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2009

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY SURVEY

To discuss the state of the meetings and events industry today (or indeed the state of any industry) without mentioning the global economic downturn is to ignore the proverbial elephant in the room. And it's a pretty sizable elephant if you listen to what hospitality industry analysts say.

"The conventional wisdom suggests that this trough is going to be longer [than the post 9-11 recession.]," says Scott D. Berman, leader of PricewaterhouseCoopers' consulting practice for the hospitality sector. "The comeback in 2002-2003 was a pretty dramatic comeback and did not affect as many markets as this cycle will."

>> BY MARNI GINTHER & JOEL SCHETTLER

Meetings

MINNESOTA'S HOSPITALITY JOURNAL

■ The Westin Edina Galleria, site of the upcoming State of the Industry Event, Feb. 3, 2009.

Hospitality in an Inhospitable Economy

The most alarming aspect of the current economy is the surprising speed at which conditions deteriorated during the final months of 2008. Any discussion related to the hospitality industry—whether it be air travel, hotel room rates and occupancy, business travel trends or hospitality employment—certainly must be placed within the greater economic context.

During the third quarter of 2008, the U.S. gross domestic product took its worst fall in seven years. It shrank at a 0.5 percent annual rate from July to September, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. That's the sharpest decline since 2001, right after the 9-11 attacks. In October, the Consumer Confidence Index plummeted to 38, the lowest reading ever since the Conference Board Consumer Research Center began measuring the index in 1967. In November, the index bounced back to 44.9 but that's still historically low. Employment fell by 1.2 million during the first 10 months of 2008 and more than half of that decrease happened in August, September and October, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). National unemployment reached 6.7 percent in November, as the bureau adjusted its greatly underestimated original projected job loss figures for September and October.

Key economic indicators for hotels are down too. In October, North American hotels reported a 6.3 percent drop in occupancy from the year before, a 1.3

percent drop in average daily rate (ADR) and a 7.6 percent drop in revenue per available room (RevPAR), according to Smith Travel Research's monthly Global Hotel Report. On a national level, occupancy rates were down 6.6 percent for the month of October when compared to the same time period one year ago, according to data from Smith Travel Research. RevPAR was down more than 7 percent.

While sweeping national trends such as these can sometimes be easy to ignore when you're a planner or supplier in Minneapolis-St. Paul, that's not the case this time around. Performance in Minneapolis-St. Paul suffered drops in room occupancy for October of 16.1 percent compared to the same month one year ago; RevPAR was down 16.4 percent, placing the Twin Cities at the bottom of performance in the top 25 U.S. markets.

Minnesota's leisure and hospitality industries experienced declining job numbers from August through October, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows roughly 247,000 leisure and hospitality jobs in Minnesota, which is a 0.2 percent decline from October of last year. On a national level, leisure and hospitality shed more than 150,000 jobs in November compared to the same month last year, according to initial BLS estimates.

Nationwide airline capacity cuts, which affect meeting and convention attendance, have not left MSP International Airport without its fair share of troubles either. The number of average daily seats on domestic departures in December 2008 at MSP International was down 11 percent from December 2007, which puts Minnesota in slightly rougher shape than the national average for that month, which was down 9.2 percent from last year, according to *USA Today's* analysis of figures provided by Official Airline Guide (OAG).

In a publicly released memo to employees in early December, execu-

(PLANNER)

Have rising fuel costs during the past 12 months changed how you plan your meetings?

55%
Yes

(VENDOR)

Which issue/operational trend has the biggest impact on your business relationship with meeting/event planners?

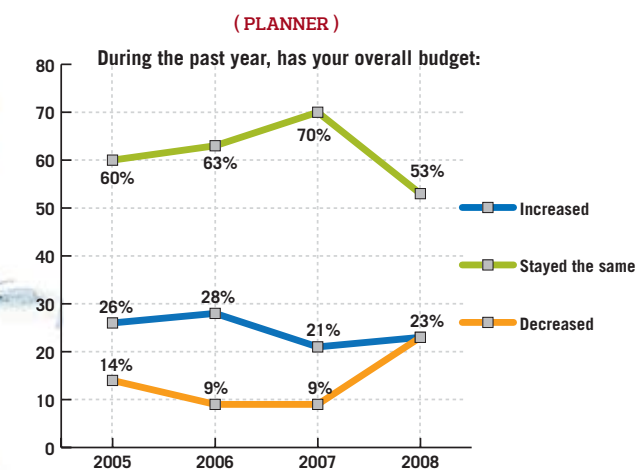
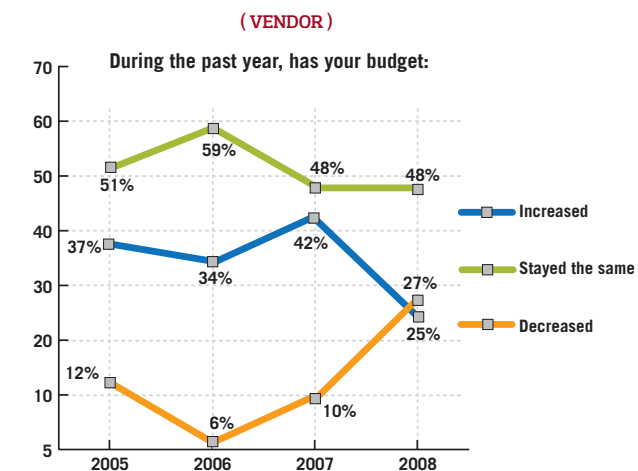
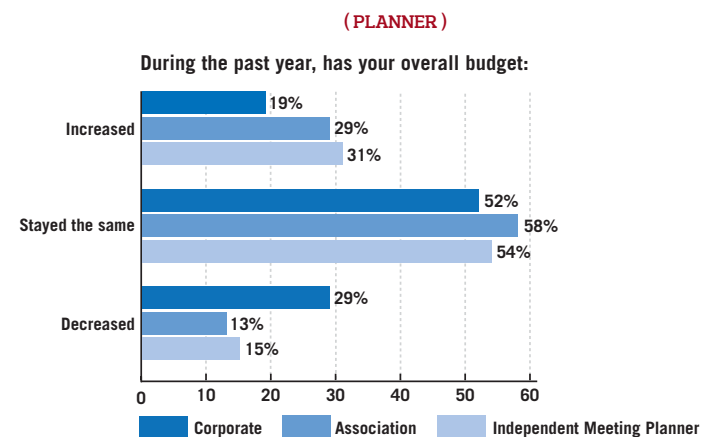
57%
Price concessions/
budget constraints

tives from Delta Air Lines, which recently merged with Northwest Airlines, announced systemwide capacity cuts for both airlines between 6 percent and 8 percent for 2009, which include cuts in domestic capacity between 10 percent and 12 percent.

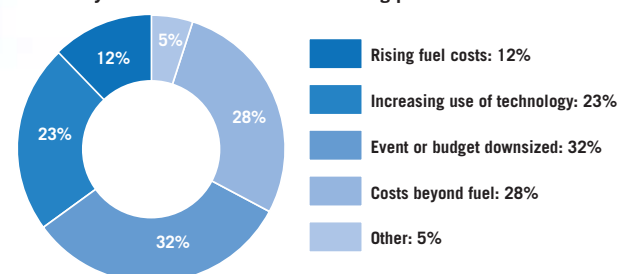
"We're in for a rough patch in '09 just in terms of general lodging," Berman says. "When you break down leisure, corporate groups and meetings, no segment is going to be immune to the downturn."

Some industry analysts are forecasting tougher times for business travel than leisure travel. During the 2008 Marketing Outlook Forum in October, the Travel Industry Association (TIA) forecast a 2.7 percent decline for business travel in 2009 and only a 1.3 percent decline in the leisure sector. More than 50 percent of travel managers say new airline fees are having an impact on their planning and they are encouraging less air travel and eliminating all non-essential corporate travel, according to a National

Budget Trends



During the past 12 months, which trend had the greatest impact on how you conduct business as a meeting planner?



“ VERBATIM: On Luxury Hotel Brands in the Softening Economy

Several luxury hotels landed in the Twin Cities just in time for the economy to head downhill. Scott D. Berman, head of PricewaterhouseCoopers' hospitality consultancy.

"I do not expect those types of hotels, at least for the first quarter of '09, to drop their room rates dramatically. What you'll see is creative marketing—'Stay with us Friday and Saturday night and get Sunday free.' Those types of deals, which certainly are a type of discounting, but the hotel industry is much more creative today. They have millions of

names in their databases around their frequent guest programs. They're tapping into and offering special privileges to their members to keep them loyal. And so where you're seeing airline frequent flier programs take perks away from their members, hotel programs are actually adding perks to sustain that loyalty."



Business Travel Association (NBTA) survey released in October. These contractions in the business travel market will undoubtedly affect planners and vendors across the country.

Budgets, Relationships and Technology

Some of the current economic malaise has already caught up to *Meetings: Minnesota's Hospitality Journal's* survey respondents' business. During the past 12 months, the trend of downsizing budgets and/or events was the top reason planners cite as having the greatest impact on how they conduct business (32 percent). This trend is followed closely by rising costs beyond fuel (28 percent) and increasing use of technology (23 percent).

To gain perspective of how widespread these budget cuts are, note that 23 percent of planner respondents say their budget shrank during the past year—that's a jump of 14 percentage points from 2007 and 2006, when, for both years, only 9 percent of respondents said their budgets shrank. On the vendor side the jump in respondents experiencing budget cuts is even bigger, up 17 percentage points this year from 2007.

