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# CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

## Planning Medical Meetings

From PhRMA Guidelines to  
F&B Caps and a Seller's Market,  
the Challenges Are Many

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**Arizona**  
**Destination Planner**  
The Magnificent Mix of Desert and  
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PAGE 39





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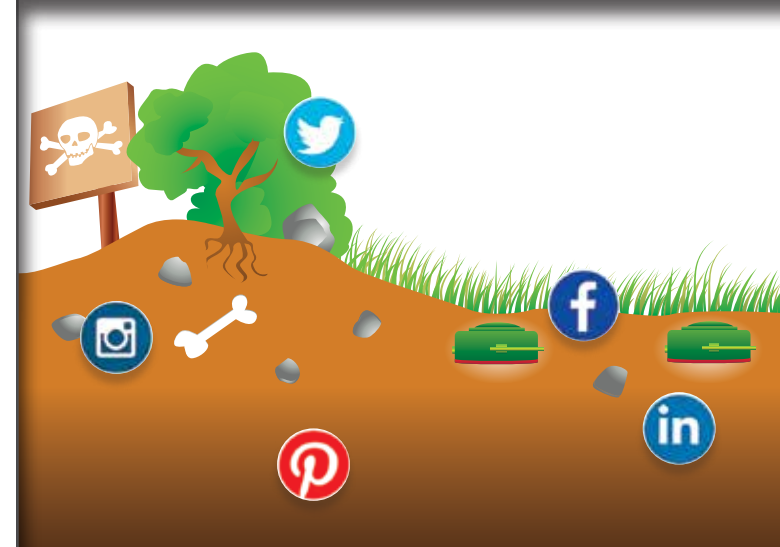
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Vistas like Echo Canyon on Phoenix's Camelback Mountain provide an inspirational backdrop for Arizona meetings. **PAGE 39**



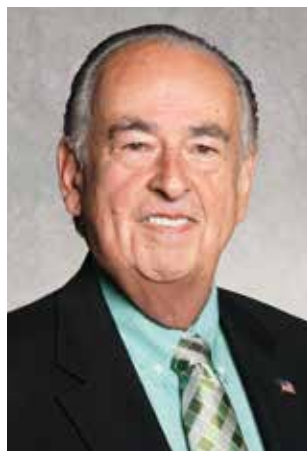
A cocktail party reception in the Chairman's Salon at Wynn Las Vegas, where planners can count on winning events. **PAGE 52**



# Publisher's Message

## Is the Doctor In?

Medical meetings are always a challenge for professional meeting planners. So much so that many planners have mastered this field and have been awarded the Healthcare Meeting Compliance Certificate (HMCC). This program — says MPI who issues the certificate — provides health care meeting compliance stakeholders with the knowledge and experience they need to successfully navigate the increasingly complex pharmaceutical, biotech and medical device regulatory environment.



In fact, they say a broad range of health care topics are covered in the program including cross-border health care compliance, industry trends, global regulations, as well as compliance, codes, laws and mandates.

Thus, when it comes to arranging medical meetings and meeting PhRMA and internal guidelines, planners have their hands full. Our cover story this month, "Planning Medical Meetings — From PhRMA Guidelines to F&B Caps and a Seller's Market, the Challenges Are Many" on page 28 aims to help planners manage these difficult tasks.

Here's a good example of how Sara Best Port, HMCC, senior director of operations and account management, BCD Meetings & Events, solves a common problem — the product launch meeting that is pending FDA drug approval and must take place within a few weeks once the approval comes through. "You may have an 800-person meeting and have three weeks to plan it. And while you know the timeline, you can't really act until you have that approval," says Port. "So it's about getting everything geared up and then hitting the ground running."

As is to be expected, hotel sales reps with a specialization in the medical meetings sector are a great resource, too. These reps, some of whom have health care meetings certifications, "know that we don't necessarily have control over lead times, and that is helpful," adds Port.

And where to meet? Medical meetings are starting to take shape in various cities from Orlando to New Orleans to Las Vegas, so for more site selection ideas, see page 52 for "Las Vegas — Where Business Is Always a Winner." And don't miss our special destination planner — "Arizona Beckons: The Magnificent Mix of Desert and Mountain Beauty Draws Groups Year After Year" beginning on page 39.

Harvey Grotsky  
Publisher

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PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
**Harvey Grotsky**  
harvey.grotsky@themeetingmagazines.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
**Mitch D. Miller**  
mitch.miller@themeetingmagazines.com

MANAGING EDITORS  
**Susan W. Fell**  
susan.fell@themeetingmagazines.com

**Susan S. Gregg**  
sue.gregg@themeetingmagazines.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS  
**Ron Bernthal**  
**John Buchanan**  
**Sara Churchville**  
**Cynthia Dial**  
**Maura Keller**  
**Christine Loomis**  
**Derek Reveron**  
**Mark Rowh**  
**Patrick Simms**  
**David Swanson**

PRESIDENT & CEO  
**Harvey Grotsky**

VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS  
**David Middlebrook**  
david.middlebrook@themeetingmagazines.com

ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES  
2700 N. Military Trail, Suite 120  
Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394  
561-989-0600 Fax: 561-989-9509  
advertising@themeetingmagazines.com

WESTERN STATES/HAWAII  
**Marshall Rubin**  
818-888-2407 • Fax: 818-888-4907  
marshall.rubin@themeetingmagazines.com

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## News & Notes

### Carnival Cruise Line to Develop New Bahamian Cruise Destination on Grand Bahama Island

MIAMI, FL — Officials from Carnival Cruise Line and the Bahamian government signed an agreement May 2 during a special signing ceremony in Freeport, Grand Bahama, for the construction of a new cruise port facility to be funded and operated by Carnival Cruise Line on Grand Bahama Island. The as-yet-unnamed planned port will be the largest purpose-built cruise facility ever constructed in The Bahamas and will take inspiration from the beauty of the Bahamian people and their islands. Features will include a one-mile stretch of beach, food, beverage and shopping outlets, a wide array of water-based amenities and other recreational facilities. The port also will feature a pier capable of accommodating two of Carnival's largest cruise ships simultaneously and is expected to eventually host up to 1 million guests annually.



DUFFY

The multimillion-dollar project will provide a significant economic benefit for the country of The Bahamas, including many employment and economic opportunities throughout the development, construction and ongoing operation once completed. "Carnival Cruise Line is the leader in year-round cruising to The Bahamas, and this new development will not only provide a truly extraordinary and one-of-a-kind destination experience for our guests but it will further solidify our partnership with the people of The Bahamas," said Christine Duffy, president of Carnival Cruise Line. "In 2017, along with Carnival's sister lines, Carnival Corporation will bring close to 3 million guests to The Bahamas via calls to Nassau, Freeport, Grand Bahama, Half Moon Cay and Princess Cays, the latter two of which were developed and are operated by Carnival Corporation brands Holland America Line and Princess Cruises. Collectively, we represent the single largest cruise company investor in The Bahamas," Duffy added.

The project is subject to a detailed public discussion process, environmental studies and permitting. [www.carnival.com](http://www.carnival.com)

### Meliá Nassau Beach - All Inclusive Unveils \$19 Million Renovation

NASSAU, BAHAMAS — Meliá Nassau Beach - All Inclusive, an all-encompassing family-friendly resort located on Cable Beach in The Bahamas, unveiled a \$19 million renovation. Part of the Meliá Hotels & Resorts brand of Meliá Hotels International, the 694-room resort situated in the western district of Nassau has been completely transformed into a Caribbean oasis.

Of the hotel's 694 guest rooms, 102 rooms are part of The Level, Meliá Hotels & Resorts' elevated service concept. The well-appointed guest rooms and suites have been redesigned to feature contemporary Caribbean style decor, along with views of the majestic Atlantic Ocean, three resort pools and lush gardens. Additional updates include 50-inch smart televisions, a pillow menu, luxurious Loewe bath amenities and outdoor seating for those rooms that include patios and balconies.

Additional renovations include a newly refurbished 24-hour fitness center featuring state-of-the-art equipment. Managed by a team of professional instructors who oversee the new and improved workout space, the facility spans approximately 1,500 sf and features an additional estimated 9,000 sf of outdoor training space, more than triple the size of the original gym. Personal training and a variety of group exercise classes also are available to guests. [www.melia.com](http://www.melia.com)

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## Tips & Trends

### 10 Steps to the Perfect Site Inspection

There is no better way to ensure a program's success than a boots-on-the-ground, face-to-face site inspection. Visiting a destination with trusted partners is critically helpful when making important decisions.



- 1. Submit a Request for Proposal (RFP) to Your Resort and DMC.** Don't just request rates, dates and service traits! Share objectives and experiences. This is your time to set the stage for future discussions.
- 2. Talk the Talk.** Once you arrive, establish time frames, review the agenda and join minds. Don't hold back. If something doesn't seem like a good fit, nix it and find something that does.
- 3. Walk the Walk.** Put everyone on your planning team in your attendees' shoes to ensure they are experiencing the destination from the attendee's perspective.
- 4. There's An App for That.** Download apps in advance to capture (and label) photos and videos of the places and spaces (evernote). Measure a meeting room or other space (MagicPlan by sensopia). Review technology capabilities for meeting space (TechSpec).
- 5. Take Five.** Ask your supplier partners for a few moments to collect your thoughts after each location. Write down five key takeaway items/feelings to refer to later.
- 6. Ask, Don't Assume.** Discuss budget, inclusions, attrition, fees. Assumption is the refuge of all misunderstandings, and this is the one time we don't want anything assumed.
- 7. Make Your List and Check It Twice.** Create a checklist for each category of service — sleeping rooms, venues, activities, meeting rooms, transportation, etc. You can't get what you want if you don't know what you're looking for!
- 8. Post-it Notes.** Review all your notes, concerns, dreams, visions and next steps with your partners.
- 9. If you Like It, Put a Ring On It.** We're not suggesting impulse moves — work with your hotel and DMC partners to secure the best solutions while mitigating risks with a thorough review of confirmation and cancellation policies.
- 10. Celebrate Your Success.** Continue planning your best gathering yet!

By **Angela Hafford**, DMCP, AlliedPRA, a global destination management company. [www.alliedpra.com](http://www.alliedpra.com)



### Hosts Global Alliance Expands Global Reach

LAS VEGAS, NV — Hosts Global Alliance (HGA) added to its list of destinations serviced with the expansion of two award-winning DMC members. Tsar Events DMC & PCO adds Tsar Panama, while +34 Spain and +351 Portugal join the well-established +39 Italy. "HGA continually strives to add greater depth to our global portfolio, so we are pleased to expand our relationships with dedicated, proven DMC members," said HGA President Marty MacKay, DMCP.

Lorenzo Pignatti, founder, +39 Italy, said, "Having all our three destinations represented by HGA is the natural development of our strategic plan that aims to consolidate our footprint in U.S. and Canada. We feel very much aligned with HGA's values, mission, ethics and business culture, and I have no doubt that such a perfect alignment can only bring great results for both our organizations."

Natalia Casajuana, managing director of +34 Spain, said they are proud to be part of the HGA family. "For more than 14 years, +34 Spain has delivered the most authentic experiences throughout Spain. Headquartered in Barcelona with an office in Madrid, our team knows every little corner of the country inside out and will share...its secrets and hidden treasures creating unforgettable experiences," she said.

Fatima Luis Neves, deputy manager of +351 Portugal said, "Our goal is to go beyond our clients' expectations, surprising them with unparalleled service standards and fresh and genuine creativity. Our country — winner of numerous travel-related awards recently — aspires to be one of the best countries for incentive travel and events in Europe. Our team at +351 Portugal daily plays its part to deliver nothing but excellence and to help clients explore the endless solutions that our destination has to offer for the MICE market."

Tsar Events DMC & PCO, expands beyond its successful operation in Russia, and Alexander Rodionov, CMP, DMCP, managing director and owner, said, "We have opened an independent office in Panama City to help our clients with their events in Republic of Panama. It is a wonderful destination with a fast-growing economy with infrastructure offering everything needed for a successful event — from the best international hotels to unique historical venues, a combination of exciting history, to a diverse culture and 21st century modern life."

Hosts Global Alliance is a worldwide consortium of select Destination Management Companies. [www.hosts-global.com](http://www.hosts-global.com)



## Baha Mar Officially Opens in The Bahamas

THE BAHAMAS — Baha Mar President Graeme Davis announced the official opening of Baha Mar, the \$4.2 billion integrated resort development located along the beaches of New Providence in The Bahamas. The first phase opening includes the preview of The Grand Hyatt Baha Mar; Baha Mar Casino; Royal Blue Golf Club; The Baha Mar Convention, Art and Entertainment Center; Peter Burwash International tennis courts and facilities; multiple restaurants, bars and lounges; select ESPA spa experiences; the resort's extensive pool and beach areas and the entry show lakes and fountain shows choreographed to music, film and lights.

The distinct East and West Towers of Grand Hyatt Baha Mar consist of 1,800 contemporary rooms including 230 one-, two- and three-bedroom suites. Each guest room offers lavish amenities, contemporary décor and outdoor balconies for views of the



An aerial view of Baha Mar.

beach, resort pools, dramatic fountain shows and the Royal Blue Golf Club.

Grand Hyatt Baha Mar manages The Baha Mar Convention, Art and Entertainment Center, the destination's 200,000-sf indoor and outdoor convention facility, and connects directly to Baha Mar Casino, the largest casino in the Caribbean. Twenty various bars

and restaurants will open in the Grand Hyatt under the leadership of executive chef Brent Martin.

Grand Hyatt Baha Mar debuts five expansive resort pools for guests, including Blue Hole, inspired by the natural salt-water blue holes of The Bahamas, luxury poolside cabanas and a half mile of pristine sandy beaches. [www.bahamar.com](http://www.bahamar.com)

## Discover The Palm Beaches Announces New Destination Services for Groups and Meetings

WEST PALM BEACH, FL — Discover The Palm Beaches (DTPB) is living up to its brand promise that The Palm Beaches are "the best way to meet in Florida." The Palm Beaches' wide array of support services and the experienced professional staff members help to ensure an efficient, memorable and exceptionable convention and meetings experience.

1. In addition to the complimentary planning services currently offered by DTPB staff, any groups and conventions booked at the Palm Beach County Convention Center can take advantage of a new banner program. Banners now will announce a company's arrival by displaying the logo in a prominent location on Okeechobee Boulevard, a high-traffic street in the heart of downtown West Palm Beach. The event also will be promoted in the Palm Beach Convention Center through additional signage.
2. Groups and meetings attendees also can utilize The Free Ride, gas-free electric shuttles, which transport passengers from the convention center to popular spots, such as Palm Beach and area attractions. This service is sponsored by DTPB.
3. DTPB offers "Dine Around" options at CityPlace, an outdoor shopping plaza, and in downtown West Palm Beach on Clematis Street, a popular dining destination.
4. DTPB staff members will provide assistance with housing options for citywide group events requiring multiple hotel stays, as well as destination marketing materials to incorporate into event websites, including the creation of social media presence for events. [www.thepalmbeaches.com](http://www.thepalmbeaches.com)

## Pacific World Releases 2017 Annual Destination Index

SINGAPORE — Pacific World, a global destination and event management company, in collaboration with Access Destination Services released its 2017 Annual Destination Index, which provides insight on the top industry trends for both clients and meetings and events professionals. In addition to the types of meetings and destinations groups are seeking, the index features details on what attendees are considering most meaningful.

### Top 5 Trends for 2017

#### 1. Take Me Off the Beaten

**Track.** Second-tier and uprising destinations are becoming more popular event destinations, such as small villages in Tuscany, or Lyon and Champagne as opposed to Paris.

#### 2. Giving Back to the Destination, Engaging Local Communities.

The meetings industry has seen an increase in Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives focusing on local communities, such as "Making a Balinese Barong," where attendees work with villages in Indonesia to create a local craft.

#### 3. Events with a Purpose, Incentives With a Meaning. It's All About Design.

A strategic approach, more and more groups are requesting a return on engagement in addition to investment, creating an impact and everlasting memory.

#### 4. Sharing Memories With the World.

Creating engaging experiences is as important as providing high-speed Wi-Fi access and designated creative hashtags for social media engagement.

#### 5. Keeping It Small and Unique; Profiling and Tailoring.

Creating an event based on specific interests and group profiles is increasing in popularity. Personalization is key to guarantee group engagement.

[www.pacificworld.com](http://www.pacificworld.com)

## Tips & Trends

### 5 Great Wine Cellar Meeting Venues

With more groups heading out of the boardroom and into creative locations, why not schedule an event within a cozy space with great food and a fun tasting with a sommelier. Here are five great venues to consider.

1. **The Wine Cellar.** A hidden gem on the lower level of the Ashton Hotel, The Wine Cellar, is one of Fort Worth's most unique private dining spaces. Up to 20 guests can dine in the elegant room surrounded by a diverse wine reserve. A gold, pressed-tin ceiling, slate floor, natural stone walls, rich wood accents and soft lighting give the Wine Cellar a refined ambience. Warren Buffet and Bill Gates have privately met here and often stay at the hotel when conducting business.
2. **The Kitchen By Wolfgang Puck.** In the wine room, pair signature wine by chef Wolfgang Puck with made-from-scratch comfort fare including gourmet pizzas, appetizers, salads, noodles and entrées for lunch and dinner in this casual and inviting private dining and meeting space for up to 20 located within the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
3. **Casa de Uco.** At the foothills of the Andes Mountains and amidst Argentina's prominent wine-growing Uco Valley region, Casa de Uco Resort's underground wine cava is the ideal space for secluded meetings complete with a 1970's wood Knoll conference table that fits up to 10 people, and seamlessly transitions for post-meeting wine tastings with the resort's sommelier.
4. **The Dutch PDR at W South Beach.** The Dutch, inspired by local cafés, seaside shacks and roadside joints, features an intimate 16-seat private dining room that surrounds meeting-goers with the restaurant's award-winning wine selection. Meeting planners can arrange wine tastings with their in-house sommelier, an introduction to sommelier class or a wine pairing dinner curated by chef Adonay and Sommelier Philip Fuentes.
5. **Hilton Orlando's Spencer's for Steaks & Chops.** The temperature-controlled wine room at Hilton Orlando's Spencer's for Steaks & Chops is the perfect intimate setting for the oenophile group. Surrounded by wine on all sides, the private dining room creates a unique setting for groups of up to eight people seeking a unique eating experience.

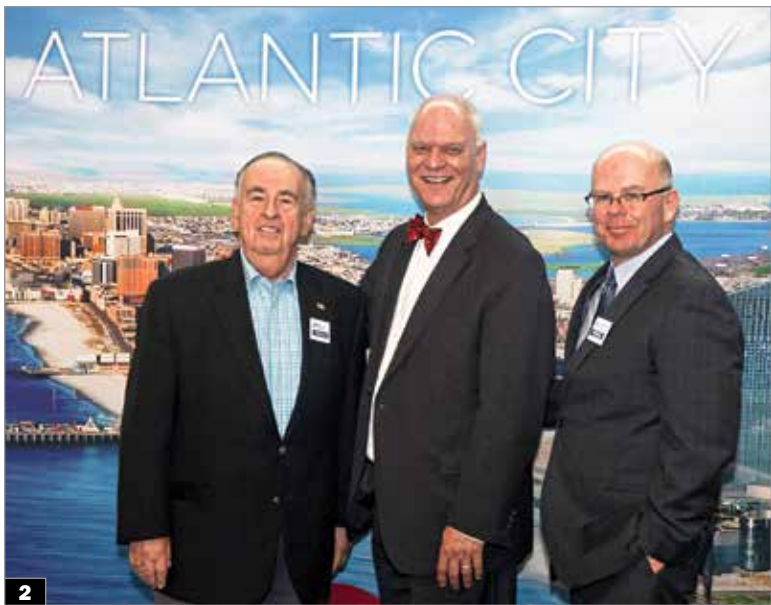
— Florence Quinn



Hilton Orlando's Spencer's for Steaks & Chops.



# Snapshots



**1-13** Meet AC and Caesars Entertainment hosted an event at the Atlantic City Convention Center April 6 as part of the second annual Global Meetings Industry Day along with the Meetings Mean Business Coalition (MMBC) and meetings industry organizations worldwide to showcase the real impact that business meetings, conferences, conventions, incentive travel, trade shows and exhibitions have on people, businesses and communities. **1** (L to r) Trish McCormick, Pool & Spa Show; Shelley Williams and Dennis Verba, Caesars Entertainment; Michael Massari, chief sales officer, Caesars Entertainment; and Tammy Puchliakow, Caesars Entertainment. **2** (L to r) Harvey Grotzky, publisher of *Corporate & Incentive Travel* magazine; Atlantic City Mayor Don Guardian; and Jim Wood, president and CEO of Meet AC. **3** Cooking up a storm are Meet AC's Karina Anthony (second from right) and Jessica Merrill (r) along with **4** Shelley Williams (l) and Reina Herschdorfer of Caesars Entertainment. **5** Jim Wood and **6** NJ State Senator Jim Whelan welcome guests. **7** (L to r) Roger Dow, president and CEO, U.S. Travel Association; Massari; and Michael Dominguez, chief sales officer, MGM Resorts International. **8** Dow and Wood join Jake Buganski, acting executive director, NJ State Division of Travel and Tourism. **9** The panel (l to r) included Dow; Wood; Paul Van Deventer, president & CEO of MPI and co-chair of the MMBC; Karie Hall, VP & GM, Harrah's Atlantic City; Larry Luteran, EVP chief sales officer, Freeman Company; Massari; and Dominguez. **10** Gwen Migita, VP of CSR, Caesars Entertainment.



