Most Island Destinations Are Going Strong and Ready to Welcome Groups

The Shifting Landscape in Site Selection

How to Stay Ahead of the Hackers
Ilani Casino Resort, which opened in Ridgefield, Washington, last spring, is located on the Cowlitz Indian Tribe’s reservation. PAGE 14

A tantalizing spread of healthful light bites, courtesy of Austin, Texas-based High Beam Events. PAGE 26

A water taxi plies the waters of the Potomac River from Alexandria to Washington, DC. PAGE 60

Gaming Resorts
Unique Experiences Await in Lesser Known Locales
By Patrick Simms

Cybersecurity — Don’t Get Caught in the Phisher’s Net
By Christine Loomis

Catering to High Expectations
Food Trends & Tactics to Satisfy Divergent Tastes
By Sophia Bennett

The Art of Site Selection
Four Experts Weigh in on the Shifting Landscape
By Christine Loomis

Southwest Hot Spots
Meet Amid Desert Vistas, Mountain Ranges and Beyond
By Sophia Bennett

Bahamas & Caribbean Comeback
Most Island Destinations Are Ready to Welcome Groups
By Christine Loomis

Need a Little Slice of Paradise?
Florida Meetings Never Fail to Deliver
By Derek Reveron

The Power Corridor
Washington, DC, Virginia and Maryland
By John Buchanan

Publisher’s Message
6 News & Notes
Tips & Trends
7 Snapshots
10 Perspective
DMCs Partner With Planners in Crisis Management
By Marty MacKay, DMCP

Perspective
7 New Ways for Event Managers to Rethink Failure
By Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey

People on the Move
#ThisIsSilversea

For more information call Silversea at 954.713.3910 or visit Silversea.com/inspire.

SIZE DOES MATTER
INTIMATE ULTRA LUXURY SHIPS.
OVER 900 DESTINATIONS.
UNFORGETTABLE CLIENT EVENTS.

#ThisIsSilversea
Paradise on the Rebound

The Bahamas and the Caribbean want planners to know that the islands are rolling out a big, beautiful welcome mat for 2018 meetings following a rough 2017 hurricane season. Many islands, such as those in The Bahamas, were largely unaffected, others are well on the way to full recovery, and some are still working their way back. Atlantis Paradise Island Bahamas (shown on our cover) made it through the storms unscathed and continues to upgrade its offerings including more that connect guests to the Bahamian people and their cultural experiences and traditions. What will shine through is not only the friendliness of the people of the Caribbean, but their fortitude and resilience in overcoming adversity to support fellow islanders as they rebuild and start anew. Also stepping up is the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), which continues to raise funds to assist member countries affected by the storms. The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association’s Caribbean Travel Market place was the first major convention of 2018 held in Puerto Rico January 30–February 1, signaling that Puerto Rico is “open for business and ready to receive groups and conventions,” says Alma Pedrosa, CDME, acting president and CEO of Meet Puerto Rico in our feature on page 42.

“Bahamas & Caribbean Comeback. ” She continues, “We feel proud of our people, our offerings and our determination. …Puerto Rico has always been one of the most desirable meetings and conventions destinations, and we look forward to the future with enthusiasm.”

Planners also can look forward to exciting new developments in the region, including the massive Baha Mar resort in Nassau, which debuted its first phase last spring — the impressive 1,800-room Grand Hyatt Baha Mar, the 200,000-sf Baha Mar Convention, Art and Entertainment Center and The Royal Blue Golf Club, featuring the only Jack Nicklaus-designed course in The Bahamas.

Read about another slice of paradise — Florida (page 50), whose hurricane-affected areas have recovered and are ready for 2018 meetings. Other brands of paradise can be found in “Southwest Hot Spots” (page 36), “Gaming Resorts” in known and lesser known locales (page 14), and the “Power Corridor” (page 60).

And while we’re on the subject of site selection, turn to page 32 where four experts weigh in on the shifting landscape in destination due diligence.
Brenda Bazan Confirmed as President & CEO of Houston First

HOUSTON, TX — The Houston City Council unanimously approved the appointment of Brenda Bazan as the new president and CEO of the Houston First Corporation (HFC). Bazan will assume responsibilities as the new leader of Houston First, effective immediately. Bazan has been with the organization since its inception in 2011.

“It’s an honor to be selected by Mayor Turner and confirmed by Houston City Council. The future of Houston is bright, and I am committed to making sure HFC serves as a beacon of light,” said Bazan.

www.houstonfirst.com

Carnival Cruise Line Expands West Coast Presence

MIAIMI, FL — Carnival Cruise Line announced the deployment of Carnival Panorama to Long Beach in 2019 — the first new Carnival ship based in Southern California in 20 years; the grand reopening of its 146,000 sq-ft of state-of-the-art Long Beach Cruise Terminal and a multimillion-dollar port development project in Ensenada, Mexico.

In 2019, Carnival will make history when it deploys its third Vista-class ship, the 3,960-passenger Carnival Panorama, on seven-day Mexican Riviera cruises from Long Beach, providing an exciting new seagoing vacation option to this vital and fast-growing market. The renovation of the Long Beach Cruise Terminal more than doubles the size of the facility’s space while dramatically enhancing the overall passenger experience and operational flow. www.carnival.com

Anahiem Celebrates Fifth Record-setting Year for Tourism

ANAHEIM, CA — Visit Anaheim announced that Anaheim welcomed 24.2 million tourists in 2017. This year marks the fifth record-setting year in a row for visitation to this destination. Anaheim has experienced a 31 percent growth in tourism since 2012.

Development projects have been on the rise in the destination with several major impactful projects underway to sustain tourism for years to come. Most notably, Disneyland’s much-anticipated Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge and updates to Downtown Disney. In September 2017, the Anaheim Convention Center’s seventh expansion, ACC North, was unveiled, adding 200,000 sq-ft of flexible meeting space and cementing the Anaheim Convention Center as the largest convention center on the West Coast. ACC North allows meeting professionals the flexibility to design unique experiences for their attendees from education sessions, workshops, galas, marketplace connections and networking events.

Additionally, many of Anaheim’s annual conventions hit record attendance or grew in size in 2017, including IMAGINE. Natural Products Expo West, VidCon, California Dental Association, OC Auto Show and LaLaRoo. www.visitanaheim.org

Marriott to Open The Drew Las Vegas in 2020

LAS VEGAS, NV — Marriott International Inc. and global development firm Witkoff announced a plan to open a new resort at 2755 Las Vegas Boulevard South. The integrated resort and casino named The Drew Las Vegas will debut the Edition brand in Las Vegas and mark The Strip’s first JW Marriott. Anticipated to open in late 2020, the resort will feature nearly 4,000 rooms and suites as well as more than 500,000 sq-ft of convention and meeting space. Once open, the hotels will be managed by Marriott International, Two Blackbirds Hospitality, led by renowned hotelier and former Cosmopolitan CEO John Unwin, will oversee the launch and operations of resort. The Drew Las Vegas will include a casino, luxury hotels, together with convention facilities, entertainment, nightlife, retail and dining curated into one cohesive guest experience. www.marriott.com

Meetings & Events Industry Releases New Economic Impact Data

WASHINGTON, DC — Face-to-face meetings and events play an integral role in bolstering our national economy and key business sectors, according to a new report from Oxford Economics, commissioned by the Events Industry Council and supported by the Meetings Mean Business Coalition and other industry associations. The report was compiled through a nationwide survey of meeting planners, exhibitors and venues and represents almost 9,000 domestic business travelers, almost 50,000 international air travelers and 11,000 hotels.

“Our report illustrates that the meetings and events industry continues to grow across all segments as it contributes hundreds of billions of dollars in revenue to the U.S. economy and supports 5.9 million jobs,” said Adam Sacks, founder and president of Tourism Economics, an Oxford Economics company. “Notably in 2016, meetings generated $325 billion of direct spending and $845 billion in business sales. These numbers represent a contribution of $446 billion in GDP and $104 billion of federal, state and local taxes. The total tax impact per household was $879 per U.S. household.

“Meetings help show that every dollar spent on face-to-face meetings and events generates an additional $1.60 — or 160 percent — in benefits for the U.S. economy. Direct spending on meetings expanded 23 percent between 2009 and 2016, primarily due to increases in the number of meeting participants. Business services was the industry most impacted by meetings in 2016, with $186.3 billion in total economic output. The finance, insurance and real estate industry followed with $141.1 billion in total economic output, followed by the manufacturing industry with $92.9 billion in total output. And, meetings generated $229.7 billion in tax impact per household in 2016, 13.2 percent of total travel and tourism spending in the U.S. www.eventsindustry.org

Tips & Trends

Top 10 Trends for Incentive Travel, Rewards and Recognition Programs

The Incentive Research Foundation’s signature 2018 Trends Study highlights 10 key trends that will affect organizations, their products and services, and the workforce in 2018. From market optimism to concerns about risk and safety, the study identifies key areas of change and their implications for corporate travel and meetings. “From culture shifts to technological advances to regulatory pressure, the IREF is tracking some essential shifts in the industry and discussing how to anticipate and respond to these trends,” said IREF President Melissa Van Dyke.

1. Building a Brand-Asset Culture Becomes a Business Imperative
   - With over 90 percent of businesses’ value in their intangibles, the IRF expects non-cash awards to grow as the focus on brand, culture and innovation becomes even more critical to business success.

2. Market Optimism Leads to Budget Growth
   - The incentive travel industry’s net optimism score for the economy is up almost 20 points from 2017, and average annual per-person spend of $3,915 reflects a 4 percent increase.

3. Regulatory Pressure Drives Changes
   - Over 70 percent of respondents to the IREF’s Regulations Study said they had made changes to their programs’ design, communications, rewards and/or reporting in response to regulations.

4. Cost and Time Tensions Continue
   - Although incentive travel budgets were up again in 2017, 60 percent of respondents said costs are rising faster than budgets.

5. Increased Focus on Managing Risk
   - From PCI compliance to concerns over the EU’s GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), ensuring program participant data is secure and appropriately used is a central concern for all types of non-cash award programs.

6. Expanding Capability With Increasingly Predictive and Intelligent Technology
   - Predictive analytics, artificial intelligence and augmented reality capabilities will be a fundamental requirement for the effective incentive, rewards and events business partner.

7. Wellness Hits a Tipping Point
   - The largest number of net increases (38 percent) reported by respondents was the inclusion of wellness components focused on fitness, food and comfort in their programs.

8. Unique Destinations with Gay Pride Calendar
   - Planners are interested in new and different subdestinations. Whereas Rome may have been the primary consideration, Puglia, Italy is becoming an attractive option.

9. Merchandise Awards Move Toward the Meaningful
   - There is a strong desire in 2018 not for more choice, but for more meaning. Impactful products may have local sourcing or organic roots and be easily personalized and customizable.

10. Gift Cards Gain Momentum
    - Mid-size firms on average spend almost half a million dollars annually on gift cards across all programs, while the largest firms spend over $1 million annually. To view or download a copy of the full study, please visit: www.iref.org/research/v42018-trends-study/2390/
Eden Roc Miami Beach Unveils $250 Million Transformation

MIAMI BEACH, FL — Eden Roc Miami Beach is newly transformed after $250 million in renovations. The 415-room refurbished property is bringing the Beach Cosmopolitan lifestyle to guests from around the world by combining the enigmatic spirit of Miami with a beachside attitude that offers an immersive escape.

Updates include the remagination of Morris Lapidus’ famous 16-seat lobby bar by interior designer David Rockwell; the introduction of the signature Nobu restaurant; and the flagship Nobu Hotel tower (boasting a hotel-within-a-hotel concept); the soon-to-open Malibu Farm restaurant; and inclusion of Boho Hunter — an upscale boutique featuring contemporary women’s fashion and accessories from Latin American designers.

With some of the most breathtaking ocean views and oversized balconies, a refreshing renovation to all 415 spacious guest rooms and suites creates a calm seaside atmosphere, with a number of new amenities, including a pathfinder guide in every room offering a 24-hour locally guide to Miami’s 55-inch flat screen TV and JBL Bluetooth speakers; Nespresso machine; curated in-room art from Saatchi Art; and more. Also, the “Spa Eden Roc” will be reinvented as Esencia Wellness, and a brand new outdoor beach bar concept, Gitano, will open in spring 2018.

Visit Fort Worth Announces New Name and More

FORT WORTH, TX — The Fort Worth Convention & Visitors Bureau (FWC VB), announced new economic impact numbers for tourism, released their 10-year Destination Master Plan, debuted the “Fort Worth Stories” marketing video series and officially announced its new name, Visit Fort Worth, at its fifth annual meeting and breakfast at the Omni Fort Worth Hotel.

New research released shows record growth in visitation, spending and jobs directly related to the Fort Worth tourism and hospitality industry: 9.1 million visitors; $2.4 billion in economic impact; 23,000+ jobs supported by tourism; $116 million in local tax revenue; and $598 tax savings per household saved per year in taxes generated by tourism. The new 10-year plan is a blueprint for ensuring Fort Worth is a must-visit city. The goal of the plan is to increase economic impact, for tourism, create more jobs and raise the city’s profile to make Fort Worth even more competitive. The plan calls for action in five key areas: enhance visitor experiences; strengthen messaging about Fort Worth; grow visitor facility needs; a headquarters hotel and the convention center; support transportation to increase connectivity, and collaboration with the city, chambers and other strategic partners.

The Visit Fort Worth sales team booked 10 citywide conventions slated for 2018: Fort Worth welcomed the JetBlue Flight Deck at the Club Level of the theater. (L to r) Rita Lopez, Riverside Hotel; Alex Castellanos, Paradisus Punta Cana; Ezra Quintanar, Paradisus Cancun & Playa del Carmen; John Larrin, V.I. Melia Hotels International – America and 2018 president of the SITE Foundation; Jorge Colona, regional director of group sales, Melia Hotels International; Maxine Lockhart, Red Lion Hotel Corporation; Vicki Ascione, V Event Management; Brandon Hall, Discover the Palm Beaches; Filippo Ascione, V Event Management; Dana Weaver, Growmark; Bill Sellmer, SMI Travel Inc.; (unidentified); Jim Marzullo, Ultimate Incentives.

The new 10-year plan is a blueprint for ensuring Fort Worth is a must-visit city. The goal of the plan is to increase economic impact, for tourism, create more jobs and raise the city’s profile to make Fort Worth even more competitive. The plan calls for action in five key areas: enhance visitor experiences; strengthen messaging about Fort Worth; grow visitor facility needs; a headquarters hotel and the convention center; support transportation to increase connectivity, and collaboration with the city, chambers and other strategic partners.

The Visit Fort Worth sales team booked 10 citywide conventions slated for 2018: Fort Worth welcomed the JetBlue Flight Deck at the Club Level of the theater. (L to r) Rita Lopez, Riverside Hotel; Alex Castellanos, Paradisus Punta Cana; Ezra Quintanar, Paradisus Cancun & Playa del Carmen; John Larrin, V.I. Melia Hotels International – America and 2018 president of the SITE Foundation; Jorge Colona, regional director of group sales, Melia Hotels International; Maxine Lockhart, Red Lion Hotel Corporation; Vicki Ascione, V Event Management; Brandon Hall, Discover the Palm Beaches; Filippo Ascione, V Event Management; Dana Weaver, Growmark; Bill Sellmer, SMI Travel Inc.; (unidentified); Jim Marzullo, Ultimate Incentives.

The full series of “Fort Worth Stories” can be viewed at: www.fortworthstory.com.
DMCs to the Rescue: Partnering With Planners in Crisis Management

No one is exempt from a disaster. They can happen anywhere, to anyone. Now more than ever, meeting planners are asking (and if they are not, they should be) their supplier partners about emergency preparedness. As your worldwide Destination Management Company (DMC), our team at Hosts Global brings to the forefront the need for this conversation between planners and DMCs far before programs occur. It is critical to address this topic in the early stages of planning a meeting, convention, incentive program or special event and with all parties involved to ensure clients are safe and all teams are prepared for various types of emergencies. We cannot say it enough. A communication plan is key in a crisis.

Dangers of Being Unprepared

It is extremely difficult to plan for the unknown. However, the danger of being unprepared for a potential crisis is an even greater risk for your meeting or event. These dangers include inadequately training your staff and not having a clear communication plan should an emergency occur. During a crisis, you must be prepared to make swift decisions in order to protect the safety of your guests and your teams. You empower your staff with the knowledge and authority to make these critical safety calls through advanced preparation.

High-level Goals and Measures to Consider

To initiate your preparedness plan, we have found it beneficial to consider the following high-level goals and protective measures:

- Protect the safety of employees, clients, suppliers and others at risk in the event of an emergency.
- Maintain high service levels by minimizing disruptions of business operations.
- Protect facilities, physical assets and electronic information.
- Protect the organization’s brand, image and reputation.
- Make an emergency supply kit to be prepared for a variety of situations.
- Learn about receiving local advance emergency alerts, locations of nearby shelter and evacuation sites and creating a list of local emergency contacts.
- When recovering from a disaster, safety as well as mental and physical well-being must be considered.
- When cancellations occur, it is essential to have important facts when time is limited.
- Make good decisions should you find yourself in one of those situations.
- Encourage each team member to develop their own personal emergency plan.
- Record their diverse feedback will ultimately make your preparedness plan complete.

Some basic protective actions are similar across many different hazards:

- Physical safety is a concern for all hazards and may involve sheltering in place or evacuating.
- Develop a business communications plan that is shared with all employees.
- Learn about receiving local advance emergency alerts.
- Creating a list of local emergency contacts.
- When cancelling an event, safety as well as mental and physical well-being must be considered.
- The critical communications document you can create is a one-page, high-level event overview. When the unthinkable happens, it is essential to have important facts when time is limited. This overview, at a minimum, should include information about your key decision-makers and their agreed upon triggers for action. This way, you don’t second guess yourself under pressure.
- An example of a situation where this document might be useful could be an outdoor event where weather might be a risk. In advance of the event, key decision-makers should decide what the trigger(s) will be for cancelling the event due to inclement weather.
- That way, during the event when emotions are high and there might be a tendency to push the envelope because you don’t want to cancel, you already have an agreed upon, reasonable risk threshold set when emotions were calm and collected.

