



National Meetings Industry Day 2010 Re-Cap

Summary

National Meetings Industry Day was held April 15, 2010 in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax. This is approximately the 12th NMID annual event that has been held across Canada. Total attendance at the event across the country was approximately 1000, from a low of 50 in Manitoba to a high of 365 in Toronto.

The theme of NMID 2010 focused on the corporate social responsibility aspect of “prosperity” in the meetings industry. Chapters were free to interpret this in a number of different ways, but the official definition is:

Prosperity is the state of flourishing, thriving, success, or good fortune. Prosperity often encompasses wealth but also includes others factors which are independent of wealth to varying degrees, such as happiness and health

As such, the primary goal was:

“To raise awareness of the Meetings Industry and communicate the value of meetings through prosperity, through the hosting of an “influence event” on April 15th, 2010”.

Secondary goals were to

1. Promote MPI;
2. Unite the chapters;
3. Initiate attention to each chapter’s local business community on the value of meetings in their area.

To do this, the objectives we put in place were:

1. Put in place a consistent theme between chapters to create a high profile “influence summit” event and provide a “turnkey” for chapter leaders that is transferable to other chapters across North America and globally.
2. Set national discussion topics, and bring in regionally significant speakers to discuss and debate the impact of the industry in each chapter;
3. Record the discussions in each city for use in creating an e-summary to document the state of the industry in Canada; provide a benchmark for progress and trends; and to use this resource to influence others about the impact of the industry.
4. Leverage the impact of NMID, by maximizing consistency nationally
5. Focus attention on specific topics nationally and regionally
6. Engagement of senior industry leaders and leaders from outside the industry
7. Increase membership through an increase in national profile
8. Create a national education opportunity for our members and future members

Many of these goals and objectives were met. The diversity of the chapters is one of MPI's enduring strengths in Canada, and that a key purpose of NMID is to celebrate and acknowledge the different paths we pursue toward a common goal. Having all Canadian Chapter's NMID activities culminate on one day of unity is a powerful statement.

2010 Partners

Partners in the event included the Convention Centres of Canada, The Conference Publishers, and Nothers.



NMID Influence Awards

To assist in reaching the goal of raising awareness of the industry, a National Award Program was designed to recognize people or organizations outside the direct industry which have supported the development of Meetings and conventions or the development of policy and programs impacting the industry. Each chapter was to recognize one person or organization in their community who has made a difference to the meetings industry *but is not actively involved in it*

Some examples given were:

- A downtown business association who has developed a program to welcome visitors by staffing volunteers to give directions and information
- A city councillor/official who has supported events by speaking at conferences or attending conference bids or promotions
- A local business person who has championed a meetings industry cause such as an expansion of the convention centre, changing in city zoning etc.

The chapters that incorporated this element into their program reported that it was very successful. The following awards were given (the award was produced nationally but given from each chapter):

British Columbia: Vancouver Airport Authority
Greater Calgary: White Hat Volunteers
Greater Edmonton: Edmonton Chamber of Commerce
Manitoba: Travel Manitoba
Toronto: Maritz Canada
Montréal: Location Miro Informatique
Ottawa: National Capital Commission
Atlantic Canada: Trade Centre Limited

Nothers sponsored the 2010 NMID Influence Awards across the country.

Attendance

Attendance at each event varied by city. Approximate numbers are:

British Columbia: 120

Calgary: 75

Edmonton: 220

Manitoba: 45

Toronto: 365

Ottawa: 120

Montreal: 115

Atlantic Canada: 75



Consistent Format

To promote consistency, the following elements were recommended for each chapter to incorporate:

1. Education
 - a. Session to discuss the impact and value of meetings focused on the theme of prosperity.
 - b. E-summary produced nationally to document outcomes and future actions and discussion topics.

2. Influence
 - a. Declaration of NMID by City and/or Province
 - b. Media campaign
 - c. Press conference

3. Advocacy
 - a. Visits to political officials, both local and provincial, to communicate the value of meetings and discuss ways to work closer together to make it easier for groups to come to meet in your community.
 - b. Meetings with industry associations or related organizations discuss the challenges and how industry can work together to achieve greater success. E.g. CSAE, PCMA, CTC, local tourism authorities

4. Outreach
 - a. NMID Awards Program
 - b. Invite other industry associations to participate i.e.: CSAE, PCMA, ISES, CAPS etc.
 - c. Invite local Chamber of Commerce or Board of Trade to participate in event, setting the stage for making it a "joint session" next year.
 - d. Invite leadership from tourism industry organizations to be members of the audience and actively initiate dialogue i.e.: CTC, TIAC, DMO's



Chapter Event Summaries (E-Summary)

British Columbia Chapter: Meetings Bring a Phenomenal Economic Boost

According to a 2008 update to the Canadian Economic Impact Study (CEIS), the meetings industry adds \$71 billion a year to the Canadian economy. **Vito Curalli**, past president of Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Canada Foundation and managing Director of Sales in Canada for Hilton Sales Worldwide, presented the report to the British Columbia Chapter of MPI during National Meetings Industry Day April 15.

The report updates the groundbreaking economic study commissioned by MPI Canada in 2006. That report uncovered data that separated “measurable facts from word of mouth,” Curalli said. Canada was the first country to undertake such an initiative, and it set the benchmark for other regions that are only just beginning their research. The first U.S. study is due out in about a year.

The CEIS created measuring standards and studied the direct, indirect, and induced effects of the industry. A meeting was defined as “a gathering of at least 10 people for at least four hours in a contracted venue for a particular purpose.” Sports and entertainment events were excluded.

CEIS research found that 673,000 meetings per year in Canada created more than 550,000 full-time jobs per year and served an average of 70 million participants. The \$71 billion in overall economic output generated by these meetings produced \$14 billion in tax revenue for all levels of government.

“It’s phenomenal. This is a number to pass on if you are speaking to a government official,” said Curalli. “This was one of the worst recessions in our history, and Canada came out of it in under a year. It’s industries like ours that make that possible.”