By Paul Ruby

## Together, We Can Make Events More Accessible

**W**e talk a lot about hospitality in the events industry, but we still have a ways to go. Inclusivity for people with disabilities must encompass more than ensuring a venue has an elevator or a ramp in place of stairs. We need to accommodate people with varying levels of abilities and circumstances and communicate our services to potential event attendees in advance so they can make informed decisions.

Our industry has made progress, most notably with the 1990 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the nation's first comprehensive civil rights law addressing the needs of people with disabilities. The law prohibits discrimination in employment, public services, public accommodations and telecommunication. The law has spurred changes and awareness across the industry.

### Lack of Information

However, since the ADA was passed, there has only been one book and a subsequent white paper that addressed the issue of accessibility specifically for event planning.

Think about it. Do hotels routinely tell potential groups how many rooms have roll-in showers with built-in benches or if their restaurant offers a Braille menu? Do convention centers publicize how many of their staff know American Sign Language? And let's be honest — how many of these questions have crossed your mind before now?

Accessibility is not only about people who are blind or deaf or in wheelchairs. People have all kinds of disabilities and some are invisible to others. Others find themselves suddenly needing special accommodations. For example, an attendee who shatters his knee the week before a conference will need unexpected special accommodations.

Members of the Event Service Professionals Association have heard event planners bemoan the lack of information out there about accessibility. We want to help. Event planners



need accessibility information early in the process. Having this information readily available will help with site selection and attendee communications.

But where do you find the time? After all, there's a reason that 'event planner' lands in the top five of most stressful jobs year after year — site selections, contract negotiations, budgets, room blocks and the list of goes on and on.

### Project Access Toolkit

This issue of meeting and event accessibility was so important to us at the Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA) that we created "Project Access: Accessible Meetings FAQs," a downloadable resource form that hotels, convention centers, CVBs and other destinations and venues can customize with their accessibility information and branding to provide to meeting planners.

The checklists are designed sequentially, from a guest's arrival at a destination airport, to ground transportation, lodging, meeting venues and offsite venues. There also is a resource list that DMOs can customize with state and local agencies.

So much of accessibility is about awareness and asking the right questions. That's why we involved people at the outset who are involved in not only events and event services, but also accessibility experts and those who face accessibility issues in their daily lives. In order to truly help our industry, we needed to know exactly what information we didn't know — if that makes sense.

swers, that's our job. So why not do some homework up front and get this information? It's to our benefit and to our client's benefit to stop doing it piecemeal and to make sure the process is more comprehensive and inclusive."

Project Access was created with the input of ESPA members who work in convention and visitors bureaus, hotels and convention centers, along with contributions from meeting planners.

Most important, we made a decision not to limit this resource to our members. After all, if we're trying to improve the industry for the benefit of meeting planners and event attendees, we need to share this information as widely as possible. Meeting

**"Accessibility** is not only about people who are blind or deaf or in wheelchairs. People have all kinds of disabilities and some are **invisible** to others."

Denise Suttle, CMP, who served as ESPA president when we started working on Project Access in earnest, told me she felt compelled to bring the project to the forefront because she and her team at Visit Albuquerque saw a noticeable uptick in the number of questions that event planners were asking about accessibility — from how many roll-in showers hotels had on the property to the availability of renting large quantities of motorized scooters and wheelchairs.

"While ADA has always been important, it seemed like meeting planners were suddenly focused on it and bringing it up more, wanting to know about our city's vendors and suppliers who could meet their needs," Suttle said.

Denise decided that Project Access would be a perfect project for ESPA. After all, our organization is dedicated to elevating the event and convention services profession and to preparing members, through education and networking, for their pivotal role in innovative and successful event execution.

"It occurred to me that ESPA should be at the forefront of this issue," Suttle said. "We're the people tasked with getting the an-

planners and others may request a copy of the Project Access template by emailing [info@espaonline.org](mailto:info@espaonline.org).

### Making a Difference

Project Access is already making a difference. In addition to our own members, we have received more than 100 non-member requests for the toolkit to date. And one of our members at the Tampa Convention Center recently received a list of ADA questions from an event planner. She began to look through the questions, thought they seemed familiar and then realized... they were from ESPA's Project Access.

Our toolkit is an excellent starting kit for venues, but we realize we couldn't possibly cover every possible situation or circumstance the first time around. But what we wanted to do is to provide a framework and let venues figure out what additional services or concerns will be applicable to their potential attendees.

Please join us in making Project Access an industry-wide resource. Together we can make a positive change! **C&IT**



**Paul Ruby, CMP**

is Associate Director of Catering/Convention Services at Sheraton Dallas Hotel and current president of the Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA). ESPA is dedicated to elevating the event and convention services profession and to preparing members, through education and networking, for their pivotal role in innovative and successful event execution. For more information, visit [www.espaonline.org](http://www.espaonline.org).



By Bill MacDonald

## 10 Criteria for Vetting Event Technology Solution Providers

Over the past decade, there have been significant upgrades and newcomers in the event technology space. These solutions claim to increase revenue, streamline processes, drive attendance, improve the attendee experience, provide data/insight and/or deliver ROI. There are several hundred event technology providers competing to win your business.

When you consider varying pricing structures, functionality and built-for-purpose options, choosing the best solutions is no easy task. How's an organizer able to cut through the clutter and make sound choices that deliver results?

“How's an **organizer** able to cut through the clutter and make sound **choices** that **deliver results**?”

Before you take a look under the hood or consider test driving a core technology that you're going to make part of your event and business processes, consider these 10 criteria for vetting:

### 1 Sustainability of the Company.

Most primary software solutions (registration, expo management, content management, speaker management) will deliver the greatest ROI when you are able to use them for three or more years. Event organizers incur lots of hidden switching costs in implementation, training and integration when jumping from solution to solution. Look for years in business, a strong customer list, number of employees, annual revenue, how they're funded and the longevity of the leadership team for indicators of stability. A revenue/employee ratio in excess of \$100K is normally a healthy metric. Consider visiting their office to get a feel for their company culture.

### 2 Not Their First Rodeo.

It would be a CLM (Career Limiting Move) to pick

a partner that goes out of business or has a major outage before your big event. Be cautious with start-up companies that are learning from you. Make sure they have a proven track record of providing like solutions to those with similar needs. Ask for examples, testimonials and case studies. It's never a good idea to be on the bleeding edge with any technology. Exceptions to this might include existing trusted technologies that add new features, modules or integration partners.

### 3 Fits with Minimal Alterations.

If the majority of your requirements need to be met

through customization vs. configuration, expect a lengthy and costly implementation. Ask for an admin demo to understand how configurable a software system is.

### 4 Plays Well in the Sandbox.

Make sure you have a good understanding of data import/export capability as well as examples of successful web services integration with other solutions. Passing data between systems, enabling single sign-on and maximizing the value of your data are no longer nice additions — they are must-haves. Ask if they've developed any APIs (Application Programming Interface). Many of these core technologies have other event products integrated into their platform, which adds considerable value for your organization's technology stack.

### 5 Plan for Continuous Improvement.

Technology is evolving at a rapid rate. Your vendors' technology needs to evolve at the same pace. Make sure their solutions are scalable and that a product roadmap is in place. Look for companies that are

pushing out improvements, modules or new features several times a year. When utilizing a cloud-based solution, the vendor should regularly apply patches to keep the system updated.

### 6 Customer Support.

User support and project management are huge differentiators between an average and a superior provider. What kind of training, customer support or project management do they include? Research their service models and ensure they will provide live support when you need it. Ask if they have user group meetings where customers share best practices. Do they have a blog, online group, case studies or newsletters that keep existing customers informed and up to date?

### 7 Stays True to Their Core.

A number of tech start-ups build their revenue model around selling sponsorships, ads or upgrades to your exhibitors. We're not crazy about that model. Most show organizers prefer that their communications and consultative selling be done by their team. Exhibitors or sponsors get turned off by multiple asks for your show. You want a tech company that focuses on improving their product and gives you the tools to be successful.

### 8 Safety and Security.

Security should be at the top of your requirements list.

Vendors should take extreme precautions to keep your exhibitor, attendee and financial data secure. Small or medium-sized vendors may not be able to afford the significant ongoing costs to provide the security you need. Ask where the technology is hosted, what their up-time is and what kind of disaster recovery plan they have. If you are conducting commerce via their solution, ask for proof of their level PCI Compliance. No compliance, no deal.

### 9 Anal about Analytics.

Any solution worth their salt will provide you great stats on pacing, usage and will have a plan for adoption. Do they provide a real-time dashboard that gives you a snapshot on how things are progressing vs. previous years? Do you have the information needed to help aid decision-making and midcourse corrections?

### 10 Anywhere — Any Device.

Most event technologies are considered a SaaS (Software as a Service) platform utilizing cloud-based technology. The biggest advantage of using a SaaS solution is that it can be accessed from any part of the world at any time. These products should also be mobile enabled allowing the same admin functionality from a tablet or smartphone as they do from a PC. Can you go to an exhibitor's booth and confirm their selection for next year in real-time from a tablet? **C&IT**



**Bill MacDonald** is the vice president, analysis and insights, at Velvet Chainsaw Consulting since November 2015. A seasoned professional who stands for conference truths, value delivery and the power of face2face meetings, Bill is an expert on corporate meeting and travel procurement, the industry supply chain and the use of technology to accelerate results. Bill has embraced and contributed to the hospitality/meetings industry's maturation for more than 25 years. He has spent most of his time with meeting and incentive companies including Conferon/Experient. Originally published in "Velvet Chainsaw Midcourse Corrections." bmacdonald@velvetchainsaw.com



## Give Your Meeting an Upgrade

### Luxury Properties Aren't Just for Incentive Programs — They Reward Meeting-Goers, too

While a natural choice for incentive programs, luxury properties have a broader appeal in the meeting planning world. A four- or five-star lodging choice can be appropriate for a board of directors meeting or other high-end gathering involving the C-suite. On the client-facing side, it can be the kind of setting that impresses customers (or potential customers) and conveys the quality of the host company's brand. And the reward aspect of a luxury property need not be restricted to incentive programs: Splendid surroundings and amenities effectively reward a company's associates at the annual meeting, for example.

#### Meeting on the Lake

With that perspective in mind, Lowe Boats has partnered with the Chateau on the Lake Resort, Spa & Convention Center in Branson, Missouri, for the last

three installments of its Annual Boat Dealer Meeting. Approximately 300 of the Lebanon, Missouri-based company's dealers attended, and "the luxurious feel of the Chateau makes our show a reward for our dealers' hard work," says Beverly Ramsey, marketing manager, Lowe Boats. "It's important that they feel they are appreciated with plush accommodations,

wonderful meals and entertainment during our new product show. Some add days on the front end or the back end to make it a true vacation."

Chateau on the Lake Resort, Spa & Convention Center, located in the picturesque Ozark Mountains, certainly has luxury credentials, having received the AAA Four Diamond Award for 18 consecutive years. Offering 301 newly

refurbished guest rooms and 43,500 sf of meeting space, the resort has been a nice fit for the Lowe Boats group, while its full-service marina on Table Rock Lake accommodates the boats. "The convenience of the marina to the beautiful accommodations at the Chateau make it a perfect location," Ramsey says. "We put 20 new boat models at the marina for the dealers to try out. With our show

and boats on the water, lots of dealers take advantage of that time to try and run as many of the new models that they can. Other dealers enjoy the pool and The Library when not in a training session or meeting."

Yet another context in which a luxury property can be ideal is the celebration of a company milestone. Last year was Lowe Boats' 45th anniversary, and a property like the Chateau was ideal for the momentous occasion — not only in terms of amenities, but also service.

"We wanted to have a huge cake with our 45th anniversary logo on display to celebrate," Ramsey relates. "Every bakery had limitations on their oven space. The staff at Chateau found someone who would build this huge display cake out of Styrofoam, and complete it with icing and our logo. Everyone commented how great the cake looked. Then they rolled it in the back while the wait staff

served cake from sheet cakes to our guests. Everyone assumed they were eating the cake that was on display."

To round out the celebration, the awards dinner was followed by live entertainment at the resort's outdoor pool and a fireworks display.

#### Mountain Luxury

Also partnering with a luxury hotel for non-incentive meetings is Boston Scientific Corporation, a Marlborough, Massachusetts-based medical device company. The legendary Broadmoor, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, has hosted several small conferences for the company in addition to a 400-attendee annual sales meeting in January 2016.

For the annual meeting, participants "fly in from all across the country, and we have a global contingent that comes to this meeting as well," says Mike Jones, vice president of sales for the company.

**Above:** The Lodge, one of four housing options at Sea Island Resort on Georgia's coast. **Right:** The Mizner Ballroom at The Cloister at Sea Island. **Below:** Chateau on the Lake Resort, Spa & Convention Center in Branson, Missouri.



Credits: Chateau on the Lake Resort, Spa & Convention Center





**Beverly Ramsey**  
Marketing Manager  
Lowe Boats  
Lebanon, MO

**"The luxurious feel of the Chateau makes our show a reward for our dealers' hard work. It's important that they feel they are appreciated with plush accommodations, wonderful meals and entertainment during our new product show."**

"The luxury part of the resort makes people feel this is a really impressive spot. Comments from surveys included, 'Wow, what a venue to have the annual sales meeting in!'" That kind of reaction led Boston Scientific to rebook The Broadmoor for its 2019 annual meeting.

Situated at the gateway to the Colorado Rockies, The Broadmoor and surrounding area is "a really desirable place to go, a very scenic resort and location," says Jones. "But more important is how the local team works with us, making our entire team feel welcome." The resort also makes the sales group feel more connected with numerous team-building opportunities, from bowling to paintball to hiking.

Indeed, this luxury resort is just as suited to the outdoorsman as to the epicurean. "Depending on what your flavor is, whether you like luxury or wilderness, they have it for you," says Jones. "So if instead of fine dining you want to go out and do flyfishing with a packed lunch,

you can do that as well." The 784-room resort offers three Wilderness Experience properties: The Ranch at Emerald Valley, Cloud Camp and Fishing Camp. The panoply of outdoor event spaces are part of an overall 185,000 sf of function space, including the 60,000-sf Broadmoor Hall and 62 meeting rooms.

Opened in 1918, The Broadmoor represents Colorado's history as much as it does luxury. Last October, The Broadmoor introduced the refurbished Estate House, a 12,000-sf historic mansion ideal for groups looking for Great Gatsby-style elegance. Built in the 1920s, the home still features original woodwork, art and other period accents. A lavish grand parlor is suited to a cocktail reception of up to 120, private dinners for up to 60, or meetings. The refined dining room seats up to 16 and is serviced by The Broadmoor's acclaimed culinary team. At the resort proper, groups can avail themselves of Colorado's only Forbes Five Star, AAA Five Diamond restaurant, the Penrose Room. A five-star spa and fitness center is also onsite, as well as three championship golf courses.

From fish camp to fine dining, The Broadmoor exemplifies how "luxury" encompasses a range of unique offerings. Josh Lesnick, president and CEO of Associated Luxury Hotels, parent company of Associated Luxury Hotels International,

notes, "Today's luxury customer is truly changing and evolving, as are their needs. At Associated Luxury Hotels International, we work with so many spectacular independent luxury resorts and hotels, and each one has its own unique, special way of meeting and exceeding the needs of their guests. That is ultimately what it's all about with today's luxury customer. Delivering new and exciting experiences that truly feel personalized and deliver unexpected extra touches that create powerful memories."

### High-Demand Segment

As far as new hotels joining the luxury ranks in the U.S., there are relatively few in the pipeline, according to recent data from STR. In February 2017, there were 8,490 luxury-segment rooms in construction, which represents a 10.7 percent increase over February 2016. However, that compares to 27,457, 62,083 and 63,274 under construction, respectively, in the upper upscale, upscale and upper midscale segments for February 2017.

"We don't have a lot of new builds going on in North America right now at the luxury level," says Rhea Stagner, CIS, DVP, sourcing and supplier relations at Maritz Travel – A Maritz Global Events Company.

Combined with a high-demand market, the situation for planners often calls



The Broadmoor takes luxury into the wilderness at Cloud Camp, 3,000 feet above the resort on Cheyenne Mountain.

Credit: The Broadmoor



Sweeping Pacific Ocean views — and the circular Coliseum Pool — are enjoyed by guests of The Resort at Pelican Hill in Newport Coast.

for booking as far in advance as possible — whether or not the luxury property is in a first-tier city. "The further out they can source the better, 18–24 months," says Stagner. "That way they will have options for that meeting or incentive. Closer in, your options become more limited, regardless of whether it's a tier-one or tier-two hotel."

### California Cachet

For example, Orange County, California, sees considerable demand from groups interested in luxury properties due to a constellation of resorts including the five-diamond Monarch Beach Resort, in Dana Point; five-star Montage Laguna Beach; five-diamond Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel; and the five-star, five-diamond Resort at Pelican Hill, in Newport. Maritz Travel has a significant history with the latter property, showing its versatility for more than just incentives. "We were one of their very first customers and had a strong relationship with their sales team prior to opening," says Stagner. "We have done a little bit of everything there, from 20-person board of directors meetings to 20-person dealer owner meetings all the way up to 500-person incentives."

The resort offers 204 opulently appointed bungalow guest rooms and suites with private terraces; 23,000 sf of function space; a five-star spa; and world-class restaurants, including Andrea, serving authentic Northern Italian cuisine. Pelican Hill Golf Club boasts 36 scenic holes by Tom Fazio; this spring, Pelican Hill Golf Academy debuted a new 3-D golf evaluation. Also onsite is the Coliseum Pool, an immense circular pool with tiered decks and luxurious cabanas.

Among the special events Stagner's

team has held for group clients of the resort is a "beautiful welcome reception at the Coliseum Pool with a stunning sunset view," she describes. "The area is so beautiful with uplighting on the palm trees and gobo on the pool, it requires very little outside décor." In addition, an awards ceremony and dinner in Mar Vista Ballroom presented "a stunning view and beautiful setting requiring minimum décor, which is a cost savings to the customer while the guests experience a memorable evening."

### Desert Jewel

Much like The Resort at Pelican Hill, many of Arizona's luxury properties are known for connecting with their natural environment. The AAA Five Diamond Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, for example, is set against the backdrop of Arizona's McDowell Mountains, in the heart of the Sonoran Desert. The Spanish colonial-style resort's 750 rooms include 69 Fairmont Gold rooms and suites. Notable amenities include five heated swimming pools, the 44,000-sf Well & Being Spa and Bourbon Steak, the Four Diamond steakhouse by acclaimed chef Michael Mina. The resort opened an additional 102 guest rooms in summer 2016, yielding its current total. The expansion included three luxury suites, a new Sunset Beach pool, 35,000-sf Sunset Lawn and new Western town event venue. This summer, the resort will expand and renovate its 2,600-sf Fairmont Gold Meeting Center and add a new 1,000-sf breakout room. A sliding Nanotec bifolding glass wall (with privacy blinds) opens the space to a 6,000-sf patio overlooking the TPC Golf Course and McDowell Mountains. It's ideal for a small but high-end corporate meeting.

### Las Vegas Winner

Another luxury option in the American West is Wynn Las Vegas. The Wynn name is practically synonymous with luxury: Wynn Resorts has received more Forbes Five Star Awards than any other independent hotel company in the world. And the brand is well attuned to the meetings market, with a combined 290,000 sf of function space between Wynn Las Vegas and Encore Las Vegas, paired with a total of 4,750 guest rooms.