How to Work With Your DMC for Local Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Management

Our team at Hosts Global believes in being proactive, and that extends to being prepared for various emergency situations that may arise. To do so, we’ve created an emergency action plan template, to ensure we can keep your people and our clients safe, while protecting our business. We have made this template available for our DMCs across our 300+ destinations along with checklists and helpful information for them to create an emergency communication plan that reflects their destination’s needs. Although we all face the same accidental and terrorist hazards, not every location faces the same natural disaster threats. When working with your local DMC we recommend gaining their expert advice on local threats and focusing on communication as the first step. In my opinion, the most

Resources Available to Meeting Planners

Last year, as the president-elect of the Association of Destination Management Executives International (ADMEI), I had the opportunity to collaborate with fellow destination management executives and MSA Security, a global security firm, to develop the ‘Emergency Preparedness Certificate Program.’ MSA was critical for establishing essential course criteria as well as creating planning checklists. So course participants can depart with tangible templates to utilize. After completing our first certificate program, we quickly realized the need to bring in legal counsel to answer many questions, so we now partner with the seasoned team at Barnes & Thornburg LLP as well. The course has been very successful. To date, it is the only comprehensive event emergency preparedness and risk management certificate course customized for meeting, event and DMC professionals.

I encourage you to learn more about this specialized training opportunity. For details regarding the certificate program and upcoming training event, please visit: www.admei.org/active/ADMEI/pt/sp/emergency.

Training

I’ve participated in a number of emergency preparedness seminars. A common theme in each training is the difficulty of knowing how you will respond in the time of crisis. My continued takeaway is that the more scenarios you can envision and discuss, however unpleasant, the more likely you are to make good decisions should you find yourself in one of those situations. Please remember, this type of scenario training should not just include immediate staff, but all field staff and partners who are essential to the successful execution of your event. I’ll close with a helpful tip: in the months leading up to your event, take time to talk through one scenario a week in your team planning meetings. Encourage each team member to take a turn walking through a scenario and then openly discuss as a group. Everyone will provide different points of view and their diverse feedback will ultimately make your preparedness plan complete.

“During a crisis, you must be prepared to make swift decisions in order to protect the safety of your guests and your teams.”

By Marty MacKay, DMCP

Marty MacKay, DMCP is president, Hosts Global’s Alliance of DMCs. Marty has spent her entire career mastering the event world. Her professional background began on the client side, where she learned the event business from the ground up while working at a leading fortune 500 company. Since joining Hosts Global in 2013, she has more than doubled the size of the Alliance and introduced best practices and standards across the membership. Marty is the president of ADMEI and leader in the hospitality industry’s focus to drive emergency preparedness. www.hosts-global.com
7 New Ways for Event Managers to Rethink Failure

If you want to be great at event management, you need to get comfortable with failure. Being an event planner requires you to constantly put yourself on the line. From taking a chance on an unknown speaker and convincing your board to change up how you program your conference or adding a new event app like Pathable so you can better connect your attendees with the relationships they want. The more chances you take, the likelier you are to sometimes — even frequently — fail flat on your face. And when it happens, occasionally all of the attendees are watching. But as Robert F. Kennedy said, “Only those who dare greatly can ever achieve greatly.” Don’t beat yourself up for failing. These seven options will help you see your failure in a positive light.

1. Failure Is a Chance to Increase Your Resilience

There are only two possible options to failure: Either you give up, or you dust yourself off and try, try again. If you take the second option, you’re guaranteed to become more resilient. Trying again gives you confidence. The next time you fail (yes, you’ll fail again), you’ll remember this situation and think, “I got a little bit further towards my goal this time. I can try this again (and again, and...ad nauseam).” Remember Thomas Edison’s words as he tried to create lightbulbs, “I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”

2. Failure Is The Beginning — Not the End

We tend to think of failure as the end of an opportunity. Your boss decides to go with another venue, so you pack away the conference evaluation results back and 50 percent of the attendees actually loved it! Sometimes you win big. Sometimes, it’s a draw. However, at the end of the day, you should be proud of your failures. Each one represents a time you put yourself out there. Just make sure you’re learning from your failures. It’s a foolish person who repeats a bad idea once proven wrong.

3. Failure Allows You to Build Tolerance to Risk

“Winners are not afraid of losing. But losers are. Failure is part of the process of success. People who avoid failure also avoid success.” — Robert T. Kiyosaki

Failure is proof that you thought you could reach the sky; that you were confident in your ideas. You could avoid having that uncomfortable meeting with your conference committee when ‘everyone’ swears that new agenda structure fell flat with attendees, but you shouldn’t. Because sometimes you get the conference evaluation results back and 50 percent of the attendees actually loved it! Sometimes you win big. Sometimes, it’s a draw. However, at the end of the day, you should be proud of your failures. Each one represents a time you put yourself out there. Just make sure you’re learning from your failures. It’s a foolish person who repeats a bad idea once proven wrong.

4. Failure Keeps You Realistic

Winning feels good. Succeeding feels good. So, when we plan an outrageous idea that goes 1,000 percent smoothly, it can go to our heads. Which can make us tough to live with and perhaps tempt us to bite off more than we can chew the next go-round.

Taking risks and dreaming big doesn’t mean that you ignore reality. You still have to keep in mind the time, resources and scope of your event. Keep this question at the core of your thinking: Is this best for our attendee experience? Then go ahead. Think outside of the box. Just have backup plans in case out-of-the-box is too big for your conference planners. And always do your research and create the business case for why you took the risk. Because when you fail (and again, remember, you will at some point), and someone points a blaming finger, you’re well prepared to say yes, we did fail. Here was our thinking when we tried the ideas and here’s what we learned to do better next time.

5. Failure Helps You Test Assumptions

Event planners rely heavily on assumptions. Think about the ones you’ve made this month alone, from “that type of AV company can’t provide the support we need” and “Surely we can afford that event app” to “no one really likes that much chicken at conferences” and “They’ll probably get the most value from this new program (even though we haven’t talked to any actual prospective attendees).” Assumptions help you make better decisions. Just like it’s a rare venue that would take your business sans deposit without previous meetings history, your assumptions help you use previous experience to infer what will and won’t work. Sometimes, we can get the wrong assumptions into our heads. And we need to know we’re wrong so we don’t continue to repeat our mistakes.

6. Failure Can Make a Team Stronger

I once worked with an association who rebranded their organization and annual event and didn’t tell the membership it was happening until we magically changed the logo and redecorated the entire conference hall live during a morning general session. I think 50 people (out of 7,500) knew before we did it. It didn’t go well. As embarrassing and frustrating as the public failure was, though, our staff and board failed together as a team. From the CEO and the board president on down, we shared the responsibility for the failure to be transparent, listened to the hurt feelings from the membership, and ate crow together as a team. This memory might sound negative, but in hindsight, I look back and am incredibly proud of that time. We didn’t play a blame game. We instead acknowledged and moved forward, stronger.

7. Failure Helps You Reach Beyond Low Hanging Fruit

If you aren’t leading your event team to think about longer range goals and innovations for your attendees on a regular basis, then you’ll forever stay in a short-range, low-success space. We joke a lot in the events world about how slow change happens, but it can be startling to realize we’re part of the problem.

Meeting planners are risk-averse by nature. We want to know the outcomes and redundant backup plans for everything. This means that when we’re too focused on the now, it steals our energy and momentum towards the later — our future. Sometimes we won’t know the outcome before you take the risk.

“Sometimes you win big. Sometimes, it’s a draw. However, at the end of the day, you should be proud of your failures.”

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey, CMP

By Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey, CMP

Failure Helps You Test Assumptions

Event planners rely heavily on assumptions. Think about the ones you’ve made this month alone, from “that type of AV company can’t provide the support we need” and “Surely we can afford that event app” to “no one really likes that much chicken at conferences” and “They’ll probably get the most value from this new program (even though we haven’t talked to any actual prospective attendees).” Assumptions help you make better decisions. Just like it’s a rare venue that would take your business sans deposit without previous meetings history, your assumptions help you use previous experience to infer what will and won’t work. Sometimes, we can get the wrong assumptions into our heads. And we need to know we’re wrong so we don’t continue to repeat our mistakes.

Failure Helps You Reach Beyond Low Hanging Fruit

If you aren’t leading your event team to think about longer range goals and innovations for your attendees on a regular basis, then you’ll forever stay in a short-range, low-success space. We joke a lot in the events world about how slow change happens, but it can be startling to realize we’re part of the problem.

Meeting planners are risk-averse by nature. We want to know the outcomes and redundant backup plans for everything. This means that when we’re too focused on the now, it steals our energy and momentum towards the future — our future. Sometimes we won’t know the outcome before you take the risk.

“Sometimes you win big. Sometimes, it’s a draw. However, at the end of the day, you should be proud of your failures.”

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey, CMP

By Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey, CMP

Failure Helps You Test Assumptions

Event planners rely heavily on assumptions. Think about the ones you’ve made this month alone, from “that type of AV company can’t provide the support we need” and “Surely we can afford that event app” to “no one really likes that much chicken at conferences” and “They’ll probably get the most value from this new program (even though we haven’t talked to any actual prospective attendees).” Assumptions help you make better decisions. Just like it’s a rare venue that would take your business sans deposit without previous meetings history, your assumptions help you use previous experience to infer what will and won’t work. Sometimes, we can get the wrong assumptions into our heads. And we need to know we’re wrong so we don’t continue to repeat our mistakes.

Failure Helps You Reach Beyond Low Hanging Fruit

If you aren’t leading your event team to think about longer range goals and innovations for your attendees on a regular basis, then you’ll forever stay in a short-range, low-success space. We joke a lot in the events world about how slow change happens, but it can be startling to realize we’re part of the problem.

Meeting planners are risk-averse by nature. We want to know the outcomes and redundant backup plans for everything. This means that when we’re too focused on the now, it steals our energy and momentum towards the future — our future. Sometimes we won’t know the outcome before you take the risk.
The choices in gaming resorts today are as diverse as the selection of table games at a casino. The hotbeds of the industry remain Las Vegas and Atlantic City, but there are compelling gaming resorts that beckon corporate groups to less-traveled corners of the country, from Hollywood, Florida, to Biloxi, Mississippi, to Ridgefield, Washington. Unique cultural experiences await groups in many of these smaller gaming enclaves and a prime example is Ilani Casino Resort, which opened in Ridgefield last spring. Developed by Salishan-Mohegan LLC in collaboration with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Ilani is located on the tribe’s 156-acre reservation, about 17 miles from the Hilton Vancouver. The 368,000-sf facility includes a 100,000-sf gaming floor and a meeting and entertainment venue seating up to 2,500 guests. Attendees have at their disposal a variety of retail shops, bars and restaurants, including Tom’s Urban and Michael Jordan’s Steakhouse. The Friedmutter Group, an architecture firm that specializes in gaming facilities, designed Ilani to highlight the beauty of the Northwest and home of the Cowlitz tribe, with panoramic mountain views and prominent use of wood, stone and zinc as building materials. Ilani adds to the gaming options in Washington, which is also home to Tulalip Resort Casino. Having recently completed a $15 million renovation, Tulalip offers 30,000 sf of meeting space and 360 redesigned guest rooms that express the rich history and culture of the Tulalip Tribes. Southwest For five years, sales representatives from Spectrum Technologies have been enriched by the culture of the Mescalero Apache Tribe at the Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino. The New Mexico gaming resort offers groups AAA Four Diamond facilities that include 273 guest rooms and 40,000 sf of meeting space. They have a lot of unique paintings and statues, and they really do highlight
that heritage throughout the property,” notes Michelle Lemke, technical solutions director. “Several of our attendees have remarked on that heritage and asked questions. So it is showcased in a very professional manner and adds some ambience to the property.” The Inn of the Mountain Gods was selected for the company’s January sales kickoff meeting primarily because of its location, notes Lemke. “It’s nice and remote and takes our sales team out of the daily grind of the sales world and allows us to decompress,” she explains. “Secondly, the amenities the Inn offers are quite exceptional. They have a beautiful lounge where we typically host our cocktail hour, a great onsite bar, and then the menu that we typically serve for that cocktail hour is very good. It’s a little bit out of the normal scope of bar food.” Apart from providing an atmosphere conducive to networking, the resort’s grounds are ideal for teambuilding. “This year, we had a scavenger hunt around the property, and the Inn staff helped our attendees to find clues, which was kind of neat,” she says. “I’ll never forget the fact that they were interactive and helped to make it fun. They seem to really care about being engaged with the customer. It’s also wonderful that the staff hasn’t changed since I began planning meetings there.” Customers who enjoy robust entertainment offerings along with their meetings may consider another South-west gaming icon Talking Stick Resort. Located in Scottsdale, Arizona, the 496-room property includes the Showroom, Salt River Grand Ballroom and Pool — all of which host touring entertainers. Recently hosted acts include Dave Mason, Gabriel Iglesias and award-winning blues-rock guitarist Kenny Wayne Shepherd. Talking Stick Resort houses more than 100,000 sf of flexible meeting space. Nearby recreational options include the 36-hole Talking Stick Golf Club, OdySea Aquarium and Topgolf at Riverwalk.

Las Vegas

When it comes to diversity in casino entertainment, arguably no gaming destination can match Las Vegas. Yet many of the city’s gaming properties also are quite serious about delivering a standardsetting conference experience. A case in point is the MGM Grand Conference Center, which topped out its 250,000-sf expansion in January. The $130 million project, opening the end of this year, will expand the conference center to 850,000 sft, including a 22,000-sf expansion of Stay Well Meetings. New facilities will include a 49,000-sf ballroom, 32,000-sf ballroom, three junior ballrooms, 11 breakout rooms and a 5,500-sf outdoor courtyard. The MGM Grand Conference Center expansion is certainly making headlines, but it’s only a part of MGM Resorts’ commitment to expanding its group business. When the expansions at Aria, Park MGM and Luxor are completed by the end of this year, MGM Resorts will have 4 million sf of meeting and convention space, reported many more than any other company in Las Vegas. Aria’s $165 million project to enhance its convention space, reportedly more than any other company in Las Vegas. Aria’s $165 million project to enhance its LEED Gold-certified convention center will deliver an additional 200,000 sf of flexible meeting space. The enhanced center welcomed its first clients in February. Meanwhile, Park MGM has introduced phase one of its new 77,000-sf conference space, and later this year will open phase two: the city’s first Executive Meeting Center and Idea Studio. The high-tech space will be ideal for small groups looking to maximize productivity. At Luxor, groups can utilize the new 20,000-sf The Estuary Square, which features the 8,000-sf Lotus Ballroom, five meeting rooms ranging from 1,400–1,650 sf, and a 4,700-sf prefunction area. With the expansion, Luxor’s meeting space now totals more than 40,000 sf. In addition, Luxor completes a redesign of more than 1,700 hotel Tower Rooms in March. Further cementing its resources for meetings, MGM Resorts partnered with Cisco Systems in November to upgrade and double its wireless infrastructure.

Michelle Lemke, Technical Solutions Director Spectrum Technologies, El Paso, TX

The Inn of the Mountain Gods is “...nice and remote and takes our sales team out of the daily grind of the sales world and allows us to decompress. ...The amenities the Inn offers are quite exceptional.”

The Difference is in the Details

Positioned at the south end of The Strip is M Resort Spa Casino, a boutique Forbes Four-Star retreat, perfect to host your next meeting or conference. With over 92,000 square feet of open and dynamic conference space, state-of-the-art technology, impeccable service and breathtaking views, M Resort delivers a unique experience sure to impress your guests. Meeting and event attendees will enjoy the uniquely-designed guest rooms, suites, seven signature restaurants and award-winning spa. Customize your next meeting or conference at M Resort Spa Casino. Call 1.866.551.1540 to speak with a qualified professional from our sales team.
At Ameristar Casino Resort Spa, “we were able to have the media and the electronics we needed to support our meeting.”

Todd Holmes
Facilities Manager
Starbucks
Kirkwood, MO

The 47-story, 1,500-room hotel and convention center will be built along side a 38-acre lagoon, ringed by a mile-long boardwalk and white-sand beach. The development is replacing the golf course behind the Wynn Las Vegas and Encore. Design integrated with recreation is, as always, paramount for Wynn Resorts Ltd. began construction on its new Las Vegas Strip development, Paradise Park, in January 2018.

Throughout all MGM Resorts meeting and convention spaces in Las Vegas (except Circus Circus). The new system features increased high-density coverage and faster download speeds.

Wynn Resorts Ltd. began construction on its new Las Vegas Strip development, Paradise Park, in January 2018.

Wynn Resorts Ltd. began construction on its new Las Vegas Strip development, Paradise Park, in January 2018.

Northeast

Caesars Entertainment is not only conducting major guest room renovation projects in Las Vegas. In the home of the world-famous Boardwalk, Harrah’s Atlantic City completed a $30 million renovation of its 450-room Bayview Tower last summer. In addition, The Pool at Harrah’s/The Pool after Dark received a $2.6 million redesign and a new fitness center was introduced.

Major renovations have also been completed at the Tropicana Atlantic City. The $200 million project has refurbished all 21 meeting rooms in the Havana Tower (16,000-sf combined), 18,000-sf Ballroom and the 20,000-sf Grand Exhibition Center. The Tropicana also offers meeting planners newly refurbished and renovated guest rooms in the North, South and Havana hotel towers, new amenities and experiences such as AtlantiCare Life Center Fitness and Escape AC, and three new dining concepts by award-winning chef Jose Garces: Olón, Bar Olón and Okatshe. After the company acquired the adjacent boutique hotel, The Chelsea, last year, the property began the process of linking it to Tropicana’s operations as its fifth hotel tower, bringing its total guest room count to 2,369 and adding 5,600 square feet of kitchen space and culinary work areas.

Most of the M Resort’s restaurants feature outdoor dining on terraces that overlook the 100,000-sf pool and events piazza, as well as the Las Vegas Strip.

Northeast

Caesars Entertainment is not only conducting major guest room renovation projects in Las Vegas. In the home of the world-famous Boardwalk, Harrah’s Atlantic City completed a $30 million renovation of its 450-room Bayview Tower last summer. In addition, The Pool at Harrah’s/The Pool after Dark received a $2.6 million redesign and a new fitness center was introduced.

Major renovations have also been completed at the Tropicana Atlantic City. The $200 million project has refurbished all 21 meeting rooms in the Havana Tower (16,000-sf combined), 18,000-sf Ballroom and the 20,000-sf Grand Exhibition Center. The Tropicana also offers meeting planners newly refurbished and renovated guest rooms in the North, South and Havana hotel towers, new amenities and experiences such as AtlantiCare Life Center Fitness and Escape AC, and three new dining concepts by award-winning chef Jose Garces: Olón, Bar Olón and Okatshe. After the company acquired the adjacent boutique hotel, The Chelsea, last year, the property began the process of linking it to Tropicana’s operations as its fifth hotel tower, bringing its total guest room count to 2,369 and adding 5,600 square feet of kitchen space and culinary work areas.

