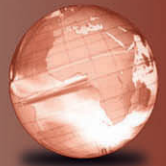


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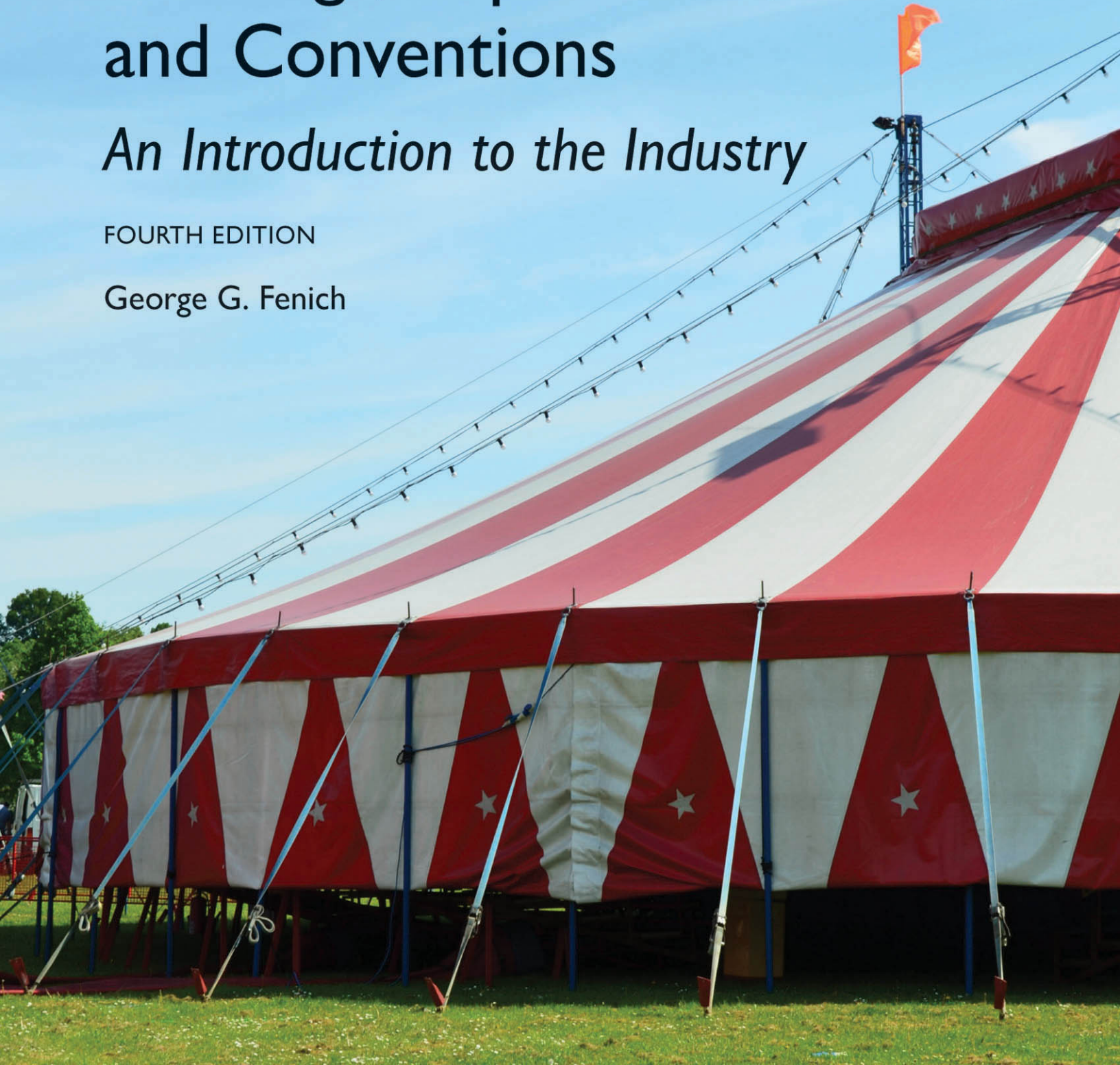


Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions

An Introduction to the Industry

FOURTH EDITION

George G. Fenich



FOURTH EDITION

MEETINGS, EXPOSITIONS, EVENTS, AND CONVENTIONS

An Introduction to the Industry

GLOBAL EDITION

George G. Fenich, Ph.D.

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*Dedicated to Breast Cancer Survivors
Notably My Wife Kathryn*

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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 find 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. The author has been teaching an introductory MEEC course for many years and has found himself 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, he 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 the author/editor volunteered to spearhead an effort to put together a new book using faculty and industry experts to write various chapters. This book is a 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 fairly even balance between 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. The author/editor 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 (Delphi technique) was used to reach the decision as to the topics to include in the book. This fourth edition not only has updated material and statistics but also has 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. That acronym was purposely *not* chosen for the title of this text. The reason is that most programs of study deal with the Incentives or Incentive Travel very little, if at all. Further, 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) and much more into 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

- All data has been updated
- Many new images
- The chapter on technology has been totally re-written and updated
- In chapter 2 on the topic of MEEC organizers and sponsors, a section has been added that discusses 'third party' entities
- In chapter 14 on international aspects of MEEC, additional regions of the globe are discussed
- The Glossary has been expanded 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.

