

ODYSSEY magazine

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EFAPCO Challenges The Meetings Industry: "Seize The Opportunities"



The new SQUARE (Brussels Palais des Congres).

The global economic turnaround presents great opportunities for PCOs keen to generate new business, according to Nicolas Le Brun, President of EFAPCO, the European Federation of the Associations of Professional Congress Organisers.

"EFAPCO represents a great number of different European countries and very different members; so a straightforward picture of the impact made by the current financial crisis is not possible. However the conference sector, particularly when associated with government institutions and professional associations, is

not suffering too much. Government institutions have little or no cancellations, on the contrary, in times of crisis, they have an increased need for meetings and conferences," said Le Brun.

"Associations are in a similar position: they have to meet with their members; it is the reason for their existence. Budgets will be tighter not only because of the diminished availability of sponsoring budgets, but also because items perceived as "luxury" such as gala dinners, will be looked at more closely and deemed less important.

"PCOs handling corporate clients face a tougher time, as they will now look at keeping their budgets as tight as possible. More "exotic" and "fun" destinations will be exchanged for conference cities with a more businesslike and "serious" image. Brussels, as the seat of the European Institutions, should benefit from this tendency along with many similar business "capitals".

Le Brun added: "Corporate organisations and associations, faced with budget cuts, may well

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NBTA Applauds Senate Commerce Committee Regarding Vital Travel Issues

The National Business Travel Association (NBTA) applauded the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation for holding hearings (May 13) to address the continued success of the travel and tourism industry, as well as the reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). NBTA has been an industry leader in advocating for Congressional support of travel and tourism and the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2009, both issues vital to the enhancement of the corporate travel community and success of the U.S. economy as a whole.

Travel professionals from across the United States testified before the Subcommittee on Competitiveness, Innovation, and Export Promotion, led by Chairman Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Ranking Member Mel Martinez (R-FL),

on the importance of corporate travel to communities throughout the nation. Panelists advocated for the promotion of corporate meetings and incentive events, highlighting the economic impact business travel has on local hospitality venues and jobs.

Senator Klobuchar said in a statement, "Most business travel is essential to doing business – and succeeding at business. As we know, the highly-publicized excesses of a few bad actors have discouraged many companies from spending on meetings and events, even when they know it's not in their best interests. There are ways for businesses to conduct meetings and events in a way that is responsible and productive. We need to do what we can to encourage companies to spend

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Iberia Applies Severe Contingency Plan To Save 200+ Million Euros

Iberia has implemented a severe contingency plan in response to the steep decline in demand and revenues, after posting a loss of 92.6...

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Accor North America and Latin America Form "Accor Americas"

In line with measures to simplify the Group's Corporate Governance, and as part of his new responsibilities as Chairman and Chief...

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American Express/CFO Research Global Business & Spending Monitor

The world's senior finance executives are focusing on aggressive new methods to reduce and control costs in the face of the...

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IN THE NEWS



Ramada Brand Continues Middle East Expansion With Two New Hotels

Ramada Worldwide has announced its continued expansion in the Middle East with the development of two new hotels: the 299-room Ramada Plaza Kuwait City hotel in Kuwait and the 183-room Ramada Hotel and Suites Amman hotel in Jordan. The brand, which has grown by 80 percent in the Middle East and in North Africa over the past two years, now has nearly 40 properties throughout the region.

“The World Tourism Organization has predicted that the Middle East will have the highest rate of overall tourism growth in the world over the next several years,” said Jim Alderman, Wyndham Hotel Group executive vice president of development. “The region has seen significant growth in upscale hotel development but the need for quality, international and midscale lodging brands remains. As the demand rises, the Ramada chain is well poised to continue its aggressive growth to meet that need.”

Located in Kuwait City and expected to open in October 2009, the five-star, Ramada Plaza Kuwait City hotel is being developed by Kuwait-based Gulf Real Estate Development House and will be managed by Abu Dhabi-based V. Five Continents Hospitality Group. The all new construction hotel will include four on-site restaurants, an executive lounge, a full service beauty salon and spa, outdoor swimming pool, gym, airport shuttle, valet parking, 24-hour room service, dry cleaning and laundry service, Internet café and hi-speed wired and wireless Internet access. It will also include a bi-level convention center with more than 2,950 square meters of meeting space.

Located in Jordan’s capital of Amman just outside the city’s financial and business districts and expected to open in May 2009, the Ramada Hotel and Suites Amman property is being developed by Kuwait-based Taameer Real Estate Investment Company and will be managed by Mena Co. for Hotels. It will be the Ramada brand’s first hotel in Jordan. A 30-minute drive from Queen Alia International Airport, the four-star, upscale hotel will feature free high-speed wireless Internet access, laundry and valet service, car rental and driver services, full service hair salon, valet parking, concierge service, 24-hour room service, business center, fitness center, swimming pool and nearly 800 square meters of meeting space.

The Ramada brand also recently opened its first hotels in six new countries, including Latvia, the Cayman Islands and Guam.

www.ramada.com

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TRAVEL MANAGEMENT



Sam Gilliland, CEO, Sabre Holdings, 'Tourism in Troubled Times'

Sam Gilliland, the Chairman and CEO of Sabre Holdings (pictured above) has urged U.S. Congress and the Administration (May 13) to take immediate action help the struggling travel and tourism industry, in a testimony delivered to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Competitiveness, Innovation, and Export Promotion.

Gilliland, who also serves as the Chairman of the Economic Sustainability Subcommittee of the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, characterized 2009 as the "Year of the Travel Deal" but cautioned that cheap travel deals would soon evaporate if the health of the travel and tourism industry continued to deteriorate.

"Just as airlines opted to park their planes in the desert rather than operate at a loss, hotels, resorts and cruise lines will eventually reduce their inventory of properties and ships if they cannot realize an acceptable return on these assets - something we're already starting to see occur," said Gilliland.

"The situation is pretty bleak. Year-on-year industry trends indicate that corporate domestic air travel and hotel stays are down nearly 20 percent, with airfares and price of hotel stays down seven percent. Domestic leisure travel is down by almost five percent with average leisure fares down 10 percent. This dramatic fall in demand is bad news for the industry, the legions of people who work in it, and both the U.S. and global economies," he said.

Gilliland called on the U.S. government to take action in four areas including energy policy, environmental policy, air traffic control modernization, and Treasury travel guidelines:

1. Energy Policy - "Reduce dependence on foreign oil and provide incentives for research, development and delivery of alternative fuels for commercial use. Without access to sustainable energy - predictable, abundant, affordable and environmentally sound energy - the entire travel and tourism industry will continue to be battered by volatile fuel prices. A biofuel industry could be a major generator of employment and wealth for the U.S. and the developing world, but to achieve this, we need a comprehensive U.S. energy policy that calls for viable fuel competition and sustainable energy."

2. Environmental Policy - "Establish policies to reduce greenhouse gasses that threaten the environment, and ensure this is fairly shared across all industries. The airline industry should not be a scapegoat for carbon emissions - they only account for two to three percent of the world's man-made carbon emissions, and have already improved fuel efficiency by 110 percent since 1978 (source: Air Transport Association). Carbon-related revenues raised from the commercial aviation industry should be re-directed back into aviation-related environmental and efficiency improvements to help the industry grow rather than flounder."

3. Air Traffic Control Modernization - "The 'NextGen' Air Traffic Control (ATC) system must become 'NowGen' to achieve much needed energy, environmental and customer-service improvements for our nation's aviation industry. Despite significant advances in modern-day technology, U.S. airlines are forced to use 40-year-old radar systems to find their way today. Even technology used in cars and mobile phones are light years ahead of the technology used in the ATC system, which may explain why nearly 25 percent of these flights are late.

'NowGen' will provide the following benefits:

- Allow all airplanes to fly more direct, efficient routes, significantly reducing fuel burn and CO2 emissions,
- Reduce congestion and open up access - more flights - in crowded airspace,
- Reduce flight delays and inconvenience to passengers and shippers,
- Create or save 77,000 jobs, and
- Be transformational for the broader economy."

GetThere Joins Forces With ETAP-ON-LINE In Europe

GetThere has announced an agreement with ETAP-ON-LINE. The two prominent business travel brands will build an integrated solution targeted towards mid-size and large European and multi-national companies.

The technology and service partnership between GetThere and ETAP-ON-LINE gives corporations a formidable opportunity to manage travel and expense more effectively across multiple markets. GetThere, a Sabre Travel Network business, is deployed in 60 countries today, facilitating the booking of more than \$9 billion (USD) annually by a host of the world's leading multinational companies. ULYSSE Travel & Expenses, ETAP-ON-LINE's expense management solution, has 900,000 users in Europe and elsewhere, with rollouts in more than 20 countries and a major presence in France and the United Kingdom.

The companies announced the agreement today at the Paragon Business Travel Conference & Expo in Paris.

"We are aligned with GetThere's philosophy of providing choices to corporations as they seek the right combination of corporate booking and expense management solutions," said Pierre-Emmanuel Tetaz, managing director of ETAP-ON-LINE. "The global recession has served as a tipping point for many corporations, with an increasing number of firms across Europe taking steps to implement automation across the entire travel chain. "

"Corporations are still traveling to visit clients and prospects, and they are squeezing more value out of every travel euro and pound," said Jason Geall, director of EMEA for GetThere. "To help corporates meet that objective, GetThere and ETAP-ON-LINE will deliver a convenient solution for both travelers and travel arrangers, driving in-policy bookings, detailed reporting and seamless process gains that only accelerate as companies maximize use of the configurable options within the integrated solution."

www.getthere.com

4. Treasury Travel Guidelines - "Recent attention on what the Treasury Department deems 'luxury' and 'excessive' in business travel has prompted companies all over the U.S to cut back and in some cases eliminate

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business travel altogether for fear of being criticized. Meetings, conventions and incentive travel are proven business tools that allow companies to establish valuable relationships, solicit feedback and reward employees. Corporations need to feel confident that they can once again hold business meetings and conventions in order to achieve their corporate objectives. Timely guidance from the Treasury Department, in the form of an endorsement of the US Travel Association's model guidelines is urgently needed to achieve this. At Sabre, our GetThere division is already in the process of developing a consulting solution for corporations that will help them manage travel policy governance and compliance, and drive fiscal accountability."

