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ESPA Launches New Brand at Annual Conference, Elects New President

The Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA) (formerly ACOM) celebrated the launch of its new name, logo and mission statement at its Annual Conference held January 6-8, 2012 at the US Grant in San Diego, California. Key to the organization's mission, the Conference featured education and networking activities specifically focused on elevating the event and convention services profession. David Dvorak, CMP, Vice President, Catering and Convention Services at Starwood Hotels & Resorts was announced as ESPA's 2012 President at the Conference.

The first Conference under the new ESPA name and brand offered attendees several new Conference additions. This included a shift forward of its Conference schedule leading directly up to the PCMA Conference, which enabled more meeting planners to attend its Sunday afternoon sessions geared toward the service/planner professional relationship. A speed learning session called Ideas in Motion, with dialogue between planners and CSMs, was featured. Additionally, a new networking session where attendees interacted with fellow members from their same region, an opportunity to read a thought-provoking book and discuss it book club style with fellow members through ESPA's Book Club and a Showcase where attendees shared innovative service tools and programs were also featured.

ESPA also offered a new way to get to know its Conference destination and fellow attendees through its Seek & Tweet contest on Twitter. Attendees participated by selecting any 5 off a list of 10 photos to snap and share with others using the hashtag #ESPA2012, a scavenger hunt style activity to incorporate social media. As a result of this contest and other Twitter participation, tweets using #ESPA2012 reached over 20,000 people and yielded over 87,000 impressions.

Also part of the Conference program was keynote speaker Chef Jeff Henderson, New York Times bestselling author and award winning chef, who delivered an inspiring story of redemption and perseverance and featured speaker Nancy DeBrosse, vice president, association strategic account management at Experient, who revealed the top three things keeping planners awake at night as well as the top meeting trends for 2012 and beyond.

"This year's Conference was the first one under our new name and brand, so we wanted to make a major impact for all attendees," said David Dvorak, CMP, ESPA President. "The program was elevated encompassing new educational additions, interactive contests and dynamic speakers, and illustrating to service professionals and the industry that this was an event they didn't want to miss."

During the 2012 Awards Luncheon and Business Meeting, several industry awards were presented. Given out in conjunction with *Successful Meetings* magazine, the CSM of the Year Awards were announced and honored Lori Denning, CMP, The Conference Center at NorthPointe; Samaria Williams, Greater Houston CVB and Mary Ann Torres, Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority. Casandra Matej, San Antonio Convention and Visitors Bureau received the Executive Excellence Award; David Renzi, CMP, American Helicopter Society International received the Meeting Professional of the Year Award; Zach Davis, Louisville CVB, received the Member of the Year Award and Rhonda Eaton, CMP, Reno Sparks Convention Center, received the President's Award. ESPA also presented Amber Mitchell from the Metropolitan State College of Denver with the fourth annual Donald S. Freeman Jr. ESPA Conference Scholarship.

About ESPA

The Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA) (formerly the Association for Convention Operations Management) is dedicated to elevating the event and convention services profession and to preparing members, through education and networking, for their pivotal role in innovative and successful event execution. For more information on ESPA, visit www.espaonline.org or contact Lynn McCullough at (609) 799-3712.