

Corporate & Incentive Travel

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A big hit! This attended, separate play area for children drew smiles all around for parents, the kids and all event participants, according to the folks at KiddieCorp, a San Diego, CA-based company that specializes in providing children's programs at meetings.

Photo courtesy of KiddieCorp

For Good Times And Greater Rewards

By Andrea Montello

Grueling hours...reports that need to be compiled over the weekend...doing more with less. This is today's reality in corporate America. Meetings, events and incentive trips mean more time away from home and

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family...or do they?

Today, savvy companies are encouraging employees to bring their families to meetings and on incentive trips. Companies have found that by including the family, the employee's efforts are given added support at home. Programs that exclude the family become more of a burden than a reward. The balance between work life and family life is an intricate one. Plus, in the world of dual-income families and the increase in women traveling on the job, the time spent with the family diminishes like sand falling through an hourglass.



“By including the family in a meeting or incentive, it says, ‘We value you and your family and know they are behind you.’”

**Diane B. Lyons, CMP, DMCP, President and CEO
Accent Destination Management, New Orleans, LA**

In most cases, top performers have families at home who have made sacrifices. “It

takes an entire village to help you be successful,” said Diane B. Lyons, CMP, DMCP, president and CEO of New Orleans-based Accent on Arrangements, a DMC that specializes in creating customized children’s programs. “By including the family in a meeting or incentive, it says, ‘We value you and your family and know they are behind you.’”

If there is a choice between attending a meeting or incentive or spending time with the kids, many parents will choose the kids. “When a company advertises it is offering a kids’ program, we find that even those who weren’t planning on coming become loyal attendees,” explained Christine Tempesta, president of San Diego, CA-based KiddieCorp, a company that specializes in providing children’s programs at conventions, trade shows, meetings and incentives. “Plus, those who would only attend part of the meeting or incentive to get back home with the family are now staying for the entire program.”

Echoing reports from the entire industry, these companies that arrange children’s programs for meetings and incentives said that last year was a challenging one. Optimism reigns, though. “Last year, companies starting taking more of a wait-and-see attitude. For the second half of this year and next year, business is picking up. Companies are saying yes we want to have our program again,” added Tempesta.

Lyons is seeing similar activity. “As we move into 2010 we are noticing more inquiries. I think clients are looking for value-added service to draw attendance,” she said.

Kids’ Persistence Pays Off

With incentives, family members who have attended trips in the past will motivate the employee to succeed so they can go on others in the future. “The child will ask, ‘Is Dad going to win that trip? I want to hang out with Suzy again,?’” said Lyons. Kids who have met during these trips often will stay in touch via texting and Facebook updates. “That adds another layer of motivation,” Lyons said.

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**Christine Tempesta, President
KiddieCorp, San Diego, CA**



Given the economy, many meeting attendees are combining these trips with family vacations as at least part of it is paid for by the company. It all sounds so simple, combine work with family time. But allowing kids to attend meetings and incentives can complicate an already complicated meeting planning process. That’s where companies such as Accent on Arrangements and KiddieCorp can

help.

It is advisable that the trip is promoted as being inclusive of the family so singles know this up front. "Make no mistake, even those without kids are motivated when a company shows that it values its employees and their families," said Tempesta.

McDonald's has an annual worldwide convention for its owner operators that includes a children's program onsite.

Rosemary Spann, president of Naperville, IL-based The Spann Group, was a meeting planner on staff at McDonald's but now, as an independent meeting planner, plans this convention as well as others.

McDonald's Owner Operator Convention, which also includes suppliers and corporate staff, has from 12,000 to 15,000 people in attendance. "Being a family-oriented company, it offers the opportunity of a children's program onsite," explained Spann. "We could have anywhere from 300 to 700 children." She has employed the services of Accent on Arrangements for help.

She pointed out that this is not an incentive trip, it's a true business meeting.

"Accent on Arrangements gives the attendees peace of mind to focus on business knowing their children are happy and secure," said Spann. "It does offer the opportunity for the family to be together in these times with both parents working."

The key to a successful meeting or incentive that includes families is making it multifaceted. It must include a multitude of activities for all ranges, for those with kids and those without.

Moreover, today's kids are savvy and in turn these children's programs must be sophisticated enough to keep their attention. Tempesta tries to incorporate activities that will teach them something about the meeting's destination. She's planned ocean-themed activities, magical castle events and beach parties. The proper staff is vital, added Tempesta. "If you have the right staff in a room with the kids, you don't even need many other supplies," she said.



"One of the biggest benefits is the kids ask their parents when they're going on the trip again so it actually motivates them to sell more to qualify year after year."
 Michelle MacGillivray, Program Manager
 Spellman Travel Partners, Boston, MA

Taking It To The Slopes

Michelle MacGillivray, program manager for Boston, MA-based Spellman Travel Partners, an incentive and meeting planning company, helps CA, a software company based in Islandia, NY, with its incentive programs.