Luxury shopping is among the dis-



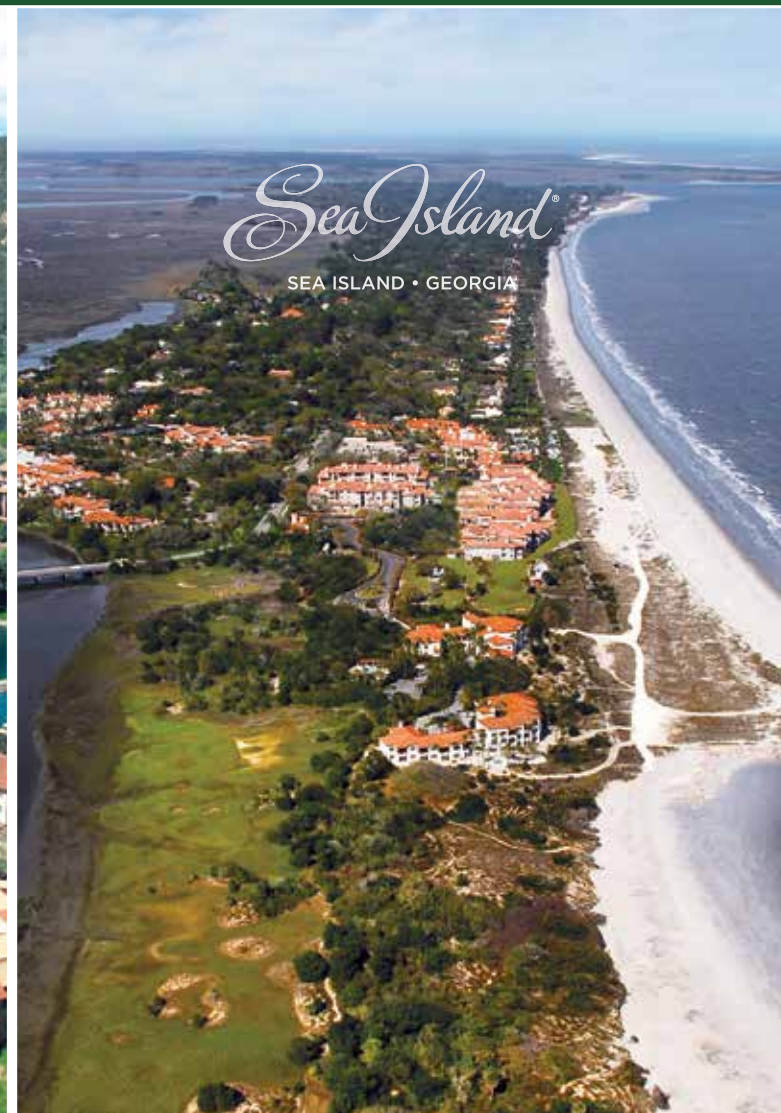
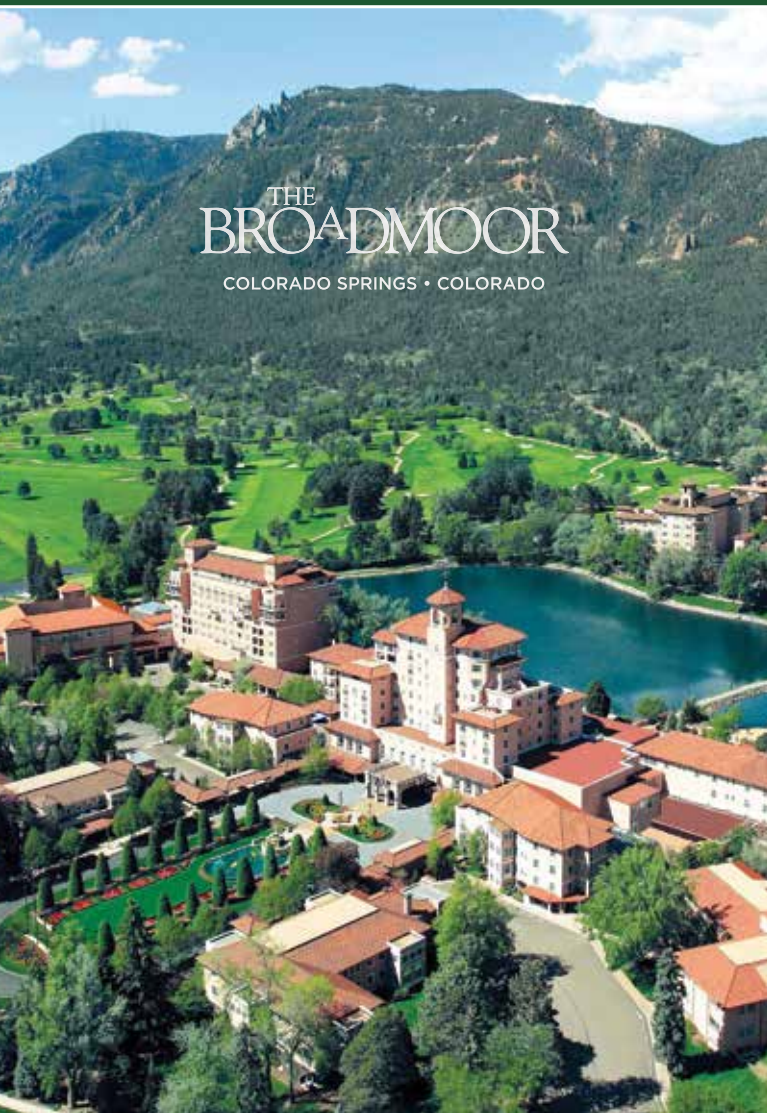
**Mike Jones**  
Vice President of Sales  
Boston Scientific Corporation  
Marlborough, MA

**"The luxury part of (The Broadmoor) makes people feel this is a really impressive spot. Comments from surveys included, 'Wow, what a venue to have the annual sales meeting in!'"**



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### ***Activities— For Everyone***

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The 784 guest rooms, suites, cottages, brownstones, and The Broadmoor Estate House feature the elegant touches and amenities at the main campus. Provide adventure at one of the three Broadmoor Wilderness Experiences: Cloud Camp, The Ranch at Emerald Valley, and The Broadmoor Fly Fishing Camp.



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With more than 87,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor function space, Sea Island venues range from boardrooms to ballrooms, accommodating 5 to 500 people. From food and décor to technical expertise, our seasoned team brings creativity and attention to detail to every conference, executive retreat, and customized meeting.

### ***Activities— Variety***

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### ***Accommodations— Choice***

Our 390 rooms and suites ensure we have a room type to meet your needs from The Cloister, nestled between the Black Banks River and the Atlantic Ocean to The Lodge, surrounded by two of our golf courses to The Inn, our select-service property. Or for those seeking outdoor adventure, we offer Broadfield, our 5,800-acre sporting club.





The McDowell Patio at the AAA Five Diamond Fairmont Scottsdale Princess.

tinctive experiences here with the 99,000-sf Wynn Esplanade and a luxury retail Strip-front expansion, Wynn Plaza, currently under construction and scheduled to debut the first quarter of 2018. The 7,000-sf Wynn Collection boutique, showcasing the work of fashion luminaries, has hosted many corporate groups who want a salon-like environment.

Another upscale space is the Chair-

man's Salon, graced with crystal chandeliers, burnished chintz and a dramatic curving staircase. This March, Wynn Las Vegas introduced a new program of workshops led by Wynn experts throughout the resort, such as master chefs, sommeliers, mixologists and artisans. The program is an excellent opportunity for planners seeking to give

Credit: Fairmont Hotels & Resorts

their attendees an interactive experience with high-end craftsmanship in many of its forms.

### Seaside Retreat

On the Southeast coast of the U.S. lies a resort that combines luxury with Southern hospitality. Georgia's ocean-front Sea Island Resort, surrounded by five miles of private beach, is billed as the only resort in the world to achieve four Forbes Five Star awards nine years in a row. Sea Island Resort has enhanced an already top-tier product with the recent completion of a \$40 million expansion, which added the new Garden Wing, with 63 guest rooms, and the new 5,000-sf Mizner Ballroom at The Cloister at Sea Island. With the new ballroom, Sea Island Resort offers groups 51,000 total sf of indoor and outdoor event space.

The Mediterranean-style Cloister — one of the resort's four housing options along with The Lodge, Inn and Cottages



Outdoor dining on the Margaux Patio at Wynn Las Vegas.

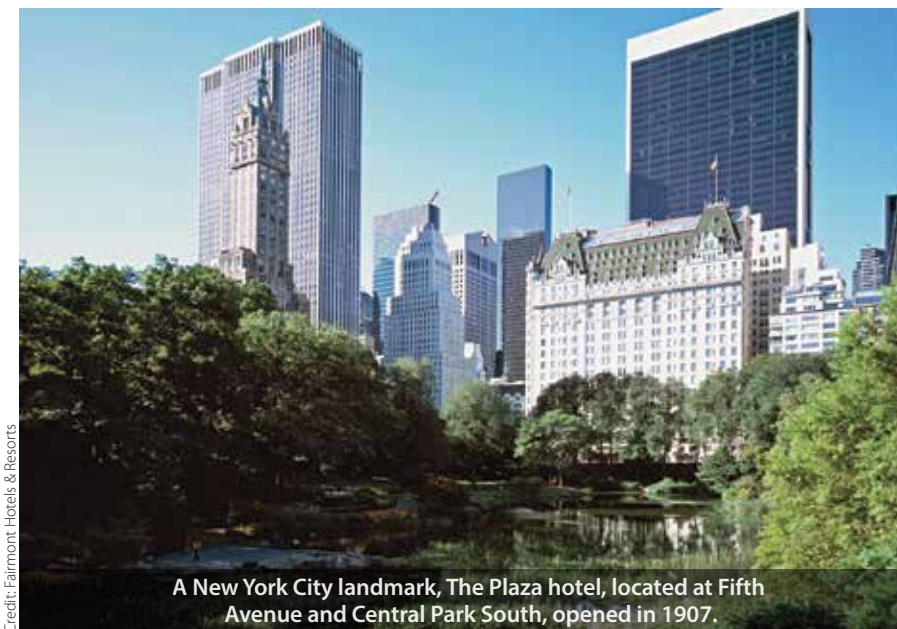
Credit: Barbara Kraft/Wynn Las Vegas



**Rhea Stagner, CIS**

DVP, Sourcing and Supplier Relations  
Martiz Travel  
St. Louis, MO

**"One guest response was: 'I thoroughly enjoyed my experience at Pelican Hill. It spoiled me for all future hotel stays. They will all pale in comparison.'"**



A New York City landmark, The Plaza hotel, located at Fifth Avenue and Central Park South, opened in 1907.

Credit: Fairmont Hotels & Resorts

— now offers 265 elegant accommodations featuring views of the Black Banks River and Atlantic Ocean. The Cloister, originally designed by famed Palm Beach architect Addison Mizner in 1928, encompasses the Sea Island Yacht Club, The Spa at Sea Island and The Sea Island Beach Club. The Cloister's F&B venues also have been augmented with an 80-seat addition and redesign of Italian restaurant Tavola, and the debut of the new River Bar Lounge. Johnson Vann Interiors commissioned Georgia artist Steve Penley to create a vivid painting for the signature restaurant.

The Lodge at Sea Island, surrounded by the fairways of the Sea Island Golf Club, is an intimate 40-room hotel and golf clubhouse offering expansive ocean views. The 85-room Inn at Sea Island is on St. Simons Island — just across the largest salt marsh on the Eastern Seaboard — minutes from the Cloister. Finally there are about 130 Sea Island Cottages — from three to eight bedrooms — available for rent.

Amenities include the 65,000-sf Spa at Sea Island, which also has garnered Forbes Five Star acclaim, and three championship golf courses and the Golf Performance Center. Out-of-the-ordinary activities are available, such as the Sea Island Shooting School offering access to Rainbow Island Sporting Clays Course; and private beach horseback rides on the shore and along the dunes.

### New York Icon

Striking interiors are commonplace at luxury properties, whether in the guest rooms, lobby or eateries. Perhaps no East Coast metropolitan hotel outdoes The Plaza in this respect. From the beaux arts-style, 4,800-sf Grand Ballroom where Truman Capote once entertained, to the Italian Renaissance ambience of The Terrace Room, to the Central Park-inspired Palm Court, The Plaza is home to a wealth of gathering venues beyond its 5,000 sf of meeting space.

"I do events all over the city at many of the hotels, but The Plaza of course is iconic," remarks Lynn Silverman, chief executive planner at Manhattan-based Creative Event Planning. "The venues are so special; they're each so different." Major law firms are among the corporate groups Silverman has brought to The Plaza during her more than 20-year relationship with the property. "Luxury is key" for these groups, she says. "They want to treat their VIP clients with the utmost of care."

Among many special event options, Silverman recommends a buyout of the 9,500-sf Todd English Food Hall, "which is a very popular spot with him being a celebrity chef. It's great because it can be used for a dinner, but before dinner it can be used for a meeting. And you can have interactive experiences, such as pasta making," she explains. Wine and spirits tasting and pairing, as well as su-



**Lynn Silverman**

Chief Executive Planner  
Creative Event Planning  
New York, NY

**"I do events all over the city at many of the hotels, but The Plaza of course is iconic. The venues are so special; they're each so different."**

shi rolling are further culinary possibilities for groups at The Food Hall, which includes a 3,500-sf private dining room.

Having appeared in numerous films, The Plaza has deep ties with popular culture and evokes immediate recognition from meeting attendees worldwide. *Eloise: A Book for Precocious Grown Ups* "is probably read to every little girl growing up. People know about The Plaza since they're knee high," Silverman notes. All of which makes the hotel extremely marketable for many types of corporate events.

But even luxury resorts that are not on par with The Plaza in terms of renown can still garner fame with attendees. Post-event surveys are routinely laudatory with properties of this level. "We do a participant/guest survey for all of our programs, and consistently, Resort at Pelican Hill programs have rated a 4.9 on a 5-point scale," Stagner says. "For an incentive program there a few weeks ago, one guest response was: 'I thoroughly enjoyed my experience at Pelican Hill. It spoiled me for all future hotel stays. They will all pale in comparison.'" Planners booking such a property should be aware they're setting quite a precedent in hospitality for their groups. **C&IT**



# Making Sense of Big Data

## How to Mine a Treasure Trove of Insights to Improve Meeting Outcomes

By Maura Keller

Capturing and analyzing the vast volume of data that can be collected from meetings and conferences — including onsite attendee behavior, engagement, feedback, surveys, social media and more — has the potential to yield invaluable insights into how to improve the overall experience and make meetings more effective, both in real time and for the future. The analysis part is, of course, the biggest challenge — how to turn an avalanche of numbers and information into a logical flow of actionable intelligence.

According to Issa Jouaneh, senior vice president and general manager at American Express Meetings and Events, there is a wealth of data that comes from meetings, such as attendance, engagement, vendor utilization, content performance and more. Meeting planners can harness the power of this data to gain insights about what works and

what doesn't in their meetings. From there, they can use these insights to drive the best possible outcomes.

As Jouaneh explains, technologies such as mobile apps and beacons have made it easier than ever for meeting planners to collect real-time data by offering a more connected feedback loop between attendees and planners.

"While it requires some level of flexibility, aided by data, meeting planners can even react to things happening on the ground in real time," Jouaneh says. "For example, if engagement at a certain session is high, planners can distribute related content via the meeting app. Small touches like this do a lot to boost the attendee experience — and it goes for speakers and other exhibitors, too. For instance, via apps, speakers can receive data on the audience's reaction in real time, and tailor the rest of their presentation."

### Capturing the Data

There are three key steps used in leveraging big data for a successful event strategy including collecting the data, analyzing the data, and making the data work for you.

For example, you can use data analytics to discover which online campaigns are influencing registration or being discussed on social media. You also can track the movements of attendees with Wi-Fi, GPS, iBeacons or low-energy Bluetooth to see which events or booths they're visiting. Or, you could send out survey questionnaires or second-screen solutions to discover the actions and thoughts of audience members before, during and after an event.

MCI USA, a company that helps businesses and associations to strategically engage and activate their target audiences, has been using the DoubleDutch platform to acquire and analyze real-

"With more information and data at their disposal, meeting planners are able to **streamline their process** and take personalization to a new level."

Issa Jouaneh

Senior V.P. and General Manager, American Express Meetings and Events



time data, including what sessions sponsors and attendees are most interested in.

Laurence Julliard, strategic consultant at MCI, says the definition of big data is changing rapidly with the growth of the internet of things and connected "things."

"Every single connected device or wearable technology is able to provide real-time data on your audience, customers, partners and team," Julliard says. "The technology available today is not only changing what we know of the audience but also how you engage with them and how they interact with each other."

Mobile apps also are a key source of data for meeting planners. Apps provide analytic dashboards and an engaging social layer that offer planners a clear picture into how attendees are experiencing their event, while also enabling meeting planners to calculate and demonstrate return on investment.

"Meeting planners should capture data about the attendee experience," Jouaneh says. "For instance, who the most popular and influential speakers are at their event, who the most influential attendees are, which sessions are the most popular and what topics are

engaging attendees the most. This data allows planners to get into attendees' heads, understand what they like and don't like, to enhance future meetings."

### Making It Easier

It's also up to meeting planners to capture appropriate data, but there are techniques and technologies that help make this task easier.

"For example, by encouraging attendees to sync their social profiles with the event app, or using gamification tactics, planners can boost engagement with event apps and gather more data," Jouaneh says. "With more information and data at their disposal, meeting planners are able to streamline their process and take personalization to a new level."

For instance, through American Express' Meetings Insights platform they're able to use both historical and predictive information to inform future meetings and events.

"Given that many of our clients have annual events, our meeting planners have a deep picture of the program's performance to help drive program improvements year after year," Jouaneh says.

And remember, big data needs to be,

well, big. That means large sample sizes and information for any scenario. Without sufficient sample size, quality and accuracy are impacted and the decision-making process slows.

Karen Shackman, president, Shackman Associates in New York, is seeing big data being used in two ways at corporate meetings: First, turnkey apps that manage registration, help attendees network prior to arriving, optimize breakout sessions, orchestrate offsite networking opportunities and create a platform for continued engagement after the meeting ends.

"Planners and attendees can connect with interest groups, conduct private chats, connect via LinkedIn, and view profiles of attendees they don't know before the meeting," Shackman says. "Apps are becoming geo-enabled, which helps attendees enhance their experience based on their location at a given moment. Have downtime between work sessions? Apps can now let you know that an attendee you were hoping to find for networking is down the street at Starbucks."

Second, interactive private technology means less tweeting and more



"Every single connected device or wearable technology is able to provide **real-time data** on your audience, customers, partners and team."

Laurence Julliard

Strategic Consultant, MCI, McLean, VA





“Apps are becoming geo-enabled, which helps attendees **enhance their experience** based on their location at a given moment.”

**Karen Shackman**

President, Shackman Associates, New York, NY

networking. While there is continuing debate on how to use social media during business components at large association meetings, Shackman is seeing a trend that creates a hyper-intelligent, private system that increases face-to-face interaction.

“The key is to provide moderators with more control than ever over questions, answers and even who gets asked the questions,” Shackman says. “With this kind of technology, meeting attendees can now ask unlimited questions, and moderators can quickly filter out ones that don’t make sense or disrupt the flow. Furthermore, because speakers can clearly see the questions being asked, they do not get lost among the noise of status updates.”

### Inherent Challenges

When capturing big data, it is important for meeting and event planners to work with tech providers to plan their deployment, considering the arc of the attendee’s journey through the various platforms and apps as an enhancement of the meetings experience.

As Mary Ann Pierce, founder and CEO at MAP Digital explains, it’s important to identify what data is triggered by registration, conference apps, evaluations, etc., and how can that data and the insights it renders be pushed to internal stakeholders — and perhaps monetized to sponsors and exhibitors.

“You really need to have a tech summit with tech providers to plan a 10,000-foot evaluation that insures interoperability and multiyear commitment by the planner and organization to reach a larger business objective,” Pierce says.

MAP Digital’s MetaMeetings plat-

form collects granular, contextual data of live and web attendees’ content participation.

“However, our planner clients have to advocate within their organization to find a ‘home’ for this data, whether it is with sales, marketing or research, and then get the budget in which to have it analyzed and merged into their internal databases,” Pierce says. “This should be a holistic business objective for upper management to empower on the planning level — not the planning level up.”

Of course, gathering and utilizing data is inherently risky because of security issues. As Jouaneh explains, meeting planners need to be aware of these risks and put the proper controls in place to protect data and ensure it’s being used appropriately and safely.

“Meeting planners need to educate themselves on the different privacy laws per country to ensure compliance,” Jouaneh says. “As the industry grows and meeting planners take on more responsibilities, and risks with them, careful use of data will be more important than ever.”

Common mistakes that planners make can include having too much data; and collecting data that no one cares about or can use because it is not aligned with business objectives.

“The more you get to know your customer, the more you will understand their needs and their business,” Julliard says, “unless you keep on asking the same kinds of questions and not listening to them.”

That said, meeting planners shouldn’t forget about the personal touch.

“Even while data’s role and value continue to grow, it’s essential that meeting

and event planners remain focused on personalization and targeting to ensure positive experiences,” Jouaneh says.

One of the additional challenges in big data collection is having planners who are not trained to deal with the selection of technology to facilitate attendees’ data generation, the measurement of it and the integration of the data into internal databases — while maintaining cybersecurity.

“Allocation of funds and the strategy behind the creating of an engaging attendee experience should come from an integrated effort by senior management in which the planner is also a stakeholder,” Pierce says.

### On the Horizon

Experts agree that big data is here to stay. It enables planners to create meetings and events that they know their audience will want to attend. Not to mention, attract sponsors and exhibitors.

With all of this access to data and technology, an event planner now can provide attendees with a more personalized experience.

“In fact, I won’t be surprised if someday the large events are replaced by several smaller events that are focused on data segmentation,” Julliard says. “With big data, event planners have access to the preferences of attendees, speakers, and sponsors, which allows us to create the perfect event just for them. Soon we will know our target audience better than themselves through artificial intelligence and predicting model analysis.”

Jouaneh stresses that as more and more data become accessible and trackable, planners will be better equipped to personalize meetings and boost at-

## Collection & Analysis

When it comes to meetings and events, it’s not enough anymore to measure total event attendance. Event organizers want to know if the right target audience is having the right interactions with the right content, salespeople, exhibitors, key activations or experiences with other attendees.

Joe Lovett, senior director of strategic planning at Cramer, a brand experience agency, categorizes captured data into three buckets: passive, active, and distilled.

As Lovett explains, **active data** includes things such as survey, polls, voting, attendee selected preferences that can be captured during registration or onsite via kiosks or apps. **Passive data** collection includes phone tracking that can provide an attendee flow and heat map, badge or other wearable tracking, peer and exhibitor interactions, event app insights, website analytics and any gamification tracking you may have. **Distilled data** includes social-post volume and sentiment, influence level of those who are sharing, attendee segmentation by some variable, whether it is role or demographic data.

