

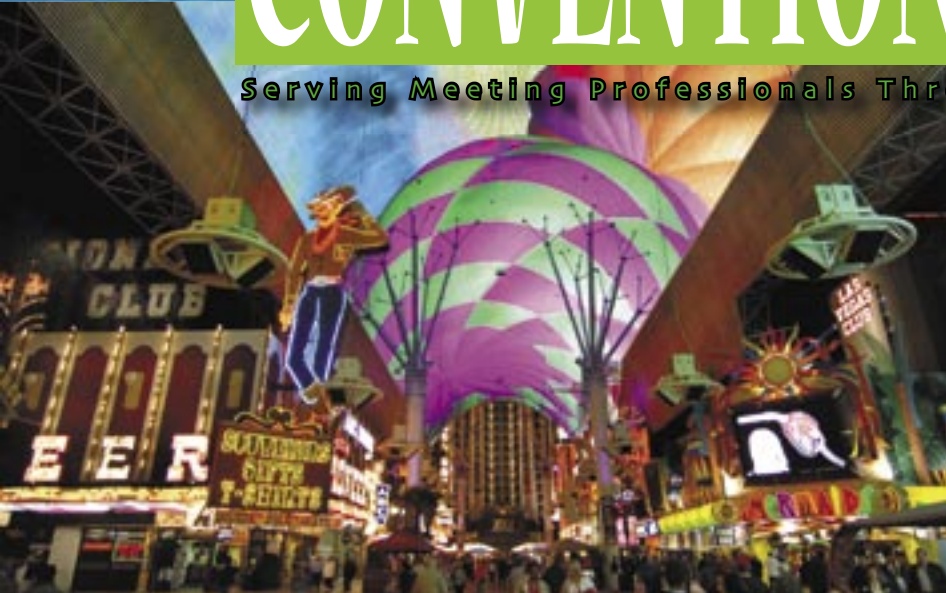
# 2007 Meeting Planners' Guide

Volume 3, Issue 4

December 06/January 07 <sup>TM</sup>

# CONVENTION FORUM

Serving Meeting Professionals Throughout The Southeast



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# CONTENTS

30



39



26

## Meeting Planners Guide

### Alabama

- 16 Facility Listings
- 16 The Beach Club

### Florida

- 19 Facility Listings
- 20 Harborside Event Center
- 21 Renaissance Vinoy Resort & Golf Club
- 23 Safety Harbor Resort & Spa
- 24 Embassy Suites Orlando North

### Georgia

- 26 Facility Listings

### Louisiana

- 30 Facility Listings
- 32 Astor Crowne Plaza

### Mississippi

- 33 Facility Listings
- 34 Jackson Convention & Visitors Bureau

### North Carolina

- 35 Facility Listings

### South Carolina

- 35 Facility Listings

### Texas

- 37 Facility Listings

### Virginia

- 39 Facility Listings

### Around The Nation

- 40 Facility Listings

December 06 / January 07  
Volume 3, Issue 1

## Features

- 8 Promise Power: New Year's Resolutions Once a Month
- 9 How To Meet, Greet and Influence People
- 10 Building a Happy, Productive and Talented Workforce
- 12 The History of Associations: A Quick Quiz
- 13 10 Business Meeting Creativity Ideas
- 14 Speaker Profiles
- 41 Polite Behavior: You Can Bring It Back
- 42 Juggling the Pressures of Work and Home
- 44 25 Offbeat Ways to Make Good Meetings Great
- 46 On the Road: The Do's and Don'ts of Safety Travel

## DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Publisher's Message
- 6 Face To Face
- 48 In The News
- 48 Industry Developments

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# New Beginnings

I just love new beginnings, don't you? We have the New Year, of course, but that's just one of the new beginnings we can celebrate. How about beginning a new month? a new week? a new day? Heck, even a new box of chocolates! (Forgive me, I thought I was Forrest Gump for a minute there ...) Seriously, new beginnings are a reason to celebrate, because they bring new opportunities to serve others, to do our best work, to correct past mistakes or to just try something different.

In case you're wondering what has gotten into me, take a look at page 8 where you'll find an inspiring article about making New Year's resolutions once a month. You'll find great ideas for making your New Year the best ever!

If one of your resolutions is to learn better people skills, "How to Meet, Greet and Influence People (page 9) is just for you! Carolyn Kerner Stein is an expert on networking, and her timely tips are sure to help you find ways to increase your confidence, your status and your success.