Local concerns are indicative of those felt across the entire country's hospitality industry. Nationwide, the top three trends planners say will affect their work in the next six months are the poor economy, budget cuts and increased travel costs, according to Meeting Professionals International's (MPI) quar-

terly Business Barometer survey conducted at the end of October. Nearly two-thirds of MPI members expressed anxiety over economic conditions for the foreseeable six months.

Tough economic times will place a strain on any relationship, from families to businesses, and in the local meetings industry, the planner-supplier relationship is no exception. More than half (57 percent) of vendor respondents say price concessions and budget constraints are the biggest trend affecting their relationships with planners.

From the planner perspective, pricing is a bigger factor in choosing a venue than it was last year. The number of planner respondents who cite "special offers from competing venues" as the main reason for considering a new destination jumped 8 percentage points from 2007. And those planners who choose "competitive rates" as the main reason increased 7 percentage points over last year.

Planners across the country are just as open to price considerations, according to national findings in MPI's *FutureWatch*. While in 2007 only 52 percent of planners said competitive pricing was their most preferred customer loyalty strategy, this year that figure jumped to 81 percent. Having flexible contracts was the next most preferred strategy by planners, at 78 percent. Again, this was a jump from last year's 39 percent.

Suppliers haven't responded very dramatically to planners' preferences, judging by *FutureWatch* numbers.

Only 53 percent of suppliers rank competitive pricing as their most preferred customer loyalty strategy while flexible contracts came in fourth. In light of the bad economy, it makes sense that price would begin to play a heavier role in planner-supplier relationships. However, as much as that factor may have increased this year, *Meetings: Minnesota's Hospitality Journal's* survey respondents still rank site quality as the most important factor in considering a new destination (34 percent).

Tightening travel and meetings budgets also begs the question of whether advances in virtual meeting technology will begin to replace some face-to-face meetings. Many travel buyers across the country (81 percent) think technologies such as teleconferencing are supplanting business travel trips, according to an October survey conducted by the NBTA.

Yet, many State of the Industry survey respondents side with the remaining 20 percent of NBTA respondents who believe technologies complement trips rather than supplant them.

"Even though webconferencing is increasing because of cost factors, companies still need to have face-to-face meetings to provide networking," says survey respondent Bonnie Marten, a training and human resources employee from the University of Minnesota, Human Resources Management System.

"At the end of the day the technology is not exactly brand spanking new," PricewaterhouseCoopers' Berman says. "And I think there's more confidence in

using it and it's an effective way to send a message but, especially if you're in the service industry, it does not replace meeting with your client. At least for our firm, [the technology] has been in place,

we use it effectively, but I don't seem to be traveling any less."

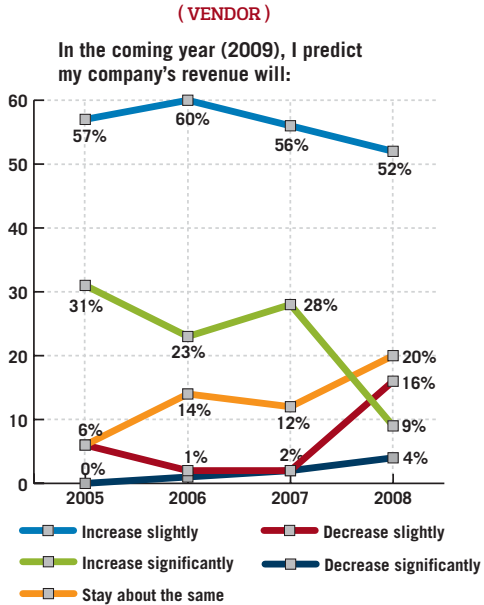
Cautious Optimism

So what lies ahead? It stands to reason that survey respondents remain concerned about what the coming year holds for the industry, but taken in context, the numbers show cautious optimism rather than panic. The number of planner respondents who think Minnesota's hospitality industry will decrease slightly in the coming year is up 23 percentage points from 2007, yet planners who think the industry will increase slightly actually outnumber those who think it will decline. It's the same situation on the vendor side. Although those who predict the local industry will decrease slightly did jump significantly (9 percentage points) from last year, they only comprise 9 percent of all vendor respondents. Most of the vendor respondents feel the industry will increase slightly (45 percent) or stay the same (39 percent).

Industry forecasters project a rocky 2009 with varying degrees of improve-

ment in the following years. Although TIA predicts a 2.7 percent decline in business travel in 2009, that's still better than the 3.6 percent decline it reported in 2008, and its 2010 forecast predicts 2 percent growth. And despite a projected 5 percent to 8 percent increase in business travel costs in 2009, the number of business trips will continue to grow in 2009, just more slowly than during the period from 2004 to 2007, according to NBTA's 2009 Business Travel Overview and Cost Forecast. The report also predicted hotel rates to increase 1 percent to 4 percent and published airfares to increase 7 percent to 10 percent.

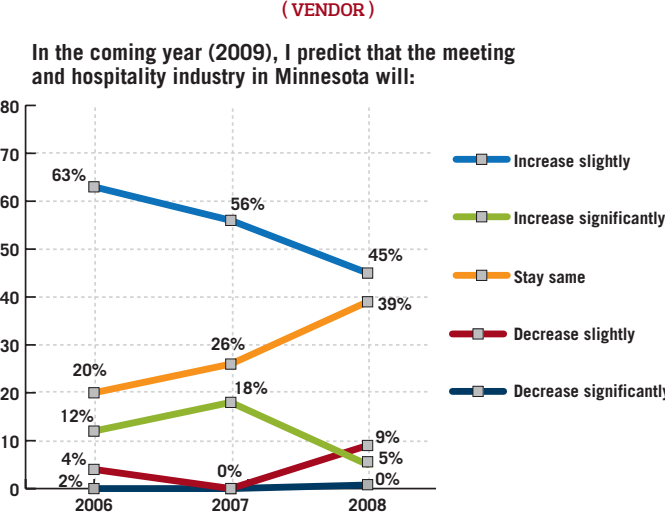
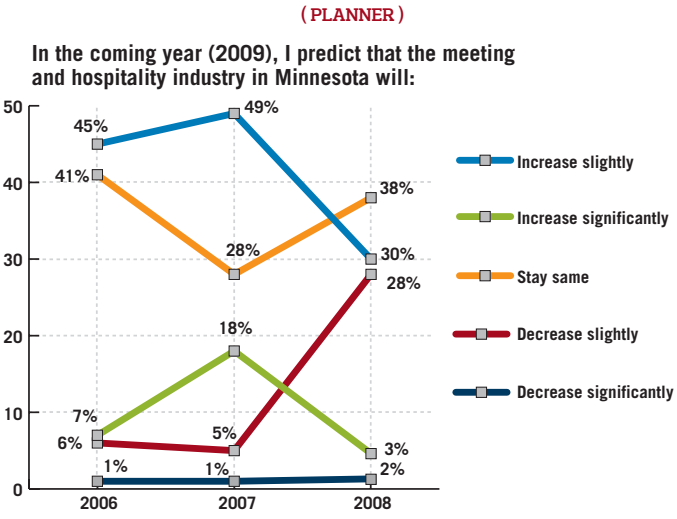
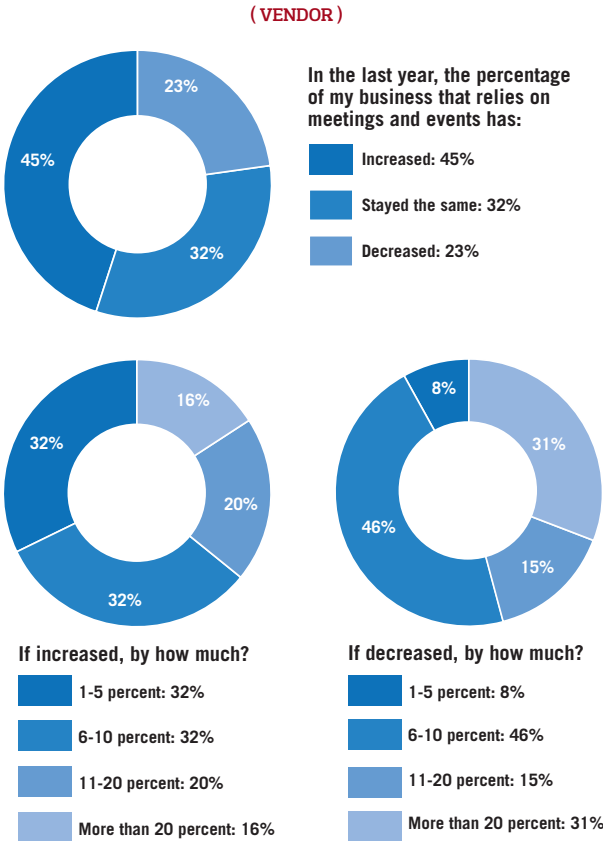
"I think the message consistently being broadcast is this is going to be a prolonged—meaning more than a year—downturn," Berman says. "The wisdom of industry leaders and the guidance that the publicly traded hotel companies are putting out is to expect a rather weak 2009, with 2010 and 2011 being improved but it's unsure how much improved." ■



Respondents Weigh In:

"The current economy is definitely having an impact on our business. Clients are canceling more than ever before, and the reason is becoming a familiar one. Companies are stating that their spending has been cut, leading to the cancellation of meetings. The cost of holding the meeting far exceeds the penalties they incur for canceling."