“By capturing these data points and layering on various attributes, you can have a great understanding on how well the event performed against identified objectives, especially for the very important attendees,” Lovett says.

What types of big data are collected may vary depending upon the type of meeting or event being held. Most meeting planners will benefit from collecting information to profile attendees and to understand what types of topics and events appeal to which market segments. This kind of data can be used to help set a meeting agenda that is designed to attract more attendees. Events where attendees are given a choice of more than one session, for example, can reveal details on participant preferences.

Here are some ways to analyze how events are resonating with audiences.

- Measuring **social media activity** enables planners to track the conversation wherever it’s happening and learn where to focus event social outreach.
- Looking at **page views** provides insights on audience awareness of each individual event and all combined future events.
- Using a **trending algorithm** allows planners to look at dozens of factors to discover not just the most popular event, but also the most interesting one. This automatically enables planners to keep tabs on the social pulse of their community.

Lovett is also excited about next-gen wearables that enable attendees to share contact information with each other, register, check in to sessions, track gamification goals, and more. For the event organizers, the data from these wearables, especially when paired with an app, can offer tremendous measurement and insight.

Other ways big data can improve the experience for attendees:

**Personalization.** Today’s attendees want to participate and engage in events on their terms. Big data can help event organizers better understand attendee needs and help them create the personalized experiences attendees crave.

**Networking.** Event producers need to focus on ways to encourage networking opportunities, and not just leave it to chance. In the registration process, ask attendees to share a hobby or personal interest, then match attendees who have something in common. Simple registration questions can be paired with wearable technology, smart badges and networking apps that can provide even more data to further networking opportunities.

That said, companies also need to be careful not to be too intrusive. Participants should feel they are opting into an event, not being tracked by marketers looking to take advantage of their attendance.

“The biggest challenge lies with the sheer amount of data that is being produced at events and how to make sense of it all,” Lovett says. “As W. Edwards Deming famously quipped, ‘Just because you can measure everything, doesn’t mean you should.’

“With some pre-event planning, strategy and goal setting in place it can be easier to determine what data points will be most valuable. Not to say that the extraneous data isn’t valuable, but it doesn’t always need to be reported on.” — MK

tendee engagement. “Data integration will also be a huge focus for the industry moving forward,” Jouaneh says. “A number of developing solutions are focused on creating integrations with meeting data and expense data. This will offer planners tremendous value in understanding the relationship and dynamics of shared resources.”

Julliard says a game changer is how you bring digital technology to your event: for example, sensor integration will allow an attendee to connect, interact and even pay through RFID technology; it also will open a new world of innovative displays and ways to interact with the audience.

“The very critical component is tak-

ing a business-first approach to any big data initiatives or analyses and focusing on the information that will help you meet your business objectives,” Julliard says. “Events are one tactic into your marketing strategy and should always bring you back to the fundamental question: How will that serve my business objectives?” — C&IT



# Planning Medical Meetings

**From PhRMA Guidelines to F&B Caps and a Seller's Market, the Challenges Are Many**

By Patrick Simms

Life can be challenging for corporate planners in a seller's market, and especially so for many of those in the medical meetings sector. Hotels in high-demand cities often have a choice of group business they can take, and pharmaceutical groups can be at a negotiating disadvantage relative to other clients. Part of the reason is the need to comply with PhRMA and internal guidelines, which translates to spend limitations and less F&B revenue for the hotel.

"Not only are we competing for very limited availability between all industries, but the HCP (Health Care Provider) meetings that require quite limited spend don't appear to be as attractive when sellers can pick and choose business that brings the most revenue," explains Amber Heintz, CMP-HC, HMCC, account director at Kansas City, Missouri-based Bishop-McCann, a meeting, incentive and event company. In addition, medical groups are known

for being very meeting-space intensive, which can create a guest room-to-meeting space usage ratio that hoteliers may not find desirable.

## Hotel Partners

How can planners try to offset these factors and make their business more attractive to hoteliers? The promise of bulk business to a hotel or hotel chain is one avenue. "We have found that multi-year deals and multiple city contracts

for a series of programs has helped in leveraging options," Heintz reports. And while spending caps on F&B can't be circumvented for certain medical meetings, it bears emphasizing that the well-to-do attendees of these events can bring significant revenue to the hotel due to their personal spending. "Even if the company has to keep their meals at a certain amount, there is still a lot of extra spending in the outlets, the spa, etc. They spend a lot as individuals."

"They're sophisticated travelers," notes Valerie Richard, CMP, manager of Superior, Colorado-based Conference Services LLC and a former in-house planner for pharma companies.

Prior to implementing any negotiating strategies, there are hurdles to clear in finding the right hotel partners. In addition to the multiple breakout capacity that many medical meetings require, it is often the case that hotels can't be categorized as luxury or recreational properties, or exceed certain room rate caps, in order to be viable sites. This again adds to the challenge of sourcing in a seller's market. So, five-star or five-diamond properties are typically avoided even if they meet room rate needs, and the mere appearance of "resort" or "spa" in the property name also can be a disqualifier. "That's just optics, what they want their investors and the rest of the world to see" as far as where they choose to meet, says Richard.

On top of these limitations, plan-

ners in the life sciences space routinely contend with short lead times. "This is familiar territory," says Heintz. "With the ever-changing nature of the life sciences industry, it is to be expected." A common scenario is the product launch meeting that is pending FDA drug approval, and must take place within a few weeks once the approval comes through. "You may have an 800-person meeting and have three weeks to plan it. And while you know the timeline, you can't really act until you have that approval," says Sarah Best Port, HMCC, senior director of operations and account management, BCD Meetings & Events in Raleigh, North Carolina. "So it's about getting everything geared up and then hitting the ground running."

In those situations, it's particularly valuable to have established relationships with national hotel reps who understand and value pharma meetings business, and will readily search for holes in the booking schedules throughout the portfolio. Heintz adds, "We have close relationships with our hoteliers, which helps when we are sometimes asking for the impossible."

Planners have found that hotel sales reps with a specialization in the medical meetings sector are a great resource in this difficult market. These reps, some of whom have health care



**Sarah Best Port**  
HMCC, Senior Director of  
Operations and Account  
Management  
BCD Meetings & Events  
Raleigh, NC

**"You have to be creative and use restaurant or outdoor function space. We may even have working meals in order not to have separate meeting space."**

meetings certifications, "know that we don't necessarily have control over lead times, and that is helpful," says Port. They're also accustomed to the space needs of these groups, and helping planners make flexible use of the function space at their properties. "We've had meetings where we've had to convert suites into breakout rooms, take out the bed and put in a conference table," says Richard. "Oftentimes you have to be creative and use restaurant space or outdoor function space," Port adds. "We may even have working meals in order not to have separate meeting space."

## A Medical Meeting Milestone

The Trauma and Critical Care Conference celebrated its 50th anniversary March 20–22 as the longest-running conference at Caesars Palace and in Las Vegas. The venerable client brings in about 1,400 attendees, about 80 percent of whom are surgeons. At the golden anniversary, Caesars Palace truly rolled out the red carpet for the group, with Caesar himself and Cleopatra joining the festivities. Less mythic but no less important figures also welcomed attendees: Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman; Gary Selesner, president of Caesars Palace; Sean McBurney, general manager; and Don Ross, vice president of catering and convention services.

In addition, Caesars Entertainment and the Las Vegas Convention Authority co-sponsored the group's faculty dinner at the world-renowned Restaurant Guy Savoy in Caesars Palace. As they dined on the finest of French cui-



The fountains in front of Caesars Palace Las Vegas.



## Creative Use of Space

One example of a property attuned to these needs is the Omni Dallas Hotel, where medical/pharma groups comprise 20 percent of the corporate meetings clientele. "We routinely get creative with meeting space in order to accommodate some of the medical/pharma meeting breakout requirements," notes Chad Enloe, director, sales. "This would include the use of suites and guest rooms as small breakouts as appropriate. In addition, we may take larger spaces and create modular rooms within that space to accomplish a greater volume of breakout rooms. Lastly, we routinely use the adjoining Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, which provides a large amount of additional function rooms in a wide variety of sizes."

## PhRMA Guidelines

Hoteliers who are educated in the pharma space also can be partners in compliance with PhRMA guidelines, as well as spend tracking and reporting. "Providing us with flexibility on the front end to meet our client's spending caps is the first step," Heintz says. "Additionally, while planning it assists us when hoteliers provide clear estimated costs and menu creativity."

When it comes to F&B, there can be a bit of a balancing act in preserving quality while curtailing costs. According to Enloe, "We tailor menus and offerings to best match the customer's tastes and expectations. This often requires substituting various items from our regular printed menus, but in doing so we strive to reach the customer's budgeted allocation for meals while

still delivering a memorable banquet food and beverage experience."

The last element Heintz looks for hoteliers to provide is detailed final billing, which is critical to reporting. "We report on transfers of value per person; therefore, (clarity) on numbers attended/planned is helpful and, of course, clear room and tax, parking per person is appreciated."

In January 2016, pharma companies completed the first round of open reporting of transfers of value to their physician attendees, in accordance with the Sunshine Act. While some companies even conducted mock reporting to ensure the live process went smoothly, there were naturally some inefficiencies when it came to uploading a massive amount of data to the federal government's system. "Prob-

# TREATING MEDICAL MEETINGS WITH CARE



Gary Selesner, President, Caesars Palace and (r) Kenneth L. Mattox, M.D.



Credit: Caesars Entertainment

Caesars and great food, the sleeping rooms that our people choose are on an elevator that goes right down to the convention. That isn't often present, even in a city like Las Vegas."

Clearly, the quality of the hotel staff also is a major reason for the partnership's success. "Caesars Palace was sort of out in the country when it opened in 1966, and we went there the first time the next year. The staff at Caesars in 1966 who had a vision were a very special kind of people. They knew how to talk to people like us in medicine who wanted to go to a special place," Mattox relates. "They wanted us to be treated like a Caesar, and certainly we have been. We've also noticed that the wait staff and service people at banquets have become family; we have seen them year after year."

While Las Vegas has sometimes been shunned as a destination for medical and pharma meetings due to its recreational side, Mattox feels his attendees achieve the right balance between education and entertainment. "When they go to the glitz, it's not reality, it's kind of an adult Disneyland. And then they retreat to the convention area to find a semblance of reality," he explains. "So in my experience, the attendance at the educational scientific session is higher in Las Vegas than in any other city I go to. And part of that is the psychology of 'Yes I like to play, yes I like to see something crazy, but then I want to return to the reality of who I am.'"

Nonetheless, the 50th anniversary conference contained a rather surreal moment for Mattox: "I gave the very last talk, and when I finished and walked out of the room, the president of Caesars Palace had arranged for the staff from the CEO/President's office, to the catering office, to the wait staff and housekeeping to form this double line. There were 80 people, and I greeted all of them. I've never seen such kindness."

—PS

sine, Kenneth L. Mattox, M.D. and his group were presented with a \$10,000 check by Selesner for the Kenneth L. Mattox, M.D., Endowed Fund.

"Caesars put our name on the marquee for the three days we were there, and that's a very valuable advertisement space," notes Mattox, distinguished service professor at Baylor College of Medicine and chief of staff and surgeon-in-chief at Houston's Ben Taub Hospital.

Mattox explains the various reasons for the long partnership between his conference and Caesars Palace: "First, Las Vegas is a special city with a special attraction. Second, the airport in Las Vegas is very close to the hotels and the venues. I travel to a lot of places in the world, and it is literally the easiest (commute of its kind) in the world. Third, the production assistance from the hotel is unique in the world. Caesars Palace is a very special hotel. Although there is gambling at



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The Bishop Arts Boardroom (I) at the Omni Dallas Hotel.

Credit: Omni Dallas Hotel

ably the hardest part was that the open payment act was very vague, so all the companies interpreted it differently in trying to understand how they were going to report," Port says. Neither did the health care providers (HCPs) fully understand the new practice, she adds. "But it seems that's kind of evolved, and they now understand what's being reported, how it's being reported and how to dispute anything."

While the PhRMA guidelines essentially call for restricting transfers of value to \$100 at HCP-facing meetings, companies have a variety of other spending caps that are part of their internal policies, often incorporated into their SMMP.

BCD's Global Life Science Center of Excellence, which specializes in this sector of the meetings industry, has a bird's-eye view of trends in these policies across their clientele. "Each client

obviously has their own guidelines and policies and interpretations of the Sunshine Act or open payments, and they provide us that information," says Port. "We then work with the internal stakeholders to ensure that they know their own internal processes, help them follow those guidelines and, if there is any deviation, point them to the right direction for approval."

"In working with such a large number of clients, we're able to advise as to what we're seeing across the industry as well. So the F&B caps, for example, vary from company to company. Some companies have breakfast, lunch and snack caps that they put in place (in addition to the dinner cap). And we're able to say, 'This is the range of what we're seeing, and you are an outlier in that you have a much lower breakfast cap than (the norm). You might want to look at increasing that.'"

The caps also vary depending on the type of meeting. For example, at board of directors meetings where the company is trying to impress its board members, "they're probably going to spend more," Richard observes.

While compliance has become a fairly mature process, one frontier in this area is complying with the rules for European physician attendees. "There is a new policy that was rolled out at the beginning of last year by the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations, and so there are countries that have agreed to be part of this guiding policy," says Port. "It's an overarching policy for the European pharmaceutical industry.

And then within that there are individual country guidelines. So the new challenge is managing the policy as a whole in Europe, but then also the nuances from country to country. One may have a cap of \$50 for dinner while another has a cap of \$30."

### Face-to-Face Meetings

Given the spend limitations of pharma groups, together with their hotel type limitations and meeting space needs, navigating the seller's market will continue to be a bit more challenging for planners in this field. But face-to-face meetings are not likely to be reduced despite that challenge. "While there are, from time to time, discussions about possibly hosting virtual meetings, everything keeps coming back to the fact that face-to-face meetings cannot be replaced," Heintz observes.

"They are powerful and great relationship builders. Distractions are minimized and often more can be accomplished." Instead, a hybrid approach may be adopted in some cases due to the time constraints of certain attendees and presenters, who can participate virtually.

Port's team is in fact seeing more hybrid meetings in the life sciences industry. "The time that the doctor is out of the office is critical, so it might be a virtual meeting for the physician but then their support staff would attend live where we have the live training," she describes.

The face-to-face medical meeting with its multiple breakouts will remain unaffected by this trend; indeed, it will be supported by the virtual component. **C&IT**

**Amber Heintz**  
CMP-HC, HMCC  
Account Director  
Bishop-McCann  
Kansas City, MO



**"We have close relationships with our hoteliers, which helps when we are sometimes asking for the impossible."**

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# The Digital Minefield

Liabilities and Due Diligence in Managing Data, Email, Websites and Social Media By Sophia Bennett

Email, websites, social media and other digital communication tools have given corporate event planners new ways to promote conferences and other gatherings. But they've also unleashed a flood of ways companies can run into legal troubles.

Planners and their bosses have a lot to think about in the digital age. How do we protect attendees' privacy? How do we keep employees from landing the company in hot water with irate Facebook posts or inappropriate Instagram photos? What are the emerging risks and how can we avoid them?

Two attorneys who

specialize in the event industry provide some guidance to help corporations navigate the tricky waters surrounding digital communications. While this should not be interpreted as legal advice, it will provide a framework for evaluating the legal issues companies should consider before upcoming events.

## Protecting Attendee Privacy

There are two important elements to protecting the privacy of people who attend your events. The first is being clear about when and what information you're collecting. The second is actually keeping that information private.

"You need to advise people that you're collecting their information," says John S. Foster, Esq., CHME, founding partner with Foster, Jensen & Gulley, an Atlanta-based firm that specializes

in the legal aspects of meetings, conventions, trade shows and association management. "You also need to tell them what information you're collecting, and you need to give them the opportunity to change that information and opt out if they don't want to give you the information."

Beacons provide a good example of the former. Jonathan Howe is the Chicago-based founding partner and president of Howe & Hutton Ltd., a firm that serves the association and meeting industries. He suggests having a written statement about what information you're collecting, how that data will be used and who it will be shared with. "Make sure you have affirmative permission from the person to collect their information," he says.

Foster uses Amazon.com as an example of the latter. Their website makes it very clear where users can go to change their personal information or disallow the site from collecting their details in the future.

Companies that gather personal data must make every effort to ensure consumers' information remains private. "The key element is making sure

you've exercised due diligence when collecting data," Howe says. Among other best practices, due diligence includes having good firewalls in place so networks are as safe as possible; not using unsecured and non-password-protected wireless connections; and making sure vendors are working just as hard to protect attendees' privacy. Keep in mind that cellphones and tablets can be hacked, not just computers.

The guidelines credit card companies ask businesses to meet before they set up merchant accounts can be a good source of best practices for guarding customer data. One of the most important of these, Howe says, is having a written policy detailing how consumers will be notified if the company's network is hacked and people's information is compromised. Following these guidelines to the letter if any information is stolen is crucial.

Don't fall into the trap of thinking an event is too small for anyone to pay attention, or so big that vendors will automatically put protections in place. "The most hacked institution in the world is the U.S. government," Howe says. "Everybody is vulnerable.

What we do is just try to protect data to the extent we can."

If your firm is unusually vulnerable to cyber break-ins, or plans to collect or disseminate highly sensitive information, it's possible to purchase cybersecurity insurance. Premiums vary depending on the size of the company, as well as what vertical they're in. "If you're in health care, they're going to be substantial," Howe notes.

## Technology, Vendors and Contracts

Remember that apps can cause the same privacy headaches as online software programs. "Make sure you do due diligence on who's going to be your supplier, and that they have the appropriate firewalls and other protections in place," Howe says.

"You also need to make sure your vendor contracts provide a very clear understanding of what they can do with the information they gather on your behalf," he adds. Can the company utilize the data they collect for their own purposes? Some companies will insert permission for this into their contracts; look for it and ask them to

remove it. It's a good idea to make sure the vendor is required to delete attendees' information off the app after an appropriate period of time. That ensures the data isn't vulnerable to hackers or accidentally mixed in with other data the company plans to keep.

Make sure there's a clause that defines who is liable if information on the app is compromised. The vendor, not your company, should bear the burden for dealing with hacks and other privacy breaches.

Howe says hotels are another vendor attempting to insert language giving them permission to collect and share attendee data. A nuance is that the hotel is placing the burden of gathering attendee consent for this on the event host.





"That's a contract clause you want to strike immediately," he says.

Another consideration when negotiating with hotels is how they make attendees aware of their privacy policy. Foster recommends that contracts contain wording requiring the hotel to make their policies regarding the collection of personally identifiable information available to guests at the time the reservation is made. Each individual should be able to determine what information he or she will disclose to the hotel.

### Write It Down

One of the most important things any company can do to protect itself in the digital age is have written guidelines for how people use communications tools, Foster says. The business should have policies for how employees use email, as well as instructions for how they interact with the company's website and social media platforms.

This is particularly important for employees who manage the company's digital sites, but all employees need some guidance about how to use online resources. For example, everyone should be instructed not to state that they represent the company when they post online, even if they're sharing

information on their personal social media accounts (unless the company has expressly granted them permission, of course).

It's easy to require employees to review company policies and agree to them during a new employee orientation or department meeting. It's harder to get outside users to agree to company policies, but it's still possible. Businesses can require that members of the public log in to their site and click on a user policy before they post comments, for example. Whenever possible, "make people click on a statement saying use of your website means they agree to your rules and guidelines before they get into the site," Foster says. For social media, businesses should have a policy in a public place (like a website) that they can point to if people are using the sites inappropriately.

There's one key component of protecting your company that doesn't involve writing it down. "I always tell people that with email, if you never want to see it again, don't put your fingers on the keyboard," Howe says. "Nobody is hack-proof."

Emphasize to employees that there's no guarantee any written communication will stay private. Besides the growing risk of hacking, emails can be subpoenaed if the company gets involved in a lawsuit. In addition, the company may choose to monitor email and other electronic communications as a way to decrease the company's liability.

Because of that, Foster says, remind

employees that email is not a good way to communicate sensitive or confidential information, including proprietary details about the company or its events. It should never be used to make derogatory statements about others.

It's also a good idea to continually remind employees that they're the first line of defense against viruses and malware that can compromise a company's systems. They should never open attachments or click on links unless they're absolutely certain they're safe.

One of the more frightening malware programs is one that allows criminals to enter your system and lock it down until you pay them. The most common way this so-called "ransomware" enters a company's network is through email. Often messages are designed to look like an e-card from a friend. But when the recipient opens the attachment or clicks the link, the malware quickly spreads through the system.

Remind employees: "When in doubt, don't open it," Howe says. "Send it to the IT people and let them see if it's legit or not." Also, make sure the IT department has the resources it needs to keep firewalls and other protections up to date.

### Digital Communications and the CAN-SPAM Act

In 2003, Congress passed the CAN-SPAM Act. It created several rules that companies must follow when using emails for commercial purposes.