Most of the 2008 figures did not show significant growth over data from 2006, which Curalli said is not surprising given that the study was conducted at the beginning of the economic downturn. “We are still booking more meetings in this country,” he said. “2010 is expected to be much stronger as companies start feeling comfortable sending people to meetings again.”

The study also looked at job creation, local versus international business, and tertiary impacts in the community. Curalli recommended that all participants read the 30-page executive summary, which is available at mpiweb.org/ceis.

Louisa Davis, MPI member and Senior Project Manager at Prime Strategies, presented Curalli with a \$5,000 donation to the MPI Foundation on behalf of the B.C. Chapter. Per capita, the B.C. Chapter is the largest contributor to the foundation worldwide. Curalli said \$1.7 million has been raised to date within Canada, and funds raised in Canada go toward supporting Canadian initiatives, such as creating the next generation of professionals by helping students through school.

Ken Cretney, General Manager of the Vancouver Convention Centre, said this year’s event theme of prosperity was a perfect choice given the exciting momentum that is starting to build after two years in a challenging economic climate. Cretney described the large crowds of participants from several conferences that were at that moment filling both the east centre and the newly constructed west centre; also, more business is scheduled between April and the end of June than was booked in all of 2009, excluding the period during the Olympic Games. “*That* is prosperity,” he said. “People were blown away by Vancouver during the Olympics. We couldn’t be in a better position.”



Ryan Soderberg, Director of Sales and Marketing for Sheraton, presented the National Meetings Industry Day Influence Award to the Vancouver Airport Authority for its outstanding planning, execution, and wrap-up during the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. The award recognizes groups and individuals in the community who have made a difference to the meetings industry as a whole. The airport authority's careful planning ensured an excellent experience for the thousands of travellers during their first and last points of contact with Vancouver during the Games. **Paul Levy**, Vice-President of Planning for the Vancouver Airport Authority, accepted the award on behalf of his organization.

"The Win Is Within"

Focusing on the journey and not the outcome will bring greater prosperity than you thought was possible, said **Jason Dorland** in his keynote speech. Perspective, process, and performance are the keys to enabling success.

Dorland is a former Olympic athlete who spent his youth investing everything he had in the goal of winning a gold medal in rowing at the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul. His high school coach taught him that first place was always the only acceptable finish. Society was embracing the viewpoint of Vince Lombardi, a famous and vocal football coach, who said that "winning isn't everything, it's the only thing." Dorland's team trained hard, fuelled themselves with anger against their competitors, and became the fastest rowers in North America. But their medals were never a reason to celebrate; they were only a source of relief that they could go back to their coach and "not be losers."

A devastating loss planted the seeds for his eventual realization that true success is more than just winning. His team travelled to Seoul as the defending Olympic champions, but, in a shocking outcome, they came in last in the gold medal 2,000-metre round. "You set a goal and work toward it for years. The dream becomes an obsession. Then your moment arrives and you fail," he said. "How do you think that feels? It is brutal. I wouldn't wish that pain on anyone."

The loss filled Dorland with feelings of disillusionment, frustration, disgust and—most of all—rage. "There was no sportsmanship. I heard the Germans celebrating my gold medal and I could have thrown my oar at them." The anger and shame intensified when he came home to find his team's failure displayed on the front page of *The Globe and Mail*. "Every day I thought about Seoul, then every night I would dream about the race and be miserable the rest of the day."

Dorland decided the only cure was to win at the next Olympics. He threw himself into training, driven by thoughts of revenge. He got stronger and faster, but he began mistreating his friends, and, at the age of 25, he was becoming bitter. "One morning I woke up exhausted. Could I train for four more years driven by hatred? No. I couldn't last four more days." He called his coach and quit the team. After an emotional night, he woke up feeling lighter than he had in years.

But Dorland's journey toward understanding prosperity was not over. He began teaching rowing at a high school, and he instilled in his students the same win-or-nothing attitude that he had been taught. His team did well, reaffirming his belief that hating your competitors and driving yourself is the only path to success. Things changed when he started dating Robyn Meagher, a competitive runner. On their first date, he asked her about her strategy for the upcoming Commonwealth Games. Her answer shocked and disgusted him: she said she planned to "do her best."

“It ruined the date for me,” he said. “I thought her perspective was wrong.” But he watched her at the games and saw how her process kicked in and earned her a silver medal. “It challenged everything I knew about how competitors went out to race.” Over more conversations and races, Meagher showed him how training and competition both are parts of her overall life journey. Losses and setbacks did not devastate her; she saw them as opportunities to learn. Often, her focus on the race and not the finish led her to a better outcome than she had hoped for.

Seeing the same destructive anger in his student athletes that he had felt as a young man reinforced the lesson. He changed his coaching methods and saw that year’s team reach a world record time despite what seemed like impossible odds. His students also gained friendships, emotional growth, and memories that would last them a lifetime. “By choosing to engage in the process, my life has become more fun, more fulfilling, and 100 times more prosperous,” Dorland said. “The win is within. There’s only one place to find it, and you’re the only one who can.”

MPI Greater Calgary Chapter: Western Hospitality Delivers Memorable Experience

From the White Hat Volunteers at the airport to service staff in hotels, restaurants, and meeting facilities, Calgary’s western hospitality delivers a memorable experience for visitors. This makes Calgary a preferred destination for business, culture, and tourism, said panelists at the National Meetings Industry Day celebration in Calgary on April 15.

The Calgary Chapter of Meeting Professionals International (MPI) sponsored the panel discussion at the TELUS Convention Centre. Four members of the business community highlighted the strengths, challenges, and opportunities of Calgary’s meetings and tourism industry.

“Tourism is the fastest-growing industry in the world,” said **Randy Williams**, CEO of Tourism Calgary. If done well, it is sustainable and has a positive impact on a community’s quality of life and economic well-being. People and companies often decide to move to Calgary after attending a convention or other meeting there. Calgary is a vibrant city on the edge of nature. The cowboy culture makes the city distinct, but behind that image is a full range of ethnic and cultural diversity.