Most of the M Resort’s restaurants feature outdoor dining on terraces that overlook the 100,000-sf pool and events piazza, as well as the Las Vegas Strip.
Pennsylvania’s gaming scene has been growing in recent times. The Sands Casino Resort Bethlehem opened in 2009, bringing a 150,000-sf casino to the state, complemented by the Sands Bethlehem Events Center, offering 12,000 sf of rentable space and an onsite AV and event team. For the last five years, King of Prussia has been home to a full-amenity gaming resort, Valley Forge Casino Resort. Guest rooms are divided into two towers: The 483-room Valley Forge Tower and the 154-room Casino Tower, which recently underwent a $6 million renovation. Since the property opened, renovations have been made to the Event Center and the 100,000 sf of function space, which includes five ballrooms. In addition, dining space has been converted into a classic steakhouse, Revolution Chop House, and the Valley Beach Poolside Club was created.

Southwest
Beau Rivage, located in Biloxi, Mississippi, has also recently completed a rooms renovation. Ninety-five of the property’s Jasmine, Cypress and Beau Chene Suites have been remodeled to better represent the Gulf Coast lifestyle. The materials palette includes the colors of driftwood and sand, and yellows and fuchsia pinks. The project has a collaboration between MGM Resorts Design & Development and the Beau Rivage Facilities team. The 1,740-room Beau Rivage offers groups 50,000 sf of function space, including the 17,000-sf Magnolia Ballroom; an 85,000-sf casino; a 1,550-seat theater; upscale retailers; the nearby Fallen Oak golf course; and a spa and tropical pool. During their free time, attendees can catch headliners such as Kansas, Kool & the Gang, Billy Idol and Fall Out Boy. The hotel offers 6,000 sf of meeting space, including seven dining rooms. In addition, dining space has been converted into a classic steakhouse, Revolution Chop House, and the Valley Beach Poolside Club was created.

Midwest
The Ameristar brand has made a name for itself in the Midwest via the Ameristar Casino Hotel Kansas City and the Ameristar Casino Resort Spa St. Charles. The Kansas City property is a AAA Three Diamond full-service hotel with 184 well-appointed rooms and the largest casino in the Kansas City area at 140,000 sf. Numerous amenities complement the hotels’ 15,000 sf of function space, including seven dining venues, live entertainment and even an 18-screen movie theater. Located just west of the Lambert-St. Louis International Airport, the Ameristar Casino Resort Spa St. Charles has a slightly smaller casino at 130,000 sf but a larger hotel at 400 guest rooms. The AAA Four Diamond properties houses a 4,000-sf Radisson Tower and a 20,000-sf conference center. Other highlights include an indoor-outdoor pool, a full-service luxury day spa, state-of-the-art fitness center and a pool deck featuring fountains, a firepit and Missouri River views.

A small group of Starbucks facilities managers gathered last year at the Ameristar Casino Resort Spa St. Charles for an annual regional kickoff meeting planned by Todd Holmes, Starbucks facilities manager. Holmes, who was personally familiar with the Ameristar brand prior to selecting the property, remarks that the “conference rooms were very comfortable; they were able to arrange it in a way that was conducive to our group. We were able to have the media and the electronics we needed to support our meeting. We had some people that dialed in from the far west and the far east, and so we were able to have the conference call option in the room. It worked out perfectly.”

One aspect of the event that did not go perfectly was a power outage throughout the hotel one evening. But the personalized planning assistance that Holmes had been receiving from Ashley Gaddy, senior executive sales manager with Ameristar, continued throughout that situation. “Through no fault of their own, the power was out for about 23 hours; 22nd–25th floors. Ashley called me and said, ‘We understand if anybody wants to go to a different hotel. We will have somebody go up and get their bags.’ And they really supported us during that time. We just hung out in the lobby, and when the power came on we all either went to the casino or up to rooms. But it made for a memorable story to tell when we get together again. We like to talk about it in a good way: how the company, and specifically Ashley, handled the situation for us. I can’t imagine anything she could have done to deliver better customer service, and she still stays in touch to this day. The next time I’m in charge of organizing (the meeting), we’ll stay there again.”

Upscale gaming hotels don’t leave the guest experience up to chance, and the long-term partnerships that companies like Cumberland Farms and Spectrum Technologies have established with such properties are testament to the remarkable customer service their attendees receive, year after year. With the growing variety in gaming resorts across the country, planners have more opportunities to create such partnerships.
A breach can be an aim to disrupt if the I are out to collect and use data for im and data collected and used for meet that hackers are often an elite group of memse personal gain. 

The hacking of Equifax, reported in March 2018 • The Risks Are Many, the solutions in the meetings industry, says Sean Donahoo, CEO of Disruptive Cybersecurity — Don’t Get Caught in the Phisher’s Net

The fact is, when you put a lot of people together in one place, all using their mobile devices and laptops, and all registered using personal data and/or accessing sensitive data for the meeting, it’s a scenario ripe for cyber infiltration. The Risks Are Many, the Criminals Clever

Sean Donahoo, CEO of Disruptive Solutions, which provides cybersecurity solutions in the meetings industry, says there are multiple possibilities. Registration kiosks and websites can be hacked in order to steal personal information. Hackers can “impersonate” or shut down conference Wi-Fi or disrupt audio-visual equipment. Cyber-savvy criminals can also set up cellphone intercept equipment, another way to gain access to personal information. And if embarrassing or disrupting a conference or corpora tion is the goal, criminals can do such things as exploiting a conference app and sending fake updates or other mes sages. All of these things, Donahoo says, have negative potential, from embar rassment, to harming reputations, to loss of sensitive data to causing major finan cial damage to companies or individuals. And then there’s the venue. Paige Schaffer, president and COO, Identity and Digital Protection Services Global Unit, at Generali Global Assistance, says, “Identity theft and fraud risks run ram pant at both convention centers and hotels, as well as unfortunately in most locations throughout the world. Ho tels may pose slightly more significant risks only because they are not usually

reserved exclusively for a given confer ence. In other words, many other people may be in the hotel outside of an event, which makes it a bit more difficult to en sure that only registered attendees enter a conference area.”

Additionally, she says, “most hotels have free, open Wi-Fi running in their lobby area 24/7, which opens up chan nels of attack for cybercriminals. Conven tion centers may be more limited in their Wi-Fi access requirements. Again, how ever, both hotels and convention centers pose cyberthreats, so organizers and att endees should ultimately not take any differences into account. Cyberattacks can occur, and identities can be stolen, anytime and anywhere.”

Phishing & Spearphishing

Schaffer notes that phishing of one kind or another is still the major cy berthreat at conferences and in many aspects of life in general. “In 2016, for example, more than 55 percent of the more than 1,000 data breaches reported in the U.S. were caused by spearphishing, according to the Identity Theft Resource Center. Spearphishing occurs when cybercriminals target employees who have access to sensitive data by sending them bogus emails that appear to come from a trusted source and that request confidential information. Spearphishing emails may also include links or attach ments that lead to malicious websites, or that install malware on an organization’s network,” she says.

Schaffer points out that cybercrimi nals often specifically target large events with their phishing campaigns because they can so easily obtain an attendee list, including contact information, which is all they require to get started. “Phishing emails are increasingly difficult to detect as criminals become ever more savvy, and any conference attendee that is duped by them may unknowingly hand over their sensitive data, whether that be personally identifiable information (PII), credit card information, corporate infor mation or even their organization for which they work, etc.”

While phishing may be the most com mon cybercrime tactic aimed at confer ences and their attendees, Schaffer says it’s by no means the only threat. “Attack ers can hack the physical scanners that are used to collect PII from attendees, set up bogus event websites that ask visitors to enter their sensitive informa tion and can even hack legitimate con ference websites, also for the purposes of collecting PII.”

Then there’s the non-digital arena, “low-tech” identity theft, which is also rampant at conferences. “Because the majority of attendees at a large event travel from out of town,” Schaffer notes, “they’re likely to carry sensitive documents and other materi als with them, especially at business-ori ented conferences, and therefore pick pockets and muggers often loiter near event venues. Attendees need to remain vigilant against these threats, but event organizers must also play their part by providing educational resources about all identity theft risks and best practices to protect against them.”

Consider the Vendors

In addition to all that, Schaffer says vendors at conferences also can pose a threat. “Vendors often collect payment information or other types of PII, and if they do not properly handle this data it can pose serious problems. To effectively combat this risk, conference organizers should ensure that any vendors collect ing payment information onsite are fully compliant with the Payment Card Indus try Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).”

Event organizers, Schaffer says, should be aware of how their organization can protect their own customers. “Questions to be asked include, do they have ade quate firewall protection in place? And, do they encrypt sensitive customer data? If a vendor does not engage in these practices normally, then they almost as surely would not do so at an event.”

But even that is not enough. Schaf fer says conference organizers should investigate whether a given vendor has suffered a data breach or been the victim of a cyberattack in the past. “Countless organizations experience breaches in today’s day and age, and in and of itself this is not necessarily a cause for major concern. Critically important, however, is a vendor’s response to a past breach. If an organization has experienced a breach and done little or nothing to rec tify damages, reimburse constituents or update their security systems, that ven dor should not be allowed to participate in a given event.”

Online Registration, Fake Websites & More

One staple of conferences these days, online registration, is another potential risk, though Donahoo says there are many variables that affect the different parties involved with a regis tration website. “Users,” Donahoo says, “should verify that they’re on the correct site before enter ing any information and should make sure there’s a secure connection before using the site. To do that, they should look for ‘https’ in front of the address and check for an indication on the browser bar that the site is secure, usually a lock icon with the word ‘secure.’”

Planners, for their part, have to vet registration providers first. “Planners should take the time to ask about their registra tion provider’s security practices, spe cifically how data is stored, retained and

Most of the technology used at a typical conference has been exploitable for years.

Sean Donahoo
CEO, Disruptive Solutions

...
sites may pose an issue, Schaffer notes, as the truth of course lies somewhere in the middle. However, it is quite evident that information directly to the criminals. “Like any other app, if it’s not secure it can affect more than just the app,” she says. “Planners won’t think twice about using mobile apps, digital badges, interactive education sessions dependent on mobile devices and ever-increasing bandwidth at venues so that more and more attendees can be online at the same time, to name but a few possible problem areas.

Fake Wi-Fi Networks
“Identity theft and fraud risks naturally increase in line with the number of users connected to a given Wi-Fi network,” Schaffer says. Especially with open, public Wi-Fi, which is extremely common at large events, savvy criminals can utilize the connection to easily steal sensitive information contained on other connected devices. Additionally, it’s common for malicious parties to set up fake, open Wi-Fi networks at events that appear legitimate, similar to their other connected devices. Additionally, the app should not be storing any personal information at all. As Donahoo notes, “It’s only a matter of time until conference organizers become another routine target. Conferences have the potential to bring all of the top industry professionals to one location. That’s going to peak someone’s interest.

“With the increase in the number of users connected to a given Wi-Fi network, event planners must also do their part, by ensuring that website and applications are secure, by developing products with security in mind from the beginning and by conducting security testing and evaluation,” Donahoo adds. Schaffer also points to the possibility of fake websites. “Online event registration can certainly pose risks, for two main reasons,” she says. “First, cybercriminals may set up a fake registration site, and given their growing sophistication, these can be quite convincing as legitimate pages. Anyone who clicked on and entered their data, likely including payment information, would be providing that information directly to the criminals.”

Apps & Badges
And what of conference apps and scannable badges? The first is a bit more complex. “Like any other app, if it’s not secure it can be exploited,” Donahoo says. “At a minimum, the app should not be storing or transmitting sensitive data in the clear. To mitigate potential problems, planners should ask the same security questions they would regarding their registration website. And again, planners should consider bringing in a security consultant to review the app and security documentation. Moreover, since many conference apps are ‘re-skinned,’ meaning the same app with a customized event look, if an app is not secure it can affect more than just one event.”

Donahoo points out that there are a number of secure data handling processes that planners can implement to better protect personal information, and they include both high- and low-tech solutions. “Encrypting emails that contain sensitive information is one effective, preventative measure as is utilizing technology that allows for the remote critical. Event staff should have their own separate network as they will have the greatest access to attendee PI. Limiting that information to one network significantly decreases the risk of identity fraud. As cybercriminals often set up phony event networks, conference organizers must make it sufficiently clear which networks are legitimate so that attendees can better avoid connecting to the wrong ones.”

Schaffer points out that there are several more considerations to consider before implementing scannable badges, Donahoo says, “there’s no easy right start. But, he notes, “cybersecurity consultants can go beyond that to such preventive measures as conducting and monitoring thorough events.”

Donahoo says planners should make use of the right tools and practices to get there. “Use a VPN (virtual private network), I strongly recommend IDVector (www.idvector.net). Utilize encryption, full disk and email. Use only strong, unique passwords. Remember that free Wi-Fi isn’t free. And use smart browsing and email habits, meaning don’t be ‘click happy.’”

“Spear phishing occurs when cybercriminals target employees who have access to sensitive data.”

Paige Schaffer
President and COO, Identity and Digital Protection Services Global Unit Generali Global Assistance, Bethesda, MD

It also may send a message to would-be cyber attackers that this group is not, in fact, an easy target.

Despite all of the identity theft and fraud risks that come with the territory of large events, Schaffer says the events must go on. “It’s critical that event organizers and attendees and anyone in any profession or situation is aware of the cyber risks that exist today, and that they take the right preventative measures to protect their information. We must all remain vigilant as threats continue to increase in severity,” she says. “However, at the same time we must all go on with our lives. We cannot let the fraudsters beat us through fear and intimidation. Countless events take place without any cybersecurity or identity theft issues.”
Catering to High Expectations

Food Trends & Tactics to Design Healthier Menus and Satisfy Divergent tastes

By Sophia Bennett

Providing a range of healthy, nourishing foods and beverages made from locally sourced ingredients is one of the biggest trends in the meeting industry. There are many good reasons for attendees’ shift in thinking when it comes to food choices. While healthy food is a priority for many people attending conferences and incentive trips, not everyone has made this shift. Plenty still come to meetings expecting to splurge on comfort food and eat dessert after every meal. How do you balance these two expectations?

It may be easier than you think. A lot of it is about striking a balance between healthy and less healthy food. “Every single meal we’re looking at — does it appeal to our mass audience?” Delaney says. “If there are cupcakes, have we balanced that with whole fruit for people? Are we taking into account dietary needs? Does every meal have a vegetarian protein and something that’s vegan? We try to appease people with having some comfort food while at the same time making sure that healthy options are always available.”

Serving really good food made with real ingredients also can go a long way toward satisfying everyone. “As corporate budgets decrease for large-scale events, companies are really focusing on high-quality catering options and using more locally grown food,” says Shane Terenzi, senior event producer for High Beam Events, an Austin, Texas-based company that focuses on corporate meetings, experiential and social events and destination management. “We are seeing so many huge companies and small companies wanting to incorporate local ingredients as much as possible. Caterers want to give back to their communities and that includes working with local farmers to get the ingredients they need and working with ranchers to get locally raised meats.”

One of the most important things to remember when designing healthy menus is not to buy into old stereotypes about healthy food being boring or not filling. “We’re constrained by any self-imposed limitations,” says Mike Schugt, president of Teneo Hospitality Group, a resort representation company in Orlando, Florida. “Attendees want healthy food, so give it to them and get very creative.”

Chefs and caterers want to contribute to their communities by working with local farmers, as well as provide clients with exceptional food and beverage options. When people are more informed about the benefits of eating probiotic foods, such as are natural sugars such as honey and agave. Fermented foods continue to be popular as more people learn about the benefits of eating probiotic food. Baron is also using more nuts and seeds in dishes. Delaney likes to allow people to build their own meals so they can choose exactly what goes into their food. As an example, she describes a lunch buffet that starts with simple salad greens. People can select their own protein, garnishes and dressing.
Companies are really focusing on high-quality catering options and using more locally grown food.

Shane Terenzi, Senior Event Producer
High Beam Events, Austin, TX

“I see a create-your-own parfait station with toppings, dairy and nondairy yogurt, granola, fresh fruit and other add-ons. Meals now are much heavier on vegetable options versus beef,” says Shane Terenzi, senior event producer with High Beam Events. So can edible flowers or edible insects. “I would definitely say the trend is to find more fun ways of bringing healthy food and beverage into events,” says Terenzi. One great way to do this is through eye-catching and entertaining displays. “Colors can add a lot,” says Jarrod Salaiz, senior event producer with High Beam Events. So can edible flowers or Instagram-worthy plating. “When you think about selling a client on healthy food, it can seem a little scary. But if it’s beautiful and tastes great, people will go crazy for it. It will bring people in no matter what the food is.”

Creating more attractive food displays can be as easy at putting vegetables and fruits on more interesting platters or containers, Salaiz says. Or it can be as involved as building an entire buffet around a clever theme and fun decorations. Work with your caterer and any event designers to create something no one has seen before (or everyone has been buzzing about on social media). No one will be able to resist digging in.

Stay Healthy at Breaks

Healthy food should carry over from meals into snack time. Serving healthy, high-protein items will give people more energy to participate in events throughout the day. “What people are snacking on and giving themselves is food that is going to make them feel good and give them more energy to participate in activities; eating preferences such as Paleo, Mediterranean, vegetarian or vegan; or religious limitations such as halal or kosher.”

Attendees can try some new spices or vegetarian foods and see how they like them.

Beautiful Presentations Will Wow Attendees

“I would definitely say the trend is to find more fun ways of bringing healthy food and beverage into events,” says Terenzi. One great way to do this is through eye-catching and entertaining displays. “Colors can add a lot,” says Jarrod Salaiz, senior event producer with High Beam Events. So can edible flowers or Instagram-worthy plating. “When you think about selling a client on healthy food, it can seem a little scary. But if it’s beautiful and tastes great, people will go crazy for it. It will bring people in no matter what the food is.”

Creating more attractive food displays can be as easy at putting vegetables and fruits on more interesting platters or containers, Salaiz says. Or it can be as involved as building an entire buffet around a clever theme and fun decorations. Work with your caterer and any event designers to create something no one has seen before (or everyone has been buzzing about on social media). No one will be able to resist digging in.

Stay Healthy at Breaks

Healthy food should carry over from meals into snack time. Serving healthy, high-protein items will give people more energy to participate in events throughout the day. “What people are snacking on and giving themselves is food that is going to make them feel good and give them more energy to participate in activities; eating preferences such as Paleo, Mediterranean, vegetarian or vegan; or religious limitations such as halal or kosher.”

Attendees can try some new spices or vegetarian foods and see how they like them.

Beautiful Presentations Will Wow Attendees

“I would definitely say the trend is to find more fun ways of bringing healthy food and beverage into events,” says Terenzi. One great way to do this is through eye-catching and entertaining displays. “Colors can add a lot,” says Jarrod Salaiz, senior event producer with High Beam Events. So can edible flowers or Instagram-worthy plating. “When you think about selling a client on healthy food, it can seem a little scary. But if it’s beautiful and tastes great, people will go crazy for it. It will bring people in no matter what the food is.”