Foster explains that email messages cannot have misleading information in any part of the header, including the To, From and Reply To fields. The Subject line must accurately reflect the content of the message and not be written to mislead the recipient. The email message must somehow disclose that the email contains an advertisement; the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which

"Social websites don't have any protection. **You're responsible** for anything that's posted on a **social website.**"

**John S. Foster, Esq., CHME**

Founding Partner, Foster, Jensen & Gulley, Atlanta, GA



enforces the act, gives guidelines for how to do this. Each message also must identify where the business is located by providing a mailing address.

The law requires that message recipients have a way to opt out of future solicitations from the company. When a person asks to be removed from the mailing list, you must do so promptly. Most email marketing services will automatically do both of these things for you, but the law makes it clear that the burden is on you to ensure these services are carried out.

### FTC Endorsement and Advertising Guidelines

The FTC also sets rules for advertising, and there are a few things corporations should know on this subject as well. Many companies allow vendors or sponsors to run advertising on their event websites. You have a duty to ensure that advertising is not fraudulent or misleading. Once you receive the ad, it's a good idea to visit the company's website and make sure their ad seems consistent with what they're sharing there. If it doesn't pass the "smell test," ask them about it.

In addition, "Have a contract with them that says they will hold you harmless, indemnify and defend you if their

advertising is misleading or violates any government guidelines," Foster says. "That transfers the risk back to the company that is doing the advertising."

The FTC has promulgated rules regarding endorsements and testimonials in advertisements — an important thing to pay attention to in this age of influencer marketing. The goal of these rules is to ensure the public isn't misled about the voluntary nature of the third-party endorser.

If a business or individual receives a material benefit in exchange for endorsing or advertising an event, they must disclose that they're receiving compensation. That's easy to remember when a company hires a celebrity or spokesperson to promote an event.

But Foster reminds firms to look for less obvious examples. If a business gives a customer a discount or free ticket to an event in exchange for promoting it on their Facebook or Instagram account, that counts as a material benefit and must be disclosed.

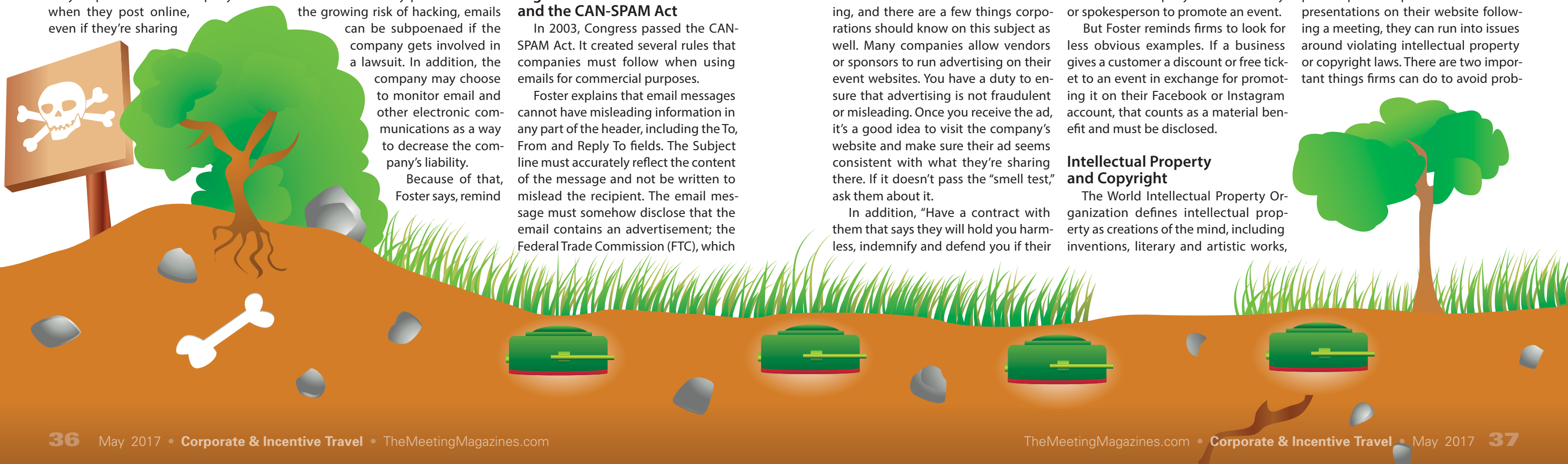
### Intellectual Property and Copyright

The World Intellectual Property Organization defines intellectual property as creations of the mind, including inventions, literary and artistic works,

and logos and names used in commerce. Chances are most of your speakers will be speaking about or sharing something (such as a handout, video or PowerPoint presentation) that's considered intellectual property. Depending on the type of meeting, people also may be discussing items that are patented or topics that include trade secrets, which also fall under intellectual property.

Speakers also may be presenting information with another legal protection: a copyright. Copyrights can be registered with the U.S. Copyright Office, and they give an individual or company the exclusive right to disseminate that item or piece of information. But even if an individual never registers a copyright, copyright law says their work is still protected as soon as it is "fixed in a tangible form that it is perceptible either directly or with the aid of a machine or device." (The main advantage to registering a copyright is that it gives the copyright holder the right to bring a lawsuit and collect damages if their copyright is violated.)

Since many companies choose to post copies of speaker handouts or presentations on their website following a meeting, they can run into issues around violating intellectual property or copyright laws. There are two important things firms can do to avoid prob-







“I always tell people that with email, **if you never want to see it again**, don’t put your fingers on the keyboard.”

**Jonathan T. Howe, Esq.**

Founding Partner and President, Howe & Hutton Ltd., Chicago, IL

lems. “Make sure you have the speaker’s written permission to post their materials on your website so there’s no copyright issue,” Foster says. If the work was done by an employee, and the employment agreement states that the employer has the right to use that work, the company is also protected.

“If you have a speaker, have them warrant to you that the information they’re presenting is their own, or, if it’s not their own, that they have permission to use it,” Howe says. Get this information in writing in case an issue arises later on.

### Defamation and Social Media

Defamation is defined as any statement that’s false and injures the reputa-

tion of a person or business. Libel is written defamation, while slander is spoken defamation. It’s important to note that if someone shares a negative opinion, that doesn’t count as defamation. It’s only when that information is presented as a fact that a person or company can be held liable for their comments.

Defamatory statements posted to a company’s online platform can get them in trouble in some circumstances, but not all. If a company owns and is considered the publisher of a platform — that is, they are solely responsible for what goes on the site — the company can be held accountable. This is typically true with websites. But if the company is considered a distributor — which is the case for the comments section of a website, since virtually anyone can post information — the company is not liable.

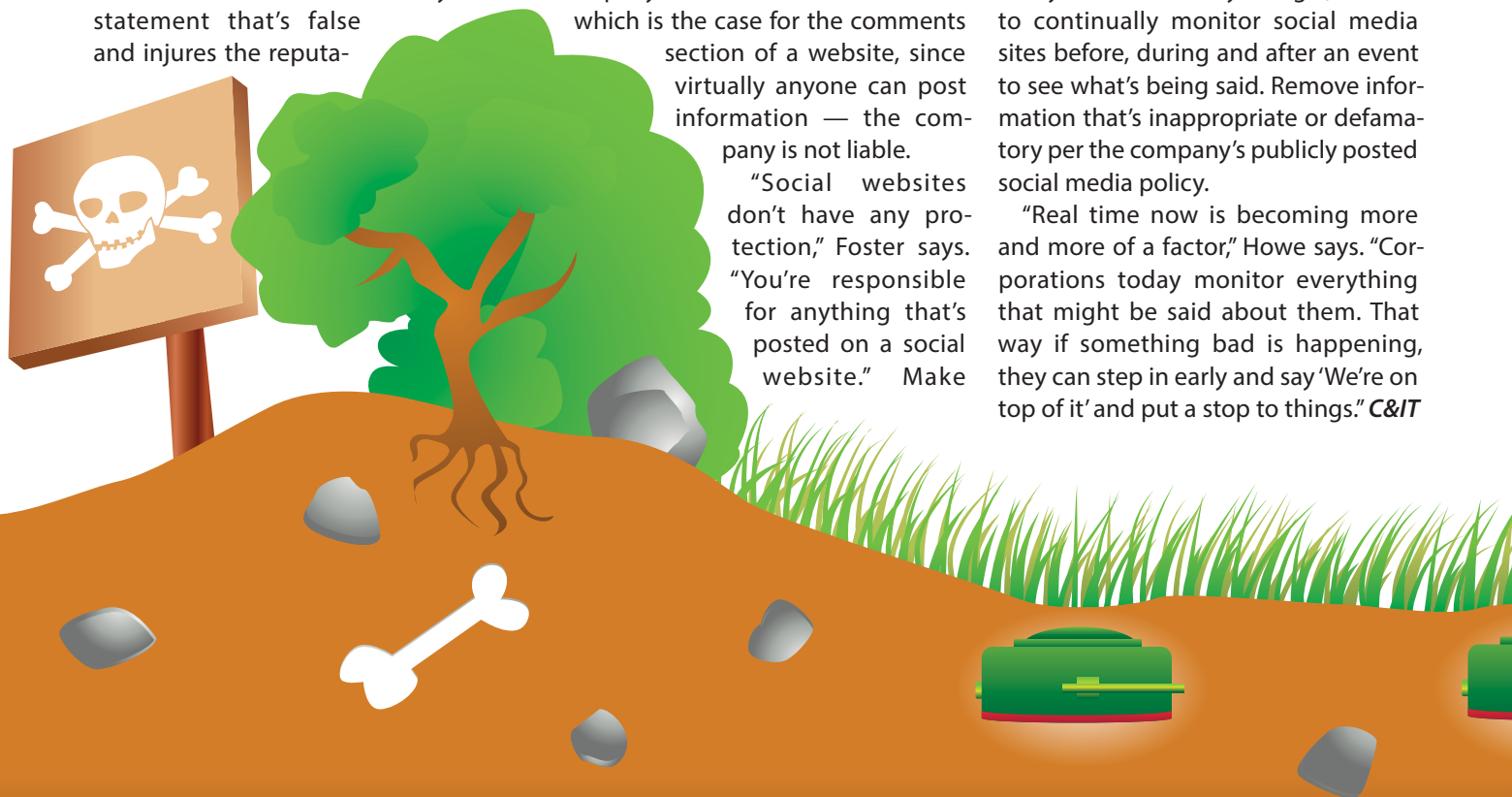
“Social websites don’t have any protection,” Foster says. “You’re responsible for anything that’s posted on a social website.” Make

sure employees who will be posting and sharing content on sites such as Facebook and Twitter are educated about defamation, and are trustworthy enough not to write a negative statement in the heat of the moment.

Businesses also should note that if intellectual property or copyrighted material is posted to social media sites without the owner’s permission, the company is open to liability. According to Foster, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act exempts online service providers from liability if they post and follow procedures for removing copyrighted material if they receive notice from the copyright owner.

If you’re not already doing it, it’s wise to continually monitor social media sites before, during and after an event to see what’s being said. Remove information that’s inappropriate or defamatory per the company’s publicly posted social media policy.

“Real time now is becoming more and more of a factor,” Howe says. “Corporations today monitor everything that might be said about them. That way if something bad is happening, they can step in early and say ‘We’re on top of it’ and put a stop to things.” **C&IT**





# Meeting in Arizona



**A Great Place for Meetings and Events!**

Credit: Visit Phoenix



# The Magnificent Mix of Desert and Mountain Beauty Draws Groups Year After Year

By Mark Rowh

**T**here's no question that Arizona is a great place for meetings. Whether corporate groups gather in Scottsdale, Phoenix, Tucson or another locale, the diverse meeting and incentive hotels and resorts attract professional meeting planners and attendees alike.

Perhaps nowhere else in the country rivals Arizona for its combination of desert and mountain beauty. The state can be a real change of pace, especially for meeting participants from the coasts or the nation's heartland.

The region's rich history, combining the early days of Spanish colonization with Arizona's later place in the mythos of the American West, offers much appeal to visitors. Meeting planners also benefit from access to a number of top-flight destination management companies as well as the information and services offered by the region's convention and visitor bureaus.

Credit: Saguaro cactus at sunset in Scottsdale. © MattSuess.com

# Arizona Beckons





The Casita Lawn at The Phoenician, which is currently undergoing enhancements.

“Arizona is a great destination for meetings,” says Stacy J. Weber, CMP, meeting and event manager at Moss Adams LLP, a Seattle-based business consulting firm. “You have the ease of airlift into Phoenix, the abundance of hotels, resorts and offsite venues, and of course, the great weather.”

For the past three years, Weber has coordinated her firm’s annual leadership meeting at the Royal Palms Resort. She also planned a department-level retreat at The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa in Scottsdale.

“What’s interesting about Arizona is that you always feel a sense of place,” she says. “In some big cities around the country, you almost feel like you could be in any major city, with a few landmarks. But Arizona feels unique and special, and you’re surrounded by the beauty of the desert.”

“I am a huge fan of meeting in Arizona,” says a director for conference planning from an organization in the Washington, DC, area. “You can count on the weather being warm and sunny, which seems to improve the mood of my attendees every time and takes the stress out of planning outside events and travel snafus. There are countless beautiful resorts to choose from and all seem to have world-class golf.”

Among other venues, she has coordinated meetings at two standouts in Tucson — Loews Ventana Canyon Resort and The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa.

“Between site selection trips and meetings, I’ve visited Tucson and Phoenix over 20 times, and I always learn something new,” Reilly says. “It’s a beautiful destination, loaded with gorgeous vistas, lovely weather and friendly locals who love sharing their knowledge and passion for the region.”

## Properties Galore

Assuredly there is a plethora of properties from which to choose: Greater Phoenix alone, which includes Glendale, Scottsdale, Tempe and Mesa among its 20 incorporated cities, offers about 450 hotels and resorts with more than 62,000 guest rooms and an array of meeting spaces, according to Megan Doyle, spokesperson for Visit Phoenix.

Kelli Blubaum, spokesperson for Experience Scottsdale, adds that visitors get a great deal more than they anticipated.

“They’re always surprised by the desert and how lush and beautiful it is,” she says. “It’s never what they expected.” Meeting attendees also tend to be surprised by the variety of resort offerings, from smaller historic hotels to grandiose resorts with expansive meeting facilities.

“Because of the diversity of our resort portfolio, we see a high number of repeat groups who come back year after year for a unique Scottsdale experience,” she says.

One popular factor is the region’s accessibility. Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, which is located just 15 minutes from Scottsdale and within easy driving distance of a variety of meeting destinations, serves more than 43 million passengers a year from more than 80 domestic and 20 international destinations.

With 300-plus days of sunshine annually, Arizona’s weather is especially appealing to planners who can confidently schedule outdoor events. And the unique desert setting adds to the experience, especially for the many attendees who meet in Arizona for the first time.

“We call the Sonoran Desert a blooming desert because of how vibrant the colors of the plants, flowers and cacti can be,”

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# Scottsdale Experiences

**Fort McDowell Adventures** boasts three unique venues for events and corporate meetings. Nestled on 25,000 acres of pristine Yavapai country with stunning mountain vistas, breathtaking sunsets, full-service food and beverage, and entertainment and activities, they can accommodate groups of 10 to 2,000 for a true Western adventure.

**Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West**, Scottsdale's only National Historic Landmark, is another option for a corporate dinner or reception. It's where America's greatest architect entertained his rich and famous guests. Set on a 491-acre Sonoran Desert Preserve in the foothills of the McDowell Mountains, Taliesin West offers companies a distinct and distinguished venue to celebrate its accomplishments, assuring guests an unforgettable evening. Taliesin West can fete up to 120 guests as well as smaller, more intimate gatherings.

**Rainbow Ryders Hot Air Balloon Company** boasts 30 years of experience offering safe hot-air balloon rides. Experience Scottsdale and Phoenix from this unique perspective with rides available every morning at sunrise — weather permitting. Or enjoy Arizona's breathtaking sunsets and views of the Sonoran Desert during a balloon flight. After landing, groups enjoy a celebratory toast with a light continental breakfast.

The award-winning Arizona winery **LDV Winery** is located in downtown Scottsdale. Groups will find handcrafted, estate-grown Rhone-varietal wines by the glass or bottle at the tasting counter or on one of the beautiful patios onsite. The vineyard and winery are located in the Chiricahua Mountains in southeastern Arizona. A plate of "little bites" pair with the wine, and unique gifts, Arizona food products and fine art from Arizona artists are available for purchase.

**Topgolf** is a popular venue and activity for corporate groups because it works for golfers and those who have never even held a golf club. The 65,000-sf Topgolf venue features three levels of semi climate-controlled golf bays containing fans with misters and heaters. They have event options for groups of 10 to 1,200 ranging from a small boardroom, large banquet rooms, a rooftop terrace, a lower lounge with two billiard tables, a shuffleboard, and access to Xbox games, single level buyouts, and full buyouts. Club rentals are free and golf clubs are available at each bay. At night the sky lights up with dynamic light shows. The venue also arranges live entertainment, interactive DJs, dancing, casino-style fun, live bands, photo booths, more than 230 flat screens and more.

**A Taste of Old Town Scottsdale by Arizona Food Tours** takes groups to many of the most celebrated locally owned establishments in the area including The Mission, Cowboy Ciao, Malee's Thai Bistro, AZ88, Su Vino Winery and more. Their lunch tours, happy hour tours and progressive dinner tours run all year round and start at \$54 per person.

Blubaum says. "It's also the home of the iconic Saguaro cactus, which you can only find in the Sonoran Desert."

The favorable weather supports a variety of amenities and activities, says Carmela Lizzo, president and CEO of Camelback Adventures in Scottsdale. With more than 32 years in the hospitality business, Camelback Adventures is one of the leading Destination Management Companies in the Scottsdale/Phoenix area. Along with fine dining, shopping and a diverse cultural climate, she recommends the area's premier golf courses and outdoor adventures such as hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and rafting.

"There are so many options available, from a dinner in the desert to hot-air ballooning to museum exhibitions of Native American arts, heritage and history," she says. Lizzo also touts escapades such as jeep rides, hiking and other outings for adventuresome attendees.

"Our cookouts are particularly well received, as many attendees are amazed by the gorgeous sunsets, the towering cactus and the amazing views," Lizzo says. "It's an experience that is completely unique to Arizona and often, the highlight of their stay in the Southwest."

Dan Gibson, spokesperson for Visit Tucson, affirms that the weather and desert beauty are prime attractions, but also points out that his city and the state in general have strong appeal to those planning corporate meetings.

"Planners love the culture here, the opportunities to get out of the ballroom and the service our properties and Visit Tucson staff provide," he says. He points to attractions ranging from the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, the vibrant downtown, impressive cultural opportunities and creative culinary options.

With so many choices for meetings, several properties are enhancing their appeal with additions or renovations.

At the Phoenician in Scottsdale, a variety of renovations will be completed in public areas this summer. They will include a redesign of the main lobby, pool complex, retail shops and eateries. A full rebuild of the resort's spa should be completed by the end of the year.

This follows the addition earlier this decade of a 45,000-sf ballroom complex to complement the existing 64,000 sf of indoor meeting space. A 15,000-sf ballroom can be subdivided into seven separate function spaces.

The resort's grand ballroom has more than 20,000 sf of space, and the main building features 26 breakout rooms sized from 365 sf to 1,037 sf. A multimedia theater accommodates up to 600 meeting attendees and supports both teleconferencing capabilities and a computerized audience interactive response system. All told, more than 80,000 sf of total interior meeting and event space is available.

Also in Scottsdale, The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa offers more than 200,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space including 41 meeting rooms. New developments at the resort include guest room enhancements such as larger flat-screen televisions, bedside charging stations for mobile devices and a guest room door-locking technology that will allow guests

to unlock doors with their smartphones, as well as a new indoor/outdoor space ideal for up to 12 participants.

Meeting space includes four ballrooms, with the majority of meeting space situated in a central location across two levels within the resort's main building. Adjacent to the facilities are two upscale shopping, dining and entertainment centers.

At the Royal Palms Resort and Spa in Phoenix, a multimillion-dollar design refresh is planned for this summer. The upgrade will include all of the property's 119 guest rooms as well as selected meeting and event spaces. The work follows recent improvements to the resort's event lawns, pool and lounge area, and landscaping. The latest changes will play on the natural backdrop of desert earth tones and wood architectural elements in supporting the overall character of a majestic estate.

Located on nine acres at the foot of Camelback Mountain, the resort features more than 20,000 sf of meeting space. Convenient to Scottsdale, Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and the Camelback financial corridor, Royal Palms offers a business setting with a variety of attractions for meeting participants from golf to swimming.

Extensive renovations also have been seen at Tucson's Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, where a multimillion-dollar remastering of guest rooms, meeting space, lobby, fitness center and spa was completed in 2016.

