpful software also enables a presenter to get caught up in reading bullet points and forgetting to engage the audience.

### RISK AVOIDANCE

From the perspective of audience members, technology-driven events can easily facilitate risk avoidance by eliminating the need for live social contact. The use of Twitter and Twitter-based application software during a live meeting can be a useful novelty, however this also allows audience members to avoid expressing and defending a particular position or perspective on an issue. Much of the technology for meetings allows for anonymous participation, which is not always a good thing because it also minimizes social contact.

### TECHNOLOGY ADVANTAGE

Meeting organizers who incorporate social networking prior to meetings can help their attendees make live connections at meetings. Twitter postings, Facebook pages and groups, and LinkedIn groups offer planners free cyber social contact conduits. Meeting software, such as Certain Software, offers planners amazing integration.

### STRATEGIES FOR RE-SOCIALIZATION

Consider facilitating quality social contact pre-meeting, throughout the meeting, and post-meeting.

Set up a Twitter account. Send an e-mail invitation to constituents asking them to become followers. Then Tweet weekly with new information about the meeting.

Set up a meeting group at either Facebook or LinkedIn. E-mail invitations asking constituents to join the group. About six months before the meeting, start posting discussion questions weekly. Closer in, start posting individual notices about each specific activity. Just before the meeting, invite all the "cyber" buddies to an "organization hosted" pre-meeting live networking gathering.

Ask every presenter, including the keynoter, to add an element of networking driven audience participation to their program. Inexperienced presenters can always employ a "round table" question-discussion.

Be reasonable about the meeting schedule. This is the area most susceptible to planner sabotage of networking possibilities. Breaks between sessions, depending on the distance attendees must walk, need to be closer to 30 minutes than the typical five to 15 minutes.

Many organizations use the buddy/mentor system in which every first-time attendee is assigned a buddy/mentor. The buddy/mentor is responsible to take this new person around to all his or her social networks and effectively guide the person through the meeting maze. Also, the buddy/mentor does some post-meeting follow up to see that the first-timer actually implements new skills learned at the meeting.

Post-meeting interaction can be achieved through social networking. The most effective will focus on discussions and activities encouraging implementation of new skills and follow up with new persons met. **Sol**

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# Beating Expectations

Diversity combined with multiple options make the GTA the ideal venue for today's meeting planner

By Jamie Parcells

People have lived in Toronto since the last ice age, but in terms of being the ideal venue for today's association and corporate meeting planners, the city – and for that matter the entire GTA including the surrounding regional municipalities of Durham, Halton, Peel and York – has never been hotter.

Toronto is indeed the hub of Canada's financial, commercial and industrial life and, according to the results of a recent survey published by Watkins Research Group, the city ranked number one in six of eight categories including superior convention centre services. Toronto also ranked within the top five in six of the eight other categories including great all around convention city. Survey results were tabulated from the responses of more than 600 meeting planners from across North America about a range of aspects pertaining to the meetings and conventions industry.

"We love it when our customers speak. In our business, nothing is more important than client endorsements," says David Whitaker, president and CEO of Toronto Tourism. "Two years ago we were ranked number eight in North America and we believe that this change is largely attributed to the revitalization of the entire region. It brings variety, choice, accessibility, diversity and energy. It speaks volumes and meeting planners are listening.

"What I am most proud of as an organization is the absolute myopic focus to the customer," he asserts, attributing the overall current success of the region to not only the work being done by his own organization, but also 'We've Been Expecting You' – a joint initiative undertaken by the Province of Ontario, the City of Toronto, The Metro Toronto Convention Centre, the Allstream Centre and, of course, Tourism Toronto.

"For the customer who is coming here, we are sharing our homes with them – it's more than just a campaign, it's an attitude. So we need to prepare for them," he says.

