HOT RESORT PACKAGES PG 79 INSURANCE INCENTIVES ROLL ON PG 69
PLANNERS ADVISE CONVENTION CENTERS PG 75 **COMDEX OR COM-DEAD?** PG 18
***BILLBOARD* PICKS TOP HOTEL CDS** PG 90 GALVESTON & TEXAS BEACHES PG 99

SUCCESSFUL
MEETINGS®

TEN DOLLARS ■ THE AUTHORITY ON MEETINGS AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT ■ A VNU BUSINESS MEDIA PUBLICATION ■ JANUARY 2003
PART 1 OF 2

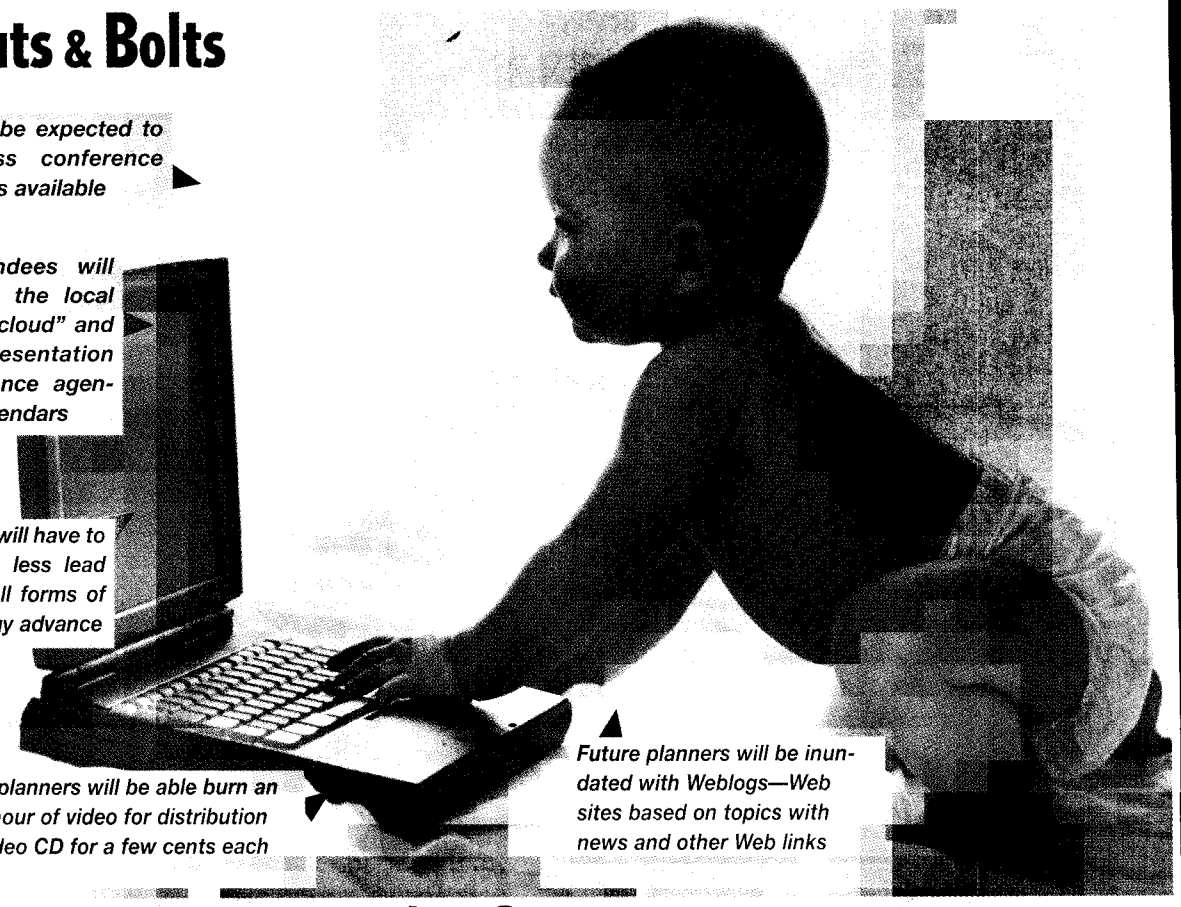
REPORT

State of the Industry

An in-depth look at the meetings industry: Where it stands at the moment, and what's to come in the year ahead