Along with 398 guest rooms, the resort features 37,000 sf of

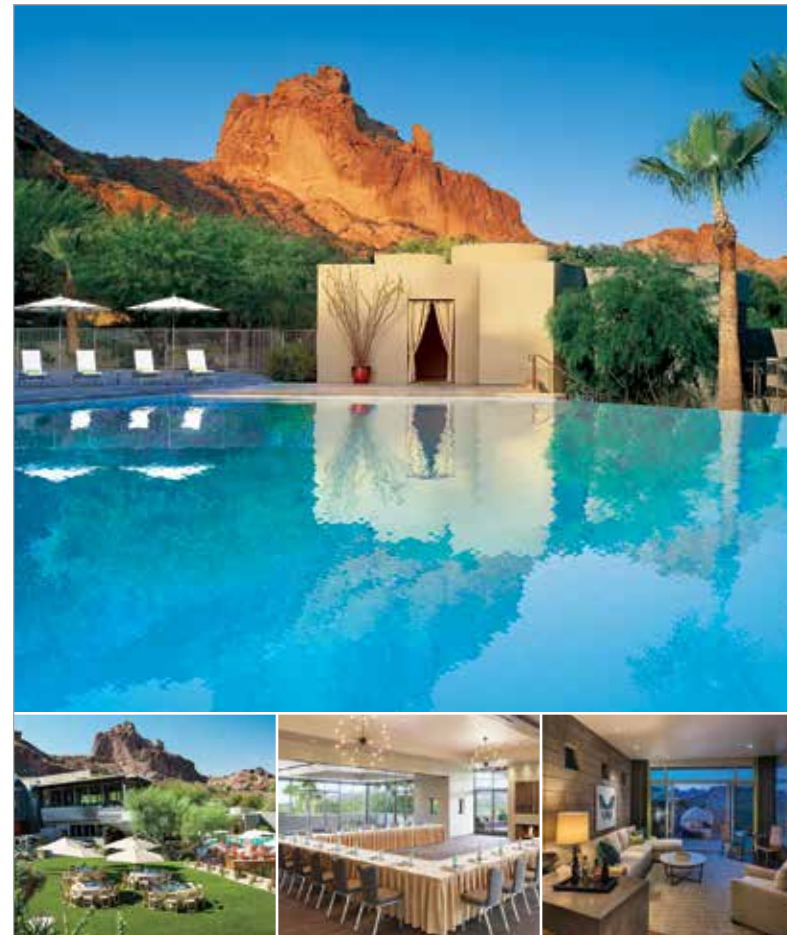


The Northern Sky Terrace at The Westin Kierland Resort and Spa.

indoor function space and nearly 40,000 sf of outdoor space. An 8,875-sf ballroom is divisible into seven sections with a 6,689-sf foyer, and a smaller ballroom (3,139 sf) can be divided into three sections. Several smaller rooms also are available, as is another ballroom measuring 10,800 sf and an 8,000-sf outdoor patio.

Facilities include a glass-enclosed, 2,000-sf room with city and mountain views, and five different parlors ranging from 728 sf to 1,008 sf. Offering special appeal to guests are nature and hiking trails that include an 80-foot-tall natural waterfall.

The Arizona Biltmore, a Waldorf Astoria resort in uptown Phoenix, offers more than 200,000 sf of indoor and outdoor



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# Phoenix Experiences

The **Phoenix Art Museum** is the Southwest's largest fine art museum, which features a collection of contemporary work and global masterpieces. Complementing the museum's galleries of fine art and objects from Asia, America, Europe and beyond are rotating exhibitions such as Samurai: Armor from the Ann and Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Collection.

**Camelback Mountain** is a hiker's paradise. The panoramic view from the "hump" of this iconic landmark, named for its resemblance to a kneeling camel, is worth scaling its two tricky trails, Echo Canyon and Cholla. Hikers gain 1,200 feet in elevation to the summit, which looks out over the city and Phoenix Mountains Preserve.

The **DeSoto Central Market** combines boutique eateries including Walrus & the Pearl oyster bar, DCM Burger Joint, a foodie-friendly Southern kitchen called the larder + the delta, Adobo Dragon Mexican-Asian fusion, Tea & Toast Co. serving coffee, tea and pastries, and RADish, the masters of salad and fresh pressed juice, along with a deco-era bar and abundant gathering space inside the historic DeSoto building in the heart of downtown Phoenix.

**The Orchard** is the perfect spot for business dinners, private events and outings. Luci's, the restaurant at The Orchard, features an energetic, eclectic vibe in an open, airy space that blends elements of an original Phoenix ranch house with clean, modern touches.

**The Farm at South Mountain** provides picturesque views along with its farm-to-table dining at one of its three restaurants. An array of programming includes yoga, cooking demonstrations and more.

**Goat Yoga** (yes, it really reads Goat Yoga) is therapeutic and helps relieve the daily stresses of life. Participants can find their center through yoga and play with goats at the same time.

**The Newton** is the place to read, dine, gather, shop and host events. A mixed-use concept housed inside Phoenix's former (but iconic) Beef Eaters building, the Newton is home to the Phoenix location of Changing Hands Bookstore, Southern Rail Restaurant, Southwest Gardener and Christoforo Schermer Consulting. It also is an event venue, with three private event spaces available for private events and parties.

**Bitter & Twisted Cocktail Parlour** is a stylish eatery boasting innovative bar bites and a hip drinking space. With its world-class, award-winning cocktail program, Bitter & Twisted is the place to go for some good eats and impeccable drinks.

The **Musical Instrument Museum (MIM)** showcases more than 6,500 musical instruments and objects, and music of cultures from around the world and more displayed in MIM's Geographic Galleries using a state-of-the-art guidePORT audio system, along with high-resolution video screens.



The Tucson Lobby Bar at Loews Ventana Canyon Resort.

event space. The two largest ballrooms recently have been renovated with aesthetic and technical upgrades. They include the 24,576-sf Frank Lloyd Wright Ballroom, which is complemented by almost 11,000 sf of prefunction space.

Also available is the 14,904-sf McArthur Ballroom. Featuring an additional 6,400 sf of prefunction space, the facility can be divided into several smaller spaces.

The resort's conference center features more than 25,000 sf of space with an array of function rooms and venues. Choices range from an 11,000-sf ballroom to small private boardrooms, all served by a fully equipped business center.

Other facilities include rooms serving 400–500 guests, a patio accommodating 300 participants and a terrace suite with room for 50 people.

Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort and Spa, situated 8 miles north of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, offers 109 guest rooms as well as an upscale setting for business meetings. Facilities include a 3,204-sf ballroom with banquet seating for up to 220 guests, a wraparound terrace, breakout rooms and two boardrooms accommodating from 12 to 20 guests.

In addition, eight private mountainside estates provide change-of-pace venues for social and business gatherings. They include game rooms, private pools, tennis courts and secluded patios.

Outdoor spaces include a patio accommodating up to 200 guests, as well as poolside and terrace options handling up to 150 persons each. And an indoor/outdoor venue dubbed

Credit: Loews Ventana Canyon Resort



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# Tucson Experiences

Tucson champions the vibrant, chef-focused cuisine (featuring two James Beard Award winners) downtown, the variety of international dining options, and their incredible Mexican food. In addition to a number of food awards, Tucson also received recognition from UNESCO as one of six Creative Cities in the United States and the only one selected for Gastronomy. The city was selected for “our region’s rich agricultural heritage, thriving food traditions and culinary distinctiveness.” Tucson has an incredibly unique mix of cultural influences reflected in their food, from the Sonoran hot dog’s cross-border origin story to historic wheat brought here by Spanish missionaries and the fruit of the prickly pear cactus showing up in our local craft beers.

Thriving downtown Tucson is home to dozens of talented chefs, such as Janos Wilder, attracted by the city’s famed heritage produce (from dates and prickly pears to beans and chiltepin chiles) and flourishing local gardens.

**MiAn Sushi & Modern Asian Cuisine** is an upscale Asian bistro and bar that has opened in downtown Tucson on the ground floor of Tucson Electric Power company’s nine-story headquarters on the Sun Link Streetcar route. The nearly 5,000-sf restaurant has a sleek, modern look and seats 160 diners inside and 120 on the patio.

**Old Pueblo Brew Tours** is open in Tucson and offers a “mobile artisan craft beer journey through the best breweries the Old Pueblo has to offer.” The new suds-tasting tours are currently scheduled on Saturdays and last 4–5 hours with 3–4 stops. Guests meet at a designated brewery and are shuttled by van during the tour. Tours are booked online.

The **Hilton Tucson El Conquistador Resort** opened an 18-horse stable on its 500-acre property in the Santa Catalina foothills on Tucson’s northwest side. Guests and members of the public can take advantage of wrangler-guided trail rides, horseback riding lessons, carriage rides, hay rides and trail-side cookouts. Discounts are available for groups, and packages can be customized with sunset rides, camping trips and other adventures.

The **Tucson Botanical Gardens** has been ranked among the recipients of the 2017 “Top 10 North American Gardens Worth Traveling For” Garden Tourism Awards.

The planetarium theater at the **Flandrau Science Center & Planetarium** on the campus of the University of Arizona, was completely renovated and includes new seats, a new seating layout, enhanced lighting and a new acoustic wall treatment.

Although the Sonoran Desert may be known for its dry climate, the Gulf of California (Sea of Cortez) and the stingrays that flow through it are critically important and the primary reason the Sonoran Desert has been named the “lushest desert on earth.” Visitors are able to create their own moments with these captivating creatures at the **Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum’s** new Stingray Touch experience, which opened last year.



Massage with a view at Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort and Spa.

the Praying Monk accommodates 60 guests for dinner or 100 people for a cocktail reception.

At Tucson’s Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain, planners can take advantage of 20-plus meeting rooms and three outdoor lawn locations. A 9,000-sf ballroom is supplemented by several 500-sf meeting rooms. Activities for groups include “Volunteering” experiences, post-dinner hikes, nighttime golf, geocaching and cooking classes.

An attractive feature is the resort’s relationship with nearby Cayton’s Restaurant, allowing groups to rent the restaurant and its large patio, which can hold nearly 300 people. With a 20-foot-high ceiling and one-ton wrought iron chandelier, copper flume fireplace and circular shape, the Cayton’s Kiva room accommodates groups of 10 to 50 guests, while another section handles 30 to 80 people. Many visitors find the unobstructed and sweeping view toward the west especially memorable.

The Westin La Paloma in Tucson offers 64,000 sf of indoor meeting space along with patios and covered decks for outdoor functions, not to mention golf courses and five swimming pools. Along with 27 meeting spaces, it has 487 guest rooms. The resort accommodates groups as large as 2,000 attendees.

Located 20 minutes from the Phoenix and Scottsdale airports, Talking Stick Resort offers 113,000 sf of indoor and outdoor event venues along with 496 guest rooms. Open-air breakout rooms offer a distinctive experience for meeting attendees, and a grand ballroom accommodates up to 2,000 guests. The resort’s conference center can be configured into as many as 12 meeting rooms. For groups of up to 650, a theater features a large stage, production-quality lighting and

theater-style seating with private booths and tables. It’s suitable for both keynote speakers and live entertainment.

The Omni Tucson National Resort has 128 guest rooms and eight meeting rooms with 10,500 sf of event space. A 2,900-sf ballroom divisible into two salons features a terrace with a scenic venue for outdoor receptions, meals or refreshment breaks. Another ballroom has 2,650 sf of space. Several salons are located convenient to the reception area. The resort’s gardens are available for teambuilding programs, fitness/meditation classes and other outdoor activities against the backdrop of the desert and the Santa Catalina mountains.

Some 45 minutes from Tucson International Airport and 13 miles from the Tucson Convention Center, the 428-room Hilton Tucson El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort handles a variety of corporate events. It offers two 11,000-sf ballrooms as well as a separate 11,000-sf executive conference center, with total meeting space topping 100,000 sf.

The Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia has 293 guest rooms along with more than 27,000 sf of indoor meeting space and 75,000 sf of outdoor space. Conference venues



Wild, Wild West street performers in Tombstone.

include 14 breakout rooms and two private dining rooms. Indoor space includes two ballrooms and 11 other meeting rooms, while outdoor venues range from 1,000 sf to 32,000 sf. Inspired by Spain’s Andalusia region, the resort offers a Spanish motif complemented by modern luxury accommodations.



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# 'Meet Your Million'

Visit Phoenix announced its new "Meet Your Million" promotion, which offers meeting planners 1 million more reasons to meet in Phoenix in 2019. The promotion includes:

- Up to 1 million loyalty reward points
- Up to a \$50,000 credit toward an opening reception
- Complimentary meeting room Wi-Fi at Phoenix Convention Center at 1.5 mbps
- Complimentary guest room Wi-Fi at participating hotels
- No attrition at Sheraton Grand Phoenix, Hyatt Regency Phoenix and Renaissance Phoenix Downtown

The promotion applies to qualifying citywide RFPs for meetings taking place during the 2019 calendar year. Groups must contract at least 1,000 rooms on peak utilizing all three participating hotels. The Phoenix Convention Center lease agreement and participating hotel contracts must be signed by December 31, 2017.

Details on all terms and conditions are available at [VisitPhoenix.com/Meet2019](http://VisitPhoenix.com/Meet2019).

— MR



Credit: Visit Phoenix

At Mountain Shadows, guests have access to 12,500 sf of indoor meeting space and 25,000 sf of outdoor event space accommodating events for up to 500 people. A 4,500-sf ballroom features a wall of retracting glass that opens to an attractive terrace (also 4,500 sf). Meeting rooms are equipped with 75-inch televisions, roll-down projection screens and wall-mounted iPad reader boards. Distinctive attractions include a 10,000-sf putting green and an overlook deck.

The Scottsdale Plaza Resort features 21 meeting rooms and 40,000 sf of event space in a single dedicated area. A 10,080-sf ballroom is supported by a 4,256-sf convention foyer and 58 breakout suites. An executive lodge boardroom and 10 ex-

ecutive lodge suites also are available, as well as a tented pavilion, cypress court and roomy courtyard for outdoor events.

At the Wigwam in Phoenix, 45,000 sf of indoor meeting space includes 25 separate meeting rooms. A 10,800-sf ballroom accommodates up to 500 dinner guests, while another ballroom handles up to 300 attendees. Another facility includes a built-in stage, 15-foot-tall ceilings and an al fresco terrace. The rooms are supplemented by 55,000 sf of outdoor space featuring 10 gardens and event lawns

Tucson's Casino Del Sol, operated by the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, offers nearly 20,000 sf of meeting space accommodating groups of up to 2,000 people. The 10-story property includes an 18,000-sf ballroom offering a variety of configurations, two smaller meeting rooms and an executive boardroom. Complementing the meeting spaces are Las Vegas-style gaming options such as bingo, slot machines and table games, live entertainment and other activities ranging from golf to swimming.

The 50 meeting rooms at the Scottsdale Resort at McCormick Ranch offer a total of 60,000 sf of event space. A 10,000-sf boardroom, divisible into five sections, seats 1,000 guests theater-style. Two other rooms, each measuring 6,084 sf, are divisible into three sections per room and hold 505 people theater-style. Three boardrooms range in size from 300 sf to 700 sf.

C&IT



Credit: Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain

The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain.

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## Destination

# Las Vegas

## Where Business Is Always a Winner

It will not be a shock to anyone who has attended a meeting in Las Vegas that the city was named the World's Leading Meeting & Conference Destination in the World Travel Awards. Four of the city's hotels are listed among the top 10 U.S. properties in Cvent's Top 100 Meeting Hotels list for 2017, and the city itself came in at No. 3 on Cvent's Top 50 U.S. Meetings Destinations in 2016. For the 23rd year in a row, Las Vegas was named as the No. 1 trade show destination in the country by Trade Show News Network, with 57 of the 250 largest trade shows, which is more shows than the next two destinations — Orlando and Chicago — hosted combined. A record 6.3 million delegates traveled to Las Vegas in 2016 to attend meetings and conventions — with good reason.

The Nevada mecca has reinvented itself many times over the years, but positioning itself as the quintessential place to hold a meeting, convention or expo may be one of its most successful efforts. And yet, among those who aren't so familiar with its merits, the city still suffers from the erroneous perception that it's all play and no work. Nothing could be further from the truth. Sure, it offers many places and ways to play; however, business is serious business in Las Vegas, and that includes delivering a lot to corporations for the money spent.

### Caesars Service

Angela Baer, CMP, corporate meeting planner with Caterpillar Inc., points to numerous reasons that Las Vegas worked well for CONEXPO/CON-AGG 2017, an event in March that drew



Caesars Palace accommodates meetings large and small, from the expansive Forum Ballroom to the intimate Senate Boardroom.

4,000-plus attendees. The base hotel for Caterpillar's group was Caesars Palace.

To start, Baer says, the convention center is expansive enough to meet the needs of very large groups. But in addition, she adds, "Caesars Palace is also a good fit because our company can get all our attending employees, show workers, dealers and customers in the same hotel. It has enough sleeping rooms to accommodate our group size. We also have enough convention space at Caesars to do many functions and meetings; both Caterpillar and our dealers utilize this space." In fact, Caterpillar held all of its functions and events at Caesars.

But it's not just about the right size. Baer calls the Caesars space and staff "excellent" and points to the convenience of access to the company's other properties. "You can utilize all 10 of the Caesars properties for events, which counts toward the F&B minimum. And there are lots of options in addition to basic meeting rooms and ballrooms."

She says there is also a great deal of value added to having everyone in one place. "Networking opportunities are priceless, so getting my entire group into one hotel is key. We were able to negotiate a rate that allowed us to save money on sleeping rooms thereby allowing our guests to all be under one roof."

None of this was surprising to Baer. "We've had an excellent relationship with Caesars for over 20 years," she says. "But even so, if the service wasn't there, we'd look elsewhere."

There's no need for that, however. "They are all incredible to work with and they make our team look good," she says. "I've

worked closely on several events with Frank Gregory and Mary Ferris in the catering department. Matt Waltersdorf and Marie Lee on the sales side are fantastic. And Jessica Roy in registrations is my saving grace!"

In terms of layout, Baer says, "Event space is the most accessible from the Palace tower. I always have staff stay there. It is actually being renovated as we speak, so soon it will be the most up-to-date tower Caesars has. I put my executives in the Augustus and Octavius towers, which are part of the Laurel Collection. These towers are VIP-driven and easily accessible for any security you may have.

You don't have to go through the casino to access them."

She also notes that there is a venue for every need. "We have run the spectrum of events from small board meetings to full-on rock concerts. Ballrooms have tons of space for rigging, staging, etc. And the décor and function space are neutral and nice for events."

For planners who have not been to the hotel, she says, "It's huge. You will get your steps in staying here! But that's true of any property that offers a large amount of space. I find Caesars easy to navigate once you get to know it. Convention space is in one area, the casino is in the middle, shops and restaurants are on one end and guest-room towers are located throughout." In spite of its size, she says, "It's nice as everything you need is right there."



The new Linq Hotel and High Roller observation wheel are located in the heart of The Strip.

And the location works well for groups, too. "Caesars is very central, which is helpful for staff and guests. It's easy walking distance to most locations on The Strip. And," she adds, "Caesars convention staff will help with planning from beginning to end. I would recommend Caesars for large or small groups. Everyone will be made to feel like a VIP."

Toyota set its Prius launch event at Caesars Palace and the Linq Hotel. Brian Hords, founder, o2 Creative Solutions, worked with Toyota on the 2015 event for 550 attendees.

"We chose the location based on a larger Toyota event that was happening concurrently. The company's national dealer meeting was taking place at Mandalay Bay, a private event for its dealer network. We needed to be close in proximity, as the cars we were revealing needed to be at the other venue the next day. We were also looking for a highly visible and attractive location for the international press that Toyota was bringing in for this event," he says.

Some media were housed at Caesars Palace. Others were at the Linq. Hords says the Linq was chosen "based on its central location on the Strip and its relative newness for journalists and media. It also offered a great rooftop venue with views of The Strip. Another deciding factor was the large architectural LED media surfaces that allowed us a large-scale mediascape."

As for challenges, Hords notes, "Freight access to the rooftop is limited. We had to load three vehicles and all the rigging for our staging and stunt from a crane that blocked a portion of Las Vegas Blvd." Challenges aside, Hords calls the Linq a "great venue for a large-scale, media-rich event."

### Hard Rock Buyout

Some companies want to be in Las Vegas but not necessarily on The Strip. Quest Software chose Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas for its Sales Kickoff FY 18 in February 2017, with 1,250 in attendance. Christy Kallinger, director global sales enablement with Quest, says of Vegas, "It's great because of the level of service you get for the cost. And Las Vegas has just about everything you could ask for at all different price points. It is also an easy destination for most people to get to."

She says the city added to the conference ROI because of

**Angela Baer**  
CMP  
Caterpillar Inc.  
Peoria, IL

**"We have run the spectrum of events from small board meetings to full-on rock concerts. (Caesars) ballrooms have tons of space for rigging, staging, etc. And the décor and function space are neutral and nice for events."**





Hard Rock Hotel & Casino and a classroom setup in Muse Hall.



Credits: Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas

“lower flight costs and overall lower costs for the high level of service, which allowed us to get more for our money.”

The Hard Rock provided an excellent base. “We were able to do a hotel buyout and take advantage of the Las Vegas location, but we were not in the middle of The Strip. We loved the Hard Rock,” Kallinger says. “No.1 reason was the staff. Michael Rowland and Lia Rispoli and their staff were some of the very best we have ever worked with. Second, the hotel was ours for the week. We were able to do a lot of branding and we had a lot of flexibility to do what we needed to do in the meeting space. Lastly, we loved the whole rock ‘n’ roll theme. The Joint and Vinyl were unique venues to hold meetings in.”

The group had some regional dinners offsite. Kallinger says the favorites were Top Golf and Brooklyn Bowl, which she calls excellent venues for team dinners and activities.

But the Hard Rock itself really delivered for the group. “What we loved about this hotel was how close everything was. The food was excellent. The meeting spaces were great

and flexible. The hotel guest rooms were really nice and the pool area provided an ideal space in which to hold our party. The décor was perfect for our rock ‘n’ roll theme.”

