



# MEETINGS DELIVER



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## *By the Numbers*

**\$12.50:** Value companies gain for every U.S. dollar they invest in business travel

**40%:** Prospects converted to new customers through face-to-face meetings

**28%:** Current business that would be lost without face-to-face meetings

**17%:** Profit the average company would lose if it eliminated all business travel

**3:** Years it would take for profits to recover

**\$4.6 million:** Minimum value of the productivity gain governments achieve by investing \$1 million in travel

**95%:** Survey respondents who say face-to-face meetings are essential for long-term business relationships

**8.5%:** Employees base pay increases to match the impact of incentive travel

**1.5%:** Minimum amount of economic growth that would result from a 10% increase in business travel spending

## **Executive Summary**

Meetings drive sales and profitability for business and enable organizations of all kinds to deliver on key strategic objectives, serving as a catalyst for education and professional development, motivation, behavior change and concrete action. And for the hundreds of local economies that rely on the meetings economy, conferences create jobs and tax revenues wherever participants gather.

Meeting professionals have known this for years. Now they can prove it. With recent research from the likes of the U.S. Travel Association, the National Business Travel Association and MPI, the data exists to back up an industry that has long strove to prove its return on investment. Unfortunately, the studies on the industry's worth have been as far-flung as they have been numerous—until now.

MPI presents the first white paper to succinctly and thoroughly present data from recent studies in a single document, allowing each and every meeting and event industry professional easy access to the numbers that prove their worth and the worth of the entire business event sector. Take these numbers to your boss, your clients, your CEO and make the case for events—not just for you and your career, but as a strategic imperative that has now proven a harbinger of business success.

Indeed, as the economic slump entered its second year, senior decision-makers began to recognize the irreplaceable role of face-to-face meetings in solidifying relationships, closing business deals, consulting stakeholders and deciding major policies or strategies. Meanwhile, the meeting industry itself is beginning to change, offering a wider menu of flexible services to meet a more challenging, sometimes sceptical market.

In every major economy, 2009 was the year when executives sought to control costs by indiscriminately cutting meeting and business travel budgets, often with little or no consideration of the purposes for which face-to-face contact is still absolutely essential. The rapid evolution of virtual meeting technologies created the impression of a simple solution and, by November, the U.S. National Business Travel Association (NBTA) reported that 85% of U.S. companies had reduced their travel spending.

Organizations have been slower to recognize that teleconferences and webcasts don't add up to a silver bullet—and neither do face-to-face meetings. The opportunity to mix, match and combine formats according to the topic, audience, timing and purpose of each meeting is just beginning to emerge as a strategic conversation among meeting planners, technology suppliers, learning designers and the people who own and host meetings.

The business benefits of face-to-face meetings include

- A 12.5:1 return on investment in business travel
- The opportunity to “seal the deal” and form long-term business relationships, negotiate important contracts, interview senior staff for key positions and understand the needs of major customers
- A 4:1 return on investment in incentive travel, in the form of heightened employee morale and performance
- A more effective mechanism for communicating and negotiating across cultures
- The opportunity to observe verbal and non-verbal behaviors that are lost in most virtual conversations
- The greater ability of face-to-face participants to build transparency and trust, communicate informally during breaks, learn the culture and norms of the group and establish their own social identities within a group
- Stronger brand awareness through customer experience
- Improved productivity attributable to government travel

In local economies, *face-to-face meetings deliver* direct and indirect employment for millions of employees across North America. A 10% increase in business travel would raise Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 1.5% to 2.9%, while the equivalent growth in government travel would boost public sector productivity by 1.0% to 1.4%.

According to economic impact studies released by MPI Foundation Canada in 2008 and 2009:

- In 2008, 69.8 million participants spent CAD\$23.8 billion at an estimated 673,400 meetings across Canada. Meeting volume declined from 2007 to 2008, but was essentially steady from 2006 to 2008.
- Meetings in Canada accounted for 552,300 full-year jobs in 2008, delivering CAD\$14.2 billion in tax revenues to all local, provincial and federal governments.

In tough economic times, *face-to-face meetings deliver* innovation, as meeting planners and suppliers adapt on the fly to contribute to their organizations' drive to succeed. Since April 2009,

meeting executives have shown a slow but steady increase in their optimism about the business of meetings, and MPI's *FutureWatch 2010* survey tells a similar story: "Meeting and event professionals are working long and hard to sustain existing business models while discovering new methods, markets, and best practices in response to an unprecedented range of pressures—financial, political, and social."

