

## Rick Binford Describes the Experient Experience

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"Meeting and event professionals looking for registration, housing, and meeting management services now have one integrated company to turn to: Experient. The company was formed last year through a merger of Conferon, ExpoExchange, and ITS, which each specialized in one of these three areas.



To learn more about Experient and the experience it provides meeting professionals with integrated services, ConventionPlanit.com interviewed Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer Rick Binford, CMP.

CP: It's been several months since Conferon, ExpoExchange and ITS merged to form Experient. How have these companies been integrated to provide seamless services to customers?

Binford: We've been tackling this at a couple different levels. First, we have completely integrated all operations from the three separate ones. This is now consistent across the organization with all operations people reporting to the same place. Today everyone is organized functionally in our core areas such as registration, housing, and meeting planning and they report up through the same chain so we can consistently apply our technology and management approach to all services. Second, we have established single "account owners" for each client who can coordinate and provide any type of service. This single operations structure and single account management structure have been the core of our whole integration structure.

CP: How have you transitioned the old brand names into the Experient brand?

Binford: The old brand names have been retired as of January 2007. They each represented a strength within their core service areas where they were marketplace leaders. But those three brand names have been completely replaced by Experient. There were product names within those companies and some of them have been retained. Throughout the whole rebranding process we have been mindful of what the strengths and perceptions were behind those old brand names and we have built the support structure of Experient in a way that reinforces what clients have come to expect. At the same time, we want to use the Experient brand to represent an even higher level of service and integrated services to meet customer needs.

CP: What are you seeing in the marketplace in terms of what meeting professionals want from meeting and event services companies and how are you tailoring your services to meet those needs?

Binford: Our whole move toward consolidating into a single integrated organization is in response to what we see in the marketplace. More and more organizations are looking for multi-skilled service providers to bring them the services they need. They want multiple capabilities and integration that drives cost effectiveness and applies best practices across multiple platforms. Clients are looking for flexibility – they have needs that vary by event type or client type and the support they need for one event may be very different than another event. Through Experient, they can turn on or turn off their external support needs depending on their needs. Integration, best practices, efficiency, and flexibility are the principles that drive us. Another area is the continuing expansion of our global capabilities – more organizations looking for companies that can address their event needs beyond North America.

CP: How do you see emerging online technologies benefiting meeting professionals?

Binford: We have all come to appreciate that data management is part of the detail work of any event and it provides great efficiencies. We are seeing how all those technologies are merging and combining. Whether it is marketing, management, or extending the life of an event, meeting professionals are looking to online technology applications to add value for their attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors.

CP: What do you see as the future trends in the meetings industry and how do you anticipate Experient responding to those trends?

Binford: We see the current trend of expanding and integrating online technologies continuing in the future. Expectations will continue to rise, and the consolidation and application of best practices will raise the game for all of us. At Experient, we are aligning our resources, expertise, and strategy to meet those needs. We also have a very active product development group that is looking ahead and bringing new and better applications to all our functional areas. This is what we need to keep all of us fresh and competitive.