

Fifth Edition

# Meetings, Expositions, Events, *and* Conventions

## An Introduction to the Industry

George G. Fenich







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*Fifth Edition*

**George G. Fenich, PhD**



330 Hudson Street, NY NY 10013

*Dedicated in memory of Loretta Lowe, San Francisco MEEC industry  
veteran and faculty member at San Francisco State University*

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# BRIEF CONTENTS

## **PART 1 Introduction**

- |          |  |           |
|----------|--|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Introduction to the Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions Industry</b> | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Meeting, Exhibition, Event, and Convention Organizers and Sponsors</b>          | <b>21</b> |

## **PART 2 Key Players**

- |          |   |            |
|----------|---|------------|
| <b>3</b> | <b>Destination Marketing Organizations</b>  | <b>40</b>  |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Meeting, Expositions, Event, and Convention Venues: An Examination of Facilities Used by Meeting and Event Professionals</b> | <b>59</b>  |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Exhibitions and Trade Shows</b>  | <b>86</b>  |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Service Contractors</b>  | <b>107</b> |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Destination Management Companies</b>   | <b>123</b> |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Special Events Management</b>  | <b>143</b> |

## **PART 3 Important Elements in Meeting, Exposition, Event, and Convention Planning**

- |           |   |            |
|-----------|---|------------|
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Food and Beverage</b>                    | <b>162</b> |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Legal Issues in the MEEC Industry</b>    | <b>183</b> |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Technology and the MEEC Professional</b> | <b>205</b> |
| <b>12</b> | <b>Sustainable Meetings and Events</b>      | <b>225</b> |
| <b>13</b> | <b>Planning MEEC Gatherings</b>             | <b>245</b> |
| <b>14</b> | <b>Producing Meetings and Events</b>        | <b>266</b> |
| <b>15</b> | <b>International Aspects in MEEC</b>        | <b>287</b> |
| <b>16</b> | <b>Putting It All Together</b>              | <b>308</b> |

<i>Appendix</i>	<b>327</b>
<i>Glossary</i>	<b>341</b>
<i>Index</i>	<b>346</b>



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## PART 2 Key Players

<b>3</b>	<b>Destination Marketing Organizations</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Meeting, Expositions, Event, and Convention Venues: An Examination of Facilities Used by Meeting and Event Professionals</b>	<b>59</b>
	<b>Chapter Objectives</b>	<b>40</b>		<b>Chapter Objectives</b>	<b>59</b>
	<b>The Role and Function of Destination Marketing Organizations</b>	<b>41</b>		<b>Hotels</b>	<b>60</b>
	What Is a Destination Marketing Organization?	41		Physical Characteristics	60
	The Purpose of a DMO	41		<i>Meeting Room Spaces</i>	60
	If DMOs Do Not Charge for Their Services, How Do They Make Money?	42		<i>Other Hotel Meeting Spaces</i>	62
	<b>Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau</b>	<b>42</b>		Financial Structure	62
	Attracting Leisure Travelers	43		Negotiating Your Event	63
	It's All About Marketing	43		<i>Room Rates</i>	63
	<i>Website</i>	43		<i>Food and Beverage</i>	64
	<b>What a DMO Can Do for Meeting Professionals</b>	<b>43</b>		<i>Other Revenue Generating Departments</i>	64
	What Meeting Planners Need to Know about DMOs	43		<i>Local Meetings and Events</i>	65
	<b>A Business Case for DMOs</b>	<b>44</b>		<i>Seasonality</i>	65
	<b>2015 DMO Organizational and Financial Profile Study</b>	<b>45</b>		<b>Industry Spotlight: A Passion For Hospitality!</b>	<b>66</b>
	<i>DMO Departments and Staff</i>	48		<b>Convention Centers</b>	<b>67</b>
	<b>Activities of DMOs Relative to Convention Marketing and Sales</b>	<b>48</b>		Financial Structure	70
	Sales Processes	48		Negotiating for Your Event	71
	Site Review and Leads Process	49		<b>Conference Centers</b>	<b>71</b>
	<b>Convention Lead Sheet</b>	<b>50</b>		Meeting Room Spaces	71
	Site Inspections	50		Associations and Consortiums	72
	DMO Services for Meeting Professionals	51		Food and Beverage	72
	The Changing Scope of DMO Responsibilities	51		Negotiating Your Event	73
	<b>Destinations International</b>	<b>52</b>		<b>Cruise Ships</b>	<b>73</b>
	DI Professional Development Offerings	53		Negotiating Your Event	74
	Certified Destination Management Executive PDM Program	53		<i>Seasonality</i>	74
	Accreditation	53		<b>Industry Spotlight: Cruising Royal Caribbean Style—Where Energy and Innovation Meet!</b>	<b>75</b>
	DI Research	53		<b>Specific Use Facilities</b>	<b>75</b>
	Event Impact Calculator	54		Financial Structure	75
	DestinationNEXT	54		Considerations for Your Event	76
	Destination & Travel Foundation	54		<b>Colleges and Universities</b>	<b>77</b>
	<b>Association of Australian Convention Bureaux</b>	<b>54</b>		Considerations for Your Event	77
	<b>Trends</b>	<b>55</b>		<i>Food and Beverage</i>	78
	<b>DMMOS</b>	<b>55</b>		Consortiums	78
	<b>Vienna Convention Bureau—About Us</b>	<b>57</b>		<b>Retreat Facilities</b>	<b>78</b>
	<b>Summary</b>	<b>57</b>		<b>A Special Retreat Facility</b>	<b>79</b>
	<b>Case Study</b>	<b>57</b>		<b>Unusual Venues</b>	<b>79</b>
	<b>Key Words and Terms</b>	<b>57</b>		Associations and Consortiums	80
	<b>Review and Discussion Questions</b>	<b>58</b>		<b>Industry Spotlight</b>	<b>80</b>
	<b>About the Chapter Contributor</b>	<b>58</b>		<b>Outdoor Events</b>	<b>81</b>
				Outdoor Venue Challenges	81
				Outdoor Tents	81
				Outdoor Venue Permits	82
				<b>Trends</b>	<b>82</b>
				<b>Summary</b>	<b>82</b>
				<b>Case Study</b>	<b>83</b>

