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A Meetings Strategy for the '80s

Chauncey Center
and the
College Inn

"In terms of an executive educational center on the east coast, I don't think there is anything like it. The environment is conducive to the goals of our overall continuing education program," said Bill Lawler, director of the meeting-services department of Deloitte Haskins & Sells. Bill was referring to the Henry Chauncey Conference Center, which recently was selected by the firm as our "location of choice" for many meetings in the east.

The Chauncey Center, located on a secluded and wooded 400-acre campus near Princeton, New Jersey, is operated by Educational Testing Service (ETS). Chauncey is a self-contained facility with meeting rooms, sleeping accommodations and recreational activities. That is the reason most given to explain the center's effectiveness for seminars and educational sessions.

DH&S has signed a multi-year contract with ETS in which the firm agreed to use Chauncey Center for a specific number of room nights per year, according to Bill Lawler.

The firm also sponsors educational sessions at the College Inn in Boulder, Colorado. DH&S has used College Inn, which is operated by the University of Colorado, since it first became available for meetings four years ago.

"Because we were one of the first users of the College Inn, DH&S gets priority as to dates

and times, as well as choice accommodations," Bill said. Although DH&S does not have a contractual agreement with the university, the firm has been able to use the facility regularly because of our good rapport with the university, the meeting-services director explained.

The two facilities, Chauncey Center and College Inn, have permitted DH&S to divide the country geographically. In this manner, most educational sessions for those in DH&S offices east of the Mississippi River will be conducted at Chauncey, while meetings for DH&S personnel in our western offices will be held primarily at College Inn.

The growth of DH&S in the past decade spurred the need for additional educational sessions. The firm limits attendance to roughly 125 participants for first-year seminars. This has further increased the number of meetings.

The maximum was set primarily to insure that the meetings would have an educational orien-

Top —
Meals at Chauncey Center are served at a long buffet table. In background, the resident chef carves roast beef.

Bottom —
Chauncey Center's dining room can seat up to 200 people. Meals, served buffet style, include salads, pasta, potatoes, vegetables, fish and meat. The decor of the dining room, like the rest of the conference center, is modern.

Top —

Some classes, like the one shown here, are held in the converted barn of Chauncey Center. The barn can seat up to 200 people, but the auditorium is usually divided into four classrooms for groups of twenty-five.

Middle —

The Henry Chauncey Conference Center, opened in 1973, is a two-story complex near Princeton University in New Jersey. The center was selected by DH&S as a key east coast meeting site because its facilities and quiet surroundings make it an effective learning environment. Here, DH&S staff accountants take a break at a pond during a small business services conference.

Bottom —

Classrooms at Chauncey Center, which can accommodate up to twenty-five people, are equipped with audiovisual and other teaching aids. Session shown here, a small business services training program held last fall, is in the center's relatively new West Wing extension.

tation and could be easily managed. "Once you go over that maximum, an educational session becomes difficult to book and cost control suffers," Bill Lawler explained. "DH&S is holding more educational meetings than ever before," Bill Kuntz, partner in charge of the EO Continuing Education Department, emphasized. "But many of our meetings will be smaller in size and be directed toward specialties."

Generally, anywhere from 250 to 650 people usually attend so-called "recognition meetings," such as the new managers meeting, where there's a mix of the social and instructional. Meetings held primarily for educational purposes, on the other hand, have limited social activities. Examples of this latter type are area senior meetings and industry specialization conferences.

In recent years our meeting concept has undergone an evolution. "Holding smaller meetings fits into our concept of conducting educational sessions in an effective way. We want to situate meetings in a pleasant place that is convenient for DH&S people to reach with a minimum of time and expense," Bill Kuntz explained. In that way, the firm's personnel also spend less time away from their offices and assignments.

There will always be exceptions to the rule. "The tax group has special requirements. And, rather than holding all of its seminars at either Chauncey or College Inn, DH&S conducts its entry-level meetings at the University of Illinois in Urbana. The university has one of the best tax libraries in the country and is conveniently located in the Midwest," Bill Lawler explained.

Both Bill Lawler and Bill Kuntz emphasized that there will probably never be a time when DH&S will use one type of meeting exclusively over the other. The firm's policy on educational activities will respond to our immediate needs, because DH&S has designed that kind of flexibility into its overall planning. As the number of meetings held

each year increased, it soon became apparent that a long-term commitment to a particular facility was greatly needed.

"Before our current arrangement with Chauncey and College Inn, we were using more than thirty different locations for our meetings. There were many we dealt with that we did not use on a regular or return basis," Bill Lawler recalled. "It was difficult to keep up to date on the accommodations offered by some facilities." Added Bill Kuntz: "We had to hustle to find meeting places and then check them out."

DH&S first used Chauncey in early 1978. "It was then that I realized it had a lot of potential," Bill Lawler recalled. Although the center did not have enough meeting rooms and recreational facilities, the firm believed that an expansion would make Chauncey an ideal candidate for a long-term commitment.

"I was receptive to Bill's recommendation that we consider Chauncey for contractual use," said Bill Kuntz. "I investigated it — was satisfied — and carried Bill's suggestion to partner Bob Pivik and managing partner Charlie Steele."

Above — DH&S staffers relax at poolside during a break in a firm conference on small business services held last fall. Swimming is only one of many outdoor recreational activities offered at Chauncey. Others are tennis, jogging, volleyball and softball.

Below — Bicycle riding is one of the more popular outdoor recreational activities offered at Chauncey Center. The center also maintains jogging trails.

The firm then approached Educational Testing Service and proposed that if Chauncey was expanded the firm would sign a formal agreement for its use. ETS subsequently expanded the center by constructing a new wing and adding more recreational facilities. "We had our first meeting under the new contract in July, almost immediately after the expansion had been completed," Bill Lawler said.