Ever attentive to a shifting business environment, meeting professionals have adopted a back-to-basics approach to their onsite programs for 2010. "Extras" are out, metrics are in and planners are on the lookout for smart, affordable elements that will add value to their meetings.

- Corporate planners foresee more emphasis on accountability and value, leading to meetings that are less elaborate and offer fewer frills and extras.
- Association planners are preparing for lower onsite attendance in 2010, combined with stronger demand for educational content and a more consistent effort in the direction of sustainable meetings.
- Independent planners expect to see more events outsourced, with clients requiring meeting content and execution to align more closely with their broader objectives.
- Some suppliers expect closer budget scrutiny to delay clients' program decisions, leading to shorter project lead times.
- Compared to past years, a larger percentage of planners will hold meetings closer to home.
- More than 70% of meeting professionals use some kind of objective benchmark, usually a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures, to track the return they receive on their meeting investment.
- Planners are attentive to any technology solutions that will help them deliver more effective meetings at lower cost.

Over the last year, meeting professionals have worked hard to *deliver the message* on the power and value of face-to-face meetings. MPI participated in the Meetings Mean Business campaign coordinated by the U.S. Travel Association, while major firms and organizations within the industry mounted their own advocacy or research efforts.

- The Krisam Group and Global Events Partners launched The Wall, a global campaign that attracted more than 3,000 signatures for a petition to the U.S. president.
- British Airways announced Face-to-Face, a campaign that offered small business owners "the chance to earn a flight anywhere in the world, to take their business to the next level with in-person meetings."
- With funding from MPI and several other industry associations, the Convention Industry Council launched a major study to measure the economic impact of U.S. meetings and events.

## ***Shift: The Challenge to Meetings***

The global economic crisis is a moment of upheaval that demonstrates the benefits that *face-to-face meetings deliver* to the organizations that hold them.

The research is done, and the results are overwhelming. Meetings drive sales and profitability for business. They enable organizations of all kinds to deliver on key strategic objectives, serving as a catalyst for education and professional development, motivation, behavior change and concrete action. And for the hundreds of local economies that rely on the meetings economy, conferences create jobs and tax revenues wherever participants gather.

And yet, in the first year of the economic slump, decision-makers across the industrialized world showed only limited understanding of the value of meetings. Facing a sea of debt and bankruptcies, unemployment and consumer jitters, many industries and governments treated meetings as an extra at best, an extravagance at worst.

Organizations are now beginning to recognize the irreplaceable role of face-to-face meetings in solidifying relationships, closing business deals, consulting stakeholders and deciding major policies or strategies. As senior decision-makers acknowledge what would be lost if every meeting were simply cancelled, the meeting and event industry itself is beginning to change, offering a wider menu of flexible services to meet a more challenging, sometimes sceptical market.

This shift in the basic understanding of meetings and business events is permanent, and comes not a moment too soon. In every major economy, 2009 was the year when executives sought to control costs by indiscriminately cutting meeting and business travel budgets, often with little or no consideration of the purposes for which face-to-face contact is still absolutely essential. In North America, meanwhile, the industry was rocked by reports of executives or top sales managers travelling to luxurious venues while the economy struggled.

The incentive trips were no more than a promise kept for superior performance and represented just a tiny fraction of overall meetings activity. But by the time the smoke began to clear, major destinations around the world were reporting major declines in meetings and business events, leading to layoffs in communities that were already suffering in a weak economy.

For many decision-makers, the rapid evolution of virtual meeting technologies created the impression of a simple solution: Organizations could slash their meeting and travel budgets, avoid the perception of wasteful spending and take credit for cutting the carbon emissions associated with air travel and ground transportation. The European Union introduced new virtual meeting guidelines to reduce air travel, and one international consulting agency predicted that virtual technologies would eliminate 2.1 million airline bookings per year by 2012.

By November, the U.S. National Business Travel Association (NBTA) reported that 85% of U.S. companies had reduced their travel spending. Organizations have been slower to recognize that teleconferences and webcasts don't add up to a silver bullet—and neither do face-to-face meetings. The opportunity to mix, match and combine formats according to the topic, audience,

timing and purpose of each meeting is just beginning to emerge as a strategic conversation among meeting planners, technology suppliers, learning designers and the people who own and host meetings.

