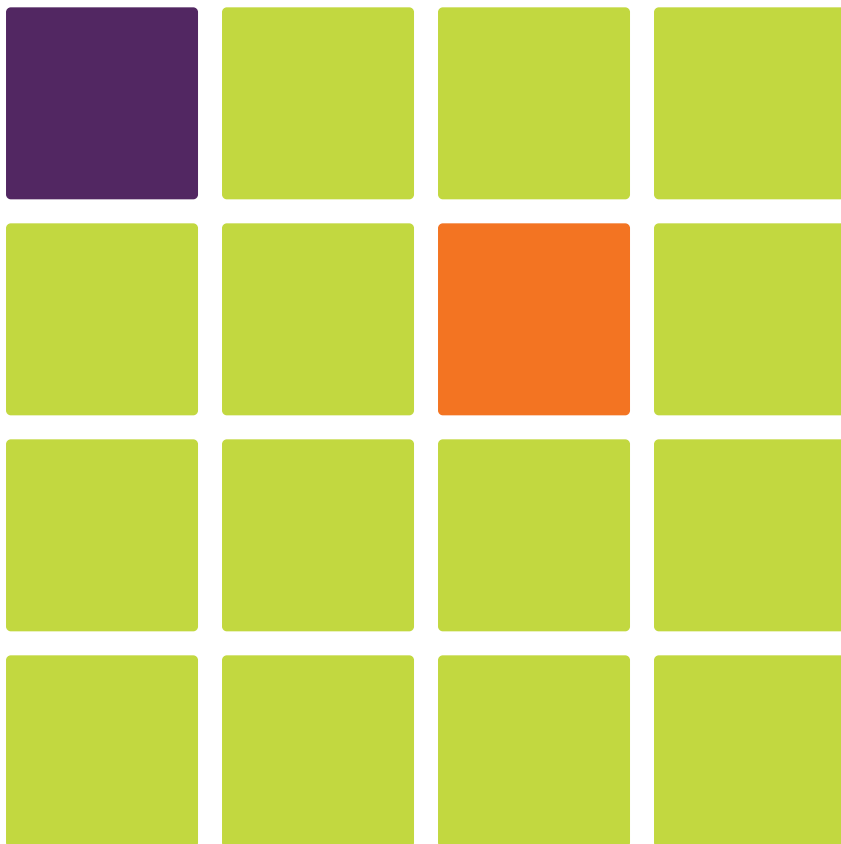


# Closing Keynote: An Industry in Shift

The Economics, Politics, and Realities of it All



## Speaker:

**Bruce MacMillan, CA**

**President & CEO**

**Meeting Professionals International**

## Executive Summary

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## Closing Keynote: An Industry in Shift *The Economics, Politics, and Realities of it All*

- Speaker: **Bruce MacMillan, CA**; President & CEO, Meeting Professionals International

### The Big Idea

The meeting and event industry is going through a period of massive shifts. The economy is affecting the industry and the industry's reputation has come under attack. The industry is also being affected by globalization and sustainability.

But these shifts present tremendous opportunities. Seizing the opportunities requires that meeting professionals think differently in order to get others to think differently about meetings. Meeting professionals must speak the language of business and must deliver a compelling message about the business value that meetings deliver.

### Context

Mr. MacMillan described the most significant shifts taking place in the meeting industry. He offered specific suggestions for actions that meeting and event professionals can take to turn these shifts into opportunities.

### Key Points

- **Meetings have tremendous business value.**

Meetings have the power to change the world. Examples:

- *The Rio Earth Summit* in 1992 put sustainability on the global agenda.
- *The International AIDS Conference* helped remove the stigma associated with AIDS and ultimately made a difference in the lives of millions of people.

Meetings also provide tremendous value for businesses. Research among chief marketing officers shows that meetings and events deliver the highest return on investment of any marketing activity. They are the best way to broaden and deepen relationships with customers. They deliver measurable performance and business results.

*"Meetings drive business results and social change . . . they have the highest ROI of any marketing platform."*

—Bruce MacMillan

A good example of the power of meetings is Apple's introduction of the iPhone. Launched at a meeting, the iPhone sold five million units in just one month.