Calgary is also an energy city, where important decisions about innovation and the future are made. Over 20% of the financial deals in Canada are made in Calgary. “Capital attracts capital,” said **Kim Koss**, Vice President of Business Development for the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. “We’re at the right place at the right time.”

To take advantage of tourism opportunities now and 30 years from now, Calgary must address several challenges. The most pressing is limited convention space. Among Calgary’s venues, the TELUS Convention Centre is ranked first in number of meetings and third in revenue generated, with 122,000 square feet of convention space and 47,000 square feet of exhibit space. Stampede Park facilities have more than twice that. To become a top-tier meeting centre, attracting large convention groups, Calgary needs even more space; and to maximize financial benefit, that space must be in the heart of the city.

Meetings & Conventions Calgary is currently conducting feasibility studies on expansion of meeting facilities. This will require cost sharing among all three levels of government and private sector partners, and will time and a champion to see it through, Williams said. Panelists encouraged meeting professionals to send a clear and consistent message to local politicians about the need for well-planned expansion and the benefits it will bring to Calgary.



Infrastructure development will have to focus on airport development and better access to the city centre. Vancouver now has a rail link, as do other cities in North America and Europe. Visitors should be able to take the C-Train direct from the airport to downtown Calgary, Williams said.

High demand has made Calgary one of the more expensive cities in which to hold meetings, but the recent economic slump has made the city more competitive, as meetings have become a buyer's market, said **Peter Gregus**, Director of Sales and Marketing for Meetings & Conventions Calgary.

During the recession, companies limited discretionary travel to meetings. "This has created a pent-up demand to get together to talk," said **Karen Chown**, Director of Corporate and Community Engagement for Calgary Economic Development. Some of the work once done in meetings now takes place electronically, but people still need to get together, meet, and collaborate. Meetings can be greener, and professionals are up to the challenge, but people are not ready to pay the extra cost yet.

To keep Calgary a preferred destination, the greatest need is the vision to see what tourism can offer. "We are an event town," Koss said. "We run some of the best events, from the 1988 Olympics to Spruce Meadows and the Calgary Stampede each year. How could you not be excited to be part of that?"

A Calgary Economic Development committee is researching whether the motto "Calgary—Heart of the New West" resonates with Calgarians, representing the full diversity of what the city has to offer, reported Chown. Whether the decision is to keep the motto or change it, great marketers will have the vision to make the most of Calgary's brand.

Calgary has great community spirit and is known for its hospitality and friendliness. It starts with the more than 200 White Hat Volunteers who interact with over a million visitors each year. The Calgary Chapter of MPI recognized the work of the Calgary International Airport White Hat Volunteers with its Influence Award, presented to those who have influenced the success of the meetings industry without being a part of it.

Chapter president **Matt Squires** presented the award to **Debbie Stahl**, a manager at the Calgary Airport Authority, and White Hat representatives **Marie Harvey** and **Norm Harvey**. Squires noted that the White Hat Volunteers are "a true testament to Calgary" and make Calgary International Airport the friendliest airport in Canada. Thanks to the work of the White Hat Volunteers, the white Stetson has become synonymous with Calgary and is a much-prized item. Calgary gave away white hats at the Vancouver Olympics, generating great press coverage. It is an important part of Calgary's brand and symbolizes western hospitality to many people.

MPI Greater Edmonton Chapter: **Transforming the Meetings Industry Through New Media**

"New media will change the way the way you do business," said **Amber MacArthur**, addressing 250 meetings industry professionals at Edmonton's Shaw Conference Centre on April 15. As part of the 13th annual National Meetings Industry Day (NMID) celebrations, participants learned how to use a variety of new media to promote events, build connections, and measure success.

MacArthur, a new-media consultant and journalist, discussed several tools—blogs, social media, mobile media, and podcasts—and explained how each could be used to enhance the meetings industry.



Blogs are a versatile tool that can enhance a meeting or conference before, during, and after the actual event. For example, prior to her speaking engagement in Edmonton, MacArthur promoted the event by posting the NMID website in a blog on her own home page. When blogs are used during the event, “conversations move from the room to the world outside,” MacArthur said. You can use these conversations to “build up a community by listening to what audiences want.”

Blogs can also be used to assess an event’s success, either by monitoring the event blog for feedback, or by using tools that determine how many people visit a blog or website and how long they stay on the site.

The popularity of social networking tools makes them effective promotional tools. By creating a Facebook event page, organizers can use social networks to promote a meeting, a conference, or a social event. Organizations that want to “get outside Facebook” can use similar social marketing options, such as Ning.

Regardless of the type of social media used, event promotion must send a consistent message and get that message out to as many people as possible. “Share everywhere,” MacArthur said. “Be an advertising marathoner, not a sprinter.” For example, attention can be drawn to social networks through email footers. “We all send 50, 100, maybe even 150 email messages every day. Why not think of the email footer as a place to advertise social media participation?” By including links to Facebook or other social networking spaces, such as Twitter, in an email footer, daily correspondence becomes a pervasive marketing strategy.

Twitter, the popular social networking tool that allows users to correspond using short, 140-character messages called tweets, provides an immediate and mobile way to gather or send information. MacArthur encouraged participants to use Twitter to “build your own little army of people who will spread the message about the meeting or event you’re hosting.” Regular updates are key to using Twitter successfully. MacArthur recommended daily updates in the weeks leading up to an event, to build momentum and “get people excited online about the event.”

Because Twitter is a mobile media, any smartphone, cell phone, or BlackBerry user can access it at any time. This makes it ideal for gauging the level of interest in or the success of an event while it is happening. MacArthur emphasized the importance of listening to online feedback: “If you don’t use these tools, you won’t be a part of the conversations online.”

The meetings industry can also benefit from podcasts—audio or video files that can be downloaded from the Internet. Generally, podcasts are used to educate or entertain viewers or listeners. The Edmonton NMID website includes a podcast of MacArthur promoting the 2010 event. Podcasts are free and simple to create and provide an excellent way to build connections with communities, clients, and potential clients.

