

**NIGEL GAUNT**

## Experiential activities increase reward's value

Have you ever wondered whether your incentive travel programme qualifiers *really* want a trip that resembles something out of a package tour brochure? You know what I mean, 'Breakfast at hotel followed by...' a sightseeing tour with numerous visits to significant and historic sites that most regular tourists also beat a well worn path towards.

Instead, why not provide an array of experiential activities rather than the usual sightseeing or traditional trip itinerary? This provides incentive programme qualifiers with a unique and memorable experience to savour long after they return home and greatly enhances the reward's perceived value.

Experiences shared with partners and fellow achievers are also the best way to build camaraderie and a sense of being part of a winning team.

Of course you can still offer sightseeing to those who seek it out as part of an optional activities programme, but remember — great teams aren't built by sitting on a bus listening to a monotonous tour guide's commentary.

Arguably the most significant benefit to this 'experience-led' programme approach is the fact that

this lowers the need to keep chasing destinations that are further to travel to or are more expensive.

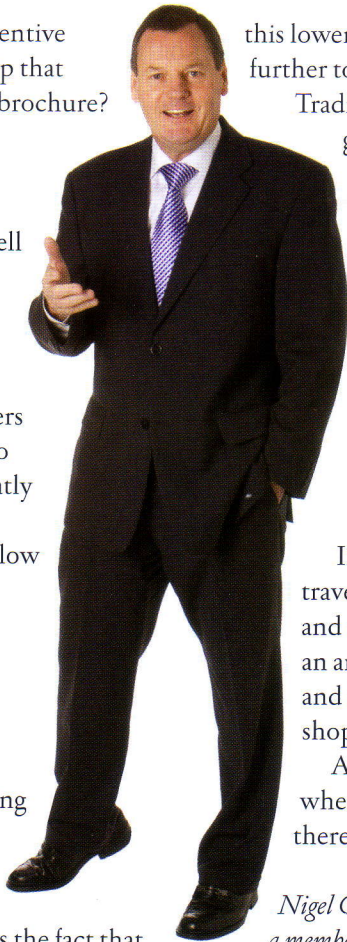
Traditionally we had to keep looking for the latest and greatest five-star city or resort destination as a way of creating appeal to the target audience. Now you can add appeal with exciting optional experiences that lower the need to promote the destination or venue as the 'carrot' ahead of what the people actually do with their time on the ground.

**"Great teams aren't built by sitting on a bus and listening to a tour guide's monotonous commentary"**

If you are planning an incentive reward travel programme I suggest you look to locations and destination management companies that offer an array of exciting experiences for your people and not just the same old sightseeing and shopping programme.

And please remember this motto: It doesn't matter where you go, it's what happens to you when you get there that really matters. ■

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### GLOBAL COMMENT FROM AIPC

## Tough fiscal times prompt innovative change



San Diego has a reputation as one of the world's most beautiful convention destinations. The

San Diego Convention Center Corporation (SDCCC) has added to this package by providing superior customer service, which has made us a top pick among meeting planners and convention travellers from around the globe.

In 2004, budget constraints faced by the City of San Diego and concerns about accountability, duplication of efforts between the Convention and Visitors Bureau

and SDCCC, and conflicting roles and responsibilities, led to a decision by the City of San Diego to shift all sales and marketing for the convention centre to the SDCCC.

I believe this was the beginning of a new era in North America in which cities began re-examining their sales and operations models, especially for those who market and operate public facilities, to take advantage of

opportunities for greater efficiencies and accountability.

From the time the convention centre opened, it had a shared role with the bureau in selling and marketing the building.

Today, the centre is among the first facilities in the US to be fully responsible for marketing and selling itself, and we have complete autonomy to make business decisions that directly influence our revenues and

long-term strategic planning.

For clients, it has meant greater efficiency and superior service, since prior to the change customers worked with staff from both organisations, creating duplication of responsibilities and confusion about who handled what responsibilities.

The fiscal success of the change has been dramatic as reflected in the centre's year-end results and other measures for the destination. ■

*Carol Wallace is President and CEO of the San Diego Convention Center Corporation, a member of AIPC, [www.aipc.org](http://www.aipc.org)*

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