George G. Fenich, Ph.D.

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I would like to thank Kathryn Hashimoto for her unabated support, patience, and encouragement; the chapter contributors for their work and insights; and students everywhere for their interest in the MEEC industry. Also, thank you to the educators in the MEEC field for helping develop the concept for this book and for continuing support through adoptions of this text.

I would also like to thank the reviewers of this edition for their thoughtful and insightful comments. They are Susan Alvarez, Indiana Purdue University Indianapolis; Pat Golden-Romero, Florida Gulf Coast University; Marla Harr, Arizona State University; Frank Lauterman, Daytona State University; Elizabeth Lewis, Florida State University; Cynthia Mayo, Delaware State University; and David Smiley, Indiana University Bloomington.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



George G. Fenich, Ph.D., is a professor in the School of Hospitality Leadership at East Carolina University. Dr. Fenich worked in the hospitality industry for 15 years before joining academe. He teaches and researches in the area of conventions and meetings, has written over 60 academic articles, and has presented at over 150 conferences—including the International Council on Hotel Restaurant and Institutional Education, the Destination Marketing Association International, the Association for Convention Operations Management, the International Association of Assembly Managers, AHTMM in Istanbul, Taipei, and Mauritius, the International Conference on Meetings & Events held in Shanghai China, and the Professional Convention Management Association. He is on the editorial board of six academic journals—including editor-in-chief for the *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism*. He is also the principal of the consulting firm Fenich & Associates LLC.

Introduction to the Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions Industry (MEEC)



The Olympic Games are one of the many aspects of the meetings, expositions, events, and conventions industry. © RommmalFotolia

Chapter Objectives

This chapter provides the reader with an understanding of the following:

- The history of the Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions (MEEC) industry
- Where MEEC fits in relation to the hospitality industry
- The magnitude and impact of MEEC
- Careers in MEEC
- Different types of gatherings

Prologue

The vignette that follows is meant to provide an example and insights into the field of meetings, expositions, events, and conventions (MEEC). The chapter concludes with the second half of this vignette. Readers are directed to the glossary at the end of this book and to the Convention Industry Council online glossary at <http://glossary.conventionindustry.org> for the definitions of any words or terms that they are not familiar with.

Chapter Outline

Introduction

What a Difference a Day Makes

Accepted Practices Exchange

What Is a Meeting?

Industry Terminology and Practice

The Organizational

Structure of the Hospitality Industry—How MEEC Fits in Background of the Industry Economic Impact Why Have Meetings and Events?

Evolution and Maturation of the MEEC Industry MBECs

This Book: Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions: An Introduction to the Industry

Employment in and around the MEEC Industry What Does a Meeting or Event Professional Do?

Future Trends

Summary

Key Words and Terms

Review and Discussion Questions

About the Chapter Contributor

The Big Day

Picture this: The sun rises above the horizon, releasing rays of blue and pink light that whisk across the ocean and spill onto the beautifully manicured greens of the resort hotel's championship golf course. Against the backdrop of the crashing surf and pleas of hungry gulls, you can also hear the sounds of morning stirring at the resort hotel. Car doors slamming, muffled voices sharing greetings and farewells, china and silver clashing, and the squeaking wheels of fully laden carts, each heading off to its appointed area under the guiding hand of one of many hotel staff who have arrived before most guests are awake.

Today is a big day. The Association of Amalgamated Professionals (AAP) will open its 35th Annual Congress with an evening reception, and before the day is done, 1,900 guests and hundreds of vendors will have descended on this resort hotel. Since there are growing concerns about the image conveyed by using apparently "glitzy" venues, the venue eliminated the word "resort" from its name. This was done after the contract was signed.

Todd Cliver, Convention Services Manager (**CSM**) for the hotel, convenes a last-minute meeting for the hotel's team that is handling the Annual Congress. Todd has worked tirelessly for nearly nine months, when the account was turned over from the Sales and Marketing department of the hotel, coordinating all of the plans, wants, and needs of his client, the association's Senior Meeting Manager, Barbara Tain. Today represents the culmination of hundreds of e-mails, phone calls, videoconferences, and personal meetings between Todd and Barbara. Todd interacted with every department in the hotel. Barbara worked closely with AAP staff and volunteers, worked with other vendors, and supervised AAP support staff for the AAP's 35th Annual Congress.

Donna Miller, Director of Sales and Marketing, whose department was responsible for contracting this—the largest meeting the hotel will have ever managed—reports on her client's last-minute changes and concerns, all meticulously logged since her client, Barbara Tain, arrived two days ago. David Stern, Front Desk Manager, recaps the latest report on expected room occupancy and on the timing and numbers of anticipated arrivals. Throughout the day, he will continue to check with his staff to ensure that there will be adequate (and contracted!) numbers of front desk clerks to support the check-in flow, bell staff to manage the deluge of luggage and golf clubs, and

door staff, valet parkers, concierge and guest services staff, and housekeeping services.

