Ramp Up Your Skills

The Current Status of Planner Certification and Education

PAGE 40

Budgeting For Today’s Market

What Planners Need to Know to Calculate Strategically

PAGE 36

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Karen Kotowski, CMP, CAE, CEO of Events Industry Council

2018 Awards of Excellence

The Best of the Best CVBs, Hotels, Resorts & Conference Centers

PAGE 44
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Meeting and event planners often feel the stress of racing against the clock to meet their clients’ needs. But that can change. PAGE 20

Conference centers have stepped away from basic meeting spaces to offering recreational activities and more. PAGE 26

Many new and creative teambuilding experiences help enhance professional relationships. PAGE 32
The Importance of Education and Certification

As meeting and event planners, you know that in order to stay relevant in the industry, you must understand contracts, budgets, space requirements and much more. You must also be up-to-date on legalities, as well as changing regulations that impact meetings. By continuing education and attaining certification, you are more valuable in the marketplace. In “Ramp Up Your Skills” on Page 40, CEO of Events Industry Council Karen Kotowski, CMP, CAE (on our cover), explains, “Recruiters and prospective employers recognize CMP Certification as the most prestigious designation in the growing industry. Certification opens the door to better and more opportunities.”

Job effectiveness as well as client and attendee satisfaction are paramount to your success. So how do you balance your personal lives with the constant demands of your job? The answer: “Time, Stress and Procrastination Management” (Page 14). According to Event Planner Amy Grace Collins, owner of Amy Grace Events, a meeting planner’s life, family and priorities must come first. Will Curran, chief event Einstein of Endless Events, agrees. He suggests planners set boundaries: Let clients know your working hours and stick to them. “It is possible to keep you and your client happy without being at their beck and call 24/7,” he adds.

These days, conference centers are offering more than just a place to hold your meeting. The facilities are now immersing destination experiences and recreational activities as incentives. “Conference Centers Have New Appeal” on Page 26 shoots down the “no-frills” stereotype with more conveniences and teambuilding activities. And planners are taking notice of the diversity. “Being in a location that is desirable for attendees to visit is not a bad thing,” says Amy Durocher, director, global accounts, with Scottsdale, Arizona-based site sourcing firm Global Cynergies, LLC. “It helps the attendees be more engaged in the program.”

And finally, turn to Page 44 to see the list of 2018 Award of Excellence winners, honoring the best CVBs, hotels and resorts as voted by our subscribers. This year, we’ve included some international destinations worth recognizing.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher
Hilton Reveals Plans for 29,000 New Hotel Rooms

McLEAN, VA — Hilton approved the creation of more than 29,000 new hotel rooms during the third quarter of 2018, increasing its pipeline to more than 371,000 rooms. A significant portion of the company’s room growth is tied to the recent introduction of its latest brand, Motto by Hilton, an urban lifestyle micro-hotel set to launch in 2019. The new brand will emphasize affordability and appears to be targeting the hostel demographic, while also seeking to improve upon the overall hostel experience. Flexibility will be another key focus of Motto by Hilton hotels, which will feature cleverly designed spaces, including guest rooms with space-saving features such as wall-beds, lofted beds, segmented showers and multi-functional furniture that can be stowed when not being used.

Motto by Hilton properties will be opening in more than 150 global locations throughout Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region. www.hilton.com

Park MGM Unveils High Tech for Small Meetings

LAS VEGAS — Park MGM recently unveiled its new Ideation Studio, a 7,000 square-foot collaborative meeting space that, along with the 10,000 square-foot Madison Meeting Center, forms Park MGM’s executive meeting venue. MGM has more than 3 million square feet of meeting space and intends to build more. But Michael Dominguez, senior vice president and chief sales officer for MGM Resorts International, says that 80 percent of their meetings in Las Vegas are for groups of 50 attendees or fewer. The Ideation Studio, which officially opens next month, is designed to take those meetings to the next level through the use of new technology and behavioral science. MGM used research from office-environment designer Steelcase to create the 10 meeting rooms and lounges that make up the Ideation Studio, starting with tables and chairs with adjustable heights so that meeting participants can be at eye level with each presenter. The rooms have a cushioned vinyl flooring instead of carpeting to encourage moving furniture around to accommodate different setups.

