



## ***News Release***

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### **Benchmark Hospitality International's Benchmark Resorts & Hotels Announces The "Top Meeting Trends for 2016"**

**The Woodlands (Houston), Texas**, April 18, 2016 ... [Benchmark Resorts & Hotels](#), a signature portfolio of [Benchmark Hospitality International](#), announces the "Top Meeting Trends for 2016" as observed by its properties. Benchmark Hospitality International is a leading U.S.-based hospitality management company, which operates 40 award-winning hotels, resorts, and conference centers coast to coast and off shore. Ted Davis, chief sales & marketing officer for Benchmark Hospitality, made the announcement.

"We thought last year was terrific," said Mr. Davis. "It was the best year in the history of the industry and for our company. Yet 2016 is well positioned for even stronger business growth." Davis continued, "There are positive indicators everywhere. Our challenge is to creatively meet demand with exceptional hospitality and service, productive meeting environments delivering rewarding experiences for meeting attendees, and highly seasoned, well trained sales professionals who are skilled at cultivating new business relationships."

#### **Trend #1 Meeting Pops Ups**

One of the more interesting trends for 2016 is planner requests for pop up meeting rooms that can be assembled or moved at a moment's notice. Often used for spontaneous conference calls, small last-minute gatherings, or just to briefly hang out in between sessions, RFPs are increasingly requesting meeting room pop ups as part of the meeting experience.

#### **Trend #2 WOW me with Flavor!**

A request heard most often from planners for 2016 is, "Wow me with your culinary talents!" Meeting properties are highly skilled in the kitchen today, and that makes "topping the last meeting's F&B experience" an ongoing and sometimes extraordinary

challenge. Consequently, gifted executive chefs and their culinary teams are now a vital part of the sales process -- of winning business over the competition and keeping them coming back.

### **Trend #3 Creative Teambuilding Roars Back**

It's been on the ascent, but for 2016, teambuilding is strongly rebounding. Suddenly there is room in meeting budgets for creative and effective teambuilding, which can include a focus on the physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects of attendees. Many properties are partnering with professional teambuilding companies to help planners gel their participants into effective work units. "Escape from the Office", "Chef's Challenge" and "Beach Olympics" are current popular themes with planners.

### **Trend #4 Halcyon Days, for now**

We've already alluded to budgets being on the uptick for 2016. So are rates. So is meeting demand! The booking pace for 2016 is positive across the country, and happily so, and the pace for 2017 is even stronger. But that's a year away and a lot could happen between now and then, like a presidential election! Meeting group size in 2016 is steadily increasing as well. So are the privacy and competitive concerns of select meeting groups who buy out entire properties to avoid competitive compromise.

### **Trend #5 The Evolution of the CMP!**

Change is inevitable. The CMP where one size fits all has, for all practical purposes, evolved well beyond the sacrosanct meeting product of the past. Most meeting packages sold today are individually created to meet the specific needs and desires of each meeting planner and their meeting attendees. The wild card with crafting customized packages is often F&B, with properties creatively enabling client preferences by harnessing the skills of the executive chef, as well as experiencing the culinary highlights of the destination by partnering with local restaurants and culinary attractions, such as artisanal purveyors, whiskey distilleries or craft breweries.

The package of the future will provide for the meeting needs of the conference group and offer something unique to each individual participant by focusing on the whole person -- the mind, body and spirit. It will include greater immersion into the hotel's destination, and may provide mind-clearing moments of Zen with the aid of spa & wellness professionals, or a focus on mindfulness utilizing specially-created meditation alcoves and tranquil outdoor settings.

### **Trend #6 Pharma Leads**

The more things change, the more they stay the same ... Leading the demand cycle for meetings in 2016 is major Pharma, followed by the Financial and Insurance industries. Toss in Tech for the Northwestern US and Northern California. Yes, this could have been written 20 years ago too, but the current message here is that these industry segments just keep getting stronger for group properties across the country as demand for their respective products increases nationally and globally year after year!

## **Trend #7 Social Media is more than just social!**

It's de rigueur in the business world today, and so providers need to be strategically aware of their social presence. Planners use Trip Advisor to evaluate prospective facilities, Twitter to post updates to meeting schedules, Facebook to reach out to speakers and attendees and to communicate with meeting venues for information and room requests. Specialized meeting & event Apps deliver an advance glance at the conference schedule for attendees, provide updates during the meeting, enable immediate in-session feedback, as well as a concluding evaluation. Social media is no longer just about socializing. It's a strategic tool for doing business in the 21st Century.

## **One More Trend Gluten Free please**

Planners in 2016 are absolutely obsessed with special dietary needs, requirements and menus... and the 1# request is for gluten free options. This is followed by vegan meals and low calorie diets. Conferees hitting the fitness center every day are interested in healthful living at home and on the road, and are counting calories and mindful of what they put in their bodies like never before. Properties need to be creatively up to this culinary challenge and deliver every time.

## **About Benchmark Resorts & Hotels®**

[Benchmark Resorts & Hotels®](#) represents the finest in lodging, dining, recreational and meeting accommodations. Many are certified by the [International Association of Conference Centres](#), the leading professional organization governing the multi-billion dollar conference center industry on five continents, and many have also been recognized with the coveted [Benchmark Conference Centers®](#) certification of meeting excellence. Benchmark Resorts & Hotels deliver highly specialized service that anticipates guests' needs and ensures a hospitality experience unsurpassed and long remembered. [www.benchmarkresortsandhotels.com](http://www.benchmarkresortsandhotels.com). To become a fan on Facebook, visit [www.facebook.com/BenchmarkResortsandHotels](https://www.facebook.com/BenchmarkResortsandHotels), or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/BenchmarkHotels](https://www.twitter.com/BenchmarkHotels).



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