Key Words and Terms	84	Organization of a General Services Contracting Company	115
Review and Discussion Questions	84	Types of Service Contractors	116
About the Chapter Contributors	85	Specialty Service Contractors	116
<b>5 Exhibitions and Trade Shows</b>	<b>86</b>	The Translator Who Knew Too Much	117
Chapter Objectives	86	Exhibitor Appointed Service Contractors	118
History	87	The Relationship between Contractors and Event Organizers	119
The Current State of the Exhibition Industry	88	Resources in the Service Contractor Industry	119
Types of Shows and Exhibitions	88	So, How Does It All Work?	120
Trade Shows or Business-to-Business Shows	88	Best Practices	120
Consumer Show or Business-to-Consumer Shows	90	Summary	121
Consolidation Shows	91	Case Study	121
Exhibition Management: Key Players	91	Key Words and Terms	122
Exhibition Organizer	91	Review and Discussion Questions	122
Facility Manager	92	About the Chapter Contributor	122
General Service Contractor	93		
Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities of an Exhibition Manager	93	<b>7 Destination Management Companies</b>	<b>123</b>
Considerations in Managing a Show	94	Chapter Objectives	123
Location	94	Destination Management Company: Definition, Structure, and Services	124
Shipping and Storage	96	Services Provided by Destination Management Companies	124
Marketing and Promotion	96	Destination Management Company versus Destination Marketing Organization	125
Technology	97	Business Structure of DMCs	126
Risk and Crisis Management	97	The Destination Management Company Organization	127
Exhibitor Perspective	98	Independent Operator	127
Why Exhibit?	98	Multi-Services Operator	127
Exhibit Design Principles	98	Destination Management Networks	127
Top Reasons Exhibitors Fail	99	Business Model of Destination Management Companies	128
Staffing the Exhibit	101	Clients	129
Measuring Return on Investment	101	Corporate Accounts	129
ROI	103	Association Accounts	129
Trends and Best Practices	104	Incentive-Based Organizations	129
Summary	104	Special Event Clients	130
Case Study	105	Destination Management Company Operations	130
Key Words and Terms	105	The Sales Process	131
Review and Discussion Questions	106	Identifying New Business Opportunities	131
About the Chapter Contributor	106	Request for Proposal	132
		Site Inspections	134
<b>6 Service Contractors</b>	<b>107</b>	Program Development	134
Chapter Objectives	107	Program Execution	134
Definition of the General Services Contractor	108	Transportation Services	135
General Service Contractor Responsibilities	109	Production of Events	137
Labor/Trade Unions	111	Wrap-Up and Billing	138
The Case of Exhibiting in a Unionized City	112		
Evolution of Service Contractors	112		

<b>Finding and Selecting a Destination Management Company</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>Key Words and Terms</b>	<b>161</b>
Association of Destination Management Executives	138	<b>Review and Discussion Questions</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Best Practices in DMCs</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>About the Chapter Contributor</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>140</b>		
<b>Case Study</b>	<b>141</b>		
<b>Key Words and Terms</b>	<b>141</b>		
<b>Review and Discussion Questions</b>	<b>142</b>		
<b>About the Chapter Contributor</b>	<b>142</b>		
<b>8 Special Events Management</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>PART 3 Important Elements in Meeting, Exposition, Event, and Convention Planning</b>	
<b>Chapter Objectives</b>	<b>143</b>		
<b>A Working Definition of a Special Event</b>	<b>144</b>		
History and Background	144		
<b>Using Festivals in the Off-Season: “Rockin’ Mountains”</b>	<b>145</b>		
It All Begins with a Relationship	145		
<b>The Presidential Inauguration Day Parade</b>	<b>146</b>		
Examples of Special Events	146		
<b>Planning Tools for Special Events</b>	<b>147</b>		
Understanding Community Infrastructure	148		
<b>Special Event Marketing Considerations</b>	<b>149</b>		
Merchandising and Promoting the Special Event	149		
Promotional Mix	149		
<b>Branding a Destination</b>	<b>151</b>		
Sponsorships for Special Events	151		
<b>The Great Garlic Cook-Off</b>	<b>152</b>		
<b>New York City Marathon</b>	<b>153</b>		
Working with the Media for an Event	153		
Understanding the Target Market for Your Special Event	154		
<b>A Very Special Wedding</b>	<b>155</b>		
<b>Preparing for the Special Event</b>	<b>155</b>		
Software and Tools for Special Events	156		
<b>Getting a Permit</b>	<b>157</b>		
<b>The Special Event Budget</b>	<b>157</b>		
Rental Costs	157		
Security Costs	157		
Production Costs	158		
Labor Costs	158		
Marketing Costs	158		
Talent Costs	158		
<b>Breakdown of the Special Event</b>	<b>158</b>		
<b>Trends and Best Practices in Special Events</b>	<b>159</b>		
<b>Summary</b>	<b>160</b>		
<b>Case Study</b>	<b>160</b>		
		<b>9 Food and Beverage</b>	<b>162</b>
		<b>Chapter Objectives</b>	<b>162</b>
		<b>Catered Events</b>	<b>163</b>
		On-Premise Catering	164
		Off-Premise Catering	165
		Style of Service	165
		<i>Buffet</i>	166
		<i>Attended Buffet/Cafeteria</i>	167
		<i>Combination Buffet</i>	167
		<i>Action Stations</i>	167
		<i>Reception</i>	167
		<i>Family Style/English Service</i>	168
		<i>Plated/American Style Service</i>	168
		<i>Preset</i>	168
		<i>Butler Service</i>	168
		<i>Russian Service</i>	168
		<i>Banquet French</i>	169
		<i>Cart French</i>	169
		<i>Hand Service or Captain</i>	169
		<i>A La Carte</i>	169
		<i>Waiter Parade</i>	169
		<i>Mixing Service Styles</i>	169
		<b>Menus</b>	<b>170</b>
		<b>Food Consumption Guidelines</b>	<b>171</b>
		<i>Some General Guidelines</i>	171
		<i>Menu Restrictions</i>	171
		<b>Contracts</b>	<b>172</b>
		<i>Food and Beverage Attrition</i>	172
		<b>Beverage Events</b>	<b>172</b>
		Reasons for a Beverage Event	172
		Categories of Liquor	173
		<i>Spirits</i>	173
		<i>Wine/Champagne</i>	173
		<i>Beer</i>	174
		<b>How Beverages Are Sold</b>	<b>174</b>
		<i>By the Bottle</i>	174
		<i>By the Drink</i>	174
		<i>Per Person</i>	174
		<i>Charge per Hour</i>	174
		<i>Open Bar</i>	174
		<i>Cash Bar</i>	175
		<i>Combination Bar</i>	175
		<i>Limited Consumption Bar</i>	175



<b>Calculate Total Cost to Determine the Best Option</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>Americans with Disabilities Act</b>	<b>197</b>
Labor Charges	175	<b>Case 3. US Department of Justice Versus Lesley University (2013)</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>Hospitality Suites</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>Intellectual Property</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>Examples</b>	<b>176</b>	Patents	198
<b>Rooms</b>	<b>176</b>	Trademarks	198
Room Set Ups	176	Copyrights	198
<i>Aisle Space</i>	177	<i>Music Copyright</i>	199
<i>Tables</i>	177	<b>Case 4. Trademark Infringement at an Exhibition</b>	<b>199</b>
Tablescapes	177	<i>Speaker/Entertainment Copyright</i>	200
<b>Examples Include</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>Labor Issues</b>	<b>200</b>
Room Rental Charges	178	<b>Ethics in MEEC</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>Service Requirements</b>	<b>179</b>	Supplier Relations	201
Set Over Guarantee	180	<b>Trends and Best Practices Regarding Legal Issues in MEEC</b>	<b>202</b>
Cocktail Servers	180	<b>Summary</b>	<b>203</b>
Service Timing	180	<b>Case Study</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>Trends and Best Practices</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>Key Words and Terms</b>	<b>204</b>
<i>Food Trends</i>	181	<b>Review and Discussion Questions</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>About the Chapter Contributor</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>Case Study</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>11 Technology and the MEEC Professional</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Key Words and Terms</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>Chapter Objectives</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Review and Discussion Questions</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>Virtual Site Selection and Research</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>About the Chapter Contributor</b>	<b>182</b>	Virtual Tours	206
<b>10 Legal Issues in the MEEC Industry</b>	<b>183</b>	Online RFPs	207
<b>Chapter Objectives</b>	<b>183</b>	Meeting Industry Portals and Information Resources	207
<b>Negotiation</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>Marketing and Communications</b>	<b>207</b>
Negotiation Strategies	184	Websites and Strategic Communications	208
Negotiating Hotel Contracts	185	Event Websites	208
<b>Case 1. SXSW Entertainment Contract</b>	<b>185</b>	Mobile Websites	208
Negotiating Hotel Contracts	185	E-blasts	209
Naming Names	186	<i>Opt-in</i>	209
<b>Contracts</b>	<b>189</b>	<i>Don't Overdo It</i>	209
Statute of Frauds	190	<i>What's in It for Me (Technology-Version)</i>	209
Parol Evidence	190	<i>Keep It Simple</i>	209
Key Hotel Group Meeting Contract Clauses	191	Room Design Software	210
Attrition	191	Selling the Show Floor	210
<b>Example</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>Online Registration</b>	<b>210</b>
Cancellation	192	<b>Social Media</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>Case 2. Sylvania versus Boca Raton Resort &amp; Club</b>	<b>193</b>	Primary Social Channels	211
Termination	193	Live Streaming	212
Dispute Resolution	194	Blogging	212
<b>Crisis Preparedness and Management</b>	<b>195</b>	Podcasting	213
What Is Risk? What Is Crisis Preparedness?	195	Hashtags	213
Crisis Management	195	Social Selling	213
<i>Mitigation</i>	195	Event Apps	214
<i>Preparedness</i>	196	<b>Desktop Tools</b>	<b>214</b>
<i>Response</i>	196		
<i>Recovery</i>	196		