Gilliland urged the U.S Senate to collaborate with travel and tourism industry to improve the health of the industry.

"As the largest industry in the world, we are inherently powerful, but historically fragmented. But I believe by working more closely together, in tandem with policymakers, the storm clouds that have been hanging over our industry will recede, and we will once again be in a position to make significant contributions to our country's economy and GDP."

Gilliland closed his testimony by emphasizing his support for the Travel Promotion Act that was re-introduced this week by Sens. Byron Dorgan (D-ND) and John Ensign (R-NV).

iJET Response To Ongoing H1N1 Influenza A (Swine Flu) Developments

iJET Intelligent Risk Systems, a leading provider of global intelligence and business resiliency services, has announced additional services and resources as H1N1 Influenza A (swine flu) continues to spread globally. iJET advice helps multinational organizations avoid potential disruptions that may ensue as the virus continues to expand its reach.

In response to increased questions and concerns surrounding the virus, iJET has launched a weekly Pandemic Briefing series, designed to provide up-to-date information, analysis and advice on the evolving H1N1 Influenza A outbreak. This interactive forum, facilitated by iJET's Director of Health Intelligence, Joan Pfingst, M.D., occurs each Thursday at 12 pm EDT/ 9 am PDT through June 30, 2009. Additional information is available at www.WorldPandemicMonitor.com.

The Pandemic Briefings run in concert with iJET's established World Pandemic Monitor service, which provides up-to-date information on pandemic preparedness and emerging infectious diseases. Subscribers receive the weekly World Pandemic Monitor report as well as time-sensitive alerts on events as they happen.

iJET has also launched an online public resource page with up-to-date information, helpful documents and links related to the new H1N1 virus. Included on the page is a map showing the current spread of H1N1, frequently asked questions and answers, a

sample sick leave policy and other practical tools. iJET clients can access this resource center through the company's Worldcue Global Control Center and Worldcue PLANNER platforms, providing ready access to information for managers and employees alike. The H1N1 Influenza A (Swine Flu) Resource Center is located at www.ijet.com/swinefluresources/index.asp.

"Health authorities are responding aggressively on multiple fronts - educating the public, monitoring the spread of the new H1N1 influenza virus and beginning the development of a vaccine," said Pfingst. "It is not yet clear how significant an impact this outbreak will have. Our understanding of the H1N1 influenza virus and the illness it causes is changing daily. Organizations need up-to-date information in order to protect employees, make informed policy decisions and maintain business operations."

Outbreaks may slow as summer weather arrives in the Northern Hemisphere, but the new H1N1 virus could pose a significant threat to the Southern Hemisphere and tropics, as their flu seasons begin. Scientists are also concerned that the H1N1 virus could cause widespread outbreaks in the Northern Hemisphere beginning in the fall, and large-scale employee absences could cause business disruptions.

In light of these risks, iJET advises that organizations take the following steps at this time:

Review Pandemic Plans. Circulate plans widely throughout the organization, with executive sponsorship. Be sure managers are familiar with plan details, current status and escalation protocols. Update HR policies to reflect implications of H1N1 Influenza. Review sick, leave and travel policies. Update plans as necessary with current emergency and key contacts, chain of communications for key suppliers, and processes for tracking and communicating business and employee status.

Communicate with Employees. Educate employees about the situation and personal protection measures. Encourage employees to practice good personal hygiene practices. Ensure your employees are aware of company sick, travel and leave policies. Provide regular updates.

Monitor Developments. Make sure your organization is monitoring ongoing developments for H1N1 and ensure appropriate escalation or de-escalation is taking place as conditions change.

Assess Business Continuity Plan for Critical Features. Identify essential employees and other critical inputs required to maintain business operations by location and function during a pandemic. Anticipate likely scenarios that could lead to an increase or decrease in demand for your products and services (e.g. decrease in travel or increase in need for hygiene supplies).

Provide guidance and supplies for prevention of exposure at the work site.

www.ijet.com/resilient

HRG Supports Enhanced Security Measures For Air Travellers

International corporate travel services company, Hogg Robinson Group (HRG), welcomes new security procedures for air travellers and is working with clients to ensure corporate travellers continue business as usual.

This month the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is set to implement the Secure Flight program to improve security and fight the risk of terrorism. All travellers arriving to, leaving from, flying within or over the United States will be required to give their name, date of birth, gender, redress number*, passport number, country of issue and expiry date, passenger flight and aircraft data to the airline operator to pass onto the TSA 72 hours prior to departure.

Stewart Harvey, Director of Client Management at HRG, said: "Security for business travellers is a very important issue and we welcome all measures to make air travel as safe as possible. However we do believe that all new security regulations and requirements would benefit from industry wide standardisation.

If governments and the industry work together on common platforms, all information gathered would be in the same format the world over.

"It is essential that companies are ready to adhere to new regulations so that travellers are not inconvenienced or delayed. HRG is already addressing a number of concerns raised by the industry, including the use of full given names correctly stated from passport details and effective correlation of frequent flyer schemes with passenger data, to ensure our clients are not adversely affected. We are working with suppliers to deliver effective solutions before the rules come into place. We are striving to ensure all our clients are briefing their employees to input the correct information when making bookings."

The TSA Secure Flight program is being rolled out in two phases. TSA is asking for passengers' full names beginning 15 May, along with date of birth and gender as of 15 August**. The details are being used by TSA for pre-departure watch list matching and will be in line with the current redress process run by the Department of Homeland Security.

* *Redress number: a unique number given to an individual by the US Authorities, where the name has regularly identified that person for additional screening, but the person poses no risk to the US.*

** *Dates yet to be confirmed by the TSA*

www.hrgworldwide.com

ASSOCIATIONS

NBTA Applauds Senate Commerce Committee Regarding Vital Travel Issues

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on travel again – in an ethical, acceptable manner – so these investments can pay off for individual businesses and for the travel industry.”

Bill Connors, CTC, NBTA Executive Director & COO, said, “NBTA research shows that the business travel industry supports more than three million American jobs, proving that a decline in corporate travel has the potential to harm millions of hard-working citizens. As we heard at the Committee hearing today, many Americans have already lost their jobs as corporate events are cancelled across the country, and local economies have suffered as a result. NBTA is encouraged by today’s Senate interest in preserving the integrity and vitality of the business travel and meetings industry, and we look forward to working with Congress to ensure business travel continues to boost the U.S. and global economy.”

At a second Committee hearing yesterday, aviation professionals testified before the Subcommittee on Aviation, Operations, Safety and Security, chaired by Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) and joined by Ranking Member Jim DeMint (R-SC), on the importance of FAA Reauthorization. Prior to the hearing, NBTA sent Committee members a letter praising the “FAA Reauthorization Act of 2009” (HR 915), outlining provisions with which the association is pleased and offering advice for others. See Letter

In the letter, NBTA offers support for:

- Swift implementation of NextGen
- Airline disclosure of flight delays and cancellations frequency and reasoning
- Quiet in-flight communications technology use

NBTA urges the committee to consider provisions on:

- Reversing regulations that deny travelers a refund of unused airline ticket excise taxes

NBTA is concerned about provisions on:

- Increasing the cap on passenger facility charges
- Sunset antitrust immunity for global airline alliances

Kevin Maguire, CTE, GLP, NBTA President & CEO, wrote in the letter, “There is a consensus among the business travel community, the aviation community, and in the FAA itself, that the failure to complete a reauthorization bill has hindered the agency, delaying progress on important programs such as the NextGen system. We congratulate the [House Transportation and Infrastructure] Committee for its early consideration of the FAA reauthorization bill and urge the full House and Senate to send effective legislation to

President Obama as soon as possible.”

www.nbta.org

Crossroads – The Pan-European Business Travel Conference & Expo

Crossroads – the pan-European Business Travel Conference & Expo co-hosted by the Paragon Partnership alliance of business travel associations and 12 business travel organisations from around the world – welcomed 270 business travel professionals who spent the latter part of this week addressing the most important topics impacting the industry.

Kevin Maguire, CTE, GLP, President & CEO of the National Business Travel Association (NBTA), one of the hosts of Crossroads, said, “As the world faces economic uncertainty, companies are turning to effective travel management as a way to reduce costs and increase value. In turn, the European travel management community relies on Crossroads and all of its host organisations for the latest information and trends that will help them maximise value for their companies.”

Herman Huijter, Chairman of the Board of the Netherlands Association of Travel Management (NATM), commented, “The importance of Crossroads in large part stems from its uniqueness as a pan-European event. By drawing participants from 17 countries – and with 40 percent buyer participation - we are able to create dialogues that are truly beneficial for European travel managers directing multi-national programs.”

Crossroads 2009 offered attendees a wide range of keynotes, panel discussions and education sessions, as well as an Expo of some 25 leading business travel industry suppliers.