To reap the benefits of podcasts or other video-based media, the content must be authentic. Authenticity is just as important in the world of new media as it is in face-to-face interactions. It involves a “willingness to be honest, accessible, and admit your mistakes,” MacArthur said. In podcasts, these qualities enhance relationships and build connections with viewers or listeners.



Creativity, like authenticity, is crucial to the success of all new media, including videos. With so much noise online, “you really want to stand out. You have to be brave.” MacArthur demonstrated the importance of creativity by engaging the audience in a unique photo op. “To stand out on the Internet, we need to be original. So we’re going to take a photo that is original.” She asked everyone to stand and explained that, on the count of three, they should all jump in the air and strike a silly or interesting pose. A photographer snapped a photo—which MacArthur plans to use to promote the success of the NMID event.

When starting out with new media, “grow from the inside out,” MacArthur suggested. For these tools to be successful, they need to be accepted and used by the event team itself. The more individuals in an organization become familiar with new media, the easier it will be for others to join in. “Think of it as a high school dance,” she said. “No one wants to be first on the floor. But as soon as one or two people are dancing, it’s not long before the dance floor is full. It’s the same with new media.”

MPI Manitoba Chapter: The Prosperity of Community Spirit

It takes more than money to create prosperity in a community, and prosperity is more than money—it’s involvement and the willingness to pitch in where help is needed, said panelists at a National Meetings Industry Day luncheon in Winnipeg.

The Manitoba Chapter of Meeting Professionals International (MPI) asked representatives from four local community organizations to discuss how they contribute to prosperity. But the panelists turned the concept around, saying Winnipeg possesses a unique prosperity of community spirit that contributes immeasurably to their organizations.

“When I think about prosperity relative to our club, I think about traditions, fans, heritage, alumni—all these things that go into any type of prosperity the Winnipeg Football Club has enjoyed over the past 80 years,” said **Jim Bell**, President of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers CFL Football Club.

The Bombers have not won a Grey Cup since 1990, yet fans still rally behind their team. “That’s a long time to make you wait, but you’ve invested your money, your time, and your patience. It’s time for you to be rewarded,” Bell said. The club will build a new 33,000-seat stadium in the next few years, and the team’s goal is to bring a Grey Cup home to that stadium.

Community support has also rallied behind Believe in the Goal, said **Colleen Deckert**, the organization’s president. Believe in the Goal was founded five years ago by 17-year-old hockey player Todd Davison and his family and friends. Davison had been diagnosed with cancer. While fighting the disease, he decided to mount a summer charity hockey game featuring volunteer NHL players, to raise money and donate it to causes supporting kids with cancer.

The first game, played in Selkirk, Manitoba, raised \$50,000. Davison died later that year, but the charity continued. Money raised now goes towards soft, comfortable blankets for kids in hospital with cancer (Davison hated the scratchy blankets), to send young cancer-stricken players to see their hockey heroes play in other cities and to meet them, and to have a hospital room at the St-Boniface Hospital’s cancer treatment centre set aside for youngsters with cancer.

“In August last year, we decided to move the game to the MTS Centre in Winnipeg,” Deckert said. “We filled that arena with almost 5,000 fans and raised \$95,000 in one night.” Believe in the Goal hopes to sell 7,800 tickets to this year’s summer game. “We’re trying to make a difference and to make Todd proud.”



Winnipeg Harvest food bank also tries to make a difference. “The goal was always to close the doors of this organization, but sadly, last year 10 million pounds of food were distributed to 40,000 individuals a month and through relationships with 320 agencies in southern Manitoba,” said **Kate Brenner**, the food bank’s development coordinator. While it may seem peculiar to discuss prosperity in the context of a food bank, “when you walk in there and see the look on peoples’ faces, that’s prosperity.”

Winnipeg Harvest does not just feed people, it moves them toward self-sufficiency, Brenner said. “We empower them. We provide them the opportunity to volunteer, with more than 260 jobs. It’s just magic to me to see how warm this place is.”

Last year, 415 third-party events gathered food and raised money for Winnipeg Harvest, and for the past few years, the food bank has held celebrity bowl auctions, with famous people signing food bowls that are auctioned off. Last year, the event raised \$243,000 with expenses of just 5%. That money paid for 18,000 lunches for children, baby food and formula, 1,680 emergency food kits, and more. For every \$1 raised, Harvest leverages \$20 worth of donated food.

While the food bank itself has never actively fundraised, that is about to change. The province and city have offered funding of \$3.2 million to expand the food bank’s facility. “But government funding comes with strings attached, so we have to raise another \$3 million,” said Brenner. “But I have to tell you this little grassroots organization will not change—we intend to keep it a comfortable place for people to come.”

Variety, the Children’s Charity came to Winnipeg in 1978, said **Wayne Rogers**, the agency’s executive director. Since then it has contributed its own brand of prosperity to the community, funding a summer camp for kids with cancer at Manitoba’s Brereton Lake, the Variety Children’s Heart Centre at the city’s Health Sciences Centre, a speech and hearing clinic at one hospital, and a therapeutic clown program at another. A program with the University of Manitoba’s Faculty of Dentistry handles children’s dental needs in 15 inner-city schools, now expanding into northern Manitoba.

Recently, Variety partnered with Parks Canada to develop the Variety Heritage Adventure Park. The \$2 million project, slated to rank among North America’s top five play parks, will be sited at The Forks in Winnipeg. Over \$1 million has been raised so far, and the park is under construction.

But with all its projects, Rogers said, “we wouldn’t have been able to operate without the community, the province, and our volunteer base.” That sentiment was echoed unanimously by the other panelists.

This year, MPI Manitoba Chapter presented its annual Influence Award, given to an organization or person who supports the development of meetings and conventions, to Travel Manitoba.



