



The Vancouver Convention Center is a unique venue.
David Wej/Alamy Stock Photo

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions Industry

Chapter Objectives

- Define the foundational concepts relating to the meetings, exhibitions, events, and conventions industry.
- Outline the history of the events industry.
- Detail the evolution and maturation of the events industry.
- Articulate the ways in which ethical practices are important factors in the events industry.
- Discuss career definitions and opportunities for the meeting or events professional.
- Outline ongoing trends in the MEEC industry.

The meetings and events industry is a complex and multifaceted business and the professionals who support the planning and execution of events must bring a diverse set of skills and knowledge to the job.



The Olympic Games are one of the many aspects of the MEEC industry.
rommma/Shutterstock

What Is the Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions Industry?

The **meetings, expositions, events, and conventions (MEEC)** industry is large and touches virtually every aspect of the hospitality industry. MEEC includes business sectors, such as travel and hospitality, convention and visitors' bureaus, corporate meeting planning, event venues, equipment providers, and more. The types of events that are part of the industry include: sporting events, such as the Olympics and Super Bowl; Social events like family reunions and weddings; corporate events, such as sales meetings and strategic planning meetings; business events, such as trade shows, consumer shows, county fairs, and much more.

The global MEEC industry is set to reach \$1.245 billion in 2023 which represents a 7.5 percent growth rate between 2017 and 2023. In the United States alone, more than 1.8 million events, conventions, and meetings occur each year with a combined total impact of almost \$400 billion. The MEEC industry contributes more to the gross domestic product than the motion picture, spectator sports, performing arts, and sound recording industries. Almost two million people in the United States are employed in this industry, and the event planner profession is projected to grow by 33 percent over the next ten years. Being a MEEC planner has been identified as one of the best business jobs.

Performing poorly at any of the hundreds of potential failure points, or “moments of truth” in a meeting or event, can affect the ability of the event organizers to achieve the objectives of the event and meet the needs of the participants. Poor performance can have financial and reputational impacts for years to come. A good experience by each attendee will result in praises; on the other hand, a negative experience tends to spread to even more people.

Industry Terminology and Practice

We have always, generically, referred to gatherings of two or more people as meetings. This term could also encompass meetings that are called conventions, congresses, symposia, and so on, some of which could have tens of thousands of people in attendance. If one

adds displays of materials or products to a meeting, the meeting then has a trade show or **exposition** or **exhibition** component. When sporting, social, or life-cycle activities are added, then a generic term that encompasses them all is events. Even broader, and more generic, is the term gathering. One must be conscious of how your stakeholders or target audience will interpret the name that is applied to a specific gathering.

The following list of terms is important for anyone involved in the MEEC industry to know. The terms were developed by the terminology panel of Accepted Practices Exchange, a part of the Events Industry Council, and are a small sample of the thousands of words that apply to this industry. The complete glossary of terms used in the MEEC industry can be found online at www.eventscouncil.org. Terms from the Events Industry Council are used throughout this book with their permission.

MEEC INDUSTRY TERMS

- **Assembly:** (1) A general or formal meeting of an organization attended by representatives of its membership for the purpose of deciding legislative direction, policy matters, and the election of internal committees; and for approving balance sheets, budgets, and so on. Consequently, an assembly usually observes certain rules of procedure for its meetings, mostly prescribed in its articles and bylaws. (2) The process of erecting display-component parts into a complete exhibit.
- **Break-Out Sessions:** Small group sessions, panels, workshops, or presentations offered concurrently within an event, formed to focus on specific subjects. Break-out sessions are separate from the general session, but within the meeting format, and formed to focus on specific subjects. These sessions can be arranged by basic, intermediate, or advanced information; or divided by interest areas or industry segment.
- **Clinic:** A workshop-type educational experience where attendees learn by doing.
- **Conference:** (1) A participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact-finding, problem solving, and consultation. (2) An event used by any organization to meet and exchange views, convey a message, open a debate, or for publicity of some area of opinion on a specific issue. No tradition, continuity, or periodicity is required to convene a conference. Although not generally limited in time, conferences are usually of short duration with specific objectives. Conferences are generally on a smaller scale than congresses. *See also:* Congress and Convention.
- **Congress:** (1) The regular coming together of large groups of individuals, generally to discuss a particular subject. A congress will often last several days and have several simultaneous sessions. The length of time between congresses is usually established in advance of the implementation stage, and can be either semiannual or annual. Most international or world congresses are of the former type, whereas national congresses are more frequently held annually. (2) The European term for a convention. *See also:* Conference and Convention.
- **Convention:** Gathering of delegates, representatives, and members of a membership or industry organization convened for a common purpose. Common features include educational sessions, committee meetings, social functions, and meetings to conduct the governance business of the organization. Conventions are typically recurring events with specific, established timing. *See also:* Meeting, Exhibition, Trade Show, and Consumer Show.
- **Event:** An organized occasion, such as a meeting, convention, exhibition, special event, gala dinner, social gathering, and so on. An event is often composed of several different yet related functions.
- **Exhibition:** An event at which products, services, or promotional materials are displayed to attendees visiting exhibits on the show floor. These events focus primarily on business-to-business (B2B) relationships (same as an Exposition or Trade Show).
- **Exposition:** *See* Exhibition.
- **Forum:** (1) An open discussion with an audience, panel, and moderator. A meeting, or part of a meeting, set aside for an open discussion by recognized participants on subjects of public interest.