David Fenner, Director of Catering, provides his final status report, commenting on the readiness of the kitchen and banquet staff to serve the equivalent of almost 12,000 meals and untold gallons of juice, milk, coffee, tea, soda, and alcoholic beverages over the next three days. In addition, the hotel's **outlets** (restaurants and lounges) expect a much higher than average volume and have planned for supplies and personnel accordingly.

Other hotel staff members report to the Director of Sales and the CSM. These include those involved with recreation (golf, tennis, health club, and pool), maintenance, security, and accounting. Even the animal handlers, who work with the parrots, an attraction for guests as they enter the property, want to ensure there are only healthy, well-behaved birds to greet the guests!

This one **convention** has already impacted and will impact every area of the hotel's operations. Armed with all this information, Todd leaves for his final preconference meeting (pre-con) with Barbara Tain, his client.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the country, Jane Lever steps onto Concourse B of the Philadelphia International Airport, her airline boarding pass, e-ticket receipt with its special "meeting discount" price, and government-issued photo ID firmly in her grasp. She has checked her luggage, making sure it is locked with only TSA-approved locks for a possible security search. She scans the bank of monitors for her flight information. Before her day ends, she will have touched down at two other airports, eaten one airline snack, grabbed a candy bar on her way through a change of planes at another airport, made numerous cell phone calls, bought a newspaper and a few magazines, and paid for a taxi to the hotel. Around the country, 1,899 other professionals just like Jane will do the same thing and travel to the same place for the same purpose—a **meeting**.

In the hotel's **destination** (city), Kathy Sykes, the Owner and President of Skylark Destination Management Company (**DMC**), is already at her office reviewing final arrangements for ground transportation for VIPs and off-site events, event theme preparations, and entertainment for the AAP meeting. Kathy has already received two complaints from the manager of the headliner rock star booked for tonight's reception: The entertainer wants only

chilled glasses for his orange juice—which he expects to be freshly squeezed in his suite—and can only get dressed if he is provided with navy blue towels for his after-shower rubdown. Kathy, of course, will ensure compliance with these requests; she wants to avoid any problems before tonight's event.

With a thunderstorm threatening for tomorrow afternoon, Kathy's mind is also already racing about alternatives for the golf tournament. She knows the golfers can play in the rain, but a thunderstorm would endanger their safety.

Jack Ardulosky, a Senior Technical Engineer for an audiovisual company, pulls into the hotel's delivery area while completing his mental checklist for final site review, satellite link integrity, picture clarity, and sound quality. With three global broadcasts and webcasts, he will have little room for error. He sees the florist unloading the last of the fresh floral arrangements and makes a note to himself that leaves and petals can cause just as much of a viewing obstruction as meeting room columns. He scans the area around him for a parking spot since not much is available with all the trucks and vans unloading the trade show booths. Jack notices the rising ambient temperature and expects a long, hot day. He will feel better as long as he can find parking in the shade, even if he has to walk a greater distance.

Barbara Tain, the Senior Meeting Manager for the association, wipes the beginning of fatigue from her eyes—she has already been on site for two days, and her constant checking of details has not allowed her to sleep as well as she would have liked—and continues her walk-through of the registration area, information center, and cyber café, ensuring the meeting space will be appropriately set for de-

livery of the education critical to the meeting's objectives—en route to a meeting with Todd Cliver and David Fenner. Having eaten just a few bites of her breakfast during a meeting with association executives and key committee members, she will still be late to her meeting with Cliver and Fenner because of last-minute details and concerns from the meeting with association staff and volunteers.

Only half glancing at the space around her, she again reviews her lengthy checklists: speaker and trainer arrivals and needs, banquet event orders (**BEOs**), transportation schedules, badges, staffing, centerpiece design and delivery, phone and data lines, computers and printers, Wi-Fi bandwidth, exhibitor booth setup, VIP procedures, concerns about tomorrow's weather, special check-in processes, audiovisual equipment, opening production rehearsal times and needs, PowerPoint™ files, handouts, arrangements for participants with disabilities including those who have specified food allergies, and amenities for VIPs—her mind is crowded with details.

With all this and more going through her mind, her most dominant thought is, "What could go wrong over the next three days—weather? Delayed arrivals? Delayed departures? The illness, or worse, death, of a participant, vendor, or speaker? A natural disaster like an earthquake? How prepared am I, and is the hotel and our vendors and off-site venues ready to respond quickly and effectively?" The fact is, although it is almost never apparent to a meeting participant, some things may not proceed as planned. The meeting planner and CSM are never more important than at that moment when a crisis must be anticipated and then averted.

It is opening day at last, and everything is in motion.