MPI Toronto Meeting Professionals and Associates Share the Path to Prosperity

Participants attending National Meetings Industry Day April 15 in Toronto identified a tremendous opportunity to make the federal government and large corporations understand the importance of Canada's meetings industry. To carry the message forward, meeting professionals and their partners need to work together and speak with one voice, letting the government know of their importance to the business community and to Canada's economy as a whole.

Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Toronto Chapter President **Bob Giorgini** welcomed a sell-out crowd of 370 that gathered at the Allstream Centre at Toronto's Exhibition Place. "These events would not come together without partnerships," said Giorgini, extending his heartfelt thanks to all contributors to the meeting.

In the past five years, Giorgini said, the MPI Toronto Chapter has contributed more than \$75,000 to the MPI Foundation of Canada, which has funded important work such as the Canadian Economic Impact Study. This study was the first to measure the contribution of meetings activity to the Canadian economy.

Giorgini read a proclamation from Toronto Mayor David Miller stating that April 15 will henceforth be known as "Meetings Industry Day" in the city.

"It makes sense to have one voice to represent us to industry, government, the media, and the public, and other parts of our business, said **Ruth Abrahamson**, Executive Director of the Business Events Industry Coalition of Canada. "We're building methodically, and we aim to be a part of future government budget development infrastructure consultations."

Introducing the theme of the event, "Path to Prosperity," emcee **Doug Bolger**, Chief L(earn)ing Officer at L(earn)², defined prosperity as "a consciousness" and "a way of thinking." He thanked the association partners for getting together last year to create a new level of prosperity for the future of the industry. It was not easy, and people had to put their differences aside to come together as a coalition, he said. "Now, we can move forward as an industry. Prosperity is a way of looking and acting together."

There is no doubt that the meetings industry and its partners have suffered in the latest economic recession. The good news is that things appear to be turning around, said the three business leaders on the Toronto discussion panel, moderated by **Wendy Mesley**, co-host of CBC's *Marketplace*. The panelists shared their approaches to prosperity during a particularly tough economy.

At Helms Briscoe, the world's largest site selection and media planning company, the first quarter of 2010 was up 38% compared with the same quarter last year, and the company is now hearing from clients it has not heard from in the past two years. With 1,100 sales associates operating as independent contractors in 37 countries, strong international communications are important. Helms Briscoe places high value on an internal pipeline that makes people feel connected in a virtual workspace. But one-on-one relationships are the ultimate key to the company's prosperity, noted **Peter Shelly**, Executive Vice President of Helms Briscoe. "Technology has allowed us to be more efficient, but nothing has changed in 30 years in regard to the relationship. We develop loyalists who will rebuild the demand when the next downturn comes our way."



At Experiential Events, a “creator of unique experiences,” sales this year have already increased by 40% compared with last year. The key was in the company’s commitment to do things differently and in its perseverance, according to President and Creative Director **Kenneth Kristoffersen**. “I’d say to clients, ‘You don’t want to hire us if you want us to do the same old thing as before.’” Soon, clients were seeing the company as a vehicle to reinforce their branding and their corporate culture. Kristoffersen compared coming out of the economic recession to the aftermath of a forest fire: when a forest burns down, what regrows is better and stronger than what was there before.

For Porter Airlines, a dynamic company that has grown to be Canada’s third-largest airline since its start-up in the fall of 2006, success came from offering the convenience of flying from Toronto’s downtown location (where the company recently financed a new terminal) and from providing superior customer service. “Our approach was not to hoard what we had. We were strategic and bold. We’ve prospered when many airlines have cut capacity and limited expansion plans,” said **Andrew Wilson**, Vice President of Sales and Distribution for Porter Airlines.

Shelly said the fiscal value of the meetings industry is being recognized by governments in the United Kingdom, Germany, India, and Australia. Kristoffersen said that in those countries, governments work side-by-side with the events industry, and the goal is to make that happen in Canada. Canada and the United States “don’t get it yet,” but there is great opportunity for that to change, Shelly added.

A strategic communication plan is essential, Wilson noted. For example, Porter stands for three things: speed, convenience, and service. “Define your three points and don’t waver.” Come together with a common voice, define what you stand for, and find good people to deliver the message to your target audience, he advised.

Wilson and Shelly agreed that producing short sound bites for the media is a good way to raise awareness of the meetings industry, while ensuring that the right image gets across.

To change the perspective that the meetings industry is “fluff” or discretionary, everyone must be more vocal, Shelly said. “Get the word out to industry and government that ‘meetings mean business.’” Get out and talk to customers as well, face-to-face, he advised.

Kristoffersen suggested talking to clients on a boardroom level about returns on investment, corporate responsibility, and financial responsibility. “Feed into what they’re planning,” he advised.

An audience member commented that prior to the economic recession, the meetings business was service-driven, but now it is price-driven. Wilson replied that if it is just about pricing, and if the budget is too small, the meetings professional cannot make the client look good. “I say, ‘Your name is on this project. How do you want it to look?’” Kristoffersen agreed: it is important to distinguish between price and value. The onus is on meetings professionals to teach clients, preferably one-on-one, and that value diminishes as well when timeframes are shortened.

Asked how Ontario’s forthcoming Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) will affect the meetings industry, Wilson replied that the jury is out on whether the new tax will prevent people from booking conferences. Shelly predicted a definite adverse effect.



The National Meetings Industry Day Influence Award was presented to Maritz Canada in recognition of its efforts as a partner and supporter of MPI. The MPI Foundation of Canada enlisted the help of Maritz to develop the methodology for the Canadian Economic Impact Study and to conduct both the original study in 2008 and the update released in late 2009.

MPI Ottawa: “Education Doesn’t Just Lead to Prosperity—It’s Pure Gold”

Education is a key component to prosperity that not only encompasses financial success but also extends to overall wellness, said **Deirdre McMurdy**, one of Canada’s most respected business journalists. Speaking at the April 15 National Meetings Industry Day (NMID) event hosted by the Ottawa Chapter of Meeting Professionals International (MPI), McMurdy told participants, “Used strategically, education gives you the chance to optimize your ability to control your destiny, and these days, that doesn’t just lead to prosperity—it’s pure gold.”