At the front of each room, there are two large TV screens to show presentations side-by-side with an offsite presenter, and also function as smartboards. Wide-angle cameras show offsite participants what is happening in the room. Everything that appears on the screens is saved to the cloud and accessible to all the meeting participants whenever they want to refer to it. Attendees can participate in real-time by using any smartphone, tablet or computer. www.parkmgm.com

5 VIP Perks Meeting Attendees Will Appreciate

Attendance at meetings, conferences and trade shows remains strong despite digital communication dominating the day-to-day life of business people across nearly every industry. The value of face-to-face interaction is indisputable, but the fact is, the effort to come together—the travel, the cost, the work that piles up while away—can be taxing. So why not consider doing something extra to show your appreciation to your attendees? In recent years, a variety of services have emerged that provide unique perks for every business traveler. For example:

1. Luxury Car Rental: Provide a premium travel experience for your guests by offering them a rental car from Silvercar. The company only rents Audi A4s, beaten by WiFi, Bluetooth, navigation, seats made of leather and other tech-savvy amenities. The rental process is entirely app-based. Guests receive a special code to book the complimentary rental in the Silvercar app. When they arrive at the airport, they use the app to activate the reservation, unlock the car and start driving. When they are finished, they simply return the car to a designated space at the Silvercar facility. The service is available at 17 airports, including Orlando, Chicago, New York and Las Vegas.

2. In-Room Massage: Zeel is a massage-on-demand company that operates in 70 cities around the US. Planners can make the arrangements in advance or offer gift cards so guests can book it themselves using Zeel’s website or mobile app. Massages can be booked seven days a week with as little as one hour’s notice. Zeel’s massage therapists are licensed, insured and go through in-person screening by the company. Zeel can also provide chair and table massages at meeting venues.

3. Luggage Service: Give your guests a completely hands-off luggage service with Bags. Planners can arrange for Bags agents to pick up their guests’ luggage from baggage claim at more than 250 airports nationwide at any time, with a one day’s notice. The service includes a host of perks that could serve several demographics under one roof: the nation’s first tri-brand hotel will have two separate lobbies, one for AC Hotels guests and a shared lobby for SpringHill Suites and Residence Inn guests. They will all share amenities, including six food and beverage outlets, a restaurant, a fitness center, a convenience store, a 24-hour business center and an indoor pool bar. The tri-brand hotel will have two separate lobbies, one for AC Hotels guests and a shared lobby for SpringHill Suites and Residence Inn guests. They will all share amenities, including six food and beverage outlets, a restaurant, a fitness center, a convenience store, a 24-hour business center and an indoor pool bar.

4. Personal Concierge: One Concierge offers a variety of services for guests in 115 countries around the world. Planners can arrange for a concierge to be at the event to assist in person or as a virtual concierge available via phone, email and web-based concierge cards. The service includes services with additional perks, such as companions to help guests with travel and bag drop service.

5. Baby Sitting: The Babysitting Company provides individually screened, CPR-certified childcare-givers in a dozen cities around the country, including Miami, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Orlando. The service can be performed in a room for one or a few children, or in a bedroom or other space for a large group, and can include babysitting, crafts activities, character visits and more. Offsite excursions, such as a trip to a local museum, also may be arranged.

--- Mitra Sorrells

Tips & Trends
Indianapolis Marriott Downtown Undergoes $45 Million Renovation

El San Juan Hotel in Puerto Rico Returns After a Full Restoration

Global DMC Partners’ 2018 Global Destination Index

Caesars Entertainment Recognized With Five Loyalty360 Awards

News & Notes

INDIANAPOLIS — Meeting attendees returning to the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown will be captivated by the property’s recent $45 million renovation. The property added four meeting rooms, bringing the hotel’s total event and exhibition area to 45,000 square feet, including 37 meeting rooms, all with upgraded technology. The hotel also added 20 guest rooms and completely renovated its onsite fitness center.

Indianapolis Marriott Downtown’s massive renovation couldn’t come at a better time, as the meetings destination positions itself to welcome larger groups. “We’ve become a 12-months-a-year travel destination, tapping $55 billion in visitor economic impact for the first time,” says Leonard Hoops, president and CEO of Visit Indy. www.marriott.com

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO — El San Juan Hotel, Curio Collection by Hilton, will celebrate its grand reopening on December 14. The extensive restoration of the hotel is reflected in the 388 guest rooms, poolside and oceanfront villas, public spaces, pools, cabanas and landscaping.

“We’re thrilled to be a part of this milestone moment in Puerto Rico’s recovery, and for the destination’s hospitality industry, as El San Juan Hotel marks a premier luxury destination within the Caribbean,” says Martin Smith, managing director of El San Juan Hotel, Curio Collection by Hilton.

In line with last year’s $65 million renovation, the hotel’s ownership has maintained El San Juan Hotel’s original look and feel. This grand reopening has returned the resort to its former sophistication featuring its iconic chandelier, hand-carved mahogany adorning the ceiling, columns and vaulted arches throughout the lobby and the registration area. With nearly 40,000 square feet of space, including a newly redesigned 11,000-square-foot grand ballroom, the hotel is available for hosting a wide array of meetings, conferences, business events and social celebrations.