AWARD TIME
Enter to win the 1st Annual Super Six Award for excellence and innovation in meeting planning. Entry form on pg. 12



technology

Fast Forward

How technology will change meeting planning in 2003 and beyond

BY JIM CARROLL

IT'S NOT AN EASY THING TO do. You've got to be able to deliver results to your clients today, yet at the same time plan carefully for tomorrow. When it comes to the latter, you need to set your sights on how technology will continue to affect the business of meeting planning in the future.

Here's a look at what's coming—and what's already here.

Meeting on the Greens PAGE 37
Regaining Trust in the Executive Suite PAGE 38
Top Ten Resolutions PAGE 40
Edited by Mary Brady

Tech breeds in-person events First and foremost, forget the idea that technology will lead to only virtual meetings. In fact, the opposite is true—it will actually increase the need for off-site events and personal get-togethers.

Why? Well, if you think about it, the onrush of technology into the workplace has meant that people are feeling increasingly isolated. As a result, there's a pressing need for the social contact found in off-site events. With such extensive reliance on e-mail, cell phones, pagers, and other tech tools, there is far less human contact than ever before.

In a world in which business executives are disconnected, they're missing out on the "corporate passion" that should be inspiring them to drive their organizations forward. That's why they need off-site events to ensure that they can share information with their peers—otherwise, they lose focus. They need a real, human interchange of ideas in order to stir creativity. It's the off-site event that can help to solve the problems that the technology vacuum has created.

As a meeting planner, you should be busy selling clients on the benefits of off-site meetings in the age of technology.

Conferences go wireless Funny thing, though: These real-life get-togethers are increasingly going high-tech. High-speed wireless, tech-

nically known as 802.11, is changing the demands placed on meeting planners. It basically provides a local area network through the air. And since many new laptops and PDAs are outfitted with this technology, it is rapidly being adopted.

The result: A change in clients' "data expectations." When people go to conferences, they will want to be able to link into a high-speed wireless connection. How will you provide it? In the not-too-distant future, conference attendees will expect to access the local conference "data cloud" via their computers or PDAs, and from there, get speaker presentation materials, conference agendas, and social calendars. They'll want to zip messages around the conference floor to arrange get-togethers with their friends, and will be eager to provide instant analysis of what's hot and what's not.

High-speed wireless has already arrived. The annual Wireless World conference, held last September in New York City, featured a high-speed wireless network, and another conference, Educause in Atlanta, allowed attendees to download schedules to their PDAs via a wireless connection and communicate directly with other attendees.

The wireless conference of the future is here, and it's changing the dynamics of events. In the next year or two, you'll most likely have a client who will ask you to create a wireless infrastructure for a conference. Will you be ready?

The Weblogs are here

Closely related to wireless is the rapid adoption of Weblogs in the business world. (They're also known as "blogs.")

What's a Weblog? It's a Web page used for online posting of short snippets of news and other information related to a particular topic area, and often features links to other Internet sites. Right now, we're seeing a growth rate with blogs that recalls the early days of the Web. Two years out, they will be so mainstream that you'll wonder how you lived without them.

Weblogs are already being used in the conference scene. The recent O'Reilly Emerging Technologies conference in Santa Clara, CA, had unique interactivity in this regard. Several attendees were busy posting instant updates of comments from various speakers to their Weblogs, online journals viewed by thousands of people worldwide. And so while people weren't participating in the conference via video, they were certainly taking part by watching for instant information posted from the show floor.