Addressing this year’s NMID theme, “The New Prosperity: Building Prosperity Through Education,” McMurdy said the recent economic downturn has affected many people’s jobs and confidence, but “the reality is that we always recover from these setbacks.” She said, “Crisis situations prompt us to innovate and improve in a very focused effort to save ourselves.”

While change and upheaval are becoming constants in today’s world, they can also present opportunities, McMurdy said. Exercising control and protecting one’s interests while taking advantage of those opportunities “requires careful calibration, a strategic mindset, and a willingness to take considered risks, to be flexible, to act quickly.”

McMurdy encouraged participants to leverage their diplomas and other formal qualifications, which are now more important than ever. At the same time, she advised them to constantly build on that foundation, budget time for personal development, and empower themselves to shape change rather than passively allow change to happen.

This approach requires a strong sense of self-awareness—something that education encourages, because education can help you refine your grasp of your strengths and weaknesses. “It allows you to optimize your focus, to respond quickly.”

You also need to have a sense of direction, McMurdy said. This includes asking questions, such as where you see yourself in five years and what must you do to get there, and setting deadlines and targets to quantify and measure progress. People no longer spend an entire career with one employer, focused on one specialty; “education gives you that mobility and the confidence to take risks.”

Companies no longer limit the definition of prosperity to financial successes. Prosperity now includes commitments to social and community values, environmental sustainability, and engagement of a wide range of stakeholders. It is similar for individuals—prosperity now extends to sustainability, balance, and engagement.



McMurdy summarized her philosophy:

1. Don't kid yourself. Do a ruthless self-examination; honestly assess your shortcomings, and focus on improvement. "It's painful, but valuable."
2. Do your homework. "That can be as simple as keeping up with current affairs, networking with others in your field, studying what your competition is doing, researching a client before a meeting."
3. Listen and learn. "Learn not just from people above you, but from those all around you," McMurdy said, adding that her "ability to ask for help and learn from people who were of a lower rank in the organization was a turning point."
4. Be a Boy Scout: be prepared. Build flexibility and mobility into your job strategy and shift emphases according to changing market conditions and demand.
5. Manage your personal brand. Consciously develop a reputation—your "personal capital"—and manage it actively. "That will ensure you optimize control over it and get the recognition you deserve."

McMurdy described how she takes a modular approach to her own career, adding television and a regular column to her core work in print journalism. She also became a speaker with the National Speakers Bureau.

In 2008, McMurdy was appointed as a vice president at the Public Policy Forum, an independent think tank that does policy research and analysis for government and business. Currently she works for Environment Minister Jim Prentice in a position that serves as an interface between the department and the minister's office. She also tends to look for assignment-oriented work that maximizes new and diverse experiences transferable to other assignments.

Asked how she manages her personal brand, McMurdy said she is able to maintain a "clear eye view of things." She added, "Always be very honest and straightforward with others on what's realistic and doable and what's not."

Meeting professionals can apply this advice by becoming more involved in the strategic production of meetings beyond the logistics functions. "Offer to be involved early on," McMurdy said, and "be very proactive about identifying your ability." This includes giving specific examples, providing briefing notes and customized solutions, and simply "being straight on" about how you can help your client take the experience to the next level.

Standards, Tools, Community, and Relationships

Prosperity is bigger than money and broader than school. It is about what one gives to and gets back from one's life, family, friends, and community, said **Marie-Louise Doyle** of Doyle & Associates Event Planners, MPI Ottawa Chapter's director of strategic education and chair of Ottawa's NMID celebration. Doyle read a statement issued by Ottawa Mayor Larry O'Brien declaring April 15, 2010, as National Meetings Industry Day in Ottawa.

Panelists elaborated on the theme of education, prosperity, and community relationships.



Doreen Ashton Wagner, co-founder of Greenfield Services, described MPI's Global Training Program, which is designed to increase participants' employability, transferability, and compensation. The globally recognized program is based on a set of meeting and business event competency standards that cover a broad range of topics, including strategic planning, project management, event design, marketing, professionalism, and communication.

Global Training has a defined series of training and career development milestones beginning with "introduction" and ending with "executive." Wagner invited participants to apply for financial support under four scholarship programs that include college education funding, general leadership education or academic funding, MPI programs, and the Anna Lee Chabot Scholarship.

Wagner also noted that the MPI website, www.mpiweb.org, offers a wealth of resources, such as webinars, industry research, conference information, and the CultureActive self-assessment tool, which allows its results to be compared against those from 94 countries.

Jim Durrell, chair of the Ottawa Convention Centre and Ottawa's mayor from 1985 to 1991, provided insights on education from the community perspective. Noting the important role parents play in influencing their children, he shared his father's philosophy on life: "The world should be a better place because you've been here."

Durrell urged participants to do volunteer service and to support charities in the community. The impact of volunteers is immeasurable, he said. Meanwhile, "the benefits that will flow back to you are incredible. . . . I encourage you to grow, get involved; you'll love it."

Joanne Joham, regional director of North America for the International Congress and Convention Association, holds both the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) and the Certification in Meeting Management (CMM) designations. She talked about her journey of achieving these goals and encouraged participants to apply. She is president of the MPI New Jersey Chapter and also teaches CMP review courses, ESL, and meeting and event planning courses locally and globally.

Joham emphasized the great group of people in the CMP and CMM educational programs who are available to give support, adding that it is extremely important to maintain personal relationships and continue to help each other.

MPI Ottawa Chapter presented its fourth annual Influence Award, which recognizes a person or organization that has made a difference to the meetings industry. This year's award, sponsored by the signage company Nothers, went to the National Capital Commission (NCC). NCC representative **Jean Cardinal** accepted the award on behalf of the commission.



MPI Montreal Chapter: A Different Perspective – Modern Tools for Meetings

This year's National Meetings Industry Day, held at Montreal's Delta Centre-Ville on April 15 and hosted by **Daniel Fortin**, centred on the theme "A Different Perspective – Modern Tools for Meetings."