Because meetings drive positive business results, cancelling a meeting—because the media has suggested it represents inappropriate spending—can actually hurt a business.

- **The economy is having a profound impact on the meeting industry and on meeting professionals.**

A massive shift in the meeting industry occurred very quickly in the last half of 2008. During this period the economy declined as did economic confidence.

An April 2008 survey of 1,000 senior industry decision makers showed that 38% expected the next six months to be favorable, 38% expected their business to be flat, and just 24% had a negative outlook. But as of February 2009, the landscape had changed dramatically. The same survey found that only 8% had a favorable outlook for the next six months, 15% thought the next six months would be flat, and 77% had a negative outlook.

Versus a year ago, the number of meetings is down 9% and some sectors are off by 20% or more. At the same time, industry staffing is down by 3% and the workload for those in the industry has increased by 5%. So, meeting professionals have less business but are working harder.

- **In addition to economic challenges, the meeting industry faces reputational challenges.**

Due to unwarranted and sensationalized media accounts, public perception has swung against meetings. Meetings have been demonized and have been portrayed as extravagant and unnecessary boondoggles ("the AIG effect"). The media has essentially said it is not appropriate to have a meeting, and publications like the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* haven't been interested in writing stories that provide the facts about the value of meetings.

- **Other major shifts taking place include globalization and sustainability.**

The meeting industry is going global. Many countries see meetings and events as a key part of their economic future and are investing billions of dollars in their infrastructure to support meetings and events. The current economy has not stopped these investments. Those in the U.S. need to recognize that going forward, competition will be global.

The other major shift taking place is the importance of sustainability. Just ten years ago, the national MPI board rejected a proposal to focus on sustainability. But today a mass shift toward sustainability is taking place because

customers are demanding more sustainable meetings. Research shows that 53% of companies have implemented sustainability programs for their meetings and events. The importance of sustainability is not a passing fad and is undiminished in the current economic environment. The meeting industry has to respond.

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*"If you are not thinking in terms of sustainability, of how to make that part of your business commitment, you're probably not going to get the business."*

—Bruce MacMillan

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▪ **Turning these shifts into opportunities requires communicating the value of meetings.**

The reality is that meetings deliver business value. This is supported by data. The key is for the meeting industry as a whole, and for individual meeting professionals, to get this message out.

The "Meetings Mean Business" initiative is an example of tremendous collaboration across industries. With leadership from U.S. Travel, a media campaign was developed and launched on very short timing, a meeting with the President took place, and meetings with other key elected officials have occurred.

The industry needs to focus on:

— *Stopping the infection.* The industry must focus on halting the rhetoric directed at the meeting industry. This requires education of executives and elected officials—including federal, state, and local officials.

Educating elected officials can make a huge difference. A specific example: Senator John Kerry had proposed legislation which stated that recipients of TARP money would not be allowed to hold meetings until they fully repaid their TARP funds. But he changed his mind and pulled this legislation after a deluge of letters and a meeting that educated him on the value of meetings and the detrimental economic consequences of cancelling meetings, such as lost jobs. This shows that education and contacting one's elected officials can and do make a difference.

— *Sending an all-clear signal.* There continues to be some reluctance to hold meetings as those considering having a meeting don't want to be demonized. What needs to take place is for business and government leaders to send out a signal that it is acceptable to have meetings. An example of one such signal comes from Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric, who recently said:

*"We must let these companies [TARP recipients] do what it takes to thrive in the global marketplace, even . . . including paying for performance*

*and courting customers through sales events. If we don't, we will all soon be investors—in carcasses."*

Similar messages are needed from other leaders. MPI members must play a role in educating leaders on the value of meetings and convincing them to make such statements. In undertaking various educational activities, MPI members must focus on the positive business impact of meetings and events.

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*"We must communicate that meetings and events are good for business."*

— Bruce MacMillan

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In particular, meeting professionals need to:

— *Speak the language of business.* Meeting professionals can't get caught up speaking about "dates, rates, and space." The conversation has to be about business value and ROI, and the language used has to be the language of business.