And prepare for them Toronto has. Trade and consumer shows continue to create substantial business for the city. With nearly 2.3 million square feet of exhibition space available, in a single year Toronto hosts more than 120 business trade shows and many more consumer shows. According to figures published by the City of Toronto, the average spending by each trade show exhibitor in 2009 was \$5,400, and nearly \$1,300 by each delegate attending. Whitaker suggests that the success of last summer's ASAE annual convention is testament to the continued success that Toronto achieves from the association market, even during periods of economic decline. "In 2009, the state of the



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economy created a buyers market in our industry, so the decision for many when selecting the city for their next meeting came down to other variables that are perhaps more meaningful to the meeting planner, and we can deliver on those variables like amenities and accessibility,” says Whitaker. Toronto can be an expensive location, but with that comes all of the opportunities and facilities. There are a tremendous amount of off-site locations/facilities, and delegates are 15 minutes from downtown to any offsite location.

There is no questioning Toronto’s accessibility. More than 70 per cent of the populations of Canada and the U.S. are within a 90-minute radius of Toronto. The city hosts the Pearson International Airport and The Metro Toronto Convention Centre boasts more than 600,000 square feet of space conveniently located within walking distance of more than 12,000 hotel rooms, as well as the waterfront, public transportation stops, shops and restaurants. With approximately 35,000 hotels rooms, accommodations abound in the Toronto area. The proximity of the convention centres to the hotels is such that you don’t have to run to the extent of shuttle transportation you have to in some other cities. That is why the larger conventions are held here.

There is a social aspect of the meeting – i.e. what else is out there to keep delegates entertained. The amenities are truly endless in Canada’s largest city and simply put, there is never a shortage for delegates visiting Toronto to do. The city’s Royal Ontario Museum, Casa Loma and ART Gallery of Ontario are sure to please delegates looking for some cultural fare. “The experience is truly at par with other large cities,” says Paul de La Durantaye, general manager, Hotel Le Germain and Hotel Le Germain Maple Leaf Square (the latter scheduled to open in October). “Toronto Tourism has done a great job the last three years of positioning the city as a true international destination – both externally to the world and internally to the people who are living here, who have come to see the city as offering a true international experience. This evolution, combined with the shifting U.S. economy, has created a Canadian market where you can get that experience without having to go overseas.”

Delegates hankering for a sporting event can take advantage of all that Toronto has to offer. The Hockey Hall of Fame is considered a niche venue by traditional standards, however, according to Steve Ozimec, manager, special events and hospitality, the hallowed venue is still a major draw for those wishing to get up close and personal with some of their on-ice heroes. Ozimec says that like most niche venues in Toronto, the HOC’s numbers were down in 2009. “In 2009, there was a sense

## TORONTO: More than Making the Grade

RANK IN NORTH AMERICA	2008	2010
Superior CVB/DMO	8	1
Superior convention centre services	16	1
Hotels well suited for my largest meeting	12	4
Great all round convention city	5	4
Superior convention facilities	21	5
Safe and secure	10	5
Easy accessibility within the city	9	7
Easy to get to	15	17

Source: Watkins Research Group



that people didn’t want to be doing something extravagant or out of the box when perhaps there were potential layoffs looming. You didn’t want to be perceived as having fun at a meeting even though it was essential to have one,” he says.

“Still, the HOC is the only venue of its kind and we have started to see signs of recovery. We already have a good base of meetings booked for September and October and we have lots of interest coming from the US.”

The Raptors, Maple Leafs, Blue Jays and Argonauts are sure to satisfy the needs of any sports enthusiast, and the state-of-the-art facilities including the Air Canada Centre and Rogers Centre are sure to impress. The notion of Toronto as a concrete jungle has dissipated over the years, due largely to all the city has to offer once delegates travel past the six blocks of bank buildings. The city features an impressive fashion district, paths for cycling, the waterfront and, of course, Little Italy and Chinatown. Those looking to improve their handicap will want to visit the Don Valley Golf Course. Its classic Howard Watson design has a traditional variety of holes and a legendary reputation for its exciting natural setting.