Are you the boss? Do you ever lead meetings? (Who doesn't?) We have two articles in this issue that will help you enjoy your work more. Gregory P. Smith writes, "Wouldn't it be great if you enjoyed going to work?" Well, wouldn't it? Smith's article on page 10 has 17 great ideas for making the workplace more fun and productive. Then flip over to lucky page 13 where Craig M. Cortello has "10 Business Meeting Creativity Ideas." More than one of his ideas involve throwing things

... have I caught your interest? Wait, there's more. Page 44 offers 25 (yes, 25!) "Offbeat Ways to Make Good Meetings Great." If my math is right, that's 55 ideas—at least one of them is sure to be exactly what you've been looking for!

We have three more articles that will help you start the New Year right: "Polite Behavior: You Can Bring It Back," "Juggling the Pressures of Work and Home" and "The Do's and Don'ts of Travel Safety." There is something in each of these essays for everyone.

So, we begin a New Year. Here at *Convention Forum*™ magazine, we are celebrating the beginning of our 3<sup>rd</sup> year! It's hard to believe we have reached such a milestone, and I want to take a moment to thank our readers and advertisers for their support. It just keeps getting better. Be sure to read about our featured properties (pages 16-40) and speakers (pages 14-15). You may find the perfect match for your next meeting.

Happy New Year!

Michelle M. Lock  
Maverick Marketing LLC

P.S. Keep sending photos of your annual meetings, special events and promotions. And don't forget those travel tips for moms and dads!

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# 10 Business Meeting Creativity Ideas



by Craig M. Cortello



Developing an innovative spirit in the workplace doesn't require extraordinary measures. Managers can experiment with simple ideas that merely break routines, giving employees permission to drop the façade we all don to some degree when we punch the clock. Here are a few ideas that will help you lighten things up for your staff and get their creative juices flowing, if you have the courage to take the leap:

## 1. Dart Board

Start every staff meeting by giving everyone a shot at the dart board. Best shot gets to kick off the meeting, appoint the moderator or tell what he or she did over the weekend. Starts things off on a playful note and gets your people out of their chairs. For safety purposes, stick with the magnetic or Velcro variety.

## 2. Colored Markers for the Flip Chart

Sounds simple, but we are programmed from an early age to correlate using colors with the awakening of our imaginations. If you need further evidence of this phenomenon, observe a classroom full of first graders the next time a teacher instructs them to put away their math books and take out their crayons. Experts agree that the key to creativity lies in the ability to awaken the child inside each of us.

## 3. Music Creativity

Ask each team member to write a four-line verse to a song that relates to his or her job duties, hobbies, business ideas, etc. Go around the room and ask each employee to sing, rap or simply recite (military cadence perhaps) his or her verse. Print the compilation in the next company newsletter to get a little PR for your department or office (others in the organization might want to transfer in when they realize you've given your staff permission to have fun).

## 4. Music Creativity II

Ask each staff member to bring in a CD with a song that describes his or her personality, work attitude or how the weekend went. Play excerpts before the meeting for a laugh.

## 5. To Serve Mankind

Ask your staff to convey what they did over the weekend that was a service to another person, charitable organization or noble cause. Vote to determine whose action was most heroic and award a gift certificate to the winner, let him or her leave work early on Friday or take a longer than usual lunch break. This will encourage your staff to think of new ways to develop a sense of community. It will also help your people feel good about their coworkers, get to know them better and give them a sense of pride in the organization.

## 6. Vocabulary Expansion

Ask your team members to bring a rarely used or obscure word to the next meeting. Have them use it in a context that is applicable to your business.

## 7. Memory Exercise

Read a list of 10 or 15 things, preferably something related to your business, your industry or to a customer, and give an award to the person who can commit the most items to memory. This exercise can help your staff become more familiar with your organization and with your customers. Memory development is also a key to developing new customer relationships that will help your business prosper.

## 8. "If I Ran This Place ..."

Ask your staff what they would consider the ideal job, the ideal workplace and the ideal location. You can't transform your place into utopia, but you might gain some insight into feasible, marginal changes that will improve things. Now that you have them thinking without barriers, ask them what they would do first or differently if they ran the company, office or department. You'll be surprised by the answers.

## 9. Show and Tell

Have your staff members bring things they've created, they are proud of or from their childhoods that the group would find interesting or funny. Demonstrate an interesting or unusual talent, perhaps. We loved this game when we were in kindergarten, and for some reason they made us stop playing when we got older.



## 10. Top 10 Lists

Until David Letterman decides to pursue intellectual property infringement, go ahead and try this one. Give a topic at your staff meeting and ask for the answers the following week. Remember to keep it clean and non-offensive. Have your staff rank the answers and use a point system to determine the winner.

We would never ask our employees for quality without offering the resources, direction, systems and commitment to develop procedures that ensure improvement in that area. Yet we ask employees for creativity or to "think outside the box" all of the time without giving another thought as to how to initiate the creative process. Take the first step and give your staff permission to shake things up a bit at your office. You're likely to see some changes—for the better!