The Chauncey Center, which lies within the quiet townships of Princeton and Lawrenceville, was named for Henry Chauncey, first ETS president, who played a major role in the founding of the nonprofit organization in 1948. Originally, ETS was involved only in national testing programs. In recent years, the organization's activities broadened to include educational research and development programs and a wide range of instructional activities. Erected in 1973, the two-story conference center provides a base for many ETS instructional programs.

ETS purchased the 400-acre tract, at that time a dairy farm, in 1955. While the brick ETS complex was being constructed, Henry and Lucy (Laurie) Chauncey moved into the property's farmhouse. For the next fifteen years the two-story farmhouse served as a home for the ETS president and his wife. That farmhouse was later named the Laurie House for Mrs. Chauncey, who died in November 1975. The Laurie House, whose foundation dates back to Revolutionary times, now serves as a guest house for the conference center.

The two-story fieldstone and glass structure of the Chauncey Center was connected to the property's nineteenth-century barn. While the center has a variety of meeting rooms, the largest, which can accommodate up to 200 people, is the converted barn. The barn, which

measures 1,848 square feet, can easily be divided into four meeting rooms for classes of up to twenty-five persons.

During the construction of the new wing, DH&S reviewed the architect's specifications and offered suggestions and recommendations. Classrooms in the split-level wing are equipped with audiovisual screens and a complete range of other teaching aids.

Chauncey Center has 100 guest rooms which are spacious and comfortably furnished. Each room has individually controlled airconditioning and a color television set. Rooms on the ground floor have terraces, while second-floor quarters have balconies. All the guestrooms overlook the center's landscaped grounds. Meals are served in a dining room that can seat up to 200 people.

Top —
Accommodations at Chauncey Center are spacious. Each of the 100 rooms has a color television set, individually controlled airconditioning and balconies that overlook the center's wooded, landscaped grounds.

Bottom —
Constructed in a sharp angular style, with clean, uncluttered lines, this section of Chauncey Center's upstairs lobby area overlooks the complex's pond.

The ancient Greeks believed that a well-tuned mind was partly the result of a healthy physical condition. Chauncey adheres to this philosophy. Two lighted tennis courts and an outdoor swimming pool are adjacent to the center's west wing. Jogging, badminton, volleyball and bicycle riding are also included in the center's outdoor activities. Indoors there are card rooms, a small gymnasium with a weight-lifting apparatus and a sauna. The center can also arrange a short jaunt to a nearby golf course.

During week-long sessions, outings are scheduled to provide a diversion and a break in the rigorous routine. The field trips

Below —
Anne Hegarty (c.), formerly of the DH&S meeting-services department, discusses upcoming meetings with Alex Vincent (left), operations manager of Chauncey Center, and Bernie Gavin, manager. Close coordination between DH&S and Chauncey has resulted in smoothly-run meetings.

occur at midweek, usually in the evening.

At Chauncey, trips are scheduled to Great Adventure Amusement Park during summer, and to a dinner theater during the rest of the year. At College Inn, a visit to a nearby ranch offers an outdoor barbecue, horseback riding and sometimes a bluegrass band, according to Bill Lawler.

"Recreational activities help create a relaxed atmosphere, a good mix of both learning and leisure. They also give the participants a chance to unwind, which is important," he explained.

"Chauncey and College Inn come as close as possible to satisfying what the participants need in order for the seminar to be effective," Bill added. College Inn also has an abundance of recreational activities, and DH&S people attending meetings there have access to the university's gym. College Inn was selected because it, like Chauncey, has everything the firm needs to conduct effective training sessions, such as modern audiovisual equipment and other instructional materials.

Because of the firm's long-term commitments with Chauncey and College Inn, the logistical problems mentioned earlier have been greatly diminished. In fact, because of our contract with ETS, it is almost as if the firm owned its own educational center — but without the maintenance headaches, according to Bill Lawler. "We know the Chauncey staff, and they know our needs. We do not have to go through the meeting's details with Chauncey every time we go there," he explained.

Bill's sentiments were echoed by Bernie Gavin, manager of Chauncey Center. "Because of our rapport with the people at DH&S, we have a feel for the requirements of the firm," he said. In 1980, DH&S plans to conduct more than twenty seminars at Chauncey, and roughly half that number at College Inn.

Another advantage of DH&S's long-term commitments to the two facilities is the flexibility the firm now has in its meetings program. Although most locations have a minimum lead time of one year in order for a meet-

Right —
DH&S staff accountants relax during a break in small business services training session, held last fall. Along the wall at right is a collection of wood sculptures by a local artist. Special exhibitions like the wood carvings supplement Chauncey Center's own art collection.

Bottom —
DH&S staffers unwind from their classroom routine by tossing a frisbee during a short break in last fall's SBS conference.

ing to be booked, a meeting can be scheduled at Chauncey on much shorter notice. In addition, DH&S has up to November of each year to change the next year's meeting schedule at Chauncey.

"For education to be effective, most people need to get away from their day-to-day environment into a more educational atmosphere," said Alex Vincent, operations manager at Chauncey. Bill Kuntz agreed. "Chauncey has an atmosphere conducive to professional education. It is quiet, noncommercial, with surroundings that are pleasing to the eye. Our educational sessions are more effective because there is a minimum of distraction."

About ten educational sessions have been held at Chauncey under the contract. Evaluations on the center by educational-session instructors and participants have been positive, Bill Lawler said.

Chauncey frees the meeting-services department to work on other meetings, seminars and educational sessions. "I know that any meetings I bring to Chauncey and College Inn will go off like clockwork. Now, meeting services can devote almost all of its time to monitoring the myriad of details that are vital to any successful meeting," Bill Lawler concluded. □