- **Institute:** An in-depth instructional meeting providing intensive education on a subject.
- **Lecture:** An informative and instructional speech.
- **Meeting:** An event where the primary activity of the attendees is to attend educational sessions, participate in meetings/discussions, socialize, or attend other organized events. There is no exhibit component to this event.
- **Panel Discussion:** An instructional technique using a group of people chosen to discuss a topic in the presence of an audience.
- **Seminar:** (1) A lecture and dialogue allowing participants to share experiences in a particular field under the guidance of an expert discussion leader. (2) A meeting or series of meetings of 10 to 50 specialists who have different, specific skills but have a specific common interest, and come together for training or learning purposes. The work schedule of a seminar has the specific objective of enriching the skills of the participants.
- **Social Life-Cycle Events:** Events that mark the passage of time in a human life, such as weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, anniversaries, and, today, even funerals.
- **Symposium:** A meeting of many experts in a particular field, during which papers are presented and discussed by specialists on particular subjects with a view to making recommendations concerning the problems under discussion.
- **Trade Show:** An exhibition of products and/or services held for members of a common or related industry that is not open to the general public. If it is open to the public, it is called a Consumer Show. Compare with Gate Show, Public Show, and Consumer Show. *See also:* Exhibition, Gate Show, Public Show, and Consumer Show.
- **Workshop:** (1) A meeting of several persons for intensive discussion. The workshop concept has been developed to compensate for diverging views in a discipline or on a subject. (2) An informal and public session of free discussion organized to take place between formal plenary sessions or commissions of a congress or of a conference, either on a subject chosen by the participants themselves or on a special problem suggested by the organizers. (3) A training session in which participants, often through exercises, develop skills and knowledge in a given field.

The Organizational Structure of the Hospitality Industry: How MEEC Fits in

MEEC is a part of, and encompasses, many elements of the hospitality and tourism industry. To understand how MEEC is related to the hospitality and service industry, one must understand the organization and structure of the tourism and hospitality industry itself.

There are five major divisions, or segments, of the tourism and hospitality industry: lodging, food and beverage, transportation, attractions, and entertainment.

The hospitality and tourism industry is multifaceted. The framework offered in the following list is meant to help provide a basic understanding of the industry, and is not intended to be an all-inclusive inventory.

Lodging

The lodging segment consists of all types of places where travelers may spend the night. These can include hotels, conference centers, resorts, motels, bed-and-breakfasts, Air BnB accommodations, and college dormitories. The important characteristics of this segment are that they are available to the public and charge a fee for usage.

Food and Beverage

Obviously, this segment contains two sub-segments: food service operations, and beverage operations. Food service operations can include the following: table service facilities that can be further broken down by price, such as high, medium, and low; by type of service, such as luxury, quick service, and so on; or by cuisine, such as American, East Asian, Italian, and others. Food service also embraces other types of operations including caterers

and institutional operations (hospitals, schools, nursing homes, and so on). Beverage operations can also be broken down by price or type of service, and whether they serve alcoholic beverages or not.

Transportation

This segment includes any means or modality that people use to get from one place to another, including walking. The better-known elements include air, water, and ground transportation.

Air transportation: This sub-segment includes regularly scheduled airline carriers, such as Delta or Lufthansa, as well as charter air services that can involve jets, propeller aircraft, and helicopters.

Water transportation: This sub-segment includes cruise ships, paddle wheelers, charter operations, ferries, and water taxis. Cruise ships are a significant element since they not only provide transportation but lodging, food and beverage, entertainment, and meeting facilities.

Ground transportation: This sub-segment includes private automobiles, taxis, limousines, jitneys, buses, trains, cog railways, cable cars, monorails, horse-drawn vehicles, and even elephants and camels.

Attractions

This segment of the hospitality and tourism industry includes anything that attracts people to a destination. This segment can be further divided into natural and person-made attractions.

Natural attractions: This sub-segment includes national parks, mountains, seashores, lakes, forests, swamps, and rivers.

Person-made attractions: This sub-segment consists of things made or constructed by human beings, including buildings such as monuments, museums, theme parks, zoos, aquariums, and so on.

Entertainment

This includes anything that provides entertainment value for a guest, such as movie theaters, playhouses, orchestras, bands, and festivals.

Overlapping Industries

There are many overlaps between these categories, for example: A hotel may be an attraction in itself, such as the CityCenter in Las Vegas. Hotels often have food and beverage outlets, attractions, and entertainment. Furthermore, some of the businesses mentioned earlier cater to tourists, meeting attendees, and local residents alike. It would seem, then, that the meetings and events industry is involved with all segments of the hospitality and tourism industry.

Understanding the interactions and complexities of the hospitality and tourism industry helps explain why it is difficult to determine the size and scope of these industries. Until the late 1990s, the US government, using its North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, did not even track many elements of these industries.

Because travel and tourism is not a single industry, producing a single product, it cannot be measured in its true form by a singular NAICS code. Travel and Tourism Satellite Accounts (TTSAs) are a relatively new economic statistical method to measure more accurately the impact of the travel and tourism industries on the US economy. Similarly, meetings and events cannot be measured by a single industry measure. The **Events Industry Council (EIC)** undertakes a research project every three or four years to measure the economic significance of the meetings and events industry.

History of the Industry

Gatherings, meetings, events, and conventions (of sorts) have been a part of people's lives since the earliest recorded history. Archeologists have found primitive ruins from ancient cultures that were used as meeting areas where citizens would gather to discuss common interests, such as government, war, hunting, or tribal celebrations. Once humans developed permanent settlements, each town or village had a public meeting area, often called a town square, where residents could meet, talk, and celebrate. Under the leadership of Alexander the Great, over half a million people traveled to Ephesus (now Turkey) to see exhibitions, which included acrobats, magicians, animal trainers, and jugglers. Andrew Young, the former US ambassador to the United Nations, said at a Meeting Professionals International (MPI) meeting in Atlanta in the mid-1990s that he was sure there would have been a meeting planner for the Last Supper, and certainly for the first Olympics. In Ancient Rome, organized meetings to discuss politics and decide the fate of the empire were held at the Forum. Ancient Rome also had the Colosseum, which was the site of major sporting events such as gladiatorial contests—someone had to organize them. Using excellent roadways, the Romans were able to establish trade markets to entice people to visit their cities. In Old England, there were fictional stories of King Arthur's Round Table, another example of a meeting that discussed the trials and tribulations of the day. Religious gatherings of various faiths and pilgrimages to Mecca are examples of religious meetings and festivals that began centuries ago. The Olympics began as an ancient sporting event that was organized as similar events are today. World's fairs and expositions are still another piece of the MEEC industry.

The First Continental Congress in Philadelphia is an example of a formal meeting; in this case, it was to decide the governance of the thirteen colonies. Political conventions have a long history in the United States and are part of the MEEC industry. Americans



Mardi Gras in New Orleans.
Wendy Kaveney Photography/Shutterstock

have also made festivals and celebrations of every sort, such as Mardi Gras in New Orleans, a part of their lives since the early days of this country, and events like these can also be part of the MEEC industry.