Creating more attractive food displays can be as easy at putting vegetables and fruits on more interesting platters or containers, Salaiz says. Or it can be as involved as building an entire buffet around a clever theme and fun decorations. Work with your caterer and any event designers to create something no one has seen before (or everyone has been buzzing about on social media). No one will be able to resist digging in.

Stay Healthy at Breaks

Healthy food should carry over from meals into snack time. Serving healthy, high-protein items will give people more energy to participate in events throughout the day. “What people are snacking on and giving themselves is food that is going to make them feel good and give them more energy to participate in activities; eating preferences such as Paleo, Mediterranean, vegetarian or vegan; or religious limitations such as halal or kosher.”

Attendees can try some new spices or vegetarian foods and see how they like them.

Beautiful Presentations Will Wow Attendees

“I would definitely say the trend is to find more fun ways of bringing healthy food and beverage into events,” says Terenzi. One great way to do this is through eye-catching and entertaining displays. “Colors can add a lot,” says Jarrod Salaiz, senior event producer with High Beam Events. So can edible flowers or Instagram-worthy plating. “When you think about selling a client on healthy food, it can seem a little scary. But if it’s beautiful and tastes great, people will go crazy for it. It will bring people in no matter what the food is.”

Creating more attractive food displays can be as easy at putting vegetables and fruits on more interesting platters or containers, Salaiz says. Or it can be as involved as building an entire buffet around a clever theme and fun decorations. Work with your caterer and any event designers to create something no one has seen before (or everyone has been buzzing about on social media). No one will be able to resist digging in.

Stay Healthy at Breaks

Healthy food should carry over from meals into snack time. Serving healthy, high-protein items will give people more energy to participate in events throughout the day. “What people are snacking on and giving themselves is food that is going to make them feel good and give them more energy to participate in activities; eating preferences such as Paleo, Mediterranean, vegetarian or vegan; or religious limitations such as halal or kosher.”

Attendees can try some new spices or vegetarian foods and see how they like them.

Beautiful Presentations Will Wow Attendees

“I would definitely say the trend is to find more fun ways of bringing healthy food and beverage into events,” says Terenzi. One great way to do this is through eye-catching and entertaining displays. “Colors can add a lot,” says Jarrod Salaiz, senior event producer with High Beam Events. So can edible flowers or Instagram-worthy plating. “When you think about selling a client on healthy food, it can seem a little scary. But if it’s beautiful and tastes great, people will go crazy for it. It will bring people in no matter what the food is.”

Creating more attractive food displays can be as easy at putting vegetables and fruits on more interesting platters or containers, Salaiz says. Or it can be as involved as building an entire buffet around a clever theme and fun decorations. Work with your caterer and any event designers to create something no one has seen before (or everyone has been buzzing about on social media). No one will be able to resist digging in.

Stay Healthy at Breaks

Healthy food should carry over from meals into snack time. Serving healthy, high-protein items will give people more energy to participate in events throughout the day. “What people are snacking on and giving themselves is food that is going to make them feel good and give them more energy to participate in activities; eating preferences such as Paleo, Mediterranean, vegetarian or vegan; or religious limitations such as halal or kosher.”

Attendees can try some new spices or vegetarian foods and see how they like them.

Beautiful Presentations Will Wow Attendees

“I would definitely say the trend is to find more fun ways of bringing healthy food and beverage into events,” says Terenzi. One great way to do this is through eye-catching and entertaining displays. “Colors can add a lot,” says Jarrod Salaiz, senior event producer with High Beam Events. So can edible flowers or Instagram-worthy plating. “When you think about selling a client on healthy food, it can seem a little scary. But if it’s beautiful and tastes great, people will go crazy for it. It will bring people in no matter what the food is.”

Creating more attractive food displays can be as easy at putting vegetables and fruits on more interesting platters or containers, Salaiz says. Or it can be as involved as building an entire buffet around a clever theme and fun decorations. Work with your caterer and any event designers to create something no one has seen before (or everyone has been buzzing about on social media). No one will be able to resist digging in.

Stay Healthy at Breaks

Healthy food should carry over from meals into snack time. Serving healthy, high-protein items will give people more energy to participate in events throughout the day. “What people are snacking on and giving themselves is food that is going to make them feel good and give them more energy to participate in activities; eating preferences such as Paleo, Mediterranean, vegetarian or vegan; or religious limitations such as halal or kosher.”

Attendees can try some new spices or vegetarian foods and see how they like them.
adapted in banquet kitchens,” says Schugt. “Previously, you would have popcorn stations and ice cream stations. Now that’s been replaced with smoothie stations and many different and interesting presentations of coffees and expressos. Hotels have bars for breaks and meals to prep coffee drinks like lattes. Instead of having bags of chips, you’ll find Kind bars.”

“Corporations and groups are not going for the meat platters as much anymore,” Baron says. “They’re going for vegetable and fruit plates with dips.” For the latter, cooks can offer plenty of alternatives to ranch dressing. Try hummus plain, blended with white or fava beans instead of garbanzos, or combined with vegetables like beets or roasted peppers. Yogurt-based dips have less fat than their sour cream-heavy counterparts.

**Beyond Food: Healthy Beverages**

Health-conscious consumption doesn’t stop at the break table. Consumers are more concerned than ever about what they drink. And food providers are responding with flavorful choices meeting participants can enjoy all day.

“The No. 1 thing you’re seeing, because we’re always trying to hydrate attendees, is flavored water or spa water,” says Delaney. Baron backs this up. “We cut down coffee in the lobby and are doing infused water with citrus or fruit or berries,” he says. Water stations provide some interesting opportunities to meet other meeting goals. Salaiz points out that many consumers who are interested in eating better are also concerned about lowering their carbon footprint. A water station that allows them to continually refill a water bottle is more eco-friendly than utilizing several plastic water bottles.

In addition, he says, companies can set out their own branded reusable water bottles (or sponsored water bottles) that attendees can pick up. This provides an additional opportunity to share a marketing message or sell a sponsorship.

“Coconut water is becoming more available for meetings and events,” says Garcia. “Teas are back in popularity and offered all day.” Kombucha, a fermented tea that contains probiotics (and a tiny bit of alcohol) may also be popular with some attendees.

For people who still crave that cup of coffee, there’s a new option that’s being called a healthier choice: butter coffee. “This was a hit in Austin a few years ago,” says Salaiz. “Instead of adding sugar and cream to your coffee there’s a special butter with healthy fat that you can add.”

“Fresh pressed juices are always a big hit,” says Delaney. Fruit isn’t the only thing being juiced anymore; drinks that contain vegetables such as beets, carrots, spinach and kale are also quite popular. Juice is great for breakfasts or breaks, but it can also be used in mocktails, which are another healthy beverage trend. “People are serving less alcohol, but when they’re doing

“Don’t be constrained by any self-imposed limitations. Attendees want healthy food, so give it to them and get very creative.”

Mike Schugt, President
Teneo Hospitality Group, Orlando, FL

**C&IT**

"Don’t be constrained by any self-imposed limitations. Attendees want healthy food, so give it to them and get very creative."

Mike Schugt, President
Teneo Hospitality Group, Orlando, FL

**Beyond Food: Healthy Beverages**

Health-conscious consumption doesn’t stop at the break table. Consumers are more concerned than ever about what they drink. And food providers are responding with flavorful choices meeting participants can enjoy all day.

“The No. 1 thing you’re seeing, because we’re always trying to hydrate attendees, is flavored water or spa water,” says Delaney. Baron backs this up. “We cut down coffee in the lobby and are doing infused water with citrus or fruit or berries,” he says. Water stations provide some interesting opportunities to meet other meeting goals. Salaiz points out that many consumers who are interested in eating better are also concerned about lowering their carbon footprint. A water station that allows them to continually refill a water bottle is more eco-friendly than utilizing several plastic water bottles.

In addition, he says, companies can set out their own branded reusable water bottles (or sponsored water bottles) that attendees can pick up. This provides an additional opportunity to share a marketing message or sell a sponsorship.

“Coconut water is becoming more available for meetings and events,” says Garcia. “Teas are back in popularity and offered all day.” Kombucha, a fermented tea that contains probiotics (and a tiny bit of alcohol) may also be popular with some attendees.

For people who still crave that cup of coffee, there’s a new option that’s being called a healthier choice: butter coffee. “This was a hit in Austin a few years ago,” says Salaiz. “Instead of adding sugar and cream to your coffee there’s a special butter with healthy fat that you can add.”

“Fresh pressed juices are always a big hit,” says Delaney. Fruit isn’t the only thing being juiced anymore; drinks that contain vegetables such as beets, carrots, spinach and kale are also quite popular. Juice is great for breakfasts or breaks, but it can also be used in mocktails, which are another healthy beverage trend. “People are serving less alcohol, but when they’re doing

“Don’t be constrained by any self-imposed limitations. Attendees want healthy food, so give it to them and get very creative.”

Mike Schugt, President
Teneo Hospitality Group, Orlando, FL

**C&IT**

"Don’t be constrained by any self-imposed limitations. Attendees want healthy food, so give it to them and get very creative."

Mike Schugt, President
Teneo Hospitality Group, Orlando, FL

**Beyond Food: Healthy Beverages**

Health-conscious consumption doesn’t stop at the break table. Consumers are more concerned than ever about what they drink. And food providers are responding with flavorful choices meeting participants can enjoy all day.

“The No. 1 thing you’re seeing, because we’re always trying to hydrate attendees, is flavored water or spa water,” says Delaney. Baron backs this up. “We cut down coffee in the lobby and are doing infused water with citrus or fruit or berries,” he says. Water stations provide some interesting opportunities to meet other meeting goals. Salaiz points out that many consumers who are interested in eating better are also concerned about lowering their carbon footprint. A water station that allows them to continually refill a water bottle is more eco-friendly than utilizing several plastic water bottles.

In addition, he says, companies can set out their own branded reusable water bottles (or sponsored water bottles) that attendees can pick up. This provides an additional opportunity to share a marketing message or sell a sponsorship.

“Coconut water is becoming more available for meetings and events,” says Garcia. “Teas are back in popularity and offered all day.” Kombucha, a fermented tea that contains probiotics (and a tiny bit of alcohol) may also be popular with some attendees.

For people who still crave that cup of coffee, there’s a new option that’s being called a healthier choice: butter coffee. “This was a hit in Austin a few years ago,” says Salaiz. “Instead of adding sugar and cream to your coffee there’s a special butter with healthy fat that you can add.”

“Fresh pressed juices are always a big hit,” says Delaney. Fruit isn’t the only thing being juiced anymore; drinks that contain vegetables such as beets, carrots, spinach and kale are also quite popular. Juice is great for breakfasts or breaks, but it can also be used in mocktails, which are another healthy beverage trend. “People are serving less alcohol, but when they’re doing

“Don’t be constrained by any self-imposed limitations. Attendees want healthy food, so give it to them and get very creative.”

Mike Schugt, President
Teneo Hospitality Group, Orlando, FL

**C&IT**

"Don’t be constrained by any self-imposed limitations. Attendees want healthy food, so give it to them and get very creative."

Mike Schugt, President
Teneo Hospitality Group, Orlando, FL

**Beyond Food: Healthy Beverages**

Health-conscious consumption doesn’t stop at the break table. Consumers are more concerned than ever about what they drink. And food providers are responding with flavorful choices meeting participants can enjoy all day.

“The No. 1 thing you’re seeing, because we’re always trying to hydrate attendees, is flavored water or spa water,” says Delaney. Baron backs this up. “We cut down coffee in the lobby and are doing infused water with citrus or fruit or berries,” he says. Water stations provide some interesting opportunities to meet other meeting goals. Salaiz points out that many consumers who are interested in eating better are also concerned about lowering their carbon footprint. A water station that allows them to continually refill a water bottle is more eco-friendly than utilizing several plastic water bottles.

In addition, he says, companies can set out their own branded reusable water bottles (or sponsored water bottles) that attendees can pick up. This provides an additional opportunity to share a marketing message or sell a sponsorship.

“Coconut water is becoming more available for meetings and events,” says Garcia. “Teas are back in popularity and offered all day.” Kombucha, a fermented tea that contains probiotics (and a tiny bit of alcohol) may also be popular with some attendees.

For people who still crave that cup of coffee, there’s a new option that’s being called a healthier choice: butter coffee. “This was a hit in Austin a few years ago,” says Salaiz. “Instead of adding sugar and cream to your coffee there’s a special butter with healthy fat that you can add.”

“Fresh pressed juices are always a big hit,” says Delaney. Fruit isn’t the only thing being juiced anymore; drinks that contain vegetables such as beets, carrots, spinach and kale are also quite popular. Juice is great for breakfasts or breaks, but it can also be used in mocktails, which are another healthy beverage trend. “People are serving less alcohol, but when they’re doing

“Don’t be constrained by any self-imposed limitations. Attendees want healthy food, so give it to them and get very creative.”

Mike Schugt, President
Teneo Hospitality Group, Orlando, FL

**C&IT**

"Don’t be constrained by any self-imposed limitations. Attendees want healthy food, so give it to them and get very creative."

Mike Schugt, President
Teneo Hospitality Group, Orlando, FL

**Beyond Food: Healthy Beverages**

Health-conscious consumption doesn’t stop at the break table. Consumers are more concerned than ever about what they drink. And food providers are responding with flavorful choices meeting participants can enjoy all day.

“The No. 1 thing you’re seeing, because we’re always trying to hydrate attendees, is flavored water or spa water,” says Delaney. Baron backs this up. “We cut down coffee in the lobby and are doing infused water with citrus or fruit or berries,” he says. Water stations provide some interesting opportunities to meet other meeting goals. Salaiz points out that many consumers who are interested in eating better are also concerned about lowering their carbon footprint. A water station that allows them to continually refill a water bottle is more eco-friendly than utilizing several plastic water bottles.

In addition, he says, companies can set out their own branded reusable water bottles (or sponsored water bottles) that attendees can pick up. This provides an additional opportunity to share a marketing message or sell a sponsorship.

“Coconut water is becoming more available for meetings and events,” says Garcia. “Teas are back in popularity and offered all day.” Kombucha, a fermented tea that contains probiotics (and a tiny bit of alcohol) may also be popular with some attendees.

For people who still crave that cup of coffee, there’s a new option that’s being called a healthier choice: butter coffee. “This was a hit in Austin a few years ago,” says Salaiz. “Instead of adding sugar and cream to your coffee there’s a special butter with healthy fat that you can add.”

“Fresh pressed juices are always a big hit,” says Delaney. Fruit isn’t the only thing being juiced anymore; drinks that contain vegetables such as beets, carrots, spinach and kale are also quite popular. Juice is great for breakfasts or breaks, but it can also be used in mocktails, which are another healthy beverage trend. “People are serving less alcohol, but when they’re doing
SOME elements of site selection will never change. The primary consideration for planners has been and will continue to be choosing a site that meets the needs of their company or clients.

In many cases, however, multiple destinations and venues can offer what’s needed in lift, space, budget, quality, experience and so on. And, as times change, new elements and options may be added to the mix in terms of what destinations and companies put on the table. It’s up to planners to negotiate terms that will make it all work.

SITE Foundation’s 2018 SITE Index includes data on various aspects of site selection and evaluation, and among the findings are two important elements: a site that meets the needs of their company or clients.

“We are looking for things like connectivity, flexibility in working with groups,” said Alisa Peters, CMP, CMM, Sr. Global Account Manager, Experient, Cary, IL.

The details matter and the cracks will be uncovered. Finding them and addressing them in agreements is a must.”

The last top-three trend for Peters is Partners, Not Vendors. “Planners want to know that the ‘home’ they contract with will feel like home, with teams that become a part of their team throughout the planning. They don’t want to feel like they’re sitting across the table from a vendor. They want to feel like they’re sitting at the table with a partner (for a great meal, with interesting stories). Relationships matter,” she says. “Now more than ever.”

Scottsdale-based Maria Maddock, manager, global accounts, HelmsBriscoe, puts the top three trends today succinctly. “No. 1: Location is still most important. No. 2: Clients hate resort fees and feeling nickel-and-dimed. Value, she says, ‘is important.’ As for No. 3: ‘Clients want free Wi-Fi.’

Matthew Marcial, CMP, CAE, vice president, education and events at MPI, is on the front lines in terms of what meeting planners have to know and learn, including about site selection. He has oversight of MPI Academy, which provides not only the CMM program and courses that qualify for CMP clock hours, but also education for WEC, among other things. His top three trends are shorter booking windows, less short-term availability due to greater hotel and venue demand and glaciers, and a greater focus on venue technology capabilities.

What Has Changed?

“Topical is in a unique position to evaluate how educating planners about site selection has evolved in recent years. “I would say the fundamentals of site selection have not changed. The primary focus always has to start with understanding the stakeholder objectives, because that will drive the overall success for an event and those objectives impact every aspect of the site selection process,” he says.

“What has changed in recent years are elements like supply-and-demand and other economic factors that have an impact on a planner’s ability to negotiate the most favorable rates and concessions. There has been a greater focus on some of the big picture trends, including economic influences, that impact the site-selection process versus the more tactical and logistical elements you’d see on a planner’s site checklist.”

While he says the topic of site selection has evolved in recent years, he notes that, “Across the board we have seen greater interest in hearing changeable trends that can play a substantial role behind the scenes in the site-selection process.”

On the client side, Peters notes that as the makeup of audiences has changed, so, too, have selection criteria. “For more senior executives, where time is money, the quickest journey with the least potential for an interruption is king right now,” she says. “Finding markets that are affordable and don’t require a transfer in an airport is crucial. A flawless hotel experience, where reliable Wi-Fi is available, is a must. And flexibility onsite, with meeting space that can be adjusted with air walls based on last-minute content drivers, is key.”

She notes that the cancellation required for month-to-month availability have been explored, with unique experiences that can be captured on social media. “These clients want the new hidden gem. They know that millennials, who have been backpacking and transferring and traipsing through airports and train stations, are not afraid to switch planes. Planners are leveraging that and are no longer afraid of booking destinations that require a transfer. These clients want markets that haven’t been explored, with unique experiences that can be captured on social media. They want to make sure that the event is full of moments that allow for true relationship building and connections.”

Heather Connelly, CMP, incentive travel manager with Gordon Food Service in British Columbia, says one trend she’s seeing that’s different than past years is that hotels today may be going a bit overboard in trying to attract planners.