INTRODUCTION

What a Difference a Day Makes

Planning for AAP's 35th Annual Congress began long before the previous year's program ended and before nine months ago when the file was turned over to Convention Services. The scenario in the opening of this chapter is only a brief glimpse of the multitude of complexities that support planning and management, and of the jobs that employ those who work in and around the meetings, expositions, events, and conventions (**MEEC**) industry, all of which contribute to a meeting's success. In some parts of the world, this industry is listed as meetings, incentives, conventions, events or **MICE**. **MEEC** and **MICE** are interchangeable.

By the time the AAP program is over, roughly 1,900 people (participants and exhibitors) will have flown on approximately 9 major airlines and regional carriers on 200 different flights; covered 4 million air miles; consumed 1,000 airline snacks and thousands of bags of candy or snacks grabbed on runs through airports; participated in 60,000 people hours of presentations, education, and social events; played 4,000 person hours of golf; and eaten approximately 12,000 catered meals. They will have made about 80,000 telephone calls, purchased and read

5,700 newspapers (both in hard copy and web based), transmitted and received more than 10,000 emails, and injected about \$5,000,000 into the local economy. Their presence will generate about \$500,000 in taxes toward state and local coffers. Countless local business owners will make sales in everything from clothing to artwork to souvenirs. Dry cleaners, cab drivers, restaurateurs, sports facilities, attractions, and hotels will all see jumps in their average weekly revenue. There may also be a significant boost to the local underground, cash-only economy, with contributions from the seamier side of this phenomenon such as gambling, drugs, and prostitution. In total, the convention-related activities for this single event will touch more than 250 local jobs.

Performing poorly at any of the hundreds of potential failure points or “moments of truth” of planning and executing a meeting or event, and especially not achieving the objectives and meeting the needs of the participants and vendors, can cause a dramatic immediate financial loss to the geographic area. In addition, the financial impact could result in positive or negative impacts for years to come: A good experience by each attendee will result in praise to many others; a negative experience will result in even more people hearing the results of the stay in that destination. Each of these people can bring or deny more business to the destination and the resort.

ACCEPTED PRACTICES EXCHANGE

Throughout this book, you will hear about the Convention Industry Council (CIC) and its Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX). The following is from <http://www.conventionindustry.org/apex> and is meant to provide early insight into this initiative.

The CIC is at the forefront of efforts to advance the meeting, convention, and exhibition industry. It represents a broad cross-section with 30 member organizations representing more than 103,500 individuals as well as more than 19,000 firms and properties involved in the meetings, conventions, and exhibitions industry. Formed in 1949 to provide a forum for member organizations seeking to enhance the industry, the CIC facilitates the exchange of information and develops programs to promote professionalism within the industry and educates the public on its profound economic impact. By its nature, the CIC provides an impartial and inclusive forum for APEX and the development of accepted practices for the industry.

APEX is an initiative of the CIC that has brought together all stakeholders in the development and implementation of industry-wide accepted practices to create and enhance efficiencies throughout the meetings, conventions, and exhibitions industry.

Some of the results of accepted practices implementation will be:

- Time & 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

WHAT IS A MEETING?

What are these things called “meetings,” “exhibitions,” “symposia,” “congresses,” “events,” and “conventions?” In what ways do meetings contribute to furthering skills and knowledge for those who attend and participate? Why are they so important to the economy? Will virtual events take the place of face-to-face gatherings in the years ahead? Why hold meetings at all? In what ways can our specific events be designed better to meet our audience’s needs? How do we differentiate what we do versus what the competition does so that we can improve market share? All of these questions are addressed in this chapter. Welcome to the fast-paced, tense, yet ultimately fulfilling world of MEEC.

The APEX initiative proposes the generic definition of *meeting*: An event where the primary activity of the participants is to attend educational sessions, participate in discussions social functions, or attend other organized events. There is no exhibit component. Compare with terms *Convention*, *Exhibition*, *Trade Show*, *Consumer Show*, which are explained in the following section “Industry Terminology and Practice.”

Synonyms for “meeting” include the following:

affair, assemblage, assembly, assignation, audience, bunch, buzz session, call, cattle call, clambake, company, competition, conclave, concourse, concursion, confab, **conference**, conflict, confrontation, congregation, congress, contest, convention, convocation, date, encounter, engagement, gang, gathering, get-together, gig, huddle, introduction, meet, nooner, parley, powwow, quickie, rally, rap session, rendezvous, reunion, session, showdown, sit-in, talk, tryst, turnout

Industry Terminology and Practice

We have always, generically, referred to gatherings of two or more people as “meetings.” This term clearly could encompass meetings that are also 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 has to be conscious of how your stakeholders or target audience will interpret the name that is applied to a 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 APEX, a part of the Convention 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 <http://glossary.conventionindustry.org>. The terms as well as other material from the CIC are used throughout this book and with their permission.

