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DMCs

Long-considered the gurus of group travel arrangements, many DMCs are becoming "one-stop shops," adding detailed event planning of off-site events and spousal programs to their list of responsibilities. According to Terrie Heikkila, vice president of operations for Don Anderson Inc., a Burlingame, Calif.-based DMC, "Most DMCs are becoming very well-rounded and more multi-service oriented. Event planning is actually a major part of our business."

The main difference between a transportation company and a DMC is that the latter is responsible for scheduling transportation, plus other tasks the client or planner chooses to contract out. A transportation company follows the agenda the planner creates-moves the group from A to B-and that's it.

A DMC is hired for its expert knowledge of the ins and outs of an area. Such a company can handle casino-night arrangements or a trip to the art museum, while the planner focuses on the meeting itself and does not become distracted by the details not directly related to the official gathering. According to Nancy Berry of C/M Planners in Flower Mount, Texas, "To best serve the client, it often makes sense to contract out certain tasks."

Chris Lee, president of California Leisure Consultants-San Diego [CEO, **ACCESS** Destination Services] agreed: "With all the steps necessary to execute a successful meeting, the key is proper delegation of tasks. Experienced planners have learned that taking on too much can turn the meeting manager into a 'Jack of all trades, master of none,'" he said.

For large groups, a DMC is usually contracted to handle logistics.