



Interview with **ACCESS Destination Services CEO, Chris Lee**, conducted by the Executive Director of The Contact DMC Group, December 2010

10 Questions for Chris Lee

Chris Lee is Chief Executive Officer of **ACCESS Destination Services**, one of the most renowned DMCs in the U.S. **ACCESS** was recently named "Best Destination Management Company" by readers of *Southern California Meetings + Events Magazine* and is a Finalist for "Event Company of the Year" by *Event Solutions Magazine*.

It obviously has been a great year critically, how is business overall? Will 2011 be a strong year?

Compared to the past two years, 2011 is building to be a strong year. There is definitely momentum in the volume of proposal requests coming in. Barring any national or global catastrophes, we feel pretty good about the coming year.

With the ease of Google and with the availability of various platforms marketed toward clients to organize their destination management activities, are DMCs relevant today?

Absolutely! Destination information has always been available to planners, from the old Yellow Pages publication, to the CVBs and other local sources. What makes a DMC valuable is their long-term client and vendor relationships, creativity, volume buying power and risk and financial management they provide. Many planners are realizing information overload these days and look to their DMC partners to save time designing and operating a custom program that meets their specific goals and objectives. It's the personalized service that clients value, not just the information.

How involved are you in the different destinations **ACCESS** serves, from a local's perspective?

We are very involved in our local destinations. We live, work and play in all of our communities. In fact, 4 of our founding Partners are native to the cities they are based in.

Last year you attained Perfect World Events in San Francisco and it is now **ACCESS Northern California**. You have revamped the infra-structure of **ACCESS Las Vegas**. Where does **ACCESS** go next?

*We will go where clients need us and want us most. We started as a small "mom and pop" operation, developed into a regional company and have been part of a large multinational company, in our 40 years in this business. **ACCESS** today represents the best of those experiences by operating as a small owner-operated business with regional and national resources and scope.*

What is your biggest nightmare when it comes to putting on an **ACCESS** event?

There are so many moving parts to producing events, it's like live television. It's all about preparation and communication. I guess my biggest nightmare is the weather, because that is out of our control.

Every trade magazine features stories on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and being Green. Where does CSR fit in your business plan?

It goes deeper than the business plan. At **ACCESS**, it's part of our company values. I describe CSR to our clients as a way to put meaning into meetings ©. In addition to integrating CSR into client programs, we developed an internal initiative called Operation Give. Check out our Blog (<http://blog.accessdmc.com>).

You've been in the business for 20+ years, what do you wish you had done differently?

I wish I had expanded the business earlier. Clients now are looking for partners who can service more than one or two destinations.

At the end of the day, with wine in hand and sitting in the easy chair, what particular achievement of **ACCESS** makes you smile?

The people and our company culture. I have been fortunate to work with and mentor some of the finest people in the DMC business at Cal Leisure, PGI and **ACCESS**. It is very satisfying to see past and current team members grow and succeed, and make a positive difference in our industry.