## x Contents

APEX	215	<b>Sustainable Meeting Standards and Guidelines</b>	<b>232</b>
Virtual Trade Shows	215	Green Meeting Standards	232
<b>On-site Event Tech Infrastructure</b>	<b>215</b>	ISO 20121	234
Bandwidth	215	<b>GES Achieves Environmental Sustainability Certification</b>	<b>234</b>
<b>Technology Is Great: When It Works</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>Creating a Process for Sustainable Practices</b>	<b>236</b>
Wired versus Wireless	216	Step 1: Create a Plan	236
Digital Recording and Streaming Media	216	Step 2: Engage Internal Stakeholders in Supporting Your Plan	236
Drones	217	Step 3: Engage Vendors in Supporting Your Plan	236
<b>Attendee Interaction and Communications</b>	<b>217</b>	Step 4: Track Your Performance	237
Beacons	217	Step 5: Communicate the Results, Celebrate the Success	237
NFC and RFID	218	Step 6: Be Innovative and Have Fun!	237
Lead Retrieval Systems	218	Best Planet Practices	237
Audience Response Systems and Speaker Interaction	219	<i>Use Technology</i>	237
<b>Post-conference Technology Applications</b>	<b>219</b>	<i>Choose a Local Destination</i>	238
Evaluations and Surveys	219	<i>Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle</i>	238
Marketing the Media	220	<i>Volume Up</i>	238
<b>Virtual and Augmented Reality</b>	<b>220</b>	<i>Eat Local</i>	238
Virtual Reality	220	<i>Decorate with Nature</i>	238
<b>The Virtual Trade Show Booth Model</b>	<b>221</b>	<i>Use Paper Wisely</i>	239
Augmented Reality	221	<i>Save Energy</i>	239
<b>Artificial Intelligence and Big Data</b>	<b>222</b>	<i>Inform Everyone</i>	239
Artificial Intelligence	222	<i>Sources</i>	239
<b>Webinars and Hybrid Meetings</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>Evaluation of Sustainable Efforts</b>	<b>239</b>
Webinars	222	MeetGreen Calculator 2.0	239
Hybrid Meetings	223	Sustainable Meeting Planner	239
<b>Summary</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>Greenwashing</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>Case Study</b>	<b>223</b>	Grand Carolina Resort and Spa	241
<b>Key Words and Terms</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>Oregon Convention Center Replaces Lighting Fixtures with Energy Efficient Technology</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>About the Chapter Contributors</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>Best Practices in Meetings, Exhibitions, Events And Conventions-Sands Eoc 360° Meetings Program</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>12 Sustainable Meetings and Events</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>Trends and Best Practices</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>Chapter Objectives</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>Rooftop Garden</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>Key Words and Terms</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>Green Meetings versus Sustainable Meetings</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>Case Study</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>Tidbit</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>Review and Discussion Questions</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>Why Go Green</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>About the Chapter Contributor</b>	<b>244</b>
The Triple Bottom Line	228	<b>13 Planning MEEC Gatherings</b>	<b>245</b>
<i>Profit (Economic Impact)</i>	228	<b>Chapter Objectives</b>	<b>245</b>
<i>Planet (Environmental Impact)</i>	228	<b>Setting Goals and Objectives</b>	<b>246</b>
<i>People (Social Impact)</i>	229	Determining the Meeting and Event Goal(s)	246
<b>Tidbit</b>	<b>230</b>	Needs Analysis	247
Other Benefits of Sustainability	232	Developing SMART Objectives	247
<i>Enhanced Brand Image</i>	232	<i>Examples of Meeting Objectives</i>	248
<i>Differentiation</i>	232		
<i>Cost Savings</i>	232		
<i>Raise Awareness</i>	232		
<i>Social Benefits</i>	232		