Today, structures supporting the MEEC industry are integral parts of major cities. It is a well-known fact that in order to be considered a *world-class city*, a community must have a convention center and a stadium or arena for sports and events. All the largest cities have them, including New York; Washington, DC; Barcelona; Chicago; London; Moscow; Pretoria; and Hong Kong. These public facilities attract out-of-town attendees for conventions and events, and are an important economic driver for the community.

In spite of the long history of meetings, meeting planning as a recognized profession has only more recently been developed. The development of the first academic meeting-planning program in the United States was approved by the state of Colorado in September of 1976, and was implemented by Metropolitan State College (now University) in Denver. This initiative was closely followed by the meeting-planning program at Northeastern Oklahoma University in Tahlequah. In 1979, Patti Shock started hotel convention service management and meeting-planning classes at Georgia State University (GSU). In 1983, trade show classes were added with the financial support of the National Association of Exposition Managers (NAEM) (now the International Association of Exhibitions and Events, IAEE), and the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE). Today, there are almost 700 academic programs worldwide, and more than 150 in the United States alone that teach about MEEC.

One factor that contributed to the rapid development of both industry education and academic programs during the 1980s was the development and implementation of the **Certified Meeting Professional (CMP)** examination and designation by the Convention Liaison Council (now the Events Industry Council). This certification gives both status and credence to the person who achieves it. Additional certificate programs have followed, including the Certified Meeting Manager (CMM), Certified Destination Marketing Executive (CDME), Certified in Exhibition Management (CEM), and others.

The Events Industry Council (previously, the Convention Liaison Council) has lead its constituent organizations in the professionalizing of the industry through certification, best practice, and education since its founding in New York in 1949 by four organizations: the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), American Hotel and Motel Association (AH&MA, now the American Hotel Lodging Association), Hospitality (then Hotel) Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMIAI), and the International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (IACVB, now Destinations International).

The basis of today's destination marketing organizations (DMO), which are also called convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs), was put forth in 1895 when journalist Milton Carmichael wrote in *The Detroit Journal* that local businessmen should get together to promote the city as a convention destination, as well as represent the city and its many hotels to bid for convention business. Shortly thereafter, the Detroit Convention and Businessmen's League was conceived to do just that. Carmichael was the head of the group that later evolved into the Detroit Metro CVB, which is now labeled *VisitDetroit*.

The role of CVBs (now referred to as Destination Marketing Organizations or DMOs) has changed over time. As in Detroit, most began by trying to attract only conventions and business meetings to their community. Later, they realized leisure visitors were an important source of business and added the "V," for visitors, to their name. Today, virtually every city in the United States and Canada, and many cities throughout the world, has a DMO or convention and visitors' association (CVA). The DMO (CVB, CVA) is a membership organization that helps promote tourism, meetings, and related business for their cities. In some international destinations, the DMO is a division of government. Many DMOs have now evolved to not only market but to help develop and manage tourism at their destinations. Most recently, the term DMO is being used in place of CVB. In this text, the terms are synonymous and interchangeable.

Evolution and Maturation of the MEEC Industry

(The following section is adapted from Fenich *Planning and Management of Meetings, Expositions, Events, and Conventions* 1st Edition.)

It can be said that events and meetings have been around since the dawn of time. In America, town hall forums were a type of meeting begun in the eighteenth century. While someone had to plan all of these events, there was neither formal training nor an established set of skills, standards, and abilities for those who organized those events. However, like other industries, such as law and accounting, as the industry evolved and matured there was an increasing need to formalize a set of competency standards to which professionals must adhere. Until very recently, no common set of **knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs)** existed for event professionals.

This dearth of standards changed in 2011 with the development of several competency standards, all of which building off a common platform—The Canadian Human Resources Council Competency Standards, the **Meetings and Business Events Competency Standards (MBECS)**, and the CMP International Standards. While all slightly different for their individual purposes, they all contain similar DNA: a similar set of knowledge, skills, and ability statements required of meetings and events professionals at the different levels of position or purpose.

MBECS

Using the MBECS as an example, the standards are divided into 12 domains or blocks with 33 skills and almost 100 sub-skills or sub-segments.

The domains and skills are listed in the following figure:

MBECS STANDARDS

A. STRATEGIC PLANNING

1. Manage Strategic Plan for Meeting or Event
2. Develop Sustainability Plan for Meeting or Event
3. Measure Value of Meeting or Business Event

B. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

4. Plan Meeting or Event
5. Manage Meeting or Event Project

C. RISK MANAGEMENT

6. Manage Risk Management Plan

D. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

7. Develop Financial Resources
8. Manage Budget
9. Manage Monetary Transactions

E. ADMINISTRATION

10. Perform Administrative Tasks

F. HUMAN RESOURCES

11. Manage Human Resource Plan
12. Acquire Staff and Volunteers
13. Train Staff and Volunteers
14. Manage Workforce Relations

G. STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

15. Manage Stakeholder Relationships

H. MEETING OR EVENT DESIGN

16. Design Program
17. Engage Speakers and Performers
18. Coordinate Food and Beverage
19. Design Environment
20. Manage Technical Production
21. Develop a Plan for Managing the Movement of People

I. SITE MANAGEMENT

22. Select Site
23. Design Site Layout
24. Manage Meeting or Event Site
25. Manage On-site Communications

J. MARKETING

26. Manage Marketing Plan
27. Manage Marketing Materials
28. Manage Meeting or Event Merchandise
29. Promote Meeting or Event
30. Contribute to Public-Relations Activities
31. Manage Sales Activities

K. PROFESSIONALISM

32. Exhibit Professional Behavior

L. COMMUNICATIONS

33. Conduct Business Communications

These competencies represent all the KSAs an event professional needs to acquire, and be proficient in, during the course of their career. The **Certified Meeting Professional International Standards (CMP-IS)** have adapted these domains and skill statements for the purpose of defining the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) Exam leading to the CMP credential. The development of these common standards marks a milestone in the MEEC industry. These standards, synopsised previously, represent the first time that the base of knowledge in the meetings and events industry has been codified, and has been a great advancement for the meeting-planning profession, and the individuals who work in the industry, as well as academics, students, and individuals who train the next generation of professionals.