Education sessions were divided into three tracks to address the most important topics challenging business travel professionals:

- Going “glocal” – finding the right local versus global strategy for multinational travel programmes
- Driving savings with strategic travel and meetings management techniques
- Travel management in uncertain times

Speakers included:

- Peter Griffiths, Regional Vice President Europe, International Air Travel Association
- Elling Hamso (European Event ROI Institute) and Maarten Vanneste (Abbit) - Designing Effective Meetings with Measurable Results
- Arjan van Weele (Eindhoven University of Technology) - Professionalising Travel Management: Dealing With Compliance and Governance Issues
- John Plender (Financial Times) - Through A Glass Darkly: The Global Economic Outlook
- Kell Ryan (co-founder of Ryanair) - Up in the Air: The Future of European Aviation

Crossroads exposition exhibitors include:

- AFTM
- American Airlines
- American Express Business Travel
- Avis Europe
- BCD Travel
- Carey International, Inc.
- CARINO Hotels and Resorts Worldwide
- Concorde Hotels
- Concur
- Dav El Chauffeur Transportation Network
- Diners Club International
- Edward Limousines & Travel Group - EQSL
- GetThere
- HRG (Hogg Robinson Group)
- Interstate Hotels & Resorts
- K Hotels
- Luxe Worldwide Hotels
- Mondial Assistance Group
- Posadas
- SkyTeam Global Airline Alliance
- Sol Melia Hotels & Resorts
- Thalys International SCRL
- The Leading Hotels of the World
- Travelport GDS
- UATP
- WORLDHOTELS
- Wyndham Hotel Group

Crossroads Paris: Paragon Business Travel Conference & Expo, held 14-15 May 2009, is a unique pan-European business travel conference. The event, now in its second year, was co-hosted by: The Paragon Partnership; The Global Alliance of Business Travel Associations; the Austrian Business Travel Association; the Brazilian Business Travel Association; the Danish Business Travel Association; the Finnish Business Travel Association; l'Association Française des Travel Managers; Verband Deutsches Reisemanagement (the Business Travel Association of Germany); the Netherlands Association for Travel Management; the Norwegian Business Travel Association; the Iberian Business Travel Association (Spain); the Swedish Business Travel Association; the Institute of Travel Management (UK and Ireland); and the National Business Travel Association (U.S.-based, global organisation).

Crossroads Paris offers corporate travel professionals unparalleled education and networking, as well as an Expo highlighting the latest products and services from the leading European business travel suppliers. The program is in both French and English, with simultaneous translation.

World Tourism in Face of the Global Economic Crisis & Influenza Threat

International tourism demand has deteriorated further due to the impact of the global economic recession. International tourist arrivals declined at a rate of 8% between January and February this year, leaving the overall volume at the same level as recorded in 2007. At the same time, influenza A (H1N1) is starting to affect the sector. It's impact is being closely monitored by UNWTO in close collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO). UNWTO follows the WHO's advice as it is the leading UN agency in matters relating to health. WHO does not recommend travel restrictions at this point.

Preliminary UNWTO figures for the first months of 2009 indicate a continuation of the negative growth already experienced in the second half of 2008. Destinations all around the world have suffered from a decrease in demand in major source markets. With the exception of Africa and both Central and South America, who all posted positive results in the range of 3-5%. So far, Northern, Southern and Mediterranean Europe, North-East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East are amongst the most affected sub-regions.

In this context, UNWTO expects international tourism to decline between 2% and 3% in 2009.

Many countries are already developing stimulus measures within their fiscal and monetary packages to mitigate the effects of the crisis on tourism, realizing that the sector can be a key driver of economic recovery. Some destinations are reducing taxes and improving

travel facilitation, recognizing that it is now crucial to remove all obstacles to tourism, especially taxation and over regulation. Others have developed financial systems to support tourism enterprises, maintain/increase employment in the sector and develop infrastructure. UNWTO encourages others to follow suit.

Secretary-General ad interim Taleb Rifai stressed that "One of the major challenges amidst the current crisis is the imperative of not losing sight of the longer-term challenges of poverty alleviation, employment and climate change".

UNWTO Response

Historically, tourism has demonstrated remarkable resilience and has emerged from past crises stronger and healthier. The current economic juncture, however, might be different. This crisis is truly global and its parameters are still in many ways unclear.

Against this background, UNWTO has increased its efforts to provide its Members with the necessary support on a consistent basis in order to endure these challenging times:

- *Resilience: the Tourism Resilience Committee (TRC) provides a framework for better market analysis, collaboration on responses and medium-term policymaking.*
- *Stimulus: UNWTO urges governments to put tourism at the core of their stimulus packages - jobs and trade are engendered through a strong tourism sector, as well as business and consumer confidence in travel which can play a big part in economic recovery.*
- *Green Economy: tourism must be placed at the forefront of the transformation towards the Green Economy; contributing with carbon-clean operations, jobs in environmental management and energy-efficient constructions.*

UNWTO's Roadmap for Recovery will lead to a unique positioning of the sector with respect to the economic crisis, its role in the stimulus programme, in the recovery, future sustainability and competitiveness of tourism.

Influenza Preparedness

Adding to the consumer and business uncertainty and the loss of confidence, the potential Influenza A (H1N1) pandemic has created an increasing degree of confusion around the issue of whether it is safe to travel. UNWTO has been very active in pressing for a clear WHO position and is working closely with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to ensure a balanced decision making process.

Within the UN system, UNWTO has a direct line to express the interests of tourism and travel. At this stage, the extent of the spread, sustainability and the complete health implications of the virus remain uncertain. Given the increased public awareness, engagement and the resulting elevated concern, calls for the urgent need for response must be viewed in context - awareness is key, not abrupt and uninformed reactions.

Until now, WHO has seen no reason to close borders or restrict travel. This stance is supported by similar past experiences, which provide no evidence that doing so would stop the spread of the virus. Furthermore, the economic cost would be enormous. WHO goes further and urges states to resist unilateral action and to consult with them before undertaking any such initiative.

UNWTO strongly supports this position and is prepared to face this kind of situation. The

Organization has formed a dedicated Risk and Crisis Management Section (RCM), established influenza contacts in every Member State, launched regional simulation exercises, created the Tourism Emergency Response Network (TERN) with some 20 peak industry organizations and launched sos.travel as a portal for emergency information for the industry and travellers. In addition UNWTO is continuing to issue guidance material.

www.UNWTO.org

AIRLINES & AIRPORTS

Star Alliance Enhances Conventions Plus Product

Star Alliance, the way the Earth connects, has expanded its Conventions Plus product offer beyond traditional conventions to include travel arrangements for major cultural and sporting events.

"Building on the experience which we have gained over the last seven years in providing travel arrangements for convention organisers on the Star Alliance network, we are looking forward to serving a new target group in the field of cultural and sporting event organisers", said Peter Glade, Director Sales and Market Development at Star Alliance.

Star Alliance Conventions Plus provides simplified travel solutions to event organisers by allowing them access to the entire alliance network through one of the member airlines. The organiser also receives a support programme which includes tickets and promotional assistance.

In general, delegates are entitled to fare discounts ranging from ten to 20 percent, depending on the type of fare, class of travel and airline used. Travel can be either in Business or Economy Class, and one companion may also travel on the delegate fare discounts.

Delegates enrolled in any of the Star Alliance member airlines' frequent flyer programmes are able to earn miles or points on their tickets. Moreover, Star Alliance Gold and Star Alliance Silver customers may also avail themselves of the benefits accorded to them by their status when travelling on Conventions Plus fares.

In order to qualify for Conventions Plus, the designated event must be of a global scale, with a minimum number of 500 international delegates from at least three different countries and two continents. The lead time to the event should be at least six months.

Network Expanded

With EGYPTAIR and Turkish Airlines having joined Star Alliance in 2008, organisers using Conventions Plus not only gained improved access to two very important convention markets: Egypt and Turkey, but also benefit from more flight connections across Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. At the same time organisations based in these two growing economies and across the entire region can now use the Star Alliance network for their convention travel needs.

SAS Puts More Focus On MICE

Star Alliance, of which SAS Scandinavian Airlines is a founding member, has expanded its Conventions Plus offering beyond traditional conventions. For the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events) industry, this means SAS and Star Alliance now also offers travel arrangements for major cultural and sporting events.

"SAS has a long standing experience with the MICE industry and have been offering travel arrangements through SAS's Official Airline Program for many years. We are now very pleased that the Star Alliance Conventions Plus program will include culture and sport events as we see this as a growing market in Scandinavia, especially for large sport events", says Susanne Nygaard, Manager Conventions & Events at SAS.

Star Alliance Conventions Plus provides simplified travel solutions to event organisers by allowing them access to the entire Star Alliance network through Scandinavian Airlines. The organizer also receives a support programme which includes tickets and promotional assistance.

In general, delegates are entitled to fare discounts ranging between 10-20%, depending on the type of fare, class of travel and airline used. Travel can be either in Business or Economy Class, and one companion may also travel on the delegate fare discounts.

In order to qualify for Conventions Plus, the designated event must be of a global scale, with a minimum number of 500 international delegates from at least three different countries and two continents. The lead time to the event should be at least six months.

SAS will attend IMEX, the essential worldwide exhibition for the MICE industry in Frankfurt 26-28 May 2009.

www.flysas.com/conventions

Presence at IMEX

In order to promote Conventions Plus, Star Alliance will once again be represented at the IMEX Trade Fair, which is seen as the essential world-wide exhibition for meetings and incentive travel, and is being held in Frankfurt,

Germany, from May 26th through May 28th, 2009. Star Alliance can be found at its dedicated stand G030.

www.staralliance.com

Spanair Prepares For Move To Terminal 1 At Barcelona Airport

Spanair and the Star Alliance members carriers serving Barcelona airport have begun its preparations for their move to the new Terminal 1 at Barcelona Airport. This follows the announcement of AENA (the Spanish national airport company) that the new terminal will open 16 June 2009 and that the Star Alliance Members will be the first to operate from this new facility.

"At Spanair we are pleased to be given the unique opportunity of being the first airline to move into Terminal 1, along with our fellow Star Alliance members. Spanair and Star Alliance have a strong commitment in Barcelona and are well poised to harness the advantages of the new infrastructure in T1 as a platform for growth. We want to be the leading company in the T1, offering our clients a new flying experience, an excellent service and a wide choice of domestic and international destinations in conjunction with other Star Alliance airlines", said Ferran Soriano, president of Spanair.