**Site Selection** 248

**Event Budgeting** 251

Establish Financial Goals 251

Identify Expenses and Revenue Sources 251

**Program Planning** 252

Program Types 253

Program Content 254

**Session Description** 254

Session Scheduling 254

**Example of an Association Meeting Schedule** 255

**Logistical Considerations** 256

Registration 256

*Registration Fees* 257

*Preregistration* 257

Housing 258

**Registration and Housing Companies** 259

Refreshment Breaks and Meal Functions 259

Speaker Arrangements 259

Benefits of Using Volunteer Speakers 259

Challenges of Using Volunteer Speakers 260

Audiovisual Equipment 261

Marketing and Promotion 261

Identifying Target Markets 262

Types of Marketing for Events 262

*Direct Marketing* 262

*Indirect Marketing* 263

**Summary** 264

**Key Words and Terms** 264

**Case Study** 265

**Review and Discussion Questions** 265

**About the Chapter Contributor** 265

Meeting and Event Specification Guide 273

Controlling Costs 274

**Managing the On-site Team** 275

Employees 275

Temporary Staff 275

Volunteers 276

**On-site Communications** 276

Personal Communications 276

Use of Technology 277

*Determine and Acquire Communication Equipment and Resources* 277

*Determine Technology Appropriate for Meeting/Convention/Event* 278

*Types of Equipment* 278

*Monitor On-Site Communications* 279

**Public Relations** 279

What Is Public Relations? 279

Develop and Manage Media Relations 279

News Releases 280

Attract and Accommodate Media 281

Media Outlets 282

Selecting and Managing Spokespersons 283

**Pre-convention Meetings** 283

**The Father of the Bride** 284

**Post-convention Review** 284

Evaluation 284

**Summary** 285

**Case Study** 285

**Key Words and Terms** 286

**Review and Discussion Questions** 286

**About the Chapter Contributors** 286

**14 Producing Meetings and Events**

266

**Chapter Objectives** 266

**On-site Management** 267

Registration and Housing 267

Food and Beverage 268

Function Room Layouts 268

*Auditorium or Theater Style* 268

*Classroom Style* 268

*Rounds* 269

Common Issues Faced On-site 270

*Obstacles* 270

*Power* 270

*Rigging* 270

*Floors* 271

*Access* 272

Speakers and Entertainers 272

On-site Audiovisual 272

Ancillary Events 273

**15 International Aspects in MEEC**

287

**Chapter Objectives** 287

**How MEEC Varies around the Globe** 288

**The World's Largest Fairs** 288

Europe 289

*The Largest Exhibition Venue* 289

**Report From CeBIT 2017** 290

*The European Society of Cardiology Congress* 291

Asia 292

*China* 292

*Thailand* 295

*Korea* 295

*Other Asian Countries* 296

Australia 296

Africa 297

Middle East 298

Latin America 298

<b>Ownership, Sponsorship, and Management Models</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>313</b>
Professional Congress Organizer	299	<b>Request for Proposal</b>	<b>314</b>
Global Commercial Exhibition Organizing Companies	299	<b>First Site Inspection</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>Important International Meeting and Trade Fair Associations</b>	<b>300</b>	Day One	315
The International Congress and Convention Association	300	Day Two	315
AIPC	300	Day Three	316
UFI—The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry	300	<b>Destination Selection</b>	<b>316</b>
<b>International MEEC Considerations</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>Second Site Inspection</b>	<b>316</b>
Lessons to Be Learned	301	Day One	316
Methods of Exhibiting	301	Day Two	317
Terminology	302	Day Three	317
Contractual and Procedural Issues	302	<b>Marketing Committee</b>	<b>318</b>
Customs Clearance	302	<b>Creation of the Conference Program</b>	<b>318</b>
Protocol	302	<b>Partnerships</b>	<b>319</b>
<i>Identity (Individualism versus Collectivism)</i>	303	<b>Contracts</b>	<b>320</b>
<i>Hierarchy (Power Distance)</i>	303	<b>Meeting Timeline</b>	<b>321</b>
<i>Truth (Uncertainty Avoidance)</i>	303	One Year to Six-Month Countdown	321
<i>Other Considerations</i>	304	Six Months to the Day of the Meeting	321
<b>Tips for Etiquette around the World</b>	<b>305</b>	<i>Month Five</i>	322
<b>Summary</b>	<b>306</b>	<i>Months Four and Three</i>	322
<b>Case Study</b>	<b>306</b>	<i>Month Two</i>	323
<b>Key Words and Terms</b>	<b>306</b>	<i>Month One</i>	323
<b>Review and Discussion Questions</b>	<b>307</b>	Pre-meeting Activities	323
<b>About the Chapter Contributors</b>	<b>307</b>	Meeting Day Activities	324
<b>16 Putting It All Together</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>After the Meeting</b>	<b>324</b>
<b>Chapter Objectives</b>	<b>308</b>	Immediate Post-meeting Activities	324
<b>More Shampoo Please</b>	<b>309</b>	Two-Month Post-meeting Activities	325
<b>The Association</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>Goals</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>Key Words and Terms</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>Budget</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>Review and Discussion Questions</b>	<b>326</b>
		<b>About the Chapter Contributors</b>	<b>326</b>
		<i>Appendix</i>	327
		<i>Glossary</i>	341
		<i>Index</i>	346



# PREFACE

The meetings, expositions, events, and conventions (MEEC, pronounced like *geese*) industry continues to grow and garner increasing attention from the hospitality industry, colleges and universities, and communities. This book gives a broad overview of this industry and is, thus, an introduction. It is not meant to provide a hands-on or step-by-step method for handling gatherings in the MEEC industry. The latter is addressed in two books by Fenich: *Planning and Management of Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions* and *Production and Logistics in Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions*. Both of the books are based on and aligned with the Meeting and Business Event Competency Standards (MBECS).

This book is being produced at this time for a number of reasons. One is the continued growth of this industry; in spite of the ebbs and flows of the economy, the MEEC segment of the hospitality industry remains resilient. Communities continue to build or expand MEEC venues unabated, and the private sector has also become a player in convention center construction and operation. People still feel a need for face-to-face meetings. The MEEC industry appears to be on a growth curve, and is of interest to many people.

Also, college faculties have indicated a need for a book such as this. I have been teaching an introductory MEEC course for many years and have found myself having to continually supplement the existing books to make them both current and more complete in addressing the various segments of the MEEC industry. Therefore, I began to contemplate the development of a book on the subject. Then, at a meeting of the Convention Special Interest Group at the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (iCHRIE) Convention in 2001, the need for a new text was discussed. The members of this group all noted the need, and I volunteered to spearhead an effort to put together a new book using faculty and industry experts to write various chapters. This book is the culmination of that effort. The result is a text where some of the best and most notable people in the MEEC industry have made contributions; as you will see, there is a balance of educators and practitioners among the chapter contributors.

The approach to deciding on topics was unusual. Rather than have a list of topics or chapters based on people's willingness to contribute, a more scientific method was used. I reviewed existing books, both theoretical and practical, to ascertain which topics to cover. Topics that appeared in more than one text were compiled into a list. Then a number of meetings were held with educators, and the relative importance of topics was discussed, which led to the development of a comprehensive list of topics. This list was sent to educators and practitioners, who were asked to rank the importance of each topic as critically important, important, or not important. Results were used to pare down the list, and this iterative voting procedure (called the Delphi technique) was used to reach the decision as to what topics to include in this book. This fifth edition has not only updated material and statistics, but has also relied on feedback from adopters and reviewers to make improvements to the previous edition.

It should be noted that this industry is referred to in many ways: meetings and events, events, meeting planning, and others. A very common acronym, and one used extensively in Asia is "MICE," which stands for "meetings, incentives, conventions, events" and is pronounced as the plural of mouse. This acronym was purposely *not* chosen for the title of this text. The reason is that most programs of study deal with incentives or incentive travel very little, if at all. Furthermore, the incentive travel segment has evolved significantly in the past few years, moving away from trips that were strictly for pleasure (as a reward for performance) toward trips that have notable education and training

components. Thus, they are now much more like sales training meetings, motivational meetings, or team building exercises, but on a more grandiose scale. Thus, this book deals with meetings, expositions, events, and conventions.

## New in This Edition

- Case studies have been included at the end of each chapter and enable the student to apply the content in each chapter to real-life scenarios.
- All data has been updated to reflect the current state. This includes charts, tables and figures.
- The chapter on technology has been totally rewritten and updated, and artificial intelligence and big data have been added to the chapter.
- All-new chapters Chapter 13, Planning MEEC Events and Chapter 14, Producing MEEC Events are included.
- Chapter 15, International, features additional regions of the world, including Nigeria and Senegal and cities, including Kazan, Beijing, Sydney, and Rio De Janeiro.
- Chapter 16, Putting It All Together, is designed to tie all the other chapters together by providing an in-depth, detailed case study.
- The Glossary has been updated to include all key terms found in the chapters.

*Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions* should be of interest to practitioners, educators, students, and the general public. It is the most up-to-date book on the MEEC industry, and will provide users with an overview of the industry. It is also comprehensive and covers a wider range of MEEC topics than any other book available. It can easily serve as the basis for an introductory college course on the subject, or for orientation sessions for new employees in the industry. It should meet the needs of anyone interested in knowing more about the MEEC industry.

