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Bell Bottoms, Big Hair and Virtual Conferences

I'll admit it. Sometimes I have trouble keeping track of the latest fads.

Like just about anything these days, there are a lot of new trends in association conferences. You may have heard about virtual conferences, in which attendees are only present virtually, listening to speakers and viewing slides on a monitor while never leaving the relative comfort of their own workspace. I have yet to attend one of these, but in my mind, this format would seem to make it difficult to have a chance conversation in the conference hallway with a colleague from a different part of the world.

Or maybe you've read about the "unconference," which has reportedly become more popular in places like Silicon Valley. The premise of the unconference is that the meeting structure should be built organically, in person, at the conference itself. Again, I have not yet attended one of these, but my understanding is that topics and speakers aren't determined until attendees arrive at the venue and begin talking to other attendees. While this is undoubtedly an interesting concept, I think it would be difficult to assure your boss that you will return from the big upcoming conference with a specific set of learnings that you can immediately apply in your job.

With all due respect to these provocative trends, WorldatWork will once again host our good old-fashioned, face-to-face, have-a-coffee-with-a-colleague-from-another-part-of-the-world, get-a-live-product-demo, ask-a-question-of-the-best-thinkers-in-our-field annual Total Rewards Conference and Exhibition in Dallas next month.

Sure, there is a lot of innovative thinking and conference fads out there today, but we know from your feedback and attendance that the format we offer works exceedingly well for total rewards professionals from around the world. That's why there will be professionals from more than 70 nations in attendance in Dallas. And they will undoubtedly be talking about the latest trends in employee rewards.

One of the important preconference forum sessions in Dallas will be dedicated to a topic that might have been considered a trend 15 years ago. But today, based on a body of knowledge and new research that will be released at the forum, we know that total rewards is firmly fixed as the prevailing global model for employee attraction, motivation and retention. The new total rewards research from that preconference forum — and many other highlights from Conference 2010 — will be featured in upcoming issues of *workspan*.

I look forward to seeing you in Dallas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan M. Johnson".

