

REALITY CHECK

Putting a fine point on the speaking industry

Spread the Word: Meetings Matter

Difficult economic times and offhand comments by politicians and media pundits about meeting excesses have had a chilling effect on the meetings industry, along with the airlines, hotels, restaurants, sightseeing tours, event planners and professional speakers who serve that industry.

The exhibition industry declined 11.6 percent in first quarter 2009, compared to the first quarter of 2008, according to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research. With companies limiting convention attendance and travel budgets, hotel revenue has declined 18.7 percent for the first half of 2009.

“The first half of 2009 was, without question, one of the most challenging the U.S. lodging industry has experienced. We are currently forecasting a total industry revenue decline of about 17 percent for 2009,” said Bobby Bowers, senior vice president at Smith Travel Research.

As speakers, we need to become better informed about our industry. The Convention Industry Council, Meeting Planners International and NSA have been promoting the message that *Meetings Matter*, because they’re good for business and jobs. A recent U.S. Travel Association (USTA) study found that for every dollar invested in business travel, businesses experience an average of \$12.50 in increased revenue and \$3.80 in new profits. Meetings provide benefits to the meeting sponsor, attendees, and to the economically vulnerable meetings destinations. Even

a recent British Airways ad campaign stressed how face-to-face meetings help grease the wheels of commerce.

“Not only do meetings help drive a vibrant and productive economy but, with the right programs and speakers, meetings matter in developing leaders and a workforce ready to help invent a profitable future,” says NSA President Phillip Van Hooser, MBA, CSP, CPAE.

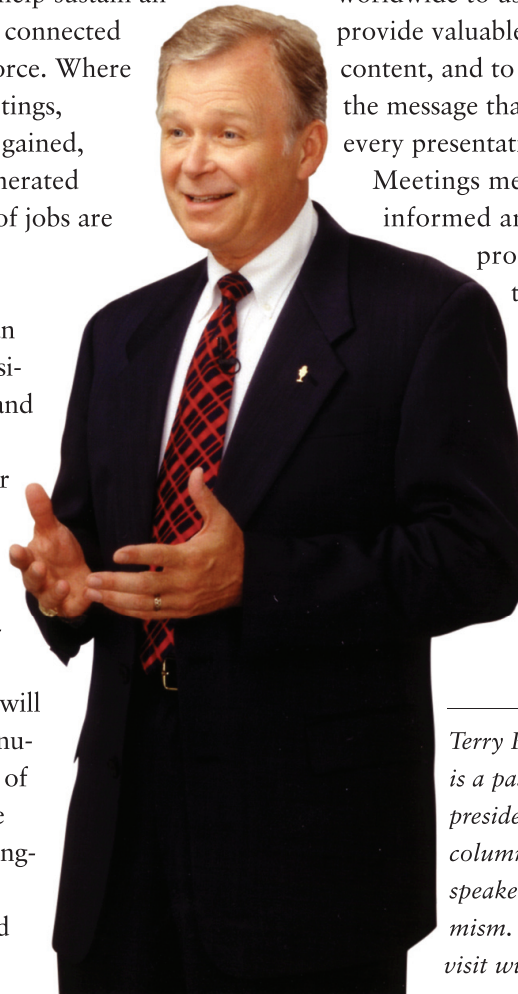
Global Speakers Federation (GSF) President Lindsay Adams, CSP, noted, “Meetings and conferences matter because they help sustain an educated and connected global workforce. Where there are meetings, knowledge is gained, revenue is generated and millions of jobs are maintained.”

Meetings, however, mean more than business. Author and management visionary Peter Drucker once observed, “The fastest growth industry in the United States will soon be continuing education of adults because things are changing so fast in every field and occupation.”

The age of lifelong employment and secure professions is over. There is a compelling need for targeted, competency-based programs to help adult learners move from obsolescence to relevance. Companies and associations that provide such programming at their meetings give their people the best “insurance” policy—updated and relevant skills positioned to invent the future.

In support of meetings, NSA and GSF leaders are challenging speakers worldwide to use the platform to provide valuable, engaging and relevant content, and to take time to reinforce the message that *Meetings Matter* in every presentation.

Meetings mean business, and informed and trained leaders and professionals. By working together, we can make this message viral and help meetings stimulate global economic growth. Be part of the solution—give value, blog about meetings, and tell audiences why meetings matter!



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