—Sheryl Sorem, sales and marketing manager, Saint Paul Hotel



The Local Landscape

Several months have passed since Minneapolis-St. Paul had its moment in the spotlight at the 2008 Republican National Convention. The convention Host Committee declared the convention a success, which received 8 billion media impressions and exposure equivalent to a \$330 million ad campaign. Yet, while the RNC may help to launch Minneapolis-St. Paul as a national and international destination, it really only signaled a beginning of a concerted effort to attract visitors, events and business to the Twin Cities, placing the area among the nation's top-tier hospitality destinations.

Throughout 2009, convention and visitor organizations will continue to leverage the RNC to attract even more events—such as the 2014 Major League Baseball All-Star Game that's already been pitched—and roll out national marketing efforts. In the meantime, professionals working within the industry will cope with economic developments that will affect everything from local arts and attractions to transportation and education.

When it comes to attracting regional and national business, survey respondents hold mixed opinions. Some local vendors have attracted more national and international business. Last year, 6 percent of vendors said that half or more of their business came from national clients (meaning clients based beyond the Midwest region). This year that number of vendors grew to 11 percent. The number of vendors with internationally based clients grew 8 percentage points from last year. Despite the influx of outside business, most vendors (61 percent) still cite the Twin Cities market as the sector that has shown the most growth over the past five years.

More than one-third of meeting planners (34 percent) hold all of their events in Minnesota. That number is down five percentage points from last year, a possible indication that either more planners are holding events out of state or they are simply not holding them at all.

Minneapolis and metro area suburbs continue to be respondents' most popular sites for in-state meetings, with 75 percent of planner respondents indicating that's where they hold their in-state events.

Marketing the Twin Cities

While any dramatic, long-term effects the RNC may have on Minnesota's or the Twin Cities' meetings and events industry remain to be seen, strong marketing efforts are underway. Anyone arriving at MSP International Airport, flipping through local publications, or just walking around the cities has probably spotted one of the ads from the More To Life Twin Cities marketing campaign. The campaign grew out of a brand research project undertaken by the then-named Greater Minneapolis Convention and Visitors Authority (now Meet Minneapolis) in conjunction with FutureBrand, an international brand development company, says Karyn Gruenberg, More To Life project leader.

"What we learned is, the same challenges in attracting meeting planners were similar in challenges employers faced in attracting talent," Gruenberg says. "It's not that we had a bad reputation, it's that we had no reputation." More To Life launched in January 2008 to market not only to conventions and visitors, but to those looking to relocate as well. Local corporations helped fund the project while local public relations, advertising and media organizations helped build and implement it.

The FutureBrand research upon which the campaign is based compared Minneapolis-St. Paul's convention and tourism markets with eight other cities—Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Denver, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Milwaukee and St. Louis—and concluded that the Twin Cities have certain "brand opportunities" along with "brand challenges." The More To Life campaign focuses on addressing the challenges and taking advantage of

What time of year are most of your meetings conducted?

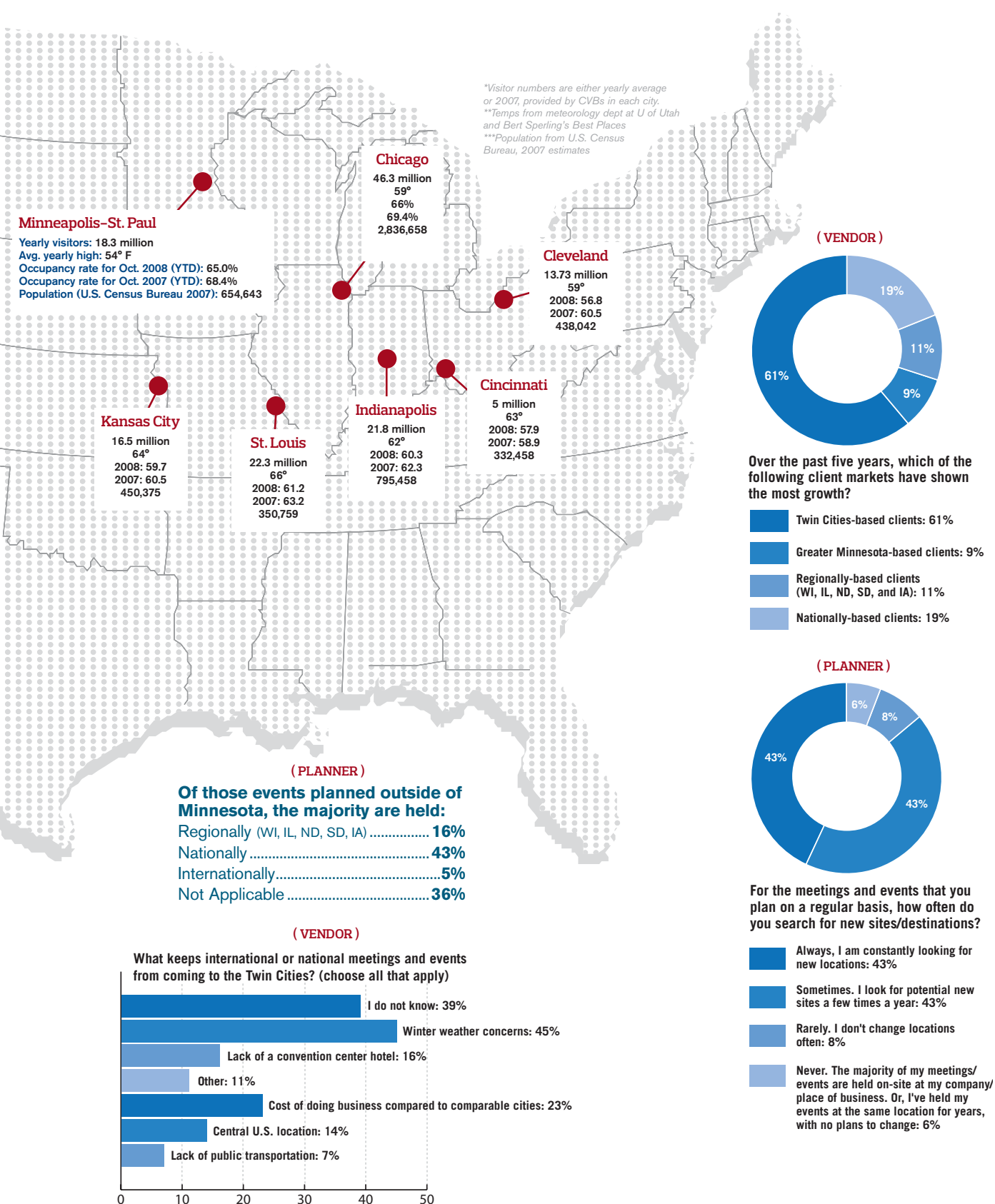
38%
Spring

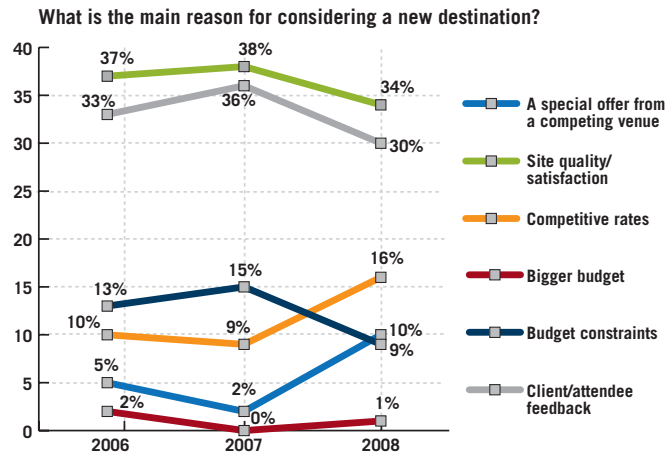
"I would absolutely love to put together a program to the Twin Cities. I think we have a lot to offer attendees. Since a majority of our business is done in the spring, it's most likely a warm destination. Our winters have a huge effect on what is pitched to clients."

—Jennifer Witthuhn, survey respondent, planner, Carlson Marketing Worldwide

How does Minneapolis-St. Paul compare?

For the U.S. hospitality industry, 2008 was a rough year. Occupancy rates in the top 25 travel markets—which includes Minneapolis-St. Paul—decreased by 3 percent from October 2007 to October 2008 according to Smith Travel Research's October 2008 Hotel Review. Occupancy rates in all other domestic markets fell by 3.6 percent. We've collected occupancy rates for the cities that FutureBrand's More To Life study compared with Minneapolis-St. Paul, plus a few other numbers to compare and contrast.





the opportunities. For example, key brand challenges included the cold weather and a perception that beyond Mall of America, there's nothing to do here. Interestingly enough, in open-ended *Meetings: Minnesota's Hospitality Journal's* survey questions about the local hospitality industry and whether it poses challenges, 20 different respondents cite weather as a hindrance to bringing conventions and meetings here during the winter months. "The wintertime weather keeps a lot of meetings from our area," says survey respondent Pam Soules, a meeting and event planner for Winmark Corporation.