Some meeting professionals have responded to the crisis in meetings and business events by falling back to the logistical skills and tactical focus by which the industry was originally defined. The facts and arguments in this paper provide a different foundation, positioning MPI members to deliver strategic solutions to the business challenges their organizations face. More than a decade ago, Intel co-founder Andy Grove described the “strategic inflection points” at which an organization—or an industry—can either adapt and prosper, or gradually lose relevance and market share. The evidence that *face-to-face meetings deliver* shows that the global meeting and event industry can thrive, not just survive, in a tough economy.

## **The Benefits for Meeting Participants: *Delivering Business Impact***

Just as the most effective meetings deliver breakthrough knowledge to participants who need it, knowledge has been meeting professionals’ best resource in countering the attack on their industry. A growing body of research shows that *face-to-face meetings deliver* results that far outweigh the time, money and resources they consume.

### **Return on investment**

In a study for the U.S. Travel Association, Oxford Economics determined that every dollar invested in business travel generates US\$12.50 in incremental value. The average U.S. business would lose 17% of its profits if it cancelled all business travel, and those profits would take more than three years to recover.

### **Sealing the deal**

Based on an April 2009 survey of business travellers, Oxford reported that more than 75% of customers either prefer or require face-to-face meetings. In a survey sponsored by British Airways, 95% of *Harvard Business Review* subscribers saw face-to-face as the “key to success for long-term relationships,” while 89% considered meetings “essential for ‘sealing the deal.’” *Harvard Business Review* found that face-to-face meetings are most effective for negotiating important contracts (82%), interviewing senior staff for key positions (81%), and understanding and listening to important customers (69%).

Executives and business travellers cited in the Oxford Economics study estimated that 40% of their prospects become new customers as a result of face-to-face interaction, compared to only 16% who convert without a meeting. They said 28% of their current business would be lost without face-to-face meetings.

### **A time and place for face-to-face**

In a white paper for Hilton Worldwide, Prof. Richard Arvey of the National University of Singapore Business School concluded that face-to-face meetings are most important where participants must “engage in and observe verbal and non-verbal behavioral styles not captured in most computer-mediated communication devices.” He said face-to-face is most important when a successful dialogue depends on participants’ ability to build transparency and trust, develop relationships, communicate informally during breaks, learn the culture and norms of the group, establish their own social identities within a group and evaluate and judge the integrity, competency and skills of other participants.

### **The best tool for the job**

In a June 2009 survey of 760 business executives, *Forbes Insights* identified persuasion, leadership, engagement, inspiration and decision-making as the business outcomes that depend most on face-to-face meetings. Participants identified Web and video conferences as the most effective mechanisms for disseminating information and presenting data. In the *Forbes* study:

- 92% of respondents said technology-enabled meetings save time, 88% said they save money, 76% said they were more flexible, and 64% admitted that virtual participation permits them to multitask during a session.
- 85% of respondents said face-to-face meetings build strong business relationships, 77% cited the ability to read body language and facial expression, 75% valued the social interaction and ability to bond with clients or colleagues and 49% said face-to-face allows for more complex strategic thinking.

While 30% of *Harvard Business Review* respondents predicted a decline in face-to-face meetings requiring travel, 60% said business relationships have suffered because of business travel cuts.

### **Bridging cultures**

In the *Harvard Business Review* study, 93% of respondents said face-to-face meetings are “helpful when negotiating with people from different language and cultural backgrounds.” Other researchers have reached the same conclusion.

“If you’re trying to do business or set up a new contract in China, you’d better be there face to face, because it simply isn’t going to happen otherwise,” said Steve Prentice, a vice president and senior fellow with The Gartner Group. But there, too, travel distances and administrative restrictions are leading to a more creative mix of live and virtual practices. Once the initial contacts behind a long-term relationship have been cemented face to face, “there are signs that, even in China, some routine meetings are moving to videoconference, for exactly the same reasons as apply elsewhere in the world,” he said.

Prentice estimates that one in 10 business trips will be replaced by virtual tools, but still sees a future for live meetings.

“The idea that virtual meetings will replace all face-to-face meetings is patently absurd,” he recently told a meeting and event industry publication. “The suggestion that all face-to-face meetings are absolutely essential is equally false. You need a sensitivity to both the circumstances and the culture.”

### **The unsung benefits of business travel**

*Forbes Insights* also identified a series of side benefits associated with business travel. Four-fifths of respondents agreed that team work depends on face-to-face interaction with co-workers, and that “down time” at in-person conferences builds stronger client bonds. In the *Harvard Business Review* study, 69% of respondents said they looked forward to travel time “as a way of stepping back and thinking about critical issues.”