“I feel that some hotels are trying to make the visit more of a wow to really get your attention and stand out,” she says, “with things such as special welcome, personalized room gifts and hotel services offered to the planner and attendees.”

Maddock says one change she has seen is increased attendance. “Participation seems to be up as I regularly encounter rooms blocks being filled and requests for addendums to increase room block or find overflow hotels.”

Additionally, Maddock says corporations today want “unique team activities that provide an authentic sense of place” and also expect the experience, which she sees as a benefit to the meeting site.

“But the world is changing and being more competitive, I believe that we’ll be seeing venue upgrades in their terms in upgraded accommodations, technology capabilities and overall flexibility in working with groups.”

Incentives and Site Selection

“Business is booming, and with it, incentive events,” says Peters. “But at the same time, the world is growing ever smaller due to dramatic weather events, Zika and changes in the political climate. Findings underscore the values that truly incentivize attendees has become more of a challenge if you have a reasonable budget.”

She believes planners no longer can rely on the “appointment” or setting the date to be the incentive, and may have to be flexible in terms of seasons. “Compression on ‘safe’ markets, those free of weather con-
“Now, it’s a topic I always try to discuss with hotels during a site visit so I can understand what their procedures are when a situation arises. In the past, it was a question I didn’t ask until the pre-con meeting,” Connelly says.

Given recent mass shootings and bombings here and abroad, Peters says security is more important than ever and has broad impact on meetings. “Po- litical climates are ever-changing in our current environment. Keeping current on changing visa requirements and potential developments is a must now, and it’s a daily workload. That work doesn’t end when the contract is signed. Our company is constantly monitoring the globe for any major events, including earthquakes, weather-related ground stoppages or delays, fires, floods, hurricanes and other any crazy Mother Nature events. We’re also on the lookout for political unrest or security concerns so we can alert our clients the minute we know that we/may need to get out in front of something that hasn’t even hit the news yet.”

She says planners are now asking for emergency plans from hotels and convention centers, “and we’re building in the ability to access those into agree- ments. That’s something that we weren’t always doing 10 years ago.”

There are changes in terms of cyber security, “An attendee’s personal information, and how it’s handled by a hotel (and marketed to) is now a part of many of the contracts that I do,” Peters says. “Eu- ropean hotels were the first to address this in contracts, largely due to European Union laws, rules and regulations. But as U.S.-based hotels have had personal and credit card information concerns for many years, many corporations are outlining specific measures they want to ensure that hotels are handling attendees’ personal information accurately, confidentially and consideration.”

Moreover, Peters adds, “The term ‘se- curity’ transcends what you would tradi- tionally think of when you hear that word. Clients need to feel secure in knowing that regardless of their skin color, religion or sexual preference, they’re going to feel welcome in a destination and are not going to be subject to harassment or to overt or latent discrimination. And clients,” she adds, “are caring very much about making sure that 100 percent of their attendees are comfortable going to a destination. They want to make sure that all attendees felt included, at home and safe when they arrive.”

Marcial also believes planners must consider security in ways they didn’t prior to the pandemic. “Attendees are more conscious than ever about security concerns as they relate to their events, and they’re looking for greater insight into venues’ specific security plans,” he says. “Depending on the type of event being planned, organizers should look to their partners for security guidelines that can be communicated with their staff and at- tendees, if appropriate and in the event of an emergency.”

Maddock, however, says, “I don’t encounter security questions with my clients aside from them avoiding cer- tain destinations.”

No One Size Fits All

Marcial says that planners should always keep their group and stakeholder objectives at the core of the site-selection process. However, stakeholders don’t always want the same thing. When asked what corporate clients these days insist on or won’t compromise on related to sites and venues, the answers cover a range of elements.

Some are very specific: “Meeting room Wi-Fi charges seems to set off my clients,” Maddock says.

Connelly says flexibility with F&B is something her companies negotiate, and that impacts decisions on which hotels they will use. “Our guests work in food service so they’re passionate about food and wine, and their menu needs to fit being served and what brand plate it is being served on. We have to work with hotels that are willing to do something different,” she says.

For Peters’ clients, budget is key. “Now, more than ever, planners are measured either on attendance or on how they complied with their given budgets, and both hinge on the numbers. A meeting has to make financial sense and come in on budget. If it doesn’t, planners are risking their jobs in this current environ- ment,” she says.

In addition to being a big-picture item, budget is also about the details, and Pe- ters says her clients are noticing. “They’re sick of paying $8 for a soft drink and $150 for a gallon of coffee and aren’t buying into it. They want concession flexibility and creativity that helps them manage around some of the new and creative revenue sources hotels are using to in- crease their ADR.”

Peters says that staying on top of bud- get means having all the information. “Planners want to know the potential impact to their budget, from the cost of a gallon of coffee to the hidden unexpected creative fees that hotels may charge. I come up with down to the square inch on how much profit. Strategic sourc- ing truly is like firefighting now,” she adds. “Clients want to know that they have any and all contingencies in the budget and that they aren’t going to get hit out of left field with items that they (or we) never imagined. Half of my day is spent sourcing for contracts meetings, the other is pushing back on or trying to prevent attempts to impose unexpected fees in contracts before they get signed.”

What Planners Wish Clients/ Companies Better Understand About Site Selection

“It is not just about price, there are many factors to look at such as room amenities, hotel location, spa/pool onsite, number of restaurants, the ambiance/vibe of the hotel, what is within walking distance,” Connelly points out. “These all impact the se- lection. I have been to many hotels that on paper seemed to be the right hotel but when I got to the hotel it walked around or talked with the hotel salespeople I could tell it was just not right for our group.”

For Maddock, it’s about a better un- derstanding of third-party planners. “Using a third party is a complimentary service that will save clients time and money. It’s also in their best interest to use a third party that can advocate for them when they run into problems with the hotel. Our top priority is to set the client up for success.”

Peters’ take is looking at site se- lection as a two-way street. “The ho- tel or destination isn’t just selling to you. You must sell your meeting to them so that we can both see if multiple groups may be varying for the same dates,” she says — and you must be accurate. “You want to market your five- bedroom house as a two-bedroom house and expect to get the right price for your home. That’s essentially what you are doing when you by not disclosing your full F&B budget or don’t contract the proper amount of room nights or guarantee your shoulders accurately. It’s danger- ous to under- and over-estimate.”

For Maddock, it’s about a better un- derstanding of third-party planners. “Using a third party is a complimentary service that will save clients time and money. It’s also in their best interest to use a third party that can advocate for them when they run into problems with the hotel. Our top priority is to set the client up for success.”

For Maddock, it’s about a better un- derstanding of third-party planners. “Using a third party is a complimentary service that will save clients time and money. It’s also in their best interest to use a third party that can advocate for them when they run into problems with the hotel. Our top priority is to set the client up for success.”
Meeting with a view at Kimpton Amara Resort and Spa, Sedona, Arizona.

Destination Hot Spots

Desert Vistas, Mountain Ranges and Spectacular National Parks Make for Perfect Meetings Destinations

By Sophia Bennett

Meetings and incentive trips in the Southwest provide attendees with stunning scenery, great hospitality and outdoor adventure. Each state in the region has different characteristics and benefits. Arizona is an excellent destination for people seeking warm weather and great entertainment. New Mexico provides rich cultural experiences unlike any other place in the U.S. Oklahoma is a centrally located destination that provides plenty of amenities at an affordable price. Here’s our guide to what you need to know about some of the hottest spots in the Southwestern U.S.

Arizona

Phoenix

“Greater Phoenix is home to dozens of world-class resorts that offer golf, spa, tennis, horseback riding, motorcycle tours and just about anything you can imagine,” says Ronnie Collins, director of sales for Visit Phoenix. “For the groups looking for engaging activities, rappelling, off-road Segway tours, Tomcat desert tours, skeet shooting, glass-blowing classes and white-water excursions are just some of the few that Phoenix offers.”

Phoenix is a hub for both Southwest and American Airlines with flights from more than 80 domestic cities. The airport is only 10 minutes from downtown. The light-rail system can deliver visitors to the city center for a $3 fare.

Once visitors arrive, they’ll find the area easy to navigate and full of entertainment options. The downtown is highly walkable. Pedicabs and Grid Bikes, in addition to the light rail, serve people who need transportation between destinations.

The University of Arizona and Arizona State University both have a presence downtown. There are dozens of good places to eat, of which 95 percent are family-owned and operated. Planners looking for offsite venues can choose from multiple theaters, museums, science centers and sports facilities (Chase Field, home of the Diamondbacks, has a reception hall that can hold 600 people).

The Phoenix Convention Center has a 312,500-sf exhibit hall and reception capacity of 12,000. The Hyatt Regency Phoenix is adjacent to the convention center and has 695 guest rooms. The nearby Sheraton Grand Phoenix, Westin Phoenix Downtown, Palomar Phoenix Cityscape, Renaissance Phoenix Downtown and other downtown hotels offer more than 2,000 additional sleeping rooms. A new Hampton Inn & Suites will open in downtown in May.

Scottsdale

Sunny Scottsdale is located a stone’s throw from Phoenix and boasts many of the same amenities: warm weather, beautiful scenery and plentiful opportunities for recreation. It’s a great place for people interested in all kinds of outdoor adventures. There are 200 golf courses within driving distance. Attendees seeking a little bit of adventure can explore the wonders of the Sonoran Desert with a sunrise balloon flight, a night-vision Hummer tour or even a self-driven (literally) adventure in a Tomcat,” says Kelli Blubaum, CMP, vice president of sales and services at Experience Scottsdale.

Accommodations in Scottsdale are plentiful, and range from luxurious spas to state-of-the-art hotels. Hotel Adeline, a new property with nearly 10,000 sf of event space and 213 guest rooms, opened last fall. The JW Marriott Camelback Inn is constructing its own state-of-the-art conference center that will bring the resort’s meeting facilities to 55,000 sf. Royal Palms Resort and Spa is upgrading all 119 guest rooms as well as its event and outdoor spaces. The Phoenician is currently building an athletic club that will include tennis and basketball courts, a fitness center, activity center, and dining and shopping options.

Last year Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain Resort and Spa finished a $2 million renovation of its casitas (apartments) and suites. The rooms were updated with modern and luxurious furnishings and decorations. The resort has also added the Spa House, a 3,500-sf home designed to pamper groups of up to 16. These guest rooms provide luxurious accommodations for groups who visit the resort for meetings. The resort has a 3,200-sf ballroom that can host up to 250 people with theater seating or for a stand-up reception (or can be broken down into five smaller spaces). There are also two small boardrooms. To make the most of Arizona’s beautiful weather, groups can plan outdoor events on one of several patios, lawns or other outdoor spaces.

Maribeth Nash, trade show and event planning associate for Origami Risk, a risk management software company headquartered in Chicago, chose the Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia for her company’s annual colleague conference, bringing in 15 of the company’s onsite and remote workers together for a three-day planning and relationship-building event.

“We do the event in the first quarter, so we’re looking for somewhere warm,” says Nash. Once she’d narrowed her choice of cities to Scottsdale, she picked the Omni at Montelucia for its quality, amenities and price. “The Montelucia has that destination feel. You felt like you were at a resort somewhere exotic. My goal is always to make our colleagues feel like they’re on a rewarding trip.”

The event began with a welcome reception on a terrace overlooking Camelback Mountain. Monday and Tuesday morning were dedicated to meetings. On Tuesday afternoon, 115 attendees were treated to a half-day rafting trip organized by Camelback Adventures. Buses drove guests to the Salt River, where they piled into rafts and floated over rocks and gentle rapids. Afterward they had dinner under the desert sky while a band played. The gathering concluded with a half-day of meetings on Wednesday.

Nash was pregnant and unable to fly to last year’s colleague conference. Because of that, “I had to really make sure the staff... was going to be amazing because I wasn’t going to be there. I needed to trust them, and I needed them to be proactive. If something was wrong, I needed them to not wait for someone to tell them but work to fix it. My executive
Panoramic view of Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort & Spa (above) and intimate meeting space in the Jade Bar (right).

Arizona’s highest point, making it a destination for ski and snowboarding enthusiasts. Flagstaff has more of an atmosphere than people are used to seeing. Flagstaff offers accommodations to suit various needs and preferences,” says Meg Roedder, communications specialist for the Flagstaff Convention and Visitors Bureau. “With spacious rooms and attentive service, Flagstaff offers a warm and welcoming place for several shows sponsored by Ben E. Keith Co., a food and alcohol beverage distribution company. “I'd done convention centers and exhibit halls, and the issue with them is they're pretty cold — both in temperature and feeling — because you're dealing with a giant warehouse space,” says Kim Snitker, the company’s marketing and design manager. “We decided to go with Isleta because it's a much warmer atmosphere.”

Ben E. Keith’s main food show kicks off each March with a party for vendors and customers. “We showcase products that will be at the food show but in a more casual atmosphere with music, dancing,” Snitker says. For the next two days, attendees can check out booths with food vendors, equipment, and paper and cleaning products. The event draws about 120 vendors and 400 customers.

“The location is perfect because it's close to the airport and has great views,” Snitker says. “A lot of the appeal to coming to New Mexico is the increased air service at our airports. You can see the mountains and the volcanoes. They have the ballroom situated so it's perfect for sunsets, which can be pretty spectacular. It's near the highway but set back far enough that you don't feel like you're right on the highway.”

One of the things that's kept Snitker coming back to Isleta is that they showcase local products. “Since it's part of the Isleta Pueblo, they featured all Isleta artists,” she says. “Everything has a story behind it and is connected to the space. They're also really good about featuring local beers and food, like green chile and fry bread and things people can't get even if they're coming from southern Colorado.”

Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, a luxury resort located on the Santa Ana Pueblo, recently completed a multi-site gathering. The Albuquerque airport is less than a 10-minute drive, and the city just opened a rapid transit system with the nation’s first fleet of electric buses. It will make 19 stops along a nine-mile corridor within the city. People staying downtown will find it highly walkable. Remind meeting-goers that they can get their kicks along Route 66, which runs through a portion of the city.

Isleta Resort and Casino on the outskirts of Albuquerque has provided a warm and welcoming place for several shows sponsored by Ben E. Keith Co., a food and alcohol beverage distribution company. “I’d done convention centers and exhibit halls, and the issue with them is they’re pretty cold — both in temperature and feeling — because you’re dealing with a giant warehouse space,” says Kim Snitker, the company’s marketing and design manager. “We decided to go with Isleta because it’s a much warmer atmosphere.”

Ben E. Keith’s main food show kicks off each March with a party for vendors and customers. “We showcase products that will be at the food show but in a more casual atmosphere with music, dancing,” Snitker says. For the next two days, attendees can check out booths with food vendors, equipment, and paper and cleaning products. The event draws about 120 vendors and 400 customers.

“The location is perfect because it’s close to the airport and has great views,” Snitker says. “A lot of the appeal to coming to New Mexico is the increased air service at our airports. You can see the mountains and the volcanoes. They have the ballroom situated so it’s perfect for sunsets, which can be pretty spectacular. It’s near the highway but set back far enough that you don’t feel like you’re right on the highway.”

One of the things that’s kept Snitker coming back to Isleta is that they showcase local products. “Since it’s part of the Isleta Pueblo, they featured all Isleta artists,” she says. “Everything has a story behind it and is connected to the space. They’re also really good about featuring local beers and food, like green chile and fry bread and things people can’t get even if they’re coming from southern Colorado.”

Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, a luxury resort located on the Santa Ana Pueblo, recently completed a multi-site gathering. The Albuquerque airport is less than a 10-minute drive, and the city just opened a rapid transit system with the nation’s first fleet of electric buses. It will make 19 stops along a nine-mile corridor within the city. People staying downtown will find it highly walkable. Remind meeting-goers that they can get their kicks along Route 66, which runs through a portion of the city.

Isleta Resort and Casino on the outskirts of Albuquerque has provided a warm and welcoming place for several shows sponsored by Ben E. Keith Co., a food and alcohol beverage distribution company. “I’d done convention centers and exhibit halls, and the issue with them is they’re pretty cold — both in temperature and feeling — because you’re dealing with a giant warehouse space,” says Kim Snitker, the company’s marketing and design manager. “We decided to go with Isleta because it’s a much warmer atmosphere.”

Ben E. Keith’s main food show kicks off each March with a party for vendors and customers. “We showcase products that will be at the food show but in a more casual atmosphere with music, dancing,” Snitker says. For the next two days, attendees can check out booths with food vendors, equipment, and paper and cleaning products. The event draws about 120 vendors and 400 customers.

“The location is perfect because it’s close to the airport and has great views,” Snitker says. “A lot of the appeal to coming to New Mexico is the increased air service at our airports. You can see the mountains and the volcanoes. They have the ballroom situated so it’s perfect for sunsets, which can be pretty spectacular. It’s near the highway but set back far enough that you don’t feel like you’re right on the highway.”

One of the things that’s kept Snitker coming back to Isleta is that they showcase local products. “Since it’s part of the Isleta Pueblo, they featured all Isleta artists,” she says. “Everything has a story behind it and is connected to the space. They’re also really good about featuring local beers and food, like green chile and fry bread and things people can’t get even if they’re coming from southern Colorado.”

Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, a luxury resort located on the Santa Ana Pueblo, recently completed a multi-site gathering. The Albuquerque airport is less than a 10-minute drive, and the city just opened a rapid transit system with the nation’s first fleet of electric buses. It will make 19 stops along a nine-mile corridor within the city. People staying downtown will find it highly walkable. Remind meeting-goers that they can get their kicks along Route 66, which runs through a portion of the city.

Isleta Resort and Casino on the outskirts of Albuquerque has provided a warm and welcoming place for several shows sponsored by Ben E. Keith Co., a food and alcohol beverage distribution company. “I’d done convention centers and exhibit halls, and the issue with them is they’re pretty cold — both in temperature and feeling — because you’re dealing with a giant warehouse space,” says Kim Snitker, the company’s marketing and design manager. “We decided to go with Isleta because it’s a much warmer atmosphere.”

Ben E. Keith’s main food show kicks off each March with a party for vendors and customers. “We showcase products that will be at the food show but in a more casual atmosphere with music, dancing,” Snitker says. For the next two days, attendees can check out booths with food vendors, equipment, and paper and cleaning products. The event draws about 120 vendors and 400 customers.