The weather, however, didn’t fully cooperate. “We ended up having bad weather for our outdoor party at the pool,” Kallinger says, “but Lia Rispoli and team very quickly got one of the ballrooms party-ready with a DJ, and our sales reps had a great night.”

For those considering Las Vegas for a meeting, Kallinger advises, “Find a hotel that will meet your needs from the first meeting. Also, hire a DMC to help you with external events and transportation. We hired Hosts Global and they were fantastic. They helped us with transportation, our regional dinners and our party.”

As for the Hard Rock, Kallinger notes, “Mike Rowland and Lia Rispoli will go above and beyond to make your event successful.”



Wynn's resort mixologist, Damian Cross, will host the Master Class “Mixology 2.0” for cocktail connoisseurs in June.

Credit: Wynn Las Vegas

### New & Noteworthy

Ever in reinvention mode, Las Vegas and its hotels always have something new going on.

In March, Wynn Las Vegas announced a Master Class Series that will take guests behind the scenes to learn from the resort’s experts. It began in April and will continue throughout the year. Among the first options were Vintner for a Day with Wynn’s Executive Director of Wine Mark Thomas, Spin With a Star DJ, Mastering Your Most Flattering Selfie (with celebrated stylists at the Encore’s Claude Baruk Salon), and Mix-



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**Christy Kallinger**  
Director  
Global Sales Enablement  
Quest Software  
Wheaton, IL

**“We were able to do a hotel buyout and take advantage of the Las Vegas location, but we were not in the middle of The Strip. We loved the Hard Rock.”**





The Venetian/The Palazzo Congress Center now features a coworking space, in partnership with Zappos.

ology 2.0, with Wynn mixologist Damian Cross. On June 15 David Walzog, executive chef of the award-winning SW Steakhouse and Lakeside at Wynn Las Vegas will host a “Grilling With a Master” workshop, which includes an outdoor cook-

75,000-sf luxury retail hub bordering Las Vegas Boulevard. According to Steve Wynn in a late April earnings call, the Wynn board of directors has approved phase one construction of the new Wynn Paradise Park that will begin in De-

out class on the SW Steakhouse patio, overlooking the Lake of Dreams.

Wynn also announced the debut of Parasol Up after the venue’s extensive renovation last December. The lounge is lighter and breezier in design, and offers the latest technology as well as a new bar menu from the hotel’s master mixologist.

And this fall brings the debut of Wynn Plaza, a

## The Entertainment Factor

Las Vegas is a city with extraordinary entertainment value and so many options planners may have a hard time choosing how to best take advantage. There are multiple ways to incorporate Las Vegas entertainment

into a conference: Book a VIP show experience for important clients and/or company executives, hire local entertainers to perform just for your group at a specific conference event, arrange tickets to a show for all delegates to

attend, or even use local entertainers to facilitate a teambuilding experience or assist with a product launch.

One group that has long wowed audiences is Blue Man Group, one of the city’s high-profile entertainment troupes and known to audiences across the nation. What may be less known is how group-friendly the famously blue men are — especially in terms of the discounts offered to corporate and other groups.

Groups of just 10 or more, for example, can arrange a ticket discount through a group sales manager. For groups of 10 to 50, there’s the VIP experience, which includes premium seating at the show, a private meet-and-greet with cast members, a complimentary drink and what the organization calls “luminescent swag.”

Groups can also book the Dinner & Show package, which pairs a Blue Man Group theatrical performance with dinner at some of Luxor’s best restaurants.

The top option is a private performance for large groups, which might be an added weekday show or an exclusive performance. If having Blue Man Group incorporate your logo or new product into a performance sounds like a great way to inspire attendees and get your message across, this is the option you want.

— CL



Blue Man Group’s technicolor paint-drum performance.



Set to open this winter at Caesars Palace is the first of its kind Gordon Ramsay’s Hell’s Kitchen restaurant.

cember 2017 or January 2018. The master planned park will replace the Wynn Golf Club with a 1,000- 2,000-room hotel tower and 260,000 sf of beachfront meeting and ballroom space overlooking a 20-acre lagoon — offering water sports activities — and a white sand beach and 4,000-foot boardwalk. Cabanas, attractions and food service also are planned. The phased \$1.5 billion project is slated for a 2019 completion.

As of January, guests at **The Venetian, The Palazzo and Sands Expo**, in conjunction with Zappos, have access to a 1,170-sf pop-up coworking lounge with room to recharge, get online, gather, collaborate and meet in small groups. There’s even a six-seat private conference room. Zappos team members are staffing the lounge, located on level two of The Venetian, and say they’ll be sharing the Zappos service philosophy of “delivering happiness with every ‘collision’ they make with a guest.” The lounge will be open seven days a week, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

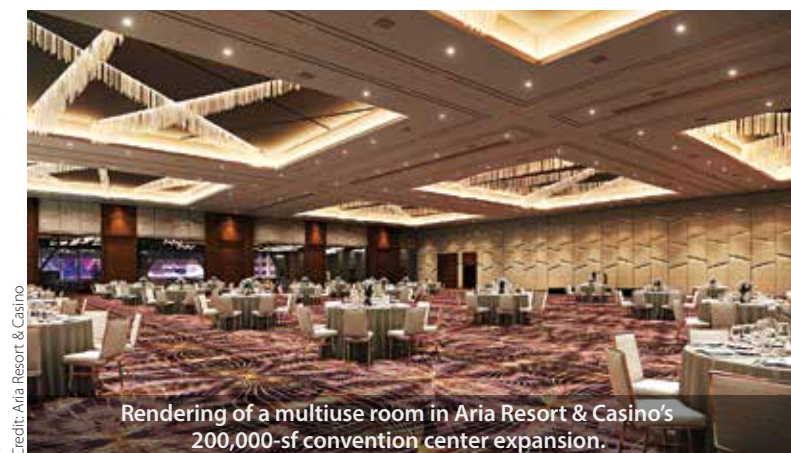
**Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas** announced a \$13 million remodel of its Casino Tower, and phase one of that remodel has already wrapped up, including the renovation of 575 guest rooms. When complete, all 640 rooms and suites will have been renovated and refreshed. In May, MB Steak will debut at the Hard Rock, a collaboration of Michael and David Morton, sons of Arnie Morton, who launched Morton’s of Chicago in 1978. The hotel also announced the opening of Oyster Bar, a full-service restaurant and bar combining oyster, seafood and more with top-shelf libations. Finally, Hard Rock has added nearly 18,000 sf of meeting and convention space, including the 28,000-sf Artist Ballroom.

Set to open this winter at **Caesars Palace** is the first of its kind Gordon Ramsay’s Hell’s Kitchen, inspired by the Michelin-star celebrity chef’s hit television show. Ramsay’s fifth Las Vegas restaurant promises to give diners an “immersive” experience so they “feel like they, too, are part of the show — flames and all,”

Ramsay said in a statement. Hell’s Kitchen will feature dishes from the show’s cast as well as chef Ramsay’s signature creations. The restaurant will seat 300 and offer both indoor and patio dining adjacent to The Strip.

In February, **MGM Resorts International** and Microsoft Corp. inked a historic multiyear deal, the first of its kind for both companies. Microsoft plans to combine four of its annual events into one mega event with as many as 30,000 delegates. That event represents the largest single-corporation meeting event ever hosted by MGM Resorts, and it’s right up there with the city’s largest annual corporate group events.

**Aria Resort & Casino** is in the midst of a \$154 million ex-



Rendering of a multiuse room in Aria Resort & Casino’s 200,000-sf convention center expansion.



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The Mandalay Bay beach and pool. Steps away is the Delano Beach Club (inset), exclusively for Delano Las Vegas guests. The venue can be bought out for private events.



Credits: MGM Resorts International

pansion of its convention center that will add 200,000 sf of technologically advanced, flexible meeting space across four stories, highlighted by stunning indoor/open-air spaces and a glass-enclosed venue with dramatic views of The Park and new T-Mobile Arena. With the completion of the expansion, Aria will feature more than 500,000 sf of meeting space. Construction began in May 2016 with anticipated completion in February 2018.

To meet the needs of their growing clientele, **Mandalay Bay's Convention Center** recently expanded by 350,000 sf to a total of more than 2 million sf, enabling Mandalay Bay to accommodate existing customer growth needs as well as to

attract new corporate and association business. The expansion added new exhibit space, ballrooms and underground parking, and the project creates one of the most flexible, customer-focused convention facilities in North America.

At a cost of \$70 million, the expansion also included a bandwidth increase to accommodate more attendees and allow for the most advanced presentations, while allowing seamless connectivity from convention space to public spaces to guest rooms. In spring 2016, the final phase of a resort-wide remodel of more than 3,000 guest rooms and suites was completed.

Located adjacent to Mandalay Bay, the new non-smoking, all-suite luxury **Delano Las Vegas** hotel features 20,000 sf of indoor meeting space with 31 meeting rooms including four boardrooms. Engaging social spaces include 3940 Coffee + Tea and Della's Kitchen, where "historic farmhouse meets urban kitchen" and the new South Beach-inspired Delano Beach Club, which groups can buy out for an evening reception. Delano's Sage Living room, located within the four separate floors of the hotel's meeting area, offers a chic and alternative space to gather with overstuffed couches, special chairs designed with lower-back support, end tables and coffee tables. The room, featuring two 52-inch, flat-screen TVs, can be used for presentations in a relaxed, comfortable environment.

Last year **Peppermill** resort in Reno celebrated 45 years in operation, serving meeting attendees and other guests. For the occasion, the resort redesigned some of its spaces and venues, including Edge, providing an intimate but vibrant nightlife experience. Lighting, soft goods and LED panels were among the changes. Six video walls were also installed throughout the property to bring the world into the resort via technology, giving guests the feeling of globetrotting while never leaving Reno. Peppermill also continues its emphasis on sustainability via a variety of dedicated practices and programs that cut energy costs and water use.

Wherever you base your meeting in Las Vegas, you can bet on one thing: There will be professional staff and services and quality facilities to accommodate and even elevate your events. Las Vegas may be a fun destination, but it definitely means business for those who arrive in the city to do business.

C&IT

**Brian Hords**  
Founder  
o2 creative solutions  
Royal Oak, MI

**The Linq Hotel "offered a great rooftop venue with views of The Strip. Another deciding factor was the large architectural LED media surfaces that allowed us a large-scale mediascape."**



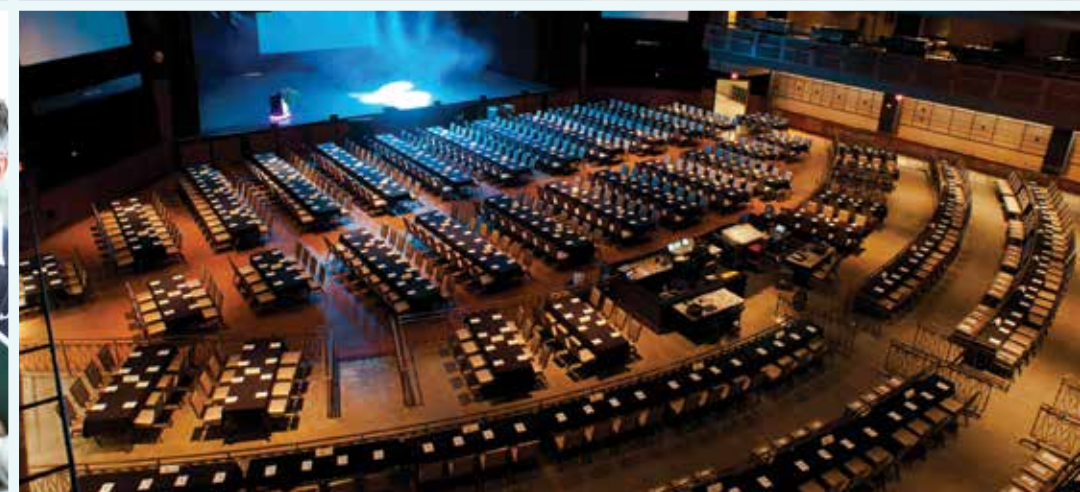
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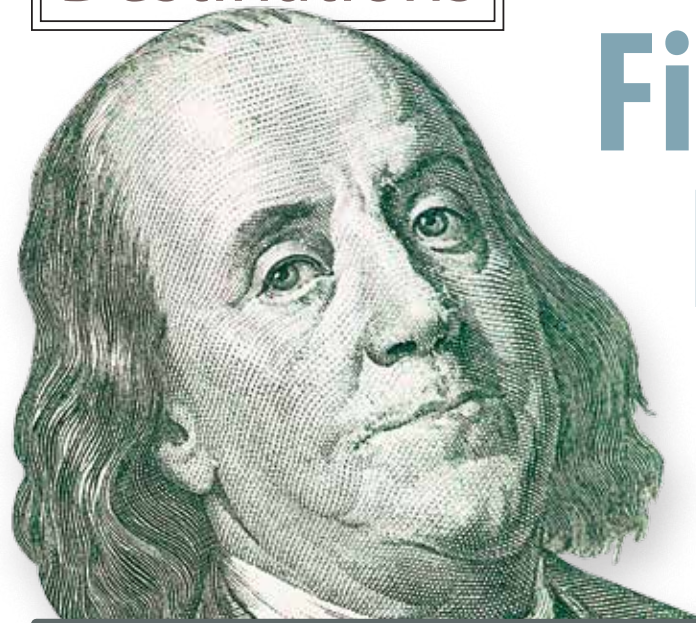


## Destinations

# Finding Value From Coast to Coast

It's Easier Than You Think

By Derek Reveron



Finding value is more important than ever because a seller's market has hiked costs in many large destinations.

But the good news for planners is that value comes in all destination sizes and finding it is easier than you think. In fact, smaller destinations are becoming less expensive and more popular, according to the 2017 global meetings and events forecast by American Express Global Business Travel.

"Columbus tends to surprise attendees...the city is bursting with things to do and places to go, and only continuing to grow."

**Kate Wagener**, CTA, Senior Education Conference Coordinator, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus OH



According to the forecast, "Experts suggest a growing interest in second-tier cities for many meeting types as a more affordable alternative." The forecast further states that "meeting planners and owners are increasingly looking beyond the traditional property choices in large cities to more unique, smaller properties, often outside the metropolitan area."

The forecast predicts that in 2017, 73 percent of meetings will take place in large locations, down from 80 percent in 2016. Meanwhile, the share for second-tier cities will increase to 27 percent from 20 percent in 2017, according to the report.

### Atlantic City

Long one of the nation's meetings powerhouses, Atlantic City offers more than 15,000 hotel rooms, eight casino

resorts and several beachfront hotels with views of the Atlantic Ocean. Hotels, convention centers and various venues offer meeting spaces that range from a few dozen square feet to 500,000 sf.

Atlantic City has transformed itself from a gaming hotel-oriented destination into one that offers a range of non-casino attractions, activities and restaurants. Atlantic City is also attracting more groups nationwide while maintaining its base of groups in the Northeast that return year after year.

Groups are attracted by Atlantic City's ability to provide value with casino properties that meet all planner needs under one roof, as well as a range of budget-friendly offsite venues.

Atlantic City continues to be recognized for the unique things it offers meetings. *Travel + Leisure* magazine's America's Best Places survey named Atlantic City the nation's 11th Best Beach Town. In addition, *USA Today* cited Atlantic City's Boardwalk as the 10th Best Boardwalk in the United States.

### Austin

Austin attracts more than 22 million domestic visitors a year and continues to gain popularity due to its range of meeting properties, attractions and more than 250 live music venues.

Planners want music to play an integral part in activities, entertainment and functions. "Being that we are the 'Live Music Capital of the World,' visitors want to experience it for themselves," says Michael Carter, account manager, Allied-PRA, Austin. "DMCs seek creative ways to tie the city's title into themes for attendees such as rock star-themed events, use of local musicians, and hosting events at the city's most

iconic and intimate venues. We try to make sure that all of our clients leave the city with a hop in their step."

But Austin offers much more than music. "While many people come to Austin for its music, many come for its outdoors," says Carter. "The Colorado River runs through the city, so many people enjoy paddleboarding, kayaking and canoeing on Lady Bird Lake. Our Mexican free-tailed bat flights also are a major attraction and staple of the city. Groups enjoy taking riverboats out to spend the evening on the water watching the bats take flight from underneath Congress Bridge."

Carter describes one activity requested by many groups. "Something popular among clients is the Corporate Rock Star event," says Carter. "Clients have the ability to break off into teams, rewrite a popular song, and perform it with a live band with the props, special effects, lighting and sound. Everyone gets the chance to feel like a rock star for the duration of their song. It's a great teambuilder and a lot of fun."

Austin's technology-oriented culture enhances the fun. "With the emergence of startups and technology in Austin, the city as a whole has been encouraged to take the lead on becoming technology driven," Carter observes. "Whether it is in the venues or on the streets, technology has played a big role in the success of what makes Austin so great. We are starting to see vast improvements in AV, lighting and décor that wasn't here before."

### New and Improved

The latest technology is evident in the 900,000-sf LEED Gold-certified Austin Convention Center with a communication infrastructure that can move voice, video and data at over 1 billion bits a second.

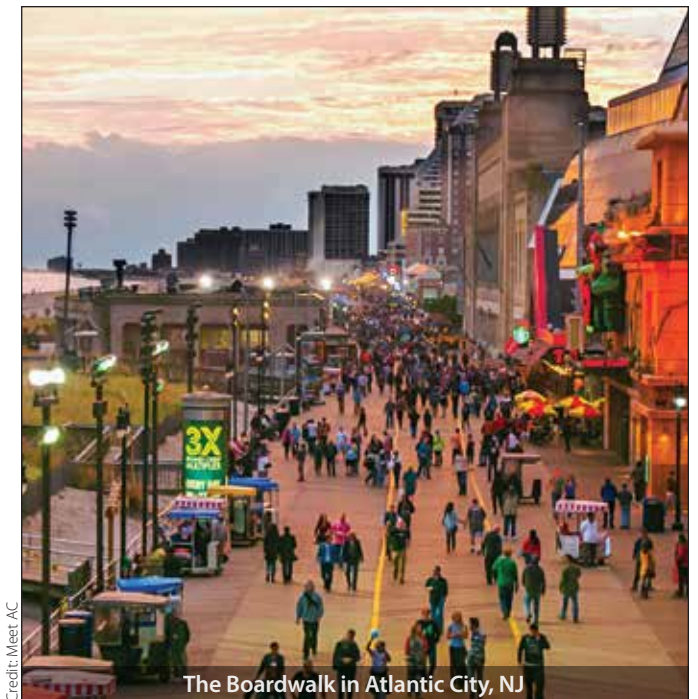
Austin hotels also are upgrading technology. As part of a \$23 million renovation, the Hilton Austin recently completed a lobby upgrade that includes a new digital media wall, designated workspaces and social zones for networking and socializing. The 801-room Hilton Austin also revitalized its lobby, public areas and 80,000 sf of meeting space with new décor. The project also includes The Reverber, a new banquet hall with indoor and outdoor space.

Marriott International recently opened the Aloft Austin Northwest, the second Aloft property in the city. The Aloft Austin features 130 loft-style rooms and 1,000 sf of meeting space as well as live local music at the W XYZ Bar as part of the property's Live At Aloft Hotels music series. Guests enjoy free Wi-Fi, the Splash indoor pool, fitness centers and a food and beverage area.

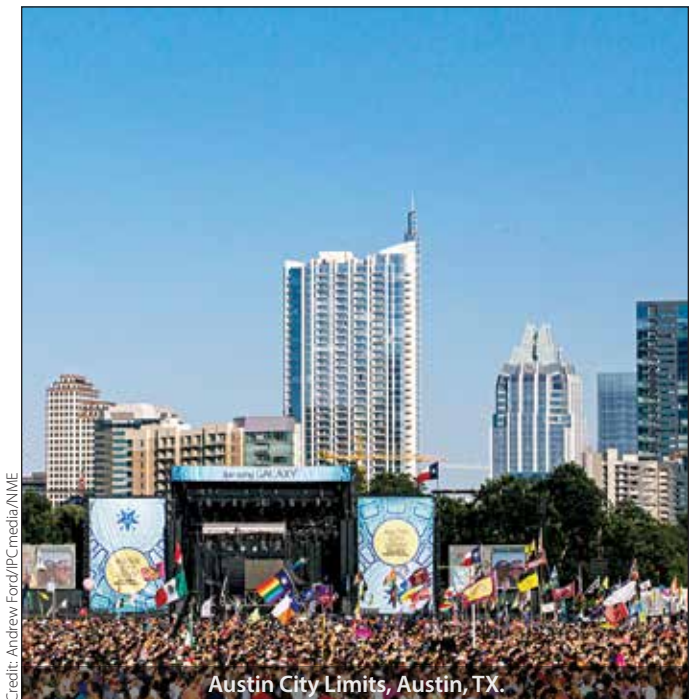
### Cincinnati

Looking to retain more meetings and improve the city's ability to better compete with similar-sized destinations, Cincinnati is expanding the Duke Energy Convention Center (DECC) and adding a new headquarters hotel. There are now more than 3,200 hotel rooms in the three blocks next to the DECC and thousands more rooms nearby.