- **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. See also Convention, Exhibition, Trade Show, and Consumer Show explained in the following paragraphs.
- **Exposition:** See Exhibition.
- **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 Exposition or Trade Show). See Trade Show, Consumer Show, Gate Show, and Public Show.
- **Event:** An organized occasion such as a meeting, convention, exhibition, special event, gala dinner, and so on. An event is often composed of several different yet related FUNCTIONS.
- **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.
- **Trade Show:** An exhibition of products and/or services held for members of a common or related industry. Not open to the general public. If it is open to the public it is called a Consumer Show. See Exhibition. Compare with *Gate Show*, *Public Show*, and *Consumer Show*. See also: Exhibition, Gate Show, Public Show, and Consumer Show.
- **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 object of enriching the skills of the participants.
- **Workshop:** (1) A meeting of several persons for intensive discussion. The workshop concept has been developed to compensate for diverging views in a particular discipline or on a particular 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 else 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.
- **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 give publicity to 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, Convention.

- **Clinic:** A workshop-type educational experience where attendees learn by doing.
- **Break-Out Sessions:** Small group sessions, panels, workshops, or presentations offered concurrently within the 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.
- **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, the election of internal committees, and approval of 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.
- **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) A European term for convention. See also Conference, Convention.
- **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.
- **Symposium:** A meeting of a number of experts in a particular field, at which papers are presented and discussed by specialists on particular subjects with a view to making recommendations concerning the problems under discussion.
- **Institute:** An in-depth instructional meeting providing intensive education on a particular subject.
- **Lecture:** An informative and instructional speech.
- **Panel Discussion:** Instructional technique using a group of people chosen to discuss a topic in the presence of an audience.

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. In order 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 six major divisions, or segments, of the tourism and hospitality industry: lodging, food and beverage, transportation, attractions, entertainment, and shopping.

1. **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, cruise ships, trailer parks or campsites, condominiums, and college dormitories. The important characteristics of this segment are that they are available to the public and charge a fee for usage.
2. **Food and Beverage:** Obviously, this segment actually 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—high, medium, and low; by type of service—luxury, quick service, and so on; or by cuisine—American, East Asian, Italian, and others. Food service also embraces other types of operations including catering, chains, and institutional feeding. Beverage operations can also be broken down by price or type of service, and even whether they serve alcoholic beverages or not.

3. **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 carriers such as Delta or Lufthansa and charter air service that can involve jets, propeller aircraft, and helicopters.

Water transportation: This sub-segment includes cruise ships and paddle wheelers, charter operations, ferries, and water taxis.

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.

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

Natural attractions: This sub-segment includes mountains, seashores, lakes, forests, swamps, climate, 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 some restaurants and shopping venues.

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

6. **Shopping:** This is an important segment of the hospitality and tourism industry, and an area in which people may spend considerable sums of money thus contributing to the local economy. Many attractions have developed products that carry their theme or logo and result in significant revenue streams for the operator. Probably the best known is Disney, whose products are sold not only at its attractions, but also in stand-alone retail centers.

As one can see, the hospitality and tourism industry is multifaceted. Furthermore, the framework offered in the preceding list is meant to help provide an understanding of the industry and is not intended to be a well-delineated typology. There are many overlaps between the categories: A hotel may be an attraction in itself, such as the CityCenter in Las Vegas; the same is true of some stores, such as FAO Schwarz in New York City or the Mall of America in Minneapolis. Hotels often have food and beverage outlets, retail stores, and even entertainment. Furthermore, some of the businesses mentioned above cater to both the tourist, meeting-goer and local resident, making it difficult to determine how much business is derived from each constituency.

It would seem then, that the MEEC industry is involved with all segments of the hospitality and tourism industry. Understanding the interactions and complexities of the hospitality and tourism industry, along with MEEC, helps explain why it is difficult to determine the size and scope of these industries. Until the late 1990s, the U.S. government, using its North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, did not even track many elements of these industries. For example, the government did not even list “meeting planner” as a recognized profession until the late 1980s.

Background 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 what was then Ephesus (now Turkey) to see exhibitions that included acrobats, magicians, animal trainers, and jugglers. Andrew Young, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said at a Meeting Professionals International (MPI) meeting in Atlanta in the middle 1990s that he was sure there would have been a meeting planner for the Last Supper and certainly for the first Olympics. In Rome, the Forum was a type of organized meeting to discuss politics and decide the fate of the country. Ancient Rome had the Coliseum, which was the site

of major sporting events such as gladiatorial contests—someone had to organize them! Through the use of excellent roadways, the Romans were able to establish trade markets to entice people to visit their cities. In Old England, there are stories of King Arthur’s Round Table, another example of a meeting to discuss the trials and tribulations of the day. Religious gatherings of various faiths and pilgrimages to Mecca are examples of ancient religious meetings and festivals. 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 MEEC industry has also been a part of American culture and development. The white steeples surrounded by snow-covered ground seen in Currier and Ives prints actually depicted the town squares of New England cities. In one of the oldest communities in North America, Santa Fe, the square not only houses the seat of government but also has been traditionally used as a festival marketplace. Even today, Native Americans can be seen around the perimeter of the square displaying their handicrafts for sale.

The First Continental Congress in Philadelphia is an example of a “formal meeting,” in this case to decide the governance of the 13 colonies. Political conventions have a long history in the United States and are part of the MEEC industry. Americans 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. The hope is that these public facilities will attract out-of-town attendees for conventions and events who will spend money in the community.

