

Keynote speaker sees face-to-face meetings flourishing

Futurist Jim Carroll confidently assured his audience of IACC conferees that their bread & butter – face-to-face meetings – is not leaving the business landscape.

The words of his Thursday morning keynote were music to the ears of an audience that is battling business downturns. Carroll said he'd lived through five recessions and the thing they have in common is that they all are temporary.

“What happens with an economic correction, even a significant one?” Carroll asked. “We always get to the point where we see articles about economic growth. The collective sense in this room is that we'll see this happen in six months to two years. . . . We know how this movie ends.”

While acknowledging the wonders of evolving technology and the specter of developments not yet imagined, Carroll said the need to meet face-to-face is fundamental and will not be replaced.

“New products are developed and updated with amazing speed, and how do you have a sales force that can deal with that continual flood without providing proper education?” he pondered. “Effective sales teams are built through sheer enthusiasm for a goal that comes from face-to-face meetings.”

Carroll pointed to an Australian study that predicted that 65 percent of preschoolers would eventually work in jobs and careers that do not currently exist. And, in any degree program based on science, because knowledge is evolving so fast, it is estimated that half of what somebody learns in the first half of the degree program will be obsolete or revised by the time they graduate.

“The reality of the future of meetings is that learning is what most people will do for a living in the 21st century,” he said. “There will be a requirement to constantly replenish that knowledge, and a huge focus on knowledge



Jim Carroll makes a point during his presentation to IACC conferees on Thursday.

delivery.”

Carroll observed that Microsoft has suggested that in the coming years, 50 percent of U.S. gross domestic product will be taken up by training and knowledge delivery. Progressive organizations will continue to bring people together to meet. Carroll ignores the purveyors of doom who say the meeting business is in a death spiral.

“We’ve been there before. Remember the post-911 buzz? Everybody was going to stop flying, stop going to hotels – it was the end of the event industry,” Carroll said. “People said it was the end of face-to-face. It didn’t happen then, and it

isn’t going to happen now.”

Carroll suggested that constant re-evaluation and the quest for new ideas is key to staying ahead of the curve. Observing key habits and attitude, Carroll said that world class innovators . . .

- possess a relentless focus on growth.
- move beyond the short term.
- constantly replenish revenue streams.
- obsess over the concept of corporate agility.
- don’t fear the future; they just do the future.
- invest heavily in experiential capital.
- banish the innovation killers.