Uses for Meetings and Events Professionals

Industry professionals can perform a personal-skills assessment of the standards and skills to discover those skills at which they are adept and at which they are not. The resulting gap analysis can help guide their professional and personal development. MBECS can also help plot career paths. Being able to provide an assessment that shows a broad mastery of the subject will enhance employability and mobility across sectors and countries, by allowing an industry professional to promote the attainment of this knowledge and associated skills to employers or clients.

Standards are of great value to employers and managers. The standards can aid in the development of job descriptions and job specifications. This leads to improvements in determining workforce requirements and producing worker solicitations. The standards can also help in developing a sequence of training for employees, as well as a basis for performance assessment and feedback.

Uses for the Academic Community

These standards provide an internationally accepted basis for developing courses of study and their requisite content. It is up to a given program or institution to determine how the content is delivered: in meeting/event specific courses, in business courses, in general education, or a combination. The significant advantage of using a standard like MBECS is that it is not prescriptive: one size does not fit all. Existing programs can benchmark themselves against the standards with resulting global recognition. The MBECS also provide a platform for dealing with governmental authorities and accrediting bodies. Using MBECS, a program can show the relevance of their course offerings and justify the content based on an international body of knowledge. Students can use the standards to develop their educational pathways and to validate their employability to recruiters. They could also use the standards to determine which educational programs best meet their learning needs. For academics, the standards can help delineate areas or topics in the meetings and events world that are in need of research.

Uses for Associations

First and foremost, standards provide recognition of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required by the industry. This can then help guide the development of program content and delivery that is consistent with international standards. They can also be used by the members of an association to determine their educational or professional development needs, and how the association can best fulfill those needs.

Accepted Practices Exchange

Throughout this book, you will hear about the Events Industry Council (formerly the Convention Industry Council) and its **Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX)**.

The Events Industry Council is at the forefront of efforts to advance the meeting, convention, and exhibition industry. It represents a broad cross-section of the industry with more than 30 meetings- and events-related associations as members, representing more than 103,500 individuals, with more than 19,000 firms and properties involved in the meetings, conventions, and exhibitions industry. Formed in 1949, the council provides a forum for member organizations to advance the industry. The council facilitates this by enabling the exchange of information among members through the development of programs to promote professionalism within the industry and by educating the public on

the industry's profound economic impact. By its nature, the council provides an impartial and inclusive forum for the APEX initiative and the development of accepted practices for the industry.

APEX brings together stakeholders in the development and implementation of industry-wide accepted practices to create and enhance efficiencies, as well as solve common problems and address industry issues. APEX also creates resources and tools to address these issues, such as education, white papers, and sample documents.

Some of the results of accepted practices implementation include:

- Time and cost savings
- Eased communication and sharing of data
- Enhanced customer service
- Streamlined systems and processes
- Less duplication of effort and increased operational efficiencies
- Better educated, more professional employees
- Solving common issues and problems

Ethics

The Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), a widely recognized authority on convention and meeting management, published *PCMA's Principles of Professional and Ethical Conduct* in 2002.

Open and trusting relationships with your venues, facilities, vendors, and service providers will be priceless over time. Although practicing ethical behavior may not be a matter of law, violation of fair and equitable business practices can be considered illegal. There is a very long list of ethical issues, but a few of the easiest to violate, due to inexperience, are mentioned here.

Trouble Spots to Avoid

- Refrain from accepting or encouraging gifts or accepting promises of gifts from venues or service providers. This is particularly an issue prior to making decisions on sites, venues, vendors, and other service providers.
- Refrain from using travel points earned from airlines and hotels during business trips for personal travel.
- Refrain from conducting site inspections or accepting invitations to familiarization (FAM) trips sponsored to any location unless your group will seriously consider booking business there.
- Refrain from any activity that would discredit you or your organization.

What to Practice

- Full disclosure of any rebates, commissions, or incentives accepted for any reason.
- Notice to attendees that a rebate from registration fees will be used to offset an expense; a legitimate example would be a shuttle service expense.
- Fair and equitable negotiations in good times and bad.
- Confidentiality during the bidding process.
- Prompt and professional notification when site and vendor selections have been decided.
- Identify and address unethical behavior in others that could result in damages to your event, organization, or group. Ethics is not limited to your own personal behavior.

Suggested Industry Etiquette (Professional Courtesy)

- Be prepared, considerate, realistic, and factual in all verbal and written communications.
- Be cognizant of the value of everyone's time, and be timely with all.
- Meet your deadlines and keep your promises.
- Treat venues, facilities, vendors, and service providers as partners rather than subordinates. Everyone has a vested interest in your success.
- Understand the need for your event partners to make a reasonable profit.
- Maintain a calm and courteous demeanor under pressure.
- Work diligently toward agreement and solutions that will be mutually beneficial.
- Don't criticize. Seek resolutions.
- Make every effort to engage in respectful communications with everyone and in every circumstance.
- Resort to confrontation only when there is absolutely no other alternative to fixing an immediate problem.
- Approach working relationships as long term rather than one-time-only, as it is likely you will work with the same service provider companies in other locations, or you will rely on their referrals if they do not provide service where your event will be located.
- Share the glory. When your event is successful, praise your partners and the staff who helped produce it.

What Does a Meeting or Event Professional Do?

When asked about a typical day in the life of a meeting planner, there are few, if any, who could say that any day is typical, whether they work in an organization or operate an external planning company. The job of a planner is ideal for those who love to multitask, who have broad interests, who enjoy problem solving, and who care passionately about building community through meetings.

Doug Heath, Certified Association Executive (CAE), CMP, and the second executive director of MPI, said many years ago that meeting planners must be more than coffee-cup counters. When Heath said that, it was a time when most meeting planners were concerned only with logistics—ensuring the provision of room sets, coffee and refreshment breaks, meals, and audiovisual setup.