Cincinnati's moves follow studies sponsored by the Cin-



The Boardwalk in Atlantic City, NJ



Austin City Limits, Austin, TX

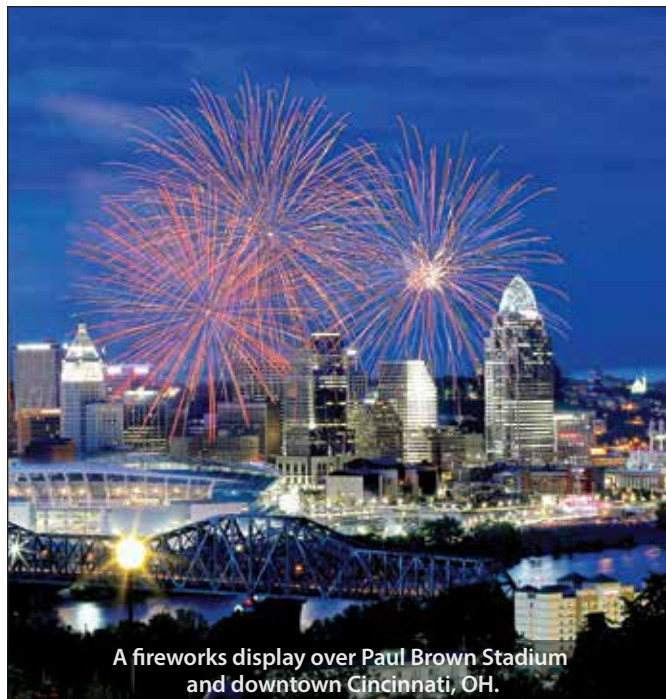
cinnati USA Convention and Visitors Bureau that ranked the Queen City as one of the nation's top 12 convention cities by MeetingSource.com.

The study ranked 176 cities according to affordability, ease of access, safety, walkability and promotional appeal. Cincinnati received four out of five stars for safety, access, promotional appeal and walkability.

Based on the results, Hamilton County Commissioner Todd Portune said that he intends to expand the DECC. The facility's last significant exhibition space expansion was about 30 years ago, although the facility was renovated in 2006.

According to the studies, the DECC lacks about 100,000 sf





A fireworks display over Paul Brown Stadium and downtown Cincinnati, OH.

Credit: The Enquirer/Jeff Swinger



Downtown Columbus, OH.

Credit: © Ohio Stock Photography

rate (ADR) climbed 2.5 percent and the RevPAR (Revenue Per Available Room) increased 4.2 percent.

Groups visiting this year include Nationwide Children's Hospital, which will hold a two-day meeting in May 2017 for 300 employees, executives, doctors and researchers at the Hilton Downtown Columbus.

Kate Wagener, CTA, senior education conference coordinator for Nationwide Children's Hospital, expects Columbus to exceed expectations. "Columbus tends to surprise attendees because they typically come in with a preconceived notion of it being a small town that has nothing to offer," says Wagener. "In actuality, the city is bursting with things to do and places to go, and only continuing to grow."

Wagener believes that most planners aren't aware of all that Columbus offers meetings. "Columbus is the 15th largest city in the U.S., and yet one of the most affordable locations," says Wagener. "Attendees love the big city vibe with the small town charm. There is an abundance of venues and properties to accommodate all different sizes and types of events. And Columbus is an extremely accessible centrally located city in the U.S. with its airport only 10 minutes from the downtown area."

### Well-located Properties

Hotels such as the Hilton Downtown Columbus also are an advantage for planners. "Meeting rooms and amenities are more than sufficient for our group needs," says Wagener. "The conference rooms vary in size and are all located near each other, making the overall experience easier on our participants when navigating the hotel. Plus, it's located within walking distance to two of Columbus' most vibrant neighborhoods — the Short North Arts District and Arena District."

Another plus is the Greater Columbus Convention Center, which is undergoing a 100,000-sf expansion from 1.7 to 1.8 million sf that will increase the number of meeting rooms from 65 to 75. The expansion includes 10,000 sf of meeting space on two levels and 37,000 sf of exhibit space.

Improved properties include the Embassy Suites by Hilton Columbus, which recently completed a \$7 million renovation that includes an expanded 9,200 sf of meeting space encompassing seven meeting rooms and upgrades of all 224 guest rooms. The project also included a transformed open-air atrium with a new second story Wi-Fi connection zone and The Exchange, a lounge and restaurant.

### Jacksonville

Jacksonville's tourism growth is beating every other Florida city.

According to a report by STR, February 2017 was Jacksonville's 40th consecutive month of RevPAR growth, making it the only Florida destination to hit that mark. During the first two months of 2017, Duval County, home to Jacksonville, recorded 1.7 percent occupancy growth compared to a .3 percent increase statewide. During 2016, Jacksonville recorded 4.7 percent occupancy growth compared to a drop of .3 percent for all of Florida.

According to Paul Astleford, president and CEO of Visit Jacksonville, "The impressive success for the destination is a combination of many things, but primarily it is due to growing awareness of what makes Jacksonville so unique. Our great waterways, our natural wonders and eco adventures, our young and vibrant arts and culture scene, and the big sporting events we host."

"Minneapolis is easy to fly into, with many daily flight options. The airport is close, making it easy to transfer attendees."

Meredith Olson, Program Manager  
metroConnections, Minneapolis, MN



Jacksonville's popularity is receiving wide recognition. Last year, TripAdvisor named the city No. 10 on its list of Destinations on the Rise in the U.S. as part of the TripAdvisor Traveler's Choice Awards. Last year, *Forbes* cited Jacksonville as one of "The 20 Best Cities for Travel This Summer" while Travelocity rated the city as the No. 8 "Best Summer Vacation Destination for 2016."

Part of Jacksonville's success stems from the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center with its 78,000 sf of exhibit space and 22 meeting rooms. A popular convention hotel, the 963-room Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront, boasts 110,000 sf of meeting space including a 27,894-sf ballroom.

### Oklahoma City

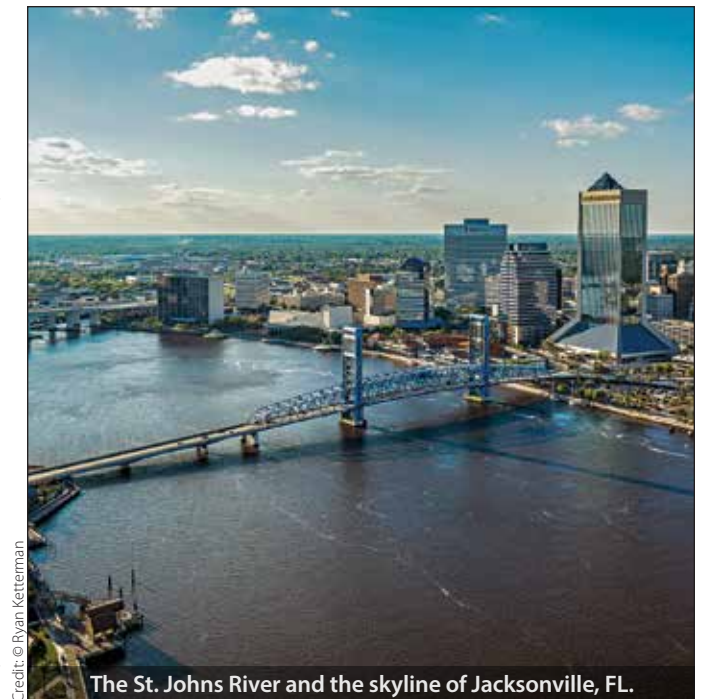
Oklahoma City touts its affordability. "Our low cost of living in Oklahoma translates to a low cost of meeting in Oklahoma City," according to the Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau website. "Everything from room rates and facility rentals to restaurants and entertainment is relatively inexpensive, especially given the variety of options here. We certainly are affordable and stack up well against cities of similar size."

Oklahoma City is building on its advantages by making a big investment in its future. Since 1993, the city has pumped more than \$5 billion of public and private funds into citywide improvements including the new \$288 million Oklahoma City Convention Center (OCCC).

The Oklahoma City Council has approved the preliminary report to commence construction of the three-level OCCC, which will feature 200,000 sf of exhibit space, a ballroom exceeding 30,000 sf as well as 45,000 sf of meeting space and 27 distinct meeting rooms.

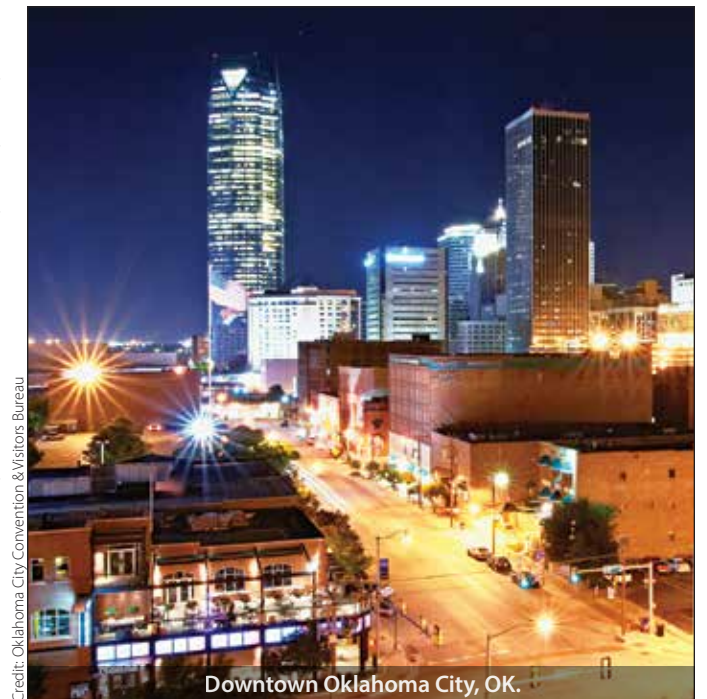
The OCCC is scheduled to open in 2020, the same year an adjacent 19-floor, 600-room Omni convention center hotel is set to open. The Omni will offer about 50,000 sf of meeting space as well as two restaurants and several food and beverage outlets.

The OCCC will team with the existing Cox Convention Cen-



The St. Johns River and the skyline of Jacksonville, FL.

Credit: © Ryan Ketterman



Downtown Oklahoma City, OK.

Credit: Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau

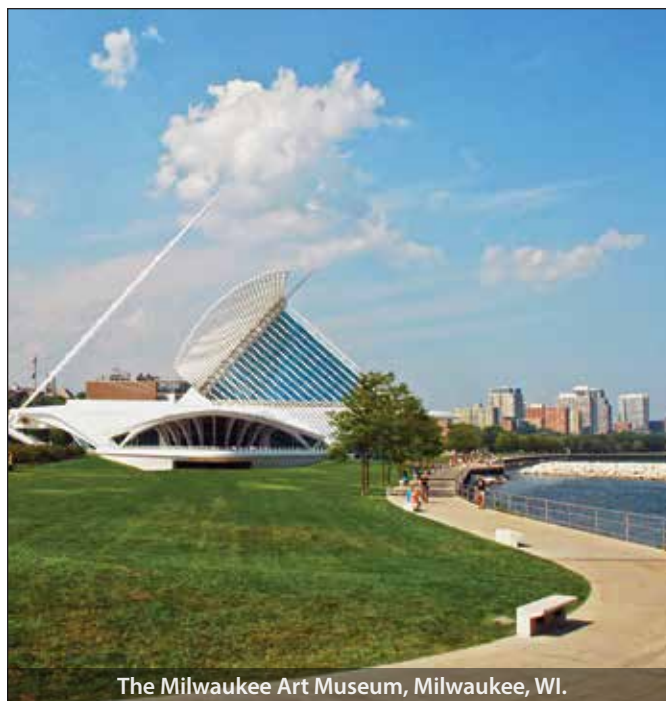
ter (CCC) to anchor Oklahoma's meeting and convention space. The CCC offers 21 meeting rooms, 100,000 sf of exhibit space and a 25,000-sf Grand Ballroom as well as a 15,000-sf arena.

### Milwaukee

The Visit Milwaukee's website boasts, "Discover why more meeting planners are choosing Milwaukee, an easy access destination featuring a three-venue convention campus with three connecting hotels. A blend of acclaimed restaurants, nightlife, festivals and offsite venues adds up to meetings at incomparable value."

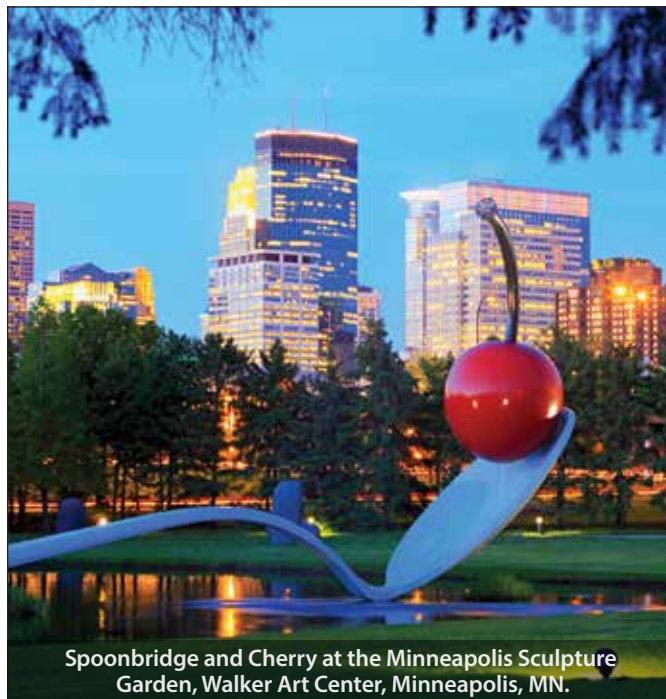
Milwaukee looks to attract larger meetings by expanding





The Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI.

Credit: Visit Milwaukee



Spoonbridge and Cherry at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN.

Credit: Meet Minneapolis

translations and other resources. The website will integrate Visit Milwaukee's other sites — Milwaukee365.com and VisitWauwatosa.org.

Traffic to visitmilwaukee.com increased 65 percent over the last five years with visitors to the site being four times more likely to visit the city, according to VISIT Milwaukee, which expects the new site to attract even better results.

### Minneapolis

Minneapolis is climbing the ranks of the nation's most popular meeting destinations.

*Condé Nast Traveler* named Minneapolis No. 14 on its list of Top Large Cities in the U.S., and Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport as the 10th Top Domestic Airport. The magazine also named three hotels — the JW Marriott Minneapolis Mall of America (No. 2), Radisson Blu Mall of America (No. 6) and the St. Paul Hotel (No. 7) — among the Top Ten Midwest hotels.

Another popular property, the Hilton Minneapolis, recently hosted a corporate group of 800 employees and executives for a five-day meeting.

The Hilton Minneapolis was a perfect fit for the group. "The property has hosted the group many years in a row due to the large number of sleeping rooms, ballroom sizes and number of breakout rooms for trainings," says Meredith Olson, program manager, conference and meetings, metroConnections, based in Minneapolis. "The space and rooms met the group's needs well, as the property is easy to navigate and the meeting areas are centralized on two floors."

Minneapolis is a favorite of the group for several reasons. "There is good value for the space and service," says Olson. "Minneapolis is easy to fly into, with many daily flight options. The airport is close, making it easy to transfer attendees. Downtown offers many hotel properties close to sporting and entertainment arenas like Target Field (Minnesota Twins), Target Center (Minnesota Timberwolves) and the new U.S. Bank Stadium. It has a walkable downtown with lots of skyway access for attendees to use during winter."

In addition, the Minneapolis Convention Center (MCC) is the largest convention center in the Upper Midwest. The MCC can host meetings for up to 2,500 attendees and features 475,000 sf of exhibit space.

Looking to attract more visitors, Meet Minneapolis recently announced its first-ever master plan, Destination Transformation 2030, which sets the following goals by 2030:

- Attract 50 million annual visitors, up from 32 million in 2015.
- Increase winter visitation to 11 million, up from 6 million currently.
- Commence a \$10 million annual branding campaign.
- Build a visitors center downtown on the riverfront.

### Final Thoughts

Planners embarking on a site selection tour will be pleasantly surprised at the myriad opportunities for find value for groups of all sizes and types from coast to coast. **C&IT**

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On The Move



Streamsong Resort in Central Florida has promoted **Andrea Smith** to director of group sales. She was senior sales manager at the resort. **LoriLynn Cox** was promoted to group sales manager. She was business development manager. **Jennifer Corso** joined the team as group sales manager. She was director of catering at Sheraton Orlando North.

JW Marriott Chicago has named **Justin Wilkinson** as destination sales executive. He was account executive affinity for the Southwest Chicago market with Marriott.

**Nick Cechak** was recently named executive meetings manager for Destination DC. He most recently served on the national meetings and events marketing team for Caesars Entertainment in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Island Hotel Newport Beach has announced **Bob Arrivillaga** as director of sales and marketing. He was most recently with

Montage Deer Valley in Park City, Utah, where he worked as associate director of group sales.

**Sarah Farrell** has joined Mount Airy Casino Resort in Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania, as director of sales. She most recently was director of sales and marketing at Holiday Inn Wilkes Barre – East Mountain in Pennsylvania.

Rosewood Hotels & Resorts has appointed **Christian Gonzalez** as the regional director of sales and marketing for the Mexico region. Most recently, he served as the director of sales and marketing at Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara.

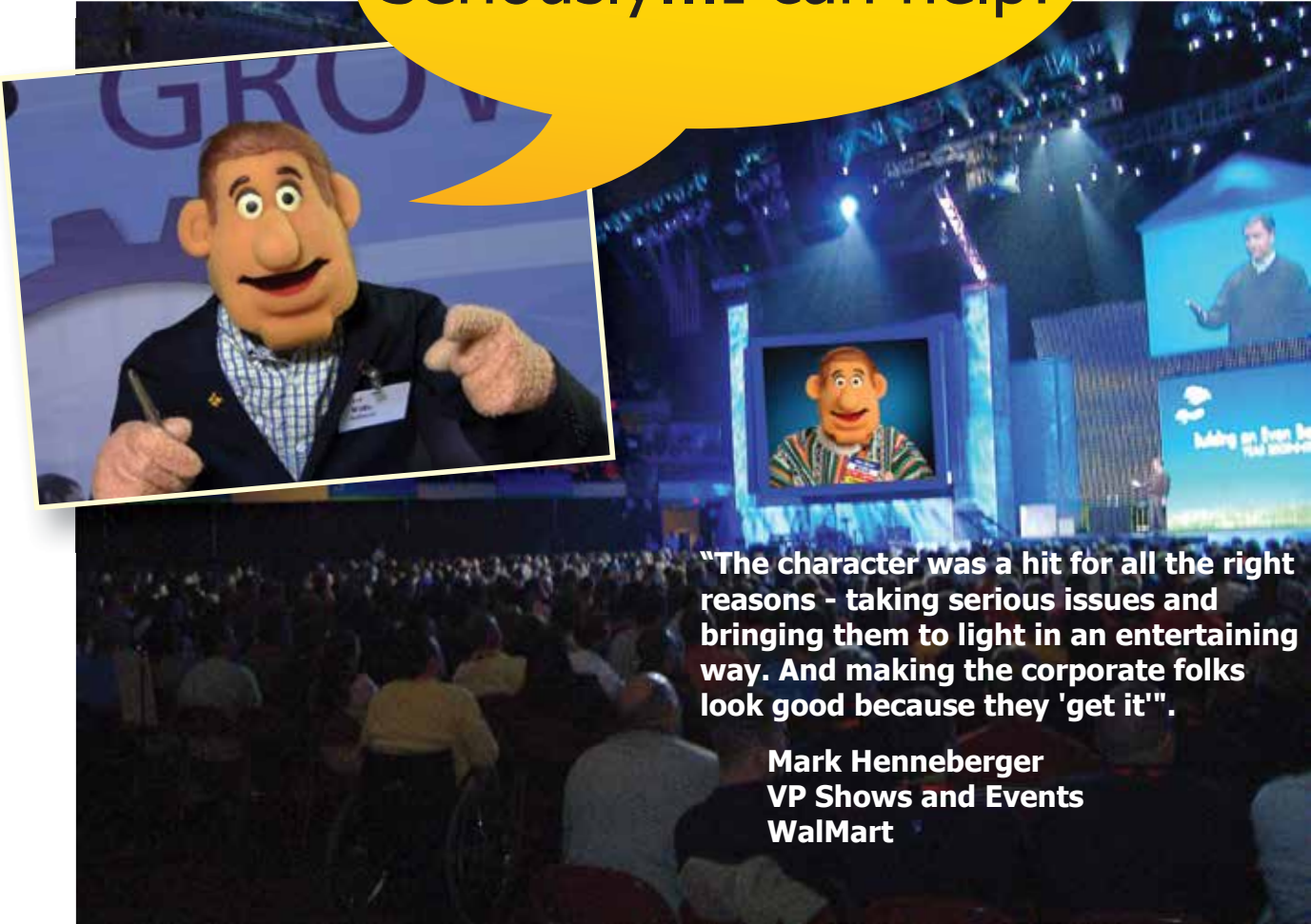
**Felicia Rahm** was named director of sales for The Copley Square Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts. She was most recently the director of sales and marketing for the Crowne Plaza Portland Downtown Convention Center in Portland, Oregon. **C&IT**

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