### **The value for brand marketing**

In October, *Conference & Incentive Travel Magazine* quoted a half-dozen brand leaders on the value of face-to-face meetings.

"Event marketing is a vital way of bringing our franchises together, and essential for maintaining the culture of the brand," said Robin Auld, marketing director for Domino's Pizza PLC in the United Kingdom. "Conferences allow us to facilitate two-way dialogue between head office and employees and communicate what we are doing with the brand and our vision of where it is headed. It can also galvanize passion and get everyone behind the brand."

Christian Stein, marketing director for Peugeot UK, says his budget for product placement events will increase next year. This type of event is “becoming more and more important, because they are a good way to target potential customers.” In contrast to broadcast media or direct marketing, “an event allows customers to come to a conclusion, because it gives them the opportunity to feel and experience the products.”

James Tipple, Yahoo!'s senior marketing director in Europe, noted that "events play a very important role in an integrated trade campaign," delivering support to a broader marketing strategy. "An economic downturn forces you to think more creatively to get your budgets and communications messages to work harder," he said. "You can run events in a more creative way, without spending more of your budget."

### **Return on investment in government travel**

Oxford Economics concluded that governments gain between US\$4.6 and \$6.3 million for every \$1 million they invest in employee travel.

“Although governments do not generate revenue like companies, productivity is still a relevant concept to the public sector,” Oxford stated. The return on investment on travel is lower for governments than it is in the private sector, but “still substantial enough to support the position that travel is an important driver of government productivity.”



### **Return on investment in incentives**

Oxford Economics found that a company would have to increase an employee's base pay by 8.5% to achieve the same impact as incentive travel. Nearly 80% of executives said incentive travel has a significant impact on morale and job satisfaction, and more than 70% say it boosts employee performance, delivering a return on investment of more than 4:1.

“Non-cash rewards have been shown to be two to three times more effective than cash rewards at improving performance,” Oxford reported. “Travel incentives tend to be more motivating as they are more memorable,” with the result that “employees are more emotionally involved and willing to work harder for something perceived as a luxury item,” even if that luxury item costs less.

### **The bottom line: Driving economic growth**

Oxford Economics found that a 10% increase in business travel would raise Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 1.5% to 2.9%. A 10% increase in government travel would boost public sector productivity by 1.0% to 1.4%.

## **The Benefits for Communities: *Delivering Revenue and Jobs***

With communities and elected officials scrambling for any opportunity to get people back to work, *face-to-face meetings deliver* direct and indirect employment for millions of employees across North America.

Jobs in the meeting industry are built on a rigorous body of knowledge that combines tactical skills with the strategic acumen to link annual meetings and product launches, association congresses and stakeholder consultations, back to the host organization's goals and objectives. Meetings are also an important source of business volume for the hospitality sector, one of the few remaining corners of the economy where new entrants with limited skills can work their way up to management or senior leadership positions.

The scope of that activity was captured in the *Canadian Economic Impact Study*, a research report commissioned by MPI Foundation Canada. The study, the first of its kind to use a new measurement methodology developed by the U.N. World Tourism Organization, was released in 2008, then updated in 2009, to provide a three-year snapshot of the Canadian industry:

- In 2008, 69.8 million participants spent CAN\$23.8 billion at an estimated 673,400 meetings across Canada. Meeting volume declined from 2007 to 2008, but was essentially steady from 2006 to 2008.
- Meetings in Canada accounted for 552,300 full-year jobs in 2008, delivering CAN\$14.2 billion in tax revenues to all local, provincial and federal governments.

Every economy is different, so data from Canada won't be an exact match for other countries. But as a very approximate rule of thumb, the Canadian data can be extrapolated to the United

States, after adjusting for a U.S. population that is 10 times the size of Canada's. MPI is one of several industry organizations supporting an economic impact study for meetings and business events in the U.S. Results are expected toward the end of 2010.

## **The Benefits of Adapting: *Delivering Innovation***

Despite the overwhelming evidence that *face-to-face meetings deliver*, the meetings landscape is still being transformed by tight budgets, reductions in business travel and closer scrutiny over any element of a conference that might be seen as a frill. Flexibility has always been one of the most important skills in meeting professionals' tactical toolbox. Now, the ability to adapt on the fly is becoming an important part of the strategic value that planners and suppliers can contribute to their organizations' drive to succeed.

The 2010 edition of the annual *FutureWatch* survey, one of MPI's two signature research publications, showed that meeting planners and suppliers are already embracing this shift.