### THE DISCERNING PLANNER

Last January, the City of Toronto introduced two initiatives designed to help “green” Toronto: the *Toronto Green Standard* and the *Green Roof Bylaw*. Both relate to sustainable site and building design for new development with an aim to reduce Toronto’s greenhouse gas emissions 80 per cent by 2050.

Meeting planners today are looking for everything under one roof, a place where they can offer their delegates a comfortable learning environment that has all the amenities that they bring forward in a conference. Increasingly, the green aspect is one of those amenities. “We find that more corporations and associations are looking to incorporate more of an environmentally sustainable component into their meetings – it’s becoming part of their RFP,” says Laura Purdy, director of sales and marketing, Direct Energy Centre Toronto. “They are asking very specific questions about the facility and what our green practices are.”

Green initiatives started at the Direct Energy Centre back in 2004 when it launched its *Green Smart Program*. “We decided that not only were we going to create green meeting facilities, but also to create our own green energy and look at bringing our venue to a point where we will be energy self sufficient. We will accomplish this within the next year,” Purdy asserts. The new Allstream Centre was constructed to a LEED Silver Standard, with all construction and operation of the building



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done in an environment-sensitive way. Meeting planners who book their event into the facility are plugging into a building that is already operating green. Industry experts suggest that more often than not, companies are incorporating green standards as part of their daily operations and when they take their sales training meetings and AGMs out of their particular office environment, they are looking to maintain that standard. "Allstream is a healthy environment. It's not just the benefit of providing an environmentally responsible facility to the delegates, it's about healthy air," says Purdy. "We introduced natural light into our meeting rooms so that meeting attendees have a connection with the outdoors. Convention centres typically don't offer this connection."

Green definitely does have a greater impact in terms of selecting an ideal location more so than in other markets. "I have noticed a shift that has benefitted facilities such as ours. Now we are seeing smaller meetings, but more of them instead of the traditional annual event – due in part to the current economy," says de La Durantaye. "This trend has meeting planners looking for facilities that offer something a little more unique and green often fits the bill. Our restaurant/meeting room also has 30-foot ceilings with windows from the top to the floor. Large windows and natural light have also worked their way into the design of our new facilities." In addition to Toronto, the Hotel Le Germain chain has properties in Montreal, Quebec City and Calgary.

Other cities throughout the country might be going green with envy when they look at all that Toronto is doing to meet this new demand, but some experts suggest that while there is a demand for green, it really comes down to a case by case basis. Roni Feldman, CMP, has been organizing meetings for 31 years and has witnessed many changes in the industry. She says that the demand for green really depends on factors such as corporate branding and the perception of the company. "Associations, for example, would like to go to a green facility, but there is often the issue of money and limited budgets – unless the association is directly linked to the environment," she says. "I am not sure that it has become as high a priority as many of us would like it to be. Giveaways at events are easy to do and the industry supports it strongly, but when it comes to looking at a venue that is truly green, cost is often an issue."

Hope McFall, owner of The Richmond in Toronto, a smaller venue located in the city, agrees with this assessment. "There is a cost to being green and green doesn't mean free," she says. McFall asserts that green initiatives are not exclusive to the larger venues and she says she takes pride in the fact that her



facility is leading the green charge for smaller venues and that those efforts have proven beneficial. "There have been a number of corporate events which have come to my venue as opposed to a similar-sized venue because of my green initiatives," McFall says. "Being green has helped my business." McFall suggests that implementing green initiatives does not have to be a major undertaking for smaller venues in Toronto and offers this advice: "Go after the low hanging fruit. Start with the small stuff, light bulbs, paints, bottled water, chemical cleaners, etc.," she says. "We switched to bullfrog power (which provides energy from a clean emission-free source) and our goal here is to have zero landfill at the end of an event. We haven't achieved it yet, but we are close."