An array of communication tools is available for meeting professionals today, but no matter which tools they use, all communications activities should focus on the client, said speakers during this meeting of the Montreal chapter of Meeting Professionals International (MPI).

RegiondeQuebec.com: The New Generation

Two representatives from Quebec's tourism industry described some of the web marketing tools they have developed, and showed how they use social networking tools.

Images play an important role in selling destinations effectively and efficiently, said **Daniel Gagnon**, Director of Communications and Advertising with Quebec City Tourism. It takes many people to turn an idea into reality, he said, as he introduced Quebec City Tourism's new website, RegiondeQuebec.com.

Gagnon described some of the processes involved in developing the site. First, they reviewed a number of websites for cities of comparable size to Quebec, pinpointing areas where they felt they could do better. They acknowledged the strengths and weaknesses of their previous site, and set about addressing the weaknesses.

The Internet is the tool of choice for planning trips, Gagnon said: 62% of travellers use it, while approximately one quarter use brochures; only a small minority relies on word of mouth. The success of any destination website will depend on good planning and efficiency. Multiple factors must be considered, and the type of traveller who'll be using the site will help determine the site's layout and available search options.

While business tourism represents a small fraction of visitors to Quebec City—about 10%—these clients tend to stay longer, and spend more money to make their stay more useful and enjoyable. They should be offered travel solutions that will enhance their visit and encourage them to stay as long as possible.

The site's features and functionalities include menus announcing business events; a fixed menu that is always visible at the top of the page, even when the user scrolls down; a menu that pops up above the "What to Do" tab; and a variety of search options driven by a more effective search engine for optimal efficiency.

Quebec City Tourism has a number of web projects slated over the next several months, Gagnon said. These include a site update, resolving programming issues, incorporating microsites within the main site, introducing online reservation capability, using Web 2.0 tools to share information, revising the business tourism offer by providing content geared to specific fields, and incorporating mobile applications. It is important to take advantage of the excitement these tools can generate and establish yourself as an expert, with the end goal of increasing sales to your destination, he said.



A 100% Web-optimised turn for planners' needs

It's crucial to maintain multiple points of contact when targeting clients, said **Emmanuelle Legault**, Director of Communications for Tourism Montreal. She emphasized the importance of knowing your clients and making them the central focus of all communications.

Noting that Tourism Montreal's website was previously built to appeal to a wide range of potential visitors, Legault described the site's shift in focus from mass communication to a more targeted communication style. The website now uses a more personalized approach, focusing on clients' needs, striving to understand what they want, and taking appropriate action. While multiple points of contact are essential, they can make this approach more challenging, Legault said. But the website's goal is to become part of the sales process by reaching out to clients.

To achieve this, Tourism Montreal is using an innovative, custom-designed monitoring tool. Using the MPI Montreal and MPI Toronto sites, Legault demonstrated how the tool works: it allows the user to target site users, capture their activities, and explore potential partnerships. The site's "meeting planner" section allows planners to download communication tools that can be personalized, and to obtain a \$10 cash-back offer per room per night.

CAPS – A prime resource for selecting your speakers

Richard Tremblay, an engineer and professional speaker, focused his presentation on the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers (CAPS), describing how it can help meeting planners choose the right speaker for an event.

CAPS speakers set themselves apart through their expertise, eloquence, enterprise, and ethics, said Tremblay; the organization offers workshops, activities, and training courses to help speakers enhance their skills. Three membership levels are available: professional, candidate, and supplier. To become a professional member of CAPS, members must have given at least 20 presentations.

The CAPS website is searchable by several factors including topic, industry, type of membership, and location, making it useful for planners who want speakers with specific qualifications.

Before an event, CAPS speakers evaluate their clients' goals, challenges, and needs, determining their audience's interests to ensure clients get exactly what they want. Post-event evaluations collect client and participant feedback, which the speaker incorporates into future interactions.



MPI Atlantic Chapter: Knowledge the Strongest Asset to Unlocking New Meetings Potential

A meetings industry battered by global recession is poised to make a strong comeback if meeting planners can exceed new demands for data and details, said keynote speaker **Michael Hughes** at the 2010 National Meetings Industry Day in Halifax on April 15. Those demands can be partly met by bricks and mortar, but only if human imagination and energy are attuned to a clientele that has become more discerning and cautious in the wake of the recent financial crisis and rebirth.

Hughes, vice-president of research and consulting for *Tradeshow Week* magazine and a 15-year veteran of the meetings industry, set the stage for “Bigger, Brighter, Bolder,” a morning hosted by Meeting Professionals International’s (MPI) Atlantic Canada Chapter in Halifax’s current conference venue, the World Trade and Convention Centre. A proposed new convention centre was the topic; a strategy plan for industry growth was the goal; and by the end of the morning, the 80 participants had focused their planning skills on the client of the day—MPI Atlantic Chapter—and empowered their association to move forward as a voice for their industry and region.

The meetings and events industry is worth \$500 billion globally, generating \$71 billion annually in Canada and \$77 million per year in the Halifax region. To tap into this lucrative market, a new convention centre has long been a priority of meeting and event planners in the Halifax region; a petition in support of the project on MPI Atlantic Canada Chapter’s website had garnered 1,333 names as of National Meetings Industry Day’s opening session.

Yet even before submission of a formal proposal, the idea of a new convention centre has drawn sharp criticism from taxpayers unwilling to support the multi-million-dollar investment.

2009 was the worst year for meetings and events since tracking began in 1972, Hughes said, but 2010 is looking brighter: exhibitor spending that declined by 20% last year is expected to grow by 2% this year, and 60% of North American companies surveyed this year expect their travel budgets to rebound. But while spending is expected to recover, clients now hold dual power: cash and information, the latter growing exponentially as access to the Internet allows them to research their own venues, accommodations, and rates. Attracting these increasingly powerful clients requires offering events that answer their two burning questions: “What is going on in my industry today? What will give me the edge as my industry recovers?”