- Corporate planners foresaw more emphasis on accountability and value, leading to meetings that are less elaborate and offer fewer frills and extras.
- Association planners were preparing for lower onsite attendance in 2010, combined with stronger demand for educational content and a more consistent effort in the direction of sustainable meetings.
- Independent planners expected to see more events outsourced, with clients requiring meeting content and execution to align more closely with their broader objectives.
- Some suppliers expected that closer budget scrutiny will delay clients' program decisions, leading to shorter project lead times.
- Compared to past years, a larger percentage of planners will hold meetings closer to home. U.S. planners will locate 80% of their meetings within the U.S. (and another 4% across the border in Canada) in 2010, compared to 61% in 2009. Canadian planners will bring 70% of their meetings to Canada (and another 15.5% to the United States), compared to 57% in 2009. EMEA planners, consistently the most likely group of *FutureWatch* respondents to anticipate international travel, will locate 63% of their meetings in Europe, compared to 36% in 2009.
- More than 70% of *FutureWatch* respondents reported using some kind of objective benchmark, usually a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures, to track the return they receive on their meeting investment.
- Planners are attentive to any technology solutions that will help them deliver more effective meetings at lower cost. Audiovisual technologies, attendee feedback tools, onsite Internet services, virtual meeting technologies and technologies for evaluating meeting vendors, venues and destinations will be popular options over the next year.

Ever attentive to a shifting business environment, meeting professionals have adopted a back-to-basics approach to their onsite programs. Extras are out, metrics are in, and planners are on the lookout for smart, affordable elements that will add value to their meetings.

First and last, planners want to know that they are wringing the maximum value out of every penny, dollar, or Euro they spend. In *FutureWatch 2010*, 51% of respondents said they would measure RO through a mix of objective and subjective measures, 23% using objective measures only and 20% with subjective measures. Over the next year, the most popular measures of a successful meeting will be:

- Meeting cost relative to budget
- Participant satisfaction
- Achievement of meeting or event objectives
- Acquisition of new customers or members
- Increased revenue from existing customers or members
- Internal performance improvements
- Direct revenue generation

On the incentive side of the industry, opulent getaways are expected to take a back seat to team-building and information-sharing programs, at least until a halting economic recovery gains more momentum. Incentive researchers and publications are stressing the need for built-in metrics, to help companies track their return on investment and make the case for continuing successful programs.

Meanwhile, some planners and suppliers are taking tentative steps in the direction of hybrid formats that combine the best of face-to-face meetings, virtual options and the latest social media tools. Planners—and their employers or clients—are beginning to explore the possibilities and practicalities of combining live audiences with virtual communities of interest, while extending the dialogue around a face-to-face meeting for weeks or months after the closing general session.

One hotel chain, Ritz-Carlton Hotel Co., introduced Meetings Within Reach, a service designed to help corporate event planners strike the right balance between life and remote meetings.

“There has always been a need to include individuals via telecasting who are unable to make a business gathering,” said Bruce Himelstein, Ritz-Carlton’s senior vice president of sales and marketing, though technology can never replace the “traditional methods of dealing with people in person, as opposed to across cyberspace.”

These initial glimmerings of innovation will become a platform for further discussion and development, as the industry learns to combine meeting technologies with the educational impact and convening power that *face-to-face meetings deliver*.

To help guide these and other strategic business decisions, the MPI Foundation and Freeman funded *The Case for Meetings and Events: Four Elements of Strategic Value*, a briefing paper by Mary E. Boone Boone Associates. The paper traced the challenges the industry confronted in the early months of 2009, but stressed “the possibilities this crisis affords. By bringing this debate to the board and senior executive level, it has created an unprecedented opportunity for truly strategic discussions between the people who *plan* meetings and the senior executives of public and private organizations that *sponsor* them. Now, more than ever, the topic of meetings and events has great relevance in the eyes of powerful stakeholders.”

Boone identified portfolio management, meeting design, measurement and advanced logistics as the four areas where meeting professionals can bring strategic value to their organizations.

“It is likely that the complexity of our economic times calls for even more meetings now, not fewer,” she wrote. “However, what is certain is that those meetings will require more careful design, alignment with strategy, clear measures and supporting logistics in order to deliver on the promise they hold.”

Ultimately, Boone says, even the most tumultuous crisis can become an opportunity for professional growth and business success.

“By creating a strong case for the business impact of meetings, planners can go a long way toward transforming the way senior leaders understand and appreciate their power.”

