

THE NEW “F” WORD

THESE DAYS, **FUN** HAS BECOME A DIRTY WORD. BUT RATHER THAN CUT OUT RECREATION ALTOGETHER, COMPANIES ARE INCLUDING TEAMBUILDING OR CHARITY WORK TO ADD DEPTH TO THEIR EVENTS.

The following is an excerpt from the April 2009 Corporate Meetings & Incentives Cover Story written by Rachel Gecker.

IF YOU BUILD IT...

Every two years, global energy giant

Hess Corp. brings its information technology services division on a corporate retreat where the IT professionals get updated on corporate goals and objectives. In the past, the group has participated in recreational activities as part of that meeting — anything from golf outings to city tours.



But at the February 2008 meeting in New Orleans, Hess decided to do something different and give back to the local community. “It’s a trend we’re seeing more and more in light of the current economy,” says Jennifer Miller, general manager for Access Destination Services, San Diego. It’s just so much easier to justify those dollars when you are organizing a program with meaning.” Working with the Just Willing Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides technology training to low-income families in New Orleans, Hess and Access Destination Services identified a local high school that had lost its computer lab as a result of Hurricane Katrina. “These kids lost their computers nearly two years ago and never had the funds to rebuild the lab,” says Miller, who helped organize the project.

Working side by side, Hess employees and students built 12 new computers using company-donated hardware, installed software onto the machines, and built desks and bookshelves. They even set up a mentorship program for the students before leaving the area, pairing students with a Hess employee with whom they could communicate for career advice and for help getting placed in the IT industry upon graduating from high school.

The project was an emotional one for the Hess team. “At the end of the day, there were 65 people with tears in their eyes. They knew they had really made an impact on these students.”

The funding for events like these doesn't always have to come out of the meeting budget, adds Chris Lee, DMCP, CEO at Access. “Many companies have a budget set aside that they have allocated for charitable giving. It doesn't hurt to ask them to support this element of your program.”

RELY ON YOUR DMC

Destination and event management companies

can be your best friend when the recreation budget is tight. All you need to do is ask.



For example, a group that wants to charter a boat for a sailing excursion will likely be quoted a price for a four-hour charter, says Chris Lee, DMCP, CEO of Access Destination Services, San Diego. “That is the standard time frame, but because of our connections with the charter company, we can get a three-hour charter for clients and save them some money.”

Lee says he will go line by line with clients through their budgets to determine where cuts can be made without sacrificing quality. “The right DMC is going to ask you the right questions to save you money.” ■

Since 1970, **ACCESS Destination Services** has provided the highest caliber of full-service, professional destination management and event production services in the West, including the Anaheim/Orange County, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Palm Springs and San Diego areas.

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