FOUR TO WATCH: Tourism and Convention Developments

It's impossible to look back on this year's developments in the local hospitality landscape without catching a glimpse of a few things that are in the works but haven't quite come to fruition. Here are a few that could see progress in the coming year.

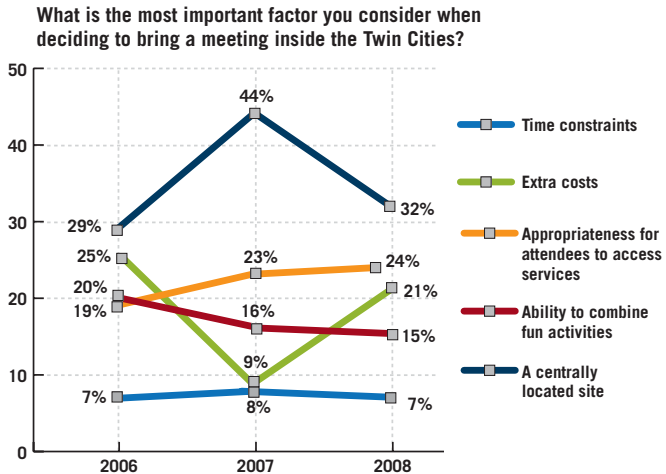
1. The Twin Cities' "Arts Explosion" isn't over yet. The Frank Gehry-designed **Weisman Art Museum** on the University of Minnesota campus is scheduled to get an addition that will break ground in January 2010, says Weisman spokesperson, Christopher James. The projected grand reopening is fall 2011, and it would become the first of Gehry's

buildings to include an addition designed by the architect.

2. The **Mall of America** continues to work with the City of Bloomington on its "Phase II" expansion project, a four-story, 5.6 million-square-foot expansion, which proponents say would contribute more than \$2 billion per year to the regional economy. Plans for a 500-room Marriott Renaissance are moving forward and more specifics will be known in January 2009, says Director of Public Relations Dan Jasper.

3. Since the **University of Minnesota** announced in 2005 its goal of becoming one of the top three research

At 35 degrees, Minneapolis-St. Paul does have the coldest annual average low temperature of the eight cities. However, Milwaukee and Denver aren't behind by much at 38 and 37 respectively. FutureBrand also brought to light certain specific brand opportunities, which included the green space of our cities, safe downtowns, the area's wealth of shopping opportunities, and the fact that Twin Cities residents are generally seen as a friendly, genuine, tolerant group of people with a high quality of life. Many survey respondents echo these attributes in their comments, and 12 different



respondents say the Twin Cities doesn't lack marketability, but that there does need to be a stronger marketing effort. One survey respondent's optimism aptly summarizes how many may feel: "The opportunity to market the Twin Cities coming off the RNC event is huge; let's do it together!"

Venues From Ballparks to Ballrooms Of course marketing efforts can't do much good if there isn't anything new or interesting to market, but that has not been a problem lately in Minneapolis-St. Paul. All it takes is one look at the downtown Minneapolis skyline to spot developments that will undoubtedly continue to make a positive impact on the hospitality industry. The letters atop the historic Foshay tower light the sky once again since the building became W Minneapolis—The Foshay in August 2008. Shortly before that, in spring 2008, the Hotel Ivy opened and contributed its own new lights to the cityscape. The Hotel Minneapolis in the former Midland Bank building and the new aloft, a kid sister to the W brand, also play their part in this year's venue boom.

Whether all these new boutique and luxury hotels are a good thing depends on how you look at it and whom you ask. Many survey respondents hold varied perspectives on the new hotels, expressing a mix of excitement and concern over whether they can keep their rooms full and whether they have the event space that downtown Minneapolis needs to attract larger groups. Several respondents specifically reference the lack of a large-scale convention hotel as being a

serious detriment to the Twin Cities' ability to attract large conventions. "The boutique hotels we have are nice," says Linda Hurlley a meeting planner from The Linwood Group Inc., "but what we really need are convention hotels for groups that are too large for the properties we have now, but are too small for the convention center." Other survey respondents hold similar views. Over the summer, talks about the possibility of public financing for a large hotel near the convention center were put on hold as the economy took a turn for the worse. Meet Minneapolis President and CEO, Melvin Tennant commented on the situation, saying that tough financial times and the city's many priorities have kept the issue from moving forward. He also referenced the growth in boutique hotel rooms as being a positive development, but maintained, "at some point in time I think everyone agrees we will need an additional large hotel. The question is timing. The fact of the matter is, in most major cities with the exceptions of New York and Las Vegas, municipalities have to support the project." Hotels aren't the only hot topics in local venue developments. Continue scanning the Minneapolis skyline and you'll see the progress being made on the new Target Field to be completed in 2010. That stadium's construction has spurred other development and marketing efforts. The nearby Warehouse District Business Association recently launched a new brand and logo. That project was supported by 2010 Partners, a coalition of business owners and stakeholders in the neighborhood, looking to maximize the return on the city's \$517 million investment in the sta-

dium. With TCF Bank Stadium also opening in fall 2009 on the University of Minnesota campus and talk of a Vikings stadium being built on the old Metrodome site, Minneapolis-St. Paul is shaping up to be quite the venue-rich

destination. Now the question is whether Minneapolis-St. Paul can use these new assets to continue attracting more conventions and events that will put heads in hotel beds and fans in stadium seats. ■

FOUR TO WATCH: Policy Issues

Political developments affect the local hospitality landscape too. Kevin Matzek, director of government affairs for **Hospitality Minnesota** gave us a rundown of what issues will top his organization's agenda when the 2009 legislative session begins in January.

1. LABOR DAY SCHOOL START. A perennial issue for the local tourism industry is maintaining the state's mandated post-Labor Day start date for public schools. In 2009 and 2010, Labor Day will fall on a later date, and Matzek says he anticipates schools making a push to start school earlier. "In Minnesota your summer is only eight to 10 weeks, so for the tourism industry in Minnesota you really have an eight- to 10-week window in which you need to do all your business," Matzek says. The concern, therefore, is to keep the end of Minnesota's summer tourism season intact by keeping the post-Labor Day school start regulation.

2. TIP CREDIT. This law would allow employers of tipped workers to pay those

workers a base wage that's lower than the minimum wage and apply a portion of the workers' tips to make up the difference. This recognizes tips as a significant portion of a tipped worker's income. The law would also guarantee that in the event the employee does not earn enough tips to equal the difference between their base wage and minimum wage, the employer makes up the difference. Minnesota is one of only seven states that doesn't allow for a tip credit, Matzek says. "We fully expect that the legislature next year will again advocate for another minimum wage increase in the state minimum wage and we'll be there fighting for tip credit language to be inserted."

3. LODGING TAX. Hospitality Minnesota will be working to ensure that money from local lodging taxes will only be used for marketing and promoting cities as tourism destinations, not for other city projects. In Rochester, Minneapolis and St. Paul, this lodging tax is applied to not only room rates, but also related services (i.e. room service, TV charges, dry cleaning). Matzek says Hospitality Minnesota will

work to correct this and maintains lodging taxes should apply to room rates only. "When [these cities] are trying to book larger groups, if the planners are looking to the bottom line, and if extra tax increases the cost of doing business in those cities, basically that's a competitive disadvantage to these cities," Matzek says.

4. VACATION HOME RENTALS. Because the Internet has made it easy for private vacation property owners to rent it out, Hospitality Minnesota, Explore Minnesota Tourism and government agencies have been studying whether more regulations need to be put in place. "We're not interested in bringing down the full weight of the Department of Health on someone who's letting friends use their cabin for the weekend, but if somebody advertises their place as a vacation destination there's an expectation that that's going to be a safe place," Matzek says. "Resorts have a lot of regulations they need to follow and it seems reasonable to ask the same of somebody else who has a business of renting their place."

“ VERBATIM: On Marketing Minneapolis-St. Paul

Karyn Gruenberg, project leader, More To Life campaign.

"After doing the research, we realized the most important people to sell this city are the people who live here. And we also discovered that people in Minneapolis-St. Paul aren't good at bragging about themselves. They like to be the best-kept secret. So the [More To Life] campaign launched with a local aspect; educating people as to why this is a great place to be. [Now]



we're hearing things more like, 'Well if we don't tell anybody we're not going to attract talent.' So in that sense it's been successful. [National marketing of More To Life] will be focused mostly through PR efforts and consumer-generated media efforts at this point. Candidly, it's economically a tough time to raise money for things like that. And as for local marketing, the hope and the plan is our convention bureaus will take the More To Life messages. The way More To Life was built is it can be created into extension campaigns, but we have to do it together, not as individual cities."

The Real Dirt on Green

If 2008 developments are any indicator, environmentally sustainable meetings are gradually moving from a feel-good trend to becoming industry-wide accepted practices. Nationally 19 percent of meeting planners rank environmental concerns among the top three trends affecting their work, according to Meeting Professional International's (MPI) 2008 *FutureWatch* report.

This year's State of the Industry survey, which for the first time included questions about green practices, uncovered a similar trend in the local market; more than half of planners (53 percent) incorporated some kind of green measures into their meetings. Most respondents (44 percent) cite a personal concern for the environment as their primary motivation to undertake new green initiatives. Although they're still far from standard practice, environmentally friendly meetings aren't just for tree-huggers anymore.