## **The Prognosis: *Delivering in Tough Times***

A broader, more strategic focus on the value of meetings is reflected in *FutureWatch 2010* and MPI’s bimonthly *Business Barometer*, both produced in partnership with American Express. *FutureWatch* surveys the association’s entire membership each fall to capture the issues and trends that meeting planners and suppliers anticipate for the year ahead. *Business Barometer* captures veteran meeting professionals’ perceptions of a shifting business environment through a series of bimonthly updates, and will continue delivering timely business intelligence as 2010 unfolds.

Since April 2009, *Business Barometer* has tracked a slow but steady return in meeting executives’ optimism about the business of meetings. In February, only 21% of respondents said business conditions had improved or held steady compared to the previous year. The proportion increased to 31% in August, 37% in October, and 49% in December.

Even more significant, the executives were increasingly confident of better times ahead. In February, only 23% predicted an improvement in business conditions compared to the previous year. That proportion rose sharply to 35% in April, 42% in June, 53% in August, 58% in October, and 71% in December.

So while the recovery is still fragile—in meetings, as in the rest of the economy—industry leaders foresee a return to an era of relatively predictable markets, in which meetings and business events can continue to deliver transformative results for clients and jobs for millions of employees.

*FutureWatch 2010* tells a similar story.

“Meeting and event professionals are working long and hard to sustain existing business models while discovering new methods, markets and best practices in response to an unprecedented range of pressures—financial, political and social,” the report states. While there was some

expectation of business growth in the year ahead, *FutureWatch* respondents were “digging in and adapting to a new reality,” characterized by the following.

- Close attention to the value of each meeting
- A focus on value, quality and competitive pricing, with less emphasis on frills and extras
- A larger share of meetings located closer to home
- A continuing shift toward virtual and Web-based technologies
- Emerging opportunities for technology or technology service providers
- Widespread emphasis on corporate social responsibility
- A new concern about public perception of meetings and events

While meeting planners listed budget cuts and the need to do more with less as the most significant job challenges they anticipated for 2010, 28% of planners and 41% of meeting suppliers predicted gradual growth in the industry, reflected in a modest increase in meeting volume.

- Planners predicted a 2.8% increase in the number of meetings held and a 4.5% increase in meeting attendance.
- Corporate planners anticipated 3.6% more meetings and 11.7% more participants, significantly higher than the 4.0% attendance increase they previously predicted for 2009.
- Average attendance at association meetings will hold steady, at just over 1,000 participants, and the number of meetings will decline by only 0.6%, compared to the 3.7% drop that association planners predicted for 2009.

## **Telling Our Story: *Delivering the Message***

From the deliberations of the Group of Twenty Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (the G20), to the high-level (and incredibly high-stakes) negotiations that concluded the global climate change summit in Copenhagen, the last year has seen many instances when there was no substitute for face-to-face. Those moments, combined with the strong arguments coming back from corporate executives and business travelers, added up to a compelling case for the industry that brings together the skills, experience and business relationships to make meetings work.

Throughout the year, the industry worked hard to tell its own story. MPI participated in the Meetings Mean Business campaign coordinated by the U.S. Travel Association, while major firms and organizations within the industry mounted their own advocacy or research efforts.

- The Krisam Group and Global Events Partners launched The Wall, a global campaign that attracted more than 3,000 signatures for a petition to the president of the United States.
- British Airways announced Face-to-Face, a campaign that offered small business owners “the chance to earn a flight anywhere in the world, to take their business to the next level with in-person meetings.”

- With funding from MPI and several other industry associations, the Convention Industry Council launched a major study to measure the economic impact of meetings and events in the United States.

When future meeting professionals look back on the evolution of their industry, 2009 could stand out as the year when politicians and public stakeholders began to understand that *face-to-face meetings deliver*. MPI will continue working with its members and partners to build public appreciation for meetings and business events, and for an industry with the skills, sophistication and vision to help its clients address the most pressing problems they face.

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## **MPI Foundation's "Value of Meetings" Research Alliance with AIBTM**

In MPI Foundation's continuing drive to provide innovative career-building thought leadership development, the MPI Foundation, along with a major investment from Reed Travel Exhibitions through AIBTM, is focused on studying and understanding the appreciable business value of meetings through key research findings. These will debut at AIBTM 2011 in Baltimore, June 2011.

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This white paper was produced by Mitchell Beer, CMM, president of The Conference Publishers Inc. of Ottawa, Canada. The Conference Publishers is a world leader in capturing and repurposing conference content, and recently launched Meetings Transition 360, a consulting service that helps meeting professionals address the issues that are reshaping their industry.