“The location is perfect because it’s close to the airport and has great views,” Snitker says. “A lot of the appeal to coming to New Mexico is the increased air service at our airports. You can see the mountains and the volcanoes. They have the ballroom situated so it’s perfect for sunsets, which can be pretty

Panoramic view of Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort & Spa (above) and intimate meeting space in the Jade Bar (right).
Twin Warriors Golf Club and restorative treatments at the 29,000 sf of indoor and 25,000 sf of outdoor meeting space. Several unique and exciting activities for groups including its award-winning Tamaya Mist Spa. Hyatt Regency Tamaya also offers excursions including hot-air balloon rides which take off from the resort’s onsite launch pad, hiking and biking trails, rafting and jexcursions, fine dining at the Corn Maiden restaurant and much more. Santa Fe Culture, history, art and cuisine combine to make Santa Fe a destination unlike any other. That authenticity is just part of the appeal of meeting in the state capital. “Santa Fe is a very affordable city,” says David Carr, director of sales for Tourism Santa Fe. There are more than 2,000 hotel rooms within walking distance of the convention center, and most are reasonably priced. The city has its own airport and the Albuquerque airport is only an hour away. The downtown is small enough that it’s walkable, and planners can contract transportation for any out-of-the-way events. The city’s high elevation means it’s more temperate than other places in the region. “A lot of people, when they think Southwest, they think Arizona, but we are not Phoenix,” says Mauer. “We do not get to 100 degrees. It gets really cool at night when the sun goes down.” Summertime temperatures average in the mid-80s with no humidity. Snow is possible in the winter. In addition to the convention center, downtown Santa Fe has over a dozen hotels with meeting space. The Eldorado Hotel and Spa, which can accommodate groups of up to 700, and La Fonda on the Plaza, which can hold up to 600 people, are among the largest. When it comes to offsite events, there are numerous good options. The four museums on Museum Hill can host large groups inside and out. The Santa Fe School of Cooking can teach participants to make mole, green chile sauce, tortillas and other Southwestern foods. “For people who are more adventurous, there’s Bandelier and Puye Cliffs, where you can hike through ruins,” Carr says. Oklahoma Oklahoma City There are plenty of reasons to say “OK” to Oklahoma City as you consider future meeting or incentive trip destinations. The community is an affordable destination and has lots to offer in terms of meeting space, transportation, food and entertainment. Oklahoma City is in the process of building a brand new convention center. The facility will have 200,000 sf of exhibit space and 125,000 sf of additional meeting space, all built to LEED standards. The space is expected to open in 2020. A 600-room Omni hotel will be attached. Across the street will be a 70-acre park that connects the convention center to the Oklahoma River. Oklahoma City is divided into districts. Bricktown is the entertainment district and is home to a number of the city’s great restaurants. The Asian District is home to one of the country’s largest populations of Vietnamese immigrants and is also a hot foodie destination. Within the Boathouse neighborhood is Riversport Rapids, one of only six indoor white-water facilities in the country. “You can bring any size group you want and spend an afternoon on the white water,” says Dennis Johnston, CDME, vice president of sales for the Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau. “In addition, you can do paddle sports like canoeing, kayaking or racing in dragon boats.” Current meeting spaces include the Cox Convention Center and adjoining Renaissance Oklahoma City Convention Center Hotel, Embassy Suites by Hilton and Sheraton Downtown Oklahoma City. New as of last year were an AC Hotel, Hyatt Place and Hilton Garden Inn Edmond/Oklahoma City North. Jasco Products Company, which designs and develops home and mobility products, is based in Oklahoma City and regularly hosts meetings, receptions and dinners at the 21c Museum Hotel. The boutique property is housed in a former Ford Motor Company manufacturing plant, which gives it some real character. Marketing coordinator Kearsten Howland has high praise for the hotel. “It’s always been the best place for having a great atmosphere and accommodations right in the heart of Oklahoma City,” she says. “There’s so much new happening downtown, and the 21c is really close to everything. That location also has really competitive pricing and a great staff to work with.” The event and sales folks always offer feedback and suggestions designed to make Jasco’s events even more successful. They’re extremely accommodating and work hard to make sure guests have everything they need. “There was a time we were hosting an event on the rooftop, and we were worried about the cold front coming in that evening because our event was supposed to be outdoors,” Howland says. “When this was discussed with the staff, they orchestrated the purchase of some heaters and installed them, so that really saved the day.” At a different event an executive mentioned that he was missing a game with his favorite sports team. “The staff brought a television up to the rooftop and connected it and rearranged the room so the group could watch that game while dinner was being served,” Howland says. Arizona and the Southwest offers something for every planner: desert vistas, luxury accommodations, mountain ranges, rich culture and spectacular national parks. &MT

Credits: Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort and Spa

Reawaken your group

Discover the luxury of Meetings Made Affordable

•Save 30% off peak-season room rates
•Save 15% off your group’s food & beverage
•$10 off select 60-minute spa services

Meetings Made Affordable

844.767.7044 | SanctuaryAZ.com | Scottsdale, AZ

Sanctuary

Landing & Mountain

Resort and spa

Sanctuary

Landing & Mountain

Resort and spa

*Offer available May 29-August 31, 2018 for groups of 20 or more rooms nightly &30 off select spa services, Sunday-Thursday.

*Offer available May 29-August 31, 2018 for groups of 20 or more rooms nightly &30 off select spa services, Sunday-Thursday. Convert image to text.
Irm and Maria tore across the Caribbean in September and October of 2017. The damage to some islands was catastrophic, with full recovery still many months away. Other islands were completely untouched by the hurricanes. For them, bright sun and tranquil blue seas bring business as usual. And for a few islands, it’s a mix.

What stands out most in the aftermath of Irma and Maria is the resilience and heart of the people of the Caribbean. The stories told over and over about the hurricanes are of hotel workers staying in the hotels without water, power and little food to help the guests stranded there — even while their own homes were destroyed. The stories emerging now about the rebuilding of resorts, hotels, airports, cruise ports and other venues are how the people of these islands manage to see this as a gift, a chance to upgrade and improve, in order to better serve the visitors to come.

Tourism, including groups and conferences, is the lifeblood of this region and the truth is there is no reason to cancel many of the 2018 programs already booked. Much of the region is up and running. Even Puerto Rico, which suffered unimaginable devastation from Maria, has already welcomed its first conference of 2018.

True, not every hotel has reopened. But they will. The Caribbean is ready to welcome planners, to show them how things have already improved and how things will be even better in the months to come. Here are a few islands to consider.

**Aruba**

Well below the region’s traditional hurricane belt, Aruba had no physical impact from Maria or Irma. Planners

All is well on Aruba, where the Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino boasts beautiful island event setups on the expansive beach.
Kimberly Findlay, senior account manager with SDI Meetings & Incentives, brought a group of 110 from the Northeast United States to Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino in April 2017 for a premium incentive program. She mentioned the quality airlift, nightlife, beaches and food as top reasons for choosing Aruba.

“Aruba is friendly, Dutch, and has great food and drinking water,” she says. “There are big, beautiful beaches and the palapas (thatched-roof tiki huts) are a big hit.”

In addition to functions at the hotel, the group also experienced dine-arounds and traveled on the island’s amusingly distinctive Kukoo Kunuku buses. She calls it all “exceptional!”

The resort gets excellent marks from Findlay for both price and location, but she also notes that it offers an abundance of ocean-view rooms, ideal for incentive participants. She really liked the “complimentary white-washed, family-style tables” they used and adds that, “The sushi bar and Starbucks tables” they used and adds that, “The sushi bar and Starbucks

Kimberly Findlay, Senior Account Manager
SDI Meetings & Incentives, Chicago, IL

Barbados

Sandy Lane in Barbados falls into the legendary category and has long upheld its reputation for quality, exclusivity and service, making it an ideal destination for incentives. Gai A. Spann, founder and “travel artist” at SPANning the Globe Tours, Atlanta, GA, has high praise for the property and the island.

“For incentive groups, a unique, luxury destination is desirable. Barbados provides an upscale Caribbean experience and boutique luxury accommodations. The island has an excellent culinary reputation, amazing natural beauty and options for activities.”

Barbados has an advanced development, high amenity value and the island’s security make Barbados a leading choice for the North American market,” he says.

The staff, food and service were personalized and extraordinary.”

Sandy Lane’s attributes include, “the level of service, quality and location,” though Spann notes that planners should not be surprised that “everything is a la carte.”

She points out that most of the hotels on Barbados are small to medium size, so there’s rarely an issue with distance from guest rooms to meeting space. Shipping, however, can be an issue and Spann encourages planners to “make sure you send items ahead of time with enough time to clear customs.”

She has two other recommendations. “For catering, it’s good to include local cuisine in the offerings,” she says. “And definitely use a local DMC and start early in your planning cycle.”

A. Spann, founder and “travel artist” at SPANning the Globe Tours, Atlanta, GA, has high praise for the property and the island.

“Barbados provides an upscale Caribbean experience and boutique luxury accommodations. The island has an excellent culinary reputation, amazing natural beauty and options for activities.”

Gai A. Spann, Founder & Travel Artist
SPANning the Globe Tours, Atlanta, GA

Sandy Lane wants meeting planners and their groups to know that Barbados has even more to offer. “Barbados represents the best in authentic Caribbean charm, expertly blended with state-of-the-art conference facilities and an ever intriguing repertoire of attractions and events. This unique combination of a timeless je ne sais quoi, the warmth of its people, advanced development, high amenity value and the island’s security make Barbados a leading choice for the North American market,” he says.

The island is friendly, Dutch, and has great food and drinking water,” she says. “There are big, beautiful beaches and the palapas (thatched-roof tiki huts) are a big hit.”

In addition to functions at the hotel, the group also experienced dine-arounds and traveled on the island’s amusingly distinctive Kukoo Kunuku buses. She calls it all “exceptional!”

The resort gets excellent marks from Findlay for both price and location, but she also notes that it offers an abundance of ocean-view rooms, ideal for incentive participants. She really liked the “complimentary white-washed, family-style tables” they used and adds that, “The sushi bar and Starbucks tables” they used and adds that, “The sushi bar and Starbucks

Kimberly Findlay, Senior Account Manager
SDI Meetings & Incentives, Chicago, IL

Barbados has an advanced development, high amenity value and the island’s security make Barbados a leading choice for the North American market,” he says.

The staff, food and service were personalized and extraordinary.”

Sandy Lane’s attributes include, “the level of service, quality and location,” though Spann notes that planners should not be surprised that “everything is a la carte.”

She points out that most of the hotels on Barbados are small to medium size, so there’s rarely an issue with distance from guest rooms to meeting space. Shipping, however, can be an issue and Spann encourages planners to “make sure you send items ahead of time with enough time to clear customs.”

She has two other recommendations. “For catering, it’s good to include local cuisine in the offerings,” she says. “And definitely use a local DMC and start early in your planning cycle.”

A. Spann, founder and “travel artist” at SPANning the Globe Tours, Atlanta, GA, has high praise for the property and the island.

“Barbados provides an upscale Caribbean experience and boutique luxury accommodations. The island has an excellent culinary reputation, amazing natural beauty and options for activities.”

Gai A. Spann, Founder & Travel Artist
SPANning the Globe Tours, Atlanta, GA

Sandy Lane wants meeting planners and their groups to know that Barbados has even more to offer. “Barbados represents the best in authentic Caribbean charm, expertly blended with state-of-the-art conference facilities and an ever intriguing repertoire of attractions and events. This unique combination of a timeless je ne sais quoi, the warmth of its people, advanced development, high amenity value and the island’s security make Barbados a leading choice for the North American market,” he says.

The island is friendly, Dutch, and has great food and drinking water,” she says. “There are big, beautiful beaches and the palapas (thatched-roof tiki huts) are a big hit.”

In addition to functions at the hotel, the group also experienced dine-arounds and traveled on the island’s amusingly distinctive Kukoo Kunuku buses. She calls it all “exceptional!”

The resort gets excellent marks from Findlay for both price and location, but she also notes that it offers an abundance of ocean-view rooms, ideal for incentive participants. She really liked the “complimentary white-washed, family-style tables” they used and adds that, “The sushi bar and Starbucks tables” they used and adds that, “The sushi bar and Starbucks tables” they used and adds that, “The sushi bar and Starbucks
He points out that Barbados is well connected in terms of airlift with direct flights from across the United States and Canada. “Once you get here, the quality mix of leading global brands and local incentives provide a range of options from the luxurious to the more traditional. The island,” he adds, “expertly blends modern amenities with an authentic Bajan experience.”

Just as important, Alleyne says the government is very supportive to the meetings industry. “There are duty waiver programs for incentives as well as other concessions.”

“Puerto Rico literally has something for everyone — sun, fun, adventure, culture, history, amazing gastronomical experiences.”

Christopher de Medeiros, Account Manager, Destination Puerto Rico, San Juan, PR

Blu Isles curates a range of diverse, culturally rich and fun experiences for groups, from culinary excursions to breakfasts with George Washington (sort of) who once visited Barbados with George Washington (sort of) who once visited Barbados to extravaganzas in the island’s evocative caves and more. “We know the state-of-the-art facilities, the legal and economic concessionary infrastructure, financial planning, and the range of support services needed to flawlessly execute your conference. Details matter,” Alleyne says. “Leave them to us.”

Puerto Rico

Images of Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Maria were heartbreaking, and the road back has been challenging. But it has not broken the spirit of the island, and it’s important to note that parts of Puerto Rico are already welcoming visitors. “Puerto Rico is open for business and ready to receive groups and conventions,” says Alma Pedrosa, CDME, acting CEO of Meet Puerto Rico. “Most of our hotels and tourist attractions are available to welcome group delegations, as our international airport and port, as well as other attractions, have been operating normally for a few months.”

Pedrosa notes that some hotels are still undergoing renovation, and will eventually open with something new to offer visitors, but emphasizes that major conventions are already returning. The first of 2018 was the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association Marketplace at the end of January. “In March, we will welcome the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN); and, we are proud to report that many of our clients have rebooked their business for 2018 and beyond,” she says.

“Puerto Rico literally has something for everyone — sun, fun, adventure, culture, history, amazing gastronomical experiences — all amid the true gem of the island, its happy and hospitable people. We are a territory of the U.S., use U.S. currency and no passport is required. "Our hotels and businesses are all open and ready to welcome visitors,” says Prime Minister Allen Chastanet. JetBlue currently has nonstop flights to the island from New York’s John F. Kennedy International Airport, and a handful of other carriers offer connections through Miami.

St. Kitts

In November, Hyatt announced the opening of the first Park Hyatt hotel in the Caribbean. Park Hyatt St. Kitts Christopher Harbour debuts with 78 rooms, 48 suites, three restaurants, a Miraval Life in Balance Spa and outdoor and outdoor private event spaces ideal for incentive groups. The resort has a deep focus on wellness and a commitment to local experiences.

St. Maarten/St. Martin

The dual Dutch/French island suffered significant damage but recovery is well underway. As of October 10, 2017, the Princess Juliana International Airport has reopened. Although the main terminal is not scheduled to open until some time in 2018, American Airlines and other carriers have already resumed flights to the island. The Dr. A.C. Wathey cruise terminal is also now reopened and the first cruise ships began to arrive in December. Unfortunately, The Westin Dawn Beach Resort & Spa, St. Maarten, is still closed and has no current opening date. Riu Palace St. Martin, formerly the Raddison Blu, may reopen as early as April 2018.

Trinidad & Tobago

The tourism authorities for Trinidad and Tobago want meeting planners and others to know that these two islands sit below the hurricane belt and are fully able to welcome groups. But there has been a change in how the islands will be marketed in the future. In January, the islands’ minister of tourism, Shamfa Cudjoe, announced the launch of a new newsletter, "The Meeting Magazine," a publication for corporate travelers.

Credit: Wyndham Grand Rio Mar Puerto Rico Golf & Beach Resort

The River Course at Wyndham Grand Rio Mar Puerto Rico Golf & Beach Resort — the resort reopened March after an extensive renovation.
Things Tourism, to serve as the new source of news related to tourism and development on Trinidad and Tobago. The former Tourism Development Company Limited has also been split into two new entities to market and promote the islands: Tobago Tourism Agency and Tourism Trinidad Limited, both new resources for planners and their groups.

Among the properties to consider: The 423-room Hyatt Regency Trinidad. In November, the property completed an extensive upgrade that included guest rooms, lobby, spa, dining venues and its 43,000 sf of flexible meeting and event space. Guest rooms feature useful workspace and multifunction areas. The overall design enhances the hotel’s connection to Trinidad and the local community of artists.

**The Bahamas**

Paradise Island and New Providence Island escaped damage from 2017’s hurricanes. The good news is that there are still deals to be had in part because of the perception that the entire region was affected, and in part because Baha Mar resort is new, having finally opened with two of its three hotels after long construction and legal delays.

The expansive Baha Mar resort’s first phase debuted last spring with the opening of the Grand Hyatt Baha Mar, which opened last spring.

Grand Hyatt Baha Mar’s two towers house 1,800 guest rooms and 230 suites featuring views of the beach, golf course, resort pools and fountain shows. 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.

On Paradise Island, Atlantis continues to evolve, refresh and reinvent itself. The resort suffered no significant damage during the 2017 hurricane season. The Coral, one of the resort’s five distinct properties, was reopened in 2017 after a $20 million transformation. Resort-wide, Atlantis has put a renewed focus on programs that connect guests to Bahamian culture — such as the weekly Junkanoo Bahamian Festival & Feast and Art Walk in the new Marina Village that showcases the work of local artists and designers. Atlantis also announced the opening of five new outposts of popular Bahamian restaurants featuring fresh ingredients from local farmers and fishermen. The resort offers more than 500,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting and event space including the Atlantis Conference Center, with two ballrooms at 50,000 sf and 25,000 sf.

In December, Atlantis announced a new program that elevates the already ultra-luxury offered at The Cove, another of the Atlantis properties. It includes guests’ arrival via luxury, private wheeled or seaplane flights from Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and the Miami Seaplane Base. No traipsing through crowded airports. This service includes private departure lounges and private SUV pickup in the Bahamas, followed by VIP check-in service at The Cove, all perfect for incentive programs.

Finally, the resort has a menu of new experiences at Dolphin Cay, including paddleboarding, kayaking, and snorkeling — often in the company of the resort’s resident bottlenose dolphins. More programs are in the works, some appropriate for small groups.

The Caribbean and Bahamas remain a viable and important destination for North American groups, even as recovery moves forward. Planners have every reason to look toward these hospitable islands for 2018 bookings and beyond.

---

**Group Bridge Suite Offer Terms and Conditions**

Book a new group at Atlantis, Paradise Island, with a minimum of 1,500 room nights for arrival between January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2019 and group will receive one complimentary upgrade to the iconic Bridge Suite including 24 hour Butler Service available throughout the stay. Contract must be signed by March 31, 2018. Applicable to new groups only. Offer is subject to availability and blackout dates and can be pulled at any time. Offer is not combinable with any other offers. See full details at [MeetingsAtAtlantis.com](https://MeetingsAtAtlantis.com).