In spite of its long history, meeting planning as a recognized profession did not develop until 1972, when MPI was founded. Only 120 planners and suppliers attended its first convention. The first board of directors was headed by “Buzz” Bartow and led to the development of the first academic meeting planning program. This program, approved by the state of Colorado in September of 1976, was implemented by Metropolitan State College (now University) in Denver. This initiative was closely followed by the meeting planning program at Northeastern Oklahoma



Mardi Gras in New Orleans.
© Wendy Kaveney/Fotolia

University in Tahlequah. In 1979, Patti Shock started the convention service management (hotel perspective) 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 IAFE (International Association of Fairs and Expositions). GSU was the first to implement trade show classes, and therefore the first to cover the whole convention industry.

There were two factors that contributed to the rapid development of both industry workshops and academic programs during the 1980s. The first was the development and implementation of the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) examination and designation by the Convention Liaison Council (CLC now CIC). This certification gives both status and credence to the person who achieves it. Additional certificate programs have followed, including Certified Meeting Manager (CMM), Certified Destination Marketing Executive (CDME), and others.

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 (HSMIA), and International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (IACVB) (now Destination Marketing Association International or **DMAI**)—the CIC (then, the Convention Liaison Council) has traditionally followed the lead of its constituent organizations.

In 1895, the basis of today's destination marketing organizations (DMO) that are also called convention & visitor bureaus (CVBs) was put forth when journalist Milton Carmichael wrote in *The Detroit Journal* that local businessmen get together to promote the city as a convention destination, as well as represent the city and its many hotels to bid for that 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 that is now labeled *VisitDetroit*.

The role of CVB's (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. Most recently, the term "DMO" is being used in place of CVB. In this text, the terms are synonymous and interchangeable.

Economic Impact

The MEEC industry is diverse. As a result, it is hard to estimate the size, magnitude, and impact of MEEC. According to recent reports there were 1.87 million meetings held in the United States that were attended by 225 million people and contributed \$115 billion to the GDP of the country. In the United Kingdom, the contribution to the economy was \$92 billion. The total economic output of U.S. meetings was pegged at \$770.4 billion and generated \$88 billion in federal, state, and local taxes. Most of the participants traveled more than the requisite 50 miles that makes them tourists and obviously spent money in the destination on hotel rooms, meals, and so on. The MEEC industry supports 1.78 million jobs in the United States alone. It is estimated that 1 in every 86 individuals is employed in some aspect of the industry. These numbers are estimated to grow every year as many individuals, corporations, and many countries start to understand the importance of the MEEC industry. This made the MEEC industry one of the largest contributors to the gross national product, larger than the motion picture industry (\$113 billion), performing arts/museums/spectator sports (\$87 billion) and data processing and information services (\$80 billion). This should give great hope for anyone with a career in the MEEC industry because the MEEC industry is very important to the economy and jobs will always be needed. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, conventions and events are expected to expand by 44% from 2010 to 2020, far beyond the average projected growth of other industries.

The tough conditions facing meeting professionals during the recession are slowly fading. The hiring picture is also improving, with overall employment in the meeting and event industry

ticking up a bit. Not surprisingly, economic uncertainty is still a worry for many meeting and event professionals.

Why Have Meetings and Events?

In the early to mid-1980s, there were discussions, (as there was immediately after September 11, 2001) and again during the economic crisis that began in 2008, that face-to-face meetings would be things of the past—that virtual meetings (teleconferencing, webinars, etc.) would supplant face-to-face gatherings. The Foundation of MPI conducted studies in the mid-1990s that focused on what made meetings work for associations and corporations. These studies showed that people preferred meeting face-to-face, and that one of the most important values of gatherings is the ability to meet with and learn from peers. “Virtual” meetings in all forms (audio and video conferences, webinars, podcasts, online learning, and exchanges) do not yet create the desired effect, although various companies such as CISCO and other platforms are working to improve the future of virtual meetings. The debate rages on. The trend today is to add a “virtual” component to face-to-face meetings, thus expanding the potential market of participants. These are sometimes called “hybrid events.”

Face-to-face meetings have the benefit of including all forms of communication, including verbal and nonverbal. For example, what does the strength and style of a handshake tell you about people in some cultures? How do their facial expressions support their words, or are they sending mixed messages? How do you feel if the people to whom you are speaking never look you “straight in the eye?” Nonverbal communication is a very important part of meeting with people. Others cite the importance of face-to-face versus virtual meetings in “closing deals.”

When we meet, we build “communities of practice.” Today, we use social media to develop communities of practice, which then often want to meet face to face. What we more often see is “blended learning” that is often used to define blending the use of technology and face-to-face interactions to deliver content and build communities of practice.

Virtually or face to face, through these communities of practice, we are able to strengthen skills (at sales or association educational meetings, or symposia), impact change (at political conventions or governance meetings), observe accomplishments (at incentive meetings and celebrations), renew acquaintances (at reunions), and learn about new products in our field (at exhibitions and trade shows).

