



POSSIBILITIES

As recently as 1995, fewer than 25 percent of associations offered members the option of online registration. Today, it's standard operating procedure, one of many examples of how meeting technology has created efficiencies, cut costs, and enhanced the attendee and exhibitor experience.

Many people (I confess to being one of them) are intimidated by technology. But you don't have to know how technology works ... as long as you know how to make it work for you. That's the purpose of this special issue of *Convene*, sponsored by the San Diego Convention & Visitors Bureau.

While its evolution continues at warp speed, to date technology has impacted meeting planning in three separate and distinct ways:

Logistics management. A dizzying array of software and online programs has simplified repetitive tasks. E-mail and other Internet applications have virtually rewritten the rules of communication, promotion, registration, and a host of other functions.

Presentation technology. While the flip chart still has its place, it stands alongside the laptop PowerPoint ... and the new-generation projection equipment that comes with it. Audiences have come to expect "high-tech" delivery; as a result, spending on audiovisual has increased 30 percent in the past three years.

Alternate delivery systems. It's unfortunate that the events of Sept. 11 revived the fear that technologies such as videoconferencing are an alternative, rather than a complement, to face-to-face meetings. Successful associations have demonstrated that the "blended" meeting

— face-to-face enhanced by technology — is the most successful model for measurable learning and community building.

The content of this issue is also about possibilities. Who would have believed 10 or 15 years ago how much of our work and lives would be centered around the desktop,

or the laptop, as the case may be. Who among us can imagine what other techno-possibilities the future will hold? Special thanks to the author of this guide, E.J. Siwek, president of Flashpoint Technologies and a meeting planner for 20 years. He brought to this project the perfect "blend" of industry experience and techno-savvy. And personal thanks to *Convene's* executive editor Maxine Golding who, thankfully for yours truly, is pretty techno-savvy herself.

While technology is constantly changing, the information in this resource guide represents a compendium of best practices. We hope it proves valuable to you, as well as others within your organization.

Peter Shure
Editor in Chief/Associate Publisher

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