## Online Supplements Accompanying the Text

An online Instructor's Manual, PowerPoint slides, and TestGen are available to Instructors at [www.pearsonhighered.com](http://www.pearsonhighered.com). Instructors can search for a text by author, title, ISBN, or by selecting the appropriate discipline from the pull-down menu at the top of the catalog home page. To access supplementary materials online, instructors need to request an instructor access code. Go to [www.pearsonhighered.com](http://www.pearsonhighered.com), click the Instructor Resource Center link, and then click Register Today for an instructor access code. Within 48 hours after registering, you will receive a confirming email including an instructor access code. Once you have received your code, go to the site and log on for full instructions on downloading the materials you wish to use.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The Vancouver Convention Center is a unique venue.  
*David Weil/Alamy Stock Photo*

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction to the Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions Industry

### Chapter Objectives

- Define the foundational concepts relating to the meetings, exhibitions, events, and conventions industry.
- Outline the history of the events industry.
- Detail the evolution and maturation of the events industry.
- Articulate the ways in which ethical practices are important factors in the events industry.
- Discuss career definitions and opportunities for the meeting or events professional.
- Outline ongoing trends in the MEEC industry.

The meetings and events industry is a complex and multifaceted business and the professionals who support the planning and execution of events must bring a diverse set of skills and knowledge to the job.



The Olympic Games are one of the many aspects of the MEEC industry.  
*rommma/Shutterstock*

## What Is the Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions Industry?

The **meetings, expositions, events, and conventions (MEEC)** industry is large and touches virtually every aspect of the hospitality industry. MEEC includes business sectors, such as travel and hospitality, convention and visitors' bureaus, corporate meeting planning, event venues, equipment providers, and more. The types of events that are part of the industry include: sporting events, such as the Olympics and Super Bowl; social events like family reunions and weddings; corporate events, such as sales meetings and strategic planning meetings; business events, such as trade shows, consumer shows, county fairs, and much more.

The global MEEC industry is set to reach \$1.245 billion in 2023 which represents a 7.5 percent growth rate between 2017 and 2023. In the United States alone, more than 1.8 million events, conventions, and meetings occur each year with a combined total impact of almost \$400 billion. The MEEC industry contributes more to the gross domestic product than the motion picture, spectator sports, performing arts, and sound recording industries. Almost two million people in the United States are employed in this industry, and the event planner profession is projected to grow by 33 percent over the next ten years. Being a MEEC planner has been identified as one of the best business jobs.

Performing poorly at any of the hundreds of potential failure points, or “moments of truth” in a meeting or event, can affect the ability of the event organizers to achieve the objectives of the event and meet the needs of the participants. Poor performance can have financial and reputational impacts for years to come. A good experience by each attendee will result in praises; on the other hand, a negative experience tends to spread to even more people.

### Industry Terminology and Practice

We have always, generically, referred to gatherings of two or more people as meetings. This term could also encompass meetings that are called conventions, congresses, symposia, and so on, some of which could have tens of thousands of people in attendance. If one

adds displays of materials or products to a meeting, the meeting then has a trade show or **exposition** or **exhibition** component. When sporting, social, or life-cycle activities are added, then a generic term that encompasses them all is events. Even broader, and more generic, is the term gathering. One must be conscious of how your stakeholders or target audience will interpret the name that is applied to a specific gathering.

The following list of terms is important for anyone involved in the MEEC industry to know. The terms were developed by the terminology panel of Accepted Practices Exchange, a part of the Events Industry Council, and are a small sample of the thousands of words that apply to this industry. The complete glossary of terms used in the MEEC industry can be found online at [www.eventscouncil.org](http://www.eventscouncil.org). Terms from the Events Industry Council are used throughout this book with their permission.

### MEEC INDUSTRY TERMS

- **Assembly:** (1) A general or formal meeting of an organization attended by representatives of its membership for the purpose of deciding legislative direction, policy matters, and the election of internal committees; and for approving balance sheets, budgets, and so on. Consequently, an assembly usually observes certain rules of procedure for its meetings, mostly prescribed in its articles and bylaws. (2) The process of erecting display-component parts into a complete exhibit.
- **Break-Out Sessions:** Small group sessions, panels, workshops, or presentations offered concurrently within an event, formed to focus on specific subjects. Break-out sessions are separate from the general session, but within the meeting format, and formed to focus on specific subjects. These sessions can be arranged by basic, intermediate, or advanced information; or divided by interest areas or industry segment.
- **Clinic:** A workshop-type educational experience where attendees learn by doing.
- **Conference:** (1) A participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact-finding, problem solving, and consultation. (2) An event used by any organization to meet and exchange views, convey a message, open a debate, or for publicity of some area of opinion on a specific issue. No tradition, continuity, or periodicity is required to convene a conference. Although not generally limited in time, conferences are usually of short duration with specific objectives. Conferences are generally on a smaller scale than congresses. *See also:* Congress and Convention.
- **Congress:** (1) The regular coming together of large groups of individuals, generally to discuss a particular subject. A congress will often last several days and have several simultaneous sessions. The length of time between congresses is usually established in advance of the implementation stage, and can be either semiannual or annual. Most international or world congresses are of the former type, whereas national congresses are more frequently held annually. (2) The European term for a convention. *See also:* Conference and Convention.
- **Convention:** Gathering of delegates, representatives, and members of a membership or industry organization convened for a common purpose. Common features include educational sessions, committee meetings, social functions, and meetings to conduct the governance business of the organization. Conventions are typically recurring events with specific, established timing. *See also:* Meeting, Exhibition, Trade Show, and Consumer Show.
- **Event:** An organized occasion, such as a meeting, convention, exhibition, special event, gala dinner, social gathering, and so on. An event is often composed of several different yet related functions.
- **Exhibition:** An event at which products, services, or promotional materials are displayed to attendees visiting exhibits on the show floor. These events focus primarily on business-to-business (B2B) relationships (same as an Exposition or Trade Show).
- **Exposition:** *See* Exhibition.
- **Forum:** (1) An open discussion with an audience, panel, and moderator. A meeting, or part of a meeting, set aside for an open discussion by recognized participants on subjects of public interest.



- **Institute:** An in-depth instructional meeting providing intensive education on a subject.
- **Lecture:** An informative and instructional speech.
- **Meeting:** An event where the primary activity of the attendees is to attend educational sessions, participate in meetings/discussions, socialize, or attend other organized events. There is no exhibit component to this event.
- **Panel Discussion:** An instructional technique using a group of people chosen to discuss a topic in the presence of an audience.
- **Seminar:** (1) A lecture and dialogue allowing participants to share experiences in a particular field under the guidance of an expert discussion leader. (2) A meeting or series of meetings of 10 to 50 specialists who have different, specific skills but have a specific common interest, and come together for training or learning purposes. The work schedule of a seminar has the specific objective of enriching the skills of the participants.
- **Social Life-Cycle Events:** Events that mark the passage of time in a human life, such as weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, anniversaries, and, today, even funerals.
- **Symposium:** A meeting of many experts in a particular field, during which papers are presented and discussed by specialists on particular subjects with a view to making recommendations concerning the problems under discussion.
- **Trade Show:** An exhibition of products and/or services held for members of a common or related industry that is not open to the general public. If it is open to the public, it is called a Consumer Show. Compare with Gate Show, Public Show, and Consumer Show. *See also:* Exhibition, Gate Show, Public Show, and Consumer Show.
- **Workshop:** (1) A meeting of several persons for intensive discussion. The workshop concept has been developed to compensate for diverging views in a discipline or on a subject. (2) An informal and public session of free discussion organized to take place between formal plenary sessions or commissions of a congress or of a conference, either on a subject chosen by the participants themselves or on a special problem suggested by the organizers. (3) A training session in which participants, often through exercises, develop skills and knowledge in a given field.