Audio alternatives go mainstream For years, audiotapes have been the main method by which conference proceedings have been made available. However, that is set to rapidly change, as clients come to request the distribution of conference video on DVD and through Web-based archives.

DVD? Isn't that complicated? Not really—you should get familiar with the concept of video-CDs, also known as VCDs. It's a format that lets you place an entire hour of video on a standard CD-ROM. The important thing is that a VCD can be placed in any DVD play-

QUICK TIPS

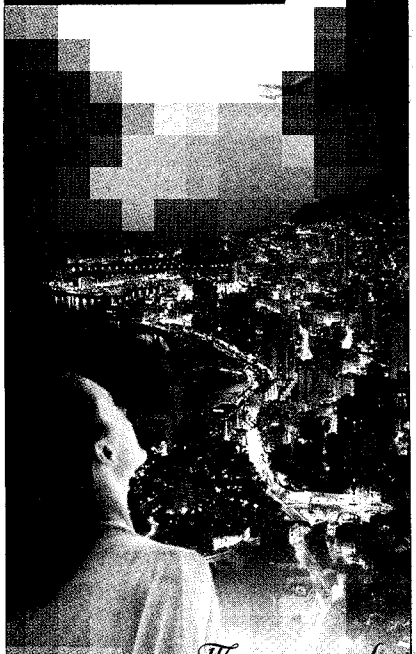
TECH TREK

Technology will continue to shape the meeting and conference industry in the future. As a meeting professional, you need to watch for—and adapt to—the significant changes it brings.



Circle #297 on Free Information Card

Monaco



Monaco and Air France- The Combination for Success

The Principality of Monaco and Air France are like champagne and strawberries... enticing on their own, but extraordinary when put together!

And the only way to ensure your next successful meeting is by booking Air France for a program in the glamorous Principality of Monaco. With dedicated Meeting & Incentive departments, the Monaco Government Tourist Office and Air France are on hand to provide you with the highest quality product, tremendous value for your investment, personal service and strict attention to detail.

Euro-guaranteed packages at Monaco's premiere hotels combined with Air France's specially priced group rates make it easy to plan the program of a lifetime. Let us entice you!

Circle #315 on Free Information Card

er—and with DVD players being the most rapidly adopted consumer technology ever, this means you can distribute about an hour of video for the cost of a regular CD. In other words, about 10 cents. To learn more about VCDs, visit *www.VCDHelp.com.*

Second, we are going to continue to see a trend that involves distribution of conference audio and video via the Web. Not live broadcasts, but video and audio archives. As a meeting planner, you had better line yourself up with some partners who can provide this capability, and learn the basics yourself. Both technologies involve converting audio and/or video to a digital format. To get familiar with what's involved, start small—for example, take a family video and edit it on your PC. Learning how to do that will give you some deep insight as to what's involved with new digital formats.

Lead times shrink Finally, expect the trend to shorter lead times within the industry to continue. September 11 started the trend, but technology is going to facilitate it.

If you think about what we've witnessed in the last 10 years, technology has brought us an economy in which the pace of innovation has increased dramatically. Business models, new forms of competition, new product launches, career responsibilities—every aspect of an organization now undergoes rapid change. This creates a pressing need to keep staff and executives up to date and on top of their game. That's why we're seeing a new industry, one in which clients are organizing off-site events with just a few months' notice, rather than a year or so.

Bottom line? Technology is not going away—indeed, it is going to continue to change what you do, how you do it, and what is expected of you as a meeting planner. It's not easy getting in the right frame of mind to deal with the change that it brings—many of us feel like Ogden Nash at times, who observed that "progress is great, but it's gone on far too long."

That's a nice sentiment, but the future continues to rush towards us. It's best to prepare for what it's bringing.

Jim Carroll is a keynote speaker, author, and columnist. Visit his Web site at www.jimcarroll.com, *and send him your questions about any issues raised in this article at* jcarroll@jimcarroll.com.