CA holds one incentive program a year for adults and another one that includes adults and children.

In February, in Vail, CO, ski rentals, skiing, and snowboarding were offered and more than 160 kids — 3

"Allowing attendees to bring families and bookend the meeting with pre- or post-weekend stays has enormous perceived value."
 George Aguel, SVP, Worldwide Sales and Service
 Walt Disney Parks & Resorts, Orlando, FL



years old and up — skied all day long. It was a huge success, said MacGillivray. Last year, the group went to Puerto Rico and tapped into Accent on Arrangements for help.

"With this incentive trip, it's like planning two programs," explained MacGillivray. "One for kids and one for adults."

But, according to MacGillivray, CA feels it is worth it: "The sales people love it. They're not feeling like I worked so much extra to earn this, and now I have to leave my children at home. They have the option of

bringing the children, and this alleviates a lot of their stress. One of the biggest benefits is the kids ask their parents when they're going on the trip again so it actually motivates them to sell more to qualify year after year."

In order to respect those without children and those who want a break and leave the kids at home, separate kids' programs and parties are planned so the attendees don't have to see the kids if they don't want to, added MacGillivray.

Think about it, most meeting planners have years of experience planning spouse programs. It's taking that concept and expanding upon it. An added twist is that many planners report that parents conduct themselves with the utmost respect when they have their family with them. Drunk and rowdy does not factor into the equation.

Although today's hotels and cruise lines offer extremely sophisticated and fun kids' programs, many planners prefer to employ the services of an outside child-care arrangement company so all the families from their group stay together. The children's programs usually match the meeting's function hours.

The destination often dictates whether families are included or not. So does the type of meeting. For instance, there is usually a spike in family attendance when a program is held in the Orlando area. Attendees either bring their families or tack on a few days before or after for a family vacation.

"Because of who we are, Disney consistently sees a higher percentage of family programs than a lot of other destinations. Even when it's not the traditional family program, attendees frequently extend their stays to add on a vacation with the family before or after the meeting," explained George Aguel, senior vice president, worldwide sales and services, for Walt Disney Parks & Resorts.

Planned properly, there are countless benefits and practically no downside to bringing the family along, added Aguel. "It's no secret that people today are time-starved, and business travel can be seen as a big imposition. Allowing attendees to bring families and bookend the meeting with pre- or post-weekend stays has enormous perceived value. There's simply no better way to strengthen the bond between a company and its employees than by making the families of those employees feel special."

To be successful, the meeting must be planned properly. "The key here is managing the meeting to ensure that enough family time is planned — either during the meeting or pre/post — so that attendees aren't distracted by family issues or tempted to miss portions of the program. If they schedule family events, planners also need to ensure they've made arrangements to host the full spectrum of family needs, from infants and toddlers to tweens and teens and, just as important, those attendees who will not have family or children with them," added Aguel.

Security Is Important

Companies such as Accent on Arrangements and KiddieCorp are also extremely popular for trade show participants, as many convention centers do not permit children under age 12 on the trade show floor. Liability is a vital issue that must be addressed when planning a meeting or incentive that will include children. Obtain a release for each child signed by the parents. The release should include a liability clause and authorization to obtain medical help in case of an emergency.



Family-friendly experiences abound in Cancun: Children of all ages enjoy safe and fun activities such as swimming with the dolphins year round in the Mexican Caribbean. Photo courtesy of Cancun CVB

It's important to have a security system in place that entails giving each child a security bracelet with an ID number that must match a bracelet given to the parents. Other companies use photo IDs for the children and families.

A corporate executive's time is a limited commodity. Many have to combine being an executive with being a parent, and bringing their families with them on these types of trips is much appreciated. Many corporations are realizing that including children in programs can have a positive effect on the employee's attitude toward the program, and even toward the job itself. **C&IT**

All About Connections

Dazzling fireworks in sync with a mesmerizing laser and water show all choreographed to a rousing soundtrack culminating with the world's first spherical video display system — the 350,000-pound Earth Globe, IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth, is EPCOT's awe-inspiring nighttime spectacular.

Many attendees and suppliers from the Buyer Interactive Trade Alliance & Conference (BITAC) enjoyed this display during a private dessert reception with their families.

"We allow our attendees to bring their families with them. It's great because in today's world, everyone is working many more hours at such a higher intensity. For them to be able to bring the kids who can enjoy the theme parks



VIOLA

while they are in meetings is a win-win," explained Rich Viola, president of Hotel Interactive, the organization that produces BITAC which complements the company's own Web portal. In July of 2008, BITAC Purchasing & Design East was held at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa at Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando. Each conference is designed for 250 attendees in order to maintain a level of intimacy.