Today, the jobs of an event professional are strategic. Planners are charged with supporting the work toward an organization's bottom line. In order to do this, both when planning, and during a meeting or event, a planner may do any or all of the following, and more:

- Define meeting/event goals and objectives, and develop session content and design.
- Develop a request for proposal (RFP) based on the meeting/event objectives, audience profile, budget, and program (see Appendix of this book for examples).
- Send the RFP to national sales offices of hotel and conference center companies, to DMOs, and to external meeting-planning companies.
- Prepare and manage a budget and expenditures, which can range from a few hundred dollars into the hundreds of millions.
- Negotiate contracts with a facility or multiple facilities, transportation providers, decorators, speakers, entertainers, and all the vendors and venues that will support a meeting/event.
- Market the meeting/event electronically and in print, and track results.
- Invite and manage the needs (travel, lodging, registration, room setup, and audiovisual) for all speakers, trainers, and facilitators involved in delivery of information and knowledge for the meeting/event.

- Invite, manage contracts and manage the needs of entertainers.
- Design food and beverage events, and negotiate contracts for these events. To do so, an event professional must know the audience (age of participants, gender, abilities, allergies, geographic location, and more), the timing for the programs, the budget, and the prices, including labor costs and taxes.
- Prepare a crisis management plan in conjunction with other staff, facilities, vendors, and emergency personnel.
- Register participants, or manage a registration company, ensuring data are accurately entered and processed securely.
- Manage the multitude of changes that happen from the first conceptualization of a meeting or event to the execution and follow-up.
- Monitor industry and business publications for changes in management companies or hotel ownership, as well as for hotel foreclosures, facility and other strikes, and other issues.
- Calm others' nerves and remain calm.

Careers in and around the MEEC Industry

The MEEC industry is a vibrant, dynamic, and exciting part of the hospitality industry. Many careers in MEEC involve multiple aspects of the hospitality industry. For example, someone who works in convention or group sales in a facility must interface with, be knowledgeable about, and manage people who work with guest rooms, front desk, food and beverage, catering, and all of the meeting facilities.

The MEEC industry is a sub-segment of the hospitality industry, which itself is part of the larger services industry. It encompasses many areas of the hospitality industry. Thus, readers are challenged to conceptualize their personal ideal job and then determine how and where in the MEEC industry they could be employed doing what they dream of.

Some of the careers in MEEC are included in the following figure:

- **Event Planner:** Plans special events like the Olympics, the Super Bowl in football, the Final Four in basketball, festivals, and gala celebrations.
- **Wedding Planner:** A wedding planner is a type of event planner who assists parties in selecting the site, décor, photographer, and other needed vendors, and is often there on the day of the event to ensure smooth operations.
- **Meeting Planner:** Organizes meetings and other gatherings for companies, corporations, and associations. These gatherings can include a small, board of directors meeting, a stockholders' meeting, new product introductions and training, educational seminars, and regional or national conventions. Corporate Meeting/Event Planners fall into this category.
- **Exhibition Managers:** Organizes and manages trade shows.
- **Hotel or Conference Center Sales:** The majority of sales and conventions, or catering service positions in hotels and conference centers deal with groups, and MEEC covers most of these groups.
- **Restaurant Sales:** While most people think of restaurants attracting walk-in clientele, many rely heavily on the MEEC industry for business. Food and beverage (F&B) venues employ significant numbers of people on their group sales staff. In New Orleans, Arnaud's and Emeril's, for example, have group or convention sales teams.
- **Entertainment/Sporting Venue Sales and Services:** Although these places primarily attract individual patrons, most also devote much time and effort to selling, providing space for, and producing events for groups. These off-site venues are often good alternatives for experiential learning.
- **Destination Management: Destination Management Companies (DMCs)** function as the local experts for companies and associations, organizing gatherings and events, arranging and supervising transportation, and securing entertainers. People employed for DMCs usually work in either sales or production.
- **Hotels:** Hotels are one of the primary locations where MEEC events are held, using ballrooms, meeting rooms, break-out rooms, and so on, for their gatherings along with sleeping rooms and F&B for their attendees. The hotel departments that deal with the MEEC industry are sales, catering, and convention services.



A Smiling Wedding Planner Sets Up the Wedding Reception Venue by Organizing the Table's Flower Decorations before the Formal Function Begins.
Ryan Jorgense-Jorgo/Shutterstock

- **Convention Centers:** These venues include dedicated facilities, such as McCormick Place in Chicago, the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York, the Congress Center Messe in Frankfurt, Germany, and the Canton Fair in Guangzhou, China—the world's biggest convention center.
- **Multipurpose Venues:** Like the Superdome in New Orleans or the Astrodome in Houston. With these venues, careers are found in either sales or operations.
- **Exposition Services Contractors:** If you like to build things or have thought about being an engineer or architect, you should consider being an exposition services contractor (ESC). ESCs design and erect the booths, backdrops, staging, and so on for exhibitions, meetings, and conventions. The decorations and backdrops for your school prom may have been done by an ESC. Again, career paths exist in sales and production and, increasingly, in design of sustainable/green products and services.
- **Destination Marketing Organizations (Convention and Visitor Bureaus):** DMOs serve to represent a wide range of MEEC companies and to market the destination to business and leisure travelers. DMOs have many departments and careers, including convention sales, tourism sales, housing bureaus, convention services, marketing, research, and member services.

Some of the most important aspects of working in MEEC are business acumen (financial and people management, legalities and risk management, sales and marketing, and ethical practices), envisioning (what can be) and executing ideas into reality, and having knowledge of adult learning techniques. In addition to having knowledge and ability for preparing and delivering virtual and face-to-face meetings, industry professionals must know more about sustainability and going green for meetings and events.

It is often said that MEEC is a relationship industry, that is, it is one built on who you know and with whom you do business. As in many industries, we depend on those we

know to help us learn and grow, and to provide accurate information. These relationships are built over time and always with the understanding that, first and foremost, ethical business practices will be the most important aspect of how we relate.