"The new Terminal 1 at Barcelona is finally allowing us to implement a 'move under one roof' project in Spain. On the one hand, the Star Alliance member carriers can now provide an improved ground service offer to their customers. On the other hand, with the correct infrastructure now in place, our member carriers can explore further hubbing opportunities with our member Spanair through the Catalan capital", said Jaan Albrecht, CEO Star Alliance.

Spanair currently operates 756 domestic weekly flights to and out of Barcelona and 740 international weekly flights (including codeshare flights and the routes operated by the Star Alliance carriers. In this new terminal Spanair will improve its customers service thanks to the big number of check-in and auto check-in and auto check-in counters, improved boarding areas and a new VIP lounge of 800 square meters, with maximum confort and performance.

New Visual Identity

Spanair has unveiled its new visual identity. The last week over 80.000 customers and employees expressed their preferences

between two different options in Spanair's website, an unprecedented record of participation. More than the 60% of the ballots cast chose the option named World. It highlights Spanair's vision as a global company and therefore uses an icon which represents the world through an orange circle, crossed by the trail of an airplane. The logo recalls with sobriety and simplicity Spanair's new efficiency.



The new visual identity is intended to express with greater accuracy Spanair's current role as a global company, the first full service airline operating from Barcelona and the second in the rest of Spain, offering great connection possibilities thanks to its Star Alliance's membership.

The renewal of the corporate identity will be applied gradually. The priority will be in its commercial uses and will have its big premiere at the opening of the T1.

EU Praises Scandinavian Airlines' Websites

SAS Scandinavian Airlines' websites have been highly praised by the European Commission. Following an extensive investigation, the Commission concluded that customers booking flights on SAS's websites feel assured that their rights as consumers are well safeguarded.

After introducing a higher level of consumer protection in Europe under the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive from 2005 and the review of the "Rules for the operation of air services in the Community" (known as the "third package"), the European Commission believed that it was time to perform a "health check" of airlines' and travel agents' ticket selling websites. The aim was to determine compliance with consumer protection rules. Subsequently, a comprehensive 14 point checklist, which was deemed to be fundamental to guaranteeing consumer rights, was prepared in cooperation with the industry.

Examples of the information investigated included: that taxes and fees are included in ticket prices, that the terms and conditions of the tickets are clearly stated, that there is no discrimination in fare pricing based on nationality, the place of residence, etc. and that it is clearly stated which flights are non-stop services. The investigation also looked into information regarding the airline's contact details and complete information about

Lufthansa Offer Accepted By 85+ % of Shareholders of Austrian Airlines

On expiry of the acceptance term for the public takeover offer to the free-float shareholders of Austrian Airlines AG on 11 May 2009, Deutsche Lufthansa AG has through ÖLH Österreichische Luftverkehrs-Holding-GmbH received acceptance declarations for an expected equivalent of over 85 per cent of the share capital of Austrian Airlines AG (not included in this figure are the shares held by Austrian Airlines AG). The actual acceptance quota can not be published until Thursday, May 14. That amount includes the 41.56 per cent stake currently still held by the ÖIAG. Also included is the syndicate of Austrian core shareholders, consisting of LVBG Luftverkehrsbeteiligungs GmbH, Raiffeisen-Invest-Gesellschaft mbH and Wiener Städtische Versicherung AG Vienna Insurance Group.

Dr. Peter Malanik, member of the Austrian Executive Board said the following: "By achieving the 75 per cent threshold, we have fulfilled an essential condition in the takeover contract. By doing so, we have passed another crucial milestone in the privatisation process. We are confident we will be able to go ahead with the closing this summer."

Dr. Andreas Bierwirth, member of the Austrian Executive Board was also satisfied with the outcome: "We would like to express our thanks to our shareholders for having made this result possible. They are making a fundamental contribution both to the positive future of Austrian Airlines and to safeguarding the location. We would also like to take this opportunity to warmly thank our shareholders for their years of loyalty!"

Primarily the approval of the EU Commission is still required in the aid and competition process if a successful conclusion of the takeover process is to be achieved.

www.austrian.com

destination airports and their location.

SAS was one of 16 airlines that were deemed to have fully met all requirements concerning passenger rights. The announcement was made today in Brussels where the results of the investigation were presented.

"This is a gratifying result, not only because it gives us an official stamp of quality, but also because we view it as approval of the work

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ODYSSEY magazine

we have performed at SAS to make our websites as functional and reliable as possible for our customers," says Lars Sandahl Sørensen, Senior Vice President, Chief Commercial Officer. "For the EU to acknowledge and highlight this makes us very proud."

SAS Scandinavian Airlines has a total of 30 websites in 14 different languages.

SAS subsidiaries Blue1 and Estonian Air's websites also meet all of the EU requirements.

Virgin Atlantic's Sir Richard Branson On BA/AA Merger Application

Sir Richard Branson (May 14) warned of the dangers to consumers and businesses if regulators allow BA and American Airlines to merge unchecked.

Final submissions to the Department of Transportation have to be made by next Monday (18 May) in order to express concerns about BA/AA's plans, which would create a monster monopoly on key routes between London Heathrow and the US.

BA and AA, together with their Oneworld partners, would hold nearly half of all take-off and landing slots at London Heathrow. In comparison, Virgin Atlantic has just over 3 percent. BA/AA would also control most of the capacity on key routes such as Heathrow-Boston (80%); Heathrow-Miami (73%); Heathrow-Chicago O'Hare (64%) and Heathrow-New York JFK (64%).

Speaking at The National Press Club in Washington, Sir Richard said: "I'm here today to warn you that if the proposed merger between BA and American Airlines is allowed to go ahead then the result for passengers, employees, communities and for fair and healthy competition, would be disastrous.

"It doesn't make sense to encourage even less competition by allowing dominant carriers to increase their stranglehold by setting prices together and agreeing schedules.

"I understand that it is tempting for regulators to say: "We've given dispensation to one alliance, we should do likewise for others" as they've done previously. But they must resist temptation. Each anti-trust application must be considered on its merits and...it's clear that the application for a merger between BA and AA must be rejected."

Sir Richard added: "Our arguments are as strong today as they were on the previous two occasions when BA and AA tried to merge. Their dominance has grown even further between then and now.

"It appears that 8 out of the top 10 US routes to Europe last year were Heathrow routes. That makes Heathrow very special indeed to US consumers. And they're going to be feeling short-changed when suddenly there's a lot less competition and higher prices on the routes to get there."

"What is before the regulators today is the

future of a competitive international aviation industry. The latest BA/AA application isn't about what the industry wants. It's about what the consumer needs.

It should not be decided on emotion or past letters of support. It should be decided on true facts. When this recession is over, we need an industry we can be proud of. An industry that promotes competition, creates jobs and brings real benefits to consumers."

Also, Sir Richard unveiled a new poster campaign highlighting the true opinions of the former head of American Airlines. Bob Crandall, who was Chairman and CEO of AA when it first tried to merge with BA in 1996, recently said: "Any objective observer would have to look very hard to find a way in which alliances have benefited consumers."

Bob Crandall's latest views contrast strongly with comments he made when he was in office, when he claimed that there would be benefits for consumers.

www.virginatlantic.com

Iberia Applies Severe Contingency Plan To Save 200+ Million Euros

Iberia has implemented a severe contingency plan in response to the steep decline in demand and revenues, after posting a loss of 92.6 million euros in the first quarter of 2009.

The plan will enable the company to cut losses by between 110 and 125 million euros, and it also foresees an 80-90 million reduction in investment spending. It includes four types of measures: a cutback in capacity, a reduction in labour costs, a reduction of purchases and external costs, and a review of the investment programme, aimed at postponing all investments not related to improving customer services or having a direct impact on earnings.

Apart from reducing seat-kilometre supply capacity, as already announced, cost-cutting measures include the following:

- Temporary layoffs, about which talks with the unions are now in progress. They will cut across the entire company, but will especially affect the areas worst hit by the decline in activity.

- Temporary hiring contracts will not be renewed, and all new hiring will be frozen. Payroll containment measures are under study, along with a moratorium on pay rises and a freeze of executive salaries.

- Spending on rented office space will be cut and the company will relinquish buildings and industrial and airport spaces, making better use of remaining properties. These reductions are expected to amount to reach a total of some 20.000 square metres.

- The company's fleet of ground vehicles used for transport between its industrial installations will be cut.

- All supplier contracts will be reviewed not

British Airways Adds Ground Service For Premium Customers

British Airways is to provide complimentary black cabs and executive cars for premium customers to speed their ground journey to and from Heathrow airport.

In a unique deal, the airline has teamed up with green award-winning Computer Cab plc to offer a free transfer service to and from Terminal 5. First and Club World customers living within 100 miles of the airport will be able to take advantage of the service.

"There is no better way to travel to and from Heathrow than in a black cab," said Richard Tams, British Airways' head of UK and Ireland sales.

"You can use the M4 bus lane to beat the traffic queues, and you have the most knowledgeable drivers in London at your service.

"This is a fantastic additional service for premium customers whether they live in Belgravia, Bath or Birmingham."

only to reduce prices but also to seek ways to adapt commercial relations to current circumstances.

- Spending on technical consultants will be cut back.

- IT developments will be postponed, excepting those directly related to operations.

The company estimates that these measures will bring about a savings of between 110 and 125 million euros on the profit and loss account.

Meanwhile, all investments that are not related to improving customer services, or that have no direct and immediate impact on earnings, are to be put on hold, for an additional savings of between 80 and 90 million euros. Specifically, this means that:

- Construction of the crew signing building at Madrid-Barajas will be postponed, along with several renovation projects at Iberia offices abroad and in the cargo building.

- All planned investments in IT will be reviewed, and those not linked to operations will be postponed.