The good news is that 88% of attendees believe that meetings and events will be critical for product sourcing and buying over the next five years, said Hughes. This reveals a market ripe with opportunity for planners willing and able to enhance their offerings with more vibrant events, customized offerings, and value-added services. “Attendees indicate that they need to show return on investment (ROI), but only 20% have true ROI tracking,” he said. “Meeting planners can help with this.”

A venue of proper size and location could enhance Halifax’s existing qualities as a destination. “We have a downtown precinct on the ocean that works beautifully for events; we have connections internationally; and everyone who comes here loves to interact on the street,” said **Scott Ferguson**, president and CEO of Trade Centre Limited, whose management team received the 2010 National Meetings Industry Day Influence Award from MPI Atlantic Canada Chapter. “Bringing people from all around the world into Halifax goes back hundreds of years; it’s the simplest form of economic development there is.”



Hughes said a new convention centre with a large exhibition space could enhance efforts to grow the meetings industry and the economy, if other issues are also examined, including the overall impact of tourism on the Nova Scotia and Halifax economies, the impact of business-generated tourism, and the ability of stakeholders such as the hotel industry, governments, and tourism officials to work together.

His Tradeshow Impact Ecosystem showed the related financial impacts of meetings and events: for example, 17% of delegates bring along a spouse or friend, 45% of delegates go shopping, and 92% dine out, contributing to an average \$3.6 million in local wages, employment, and tax revenues.

Participant insights were harvested in a World Café hosted by **Ravi Tangri** of Chrysalis Strategies Inc. and graphically facilitated by **Janet Rhymes** and **Corrie Melanson** of SeeWhatYouMean. Tangri, once a nuclear physicist, now uses his scientific training to simplify complex issues at the human interaction level.

He set the Café tone with a simple request: identify all red items in the room. “Now, close your eyes and think of something that was blue,” he said. Focusing on a specific thing leaves many things unobserved, whereas examining all verbal and visual perspectives can yield collective solutions. Four-person round tables were given 20 minutes to discuss each of three questions, leading from what Halifax is doing right to what it needs to do better.

The first question—share an example of a successful event or meeting in Halifax—drew a range of examples, including concerts by the Rolling Stones and Paul McCartney, the G7 Summit, Tall Ships, annual busker and comedy festivals, World Hockey Championships, and weddings on Citadel Hill. The response to September 11, 2001 was suggested, as the Halifax International Airport and surrounding venues became a haven for grounded and diverted travellers. Also, a recent conference of 1,400 delegates tailored its program to fit smaller venues so it could be held in Halifax.

Next, groups considered the factors or conditions that enabled the success of those events and meetings. Participants said Halifax as a host city, and the service providers in it, are seen as innovative, supportive, creative, genuine, and flexible. “We do combination venues of outdoors and indoors; we work with a variety of restaurants and entertainment; we have lots of services to draw upon; and we’re not afraid to think outside the box,” one participant said.

From the final question—What will it take to grow our industry and make each event bigger, brighter, and better?—five themes emerged: advocacy, attitude, innovation, co-operation, and the need to do the homework to seek out and focus upon the best meetings opportunities for the region.

In the World Café spirit of “dotmocracy,” participants were given sticker dots to vote for their top three issues. Advocacy emerged as a clear leader, including a new convention centre and other infrastructure necessary to attract, transport, and serve clientele. Also under advocacy were marketing, media awareness, and educating the government and the general public about the benefits of the meetings industry. “We do a great job of telling the public what the potential benefits are, but we’re not strong on follow-up, to say what the actual benefits *were*,” said one participant, who suggested an industry-mandated post-event review to track and share data.

Adopting and fostering a progressive attitude was also voted a key action item. “We need to open our minds, out-speak the naysayers, and move forward,” a participant said. “Some fear this new convention centre will turn us into Toronto, but that will not happen.” Another participant said the benefits associated with meetings and events must be promoted. “After every event, all the world is doing is looking at the red, whether it is there or not. . . . Providing information can help with their decision making.”

Other high scorers included the need for innovative ideas, co-operation among those within the meetings industry and other industries, and a willingness to take risks. “Each of us needs to take responsibility for our growth and development,” a participant said. “If we continue to think separately, we can never come together and be effective.”

Hughes said the meetings industry is all about transformation. “We aim not just to educate and inform people, not just to give them a memorable experience, but to transform them into better employees, better people,” he said. **Kim George**, president of MPI Atlantic Canada Chapter, said the morning’s findings will be used to develop an action plan in which the chapter transforms into a voice of the industry.

NMID 2011: Planning Ahead

National Meetings Industry Day 2010 was a success in most regions, although there is a continued desire to build it into a more nationally effective event with a larger voice.

The goal of the event was *to raise awareness of the Meetings Industry and communicate the value of meetings to the broader business community and community at large, though the hosting of an “influence event” on April 15th, 2010*. To reach this goal, it met many, if not most, of its objectives, including:

- Consistent format provided
- Creation of an event worthy of media attention
- Engagement of senior leaders within the industry and those outside of it
- Creation of a national education opportunity
- Greater awareness of Meeting Professionals International both on a regional and national level
- It also created a “winner” in terms of the Influence Award give at the chapter level.

Next steps

1. May 7th conference call: NMID committee to review the information captured across the country, and to create goals and objectives focused on the business of the meetings industry in Canada and how we can make a difference on a united front across the country.
2. Build upon these goals to create a better joint national education plan for NMID in April 2011. As well, utilize a public relations firm that was used by the Atlantic Canada chapter for their NMID 2010 event, which brought exposure from the local media in Halifax. This joint public relations campaign will create an action plan for the NMID committee to engage different business communities in Canada, which are impacted by the meetings and events industry. This will be accomplished through initiatives such as letters to the editor, participation in local conversations regarding the local business community, and any other initiatives that will help chapters be the voice of the meetings industry in their local areas, but also across the country.