Think for just a moment about all the individuals and businesses involved in the execution of a single meeting or event. They could include the following:

The Meeting Sponsor

- Association or corporation sponsor
- Meeting planner
- Executive director or chief executive officer
- Staff specialists in departments that include marketing, governance and government affairs, education/professional development/training, membership, information technology, and accreditation
- Others who staff call centers, copy materials, process registrations, manage human resources, control purchasing, and more
- Board of directors
- Committees
- Sponsors

The Facility

- Owners
- Executive staff, including but not limited to: the general manager, revenue manager, resident or hotel manager, directors of sales, marketing, convention services, catering, housekeeping, engineering, maintenance, purchasing, human resources, food and beverage, front office operations, social responsibility, and security
- The thousands of other full- and part-time, year-round, and seasonal staff: groundskeepers, animal handlers, housekeepers, food servers (for banquets, room service, and the outlets), maintenance, security, and engineering

The Destination

- DMO/CVB (president, directors of sales, marketing, convention services, membership, registration, social responsibility, and all support staff)
- Restaurants
- Attractions
- Off-site venues
- Theaters (movie and legitimate)
- Copy and printing companies
- Transportation (buses, airport shuttles, taxicabs, and limousines)
- Airport concessions
- Doctors, medical personnel, and emergency workers
- Pharmacies
- Florists
- Destination management companies
- Audiovisual suppliers
- General services contractors
- Specialty services contractors
- Dry cleaners and tailors
- City, county, and state employees
- IT division and telecommunications department

All Others Who Provide Services for Meetings

- Talent (entertainers, disc jockeys, bands, and magicians)
- Education (speakers, trainers, and facilitators)
- Sound and lighting
- Transportation (air, rail, car, boat, and travel agencies)
- Printing
- Shipping
- Promotional products
- Off-property food and beverage
- Translators for those who speak American Sign Language and other languages
- Americans with Disabilities Act equipment
- Carpentry
- National sales (hotels and conference centers)
- Third-party or independent meeting planners

Even the president of the United States and Congress impacts our industry by determining trade regulations, travel restrictions, security issues, who needs a visa, and whether or not our country goes to war.

Is there anyone who does not have some influence on the meetings and events industry? A case can be made that every person has an impact, in some way, on each and every meeting—even those meetings of two or three that take place in an office or restaurant. Take a few minutes and add to the jobs or functions previously listed that might affect a meeting, and then think again. Also, create a career pathway for at least one of the careers noted previously.

Which Career Is Right for You?

The following are some of the career planning questions you might ask yourself to determine if this may be the right profession for you:

- Do you like to plan parties, work events, or just your day, down to the last detail, ensuring everything is locked in?
- Do you have, and regularly update, a date book or Outlook calendar that includes everything you need to do for weeks or even months into the future?
- Has any of the activities or skills outlined in this chapter struck a chord, and made you say, “this sounds like me” or “I have that ability or strength” and I want to be part of that?
- Do you ask good questions, rarely taking anything as a given? Do you think about contingencies or what if “x” happened? How would I adjust?

If you answered “yes” to some of these questions, you may just have the aptitude to be a good meeting professional.

Trends and Best Practices

The following are ten trends in the meetings and events industry.

1. **Meetings Are Experiences:** Meetings and events today aren’t just face-to-face gatherings for the sole purpose of exchanging business information. Rather, they’re enriching, one-of-a-kind experiences that attendees will treasure forever. Event professionals are increasingly creating these distinctive experiences in a variety of ways, oftentimes by simply choosing unique or unexpected venues that offer a “WOW factor.” Another way to create memorable experiences is by engaging all five senses in what are referred to as multisensory events. Meals are also part of the attendee experience, and in the years ahead, food and beverage offerings will be increasingly tailored, either to reflect the event theme or to serve as special events in and of themselves.

2. ***Content Will Condense:*** Attendees' available time and attention spans are ever shrinking. Meeting schedules are shrinking as attendees' time is more and more consumed by business and family pressures. Content must be concise and it must have hard-hitting, take-home value. Event attendees want to be engaged for the short time they are at our meetings, and then they want to go home.
3. ***Attendees Want a Sense of Place:*** There is growing popularity in incorporating local elements into the meeting or event, giving attendees a taste of the locale they're in, such as offering attendees samples of the regional cuisine. Another way for attendees to experience a destination is to engage in local volunteer efforts or *voluntourism*, which can be included as part of the meeting's program (inclusion), and also plays into the growing interest in and importance of sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR).
4. ***Attention to Diversity Will Become Even More Important:*** With various generations—all with different work ethics and characteristics—working alongside each other, and issues related to gender equity and racial diversity still being addressed, companies continue to examine their recruitment and talent development strategies, approaching them with more awareness and creative solutions.
5. ***Mobile Technology Is Here to Stay:*** Having an event website, app, and social media presence used to be nice to have; today, they are required. Other than corporate meetings, all events must have an app. For cost-saving reasons, as well as sustainability reasons, most meetings no longer have printed programs, or there are a very limited number of printed programs. All of the event information is posted on the app. Not only do they allow for on the fly changes, posting of speaker handouts and bios (again, less printed documents), but they also allow for engaging the attendee before, during, and after the event. Mobile technology allows event professionals to not only push information out to attendees, but also get information from attendees to help them craft their programs on the front end, and to make adjustments during the event to provide more value. As a result, access to reliable, universal Wi-Fi will be increasingly expected with sufficient bandwidth.
6. ***Technology Will Get More Connected:*** The MEEC industry will continue to work toward greater connectivity, with the boundaries between online and offline further blurring the term hybrid, as every event moves toward such multi-faceted experiences.
7. ***Social Media's Dominance Will Deepen:*** Social media will play a more measurable part in marketing and communication strategies all across the MEEC industry.
8. ***Consolidation in the Hospitality Industry Will Continue:*** Recently, we saw two of the largest hotel companies, Marriott and Starwood, merge into *the* largest hotel company in the world. This trend will only continue, even among the smaller hotel companies. It is hard to imagine that the US government will allow more consolidation in the US airline industry, but who knows. Most thought it would block the American/US Airways merger. Travelers lament the lack of competition in airline choice, let alone the deterioration of service and comfort. This is an unfortunate trend that will continue.
9. ***The Importance of Meetings Will Get Noticed:*** Meetings not only drive local and national economies (as demonstrated by the Events Industry Council's *Economic Significance Study of Meetings to the US Economy*), they also drive business results. An industry coalition called *Meetings Mean Business* promotes not only the economic benefit of meetings, but also tells the story of how meetings drive business forward.