---

**MeetingsAtAtlantis.com**

1.800.722.2449
Florida is in a class by itself for several reasons, not the least of which is its unique geographical configuration: As a peninsula, it is the only mainland state with eastern, western and southern coastlines. It boasts the world’s most famous collection of theme parks and distinctive city, coastal and resort properties that continually upgrade and improve to remain attractive in one of the country’s most highly competitive tourism markets. Ahh, and then there’s the weather...

No wonder so many groups return to Florida year after year, some planning several different types and sizes of meetings in the state in a single year.

The Emerald Coast

The Panhandle’s Emerald Coast — Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island — is distinguished by its beachy ambience with sugar-white sand beaches and the stunning, emerald-green Gulf.

Planners and attendees love the world-class golf resorts, too, including the 602-room Hilton Sandestin Beach, the largest full-service beachfront property on Northwest Florida’s Gulf Coast. The property offers 40,000 sf of meeting space and six restaurants, including the Emerald Coast’s only AAA Four Diamond steakhouse. And at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort in Miramar Beach, the 15,000-sf Linkshe Conference Center is undergoing a multimillion-dollar renovation.

The Emerald Coast Convention Center (ECCC) in Fort Walton Beach, which boasts 35,000 sf of multiuse space, attracts its share of repeat groups. Andromedia Systems Inc., a Virginia Beach-based provider of technology services and solutions, planned its fourth meeting at the ECCC for March 2018, booking rooms at the Holiday Inn Resort and three other hotels.

Value was a prime reason for choosing the ECCC. “We held meetings in the ECCC’s main ballroom and in several breakout rooms,” says Sarah Rollins, Andromedia’s business development and proposal planner, and meeting planner. “The ECCC is very reasonable compared to hotel and resort meeting spaces. I researched them all and this was the best price for our group. They have reasonable catering costs.”

The ECCC also was convenient for other several reasons. “They have first-class facilities and up-to-date AV,” says Rollins. “They are located in close proximity to several nice hotels. This location has a convenient airport, with flights from DC, Charlotte and Atlanta. And the ECCC is well managed and meets all of our needs. I suspect the visit in March won’t be our last.”

The Fort Worth, Texas-based Acme Brick Co. chose Destin over other destinations for its annual sales meeting in February of 83 employees, executives and their guests. “We have

Barbara Lewis, Executive Assistant, Sales Acme Brick Co., Fort Worth, TX

The Henderson has “an amazing rooftop deck where we can hold the cocktail reception during sunset. ...We anticipate lots of wonderful selfies will be taken by our guests.”

The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club has undergone more than $50 million in enhancements over the last few years including renovation of the championship golf course.

Sanibel Island’s premier incentive destination offers 12,000 sq. ft. of flexible function space overlooking the Gulf and plenty to keep your team active. Here, the line between business and pleasure blurs creating a new way to conduct business.

MEET YOU ON THE ISLAND.
The property has the quality of food that our group expects. Also, the resort provides concierge car service for its guests. "Uber for our group," says Barbara Lewis. "The amazing rooftop deck where we can hold the cocktail reception during sunset. We are excited to have access to such a nature-inspired spa and Gulf-to-table cuisine."

Escape to Sunny Shores, Meet at the Beach

Jacksonville isn’t — but should be — among the first destinations corporate planners consider in Florida.

One reason: Travel guidebook publisher Lonely Planet ranked Jacksonville No. 9 in its Best in Travel 2018 list as one of the world’s Top 10 Best Value Destinations. Jacksonville was the only American city on the list. The guidebook cited Jacksonville’s beaches, park system, family-friendly food scene and affordable hotel rates.

More hotel space is coming: Hyatt Place Jacksonville is under construction and is scheduled to open late this year at The Strand at St. Johns Town Center, a new 45-acre development with retail outlets, restaurants and apartment homes. The five-story property will include 160 guest rooms and 3,000 sf of flexible meeting space.

South of Jacksonville, the 200-room Hard Rock Hotel Daytona Beach is slated to open in early 2018 with 20,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space, including some with views of the Atlantic Ocean. The property is Daytona Beach’s newest beachfront hotel and the fourth Hard Rock Hotel in Florida.

The Gold Coast

Planners find that Miami offers everything needed for memorable meetings, including event-friendly hotels such as the Hilton Miami Downtown, which has completed a property-wide, $35 million renovation. Located downtown near the Wynwood Arts District and Design District, the 527-room property offers more than 45,000 sf of meeting space including a 17,000-sf ballroom and 19 meeting rooms.

The Miami Beach Convention Center (MBCC) will offer more than 500,000 sf of flexible meeting space, 180,000 sf of meeting space, a nature-inspired spa and Gulf-to-table cuisine.

Miami

The Miami Beach Convention Center (MBCC) is undergoing a multimillion-dollar, state-of-the-art renovation with sustainability in mind — the MBCC is on track to receive LEED Silver certification when it debuts in September. The project includes exterior fin-shaped structures lining the building’s sides and entrance that provide shade to reduce energy use by 20 percent when combined with natural sunlight. Other energy-saving efforts include LED bulbs, solar panels above the parking areas and electric-car charging stations. The new MBCC will offer more than 500,000 sf of exhibit space, 180,000 sf of meeting space, a new 60,000-sf ballroom and 20,000-sf junior ballroom.

The Marriott Marquis Miami Worldcenter Hotel & Expo Center is strategically situated between Miami Int’l Airport and Fort Lauderdale Int’l Airport.

Contact our Sales office for current offers & incentives at 305-627-8800 or email us at groupsales@diploamatresort.com
ter, developed by MDM Group, is scheduled to break ground in the third quarter of 2018 with an estimated completion in the first half of 2022. It will feature approximately 1,700 hotel rooms and 500,000 sf of meeting and exhibition space. Amenities will include an expansive pool deck with views of Biscayne Bay, the American Airlines Arena and the downtown Miami skyline, as well as an 80,000-sf outdoor event deck.

**Hollywood**

Just north of Miami is the city of Hollywood, home to Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, which is undergoing a $1.5 billion expansion that includes construction of a guitar-shaped hotel tower. The project encompasses an additional 806 guest rooms and suites, including 638 in the guitar hotel tower as well as 168 new rooms and suites in the seven-story Pool Tower. The Seminole Hard Rock’s expansion will add 60,000 sf of new retail and restaurant space, and provide a new $100 million redesign and rebuilt Hard Rock Live arena that will replace the 5,500-seat venue with a state-of-the-art facility that seats 7,000 theater-style. The expansion will premiere in mid-2019. Another iconic Hollywood property, The Diplomat Beach Resort, is emerging from a $100 million transformation that includes 1,000 reimagined guest rooms and suites, and indoor and outdoor public spaces. The Diplomat’s repeat customers include a customer service company that held a meeting for 1,400 employees, managers and executives last year. “This was the fourth large program the company operated at the hotel,” says Jill Bartholomay, lead buyer, event purchasing and industry relations, ITA Group. “We continue to return because the destination is promotable to our employees and because of the hotel’s flexibility and great operational history.”

Bartholomay cites several reasons, including location, as to why the Diplomat is so popular with the group’s attendees. “There is great airlift with the flexibility to use both Fort Lauderdale and Miami airports,” says Bartholomay. “The hotel offers a beachfront location, extensive meeting space and experienced staff that understand the needs of corporate groups. The renovations look great.”

The Diplomat’s 209,000 sf of function space — the 50,000-sf Great Hall, four ballrooms and the 20,000-sf Grand Ballroom — fit the group perfectly. “The Diplomat is an ideal property for large meetings and incentive programs based on the flexibility of the space,” says Bartholomay. “With multiple ballrooms, our evening events can flow between rooms, allowing for multiple themes and food and beverage options. During the day, there is the flexibility to hold meals outside for large groups, with indoor backup.”

The group also enjoyed meals at The Diplomat Landing, a restaurant venue across the street from the Diplomat accessible via pedestrian bridge. Attendees enjoyed The Landing’s restaurants and large outdoor patio with views of the Intracoastal Waterway.

Bartholomay says meetings at the Diplomat are always a hit. “A survey of attendees was conducted following last year’s,” she says. “The hotel scored a 93 percent overall satisfaction and the overall program received a 98 percent overall score, a great success.”

**Palm Beach**

Some might be surprised at the variety in Palm Beach County, which includes 39 cities and towns as well as 15 tourism districts in 2,200 square miles. The area features chic shopping, fine dining, 160 golf courses and opulent resorts. Seven resorts and two hotels were named among the “Top Resorts in Florida” by the Condé Nast Traveler 30th annual Readers’ Choice Awards. The two hotels were the Chesterfield Palm Beach (No. 3) and the Brazilian Court (No. 5). In the resorts cat-

"The Diplomat is an ideal property for large meetings and incentive programs based on the flexibility of the space."

**Jill Bartholomay, Lead Buyer**

Event Purchasing and Industry Relations

ITA Group, West Des Moines, IA

An inviting lawn event setup at the Forbes Five Star Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa.

**Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa**

Stay. The water’s perfect.

**SUMMER RATES FROM $209**

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT SALES AT 561 540 4806

100 SOUTH OCEAN BLVD. MANALAPAN FL 33462 •EAUMOMENTS EAPALMBEACH.COM
The hotel features 309 guest rooms and suites in three towers, the 42,000-sf Forbes Five Star Eau Spa and more than 30,000 sf of meeting and event space. Unique spaces include Stir terrace, which faces the Atlantic Ocean and features a firepit with seating nearby; Breeze Ocean Kitchen, an oceanfront restaurant that also can be used for private receptions and dinners; and the Self-Centered Garden at Eau Spa, a lovely outdoor space ideal for receptions.

In January, the Boca Raton Resort and Club hosted a meeting for 100 executives and customers of Georgia Pacific. It was the group’s fifth meeting at the resort.

The Boca Raton Resort’s value is a top reason why Georgia Pacific returns to the property, even when rates may be the lowest. “Granted it was peak season in the area, and rates were higher than what’s seen during other times of the year, but we forecast for that and for a luxury property, and prices were comparable to other resorts,” says Wil Bates, CMP, manager, GP Events.

Flexibility is also a factor. “During the sales and contracting phase, the hotel is always willing to be flexible with us and do what they can to help us achieve the goals and objectives of the events we hold there,” says Bates. “The meeting space was fantastic.”

Attendee feedback is always good. “We received feedback from event stakeholders and attendees that the event was very well executed,” says Bates. “We have contracts signed for two other events at the Boca Resort over the next two years.”

In 2017, Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate underwent a $40 million expansion project that added 23,000 sf of additional pool deck and recreational space, installation of Kissimmee’s only resort water park and a new 93-room property villa building. The resort’s Trevi’s Restaurant was redesigned to include an outdoor garden terrace and bar. The expansion also added 100,000 sf of expanded event lawn and conference center space at the Osceola Conference Center. The 862-room resort offers a total of more than 248,000 sf of meeting space, 36 holes of championship golf, the David Leadbetter Golf Academy, the Mokara Spa, multiple dining options and more.

Universal Orlando’s five on-site hotels — Loews Portofino Bay Hotel, the Hard Rock Hotel, Loews Royal Pacific Resort, Universal’s Cabana Bay Beach Resort and Loews Sapphire Falls Resort — offer a total of 5,600 rooms. The number will rise to 6,200 rooms when Universal’s 600-room Aventura Hotel, scheduled to open in August 2018, is combined with the 400-room ongoing expansion of the Cabana Bay Beach Resort. The Loews Meeting Complex — comprised of Loews Sapphire Falls Re-

The layout of the Margaritaville Resort vacation homes, cottages, villas and timeshare units.

The Loews Meeting Complex at Universal Orlando capitalizes on Florida’s exceptional weather with 97,000 sf of outdoor space, including this open-air event pavilion at Loews Royal Pacific Resort.
beachfront site for their corporate events. Nine meeting rooms, each with comprehensive audiovisual capabilities, comprise the 12,000 sf of indoor and outdoor event space, and the resort boasts that it is the only destination on the Florida Gulf Coast’s Sanibel Island capable of accommodating up to 300 guests. Dining options include a daily breakfast buffet and a new restaurant, Shima Japanese Steakhouse & Sushi Bar, that can be used for private group events.

Farther south on the Gulf side is Paradise Coast — Naples, Marco Island and the Everglades — offering 30 miles of beaches, trendy stores, outdoor adventures and some of Florida’s top resorts including the AAA Four Diamond Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club, which offers 83,000 sf of indoor/outdoor meeting and event space. Events in the oceanfront venues or on the beach are accentuated by the spectacular Gulf Coast sunsets.

Southwest Coast

This area’s beachside properties, activities and restaurants are drawing more visitors than ever. During the 2017 fiscal year, which ended September 30, Tampa Bay’s hotel revenue increased 5 percent to $670 million over 2016, according to Visit Tampa Bay. Average daily rate (ADR) increased 4.2 percent while RevPAR rose 3.1 percent.

According to Santiago Corrada, president and CEO of Visit Tampa Bay, “As we wait for new hotel inventory and anticipated developments to come online over the next few years, we are working hard to make the most of the availability we have for both leisure travelers and convention groups.”

Tampa-area beach meeting properties include the 343-room Wyndham Grand Clearwater Beach, which opened last year with 22,000 sf of meeting space. Nearby, the Hilton Clearwater Beach completed a $20 million renovation that includes transformation of its 35,000 sf of meeting space, a new restaurant and new spa.

Inland from Tampa Bay, sits Streamsong Resort, one of Florida’s top group golf destinations. Streamsong opened its third golf course, Streamsong Black, last year along with a new clubhouse and restaurant. The course was named the Best New Course of 2017 by Golf Magazine — the latest of several honors that Streamsong’s golf courses have received since the property opened about five years ago.

South of Tampa and just across the causeway from Fort Myers, Sanibel Island’s Sundial Beach Resort and Spa is perfect for planners and meeting-goers looking for a laidback, rustic and Lowes Royal Pacific Resort, which are connected by bridge — offers groups and planners 295,000 sf of indoor meeting space and 97,000 sf of outdoor space.

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel at SeaWorld recently added 20,000 sf of ballroom space and 20,000 sf of outdoor courtyard space, bringing total indoor/outdoor event space to 100,000 sf.

For planning assistance, visit OrlandoMeeting.com
For their meetings on Capitol Hill, Solum Consulting attendees overnight in Alexandria, where hotels offer convenience and value.

"Comparing Alexandria to Washington...for a meeting we hosted last November, we saved 20 percent on room rates."

Steve Powell, President
Solum Consulting, Greensboro, NC

For rather obvious reasons, the nation’s capital is one of the most unique and fascinating destinations in the world. And its perpetual appeal to tourists from around the globe extends to meeting attendees.

Its vast hotel inventory, which represents virtually every brand in existence, is highlighted by a number of properties that symbolize the power and influence of the city.

Among them are the historic Willard InterContinental Washington, located across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House; and the new Trump International Hotel Washington, DC, located on Pennsylvania Avenue near the White House, which is a historic former post office building. In October, the Watergate Hotel, scene of the notorious break-in, announced a new signature guest room to capture the infamy and intrigue of one of the most famous guest rooms in the world: The Watergate Scandal Room 214, where on June 17, 1972, E. Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy, who helmed The Watergate break-in team, stationed themselves while the burglary at the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate Complex, adjacent to the hotel, was underway.

Among the city’s newest hotels is the 278-room, LEED Silver-certified InterContinental Washington, DC, located across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House; and the new Wharf, which opened last October.

The hotel, which features 17,000 sq ft of meeting space, is among the anchors of the new and fashionable mile-long waterfront neighborhood along the Potomac River known as The Wharf. The hotel’s eclectic flagship restaurant is the Afro-Caribbean eatery Kith and Kin from Top Chef fan favorite Kwame Omwuachi, who serves as executive chef.

Among Washington’s top attractions — aside from obvious draws such as the U.S. Capitol, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial and Washington Monument — are the National World War II Museum, the Smithsonian Institution on the National Mall, the National Air & Space Museum and National Museum of Natural History.

For art and performing arts-interested groups, the top draws are the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and National Gallery of Art. The Corcoran Gallery of Art, less well known than the National Gallery, is also among the most spectacular art museums in the U.S.

Among the city’s most famous old restaurants is the Old Ebbitt Grill, originally opened in 1856 and still serving fine American fare to politicians and dignitaries even though it has moved to a new location. Other time-tested eateries known for their famous and powerful clientele include Charlie Palmer Steak; Fiola, fabled for its Italian fare; The Source by Wolfgang Puck; and Bourbon Steak, located in the Four Seasons Hotel.

That means that corporate planners looking for rates, dates and space on a typical budget often have to look outside the city’s limits to find accommodations. Fortunately, northern Virginia and southern Maryland fill that need very well.

The Magic of Alexandria

Located just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC, Alexandria, Virginia combines a unique history that dates back to before the American Revolution with modern flourishes that have made it a stylish and sophisticated destination.

Steve Powell, president of Greensboro, North Carolina-based Solum Consulting, which plans educational and leadership conferences in the agricultural industry, has been using Alexandria for one or two meetings a year for the last decade.

“There are two key reasons why we are so loyal to Alexandria,” Powell says. “The first is its proximity to Washington, DC. As part of our meeting agendas, we often go into the city for meetings on Capitol Hill with members of Congress or with staff at various federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Alexandria is very convenient. It’s very easy to get from any hotel in Alexandria to any place you want to go in Washington in about 20 minutes.”

The second factor that keeps bringing his events back to Alexandria is cost savings. “We also save money in Alexandria, which is a much more budget-friendly environment than Washington,” Powell says. “We’ve done detailed cost research in comparing Alexandria to Washington, and for a meeting we hosted last November, we saved 20 percent on room rates. For food and beverage, we also saved 25 percent by staying in Alexandria. In addition, based on our F&B minimum, we got our meeting space at no cost. No hotel in Washington would offer that. And that saved us even more money.”

Such savings are particularly important to Powell because the budgets for his meetings are underwritten by Syngenta Corporation, a major crop science company that pays the cost of his events.

For last November’s meeting, a four-day, three-night event for 22 agricultural industry executives, Powell chose the Kimp ton Lorien Hotel & Spa in Old Town Alexandria as his hotel.

“We found the hotel thanks to the efforts of Visit Alexandria, the local CVB,” he says. “I give all the credit to them. They made my job very easy. I contacted them very early on and told

Washington, DC

The Watergate Hotel recently debuted the new Scandal Room 214, detailed with artifacts and memorabilia from the infamous 1972 Watergate break-in.

“The Meeting of the Minds” is a guided tour of the Watergate breaks-in. The Wharf, which opened last October, is one of the new and fashionable mile-long waterfront neighborhoods along the Potomac River known as The Wharf. The hotel’s eclectic flagship restaurant is the Afro-Caribbean eatery Kith and Kin from Top Chef fan favorite Kwame Omwuachi, who serves as executive chef.

