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CMP's Global Reach: Committing to the Advancement of the Profession

By [Marilyn Healey](#), *President, Association for Convention Operations Management*

In a downturned global hospitality and tourism industry, one thing has remained consistently strong—the number of meeting planners and meeting services professionals earning the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) designation. The number of new CMP certifications has remained steady numbering approximately 1,000 annually for each of the past several years, according to the Convention Industry Council (CIC) which administers and manages the CMP exam.

Due to increased global meetings industry demand for the CMP designation, the CIC recently announced additional CMP exams to be held outside of North America in February, 2010. Meeting Planners International (MPI) has also lent its support to the inaugural CMP Global Exam Day which includes testing locations in Cancun, Mexico (in conjunction with MPI's Meet Different convention), South Korea, Singapore, South Africa and Italy.

“The CIC is responding to positive and increased demand for the CMP exam globally,” says Keith Patrick, CMP and former chair of the CIC CMP Board of Directors. “The world has shrunk a lot in my lifetime and now I see it shrinking even faster. We’re all in the same little boat and the more we standardize meeting planning practices globally, the easier it is to produce consistent and efficient meeting planning results.” The CMP certification is obtained through successful completion of the CMP exam which comprehensively covers the body of knowledge and skills essential to excellence in meeting planning and management disciplines. Additionally, the CMP Board of Directors has approved a new streamlined CMP application which took effect January 1, 2010. The updated application has been modified to ensure relevancy to the broader global meeting profession while maintaining the high standards of the credential.

The revised application focuses on work experience and education and has eliminated some of the sections on industry involvement and a complicated points system. It also gives credit for the experience obtained by candidates who hold a degree in meeting or hospitality management.

“While the certification has been global for a number of years, the CMP program continues to evolve to be relevant to as large an audience as possible,” explains Cary Bradley, a CMP and Board member representing the Association for Convention Operations Management (ACOM), the association for convention services management professionals.

Though slowed somewhat by economic conditions in 2008 and 2009, globalization continues to emerge as a major factor in the meetings industry, especially as hotel and resort companies increase their global presence, according to Patrick, a former ACOM president.

"Having been a CMP on both the supplier side and as a meeting planner, the CMP is becoming more recognized internationally and is viewed as a benefit to an organization to have a team member or members with this designation," says Bradley. "In these economic times when there is increased demand for measurable meeting results and return on investment, the global hospitality industry is realizing more than ever the value the designation brings to supplier staffs and their organizations."

According to Bradley, the CMP application and exam have been evolving continuously. "The CIC brings together professionals who have already passed the exam who evaluate and revise the questions to ensure their relevancy to a contemporary audience. This has been going on for years."

"Similar to the exam process, it's important for the application process to evolve as well," she continues. "We've done surveys, looked at competitive designations and their criteria and reached out to a global audience to understand how to make the CMP criteria as embracing as possible, while still upholding strict, measurable objectives for exam eligibility."

Most CMPs agree the primary benefit of earning the credential is a sense of personal achievement and enhanced professional stature. "Earning the CMP designation tells the individual and the industry that you know what you're doing," says Patrick. "It gives the individual the sense of confidence and well being to do a better job. If a mistake is made, I know how to correct it and move forward."

"The CMP symbolizes excellence and academic experience and is one of the most widely recognized designations in the meetings industry," says Lynn McCullough, ACOM executive director. "It verifies the important role of continuing education and reflects positively on the meeting planning discipline while validating the expertise of those practicing it. Currently, over 25 percent of ACOM members hold the CMP designation, and the number is growing rapidly."

Dirk Bohns, CMP, a hotel Technical Services Manager and ACOM member, went through the CMP process several years ago. "Studying for the CMP examination can be a challenging process but having a good support team of family and co-workers behind you can make the preparation easier to accomplish," Bohns observes. "Once I received my CMP and started to realize everything I learned from my fellow CMP professionals, I began to teach to the younger and future CMP professionals of the staff, something I take great joy in doing."

Patrick went a step further, actively encouraging his staff to pursue the CMP designation themselves. "Going through the process of taking the CMP, I realized that it would benefit everyone on my staff to do the same, even to the level of the banquet manager."

"Ultimately, we had over 20 people qualify for the CMP," he says. "Upper management recognized the importance of the CMP designation to staff professional development and as a marketing strategy. Our meeting planner customers, especially those who are CMPs themselves, perk up their ears and say 'your banquet manager has a CMP? You must really know what you're doing!'"

"Having a CMP on staff demonstrates a supplier's commitment to their meeting planner customers," says Bradley. "That's one of the values of the designation on the supplier side whether you are a convention center, hotel, convention bureau or special event planner."

Hotel brands are expanding globally in the Middle East, India, China and elsewhere much more than they are domestically which spurs globalization of the CMP as well. "It's important to speak a

similar language professionally and that's what the CMP designation demonstrates," Bradley notes. "The whole goal in this industry is to march in step lock and have a shared knowledge of best practices. Taking the CMP exam allows you to do that. It's a growing global community of meeting planning professionals."

Marilyn Healey is the President of the Association for Convention Operations Management (ACOM), an association dedicated to advancing the practice of convention services management in the meetings industry, and is also Senior Convention Services Manager for the Hyatt Regency Long Beach. Ms. Healey formerly served as Director of Meetings & Convention Services at the Hilton Long Beach Hotel and Conference Center, and then the Hyatt Orange County. An ACOM member since 1996, Ms. Healey received the ACOM Member of the Year Award in 2001. Ms. Marilyn Healey can be contacted at 562-491-1234 562-491-1234. or Marilyn.Healey@Hyatt.com

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