*Craig Cortello is the president and founder of La Dolce Vita Enterprises, a consulting and training firm that assists companies in creating productive and imaginative work environments that encourage innovative business solutions. He is also the national sales manager of Trinity Consultants, a nationwide environmental consulting firm, an author and an accomplished musician. He credits much of his success in the business world to his creative spirit that was cultivated through exposure to music and the arts. Craig is a proud resident and native of the New Orleans metropolitan area, and a Hurricane Katrina survivor! For more info see [www.ldv-enterprises.com](http://www.ldv-enterprises.com).*

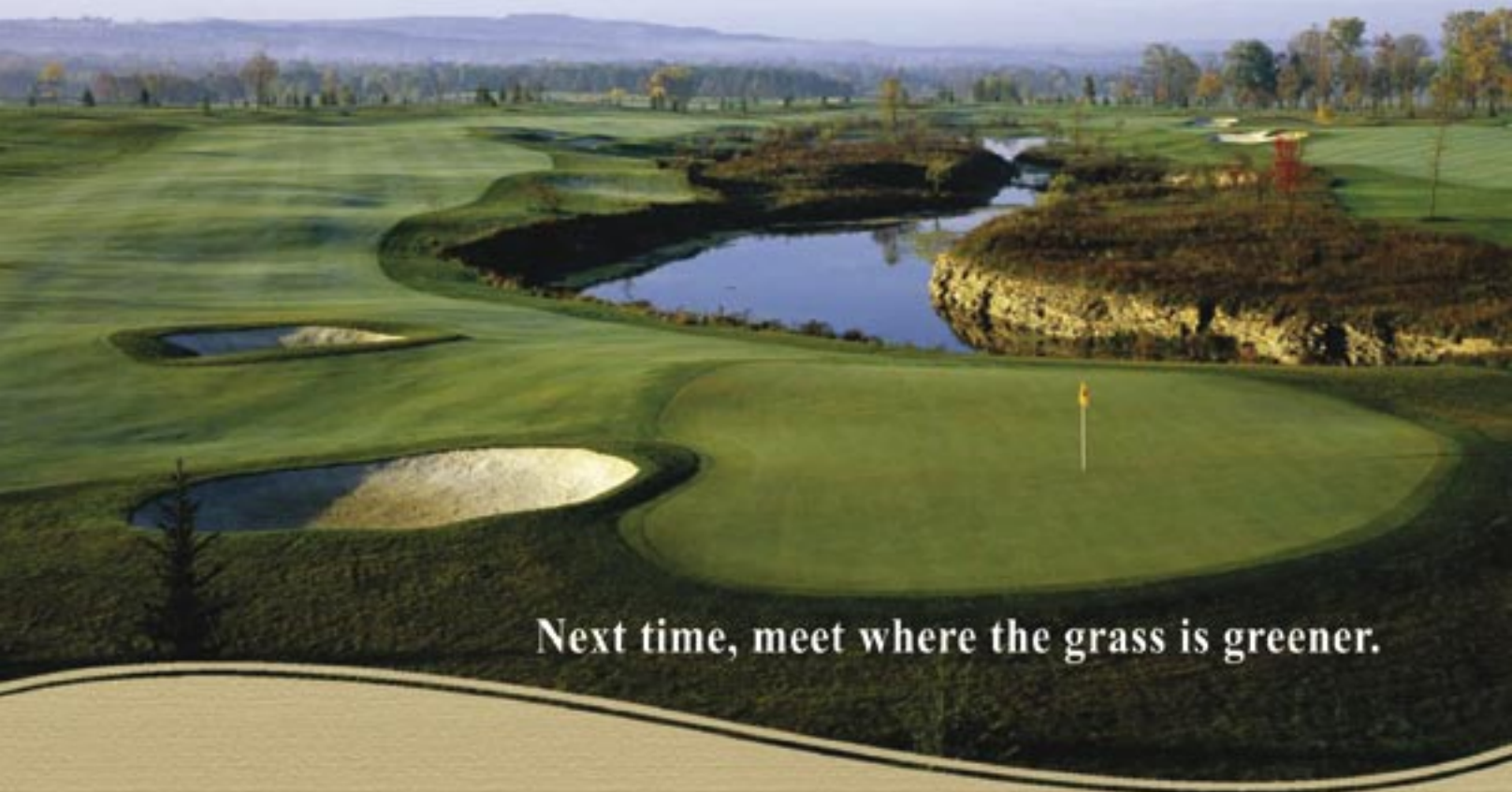
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