Today, we participate, virtually, in many events and interactions: attending classes; viewing live streaming of sporting events and meetings; and even attending community, religious, or spiritual events. In 1999, *High Tech-High Touch*, written by John Naisbitt and others, was first



Shaking hand is a form of nonverbal communication.
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published. In this book the authors look at the impact of a technological society and the need for “unplugging” now and then. The need for experiential learning and participation, noted in Pine and Gilmore’s *The Experience Economy*, continues to drive meetings and events: One attends the Super Bowl to participate in the excitement of the crowd and the experience of being there. One attends a wedding face-to-face to experience the joy of those gathered and to taste the cake and drink the champagne! Although there are sites, including islands in SecondLife™ (such as Virtualis™) that even offer virtual weddings, they are not yet in the mainstream.

Our jobs are to follow the trends and to find methods by which we can meet our objectives for meetings and events using the best methods possible for delivery for our demographic. In some cases, that will be face to face, and in others, virtual. In more cases, it will be blended.

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. The Romans had the Forum where meetings took place and the Coliseum where events took place. Religious pilgrimages have taken place for thousands of years. 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 established sets of skills, standards, and abilities for MEEC professionals. However, like other industries, such as law and accounting, as an industry evolves and matures there is an increasing need among clients, employers, and governments to have a codified set of competency standards to which professionals must adhere. Until very recently no common set of knowledge, skills, and abilities (**KSAs**) existed for events professionals.

This dearth of standards changed in 2011 with the release of the Meetings and Business Events Competency Standards (**MBECS**). MBECS contains the KSAs required of meetings and events professionals.

MBECS

The MBECS are divided into 12 domains or blocks with 33 skills and almost 100 sub-skills or sub-segments. The domains and skills are listed below:

- 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 Plan for Managing 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

The list above represents all the KSAs an event professional needs to acquire, and be proficient in, during the course of their career. That these are, in fact, those KSAs needed by event professionals was validated when the CIC adopted MBECS as the primary basis for their new Certified Meeting Professional International Standards (CMP-IS) and for the CMP Exam. The development of these standards marks a milestone in the MEEC industry. For the first time all players in this industry have a common benchmark or point of reference.

USES OF THE STANDARDS The standards synopsis above represent the first time that the base of knowledge in the meetings/events arena has been codified. Thus, moving forward, the industry profession, academics, students, professionals, human resources staff, and so on can work from the same base.

USES FOR MEETINGS/EVENTS PROFESSIONALS The MBECS represent the KSAs a practitioner must possess in order to be successful in the field. Industry professionals can perform a personal “skills assessment” of those standards and skills at which they are adept and those that 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. This also allows an industry professional to promote their KSAs to employers or clients.

The MBECS is 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 The MBECS provides the 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 meetings/events specific courses, in

business courses, in general education, or a combination. The significant advantage of using 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/events world that are in need of research.

USES FOR ASSOCIATIONS First and foremost the MBECs provides recognition of the KSAs required by the industry. This can then help guide the development of program content and delivery that is consistent with international standards. MBECs 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 (Fenich, 2012b).

THIS BOOK: MEETINGS, EXPOSITIONS, EVENTS, AND CONVENTIONS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE INDUSTRY

This content of this book is meant to provide an introduction and an overview of the MEEC industry. Thus, only a few of the chapters deal with KSAs. However, those chapters that do such as “legal issues”, “technology”, and so on. are based on MBECs. In the chapter summary at the end of those chapters is found a list of the specific standards, skills, and sub-skills from MBECs that have been covered in the chapter. Thus, readers can cross-check those MBECs KSAs covered in the chapter against the full set of MBECs standards thus creating a personal “skills assessment.” After completing this book, readers can progress to two additional texts “Planning and Management of MEEC” and “Production and Logistics in MEEC.” After gaining the knowledge in these three books, the reader will have the knowledge base the MEEC industry expects of “manager level” employees. Further, the reader will be well positioned to be successful in pursuing the CMP certification.

EMPLOYMENT IN AND AROUND THE MEEC INDUSTRY

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 include the following:

- **Event Planner:** Puts together special events like the Olympics, the Super Bowl in football, the Final Four in basketball, festivals, and celebrations.
- **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.
- **Wedding Planner:** A wedding planner assists the 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.
- **Hotel or Conference Center Sales:** The majority of sales and convention or catering services positions in hotels and conference centers deal with groups, and MEEC covers most of those 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 & 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 in 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, breakout 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.
- **Convention Centers:** These venues include dedicated facilities such as McCormick Place in Chicago, the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York, and the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Convention Center in Las Vegas. Also included in this category are multipurpose venues like the Superdome in New Orleans or the Astrodome in Houston. With these venues, careers are found in either sales or operations.
- **Exposition Services Contractors:** If you like to build things or have thought about being an engineer or architect, you should consider being an exposition services contractor (ESC). ESCs design and erect the booths, backdrops, staging, and so on for meetings and conventions. The decorations and backdrops for your school prom may have been done by an ESC. Again, career paths exist in sales and production and increasingly in design of sustainable/“green” products and services.
- **Destination Marketing Organizations (Convention and Visitor Bureaus):** DMOs serve to represent a wide range of MEEC companies and to market the destination to business and leisure travelers. DMOs have many departments and careers, including convention sales, tourism sales, housing bureaus, convention services, marketing, research, and member services.

