NEWS

ACOM Rebrands as Event Services Professionals Assn

Change Reflects Drive For Wider Membership

By Rebecca Keister

In order to better define itself as a group representing all industry personnel, the Association for Convention Operations Management (ACOM) now will be the Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA).

"We thought, let's look at how we present ourselves in the market. We're trying to establish a better organization, that is able to really reach a broader membership base," Eric Blanc, CMP, President, ESPA, told *USAE*. "Quite frankly, it's not just about convention [management]."

Along with the name change, ESPA has rolled out a new logo to reflect this "strategic direction" that the association initiated earlier this year upon assessing where the association – now over 20 years old – was and where it was going in terms of membership.

Its new mission is defined as elevating the event and convention services profession and to better educate its members.

The new logo's "S" is meant to double as an abstract image of a services manager "reaching for the stars and striving for excellence."

"It's a better identity and brand awareness of service professionals who really make the industry tick, who have historically been underappreciated and valued," Blanc said. "This is our attempt to bring them to the forefront."

A changing demographic also brought what the association saw as needed changes and an examination of it was presenting itself.

Blanc said ESPA's membership has been stagnant and that in the last few years of economic turmoil, there has been a decline in annual meeting attendance.

That, he said, can be attributed to the fact that the associations' members are typically the first ones cut out of travel budgets since they are not sales professionals.

Also, Blanc said, the entire industry is becoming less transient, as those who used to max out after a few years in one position are tending to stay longer and want more professional development opportunities.

Add to that the emergence of the new generation of workers, who are more targeted in their career goals and armed with industry-specific degrees, and the need to revamp educational offerings to align with what those professionals need.

"We want in the future to bring more professionals together and give them the tools to reach for the stars," Blanc said. "We felt the only way to do that was to identify with the true essence of who we are."

ESPA Event Service Professionals Association

ESPA says those changes in education, including expanded content and sessions, will be evident at is next Annual Conference taking place Jan. 6-9, 2012 in San Diego, Calif.

Increased networking opportunities and a refreshed Website are also part of the rebranding.

Loews Lake Las Vegas; The Perfect Destination Location

Loews Lake Las Vegas is a magnificent 25-acre lakefront desert hotel featuring 493 beautiful guest rooms, including 46 suites that mirror the property's Moroccan spirit. Additionally, there are three two-and three-bedroom casbah suites with private entrances.

The property offers 45,000 square feet of indoor function space, including the elegant 20,580-square-foot Casablanca Ballroom. Other meeting rooms include the 5,000-square-foot Baraka Room, 12 mid-sized meeting rooms and five hospitality suites. Over 55,000 square feet of outdoor function space includes multiple courtyards, a Moroccan-style palace garden, lavish pool decks and an open-air pavilion and lawn area. Swank Audio Visuals provides AV and presentation services on property.

With a 320-acre lake as a backyard, water activities include yacht cruises, gondola rides, boat rentals, paddle boarding, kayaking and fishing. Enjoy the Activity Pool, which features a water slide, private white sand beach, volleyball and sports court, or the Relaxation Pool with cabanas. Relax in Spa Moulay, featuring 11 spa treatment rooms, a full-service beauty salon, and complete fitness center.

Dining options abound at Lake Las Vegas. Master Sushi Chef Osama "Fuji" Fujita, brings a unique approach to Pacific Rim cuisine at Marssa. This fine dining venue features a full sushi bar, extensive sake list, as well as a list of wines by the glass, in a dramatic setting. Dine poolside at Sandsabar Grill, which offers a variety of items, drinks, sandwiches and salads. Serving breakfast, lunch and dinner in a relaxed atmosphere, Rick's Café is the setting for Breakfast at Loews, a branded breakfast program with custom-shaken juices, local breakfast specialties and signature sweets. Marrakesh Express, a gourmet coffee bar and deli, offers specialty drinks, including espresso, flavored teas, and fresh baked pastries, sandwiches, salads and snacks. Arabesque Lounge is the ideal place to enjoy nightly entertainment, a drink and a variety of tapas items.

Loews Lake Las Vegas is the perfect destination location, offering shopping, dining, and elegant accommodations, but still only twenty minutes from McCarran

Airport and thirty minutes from the Las Vegas strip.

Loews Lake Las Vegas Lotus Court.

Regatta Travel Becomes DMAI Alliance Partner

By Jonathan Trager

Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) announced on Oct. 3 that Regatta Travel Solutions has joined the association as one of its elite Alliance Partners.

Regatta provides destination-marketing organizations (DMOs) with a new technology that harnesses the Internet to deliver bookings to hotel, villa, and activity partners. The company may be found at www.regattatravelsolutions.com.

"We look to our business member community to help DMOs find new solutions. For that reason, we are extremely proud to have Regatta join our fold as an Alliance Partner," said Michael Gehrisch, DMAI President & CEO. "Regatta has a proven track record and is passionate about providing innovative solutions for DMOs. We believe they will do great things in the destination marketing industry space, and we look forward to being a part of that."

Ashwin Kamlani, President of Regatta Travel Solutions, said the announcement marked a "great day for Regatta."

Though the Florida-based company is only two years old, Kamlani said, it has a great deal to offer DMOs and that's why it sought to become a DMAI Alliance Partner.

"We wanted to send a message that we're a young company but we're a stable company, and we're not just here to get a couple of clients, we're trying to change the destination-marketing industry," he said.

The aim of the company is to provide a low-cost alternative to such travel industry giants as Expedia and Travelocity. Booking hotel accommodations through those sites can cost hotels anywhere from 20 percent to 30 percent of revenue, said Kamlani.

By contrast, using Regatta costs less than 10 percent and actually drives people to visit DMO sites, Kamlani said, as compared to the other booking engines.

"What we bring to the table that is so different is a superior booking engine than the other guys also marketing expertise," he said.

Kamlani added that his company's system allows Regatta to precisely track return on investment (ROI) for DMOs, something that has never been done before.

DMAI's Allied Membership program offers three tiers of participation: Business Member, Business Partner and Alliance Partner, which is the highest level of commitment within the Allied Membership category.

To become an Alliance Partner, an organization must make a minimum investment of $50,000 per year in the association, with a three-year minimum commitment. In return, DMAI's Alliance Partners receive a package of benefits that offers heightened visibility and access to DMAI's members. The Alliance Partner does not necessarily provide a service to DMAI.