

ME PRODUCTIONS
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Nearby Convention Center Is Planned

-- Negotiations are under way between Osceola County and Xentury City Development Co. for a \$100 million, 250,000-square-foot convention center to be built on a tract of land just south of the Gaylord Palms Resort within a couple of miles of Interstate 4.

Osceola County is just east of the main entrance to Walt Disney World, adjacent to Orange County, in which Disney World and Orlando are located.

The new proposal, scaled down significantly from previous plans that called for a million-square-foot facility, could be under construction in early 2003 and open in a couple of years, county officials said.

"There was a time when they were looking at something so big that you could have seen it from the surface of the moon," said Mike Quatrini, central Florida manager for ME Productions, a large destination management company. "It was unrealistic, because it would have gone head to head with the Orange County Convention Center from day one."

The current plan calls for a 1,000-room Sheraton hotel to be built on the property. At press time, Osceola County was negotiating with Xentury City about the project, for which the developer would have to have \$45 million of its own financing in place before groundbreaking. Xentury City would donate the land for the convention center, which in turn would be beneficial to the mixed-use development Xentury City is building on the land around the convention center site.

MARCH 18, 2002

A Can-Do Spirit Amid Hard Times

By Rowland Stiteler

-- The atmosphere prevailing after the recent tourism industry slowdown has caused event planners around Florida to come to a conclusion with a familiar sound to it: These are the best of times; these are the worst of times. Event planners in various parts of the Sunshine State tell tales of spare-no-expense parties for some clients, as well as bare-bones gatherings for others who, as Florida Panhandle planner Joyce Ventry put it, "do not want to be perceived as having fun at their events these days."

But what those planning events on both ends of the spectrum agree upon is that the economic times call for a good deal more creativity, and that for a place to hold a worthwhile event, Florida is difficult to beat.

"In terms of resources to work with, this has got to be one of the best places in the world to be in this industry," said Mike Quatrini, general manager of ME Productions, a statewide destination



Mike Quatrini
General Manager

OCTOBER 07, 2002

Converting The 7-10 Split Has Never Been Such Fun

- Ay caramba! What will they think of next? If a concept like "human bowling" sees the light of day, anything might be possible. Azteca, the big Mexico-based TV programming company, included this wobbly entertainment in a five-day program at the Loews Miami Beach Hotel last month. The beachfront bowling gig was a brainstorm generated by

ME Productions, a Fort Lauderdale production and destination management company, which thought it a fine idea to straggle attendees into giant metal bowling-ball shaped cages and them toward five-foot stuffed bowling pins.

And it was for a perfectly good reason: to create a "surreal environment that would wow the otherwise jaded entertainer types from Azteca," said Fe Domenech of ME Productions.

If rolling caged attendees along the beach wasn't Dali-esque enough, ME Productions transformed the Loews America Ballroom into a glittering disco, featuring "a new, innovative acrylic table with dramatic lighting effect from top surface bottom. A rolling light show enabled the tables to glow in changing colors that shifted hues every 10 seconds," said Domenech.

We sure hope those disoriented folks, staggering through Miami International Airport back to AeroMexico, didn't leave with the wrong impression about the States!

Where Ritz-Carltons seem to have sprouted out of the ground like palm trees, and a good number of corporate groups are booking beachfront hotels and looking for galas with a tropical flavor, according to Lisa Jebb, vice president of sales at ME Productions in Fort Lauderdale.

"One of our most popular events right now is what we call Taste of Florida, but it's more than just a taste," said Jebb.

The company basically re-creates a compendium of the best of south Florida, all in a hotel ballroom. Key West, South Beach and the Everglades are all in one big area, with elaborate sets to resemble the locations involved, plus live entertainment like jugglers and musicians, a good representation of live alligators and exotic birds, and food from all the areas represented.



Make that spare! Azteca attendees really on a roll with bowling eve