10. *Face-to-Face Is Here to Stay:* Some prognosticators have predicted that technology and virtual gatherings will spell the demise of face-to-face. This is not the case. Human beings are social animals—they have an innate need to physically interact with one another. Technology is, and will continue to be, used to enhance and supplement face-to-face gatherings, especially before and after an event.

For meeting/event professionals, meetings/events never truly end. No matter how we define an event, each is a matter of intense planning and execution, evaluation, follow-up, and starting over. The role of a MEEC professional is critical in ensuring outcomes that contribute to a sound economy.

The success of the industry for individuals who currently work in, or who will choose to work in, MEEC depends on what we do now and how we anticipate and plan for the future. Those who choose to stay in or join this industry must have critical thinking skills and the willingness to consider the impact of all local and worldwide events on one's own meetings and events. Event professionals will need to know more about changing demographics in order to accommodate the needs of broader audiences; adult learning techniques to incorporate experiential learning and technology into face-to-face or virtual presentations, or for blended learning; nutrition and food allergies to ensure healthy and safe participants; climate change to understand its impact on sustainability, the availability of food and water, and the bottom line; current events and projections about world population shifts; and the worldwide economy and its impact on availability of products and services, including safety and security; and so on. The list is even lengthier than those stated.

In order to succeed, the meeting/event professional needs to be curious, informed, and customer focused. They will be planning experiences, not just meetings. They will change how spaces are used in facilities; how content is derived and delivered; and how participants are engaged. Those who succeed will enhance what they learn in classes and sessions by looking outside the industry for information.

Summary

In this chapter, you have been introduced to the world of MEEC. As we have seen, MEEC is multifaceted and exciting, and offers diverse career opportunities. MEEC is also very large and incorporates many aspects of the hospitality industry. It has tremendous economic impact. You are

now prepared to continue with the remaining chapters in this book. They expand on and provide more details about the concepts and practices of MEEC that this first chapter only touches on.

CASE STUDY

The Big Day

Picture this: The sun rises above the horizon, releasing rays of blue and pink light that whisk across the ocean and spill onto the beautifully manicured greens of the resort hotel's championship golf course. Against the backdrop of the crashing surf and pleas of hungry gulls, you can also hear the sounds of morning stirring at the resort hotel. Car doors slamming, muffled voices sharing greetings and farewells, china and silver clashing, and the squeaking wheels of fully laden carts, each heading off to its appointed area under the guiding hand of one of many hotel staff who have arrived before most guests are awake.

Today is a big day. The Association of Amalgamated Professionals (AAP) will open its 35th Annual Congress with an

evening reception, and, before the day is done, 1,900 guests and hundreds of vendors will have descended on this resort hotel. Since there were growing concerns about the image conveyed by using apparently glitzy venues, the venue eliminated the word resort from its name. This was done after the contract was signed.

Todd Cliver, Convention Services Manager for the hotel, convenes a last-minute meeting for the hotel's team handling the Annual Congress. Todd has worked tirelessly for nearly nine months, when the account was turned over from the Sales and Marketing Department of the hotel, coordinating all of the plans, wants, and needs of his client,

(Continued)

the association's Senior Meeting Manager, Barbara Tain. Today represents the culmination of hundreds of emails, phone calls, videoconferences, and personal meetings between Todd and Barbara. Todd interacted with every department in the hotel. Barbara worked closely with AAP staff and volunteers, worked with other vendors, and supervised AAP support staff for the AAP's 35th Annual Congress.

Donna Miller, Director of Sales and Marketing, whose department was responsible for contracting this—the largest meeting the hotel will have ever managed—reports on her client's last-minute changes and concerns, all meticulously logged since her client, Barbara Tain, arrived two days ago. David Stern, Front Desk Manager, recaps the latest report on expected room occupancy and on the timing and numbers of anticipated arrivals. Throughout the day, he will continue to check with his staff to ensure that there will be adequate (and contracted) numbers of front desk clerks to support the check-in flow, bell staff to manage the deluge of luggage and golf clubs, and door staff, valet parkers, concierge and guest services staff, and housekeeping services.

David Fenner, Director of Catering, provides his final status report, commenting on the readiness of the kitchen and banquet staff to serve the equivalent of almost 12,000 meals and untold gallons of juice, milk, coffee, tea, soda, and alcoholic beverages over the next three days. In addition, the hotel's outlets (restaurants and lounges) expect a much higher than average volume and have planned for supplies and personnel accordingly.

Other hotel staff members report to the Director of Sales and the Convention Services Manager. These include those involved with recreation (golf, tennis, health club, and pool), maintenance, security, and accounting. Even the animal handlers, who work with the parrots, an attraction for guests as they enter the property, want to ensure there are only healthy, well-behaved birds to greet the guests.

This one convention has already impacted, and will impact, every area of the hotel's operations. Armed with all this information, Todd leaves for his final preconference meeting (pre-con) with Barbara Tain.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the country, Jane Lever steps onto Concourse B of the Philadelphia International Airport, her airline-boarding pass, e-ticket receipt with its special meeting-discount price, and a US government-issued photo ID firmly in her grasp. She has checked her luggage, making sure it is locked with only the TSA-approved locks for a possible security search. She scans the bank of monitors for her flight information. Before her day ends, she will have touched down at two other airports, eaten one airline snack, grabbed a candy bar on her way through a change of planes at another airport, made numerous cell phone calls, bought a newspaper and a few magazines, and paid for a taxi to the hotel. Around the country, 1,899 other professionals, just like Jane, will do the same thing and travel to the same place for the same purpose—a **meeting**.

In the hotel's destination city, Kathy Sykes, the Owner and President of Skylark Destination Management Company (DMC), is already at her office reviewing final arrangements for ground transportation for VIPs and off-site events, event theme preparations, and entertainment for the AAP meeting. Kathy has already received two complaints from the manager of the headliner rock star booked for tonight's reception: The entertainer wants only chilled glasses for his orange juice, which he expects to be freshly squeezed in his suite, and can only get dressed if he is provided with navy blue towels for his after-shower rubdown. Kathy, of course, will ensure compliance with these requests; she wants to avoid any problems before tonight's event.