- However, all investments aimed at improving services to customers will continue, such as the spending of 7 million euros to improve VIP lounges at the Madrid hub and elsewhere. The renovation of tourist class on long-haul aircraft will also go ahead.

Capacity cuts will be selective and temporary, and will not entail withdrawal from any markets, but merely a temporary reduction of frequencies in periods and time slots when demand is lowest. Strategic routes will not be affected. Accordingly, effective in this month of May, Iberia will withdraw five Airbus A320s from service. The delivery of new aircraft will

be postponed, those operating under wet lease will now be flown by Iberia and smaller aircraft will be used on some routes and time slots.

The aim of all these measures is adapt quickly to the current environment and to emerge strengthened, having protected the most important markets and the company's financial strength, as well as the P&L account.

First Quarter Results

The Iberia Group posted a consolidated loss of 92.6 million euros in the first quarter of 2009, chiefly due to the deep impact of the world economic recession on the air transport industry.

Operating earnings declined by 15.6 per cent on the weakness of air traffic in most international markets, and especially in Spain's domestic market. This was aggravated by a steep decline in business travel, and strong downward pressure on fares.

Other extraordinary factors, such as the disruptions caused by the work-to-rule by pilots and severe snowstorms in January, also had a negative impact on the quarterly accounts.

The 6.1 per cent reduction in seat-kilometre supply was outstripped by a 9.5 per cent decline in demand. This pushed down the passenger load factor by 2.9 points from the 2008 average, to 76.5 per cent, although this was still the highest among comparable European airlines.

Operating costs were 6.3 per cent lower than those of the same quarter a year ago, with declines in nearly every item, which helped offset the drop in revenues.

The number of employees was reduced by 4 per cent than in Q-1-08, and the aircraft fleet utilisation rate climbed by 3.4 per cent to a company record of 10 hours per/aircraft day.

Aircraft maintenance services to third parties continued to grow, posting a 6.3 per cent rise over same-2008, and accounting for 7.2 per cent of total operating revenues in the quarter.

The company's equity position remains strong, and it boasts a large balance of disposable current assets (short-term financial investments and cash), amounting to 2,252.3 million on March 31st, 2009.

Korean Air Extends Network In China With 30 Flight Routes Nationwide

Korean Air will add two flight routes to China for nonstop services from Incheon International Airport in Seoul. From May 27, 2009, Korean Air will operate five flights per week between Incheon International Airport, Seoul, and Xi'an, a western city in China by using a Boeing 737-800 aircraft with 149 passenger seats. Operating every day except Thursdays and Sundays, the flight KE807 will depart Seoul at 9:20 a.m. and will arrive in Xi'an at 11:20 a.m. the same day. The return

flight KE808 will depart Xi'an at 12:20 p.m. and will arrive in Seoul at 4:00 p.m. the same day.

Another new destination is Mudanjiang, a northeastern city in China. Korean Air will now fly three times per week on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays from June 2, 2009. Also using a Boeing 737-800 aircraft with 149 passenger seats, the outbound flight KE823 will depart Incheon International Airport at 10:00 a.m. and will arrive in Mudanjiang at 11:45 a.m. The return flight KE824 will depart Mudanjiang for Incheon International Airport at 12:45 a.m. and will arrive at 4:25 p.m.

Korean Air's new services ensure that travelers will be able to reach these regional Chinese cities conveniently. Travelers from the Americas and Europe can check in baggage to their final destination and transit through Incheon International Airport hassle-free. The addition of Xi'an and Mudanjiang to the route network represents that Korean Air is going to serve 30 flight routes to China.

JAL Announces Code Share Agreement With Qantas

Japan Airlines (JAL) will start to offer from June 01, 2009, new code share flights with fellow oneworld member Qantas (QF) which will connect Japan, via Singapore, to 3 destinations in Australia, namely Adelaide, Melbourne and Perth.

JAL and QF first started offering code share flights in April 1986. At present, JALways, a 100%-owned subsidiary of the JAL Group, provides one daily flight between Tokyo (Narita) and Sydney, as well as Brisbane. In addition to that, JAL has code share flights with Jetstar Airways which offer passengers a daily service on the Tokyo (Narita)-Cairns and Osaka (Kansai)-Gold Coast routes, and also for 5 days a week, service on the Gold Coast-Sydney route.

Operating two daily flights connecting Tokyo (Narita) and Singapore, JAL will extend its reach from the current 4, to 7 destinations in Australia by means of the new code share flights operated by QF, who flies from Singapore to Melbourne and Perth on a daily basis, and thrice a week to Adelaide.

Reservations for these code share flights will begin from May 20, 2009.

Jet Airways Konnect Enhances Its Pan-India Network

Buoyed by strong customer demand, effective May 20, 2009, Jet Airways Konnect, Jet Airways' new all-economy service, will enhance its network to include five new services, including four new services from Kolkata.

The airline will enhance air connectivity within North Eastern India with the introduction of its services on the Kolkata - Jorhat, Kolkata - Agartala, Kolkata - Guwahati and Guwahati - Agartala sectors, while linking two key cities

Continental To Close Tampa Reservations Center

Continental Airlines released (May 13) the following employee bulletin to its more than 43,000 employees.

In response to reduced call volumes caused by a customer shift towards Web self-service and the global economic recession, Continental will eliminate approximately 500 positions in its Reservations department and close its Tampa Reservations Center effective July 19, 2009.

"We must make these changes to adapt to changing customer preferences toward the Web," said Reservations and eCommerce VP Martin Hand. "Adding to the structural decline in call volumes caused by the Web has been the effect of the global recession, which has resulted in fewer calls into our reservations centers."

The company is offering a number of voluntary programs to employees, including an early-out severance program and Company Offered Leaves of Absence (COLAs). In addition, Tampa Reservations agents who otherwise would not be furloughed will have the option of transferring to other Reservations centers located in Houston and Salt Lake City.

Continental will also offer outplacement services at all three Reservations centers and relocation assistance to affected employees.

in Eastern and Southern India with the introduction of its new Kolkata-Bengaluru service.

Jet Airways Konnect currently links four major metros - Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai to several destinations across India, including Kochi, Pune, Hyderabad, Coimbatore, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Bhopal and Amritsar.

According to Mr. Wolfgang Prock-Schauer, CEO, Jet Airways, "There is latent demand for a quality, all-economy service on several key domestic routes. With the successful introduction of Jet Airways Konnect's new service, and based on strong demand, we are confident that our new flights are in perfect sync with prevailing passenger needs, and will be very well received."

The Jet Airways Konnect service currently operates a fleet of six ATR 72-500 and two Boeing 737-800 aircraft on key domestic routes across India.

www.jetairways.com

JAL Code Shares With Korean Air On Shizuoka-Incheon Route

Japan Airlines (JAL) will start offering code share flights between Shizuoka and Seoul (Incheon) operated by Korean Air (KAL)

starting June 4, 2009, the first day of operation of the new Shizuoka Airport.

The new code share flights will internationalize JAL's network out from Shizuoka, where the carrier will already be operating three daily return flights between Shizuoka and Fukuoka, and one daily between Shizuoka and Sapporo when the prefecture's new airport opens its doors this June.

JAL and KAL entered their first code share partnership in August 2004 with the objective

of mutual development on the Japan-Korea network. Through this new agreement to include the Shizuoka-Seoul (Incheon) route, passengers traveling between the two countries, either for business or for leisure, can now expect greater convenience provided by the expanded network to 16 routes and 165 return flights a week.

Reservations and sales of tickets for the code share flights start May 15.

www.jal.com/en/

M.I.C.E.



Nicolas Le Brun, President of EFAPCO

EFAPCO Challenges The Meetings Industry: "Seize The Opportunities"

...continued from page one

look to trim down their meetings departments and outsource events to PCOs. I hope our members, across ten member countries and the 1,000-plus PCOs they represent, will be ready to meet these new opportunities – with appropriate staffing levels and quality standards.

"Annual association congresses are still on the agenda; little or no cancellations have been noted. PCOs however have an even more important role to play in helping them to reach their goals. Companies and institutions sending participants to an annual congress will probably send less people than before, and they will want to be convinced there was extra value in sending their people to the event.

"All in all there is no major crisis feeling in our sector, although some members will deal with

more difficult times than others, and organisers will have to confidently justify their budgets and content."

Daniella Serrati, AIMP Secretary General and Italy's EFAPCO Board member said: "Our members now have more direct contact with clients, and are dealing with reductions in rates. There's a constant search for new clients. Everyone is looking more carefully at service quality and financial control.

"The economic downturn has hit marketing, advertising and events and, in future, all of these areas will keep a more careful watch on their investments. Italy's SMEs are playing a key role in our economic recovery – focusing on new ideas, technologies and product quality."

As EFAPCO steps up the pressure to secure greater political and economic recognition for the meetings industry from the EU, it is appropriate that the Federation's 4th Congress will take place in the European Union's capital city from January 7 to 9, 2010. It will be one the first major events to take place in the brand new SQUARE (Brussels Palais des Congres).

EFAPCO Congress 2010
www.efapco2010.eu

www.efapco.eu

Cologne Convention Bureau At IMEX 2009

This year, Cologne is represented for the first time at the IMEX - incorporating meetings made in Germany - The Worldwide Exhibition for incentive travel, meetings and events by the Cologne Convention Bureau (CCB) and three partners. The IMEX is Germany's most important trade fair for meetings and incentive trips and is taking place from 26–28 May 2009 in Hall 8 at Messe Frankfurt. More than 3500 exhibitors from over 150 countries will be attending IMEX 2009.

Expansion Planned For Veterans Memorial Auditorium, Greater Des Moines

The vote to expand Iowa Events Center, specifically Veterans Memorial Auditorium, has been approved. Polk County Supervisors approved a resolution (May 12) that should help draw more convention business to Greater Des Moines. Leaders voted unanimously to spend nearly \$42 million to renovate and expand Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Downtown Des Moines, Iowa.