The meetings and conventions trade continues to be a major component of the tourism and hospitality industry. According to the Watkins Research Group, in 2009, this sector brought in more than \$305-million in visitor spending to the region. To green or not to green may be a question that many continue to ponder, but there is no question that for today's corporate and association meeting planner, the GTA presents a golden opportunity. **Sol**



Jamie Parcells is the Publisher of *Speaking of IMPACT*.

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# The Audiovisual Contract

## Seven lessons to help you do your homework before signing any agreement

By Massimiliano (Mass) Scaccia

**E**xperienced meetings industry professionals have a substantial list of lessons they've learned: what to do and what not to do in order to produce a successful event. Since experience is the best teacher, we ought to learn from those who have the experience. Because audiovisual (AV) requirements constitute a big chunk of real estate on any meeting planner's agenda, perhaps a few lessons on the basics of AV planning are in order.

**1** Recognize that you are not contracting for "equipment" but selecting an event partner with the hardware, technology, skills and experience to do the job well.

**2** Realize that your AV company (partner) has just as much at stake in the success of your event as you do. A professional company will always strive to put on the very best event, as their reputation (like yours) is on the line. How your event looks and sounds is of the utmost importance to that company, as every person at that event is a potential client. The phrase "You're only as good as your last event" applies to you and your partner AV company.

**3** Determine what the event is worth to you, to your company and to your target audience. This worth goes far beyond the dollar value of your event. Remember that at every event your company's reputation and integrity, as well as your own, are being showcased.

**4** Clearly articulate your goals for the event. Is it to gain more business from that event? Is it to strengthen your current relationships with present customers, while at the

Massimiliano (Mass) Scaccia is the owner and founder of Massive Audio Visual Services Inc and is best known in the industry for treating clients like family.

• [www.massiveav.ca](http://www.massiveav.ca)

same time gaining potential clients? How is your company to be branded at this event? These questions should never be far from your mind when planning a successful event. Emphasize the importance of these goals and be sure to select an AV company that "gets it."

Simply hiring a company that can provide you with the projectors or screens for rent does not mean that they are qualified to run your show. It is not only the equipment that makes your event; it's the people running it. It is easy to become preoccupied with having your event cost as little as possible. Your primary concern should not necessarily be negotiating for equipment rentals, but rather negotiating for production support. An event may have the biggest backdrop, water feature or "eye candy," but if the room sounds terrible, that's what attendees will remember. Money may have been saved by cutting the AV budget, but at what cost? There is a fine line between

getting what you need in order to have a successful event and paying the least for it. Having and adhering to a budget is important, but so is not comprising the quality of your show. Your AV company should be forthcoming with you in regards to this and be able to tell you when you are challenging the effectiveness of the message you are attempting to convey to your audience.

**5** Establish open dialogue and a close rapport with your AV partner. Your representative should be asking specific and insightful questions about the event, not just the generic ones that are common in the industry. These questions assist in personalizing the event and in clarifying successful outcomes. Only by fully informing themselves about your company, your event and your goals, will your AV company meet your needs. Being aware of every necessary detail will ensure that when its time your event comes off with out a hitch.

**6** Know from whom your AV company is purchasing their rental equipment. Does this supplier keep their equipment well maintained and in good working order? An excellent AV company is not buying used equipment off websites or acquiring other people's rental product. If the company cares about their clients, it will strive to provide the latest and best equipment – ensuring the best product and the best possible service.

**7** Never accept a comprehensive quote without your AV company performing a "site check." Site checks are valuable for several reasons, the first of which is that your representative will have a complete visual of the venue. This will allow them to accurately determine what can or cannot be done by identifying power sources and where cables can be run. Safety issues can also be addressed at this time in order to maintain safety for attendees and event technicians.

