

## Getting a DMC...

- Need to find a DMC in a certain area? Go to [www.adme.org](http://www.adme.org) and click on member directory. There's a geographical listing of all ADME members by state.
- You can also see which ADME members have the Destination Management Company Professional (DMCP) designation. These individuals have participated in the certification program offered by ADME.

## Should You Get a DMC ASAP???

OK. You've got your PDA, your WiFi, your iPod. They've become indispensable, no doubt.

But do you have a DMC?

*What!?! It's 2006 and you're operating without a DMC, an indispensable acronymic essential for any company?*

We all know the logistics nightmares and problems that can happen with travel and special events – bad food, hidden costs, broken promises and general screw-ups. Enter the DMC – destination management company – to alleviate *all* sorts of headaches that can befall even the best of planners. And even full-time planners.

Chris Sullentrop with Maritz Travel Company has been coordinating travel events for 20 years. Maritz, a \$1 billion-plus corporation with offices or affiliates in 1,600 locations in 60 countries, manages 2,000 meetings and incentive travel

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programs each year.

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"Traditionally I do not use a DMC locally," said Brooke Sommers, Manager of Events and Field Communication for Sun Microsystems, Louisville, Colorado. "But The Arrangers (based in Denver) proved to me why I would use [one] again. Even in one's own backyard there is nothing like utilizing a company that can put

together events with such expertise, leaving nothing to chance."

That "nothing-to-chance" **logistics management**, both prior to and at the event, is crucial. Holly Holliday, Marketing Manager with Sun Microsystems, worked with Destination Nashville recently on a large conference. "Their ability to fully manage the logistics of our event enabled me to focus on our customers and increase ROI!" Holliday said. Without this service, the conference would have been far less productive.

"A destination management company represents the goals and objectives of its client as it leverages its relationships and **purchasing power**," says Susan Henderson, DMCP, CMP, President of the Association of Destination Management Executives (ADME). "Because a DMC is familiar with service quality and reli-

ability in numerous locales, it gives the client a definite advantage. We'll deal with the vendors, negotiating in the best interest of the client, and stay within budget to get the client the best of everything they need."

Typically a DMC might:

- Create, communicate and manage timelines for all events/activities and the successful execution of program elements
- Plan, manage, and execute group arrival and departure manifests and changes
- Oversee and manage all consumption of alcohol; proactively manage the safety concerns with alcohol consumption
- Investigate possible corporate conflicts, competitor meetings and security levels
- Select and recommend menu options, portion sizes, etc. compatible with all hotel food functions to eliminate redundancies and incompatibilities
- Implement activities consistent with meeting goals (i.e. teambuilding, ice breaking, social opportunities, relaxing and reward/recognition op-

portunities)

- Evaluate and select entertainment options appropriate for group and client objectives; manage entertainment contracts and rider requirements
- Showcase unique elements of the meeting destination; create exclusive opportunities unavailable to the general public and unknown by the client.

"It comes down to understanding the clients' vision, or giving them ideas and specifics, and following through on all the details, plus the unexpected circumstances," said ADME President Susan Henderson.

For Allie Hunt, Entertainment Marketing Manager with 24 Hour Fitness, the unexpected included flight changes, one missed flight and a missing camera. Advantage Destination & Meeting Services in Miami was the DMC on top of that situation that solved all problems. "Everything ran flawlessly," Hunt said of the event. "The [DMC] staff was extremely helpful and friendly and made us feel as though we were their top priority." Karen Groth, Marketing Spe-

cialist with GE Commercial Finance, worked with a DMC on a customer event in Atlanta. Her satisfaction and appreciation culminated in her writing a thank you letter to Atlanta Arrangements from her home computer just after her event :

"Let me begin by quoting my CEO at the conclusion of our event," Groth wrote. "PERFECT, SIMPLY PERFECT!!! I wouldn't have changed a thing!" It's a sentiment echoed by many who have elected to use a DMC. Foremost for many who choose a DMC is the **creativity** and "flair" a DMC brings to meetings, special events, teambuilding and similar situations. A DMC can seize upon a theme or corporate message and capitalize on its momentum and enthusiasm. A DMC can also analyze and evaluate appropriate venues and activities suited to match the demographics and size of the group. Chris Sullentrop of Maritz Travel regularly turns to Andy Gladstone at Show Me Arizona when bringing corporate groups to the Grand Canyon state. Maritz believes that events need to be memorable

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to be effective, and Show Me Arizona complies with that belief. For Sullentrop's most recent group, Show Me Arizona coordinated three days that combined elegance within the rugged feel of the desert Southwest.