"This expansion opens up more opportunities for conventions to be brought in to the city," says Vicki Comegys, Vice President of Sales and Services at the Greater Des Moines Convention and Visitors Bureau (GDMCVB). "We are thrilled to now give meeting planners across the country more options and more space in Greater Des Moines. We strongly believe this will lead to increased bookings and more exposure for the city."

The expansion, which will include the addition of a grand ballroom and several meeting rooms, will allow Des Moines to compete with other cities in the region for meetings and conventions.

"Convention-goers like their meeting spaces to be connected," says Greg Edwards, GDMCVB President and CEO. "The expansion of Veterans Memorial Auditorium is critical in getting larger conventions to Des Moines. This is a great day in Des Moines' history."

The GDMCVB has been involved in discussions throughout the plan development phase. The expansion is estimated to bring 15-16 additional regional/national events within the first 3-5 years of project completion. Regional and national conventions are expected to grow to 43 events by year 10. This is expected to result in convention related visitor spending of \$38.8 million, according to Economics Research Associates April 2008 study.

www.SeeDesMoines.com

The Cologne-Bonn-Dusseldorf stand (G 190) will be one of the exhibitors in the open area of the German Convention Bureau (GCB). This year's joint stand is considerably larger and more extensive than last year's. KölnKongress GmbH, SKYEVENTCONFERENCE and Take Five will be represented as Cologne partners.

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"This year, Cologne has an even larger presence at the exhibition than last year, which shows the growing importance accredited to the MICE segment as an economic factor in Cologne. Cologne is an extremely attractive city for hosting conventions and events thanks to the benefits its location can offer. These include an excellent price/performance ratio, an outstanding infrastructure and an excellent choice of events centres, locations and conference hotels", explains Stephanie Franke, Head of the Cologne Convention Bureau.

The new CCB homepage will go online just in time for IMEX. The key element of this web presence will be a meeting planner that enables customers to search online for locations and service partners and find the perfect solutions for their events. Furthermore, the Cologne Convention Bureau will showcase the new "Meeting Point Cologne" and accompanying CD hot off the press. The new edition of the brochure provides a wide range of information and addresses relating to the numerous venues available for conventions around Cologne. To give visitors to the exhibition stand a chance to really get to know Cologne and its partner cities, they will have the opportunity to enter a competition to win a luxury weekend on the Rhine.

With more than 130 venues and over 250 hotels with over 25,000 beds, Cologne is well-prepared as a convention location. Cologne's central location at the heart of Europe and its status as a media, business and university metropolis makes it the perfect environment for successful events. Last but not least, the open and friendly atmosphere of the city is a key factor in contributing towards an all round successful event.

Kölnkongress - Your Professional Partner In Cologne

With its wide range of unique venues all situated in Cologne city centre, Cologne's largest provider of event venues, KölnKongress, is the reliable and professional partner for events on location. From doctor's conventions to rock concerts, event organisers can choose from 10 extraordinary locations with a total of over 60 rooms, which are all equipped with the most up-to-date technology and are suitable for as few as 8 people or as many as 9600 people.

Take Five Hotels

Take Five Hotels, the marketing amalgamation of 13 top hotels in Cologne, are also looking forward to being represented at IMEX this year. Take Five Hotels provides information regarding the various offers available for 4 and 5 star hotels, as well as the unique one stop agency, which informs potential event organisers about current availability at Take Five hotels. "IMEX is still the top trade fair in the MICE sector and is an absolute must for every hotel provider", explains Take Five spokesperson Wilhelm Luxem.

www.conventioncologne.de

Liverpool Celebrates Conference Status Coup

Liverpool has been named as one of the world's most desirable cities to host a conference, according to the industry 'bible'. Following the opening of the Arena &

Convention Centre Liverpool at the beginning of 2008, the city has broken into the world's top 100 conference venues for the first time - and is now ranked higher than New York, Moscow, Auckland, Venice and Bonn.

The city rose an astonishing 44 places in its year as European Capital of Culture to be ranked 86th out of 300 destinations in the league table published by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA).

As well as being ranked in the top 100 - Liverpool has broken into Europe's top 50 and is now in the UK's top five as a major conference destination.

Liverpool's ranking in 2007 was 130th - in 2006 it was 245th - and today city leaders said they aim to be in the world's top 50 by 2012.

Councillor Warren Bradley, Leader of the city council which was instrumental in creating the Arena & Convention Centre Liverpool, and owns and operates it through a subsidiary company, said: "These rankings are a huge boost for our reputation as a great place to do business and I thank everyone who has worked tirelessly to catapult the city back into Europe's premier league.

"We knew a world class conference centre was vital to our future prosperity, and with the cultural and retail offer to match, Liverpool's global appeal to businesses and tourists will continue to grow and grow."

To gain its ranking, Liverpool City Region hosted 18 events that met the following ICCA criteria:

- An event must attract a minimum of 50

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delegates

· An event must take place regularly (i.e. every year/four years) and not be an ad hoc event

· An event must rotate between at least three different countries

It is estimated Liverpool's Arena & Convention Centre contributed £200million to Liverpool's economy in its first year in 2008. The venue, which comprises the 11,000 seater Echo Arena and the BT Convention Centre, saw 700,000 people pass through its doors in the first 12 months.

Highlights of this year's conference programme, announced so far, include blue chip conferences including the Royal College of General Practitioners, The TUC Congress, The NHS Confederation and The Association of British Neurologists.

Councillor Gary Millar, executive member for tourism and enterprise, said: "Being European Capital of Culture has had a huge impact on the city's international profile and appeal and 2008 was an amazing platform to launch the Convention Centre. These rankings also prove ACC Liverpool is really making an impact to our economy, with evidence suggesting a high percentage of delegates often come back as tourists."

"The years of investment in the city's infrastructure and training in our hospitality sector is beginning to reap dividends and we are committed to supporting the industry to further improve the city's welcome to visitors and businesses alike."

Pam Wilsher, acting director of tourism for The Mersey Partnership, which operates Liverpool's Convention Bureau, said: "This is fantastic news for conferencing in Liverpool. Through our conference ambassador programme, we helped secure a number of prestigious events at venues across the city during 2008. Business tourism plays a major role in the City Region's visitor economy, and new facilities at ACC Liverpool have transformed our conference offer."

"Rising 44 places in the last year shows what an attractive and competitive prospect Liverpool is for international conference buyers and event organisers. To be ranked at 86th in the world with the likes of Adelaide and San Francisco, and ranking higher than New York City and Auckland, is a fantastic achievement."

www.liverpool.gov.uk

M.I.C.E. EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS

Send your meetings, incentives, conventions & exhibitions (MICE) related events, news & information to the Editor:

edit@btbtravel.com

HOTELS & RESORTS

Accor North America and Latin America Form "Accor Americas"

In line with measures to simplify the Group's Corporate Governance, and as part of his new responsibilities as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Gilles Pélissou has streamlined his chain of command with the aim of accelerating the decision-making process in a time of recession, improving the responsiveness of teams across the organization and maintaining the Group on course.

After the appointment of Jacques Stern as Senior Executive Vice President, the various operating and corporate responsibilities in the Accor Hospitality business have been redefined as follows:

- The number of large operating regions has been reduced from five to three: "Europe, Middle East and Africa", "Americas" and "Asia-Pacific".

Yann Caillère will lead the Europe region, which now includes Northern and Southern Europe, with 56 countries and 2,300 hotels. He will continue to oversee the Middle East and Africa, and remains in charge of Sofitel Worldwide.

Building on his long track record of achievement in Europe and his previous North American experience, Michael Flaxman will head a new region called the Americas, combining the 1,000 Motel6/Studio 6, the Novotel properties in the United States and Canada, as well as the hotels in Latin America.

Michael Issenberg will continue to manage operations in the Asia-Pacific region, with 370 hotels in 16 countries. The region, the world's most highly populated, extends from India to the Pacific Islands.

- "Hotel Marketing" and "Sales and Distribution" have been combined into a single corporate department. Based on his experience in both conventional and online marketing and distribution, Jean-Luc Chrétien will be in charge of Marketing and the Hotel Brands, in addition to Distribution.

Under the new structure of Accor's operating regions, Accor North America joins Accor Latin America, with Olivier Poirot continuing to lead North America, and Roland de Bonadona leading Latin America. Both Poirot and Bonadona will report to Michael Flaxman under the restructured organization of Accor Americas.

With Gilles Pélissou, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, the Executive Committee now comprises nine members:

Jacques Stern Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer in charge of Finance, Strategy, Hotel Development, Information Systems and Purchasing for Accor Hospitality

Yann Caillère Chief Operating Officer, Accor

Hospitality Europe, the Middle East and Africa

Chief Executive Officer, Sofitel Worldwide in charge of Hotel Design and Construction Worldwide

Michael Flaxman Chief Operating Officer, Accor Hospitality Americas

Michael Issenberg Chief Operating Officer, Accor Asia-Pacific for Accor Services

Serge Ragozin Chief Operating Officer, Accor Services Worldwide for the support functions

Jean-Luc Chrétien Executive Vice President, Accor Hospitality Marketing and Distribution

Cathy Kopp Executive Vice President, Human Resources

Pascal Quint Corporate Secretary and Secretary of the Board of Directors

Philippe Adam and Eric Lepleux are leaving the Group after three years of significant contributions to Accor's growth and development.

www.accor-na.com/

Construction Begins On New Hotel Urbano On Brickell In Miami

Amidst the glitz and sophistication of downtown Miami rises a stylish new destination for business and vacation travelers, as well as a gathering spot for local residents in search of an upbeat neighborhood venue to dine, mingle and relax. Construction has begun on the new Hotel Urbano on Brickell, which is slated to open this fall. Designed to reflect the multi-cultural heartbeat of Miami, the property will be managed by Portfolio Hotels & Resorts. The property is well suited to become a popular destination for business professionals and residents, given the hotel's proximity to Key Biscayne, Brickell Avenue, Coconut Grove and South Miami.