Among Washington’s top attractions — aside from obvious draws such as the U.S. Capitol, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial and Washington Monument — are the National World War II Museum, the Smithsonian Institution on the National Mall, the National Air & Space Museum and National Museum of Natural History.

For art and performing arts-interested groups, the top draws are the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and National Gallery of Art. The Corcoran Gallery of Art, less well known than the National Gallery, is also among the most spectacular art museums in the U.S.

Among the city’s most famous old restaurants is the Old Ebbitt Grill, originally opened in 1856 and still serving fine American fare to politicians and dignitaries even though it has moved to a new location. Other time-tested eateries known for their famous and powerful clientele include Charlie Palmer Steak; Fiola, fabled for its Italian fare; The Source by Wolfgang Puck; and Bourbon Steak, located in the Four Seasons Hotel.

That means that corporate planners looking for rates, dates and space on a typical budget often have to look outside the city’s limits to find accommodations. Fortunately, northern Virginia and southern Maryland fill that need very well.

The Magic of Alexandria

Located just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC, Alexandria, Virginia combines a unique history that dates back to before the American Revolution with modern flourishes that have made it a stylish and sophisticated destination.

Steve Powell, president of Greensboro, North Carolina-based Solum Consulting, which plans educational and leadership conferences in the agricultural industry, has been using Alexandria for one or two meetings a year for the last decade.

“There are two key reasons why we are so loyal to Alexandria,” Powell says. “The first is its proximity to Washington, DC. As part of our meeting agendas, we often go into the city for meetings on Capitol Hill with members of Congress or with staff at various federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Alexandria is very convenient. It’s very easy to get from any hotel in Alexandria to any place you want to go in Washington in about 20 minutes.”

The second factor that keeps bringing his events back to Alexandria is cost savings. “We also save money in Alexandria, which is a much more budget-friendly environment than Washington,” Powell says. “We’ve done detailed cost research in comparing Alexandria to Washington, and for a meeting we hosted last November, we saved 20 percent on room rates. For food and beverage, we also saved 25 percent by staying in Alexandria. In addition, based on our F&B minimum, we got our meeting space at no cost. No hotel in Washington would offer that. And that saved us even more money.”

Such savings are particularly important to Powell because the budgets for his meetings are underwritten by Syngenta Corporation, a major crop science company that pays the cost of his events.

For last November’s meeting, a four-day, three-night event for 22 agricultural industry executives, Powell chose the Kimpton Lorien Hotel & Spa in Old Town Alexandria as his hotel.

“We found the hotel thanks to the efforts of Visit Alexandria, the local CVB,” he says. “I give all the credit to them. They made my job very easy. I contacted them very early on and told

The Power Corridor

Washington Reigns, but Virginia and Maryland Offer Access at a Discount

By John Buchanan

N o other meeting location in the U.S. can match the singular allure of Washington, DC. It is the world’s premier “power” destination. Although the nation’s capital does attract corporate meetings, it is much more frequently utilized for government and association meetings, as well as events and conferences staged by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foreign governments and organizations.

“Comparing Alexandria to Washington...for a meeting we hosted last November, we saved 20 percent on room rates.”

Steve Powell, President
Solum Consulting, Greensboro, NC

That means that corporate planners looking for rates, dates and space on a typical budget often have to look outside the city’s limits to find accommodations. Fortunately, northern Virginia and southern Maryland fill that need very well.

The Magic of Alexandria

Located just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC, Alexandria, Virginia combines a unique history that dates back to before the American Revolution with modern flourishes that have made it a stylish and sophisticated destination.

Steve Powell, president of Greensboro, North Carolina-based Solum Consulting, which plans educational and leadership conferences in the agricultural industry, has been using Alexandria for one or two meetings a year for the last decade.

“There are two key reasons why we are so loyal to Alexandria,” Powell says. “The first is its proximity to Washington, DC. As part of our meeting agendas, we often go into the city for meetings on Capitol Hill with members of Congress or with staff at various federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Alexandria is very convenient. It’s very easy to get from any hotel in Alexandria to any place you want to go in Washington in about 20 minutes.”

The second factor that keeps bringing his events back to Alexandria is cost savings. “We also save money in Alexandria, which is a much more budget-friendly environment than Washington,” Powell says. “We’ve done detailed cost research in comparing Alexandria to Washington, and for a meeting we hosted last November, we saved 20 percent on room rates. For food and beverage, we also saved 25 percent by staying in Alexandria. In addition, based on our F&B minimum, we got our meeting space at no cost. No hotel in Washington would offer that. And that saved us even more money.”

Such savings are particularly important to Powell because the budgets for his meetings are underwritten by Syngenta Corporation, a major crop science company that pays the cost of his events.

For last November’s meeting, a four-day, three-night event for 22 agricultural industry executives, Powell chose the Kimpton Lorien Hotel & Spa in Old Town Alexandria as his hotel.

“We found the hotel thanks to the efforts of Visit Alexandria, the local CVB,” he says. “I give all the credit to them. They made my job very easy. I contacted them very early on and told

The Watergate Hotel recently debuted the new Scandal Room 214, detailed with artifacts and memorabilia from the infamous 1972 Watergate break-in.

“The Meeting of the Minds” is a guided tour of the Watergate breaks-in. The Wharf, which opened last October, is one of the new and fashionable mile-long waterfront neighborhoods along the Potomac River known as The Wharf. The hotel’s eclectic flagship restaurant is the Afro-Caribbean eatery Kith and Kin from Top Chef fan favorite Kwame Omwuachi, who serves as executive chef.

Among Washington’s top attractions — aside from obvious draws such as the U.S. Capitol, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial and Washington Monument — are the National World War II Museum, the Smithsonian Institution on the National Mall, the National Air & Space Museum and National Museum of Natural History.

For art and performing arts-interested groups, the top draws are the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and National Gallery of Art. The Corcoran Gallery of Art, less well known than the National Gallery, is also among the most spectacular art museums in the U.S.

Among the city’s most famous old restaurants is the Old Ebbitt Grill, originally opened in 1856 and still serving fine American fare to politicians and dignitaries even though it has moved to a new location. Other time-tested eateries known for their famous and powerful clientele include Charlie Palmer Steak; Fiola, fabled for its Italian fare; The Source by Wolfgang Puck; and Bourbon Steak, located in the Four Seasons Hotel.
The Hilton Baltimore “brought in local oyster men who harvest famous Chesapeake Bay oysters and we did a Maryland crab feast.”

Justin Haggart, Event Marketing Mgr.
Guest Supply, Somerset, NJ

Based on his experience and the feedback he got from attendees, Powell gives the Kimpton Lorien high marks. “The room product is excellent,” he says. “The bedding, the bath product is excellent, “he says. “The bedding, the bath and the lighting are all very good. The F&B is also excellent. The hotel also offers an intimate environment, which was perfect for such a small meeting. The staff was also excellent. They gave us tremendous and very personalized service. And they did a fantastic job of helping us find the perfect hotel. They put together our RFP and then they put it out to all of the hotels that they felt would meet our needs. Then we selected several finalists and finally narrowed it down to our choice of the Kimpton Lorien.”

Last August, Mark Fried, CEO and president of New York-based Vendome Group, a media company that produces major conferences, used Baltimore for a National Conference for Addiction Disorders, which drew 1,000 attendees from entities such as addiction treatment centers and drug testing companies.

“Baltimore today is also much more than just the Inner Harbor. It’s a destination that offers a lot of flexibility...so it works very well for meetings in our markets.”

Mark Fried, CEO and President Vendome Group, New York, NY

According to the feedback, the Hilton Baltimore provided Crabcakes, Fried says. “They even gave us a crab boil. We had crab at the hotel or was planning to go out for crabs somewhere well-known.”

“Baltimore today is also much more than just the Inner Harbor. There is a lot going on there. It’s just a destination that offers a lot of flexibility...so it works very well for meetings in our markets.”

Mark Fried, CEO and President Vendome Group, New York, NY

Located adjacent to the stadium where the Baltimore Orioles play at Camden Yards, several years ago when he hosted his first-ever conference in Baltimore.

“The quality and configuration of a hotel’s meeting space is always a major consideration for us in selecting a hotel,” Fried says. “We need a large ballroom for general sessions. We also need a fairly large exhibit hall. And we do breakout sessions. And I happen to like ‘stacked’ space, so the Marriott Inner Harbor was a natural choice for us. And it’s an excellent property. Both the room product and the food and beverage were excellent. We were very pleased with the property.”

The local dining scene, especially in the Inner Harbor area, earned rave reviews from his attendees, Fried says. “There’s a wide range of dining options, including within easy walking distance of the Marriott hotel,” he says. “One common denominator when it came to food: Maryland’s world-famous crab. “Whenever you talk about Baltimore and food, you’re going to talk about crabs,” Fried says. “There are crab restaurants that range from casual to fine dining. Almost every single person I spoke to at the meeting was either going to have crabs at the hotel or was planning to go out for crabs somewhere well-known.”

The overall attractions of the Inner Harbor area also generated a lot of positive feedback from attendees, Fried says. “They really enjoyed the Inner Harbor scene, including the restaurants and entertainment options. They also enjoyed the fact that there is the walkway around the harbor, which makes exploring easy and fun.”

Among the top attractions are the Maryland Science Center, which features an IMAX Theater; the National Aquarium; the Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine; and the historic battleships now housed in the harbor, including the USS Constellation, USS Torsk and USCGC Taney.

For meeting planners considering Baltimore as a destination, Fried also highly recommends working with local CVB Visit Baltimore. “I rate them very highly,” he says. “Too often, we as meeting planners find that CVBs are either very passive or not reactive at all. And Visit Baltimore was great. They helped us with our collateral materials and other practical aspects of the meeting. It was a pleasure to work with them.”

Because of his success in Baltimore last year — the conference was the second most well-attended in Vendome’s history — Fried is going back next year. “Baltimore is just a destination that leads to a successful meeting,” he says.

Another meeting planner who has discovered the appeal of Baltimore is Justin Haggart, event marketing manager at Somerset, New Jersey-based Guest Supply, a Sysco company.

For the last two years, Haggart has used Baltimore as the destination for Guest Supply’s annual July five-day, four-night sales conference, which draws 500 attendees. The company will return this July for the third consecutive year.

“The reason we keep returning is simple,” Haggart says. “Baltimore is Justin Haggart, event marketing manager at Somerset, New Jersey-based Guest Supply, a Sysco company.

Baltimore is what we call ‘stacked’ space, so the Marriott Inner Harbor was a natural choice for us. And it’s an excellent property. Both the room product and the food and beverage were excellent. We were very pleased with the property.”

among the top attractions are the Maryland Science Center, which features an IMAX Theater; the National Aquarium; the Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine; and the historic battleships now housed in the harbor, including the USS Constellation, USS Torsk and USCGC Taney.

For meeting planners considering Baltimore as a destination, Fried also highly recommends working with local CVB Visit Baltimore. “I rate them very highly,” he says. “Too often, we as meeting planners find that CVBs are either very passive or not reactive at all. And Visit Baltimore was great. They helped us with our collateral materials and other practical aspects of the meeting. It was a pleasure to work with them.”

Because of his success in Baltimore last year — the conference was the second most well-attended in Vendome’s history — Fried is going back next year. “Baltimore is just a destination that leads to a successful meeting,” he says.

Another meeting planner who has discovered the appeal of Baltimore is Justin Haggart, event marketing manager at Somerset, New Jersey-based Guest Supply, a Sysco company.

For the last two years, Haggart has used Baltimore as the destination for Guest Supply’s annual July five-day, four-night sales conference, which draws 500 attendees. The company will return this July for the third consecutive year.

“The reason we keep returning is simple,” Haggart says. “Baltimore is Justin Haggart, event marketing manager at Somerset, New Jersey-based Guest Supply, a Sysco company.

Baltimore is what we call ‘stacked’ space, so the Marriott Inner Harbor was a natural choice for us. And it’s an excellent property. Both the room product and the food and beverage were excellent. We were very pleased with the property.”

among the top attractions are the Maryland Science Center, which features an IMAX Theater; the National Aquarium; the Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine; and the historic battleships now housed in the harbor, including the USS Constellation, USS Torsk and USCGC Taney.

For meeting planners considering Baltimore as a destination, Fried also highly recommends working with local CVB Visit Baltimore. “I rate them very highly,” he says. “Too often, we as meeting planners find that CVBs are either very passive or not reactive at all. And Visit Baltimore was great. They helped us with our collateral materials and other practical aspects of the meeting. It was a pleasure to work with them.”

Because of his success in Baltimore last year — the conference was the second most well-attended in Vendome’s history — Fried is going back next year. “Baltimore is just a destination that leads to a successful meeting,” he says.

Another meeting planner who has discovered the appeal of Baltimore is Justin Haggart, event marketing manager at Somerset, New Jersey-based Guest Supply, a Sysco company.

For the last two years, Haggart has used Baltimore as the destination for Guest Supply’s annual July five-day, four-night sales conference, which draws 500 attendees. The company will return this July for the third consecutive year.

“The reason we keep returning is simple,” Haggart says. “Baltimore is just a destination that leads to a successful meeting,” he says.

Another meeting planner who has discovered the appeal of Baltimore is Justin Haggart, event marketing manager at Somerset, New Jersey-based Guest Supply, a Sysco company.

For the last two years, Haggart has used Baltimore as the destination for Guest Supply’s annual July five-day, four-night sales conference, which draws 500 attendees. The company will return this July for the third consecutive year.

“The reason we keep returning is simple,” Haggart says. “Baltimore is just a destination that leads to a successful meeting,” he says.

Another meeting planner who has discovered the appeal of Baltimore is Justin Haggart, event marketing manager at Somerset, New Jersey-based Guest Supply, a Sysco company.

For the last two years, Haggart has used Baltimore as the destination for Guest Supply’s annual July five-day, four-night sales conference, which draws 500 attendees. The company will return this July for the third consecutive year.

“The reason we keep returning is simple,” Haggart says. “Baltimore is just a destination that leads to a successful meeting,” he says.

Another meeting planner who has discovered the appeal of Baltimore is Justin Haggart, event marketing manager at Somerset, New Jersey-based Guest Supply, a Sysco company.

For the last two years, Haggart has used Baltimore as the destination for Guest Supply’s annual July five-day, four-night sales conference, which draws 500 attendees. The company will return this July for the third consecutive year.

“The reason we keep returning is simple,” Haggart says. “Baltimore is just a destination that leads to a successful meeting,” he says.
doing something different from last year so that you can keep your event fresh."

Two major meeting properties located in southern Maryland, just outside Washington, DC, are two of the country’s most acclaimed meeting properties: the MGM National Harbor and Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center.

MGM National Harbor, located just minutes from the heart of Washington, DC, on the banks of the Potomac River is a sprawling gaming resort complex that includes a state-of-the-art theater that hosts big-name entertainers and is also a meeting and conference venue. Among its critically acclaimed restaurants are Fish by José Andrés, and Voltaggio Brothers Steak House.

Tap Sports Bar is also popular with groups. The resort’s meeting facilities, which total 50,000 sf, include ballrooms, VIP suites and boardrooms, as well as the theater for general sessions.

Marriott’s Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center, also located in National Harbor, Maryland, is just 10 miles from the U.S. Capitol. Noted for its dramatic 19-story atrium, the resort’s flagship restaurant is the Old Hickory Steakhouse. The complex also offers a popular and casual sports bar. Gaylord National offers 546,000 sf of meeting and event space, including 89 meeting rooms and the 24,000-sf RiverView Ballroom. Amenities include an indoor pool, fitness center, spa and salon.

Like Fried, Haggart and his attendees like the fact that Baltimore is a very good meeting destination. There are a lot of things for attendees to do in their spare time."

Guest Supply’s hotel is the Hilton Baltimore, located in Inner Harbor, across the street from Camden Yards and connected to the Baltimore Convention Center. Why such loyalty to a single hotel?

“The ballroom space at the Hilton is a very good fit for us,“ Haggart says. “We take over the entire Key Ballroom, which is about 25,000 sf, and also the entire Holiday Ballroom, which is 15,000 sf. We use the Key Ballroom for exhibit space and the Holiday Ballroom for general sessions and dinners. We also use a lot of break-down rooms. So the space at the Hilton is just perfectly suited to us. The F&B is also great. The team that we work with at the hotel is excellent. They have been wonderful partners. The hotel also has enough rooms so that as our meeting grows, they can still accommodate us. There are also lots of convenient opportunities outside the hotel, including offsite venues.”

Haggart has especially appreciated the hotel’s creative F&B options. “Two years ago, they brought in local oystermen who harvest famous Chesapeake Bay oysters and we did a Maryland crab feast,” he says. “Last year, we did a barbecue outside that included burgers and sausages. They really work with us to change up the menu and do fun things.”

Last year’s meeting also featured a baseball game-style tailgate event. Afterward, the group went across the street and attended an Orioles game.

Haggart encourages meeting planners who have not experienced Baltimore to investigate it. “Baltimore is very convenient, especially in terms of its three airports, for people coming in from the East Coast,” he says. “It also offers a lot of opportunities to get away from the hotel. For example, when I was there recently, I toured Sagamore Distillery as the possible venue for a dinner event this year. And new options like that mean you can keep going back to Baltimore, but also have enough options for
Danielle Babilino was named S.V.P. of global sales and marketing for Hard Rock Hotels & Casinos. She was E.V.P. of sales and marketing for Alon Las Vegas.

Omni Louisville Hotel has named Eamon O’Brien as DOSM. He was DOSM for the Louisville Marriott Downtown.

Nicole Considine was named DOSM for Delta Hotels – Marriott Dallas Allen & Watters Creek Convention Center, opening in 2019 north of Dallas. She was DOSM for the W Dallas Viceroy Park.

Loews Ventana Canyon Resort in Tucson has appointed David Toler as DOSM. He was DOSM at Westward Look Wyndham Grand Resort & Spa in Tucson.

The Ritz-Carlton Key Biscayne, Miami has named Martin Jakubczak as director of sales. He was associate director of sales at The Westin Fort Lauderdale Beach.
THRILLING, STUNNING, TRANSFORMATIVE. THERE ARE WORDS TO DESCRIBE IT.

Find 500,000 square feet of reimagined exhibit space, a 60,000-square-foot ballroom and 81 breakout rooms. The Miami Beach Convention Center is the perfect space for your business. Unlimited possibilities coming in September 2018.

Learn more at MiamiMeetings.com
Meetings@MiamiMeetings.com | 800-933-8448 ext. 3071