



MEETING PLANNER SURVEY REVEALS ENCOURAGING NEWS FOR MEETINGS INDUSTRY

*Far Fewer Meeting Cancellations Along With Increased Bookings and Attendance Predicted;
Continued Focus on Cost Control Remains*

June 15, 2010 (Chicago, IL) - After 18 months of declining demand and an uncertain horizon, it appears the U.S. meetings industry outlook is improving according to a new survey commissioned by the **Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA)**, the **PCMA Education Foundation** and **American Express**. The national survey of 505 professional meeting planners located throughout the U.S., 56% of whom were association planners and 44% of whom were corporate, incentive and independent planners, as well as procurement specialists, was conducted during the April to May timeframe in 2010 by **Ypartnership**.

When asked about their intentions regarding off-site meetings planned for 2010 and 2011 in comparison to 2009, respondents indicated they booked a net increase of 15% more meetings or approximately an average of 17 more meetings per planner in 2010, and a net increase of 24% more meetings or approximately an average of 17 more meetings per planner in 2011. Similar trends were observed with respect to their expectations about attendance at off-site meetings in both 2010, in which respondents expect a net increase of 23% and in 2011 a net increase of 38% versus 2009.

The outlook and booking behavior of meeting planners reflect a significant shift in sentiment on the forces that impacted the industry so adversely over the previous two years: only 6% stated they were planning to postpone, cancel or re-book meetings in 2010 because of "current economic conditions" - versus 41% who cited this reason in 2009. Further, 89% stated they were not planning to postpone, cancel or re-book any meetings they had already booked in 2010 and 2011 - versus 54% who shared this sentiment in 2009. On an equally encouraging note, respondents expected to pay only \$7,600 in cancellation fees for meetings booked in 2010 and \$3,500 for meetings booked in 2011 - versus \$81,000 in 2009.

"While it's been a difficult eighteen months for our industry, I'm encouraged to see both actual business as well as business sentiment improving. There continues to be caution in budgets and costs controls, which is to be expected, but if we can stay on this positive trend path there are certainly brighter days ahead for meetings," said Deborah Sexton, PCMA president and CEO.

Although planners' sentiments with respect to both the selection of meeting venues and lodging accommodations have reflected some moderation in their concern about the perception of venues that might appear frivolous, the results clearly reveal lingering anxiety.

Specifically, meeting venue selection is likely to be affected during the next two years, with resorts and cruise ships still perceived to be destinations that should be avoided:

- Resorts: net decrease of 7%;
- Convention centers: net decrease of 4%;

- Cruise ships: net decrease of 15%.
- Hotels: net increase of 25%;
- Conference centers: net increase of 1%;

A similar conclusion emerges from the analysis of the type of lodging accommodations sought by meeting planners in the year ahead:

- Mid-scale: net increase of 18%;
- Upscale: net increase of 1%;
- Upper upscale: net decrease of 19%;
- Luxury: net decrease of 24%.

Financial and time pressures also continue to impact the length of off-site meetings, with 30% of planners stating their intention to reduce the length of both sales and incentive meetings by one or more days, and 17% expressing a similar sentiment with respect to their annual conferences.

On a positive note, one out of four planners expect their total annual budget for off-site meetings to increase this year over last - compared to only 8% who expressed this sentiment in 2009.

The survey was conducted online with a nationally representative sample of professional meeting planners drawn from PCMA and American Express member and associate databases. Respondents were screened for inclusion based on their meeting planning experience and behavior, such as: meeting planning is part of their formal job description; minimum of five years planning off-site meetings; and that they had booked a minimum of five off-site meetings during the past 12 months in hotels, resorts, convention centers, and conference centers.

The vast majority of respondents (77%) had over ten years of professional meeting planning experience, and roughly one-half (44%) had booked more than 20 off-site meetings during the previous twelve months. Nearly one-half (49%) held the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) designation. The most frequently planned meetings were for 100 attendees or less (51%) and more than one in ten (13%) planned off-site meetings for more than 1,000 attendees.

"These survey results reveal promising signs of a revival for corporate meetings and incentives," said Issa Jouaneh, vice president, Maxvantage and Global Meeting Solutions, American Express Business Travel. "As meeting activity rebounds, cost control will remain top of mind and it will be critical for planners to make strategic spending choices. Companies with effective meetings programs will be those that continue to promote policies that deliver a strong return on investment from meetings while balancing the need to deliver on stakeholder objectives and creating the designed attendee experience."

The Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) is the professional resource and premier educator for the meetings and convention industry. Founded in 1957, PCMA represents the interests of meeting management executives from associations, non-profit organizations, corporations, independent meeting planning companies, and multi-management firms who recognize the importance of meetings to their organization. PCMA empowers members with the tools they need to succeed as meeting professionals and to promote the value of the industry to their organizations and the general public. Headquartered in Chicago, PCMA has 16 chapters throughout the United States and Canada. For additional information, please visit the PCMA Web site at www.pcma.org.

The role of the PCMA Education Foundation is to support the mission of the PCMA through fundraising and grant giving focused on education and research that will benefit the meetings and conventions industry.

Established in 1985, the Foundation supports educational programs to improve professionalism in the meetings industry and to provide a university-level meeting management curriculum. The Foundation provides educational programs for meeting managers, hotels, convention and visitors bureaus, and other members of the meetings industry. It also conducts ongoing research of industry issues and concerns. The Foundation continually designs and creates new programs to encourage the highest levels of professionalism in the meetings industry.

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