The Grand Floridian event was so successful that it is being held there again this July. "The post survey results from our Disney experience ranked it in the top 5 percent. We're excited about coming back," said Viola.

Surprisingly, this was the first time many top executives had been to Disney, Viola noted. These highly acclaimed events have earned a reputation for bringing together the top echelon of both purchasing decision makers and suppliers. Based on this experience, two large companies are looking to book their events at Disney. "They were so impressed with the service, with the quality of food at Disney's Grand Floridian, and they said it rivaled any other experience they have had and add to that the family atmosphere. Disney definitely wowed. We heard from many that this was the first time their kids complimented them for the industry they are in."

An executive could easily long to have their family with them while they are at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa, a Victorian-style resort with world-class dining, entertainment and accommodations. "By letting them bring their families, they didn't feel the pressure of 'I wish they were here with me.' The experience gave families the opportunity to reconnect. The opportunity to be

productive while their families were having a great experience was the perfect balance.” — AM



EPCOT's IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth is a popular buyout for groups. Attendees of The Buyer Interactive Trade Alliance & Conference (right) also enjoyed this spectacle during a private dessert reception with their families. Photo courtesy of Walt Disney World Resorts

Family-Friendly Port Adventures

In 2010, Disney Cruise Line will provide family-friendly Port Adventures so attendees can fully experience the culturally rich and exotic locales along their Mediterranean, Northern European, Caribbean and Bahamian routes. All Port Adventures will offer more scheduled breaks, complimentary snacks and beverages, and fun port journals for kids. While every port of call will offer Port Adventures for families to enjoy together, many tours integrate separate activities for children and adults. While kids are engaged in age-appropriate activities supervised by youth counselors from the ship, parents can explore cultural sites and points of interest in greater depth and/or attend their company's meetings onboard. For the 2010 European season, each itinerary will include at least one tour that features distinctly Disney touches, beloved characters and rich storytelling to help bring local culture and customs to life.

Some of the Port Adventures exclusive to Disney Cruise Line (disneycruise.com) guests include:



Distinctly Disney. At one port of call, on the Mediterranean and Northern European itineraries, a one-of-a-kind experience brings local history and stories to life with the help of some Disney characters such as Belle, Cinderella and Snow White, who mingle with guests at an elaborate

Royal Ball at the Catherine Palace in St. Petersburg, Russia. The majestic Catherine Palace was the summer residence for Russia's imperial family for more than 200 years. Arriving by horse-drawn carriages, the princesses and their princes will entertain and treat guests as royalty in the gilded Grand Ballroom.

Something for Everyone. At many ports of call during the 2010 European season, at least one Port Adventure will feature youth counselors from the Disney Magic who will go ashore to direct mini-adventures designed just for children. For example, during a tour of Florence, families will experience city highlights together and then divide into separate groups for their own style of fun. For roughly an hour, children will test their artistic skills as they create their own traditional Italian fresco painting in the manner of Michelangelo. It's free time for the adults to discover all that the impressive Palazzo Vecchio has to offer, including the masterpieces of this Florentine palace.

Family Adventures. Unique to Disney Cruise Line, one-of-a-kind family adventures will be offered at select ports of call. These immersive, interactive tours allow families to spend quality time together while experiencing the sites and culture of the destination in a fun and entertaining way. For example, the Sidi Bou Said Treasure Hunt in Tunis guides families throughout focal points of this popular destination by following clues. This entertaining quest brings to life the culture, sites, sounds and flavors of the city. As part of this Port Adventure, families visit a traditional Tunisian house, learn about the origin of Sidi Bou Said

The Disney Dream will set sail in 2011 and feature Goofy's Sports Deck with Goofy's Golf, digital sports simulators, full-court basketball and more. At Nemo's Reef little cruisers will have fun and cool off at this water-play area. Photo courtesy of Disney Cruise Line



The AquaDuck onboard the Disney Dream, the first water coaster aboard a cruise ship, is 765 feet long, four decks high and swings out over the ocean. Water jets will push guests upwards and forwards at 20 feet per second. Photo courtesy of Disney Cruise Line

from a local storyteller, receive a hand-painted henna tattoo, bargain with local merchants for a keepsake water vessel, sip freshly prepared mint tea and get their name written in Arabic as a souvenir.

Signature Collection. These exclusive tours are customized for guests seeking deluxe experiences ashore in intimate, upscale settings. In Florence, the Tuscan Cooking School and Wine Tasting takes guests on a northern Italian culinary journey. Guests learn how to create delectable Tuscan cuisine using fresh, local ingredients at an authentic Tuscan farmhouse. Additionally, an Italian chef provides one-on-one instruction and guides the hands-on participation. Guests then enjoy their culinary creations, such as antipasto, pasta, focaccia and Tuscan almond biscotti. A sampling of wines bottled onsite at the farmhouse provides the perfect pairing to the regional feast. C&IT