As attendees arrived, they were given top-quality Stetson hats and stylish Western belts to get into the mood of the old West. Show Me Arizona turned the Four Seasons Hotel foyer and ballroom into a Western town, complete with a swinging-door saloon. One evening bistros were set up so four of the Southwest's premier chefs could prepare signature dishes and talk with diners.

Another evening luxury "living room" motor coaches took the group into the desert for an "upscale hoe-down" complete with a quick-draw competition, cow roping and a singing balladeer atop a grand white horse. As night began to fall, the desert transformed into a brilliant expanse of glowing cacti and astounding beauty, thanks to two days' previous work stringing thousands of lights in dramatic fashion. Live music then could be

heard coming from a rustic barn, which Show Me Arizona had transformed into a fabulous five-star environment that included carpet, linens, dramatic lighting and outstanding food.

This sort of unique event intrigues many DMC users. DMCs have first-hand knowledge of the finest local venues, caterers, décor, transportation and other event services, as well as access to the newest and most unique venues, restaurants and experiences. As you would imagine, "elegant rustic" desert dining, swimming with dolphins, and similar experiences make an event unforgettable. For Brooke Sommers' group with Sun Microsystems, the opportunity to go onto Invesco Field at Mile High Stadium, home of the Denver Broncos, was a thrill.

"Our Five Decades of Music theme captivated our audience," said Kay Towner with the Pennsylvania Convention Center, who worked with DMC Global Events Partners Philadelphia on a recent event. From the stylized shoe centerpiece to the complicated dance floor and two-story martini bar, the conversion of

the venue was a hit. "The winning combination of trust, intelligence, capability, good humor, resourcefulness, creativity, attention to timeline and budget resulted in a magnificent event."

A DMC's **flexibility** and willingness to help is what pleases a number of companies. "I had a great experience working with a DMC and will definitely work with them in the future, and their counterparts across the country," said Melissa Hamer of Renaissance Learning. "Their professionalism, attention to detail, ability to anticipate my needs, and flexibility to accommodate last-minute requests exceeded my expectations and made my job easier. It was a pleasure working with such a cheerful and energizing bunch!"

Pilot Travel Centers' Jennifer Hunnicutt expressed it this way: "[The DMC we use] takes all the stress out of our meetings. I can't say enough about how flexible they are when it comes to those last-minute changes and recommendations. I don't sweat the small stuff anymore."

When the International Trade-mark Association (INTA) held

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**Simplicity** is perhaps the key reason to choose a DMC. Clients have only one contact and one payment to make. The DMC tracks the details and will provide detailed accounting of all charges. Plus the DMC will provide accurate feedback to clients on program choices.

its 125<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, the group used the services of The Meeting Manager in San Diego.

“Talk about grace under pressure!” said INTA’s Tricia Simpson, Manager of Meetings & Conventions, of the DMC’s diligence and efficiency in handling an event for a group that swelled from an expected 3000 participants to 4500. “I especially appreciated the honesty and integrity [shown by The Meeting Manager that kept] us from making costly mistakes.”

For some clients, it’s all about **service quality**. A DMC will anticipate the “what if’s” and “what might’s” to ensure comfort and safety of all guests. A DMC will:

- Manage the service level of all suppliers utilized for program requirements; effectively communicate to all vendors the timing and delivery of contracted services; ensure vendors are knowledgeable and trained on the delivery of services

required

- Select and manage staff to support the delivery of all services
- Plan and manage load-in and load-out of all program elements including rentals, floral, décor and entertainment needs

Not all companies planning their own events consider **supplier management**, but a DMC will. DMCs:

- Conduct due diligence on all vendor options to insure appropriate business licensing, desirable insurance requirements, safety training, dress code and training procedures of personnel
- Negotiate costs and components of vendors services; manage the timing and delivery of all services
- Manage financial requirements of vendor to ensure delivery of products/ services including advanced deposits and final payment of invoices
- Audit all vendor invoices to

ensure accuracy and completeness

**Simplicity** is perhaps the key reason to choose a DMC. Clients have only one contact and one payment to make. The DMC tracks the details and will provide detailed accounting of all charges. Plus the DMC will provide accurate feedback to clients on program choices. To learn more about adding a DMC to your cache of resource tools, log on to [www.adme.org](http://www.adme.org) or phone the Association of Destination Meeting Executives at 937.586.3727.