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in plain **words**

Top 10 Changes in the Event Industry in the Last 10 Years

By Deborah Elias, CSEP, CMP

I am celebrating a milestone this year; my company—Elias Events—has been in business for 10 years. This is a great time to reflect on the past and plan for the future. In the 10 years since I started the company, I have witnessed many changes in the event-planning industry—the following are the top 10.

1. Technology has significantly developed. Slides and awkward projectors are no longer used for displays. Now we can project images into thin air, and LCD projectors make a more visually appealing presentation. LEDs play a big part in affecting the overall feel of events. Special effects enhance events with items such as the amazing rain curtain, gobo technology and even mood-setting fog machines that adhere to fire codes.

2. I remember when creating an **invitation** for an event meant only a few selections of paper, fonts and styles. Now, the sky is the limit, and you are restricted only by imagination. We produce many innovative event invitations, from messages in bottles to custom DVDs. U.S. mail sends almost anything out as long as it has a stamp, and you can really have fun with this part of the event.



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3. Now event **entertainment** has evolved from the cover band or DJ to bringing the

actual singers or entertainment to an event. Today's clients spend a lot of money flying in top performers such as U2 or Elton John. The advent of reality television supplies us with a greater selection of entertainment ideas to use when planning, from "American Idol"-style contests to game shows.

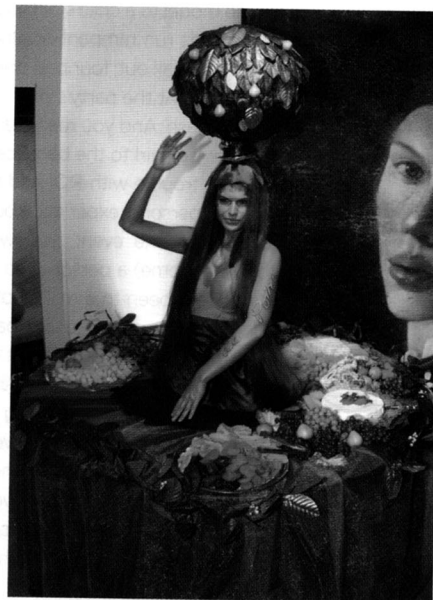
4. Linen has progressed from a small selection of polyester blends to a large selection of fabrics and colors. Fabrics and textiles from India, Egypt and other nations are readily available. And the use of flame-retardant linen is naturally popular with the fire marshal.

5. Event decorations are more over-the-top than ever. New products and the use of decor change a boring ballroom into a fairy tale setting or a crisp corporate environment. Lighted tables, lounge furniture and inventive centerpieces are just a few decor trends. Other nonconventional items, such as ice sculptures, also play a large role in the event's atmosphere.

6. Brand messaging is more direct since 9/11, even with the recent slight downturn in the U.S. economy. Companies use events as vehicles to generate clear-cut messages, whether it's the launch of a product or reintroduction of the company to its client base. Events are educating rather than entertaining—although entertainment is used to convey the message.

7. Once you could choose from a few **themes** when planning an affair. Thanks to TV, movies and social awareness, themes are becoming imaginative and off-the-cuff. The green movement and sustainability are quickly becoming crowd-pleasers.

8. The **food and beverage** industry has



Stroll if you want: Food and beverage have traveled a long way in events as seated dinners are now often replaced with imaginative buffets. Here, a living buffet table is used to launch Bacardi Pear Vodka.

done its share to keep pace with industry demands for more food selection. Black-tie affairs with the infamous and maybe not-so-delectable "rubber chicken" plate are less common. Chefs operate innovatively and cook with a kitchen full of tasty products to delight guests. Bland seated dinners are being replaced with imaginative buffets that serve up items for even the pickiest eaters. Libations at events have changed too, with the introduction of flavored liquors and other trends.

9. Over the years, **facilities** hosting the

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