## The Organizational Structure of the Hospitality Industry: How MEEC Fits in

MEEC is a part of, and encompasses, many elements of the hospitality and tourism industry. To understand how MEEC is related to the hospitality and service industry, one must understand the organization and structure of the tourism and hospitality industry itself.

There are five major divisions, or segments, of the tourism and hospitality industry: lodging, food and beverage, transportation, attractions, and entertainment.

The hospitality and tourism industry is multifaceted. The framework offered in the following list is meant to help provide a basic understanding of the industry, and is not intended to be an all-inclusive inventory.

### Lodging

The lodging segment consists of all types of places where travelers may spend the night. These can include hotels, conference centers, resorts, motels, bed-and-breakfasts, Air BnB accommodations, and college dormitories. The important characteristics of this segment are that they are available to the public and charge a fee for usage.

### Food and Beverage

Obviously, this segment contains two sub-segments: food service operations and beverage operations. Food service operations can include the following: table service facilities that can be further broken down by price, such as high, medium, and low; by type of service, such as luxury, quick service, and so on; or by cuisine, such as American, East Asian, Italian, and others. Food service also embraces other types of operations including caterers

and institutional operations (hospitals, schools, nursing homes, and so on). Beverage operations can also be broken down by price or type of service, and whether they serve alcoholic beverages or not.

### Transportation

This segment includes any means or modality that people use to get from one place to another, including walking. The better-known elements include air, water, and ground transportation.

*Air transportation:* This sub-segment includes regularly scheduled airline carriers, such as Delta or Lufthansa, as well as charter air services that can involve jets, propeller aircraft, and helicopters.

*Water transportation:* This sub-segment includes cruise ships, paddle wheelers, charter operations, ferries, and water taxis. Cruise ships are a significant element since they not only provide transportation but lodging, food and beverage, entertainment, and meeting facilities.

*Ground transportation:* This sub-segment includes private automobiles, taxis, limousines, jitneys, buses, trains, cog railways, cable cars, monorails, horse-drawn vehicles, and even elephants and camels.

### Attractions

This segment of the hospitality and tourism industry includes anything that attracts people to a destination. This segment can be further divided into natural and person-made attractions.

*Natural attractions:* This sub-segment includes national parks, mountains, seashores, lakes, forests, swamps, and rivers.

*Person-made attractions:* This sub-segment consists of things made or constructed by human beings, including buildings such as monuments, museums, theme parks, zoos, aquariums, and so on.

### Entertainment

This includes anything that provides entertainment value for a guest, such as movie theaters, playhouses, orchestras, bands, and festivals.

### Overlapping Industries

There are many overlaps between these categories, for example: A hotel may be an attraction in itself, such as the CityCenter in Las Vegas. Hotels often have food and beverage outlets, attractions, and entertainment. Furthermore, some of the businesses mentioned earlier cater to tourists, meeting attendees, and local residents alike. It would seem, then, that the meetings and events industry is involved with all segments of the hospitality and tourism industry.

Understanding the interactions and complexities of the hospitality and tourism industry helps explain why it is difficult to determine the size and scope of these industries. Until the late 1990s, the US government, using its North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, did not even track many elements of these industries.

Because travel and tourism is not a single industry, producing a single product, it cannot be measured in its true form by a singular NAICS code. Travel and Tourism Satellite Accounts (TTSAs) are a relatively new economic statistical method to measure more accurately the impact of the travel and tourism industries on the US economy. Similarly, meetings and events cannot be measured by a single industry measure. The **Events Industry Council (EIC)** undertakes a research project every three or four years to measure the economic significance of the meetings and events industry.

## History of the Industry

Gatherings, meetings, events, and conventions (of sorts) have been a part of people's lives since the earliest recorded history. Archeologists have found primitive ruins from ancient cultures that were used as meeting areas where citizens would gather to discuss common interests, such as government, war, hunting, or tribal celebrations. Once humans developed permanent settlements, each town or village had a public meeting area, often called a town square, where residents could meet, talk, and celebrate. Under the leadership of Alexander the Great, over half a million people traveled to Ephesus (now Turkey) to see exhibitions, which included acrobats, magicians, animal trainers, and jugglers. Andrew Young, the former US ambassador to the United Nations, said at a Meeting Professionals International (MPI) meeting in Atlanta in the mid-1990s that he was sure there would have been a meeting planner for the Last Supper, and certainly for the first Olympics. In Ancient Rome, organized meetings to discuss politics and decide the fate of the empire were held at the Forum. Ancient Rome also had the Colosseum, which was the site of major sporting events such as gladiatorial contests—someone had to organize them. Using excellent roadways, the Romans were able to establish trade markets to entice people to visit their cities. In Old England, there were fictional stories of King Arthur's Round Table, another example of a meeting that discussed the trials and tribulations of the day. Religious gatherings of various faiths and pilgrimages to Mecca are examples of religious meetings and festivals that began centuries ago. The Olympics began as an ancient sporting event that was organized as similar events are today. World's fairs and expositions are still another piece of the MEEC industry.

The First Continental Congress in Philadelphia is an example of a formal meeting; in this case, it was to decide the governance of the thirteen colonies. Political conventions have a long history in the United States and are part of the MEEC industry. Americans



Mardi Gras in New Orleans.  
*Wendy Kaveney Photography/Shutterstock*



have also made festivals and celebrations of every sort, such as Mardi Gras in New Orleans, a part of their lives since the early days of this country, and events like these can also be part of the MEEC industry.

Today, structures supporting the MEEC industry are integral parts of major cities. It is a well-known fact that in order to be considered a *world-class city*, a community must have a convention center and a stadium or arena for sports and events. All the largest cities have them, including New York; Washington, DC; Barcelona; Chicago; London; Moscow; Pretoria; and Hong Kong. These public facilities attract out-of-town attendees for conventions and events, and are an important economic driver for the community.

In spite of the long history of meetings, meeting planning as a recognized profession has only more recently been developed. The development of the first academic meeting-planning program in the United States was approved by the state of Colorado in September of 1976, and was implemented by Metropolitan State College (now University) in Denver. This initiative was closely followed by the meeting-planning program at Northeastern Oklahoma University in Tahlequah. In 1979, Patti Shock started hotel convention service management and meeting-planning classes at Georgia State University (GSU). In 1983, trade show classes were added with the financial support of the National Association of Exposition Managers (NAEM) (now the International Association of Exhibitions and Events, IAEE), and the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE). Today, there are almost 700 academic programs worldwide, and more than 150 in the United States alone that teach about MEEC.

One factor that contributed to the rapid development of both industry education and academic programs during the 1980s was the development and implementation of the **Certified Meeting Professional (CMP)** examination and designation by the Convention Liaison Council (now the Events Industry Council). This certification gives both status and credence to the person who achieves it. Additional certificate programs have followed, including the Certified Meeting Manager (CMM), Certified Destination Marketing Executive (CDME), Certified in Exhibition Management (CEM), and others.