"Backyard mechanics" are common in every industry and the live events industry is saturated with them. Some companies care deeply about the work, some pretend to care and others simply don't. I've heard far too many people say "if the client is cost focused and cutting corners, then I will be, too." Those in the know will always stay focused on the outcomes and remain passionate about their work. **So!**





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# Meetings at Warp Nine

**“What is technology anyways? Isn’t that just a fancy word for *fire*?”**

By Michael Kerr, CSP, HoF

**S**ince I’m somewhat of a technological savant, I often field questions like this. People who ask this question are idiots so I typically ignore these kind of questions.

What I can’t ignore is this question: “How can the meetings industry optimally leverage the value of multi-faceted inter-spatial converging technology platforms to conform to the future demands of intergenerational, multi-user groups in a post-dynamic, ultra-technological world?”

In other words: “Can I still use a flip chart in my presentations?”

As someone who not only uses flip charts, but actually owns several flip charts and makes use of them frequently during dinner parties and on romantic dates with my wife, I can confidently say this about that: “Take a breath. Yes. Yes, you can still use a flip chart.”

Flip charts have always been with us, and they always will be. Seriously. Early speakers (circa 30,000 BC) used to draw flip charts on cave walls to explain the concept of flip charts even though they didn’t exist yet. How cool is that? (It’s so cool, I’m going to go journal about it tonight on one of my flip charts.)

But you may be wondering, that with the speed of technological change sweeping over us like a giant computerized broom, what other technological advances can the meeting industry leverage or, at least, pretend to make use of because it’s really cool and looks like something Captain Picard would have used on the Enterprise?

Michael Kerr is this year’s academic chair of I.F.C.F. (International Flip Chart Federation), a speaker, trainer, author and all-round techno savant.

• [www.mikekerr.com](http://www.mikekerr.com)



Here are a few predictions about some new inventions and trends that will take the meeting industry to Warp nine in the near future (please note: we are currently at Warp 1.3, so this is very exciting stuff):

**3D Meetings.** Thanks to the movie *Avatar*, more and more meetings will feature 3D experiences, such as delegates actually showing up in person, wearing funny sunglasses and touching each other’s face in astonishment as they explore the exciting third dimension.

**Virtual Meetings:** Virtual meetings will, however, virtually overtake traditional 3D

meetings to the point that virtually no one will even need to show up anywhere anymore (much like my last public seminar), let alone get out of bed in the morning.

Downloadable brain implant technology will allow conference attendees to simply download meeting content directly into their brains, thereby ensuring presenters never have to deliver content again, causing thousands of motivational speakers to heave a huge sigh of relief.

PowerPoint™ technology will be superseded by SuperDuperReallyPowerfulPowerPoint™, resulting in even longer delays to the start of opening sessions. (The upside being that some of the new slide transitions will blow conference delegates’ minds.)

**Hybrid Meetings.** More and more so-called “hybrid meetings” will feature attendees driving their Toyota Prius at breakneck speeds to get to the event where they will then dine on sandwiches made from ethanol.

This isn’t so much a technological change but more of a prediction around meeting nomenclature: circa 2027, a U.N.-sanctioned language committee will officially reassign the word “podium” to mean “lectern,” since evidently people will never, ever grasp the correct definition anyway. This seemingly simple change in language will save meeting planners thousands of hours in lost time and mass confusion.

Technology speakers will be unable to keep up with the ever increasing rate of technological change, thus making them obsolete. Ironic, no?

Advances in green technology will accelerate. Eventually everything from table place settings, to attendee bags, to flip charts, to the very sun itself, will be solar-powered. Speakers, however, will be powered by wind energy.

Flip chart marker makers will introduce a new colour called “fandango-banana-rama.” Otherwise, flip chart technology will stay pretty much the same as it has when it was first conceived back on that cold, rainy Tuesday morning in 30,000 BC.

So there you have it. Nine technological advances that will dramatically alter the time-space continuum of the meeting industry.

(Incidentally, in the future, due to tremendous efficiencies gained by new technology, Top-10 lists will require only nine items.)

**Sol**





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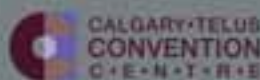


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