The Zeal to Be Green

This growing interest among planners isn't lost on suppliers—from hotels to convention centers, many are vying for a spot on the green scene by publicizing environmentally friendly initiatives. White Plains, N.Y.-based Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide launched an ambi-

tious program to make every one of its new Element hotels meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. Government agencies are stepping in too. The Environmental Protection Agency's decade-old Energy Star rating system, which rates the energy efficiency of consumer products, was adapted in 2002 to apply to hotels that perform in the top 25 percent of the market.

The mobilization of the planner, supplier and government elements of the industry has come none too soon. Unlike the LEED certification, which is widely recognized and implemented in green building projects, the meetings and events industry lacks an overarching, recognizable set of standards that translate across different regions and organizations. And that leaves the industry open to "greenwashing," or claims of being green that are exaggerated or untrue.

"It is an era of greenwashing," says Mark Andrew, president of Minneapolis-based GreenMark, a communications and consulting firm that helps clients both establish and promote green practices of their own. His firm helped outline the sustainability plan for the 2008 Republican National Convention. "The good news is that the industry is becoming

aware and has a desire to transform itself," he says. "The bad news is, efforts are still very, very fragmented. And the focus tends to be on low-hanging fruit." This doesn't mean all efforts are insincere—as Andrew says, "when it comes to green practices, it's impossible to do too much."

However, if a company promotes its green practices, it had better follow through on them, says Amy Spatrisano. A principal of Portland, Ore.-based Meetings Strategies Worldwide, an event management company specializing in green meetings, she also co-founded the Green Meetings Industry Council and writes and speaks on the topic of green meetings. She consistently sees press releases touting hotel chains' green initiatives, such as towel and linen re-use programs, recycling, energy-efficient lighting, and hosts of others. But on the

ground, she says, those practices are often inconsistent, even between different locations of the same brand. The good thing, she says, is that the sophistication of the planner is changing.

"When a supplier a year ago said, 'we're green,' most planners said, 'oh great,' because they didn't know what to look for," Spatrisano says. "So as the level of sophistication within the planners continues to grow, suppliers are going to be more hard pressed to advertise that they're green and have the planners really believe it. I'm already hearing from planners who've been jaded from the experiences they're having."

Spatrisano is quick to point out also, that greenwashing isn't exclusive to the supplier side. Events touted as "carbon-neutral" can make the claim by buying carbon credits to make up for their event's carbon footprint. "So if you write a big fat check you can say your event was carbon neutral," she says, "but you didn't change any of your behavior."

Defining Green

Awash in a sea of green, what's a planner to do? The Convention Industry Council's

(CIC) Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX) has recognized the need for some standardization in this area, just as it has done in the past by establishing accepted practices for industry areas such as contracts and RFPs. In April 2008, APEX's Green Meetings and Events Practices Panel convened for the first time.

Led by Spatrisano, the panel, which includes government representation from the EPA, comprises nine committees—one for each different area of the planning industry (such as food and beverage, venues, accommodations, etc.). Three professionals, one from the planning sector, one from the supplier side and one from a government or nongovernmental organization, head each committee. Their goal is to research and define standards, which will be vetted through the industry and presented in April 2009. "That's a rather aggressive target; as time is ticking away it's looking a little more aggressive, but we're keeping that as our goal," Spatrisano says.

When the preliminary standards come out in early 2009, anyone who works in the industry can log on to the CIC's Web

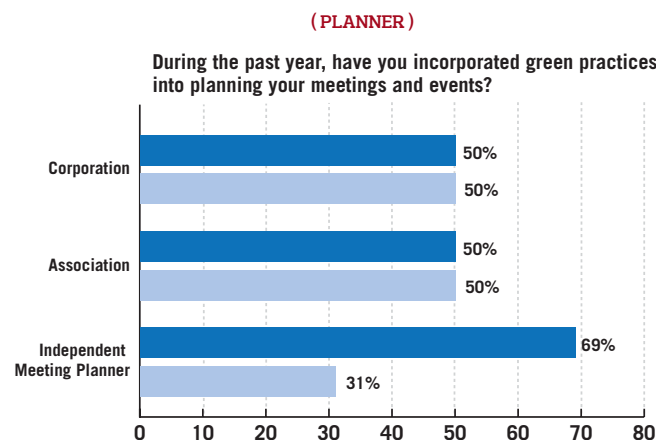
VERBATIM:

Spending Green to be Green

Mark Andrew, *president, GreenMark*

"Part of the challenge is to drive practices to a critical mass because the prices and costs will drop. We're en route to driving practices to a critical mass; we're not there yet. There

are greener supplies available today than in the past but there tends to be a cost premium associated with those. I own food stands at the State Fair. I was trying to get corn-based or sugar-based containers. And it's very, very nice quality stuff but it was six times more expensive and I just couldn't do it. So we don't advocate businesses falling on their swords to get green. We advocate doing green practices within the constraints of existing budgets. And so that means we need to be a little patient to nurse these markets along. And there are ways to do that, to encourage the development of best environmental practices in manufacturing as they relate to events, but it's taking time; it's evolving."



Six Sins of Greenwashing

In November 2007 TerraChoice, an environmental marketing firm with offices in Philadelphia, Chicago and Ottawa, released a white paper (or "green" paper as it was dubbed) called "The Six Sins of Greenwashing." They're helpful points to consider when buying any product or service.

1. The Sin of the Hidden Trade-off. This refers to claiming a product is green by pointing out one green aspect and ignoring other environmentally harmful aspects. For example, touting the recycled content of paper while ignoring the emissions produced when the paper is made.

2. The Sin of No Proof. The label on a skin cream may say it's not tested on animals, but the company offers no proof to support this claim. A new appliance might tout its energy efficiency but lack any explanation of how it saves energy.

3. The Sin of Vagueness. Beware of phrases like "chemical-free," "non-toxic," "all-natural" and "green." Poison ivy is "natural." A "chemical" is really any material with a chemical composition—like water. Many substances, including salt, can be toxic in the right amounts. And "green" means nothing without claims to support it.

4. The Sin of Irrelevance. The most common example of this sin that TerraChoice found was regarding chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which contribute to ozone depletion and have been banned for decades. Yet products continue to have labels promoting them as CFC-free.

5. The Sin of Lesser of Two Evils. Cigarettes made from organic tobacco? "Green" insecticides? This sin refers to "green" claims placed on products where the whole category of products is environmentally questionable.

6. The Sin of Fibbing. Plain Old Lying. Saying your product is organically certified or Energy Star certified when it's just not. Download the full report at www.terrachoice.com



Scott McDougall,
President, TerraChoice

site to review them and essentially toss in their two cents. What will emerge, Spatrisano predicts, is an industry-endorsed set of practices. It's important to note that the APEX panel doesn't expect all planners and suppliers to overhaul their practices overnight and that's why the standards will be rolled out in different levels. The first set of standards to come through will be less strict, with subsequent standards tightening their restrictions.

"We want to be able to engage the industry and we want something that's doable for people," Spatrisano says. Once the standards are well established, she hints at the possibility of creating a certification program—like a CMP but for green meetings—but nothing has been solidified yet.

One organization has already launched a certification program that's met with mixed results. In August 2008 the Canton, Ga.-based Association for Green Meetings and Events (AGME) launched the Certification in Green Meetings and Events but the fledgling organization has not yet been able to carry out the planned certification program.

The Future of Green

Whatever form industry standards and certifications might take, many green meetings proponents agree market forces will be the ultimate factor in driving the growth of environmentally friendly meeting practices. Furthermore, planners sit at

a unique intersection of this equation.

"I think meeting planners are in a place where they can increase their business if they develop skill sets around meetings and events that have sustainable practices," Andrew says. "And the biggest part of that is not just the small things at the event itself—it's getting the venue to transform their own policies and practices, and for the venue to get their vendors to transform their policies and practices."

In other words, demand for greener options from the planner base will spur suppliers to green up their act. This is already happening in some circumstances. Just ask Autumn Salamack, manager for education and outreach at Blaine, Minn.-based Aveda. She works with the company's show team to ensure all event suppliers implement green practices that meet Aveda's own sustainability guidelines.

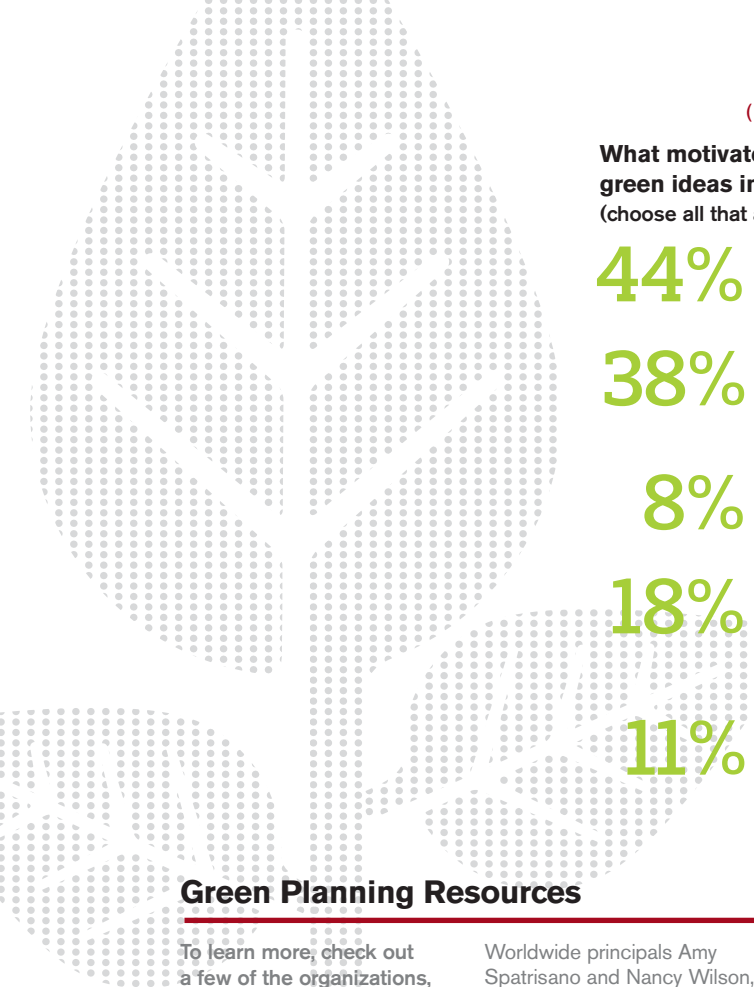
"Definitely we've seen a change [in vendors offering greener options], especially over the last two years," Salamack says. "I think there's a pretty good baseline of practice in terms of recycling and energy conservation. And they're starting to advertise it a little bit more to us as clients. But we still feel we have to push back sometimes and make sure that [the green practices we ask for] are really happening."