The Events Industry Council (previously, the Convention Liaison Council) has lead its constituent organizations in the professionalizing of the industry through certification, best practice, and education since its founding in New York in 1949 by four organizations: the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), American Hotel and Motel Association (AH&MA, now the American Hotel Lodging Association), Hospitality (then Hotel) Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMIAI), and the International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (IACVB, now Destinations International).

The basis of today's destination marketing organizations (DMO), which are also called convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs), was put forth in 1895 when journalist Milton Carmichael wrote in *The Detroit Journal* that local businessmen should get together to promote the city as a convention destination, as well as represent the city and its many hotels to bid for convention business. Shortly thereafter, the Detroit Convention and Businessmen's League was conceived to do just that. Carmichael was the head of the group that later evolved into the Detroit Metro CVB, which is now labeled *VisitDetroit*.

The role of CVBs (now referred to as Destination Marketing Organizations or DMOs) has changed over time. As in Detroit, most began by trying to attract only conventions and business meetings to their community. Later, they realized leisure visitors were an important source of business and added the "V," for visitors, to their name. Today, virtually every city in the United States and Canada, and many cities throughout the world, has a DMO or convention and visitors' association (CVA). The DMO (CVB, CVA) is a membership organization that helps promote tourism, meetings, and related business for their cities. In some international destinations, the DMO is a division of government. Many DMOs have now evolved to not only market but to help develop and manage tourism at their destinations. Most recently, the term DMO is being used in place of CVB. In this text, the terms are synonymous and interchangeable.

## Evolution and Maturation of the MEEC Industry

(The following section is adapted from Fenich *Planning and Management of Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions* 1st Edition.)

It can be said that events and meetings have been around since the dawn of time. In America, town hall forums were a type of meeting begun in the eighteenth century. While someone had to plan all of these events, there was neither formal training nor an established set of skills, standards, and abilities for those who organized those events. However, like other industries, such as law and accounting, as the industry evolved and matured there was an increasing need to formalize a set of competency standards to which professionals must adhere. Until very recently, no common set of **knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs)** existed for event professionals.

This dearth of standards changed in 2011 with the development of several competency standards, all of which building off a common platform—The Canadian Human Resources Council Competency Standards, the **Meetings and Business Events Competency Standards (MBECS)**, and the CMP International Standards. While all slightly different for their individual purposes, they all contain similar DNA: a similar set of knowledge, skills, and ability statements required of meetings and events professionals at the different levels of position or purpose.

### MBECS

Using the MBECS as an example, the standards are divided into 12 domains or blocks with 33 skills and almost 100 sub-skills or sub-segments.

The domains and skills are listed in the following figure:

#### MBECS STANDARDS

##### A. STRATEGIC PLANNING

1. Manage Strategic Plan for Meeting or Event
2. Develop Sustainability Plan for Meeting or Event
3. Measure Value of Meeting or Business Event

##### B. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

4. Plan Meeting or Event
5. Manage Meeting or Event Project

##### C. RISK MANAGEMENT

6. Manage Risk Management Plan

##### D. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

7. Develop Financial Resources
8. Manage Budget
9. Manage Monetary Transactions

##### E. ADMINISTRATION

10. Perform Administrative Tasks

##### F. HUMAN RESOURCES

11. Manage Human Resource Plan
12. Acquire Staff and Volunteers
13. Train Staff and Volunteers
14. Manage Workforce Relations

##### G. STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

15. Manage Stakeholder Relationships

##### H. MEETING OR EVENT DESIGN

16. Design Program
17. Engage Speakers and Performers
18. Coordinate Food and Beverage
19. Design Environment
20. Manage Technical Production
21. Develop a Plan for Managing the Movement of People

##### I. SITE MANAGEMENT

22. Select Site
23. Design Site Layout
24. Manage Meeting or Event Site
25. Manage On-site Communications

##### J. MARKETING

26. Manage Marketing Plan
27. Manage Marketing Materials
28. Manage Meeting or Event Merchandise
29. Promote Meeting or Event
30. Contribute to Public-Relations Activities
31. Manage Sales Activities

##### K. PROFESSIONALISM

32. Exhibit Professional Behavior

##### L. COMMUNICATIONS

33. Conduct Business Communications

These competencies represent all the KSAs an event professional needs to acquire, and be proficient in, during the course of their career. The **Certified Meeting Professional International Standards (CMP-IS)** have adapted these domains and skill statements for the purpose of defining the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) Exam leading to the CMP credential. The development of these common standards marks a milestone in the MEEC industry. These standards, synopsized previously, represent the first time that the base of knowledge in the meetings and events industry has been codified, and has been a great advancement for the meeting-planning profession, and the individuals who work in the industry, as well as academics, students, and individuals who train the next generation of professionals.

### Uses for Meetings and Events Professionals

Industry professionals can perform a personal-skills assessment of the standards and skills to discover those skills at which they are adept and at which they are not. The resulting gap analysis can help guide their professional and personal development. MBECS can also help plot career paths. Being able to provide an assessment that shows a broad mastery of the subject will enhance employability and mobility across sectors and countries, by allowing an industry professional to promote the attainment of this knowledge and associated skills to employers or clients.

Standards are of great value to employers and managers. The standards can aid in the development of job descriptions and job specifications. This leads to improvements in determining workforce requirements and producing worker solicitations. The standards can also help in developing a sequence of training for employees, as well as a basis for performance assessment and feedback.

### Uses for the Academic Community

These standards provide an internationally accepted basis for developing courses of study and their requisite content. It is up to a given program or institution to determine how the content is delivered: in meeting/event specific courses, in business courses, in general education, or a combination. The significant advantage of using a standard like MBECS is that it is not prescriptive: one size does not fit all. Existing programs can benchmark themselves against the standards with resulting global recognition. The MBECS also provide a platform for dealing with governmental authorities and accrediting bodies. Using MBECS, a program can show the relevance of their course offerings and justify the content based on an international body of knowledge. Students can use the standards to develop their educational pathways and to validate their employability to recruiters. They could also use the standards to determine which educational programs best meet their learning needs. For academics, the standards can help delineate areas or topics in the meetings and events world that are in need of research.

### Uses for Associations

First and foremost, standards provide recognition of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required by the industry. This can then help guide the development of program content and delivery that is consistent with international standards. They can also be used by the members of an association to determine their educational or professional development needs, and how the association can best fulfill those needs.

## Accepted Practices Exchange

Throughout this book, you will hear about the Events Industry Council (formerly the Convention Industry Council) and its **Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX)**.

The Events Industry Council is at the forefront of efforts to advance the meeting, convention, and exhibition industry. It represents a broad cross-section of the industry with more than 30 meetings- and events-related associations as members, representing more than 103,500 individuals, with more than 19,000 firms and properties involved in the meetings, conventions, and exhibitions industry. Formed in 1949, the council provides a forum for member organizations to advance the industry. The council facilitates this by enabling the exchange of information among members through the development of programs to promote professionalism within the industry and by educating the public on



the industry's profound economic impact. By its nature, the council provides an impartial and inclusive forum for the APEX initiative and the development of accepted practices for the industry.

APEX brings together stakeholders in the development and implementation of industry-wide accepted practices to create and enhance efficiencies, as well as solve common problems and address industry issues. APEX also creates resources and tools to address these issues, such as education, white papers, and sample documents.