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*"Meeting professionals have to take responsibility for using the language of business."*

— Bruce MacMillan

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— *Leverage technology to improve meeting performance.* Technology can improve events. It can complement them and extend an event's messages. As an example, a video of a recent MPI event was sent to 70,000 people and 14,000 of them opened it. This dramatically extended the event's reach.

— *Think as brands.* Destinations are attempting to become "brands." Meeting professionals should also think in terms of a brand and should focus on the idea of a meeting as a "business tool" as opposed to "hospitality."

## Other Interesting Points

- **Meeting/hospitality industry vs. auto industry.** While the auto industry has asked Congress for more than \$35 billion, the meeting and hospitality industry—which employs more people—has asked for nothing more than not to be sacrificed on the altar of political correctness.
- **Recommended reading.** A white paper by Mary Boone titled "Four Elements of Strategic Value" describes the business value that meetings provide. It uses language such as portfolio management, meeting design, advanced logistics, and result analysis and communication. This white paper can be found on MPI's website.
- **NEMICE recordings.** Recordings of the general sessions and educational sessions for NEMICE 2009 are available at [www.fleetwoodonsite.com/mpine](http://www.fleetwoodonsite.com/mpine).

## Biography

### **Bruce M. MacMillan, CA**

*President & CEO, Meeting Professionals International*

Bruce MacMillan is currently president and CEO of Meeting Professionals International, the largest global community of meeting professionals with 23,000 members in 79 countries around the world.

Throughout his career in the hospitality industry, he has held a wide spectrum of positions, most recently as president and CEO of the Toronto Convention and Visitors Association from 2003-2006 where he led the Toronto tourism industry's post-SARS recovery, growing the CVB from less than 700 members and \$8 million to almost 1,100 members and \$30 million.

He also worked for Tourism Vancouver, the Greater Vancouver Convention and Visitors Bureau, for 11 years as vice president, sales and market development, leading a team of 22 professionals responsible for convention and corporate meetings, tour, and travel and incentive sales marketing.

In 1998, Bruce completed a twelve-month secondment to the Vancouver Whistler 2010 Bid Society where he served as executive director, developing and securing the Canadian 2010 Olympic Winter Games rights after an intense competition with Calgary and Quebec City.

He serves on several industry boards including the Advisory Board for the University of Guelph, School of Tourism and Hospitality and currently Chairs the Convention Industry Council's Sustainability and Responsibility Task Force.

Born in Vancouver, Bruce graduated from the University of British Columbia in 1982 with a Bachelor of Commerce degree and received designation as a Chartered Accountant with Arthur Andersen in 1985. He attended Cornell University in Ithaca, New York for post-graduate study in 1996-97. Bruce has also worked in international financial management consulting and has spent time in a special events capacity at Expo 88 in Brisbane, Australia.

His wife, Judy, a Ryerson University hotel management graduate, and two daughters enjoy traveling and exploring new destinations and cultures around the world.



Meetings have tremendous value. Nothing replaces the personal interaction and networking of a meeting. However, often a meeting's great ideas and rich content aren't captured and presented in a simple, clear, useable form. This is a missed opportunity. And this is where BullsEye Resources fits.

BullsEye helps meeting professionals enhance the value of their events by better leveraging an event's unique content. Specifically, BullsEye creates concise executive summaries and reports that capture an event's key takeaways (Think "CliffsNotes"). These executive summaries and reports make an event more valuable by:

- Creating a tangible, concise, user-friendly summary of an event's key information that can be used for multiple purposes.
- Reinforcing the key takeaways for attendees.
- Extending an event's reach by providing a vehicle to share critical event information with non-attendees.

BullsEye has created executive summaries for leading:

- Corporations – including UPS, Aetna, and U.S. Foodservice.
- Associations – like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), and the Massachusetts Lodging Association (MLA).
- Non-profits – such as Harvard Business School, the CDC, and the Global Child Nutrition Forum.

To learn more about how BullsEye can help enhance the value of your next event, visit [www.bullseyeresources.com](http://www.bullseyeresources.com) or contact us at [info@bullseyeresources.com](mailto:info@bullseyeresources.com) or 978-443-5513.