As you can see, 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. Some of the most important aspects of working in MEEC are business acumen (financial and people management, legalities and risk management, **sales and marketing**, ethical practices), visioning (what can be) and execution of ideas into concepts, and knowledge of adult learning techniques. In addition to knowledge and ability for preparing and delivering virtual and face-to-face meetings, industry professionals must know more about sustainability and “green” for meetings and events.

It is often said that MEEC is a “relationship industry,” that is, one built on who you know and with whom you do business. As in many industries, we depend on those we know to help us learn and grow and to provide accurate information. These relationships are built over time and always with the understanding that first and foremost, ethical business practices will be the most important aspect of how we relate.

Think for just a moment about all the lives and jobs that could impact one of the meeting participants and the meeting organizers involved in the scenario for the Association of Amalgamated Professionals. They include the following:

The Meeting Sponsor

- The Association of Amalgamated Professionals
- Meeting planner
- Executive director or chief executive officer
- Staff specialists in departments that include marketing, governance and government affairs, education/professional development/training, membership, information technology, and accreditation
- Others who staff call centers, copy materials, process registrations, manage human resources, control purchasing, and more
- Board of directors

- Committees
- Sponsors

The Facility

- Owners
- Executive staff, including but not limited to: general manager, revenue manager, resident or hotel manager, directors of sales, marketing, convention services, catering, housekeeping, engineering, maintenance, purchasing, human resources, food and beverage, front office operations, social responsibility, and security.
- The thousands of other full- and part-time, year-round, and seasonal staff: groundskeepers, animal handlers, housekeepers, food servers (for banquets, room service, and the outlets), maintenance, security, and engineering.

The Destination

- DMO/CVB (president, directors of sales, marketing, convention services, membership, registration, social responsibility, and all support staff)
- Restaurants
- Attractions
- Off-site venues
- Theaters (movie and legitimate)
- Copy and printing companies
- Transportation (buses, airport shuttles, taxicabs, limousines)
- Airport concessions
- Doctors, medical personnel, and emergency workers
- Pharmacies
- Florists
- Department and other stores
- Destination management companies
- Audiovisual suppliers
- General services contractors
- Specialty services contractors
- Dry cleaners and tailors
- City, county, and state employees
- IT division and telecommunications department

All Others Who Provide Services for Meetings

- Talent (entertainers, disc jockeys, bands, magicians)
- Education (speakers, trainers, facilitators)
- Sound and lighting
- Transportation (air, rail, car, boat, and travel agencies)
- Printing
- Shipping
- Promotional products
- Off-property food and beverage
- Translators for those who speak American Sign Language and other languages
- Americans with Disabilities Act equipment
- Carpentry
- National sales (hotels, conference centers)
- “Third-party” or independent meeting planners

Is there anyone who does not have some influence on the MEEC industry? A case can be made that every person has an impact, in some way, on each and every meeting—even those meetings of two or three that take place in an office or restaurant. Take a few minutes and add to the jobs or functions above that might affect a meeting. Then think again. Even the president of the United States and Congress impact our industry by determining trade regulations, security issues, and whether or not our country goes to war.

What Does a Meeting or Event Professional Do?

When asked about a “typical day,” there are few if any meeting/event professionals, whether they work in an organization or operate an external planning company, who could say that any day is “typical.” 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) and CMP, who was the second executive director of MPI, said many years ago that meeting planners have to be more than coffee-cup counters. When Heath said that, it was a time when most meeting planners were concerned only with logistics—ensuring 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. To do that, and in the course of planning 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 A 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 that 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 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 and manage contracts and needs for 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) and timing for the programs, and the budget and 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 first conceptualizing a meeting/event to the execution and follow-up.
- Monitor industry and business publications for changes in hotel ownership or management company, hotel foreclosures, facility and other strikes, and other issues.
- Calm others’ nerves and remain calm.

The following are some of the questions you might ask yourself to determine if this may be the right profession for you:

- Do you like to plan parties, work schedules, your day, and ensure that the details are locked in?
- Do you have and regularly update a date book or personal digital assistant (PDA) or smart phone that includes everything you need to do for weeks or months into the future?
- Have you discovered your strengths and do you see how those strengths fit into this profession?
- Do you ask good questions, rarely taken anything as a given? If you answered “yes” to at least three-fourths of those questions, you may just have the aptitude to be a good meeting professional.

To be prepared for short- and long-term change, *meeting/event professionals*—a term that encompasses those who plan and execute meetings/events, those who work for and in facilities in which meetings are held, and the many vendors who supply services for meetings—must