Some of the results of accepted practices implementation include:

- Time and cost savings
- Eased communication and sharing of data
- Enhanced customer service
- Streamlined systems and processes
- Less duplication of effort and increased operational efficiencies
- Better educated, more professional employees
- Solving common issues and problems

## Ethics

The Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), a widely recognized authority on convention and meeting management, published *PCMA's Principles of Professional and Ethical Conduct* in 2002.

Open and trusting relationships with your venues, facilities, vendors, and service providers will be priceless over time. Although practicing ethical behavior may not be a matter of law, violation of fair and equitable business practices can be considered illegal. There is a very long list of ethical issues, but a few of the easiest to violate, due to inexperience, are mentioned here.

### Trouble Spots to Avoid

- Refrain from accepting or encouraging gifts or accepting promises of gifts from venues or service providers. This is particularly an issue prior to making decisions on sites, venues, vendors, and other service providers.
- Refrain from using travel points earned from airlines and hotels during business trips for personal travel.
- Refrain from conducting site inspections or accepting invitations to familiarization (FAM) trips sponsored to any location unless your group will seriously consider booking business there.
- Refrain from any activity that would discredit you or your organization.

### What to Practice

- Full disclosure of any rebates, commissions, or incentives accepted for any reason.
- Notice to attendees that a rebate from registration fees will be used to offset an expense; a legitimate example would be a shuttle service expense.
- Fair and equitable negotiations in good times and bad.
- Confidentiality during the bidding process.
- Prompt and professional notification when site and vendor selections have been decided.
- Identify and address unethical behavior in others that could result in damages to your event, organization, or group. Ethics is not limited to your own personal behavior.

## Suggested Industry Etiquette (Professional Courtesy)

- Be prepared, considerate, realistic, and factual in all verbal and written communications.
- Be cognizant of the value of everyone's time, and be timely with all.
- Meet your deadlines and keep your promises.
- Treat venues, facilities, vendors, and service providers as partners rather than subordinates. Everyone has a vested interest in your success.
- Understand the need for your event partners to make a reasonable profit.
- Maintain a calm and courteous demeanor under pressure.
- Work diligently toward agreement and solutions that will be mutually beneficial.
- Don't criticize. Seek resolutions.
- Make every effort to engage in respectful communications with everyone and in every circumstance.
- Resort to confrontation only when there is absolutely no other alternative to fixing an immediate problem.
- Approach working relationships as long term rather than one-time-only, as it is likely you will work with the same service provider companies in other locations, or you will rely on their referrals if they do not provide service where your event will be located.
- Share the glory. When your event is successful, praise your partners and the staff who helped produce it.

## What Does a Meeting or Event Professional Do?

When asked about a typical day in the life of a meeting planner, there are few, if any, who could say that any day is typical, whether they work in an organization or operate an external planning company. The job of a planner is ideal for those who love to multitask, who have broad interests, who enjoy problem solving, and who care passionately about building community through meetings.

Doug Heath, Certified Association Executive (CAE), CMP, and the second executive director of MPI, said many years ago that meeting planners must be more than coffee-cup counters. When Heath said that, it was a time when most meeting planners were concerned only with logistics—ensuring the provision of room sets, coffee and refreshment breaks, meals, and audiovisual setup.

Today, the jobs of an event professional are strategic. Planners are charged with supporting the work toward an organization's bottom line. In order to do this, both when planning, and during a meeting or event, a planner may do any or all of the following, and more:

- Define meeting/event goals and objectives, and develop session content and design.
- Develop a request for proposal (RFP) based on the meeting/event objectives, audience profile, budget, and program (see Appendix of this book for examples).
- Send the RFP to national sales offices of hotel and conference center companies, to DMOs, and to external meeting-planning companies.
- Prepare and manage a budget and expenditures, which can range from a few hundred dollars into the hundreds of millions.
- Negotiate contracts with a facility or multiple facilities, transportation providers, decorators, speakers, entertainers, and all the vendors and venues that will support a meeting/event.
- Market the meeting/event electronically and in print, and track results.
- Invite and manage the needs (travel, lodging, registration, room setup, and audiovisual) for all speakers, trainers, and facilitators involved in delivery of information and knowledge for the meeting/event.



- Invite, manage contracts and manage the needs of entertainers.
- Design food and beverage events, and negotiate contracts for these events. To do so, an event professional must know the audience (age of participants, gender, abilities, allergies, geographic location, and more), the timing for the programs, the budget, and the prices, including labor costs and taxes.
- Prepare a crisis management plan in conjunction with other staff, facilities, vendors, and emergency personnel.
- Register participants, or manage a registration company, ensuring data are accurately entered and processed securely.
- Manage the multitude of changes that happen from the first conceptualization of a meeting or event to the execution and follow-up.
- Monitor industry and business publications for changes in management companies or hotel ownership, as well as for hotel foreclosures, facility and other strikes, and other issues.
- Calm others' nerves and remain calm.

## Careers in and around the MEEC Industry

The MEEC industry is a vibrant, dynamic, and exciting part of the hospitality industry. Many careers in MEEC involve multiple aspects of the hospitality industry. For example, someone who works in convention or group sales in a facility must interface with, be knowledgeable about, and manage people who work with guest rooms, front desk, food and beverage, catering, and all of the meeting facilities.

The MEEC industry is a sub-segment of the hospitality industry, which itself is part of the larger services industry. It encompasses many areas of the hospitality industry. Thus, readers are challenged to conceptualize their personal ideal job and then determine how and where in the MEEC industry they could be employed doing what they dream of.

Some of the careers in MEEC are included in the following figure:

- **Event Planner:** Plans special events like the Olympics, the Super Bowl in football, the Final Four in basketball, festivals, and gala celebrations.
- **Wedding Planner:** A wedding planner is a type of event planner who assists parties in selecting the site, décor, photographer, and other needed vendors, and is often there on the day of the event to ensure smooth operations.
- **Meeting Planner:** Organizes meetings and other gatherings for companies, corporations, and associations. These gatherings can include a small, board of directors meeting, a stockholders' meeting, new product introductions and training, educational seminars, and regional or national conventions. Corporate Meeting/Event Planners fall into this category.
- **Exhibition Managers:** Organizes and manages trade shows.
- **Hotel or Conference Center Sales:** The majority of sales and conventions, or catering service positions in hotels and conference centers deal with groups, and MEEC covers most of these groups.
- **Restaurant Sales:** While most people think of restaurants attracting walk-in clientele, many rely heavily on the MEEC industry for business. Food and beverage (F&B) venues employ significant numbers of people on their group sales staff. In New Orleans, Arnaud's and Emeril's, for example, have group or convention sales teams.
- **Entertainment/Sporting Venue Sales and Services:** Although these places primarily attract individual patrons, most also devote much time and effort to selling, providing space for, and producing events for groups. These off-site venues are often good alternatives for experiential learning.
- **Destination Management: Destination Management Companies (DMCs)** function as the local experts for companies and associations, organizing gatherings and events, arranging and supervising transportation, and securing entertainers. People employed for DMCs usually work in either sales or production.
- **Hotels:** Hotels are one of the primary locations where MEEC events are held, using ballrooms, meeting rooms, break-out rooms, and so on, for their gatherings along with sleeping rooms and F&B for their attendees. The hotel departments that deal with the MEEC industry are sales, catering, and convention services.