President of Global DMC Partners Catherine Chaulet says, “It’s important to us to review this data each year because our industry has an enormous impact on the global economy by bringing millions of people around the world every day.”

www.globaldmcpartners.com

LAS VEGAS — Caesars Entertainment Corporation was awarded five Loyalty360 Awards during the Association for Customer Loyalty’s annual Loyalty360 Customer Expo in Nashville. Recognizing its exceptional accomplishments in building strong customer relationships and inspiring customer loyalty, Caesars’ Loyalty360 Customer Awards included two “Best in Class” honors for Partnership and Employee Focus, a Bronze Award in the Awareness & Acquisition category, Bronze Award in the Brand Messaging & Communication category and a Bronze Award in the Customer-Centric Culture category.

For Corporate & Incentive Travel

November 2018 • TheMeetingMagazines.com

TheMeetingMagazines.com • Corporate & Incentive Travel • November 2018
IMEX America 2018, held at the Sands Expo and Convention Center in Las Vegas October 16-18, set a series of new records. The largest-ever convention expanded into an additional hall, creating space for more than 3,500 exhibitors representing 150 countries.

A record of more than 13,000 attendees took part in the event. Over 70,000 appointments were made, including 64,000 individual appointments and booth presentations — an increase of 7 percent.

By offering a large and diverse range of experiences — from C2 International’s Cloud Lab to the Tech Zone — it met the growing demand for interactive live experiential activities that are redefining the scope of the industry itself.

The week began with Smart Monday, powered by MPI. Smart Monday’s carnival theme and the Six Star Innovation & Experience Lab — including Sophia, the life-like robot — added new interactive elements.

More than 30 IMEX and partner events, including Association Evening, SITE Nite North America, MPI Foundation Rendezvous, the EIC Hall of Leaders Reception and Shamrock Invitational Golf Classic, brought thousands of people together, as well as raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for industry foundations.
Is Your Recognition Program Effective?

Clients often ask, “How can we be sure we have a world-class recognition program?” Here are some things to consider if you really want to make your recognition program as effective as it can be:

Know What Success Looks Like

In our business, we work with many different organizations across a wide range of industries. Success is different for every one of them. Whether you are launching a new program or looking to invigorate your existing one, it is essential to know what the goals are. If you’re in the middle of a merger, defining culture and brand values may be the most important component of the program. If engagement survey scores show that enthusiasm just isn’t there, concentrate on increasing participation and stressing to managers the importance of their role.

While employee engagement and recognition are long-term strategies, the shorter-term understanding of what the issues are right now will influence where you invest effort and resources in the program.

And with communications, you can change your focus when you need to. Know what you need to achieve today and be flexible enough to know when it’s time for a change. You will build a better program that lives in the real world of your organization.

Make It Easy for People

If your team is always on the road or includes remote workers, the program needs to be mobile-friendly. It used to be challenging to reach scattered workforces since not everyone had access to a computer, but today, 85 percent of people ages 18 to 65 have a smartphone. Whether they are in the office at a desktop computer or on a repair call, it is important to be sure that every member of the team feels valued and part of the community. What’s more, most of your workers expect a user-friendly, intuitive experience. If you want people to participate in a program, it has to be at least as easy as placing an order on a retail website. That’s a baseline expectation of every person in your company.

Never Stop Communicating

A steady stream of communications keeps the program front of mind.

At Next Level, we use our online Applaudit platform as the hub for company news, recognition and rewards of all kinds.

We give our team reasons to keep visiting the site with automated emails and callouts by managers for special recognitions or updates.

Managers are also given a pool of points to amplify the recognition experience with meaningful rewards. The platform is the home of our day-to-day and annual recognition, as well as a place to communicate about our company values and goals. It creates social buzz in the office when colleagues celebrate one another’s efforts and achievements and has become an intrinsic part of our award-winning company culture.

Our frequent and engaging communications bring people back to this recognition center over and over, giving us the momentum we need to keep people connected with their colleagues and their goals.

Consider integrating your communications, from internal newsletters to printed mailings to e-statements for the biggest impact.

Expressing appreciation for the work people do is no longer a nice-to-have. It’s vital to the health of your company.

Commit Time and Effort

It’s not enough to just turn on a platform and wait for it to take root in your company. You, and every senior leader and manager, need to be actively committed to the program.