Salamack highlights one example of such change at Marriott's Residence Inn at the Depot in downtown Minneapolis, where she had helped plan several train-

ing events. After her show team had continually asked for recycling bins for their event space and attendees, the hotel management told her they'd decided to just implement recycling at all times, across the whole property. "So it's really nice whenever we hear those stories because we will see change occur," Salamack says.

So with all this progress on the green front, suppliers are getting flooded with requests for greener services, right? Well, not exactly, says Adam Heffron, director of sales at the Minneapolis Convention Center. "I have to say, all in all, there doesn't seem to be a lot of emphasis placed on green initiatives," he says. "The old 'space and dates' really is still paramount." While the Convention Center does take some green steps already, such as recycling and energy conservation measures, Heffron says most planners don't ask for much else. In some cases it's more than they expected. "But I don't see this great outpouring of requests in the RFPs," he says. "Actually I thought there would be more of a push than there is."

Although planners have lots of buying power to drive suppliers' greener practices, suppliers can step up early and spark that competition themselves, too, Spatrisano says. So the greening of the industry ultimately will be, as Salamack says, "a constant evolution. And it definitely requires a partnership on both sides." ■



Green Planning Resources

To learn more, check out a few of the organizations, tools and initiatives out there to help planners get green.

> **Green Meetings Industry Council** is a nonprofit, global member organization of planners and suppliers. Although originally based in Portland, Ore., and co-founded by Amy Spatrisano, the organization is evolving and expanding its reach. Spatrisano suggested that the GMIC might be a possible administrator of any green meeting certification that would come out of the CIC's APEX green meeting standards, though nothing has been decided. www.greenmeetings.info

> **MeetGreen** is a suite of tools produced by Meetings Strategies Worldwide. It includes a sustainability calculator for your event; a toolbox with green meeting guidelines, tips for contract language, surveys and checklists; a copy of *Simple Steps to Green Meetings and Events* by Meeting Strategies

Worldwide principals Amy Spatrisano and Nancy Wilson, and a MeetGreen certification program. Most of these tools are not free but there's a great demo version of the green meeting calculator. www.meetgreen.com

> **Green Seal**, a Washington D.C.-based nonprofit organization that evaluates and certifies eco-friendly products and services. Green Seal sells a publication called *Greening Your Property* through American Hotel and Lodging Association's (AH&LA) Educational Institute and also lists Green Seal-certified lodging properties in the United States. www.greenseal.org

> **Ceres Green Hotel Initiative** is "a program designed to increase and demonstrate market demand for environmentally responsible hotel services." Ceres is a Boston-based network of investors and environmental organizations working with companies to address environmental issues. The Green Hotel Initiative

offers free, downloadable tools, a survey you can send to hotels that works as an RFP specifically about green practices, and a guest request card that individual travelers can use. www.ceres.org, click on "Industry" and click "Green Hotel Initiative."

> **Energy Star**, the labeling program by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy, has a Web page specifically on hospitality. It lists guidelines and starting points for hoteliers and provides lists of Energy Star-certified hotels. www.energystar.gov, click "Buildings & Plants" and click "Hospitality" under the header that reads, "Getting Started For..."

> **The Green Meeting** is an online news source aggregating the latest happenings in the push for environmentally sustainable travel, conventions, meetings and events. www.thegreenmeeting.com

CASE STUDY:

The Green Planning Process



Autumn Salamack, manager for education and outreach at Aveda, shares how her company developed and implemented their green planning guidelines.

• **Formalize guidelines.** Aveda has established its own green meeting event and travel guidelines that all in-house event and meeting planners follow from the moment they begin planning. "We had been doing a lot of the things that are within our guidelines for a number of years," Salamack says, "but this is a formalized way of making sure there is a consistent checklist."

• **Shop around.** When planners have a more specific idea of what vendors they might use, they send the vendors a survey, asking them to report what, if any, programs they have in place for water conservation, energy conservation, waste reduction, recycling and so on.

• **Negotiate.** Before Aveda planners sign a contract with the vendor, they review the survey results. "The vendors don't have to answer the way we want them to on every survey item in order for us to do business with them," Salamack says, "but they have to show some progression in some key areas and they have to be willing to have a conversation with us and maybe move forward on a couple of key items."

• **Follow through.** After Aveda planners sign a contract with a vendor, they send the vendor a letter detailing more specifically certain things they can't allow at their event. That typically means things like, no bowls of individually wrapped candy, all sugar and condiments must be in bulk, recycling bins must be in the room and the menu can't include any veal or farmed salmon or shrimp.

• **Be persistent.** Salamack notes that even during the event it's important to make sure the green steps planners have taken continue to be implemented. "The first day we might get all of our condiments in bulk and then the second day it's individually wrapped sugars and creamers," Salamack says. "It's about making sure that we're really clear with whoever our event contact is at the facility that we're consistently going to get what we asked for across the duration of our event."

“ VERBATIM:

The Future of Meetings

Amy Spatrisano, principal, Meetings Strategies Worldwide

"While [the APEX green meeting standards] are going to be launched as voluntary standards, I believe that competition will drive the use of these standards, and it will drive them fast. I don't think it will eliminate greenwashing but I think for a time it will level the playing field around greenwashing. I think it's crucial that suppliers be apprised to what's happening. Its' not really an 'if,' it's a 'when.' And how you're prepared really depends on if you wait until your competition is there and you have to catch up, which is way more expensive."



The Value of Green

Elizabeth Henderson, director of corporate social responsibility, MPI

"In a study done in 2007 by FGI Research, they found that corporate social responsibility influences consumers. An organization's record at giving back to the community was the No. 3 reason cited, at 53 percent, while respect for the environment rated fourth at 52 percent. In comparison, an organization's Web site influenced only 33 percent and TV ads only 27 percent. This tells me that there is an opportunity here to differentiate your products and services in the marketplace through the creation and implementation of good corporate social responsibility policies and practices—including environmental sustainability."



On the Job

If you're a typical meeting planner you probably work full time as part of a planning staff with five or fewer members. You have likely been in the industry for about a decade or more, and your job description requires you to juggle a variety of duties ranging from accommodations and food-and-beverage planning to budget management and running meetings on-site. A meeting planner's job function can be found in job titles across an organization. Yet their job descriptions have remained stable over the years, according to data gathered from this year's State of the Industry survey.

More than half of survey respondents work for a corporation, while nearly one-quarter are affiliated with an association. Nevertheless, planners share many of the job's tasks regardless of job title, position in the org chart or field of work; more than 80 percent of respondents, for example, are charged with finding new meeting venues.

Whether a planner's staff is part of a planning services company or part of a dedicated planning department within a larger organization varies. Of all corporation planners, 36 percent work for a company that has a dedicated planning department, while only 26 percent of association planners work as part of a dedicated department. Of the remaining respondents, 13 percent classify themselves as independent planners, and employees of meeting planning companies made up the minority, at 3 percent. The planning profession continues to stretch across many industries, and the demographics of survey respondents show that they represent sectors ranging from finance and banking to manufacturing and medical fields.

While many elements of planners' jobs have remained consistent, some trends have begun to change the way planners and suppliers work. Clearly the recent economic downturn will continue to affect many areas of planners' and suppliers' jobs. Respondents to MPI's 2008

FutureWatch ranked a failing economy and possible recession as the top external trend affecting their industry—and that was before the turbulence during fall 2008. Of course a weakening economy's effect on certain aspects of planners' jobs, such as budgets, becomes more immediately obvious than other areas. For example, it remains uncertain how much pressure the financial crunch is

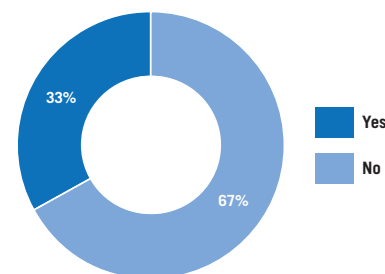
putting on planners to prove their value to their company or clients.