"The Hotel Urbano's personality and attitude are upbeat and informal and will make this the preferred choice for business and vacation travelers, as well as the perfect venue for small business meetings and casual, intimate social functions," said Helmut Horn, President of Portfolio Hotels. "We selected the name 'Urbano' to reflect the property's urban location, energy, décor and the eclectic unpredictable architecture of the neighborhood. As with all of our properties, our goal is to provide customers with a unique, value-added experience."

The hotel is owned by CRP/Cardel Brickell Hotel, LLC, a joint venture between affiliates of Miami-based Rodblu Investments and The Carlyle Group, based in Washington, DC.

Boutique hotels, known for individual appeal, stylish ambiance and personalized amenities combined with unique services, have

increasingly gained popularity throughout North America and particularly in Miami. The new Hotel Urbano is designed as a true boutique hotel in every sense of the word and will offer:

- 65 stylish guest rooms designed by Marcie DeLaRosa, one of the country's top interior designers
- Guest rooms featuring walk-in showers with water conscious shower heads, and most rooms with balconies
- Tropical, free form outdoor pool and deck with private cabanas and alfresco dining
- Fitness room to help guests stay in shape and functional business center to keep them productive
- Three comfortable meeting rooms to meet business and leisure needs, including a well-appointed boardroom
- Innovative full-service restaurant serving South Florida cuisine with a Cuban twist and featuring alfresco dining, plus a vibrant poolside lounge

www.hotelurbano.com
www.portfoliohotels.com

Sofitel Luxury Hotels Signs Guangzhou Property

The Sofitel Luxury Hotels has announced the signing of the management contract for the Guangdong Sunrich Group's latest hotel property, the Sofitel Guangzhou Sunrich, located at the heart of Guangzhou's Tianhe CBD. The signing ceremony was held on May 8, 2009 to close the much anticipated venture for the renowned luxury hospitality brand under the Accor Group.

Sofitel Guangzhou Sunrich is located at an unrivaled position in Tianhe CBD area, the most developed financial and commercial district of Guangzhou, facilitating access to much of the city's dynamic environment such as shopping centres, city landmarks and grade A office buildings holding headquarters of countless international enterprises. Guests will find the hotel easily accessible as it is in walking distance from the main metro lines and a short drive away from Guangzhou East Railway Station connecting Guangzhou, Dongguan, Shenzhen and Hong Kong.

Together with the guestrooms, meeting rooms, business center and spa & fitness facilities, this property will also host a wide range of dining and cocktail venues which will serve to its locale as the destination for fine dining, business meetings and leisure outings. The Sofitel Luxury Hotels wishes to incorporate the state-of-the-art facilities and venue capabilities with the unique French flair and generous hospitality it is most known for.

Since its establishment in 1993, the Guangdong Sunrich Group had first seen its main business come from real estate, hotel investment and oil product sales but over the years, has diversified its scope to cover such industries as petroleum and gas, insurance, import & export, property management and most notably, as a sole supplier for mechanical tubing projects in China. The conglomerate is now present in a number of regions in China including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenyang, Jinan and Shenzhen.

FEATURED HOTEL

At Pan Pacific Hotel Seattle Guests Get Activino!



As Seattle's premiere urban destination, Pan Pacific Hotel Seattle features 160 superbly appointed guest rooms and suites with views of the city, Lake Union and Space Needle; plasma HDTVs; Internet radio; complimentary wireless Internet access; and accommodating working spaces.

The AAA Four Diamond property also offers a full service fitness center, over 5,000 square feet of luxurious meeting and event space, 24-hour private dining and a sleek library lounge serving cocktails, meals and light snacks.

Pan Pacific Hotel Seattle is part of the exclusive 2200 Westlake, featuring Vida Spa, John Howie's Seastar Restaurant & Raw Bar, Whole Foods Market, Starbucks and many more retail outlets. The hotel is within walking distance of Seattle's Central Business District, Nordstrom's flagship retail store, upscale Pacific Place and scenic Lake Union and is now conveniently connected, by the Seattle Streetcar, to nearby Westlake Center and South Lake Union Park.

For active-minded couples who want to enjoy a Pacific Northwest getaway filled with adventure, ecology, organically-inspired lunch and "vino" culture, Pan Pacific Hotel Seattle together with EverGreen Escapes accommodates with its new Activino package.

Guests enjoy a Premier guestroom for two nights; breakfast for two; overnight parking for two nights; and a full-day "Activino A La Carte" escape (see full description below). The cost for this amazing adventure starts at \$998, double occupancy and is available through October 31, 2009.

To begin, the full-day "Activino A La Carte" escape features a choice to paddle, hike, bike or rock climb followed by a Wine Trail Experience. Guests will be picked up and dropped off from/to the hotel, travelling in adventure-outfitted luxury Bio-Diesel Mercedes or Jeep and accompanied by a highly qualified naturalist guide. The package also includes lunch at Full Circle Organic Farm,

scrumptious morning and afternoon tea, selected Washington wine, refreshments, all entry fees and comprehensive naturalist commentary.

Here's the Step-by-Step Itinerary/Escape Plan:

- Start the day with a short drive across Lake Washington and along Lake Sammamish up into the Cascade foothills to the heart of Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.
- Stop to view the breathtaking 268 foot Snoqualmie Falls.
- Guests choose one of the following activities: rock climbing, mountain biking, paddling or hiking.
- From any of these activity vantage points, guests will experience the season's beauty with a dedicated naturalist along to interpret the surrounding ecosystem, including the grand landscape in motion, as seen from a geological perspective.
- Next, on to lunch at Full Circle Farm, a 260-acre certified organic produce farm in Carnation. The farm cultivates more than 125 varieties of fruits, vegetables and herbs, utilizing sustainable practices.
- With the active portion of the day tackled, and after a satiating lunch, guests will enjoy the "vino" portion of "Activino," visiting at least four of Woodinville's most acclaimed boutique wineries. In addition to tasting the quality of the wine, the guide and wineries will discuss the natural history, sustainability and bio-dynamics in viticulture.
- As an added bonus, guests will also be guided through short, interpretive nature walks on native wetlands.

About Evergreen Escapes

EverGreen Escapes is the premier local and sustainable adventure travel company in Seattle, Washington USA. Specializing in crafting upscale nature, wildlife, active and education based experiences throughout the Pacific Northwest & British Columbia, EverGreen Escapes features authentic half, full and multi-day escapes, exclusive private getaways, memorable corporate retreats and inspiring teambuilding experiences. Whatever the pursuit - bird watching, hiking, sea kayaking, cycling, snowshoeing, rock climbing or wine tasting - they creatively design and execute their programs with a commitment to wilderness education, interpretation and sustainability. They combine their experiences with the comfort of scrumptious northwest "on safari" meals, fine local wine and luxe lodges. The goal is to offer locals and visitors a transformational outdoor experience that inspires them to respect, revere & protect our planet from the rock face, to the orca, to the wine!

www.evergreenescapes.com

Pan Pacific Hotel Seattle

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www.panpacifichotel.com/seattle

Present at the signing was Vice President of Sofitel Greater China, Mr. Michel Molliet, "We are delighted to partner with Guangdong Sunrich Group on such an important hotel project, with whom we hope to build a strong relationship in the years to come and work together to build a landmark Sofitel property."

The Sofitel Guangzhou Sunrich is expected to open at the end of 2010.

www.sofitel.com

Shangri-La Launches MaxiMICE To Help Meeting Organisers

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, Asia Pacific's leading luxury hotel group, launches MaxiMICE – an initiative designed to maximise the returns of delivering successful events. Meeting organisers can enjoy a 10 per cent credit by booking a meeting group and save the credit for the next meeting at any Shangri-La hotels and resorts. Meeting organisers can receive a credit to a maximum of US \$5,000 - the credit can be used for any hotel services on their next meeting group at any of Shangri-La hotels and resorts. This offer is applicable when confirming a meeting between 1 May and 31 December 2009.

MaxiMICE aims to bring meeting organisers the best and most flexible rewards within the strong network of 62 Shangri-La hotels and resorts, and will assist meeting organisers easily find an ideal location, whether in a city hotel, resort or a Traders hotel. Shangri-La offers total meeting space of over 130,000 square metres (over 1.4 million square feet), more meeting capacity than any other Asia Pacific luxury hotel group, featuring pillarless, high-ceilinged ballrooms up to 2,240 square metres in key city locations, and coupled with exceptional Shangri-La service.

Shangri-La guarantees meeting organiser a streamlined and successful event.

www.shangri-la.com

Futian Shangri-La, Shenzhen Offers Horizon Club Introductory Rates

To celebrate the opening of the Horizon Club facilities at Futian Shangri-La, Shenzhen, a special introductory rate starting from RMB1,528 per night for single or double occupancy in a Horizon room will be available from 1 May to 31 August 2009. The rate is subject to a 15 per cent service charge.

Designed around the concept of a "hotel within a hotel" for discerning business travellers, the Horizon Club rooms and lounge at Futian Shangri-La, Shenzhen provide guests with a new perspective on exclusivity and convenience.

Exclusive privileges and amenities combine with an exemplary level of personalised service to satisfy the distinctive needs of the hotel's most discerning guests.

CORPORATE CARDS

American Express/CFO Research Global Business & Spending Monitor

The world's senior finance executives are focusing on aggressive new methods to reduce and control costs in the face of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. At the same time, many businesses are continuing to invest in areas such as technology, marketing, and R&D to generate revenue and improve their operations once the recovery begins. These findings were released in the second annual American Express/CFO Research Global Business & Spending Monitor, a survey of 285 senior finance executives from the United States, Europe, Canada, Mexico, Asia, and Australia.

