

CORPORATE MEETINGS & INCENTIVES

KEYNOTES/



MARITZ-FREEMAN INK DEAL

Maritz Travel Co. continues its wave of partnerships with a deal making Freeman its preferred provider of audiovisual, multimedia, and creative services. The multimedia and creative services will be provided through ProActive, a division of Freeman.

Freeman, in return, will offer its clients virtual meeting services through the Maritz LIVE program, a suite of e-meeting services launched in May, and meeting assessment and measurement services through Maritz's two-year-old Meetings Effectiveness program.

The Maritz-Freeman partnership follows the announcement in June of a preliminary agreement between American Express Business Travel and Maritz to bundle and market their strategic meetings management tools under a program called MaXvantage. Maritz is also building its new Maritz LIVE program through partnerships, so far including InXpo for virtual meetings and Velocity Broadcasting for satellite broadcasting events.

NETWORKING

MeetDifferent WITH A DIFFERENCE

Hosted buyers at MPI's February conference will save \$1,550.

Meeting Professionals International will take a new tack at its annual conference, MeetDifferent, scheduled for February 20-23. As an alternative to the traditional trade show that MPI has held for many years at both its annual conferences, the association has created a hosted-buyer program for its upcoming event at Moon Palace in Cancun, Mexico. One hundred qualified meeting buyers will get free housing and registration in return for their participation in a series of prescheduled appointments with suppliers.

MPI announced the hosted-buyer program in July, offering the free registration—a \$625 savings off the early-bird rate. A couple of weeks later MPI upped the ante, adding a four-night stay at Moon Palace as part of the package, a \$925 value.

In return for rooms and registration, meeting buyers must agree to attend 15 appointments with suppliers (five per day, 15 minutes each) during the show.

The application deadline is October 15, after which MPI will select 100 buyers and notify them of their acceptance by the week of November 2.

When registering, planners are asked "detailed questions related to previous and future program size, scope, buying power, budget, and potential for future business"

and then matched for appointments with suppliers that "align with their business needs," according to the MPI Web site.

Before accepting participants, MPI says it will verify an applicant's status as an active meeting planner. Program participants will have a \$300 credit-card charge processed when they register, which will be refunded after they appear at all pre-set appointments.

According to the conference Web site, qualified planners must be actively involved in buying meeting rooms, space, and services for their organizations. Further qualification will be made based on buying authority, buying volume, room nights, and other factors relevant to the planner's business.

MPI made the decision to move forward with the hosted-buyer program on the last day of the World Education Conference in July after talking to exhibitors, suppliers, and planners about the concept.

The next day, Elite Meetings International, Santa Barbara, Calif., announced that its FaceTime appointment scheduling technology was being considered for the MeetDifferent conference. FaceTime will be used for the hosted-buyer program at the 2009 Motivation Show. As of early August, MPI had not awarded the scheduling technology provider contract.