Only 20 percent of respondents must report return on investment measurements for events they plan, according to this year's survey data. Independent planners maintain the strongest representation within that group, with 30 percent saying they're required to report ROI measurements, followed by 25 percent of

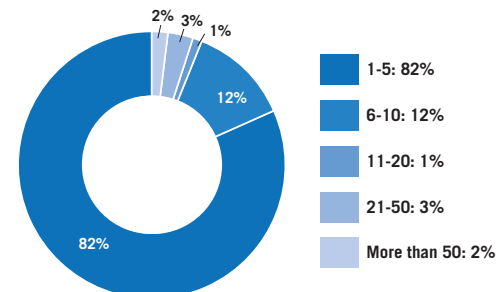
As a planner, which of the following tasks are part of your job responsibilities? (check all that apply)

TASKS	Corporation	Association	Independent
Meeting or event marketing	57%	83%	85%
Educational planning	29%	71%	31%
Tracking legal liability	19%	42%	23%
Logistics management	71%	75%	85%
Attendee research	28%	50%	31%
Creating RFPs	47%	67%	62%
Initiating budgets	50%	71%	69%
Budget management	83%	96%	77%
Negotiating contracts	67%	79%	85%
Establishing meeting or event strategies	55%	58%	62%
Orchestrating new meeting or event strategies	36%	54%	54%
Food & beverage planning/orders	91%	96%	92%
Accommodations planning	90%	96%	92%
Event security coordination	28%	54%	54%
Coordinating meeting/event themes and/or entertainment	78%	75%	77%
Seeking out new event venues (site and facility tours)	78%	79%	92%
Providing site & facility tours	21%	29%	46%
Working on-site during a meeting/event	81%	92%	100%
Other	3%	0%	15%

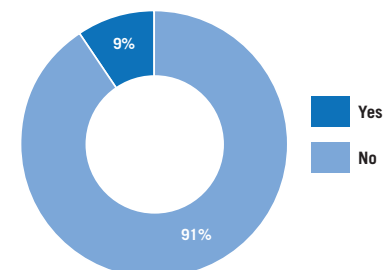
Does your organization have a meeting-planning department?



How large is the planning staff where you work?



Are you Industry certified?



Portrait of a Planner

"As long as my company will let me, I will continue to coordinate meetings and events! I have the best of both worlds—I get to be a meeting planner, but my everyday project coordinator duties also keep me busy on many levels. I thoroughly enjoy planning, administrating and coordinating personal and business gatherings—finding new ideas for agendas, food and beverage, activities and decor is exciting and fun."

—Colleen Seeger, survey respondent, executive/administrative assistant, *Renewal by Andersen Corporation in Cottage Grove*

Percentage of meeting/event/conference planners who plan between six and 10 events per year.

24%

Percentage of meeting planners who spend 91-100 percent of their time planning meetings

35%

Percentage of executive assistants who spend 11-20 percent of their time planning meetings

29%

association planners and 17 percent of corporate planners. Post-event attendee surveys, budget and revenue reports and client feedback continue to be the top three tools planners use to measure ROI.

Furthering Careers

For many planners, proving their personal value to their organization involves continuing education, and the number of planners who hold industry certifications has grown steadily over the past three years. National trends reflect the same growth. In 2007 the Convention Industry Council, the organization that administers both the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) and Certified Meeting Manager (CMM) designations, released the Certified Meeting Professional Report showing similar findings that indicate continual growth in the CMP certification

every year from its creation in 1985 up to 2006. During that year, which was the latest year of data contained in the survey, more than 12,000 individuals held the designation worldwide. In comparing Minnesota to area states, the CIC's report put the number of certified meeting professionals in Minnesota in the 100-to-300 range, which is more than North Dakota, South Dakota and Iowa, and on par with Wisconsin and Michigan. The CMP certification remains the most popular certification among meeting planners; 89 percent of planners who are certified hold the CMP, according to the survey data. Planners who were more certain about their career choice when entering the hospitality profession are far more likely to seek industry credentials. Of those who stated that hospitality was their chosen field, 20 percent of respondents hold an industry certification of

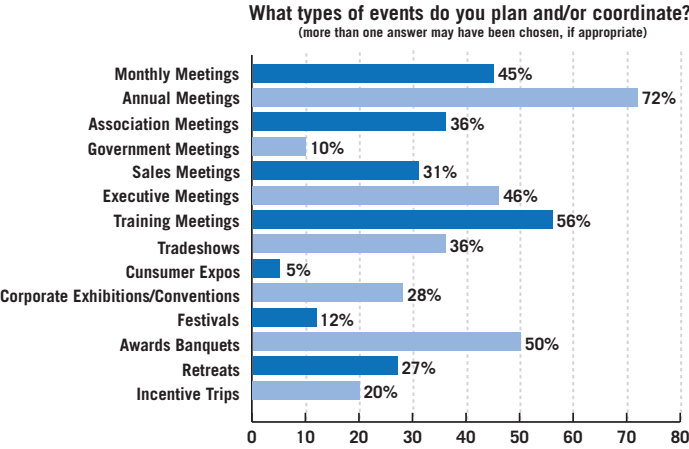
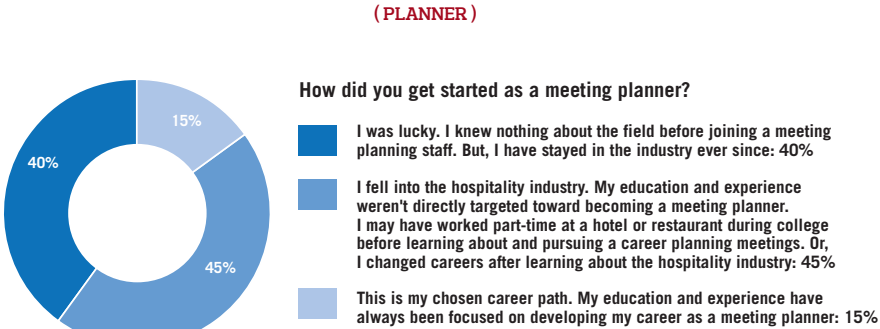
some sort; only 3 percent of respondents who "fell into the hospitality industry" have an industry certification. A more pronounced and perhaps more surprising trend is the growth in the number of vendors holding industry certifications, which has grown consistently since the first year of the State of the Industry survey in 2004. These findings mirror data from the CIC's 2007 CMP report, which discovered that more than one-third of all 2007 CMP applications came from vendors, "evidence of increased interest on the part of this sector of the industry." Dennis Laufersweiler, director of catering and conference services at the Plymouth Radisson Hotel & Conference Center, says that as a vendor, earning his CMP in August 2008 was worth the effort. "Planners who have a CMP take their profession seriously," he says, "and

my having a CMP shows them that I, as a supplier, take my profession just as seriously too." The CIC report also found that CMPs earn more than their noncertified counterparts, showing an average of \$2,000 difference in pay. *Meetings: Minnesota's Hospitality Journal's* survey data corroborated the national report, revealing that higher salaried workers have a higher percentage of certification. Not surprisingly, the survey also indicated a correlation between a higher salary and more years on the job. The most common salary range among all planner respondents was between \$40,000 and \$49,000, just as it was last year.

Percentage of vendors who spend 91-100 percent of their time on meetings- and events-related business

41%

Technology Trends Across all industries, rapidly changing technology is a force that continues to shape how business is conducted. In 2008, *FutureWatch* respondents placed changes or advances in technology among the most important external trend affecting their industry. Attendee feedback systems held the top spot for the most popular meeting technology, followed by RFP systems, meeting interaction software and better on-site Internet access. *Meetings: Minnesota's Hospitality Journal's* survey respondents believe many of the same technologies have improved the efficiency of their jobs: electronic RFP technology, online registration, e-mail marketing, PDAs such as Blackberries and wireless technology in general. Many survey respondents cite specific software, such as the webconferencing program WebEx, and meetings management programs such as StarCite, that has helped them on the job. One technology planners hope to make better use of in the coming year is webcasts,



What is your salary range?			
SALARY	Executive Assist./ Administrative Assist.	Independent Meeting Planner	Meeting/Event/ Conference Planner
Less than \$29K	6.5%	33%	3%
\$30K—\$39K	13%	0%	18%
\$40K—\$49K	45%	33%	35%
\$50K—\$59K	16%	0%	32%
\$60K—\$69K	16%	33%	3%
\$70K—\$79K	3%	0%	3%
\$80K—\$89K	0%	0%	3%
\$90K—\$199K	0%	0%	0%

“ VERBATIM: On Career Trends

Three newly designated CMPs from different industry sectors in Minnesota weigh in on what they think are the biggest trends affecting their jobs and careers.

Sean Schuette, CMP, director of meetings and events, IntrinXec Management, Inc.

"One [challenge] especially with the times we're in, is getting support from an employer and having them believe in your development. In my interview, I negotiated that I needed my employer to support [my membership] in MPI, for me to continue to grow as a professional. It's like taking a fish out of water—you need to be in the pool with everybody and you need to learn and share best practices. Another one is, that whole 'seat at the table.' Gaining the respect. Because sometimes even people within your organization think 'Oh your job isn't hard it's just setting up chairs.' And it is far more involved. I think that's a huge thing—just people understanding. In this industry we're directly impacted by world events. And it's not just 9-11, it's [trends like] the greening of meetings and corporate social responsibility. It's not about just showing up and putting linens on the tables. We've got to be thinking about stuff. I found out this week we have a speaker who's wheelchair bound, so I have to always make sure I'm aware of [Americans with Disabilities Act regulations] and adjusting the room and the stage so its safe. So there are all these different things and that learning curve never ends."



