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**MPI AND AMERICAN EXPRESS *FUTUREWATCH* STUDY REVEALS
MEETING INDUSTRY WILL ADAPT TO CHANGES IN 2009**
*Despite Economic Downturn, 2009 Brings Unique Business Opportunities
for Meeting and Event Industry*

DALLAS (January 9, 2009) – In partnership with American Express, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) today released the initial executive summary of *FutureWatch* 2009 on www.mpiweb.org. A forward-looking survey of its worldwide membership, *FutureWatch* focuses on the trends which will affect the meeting and event industry in the next twelve months. This year's survey had record participation with over 2,700 participants. Full survey results will be available at a presentation during MPI's 2009 MeetDifferent® conference in Atlanta, Feb. 7-10.

According to this year's results, the meeting industry will sharpen its focus and streamline its activities, when faced with a tough global market. The economic effect on the industry is not quite as severe as first anticipated. Meeting attendance, per meeting, is expected to increase by 3% in EMEA (Europe, Middle East, and Africa) and 9% in Canada, but decline by 5% in the United States.

"After three strong years, the global meeting and event industry is coming to grips with a major paradigm shift and the *FutureWatch* data reveals how acute the expectations are for change," said Bruce MacMillan, president and CEO of MPI. "Through initiatives like our Global Knowledge Plan, our objective is not only to ensure our members survive the shift, but also to find ways to thrive as the industry retrenches in an ebbing economic cycle."

A few highlights from the preliminary FutureWatch findings are below:

- **In 2009, meeting and event budgets are expected to fall by 6%.** Last year's report predicted that budgets would rise 22.6%. In fact, 17% of corporate meeting planners and 12% of association meeting planners predict some level of budget reductions in the upcoming year. Nevertheless, government meeting planners generally expect fewer budget reductions, explaining that the private sector does not usually have an effect on the necessity of their meetings.
- **Planners and suppliers agree that an increase in creativity and innovation will be a necessary and invaluable tool in 2009.** Planners and suppliers expect new, (including currently unknown standards and practices) to emerge which will make the industry more efficient and effective for the long term. While client-side planners foresee a 9% drop in volume, independent meeting management professionals expect only a marginal reduction of 0.5%.
- **11% of meeting professionals expect an increase in the use of technology to access meetings and content remotely, in order to help lower overall costs.** The technology which more professionals plan to use is "on-site" related.

- **Face-to-face meetings are still considered to have the highest ROI of all marketing tools.** A greater significance is now being placed upon planners worldwide to provide the value of the proposed meetings and events. 74% of organizations holding meetings and events measure ROI. Additionally, the primary measure of ROI is the satisfaction of the meeting attendees.

The *FutureWatch* 2009 survey closed on Nov. 11, 2008 with 2,740 responses received. [The Executive Summary](#) of *FutureWatch* 2009 will be available on Friday, January 9th. Full survey results will be released and discussed “live” during MPI’s MeetDifferent conference in Atlanta

About MPI:

Meeting Professionals International (MPI), the meeting and event industry’s largest and most vibrant global community, helps its members thrive by providing human connections to knowledge and ideas, relationships, and marketplaces. MPI membership is comprised of more than 24,000 members belonging to 70 chapters and clubs worldwide.

About American Express:

Merchant Services is the merchant network of American Express, which acquires and maintains relationships with millions of merchants around the globe, which welcome American Express-branded Cards. American Express Company is a leading global payments, network and travel company founded in 1850.