With a thunderstorm threatening for tomorrow afternoon, Kathy's mind is also already racing about alternatives for the golf tournament. She knows the golfers can play in the rain, but a thunderstorm would endanger their safety.

Jack Ardulosky, a Senior Technical Engineer for an audiovisual company, pulls into the hotel's delivery area while completing his mental checklist for final site review, satellite link integrity, picture clarity, and sound quality. With three global broadcasts and webcasts, he will have little room for error. He sees the florist unloading the last of the fresh floral arrangements and makes a note to himself that leaves and petals can cause just as much of a viewing obstruction as meeting room columns. He scans the area around him for a parking spot since not much is available with all the trucks and vans unloading the trade show booths. Jack notices the rising ambient temperature and expects a long, hot day. He will feel better if he can find parking in the shade, even if he must walk a greater distance.

Barbara Tain, the Senior Meeting Manager for the association, wipes the beginning of fatigue from her eyes—she has already been on site for two days, and her constant checking of details has not allowed her to sleep as well as she would have liked—and continues her walk-through of the registration area, information center, and cyber café, en route to a meeting with Todd Cliver and David Fenner, ensuring the meeting space will be appropriately set for delivery of the education critical to the meeting's objectives. Having eaten just a few bites of her breakfast during a meeting with association executives and key committee members, she will still be late to her meeting with Cliver and Fenner because of last-minute details and concerns from the meeting with association staff and volunteers.

Only half glancing at the space around her, she again reviews her lengthy checklist: speaker and trainer arrivals and needs, **banquet event orders (BEOs)**, transportation schedules, badges, staffing, centerpiece design and delivery, phone and data lines, computers and printers, Wi-Fi bandwidth, exhibitor booth setup, VIP procedures, concerns about tomorrow's weather, special check-in processes, audiovisual equipment, opening production rehearsal times and needs, PowerPoint files, handouts, arrangements

for participants with disabilities including those who have specified food allergies, and amenities for VIPs—her mind is crowded with details.

With all this and more going through her mind, her most dominant thought is, “What could go wrong over the next three days: weather; delayed arrivals; delayed departures; the illness, or worse, death, of a participant, vendor, or speaker; or a natural disaster like an earthquake? How prepared am I? Is the hotel, our vendors, and off-site venues ready to respond quickly and effectively?” The fact is, although it is almost never apparent to a meeting participant, some things may not proceed as planned. The meeting planner and CSM are never more important than at that moment when a crisis must be anticipated and then averted.

It Is Opening Day at Last, and Everything Is in Motion

It is the end of the first day of the AAP’s 35th Annual Congress, which Barbara Tain refers to as the Annual or Annual Meeting, and so far all has gone well.

Barbara will have had formal, prescheduled meetings with Todd Clive. Barbara will also have spoken with Todd and many others who work for the hotel via radio (walkie-talkie) and/or mobile device, as well as by chance and scheduled meetings. These talks include a review of banquet checks with various departments, one of which will include accounting. Barbara will have talked with those on the AAP staff and in volunteer leadership, and with outside vendors.

She will also check the weather many times on her smart phone, television, radio, and, if there is one, the newspaper. Barbara will have eaten on the run, tried to find a few minutes to check office voice mail and email, and, through it all, kept a smile on her face, even while her feet hurt.

At the end of the day, she will review her notes and check room sets for the next morning’s sessions and crawl into bed for a few hours of sleep before it all begins again.

When the final curtain closes on the AAP’s 35th Annual Congress, Barbara Tain will be one of the last to leave the hotel. Before leaving for the airport to fly home, she will review all the master account charges, conduct a post-convention (post-con) meeting with the property staff and her vendors, and make notes for next year’s meeting. Once back in the office, she’ll work with the vendor companies that conducted the evaluations, review all the bills, and ensure timely payment, and write thank you notes.

Face-to-face meetings will continue because there is a need for human interaction. These meetings and events will succeed because they are enhanced by virtual audiences who add to the energy and diversity prior to, during, and after the meeting or event. (Think Twitter and the hashtags being used now for meetings, and envision even greater involvement in the future.)

You’ve thus far decided to read this text and to learn about this dynamic industry. *You* are the future; you bring to it your experiences and insights. Observe, learn, and take action to keep MEEC moving forward.

Key Words and Terms

For definitions, see the Glossary

Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX)	Destination Management Companies (DMCs)	Meetings and Business Events Competency Standards (MBECS)
banquet event orders (BEOs)	Events Industry Council (EIC)	meetings, expositions, events, and conventions (MEEC)
Certified Meeting Professional (CMP)	exhibition	meeting
Certified Meeting Professional International Standards (CMP-IS)	exposition	
conference	knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs)	
convention		

Review and Discussion Questions

1. What are meetings?
2. Describe some events from the past that were meetings.
3. Describe some current aspects of MEEC industry jobs.
4. Who attends meetings?
5. What can be accomplished by convening or attending a meeting?
6. What are five key jobs in a facility (hotel, resort, or conference center) that contribute to the successful outcome of a meeting?
7. What is the CIC?
8. What is APEX, and what is its impact?
9. What is the impact of meetings on the US economy?
10. What is MBECS?
11. What is the future of electronic meetings?
12. Create your own career pathway in the MEEC Industry.
13. Create a list of situations in the MEEC industry where ethics would come into play.

About the Chapter Contributors

Karen Kotowski, CAE, CMP, is the CEO of the Events Industry Council, a federation of more than 30 associations in the meetings, conventions, events, and exhibitions industry. The council administers the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) credential, develops best practices through its APEX Initiative, promotes sustainable meetings practices, and conducts research on the economic impact of meetings and events.

Kathryn Hashimoto, PhD, is a faculty member in the School of Hospitality Leadership at East Carolina

University. She has theoretical expertise in marketing and consumer behavior with operational expertise in meetings/events and casino management.

Previous Edition Chapter Contributor

Joan L. Eisenstodt, president of Washington, DC–based Eisenstodt Associates, LLC.