Dennis Laufersweiler, CMP, director of catering and conference services, Radisson Hotel & Conference Center

"Am I going to gain business for my hotel right here just because I have my certification? No. But it's going to come down to giving clients value for their money. People have really started to look at budgets and like everything else, those things go in cycles. So at every turn I've got to show them value for their dollar and that's the emphasis that comes in with service. People on this side of town know their choices: us or Sheraton West or Marriott West or Northland or maybe the properties in Bloomington. We all have meeting rooms we all have banquet halls. In the end it's the service you provide, the environment you give them and the value you give them. Every company now is going to reevaluate, 'Are we getting the biggest bang for our buck?' This happened with 9-11, and then [the market] came back and now we're seeing that again."



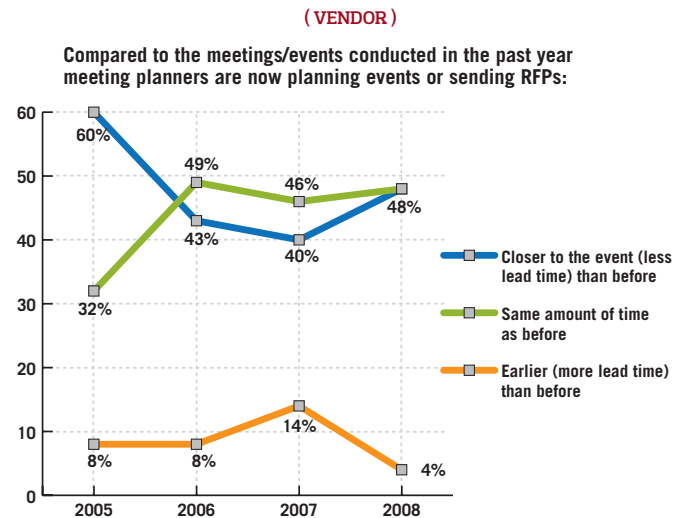
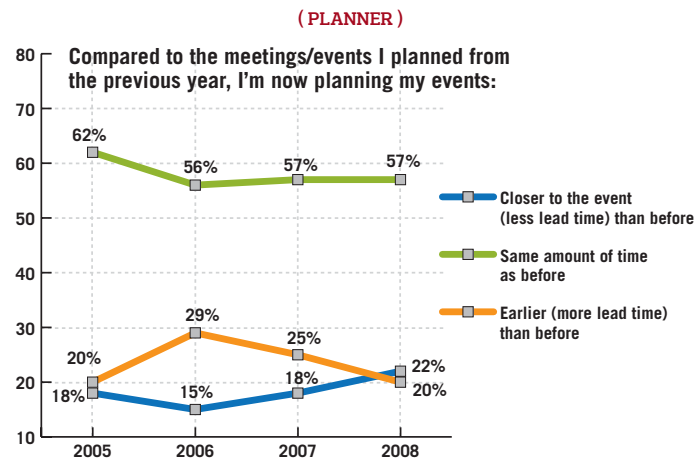
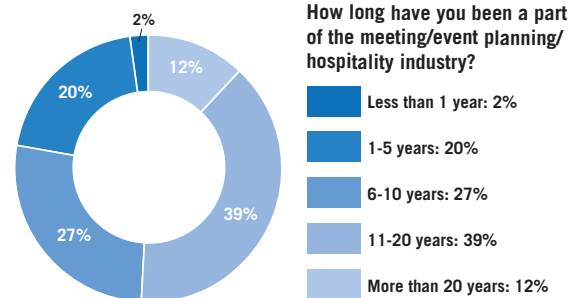
Stephanie Ripley, CMP, meeting planner, Thomson Reuters

"Even as large a corporation as we are, our salespeople are struggling, and they're the ones that bring the money in. So I'm seeing tighter budgets; we've seen a few meetings that are not happening. We've luckily not had to cancel anything but definitely a lot of budget cuts and trying to do more for less. And that leaves us trying to be creative. Maybe in corporations it's more prominent, but [meetings and events] would be an area that they would cut first. So my boss has been working very hard to prove value and to promote the things that we can do across the entire company. And with the acquisition of Reuters, for us it might mean more work. We're not seeing a slowdown totally; we might see some after the first of the year in 2009. This is a slower time of the year anyway but everyone's been pretty busy up until now. So I think luckily for us we'll weather the storm, hopefully."

59% Percentage of vendors who believe planning schedules are changing because planners get attendee confirmations closer to the event date than before, affording less time.

As a supplier or vendor, which of the following tasks are part of your job responsibilities? (check all that apply)

TASKS	PERCENT
Providing site & facility tours	50%
Venue or event marketing	59%
Working on-site during a meeting/event	50%
Accommodations planning	39%
Supply/services sales	50%
Budget management	50%
Coordinating meeting/event themes and/or entertainment	55%
Food & beverage planning/orders	39%
Establishing meeting or event strategies	50%
Creating RFPs	34%
Logistics management	46%
Orchestrating new meeting or event strategies	43%
Initiating budgets	39%
Seeking out new event venues	21%
Educational planning	16%
Event security coordination	30%
Attendee research	16%
Other	12%
Tracking legal liability	14%
Negotiating contracts	66%



“ VERBATIM: On CMP Certification and Standardizing the Meetings Industry

Christina Buck, CMP, CMP program director, Convention Industry Council.

"I think the CMP certification process is an individually driven career builder and it really varies from applicant to applicant whether they have the desire to earn it early in their career or as they become aware of the next education level in the meetings industry. Everyone has different preferences for their career growth. Also, it's a big dedication. The application process in itself is a big step and a big commitment, which is what I think makes the CMP designation so

unique. We are seeing more [hospitality-related four-year degrees] on our applications and in general because we partner a lot with universities. A lot of universities will use our manuals so we are seeing more of them that offer dedicated curriculum and certainly it's a career path that's becoming more and more sought after. The CMP continues to gain recognition, especially in other countries that have been reaching out to us for education and certification. And as the trend of the event industry is globalizing the CMP designation is becoming more and more significant."

a broadcast of live meetings over the Internet to broaden the reach of meetings or events by combining live and virtual audiences. "Two in five meeting planners, and nearly half of corporate planners, expect their use of webcasts to increase next year," said the *FutureWatch* 2008 report. One local survey respondent who plans increased webcast usage next year is Jenny Prosser of Minnesota Health & Housing Alliance.

"We have just started using webinars and webcasts to train our members from their location," Prosser says. "Our members seem to like it because they don't have to travel and they can train as many people as they want for one low cost."

Vendors increasingly rely on Web-based technology as well. For the second year in a row, respondents to the vendor survey rank e-mail notices and Web site postings within their top three advance marketing channels, topped only by word-of-mouth client referrals.

Perhaps one important discovery that most of the recent meetings industry research makes is that planners have yet to readily adopt cutting-edge technology. Great resources are being developed, yet "meeting professionals are generally a tough sell when it comes to the technologies available to facilitate meetings and events," *FutureWatch* 2008 said. "Technology developers have some way to go in meeting the expectations of an increasingly sophisticated market." CIC's CMP Report findings showed only 14 percent of corporate planners and 17 percent of association planners use any specific meet-

ings software. The report concluded that there exists an overall demand for "industry-wide technology solutions."

Daily Demands

We all know technology seems to speed up our lives, but it's likely not the only reason planners continue to feel a time crunch. Since 2006, the number of planners who feel they're planning their events with less lead time has risen steadily. Among the vendors who responded to this year's survey, 96 percent say they think planners are coordinating events with the same amount or less lead time compared to 2007. Of those vendors who believe the event-planning cycle is shrinking, a majority (63 percent) feel they are afforded less lead time because meeting planners are receiving attendee confirmations closer to the event date than ever before.

Of those planners who say they're planning with less lead time, most cite changes in event size or attendance (41 percent), followed by the fact that they receive attendee confirmations closer to the events than before. Nearly one-third of planners with less time also saw their budget decrease during the past year. Planners with extra workdays to plan their events didn't necessarily receive the luxury of time. Reasons for schedule changes varied widely—from being new in the industry and wanting plenty of time, to allowing more time for marketing, to increased workload that results in more time needed to plan and juggle more duties.

Aside from demands of time, how are planners meeting changing client demands? For the second year in a row, annual meetings are the most common type of event. This year, training meetings, awards banquets and executive meetings fall not far behind. Planners continue to create events that appeal to a broad spectrum of their intended audiences. Most popular for attendees was "an event that has it all: seminars, speakers, training and networking opportunities." This was followed by workshops/educational opportunities and networking opportunities. Most respondents (83 percent) say that compared to 2007, educational opportunities held at their events were either just as important or more important to their attendees. ■

THANKS TO RESPONDENTS AND PARTNERS

Meetings: Minnesota's Hospitality Journal would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in this year's survey. Your insight and knowledge allows us to bring you our best possible coverage of the state's hospitality industry. We partnered again this year with the University of Minnesota Tourism Center to develop new questions and improve the survey process; our thanks goes out to them as well. Finally, we would like to thank Trapper's Landing Lodge for providing the survey incentive prize of a weekend getaway at their beautiful Leech Lake property. Congratulations to winner Lynnette Offen, CMP, regional manager at HelmsBriscoe.