"While companies are clearly focused on cutting where they can, they are spending when they should to become more efficient and keep revenue flowing," said Gunther Bright, Senior Vice President, Global Client Group at American Express. "They're also measuring themselves against new metrics that reflect today's market reality, as well as a post-recession global economy."

Companies Make Trade-Offs To Control Costs, Avoid Layoffs

Companies in all regions remain pessimistic about the prospects of rapid economic recovery, with nearly 70% of respondents expecting to see recovery begin sometime in 2010. Over two-thirds of respondents predicted modest to substantial economic contraction over the next 12 months, and 63% reported that their companies' capital investments will decrease in 2009.

When asked about changes in their workforce, 59% of respondents anticipate a decrease in headcount. But companies are also taking actions now to avoid layoffs. Half the executives polled reported plans to freeze salaries and bonuses, while 32% plan to reduce benefits and 29% plan to cut salaries and bonuses. Twenty-four percent plan to reduce employee work hours or give furloughs and 16% plan temporary office or plant closures.

Cost control strategies also dominated finance executives' sentiments as they continue to deal with the recession:

- 85% are tightening controls over employee spending.
- 82% are placing greater emphasis on measuring and monitoring company financial performance.
- 71% are improving internal financial controls.

Sustained Spending in IT, Marketing and R&D

Despite the weight of the economic downturn, many companies are taking proactive steps to ride out the storm and position themselves for recovery. The research revealed a clear divide between investments that companies feel are vital to controlling costs or increasing revenues, and those that may be delayed until a recovery begins.

When asked where it would be important to

sustain spending, companies identified information technology (69%), employee benefits (64%), marketing/advertising/PR (57%), and research and development (54%). Other areas of investment, such as merger opportunities and third-party consultants, were much less likely to be rated as important categories to sustain spending.

Finance executives' attitudes toward business travel told a similar story. Overall, 87% of respondents reported that their companies plan to spend less on business travel this year, with 44% expecting a decrease of more than 10%. Yet the corporate travel mix is shifting toward a heavy focus on revenue-generating travel:

- 82% are likely to maintain or increase travel for meetings with new clients or for business development.
- 66% plan to maintain or increase travel for meetings with existing clients.

New Performance Metrics Steer Decision Making

The precipitous decline of economies around the world, combined with the expectation that the recession will not reverse itself quickly, have led companies to explore new ways to measure success.

Many respondents reported using or considering new metrics for financial performance (55%), operational efficiency (54%) and cash flow/capital spending (54%).

77% of companies reported that they have completed, are executing, or plan to revise their forecasting methods.

70% of respondents said their companies had adopted a formal program to improve employees' understanding of their contribution to business performance; 64% said they are working to refine or develop new business models to deal with the downturn.

One finance executive reported creating a financial early warning system by using forward looking projections linked to performance benchmarks his company must hit to maintain access to credit. Another said, "We are measuring return on sales, capital employed, days of working capital, etc. These are all areas (and several others) that were previously neglected."

Emerging Measurement Strategies Also Included:

- Emphasizing return on investment over earnings per share.
- Focusing on direct impact on company profitability by line of business.
- Measuring customer profitability.
- Creating a "corporate dashboard" to track changes among a company's key assets.
- Examining employee productivity measures such as sales per employee and value-added per employee.

"Companies are adopting measurements that relate to productivity, profits and ROI," added Bright. "As we've heard from our own clients, a smart mix of data and insight can help executives make better decisions about strategy and investment in this challenging economic environment."

PEOPLE

Elegant Hotels Group Appoints Michelle Luces As Director of Revenue

Elegant Hotels Group has named Michelle Luces as its new director of revenue management effective May 13. In her new position, Ms. Luces will oversee yield management, training, inventory control programs as well as strategic pricing policies to reach optimum revenue for the five distinctive beachfront hotels and resorts dotted along the west and south coasts of Barbados including Turtle Beach Resort, Crystal Cove Hotel, Colony Club Hotel, Tamarinid Cove Hotel and The House.

Ms. Luces, a native of Caracas, Venezuela, has spent more than a decade in management for the Hilton Hotels Corporation and its international properties. She previously worked with the Hilton Hotels Corporation as regional director of revenue management and front office operations for the Caribbean and South American region where she has accomplished a significant year-over-year growth in six months. Based in Miami, Florida, she was tasked with strategically coordinating the revenue management processes and procedures for hotels in the Caribbean & South America region to maximize room revenue for each hotel.

From 2005 to 2007, Ms. Luces served as area project and revenue training manager for Hilton Hotels' Americas Corporate Office in Coral Gables, Florida. Prior to that, she worked in San Juan, Puerto Rico at Caribe Hilton Hotel with the role of yield manager. Ms. Luces has also held positions at the Marquette Hotel in Minneapolis, and the Hilton Caracas and Hilton Margarita in Venezuela.

Wyndham Hotels and Resorts Expands Development Team

Wyndham Hotels and Resorts has announced the appointment of Stephen K. Miller as senior vice president of development, responsible for the growth of the Wyndham Hotels and Resorts brand's portfolio through management and franchise agreements throughout the Eastern United States. The appointment marks Miller's return to the Wyndham brand, which he served in a senior development role for more than a decade under the former Wyndham International. While there, he was integral in expanding the brand's portfolio.

In addition to his time with Wyndham International, Miller brings to the company extensive hospitality experience that includes positions with hotel companies including Strategic Hotels & Resorts Inc., Carlson Hotels Worldwide, Interstate Hotels & Resorts and Embassy Suites, now a brand of Hilton Hotels Corp.

Most recently, Miller was managing director and Chicago head for DTZ Hospitality Group, a London-based real estate and investment banking firm.

HRG Appoints New Director of Sales & Account Management For China

International corporate travel services company, Hogg Robinson Group (HRG), has announced the appointment of Yates Fei as Director of Sales and Account Management for HRG China with immediate effect. Reporting to Harald Weber-Liel, General Manager of HRG China, Yates Fei will be responsible for extending HRG's business development strategy for China, which includes new business opportunities and account wins. In his new role, he will also build and oversee the China corporate sales and account management teams to deliver a high value service to HRG's clients in China.

Fei started his career with HRG as Regional Business Manager for Asia Pacific back in 2005 and prior to this most recent appointment, he was the Head of Account Management for HRG China, where he deftly aligned the China account management team to support HRG's premium clients' regional and global initiatives.

New General Manager, Operations At HRG Australia

Hogg Robinson Group (HRG), has announced the appointment of Darryl Laverty as General Manager, Operations at HRG Australia, with immediate effect. Based in Sydney, Laverty will report to Greg Treasure, Managing Director for Australia. His responsibilities will include not only national operations, but also executive ownership of growth into New South Wales. Laverty brings in excess of 25 years of corporate travel experience to his new role at HRG, and has held significant roles and delivered successful objectives for key organisations within the sector.

New General Manager, Prateek Kumar, For Dusit Thani Manila

Dusit International has announced the appointment of Mr. Prateek Kumar, as the first general manager of the all-new Dusit Thani Manila. "After completing the hotel's extensive renovation, we immediately started our search for the ideal candidate. With Prateek's notable experience in luxury hotels in Singapore and most recently, working as General Manager for a newly opened deluxe hotel, we knew he had the right energy and enthusiasm to re-launch the hotel" shares Gerhard Kropp, Regional Vice President of Dusit International and President of Philippine Hotelier's Inc., owning company of Dusit Thani Manila.

Prateek Kumar is a charismatic and vibrant young blood whose flair for significant and ingenious leaps in thinking, strategic innovations in this global market and overall remarkable expertise in hotel management swiftly brought about his rise to the quintessential ladder of success.

Travelport GDS Strengthens Its Team In Africa

Travelport GDS has today announced details of the new, highly experienced team it has recruited both internally and externally as it sharpens its focus on growing its market presence throughout Africa.

Mark Meehan has relocated to Travelport's Middle East and Africa (MEA) headquarters in Dubai to head up the newly-created team. Reporting into Bryan Conway, president and managing director for the MEA region, Meehan will have overall responsibility for reinforcing the company's leading position in many African markets and identifying new market entry opportunities for the company. He previously held responsibility for Travelport GDS's global commercial operations based in the UK and has been with the company for ten years.

Matthew Powell has been named as director of business development for Africa, reporting into Meehan. Formerly head of product marketing, Powell has grown with the company in various leadership roles over a 14-year period. With extensive knowledge of the GDS sector, Powell has particular expertise in managing helpdesk operations, regional sales teams and product marketing programmes. Powell will also be based in the MEA headquarters but will spend much of his time travelling throughout Africa, working closely with the company's distributors in the continent as well as identifying new market entry opportunities.

In addition to the strategic direction provided by the newly created roles based in the MEA headquarters, Travelport GDS has also strengthened its local commercial team based in Southern Africa. Working in close collaboration with the Travelport distributors in the region, the focus of the new Southern African team is to expand the company's already strong presence in the region and oversee the implementation of new Travelport products in local markets.

Heading up the Southern Africa team is Gary Broomberg, commercial vice president for the region. Based in Johannesburg, Gary recently joined Travelport, bringing with him over 15 years experience gained in a number of high profile technology organisations including MicroStrategy and Novell.

He is supported by two regional product managers; Samantha Williams, who has recently re-located to Johannesburg from Travelport's global HQ in the UK, and local appointee Don Smith. Both Williams and Smith offer extensive GDS product knowledge as well as experience of working in the Southern African travel industry. In their roles they will offer local hands-on support when new Travelport products, services and content are introduced to the growing region.

He has a Diploma in Catering and a Bachelor Degree in Hotel Management from the Griffith University in Australia.