Too often, program owners are frustrated that “it isn’t working,” only to find out that it hasn’t been adopted by company influencers. If a team isn’t engaged, is their manager using the platform? When was the last time they received recognition?

Giving recognition and awarding points isn’t something that should be left to the last minute and distributed in haste to meet some kind of deadline.

Recognition should be in the moment, using the tools you provide, keeping everyone on track throughout the year. And that effort starts at the top, with company leaders championing the program day-to-day.

Take It Offline

Your online culture and your in-office culture must align to be authentic. And recognition has to be authentic to be meaningful for program participants.

It’s great to have recognition on the platform, but how do employees feel if no one ever says anything about it person-to-person? Managers and peers alike need to get up, go down the hall and say, “thank you” or “congratulations.”

Nothing replaces human interaction and the personal connections that are made as a result.

We know that employee engagement and recognition correlate to important business outcomes, including customer satisfaction, productivity and profitability. They also correlate to employee satisfaction and retention.

Expressing appreciation for the work people do is no longer a nice-to-have. It’s vital to the health of your company.

Commit to a program that works for your organization’s goals, values, culture and environment.

Consider working with a recognition or engagement company that can help you stay on track. You’ll reap the rewards of a workforce that cares about the organization, and about their contributions every day. That’s what makes a world-class program.

By Victor Sawi

Victor Sawi

As vice president of sales and services, he is responsible for new client acquisition and the integrated efforts of the Client and Customer Services teams at Next Level Performance. Prior to joining the company, he worked in a wide array of industries, including retail, insurance and financial services/banking. His first encounter with Next Level Performance was as a client.
A mericans are experiencing stress like never before. According to the American Psychological Association, 62 percent of adults are suffering adverse health effects, and a large percentage of visits to doctors’ offices are the result of stress-related problems. 

In fact, a steady diet of stress is responsible for the majority of illnesses and has been linked to such life-threatening conditions as heart disease, cancer, stroke and immune system disorders. Emotional problems like depression, anxiety and insomnia are often traced back to stress.

Unfortunately, the meetings and events industry is one of the highest stress-inducing industries in which to work. But stress can impede your ability to do your job effectively. And in the meetings and events industry, job effectiveness and client and attendee satisfaction are paramount to a meeting planner’s success.

According to Karen Ferrai, meeting planner and founder of Global Planning Source Inc., most planners think time is their biggest stress, but her observation is that managing relationships within a business context is the biggest stress. “You always want to build toward making relationships for the future of your business, but it is important to maintain the current relationships you have,” Ferrai says. “Another stress is the feeling of having to be on 24/7 and juggling crises back at the office while putting out fires onsite”.

Amy Grace Collins, event planner and owner of Amy Grace Events, says that event planners are dealing with a unique set of stressors that many industries just don’t face. “We are, in many cases, managing one of the biggest dreams or wishes our clients have had in their lives,” Collins says. “At the end of the day, our clients have the final say, and many times, we may not feel that it’s the right one, which can be stressful when your reputation and brand are on the line.”
Steps to Take

Changing our mindset about the role stress should play in our lives is an important step to take when managing stress in today’s meetings and events environment.

In the extraordinarily stressful meetings and events industry, many skilled professionals somehow still believe that if they experience stress, they just aren’t trying hard enough. Symptoms of stress are not symptoms of weakness. It’s unrealistic to believe we can prevent all stress; rather, we need to incorporate healthy stress reduction strategies to maintain physical and emotional balance in everyday life.

and your own is important. Client service means attending to the needs of the client, but not taking on their woes. “People need to put a priority on the things that keep them healthy and balanced,” Fiorini says. “And they need to schedule their priorities. In our industry, that’s not going to be possible every single day, but you counteract the busy workdays with time off. There is always time in your calendar to do the things that make you happy that are not always work-related. A work/life balance is the key to my success.”

Many factors contribute to stress and the ability to manage a work/life balance, but planners should consider focusing on their strengths and outsource the other professionals. “Don’t try and be all things to all people,” Fiorini says. “Know your peaks, your genius zone. Are you a morning person? Assign yourself tough, high-concentration tasks in the mornings. Don’t leave the tough tasks until it’s nighttime or vice versa. And make exercise a must-do, not a should-do.”

According to Collins, a meeting planner’s life, family and priorities must come first. “Clients can easily become a dominating force in your day, and if you don’t set expectations in the beginning, it can become a constant disrupter in your personal life,” Fiorini says. “Late-night texts and emails filled with panic—of what’s a pain point for you, “Collins says. “We’ve all been there. We have all let it creep into our lives and run us in a way that isn’t good for our clients, you feel the need to immediately respond. This creates a dangerous precedence—namely, constant availability.”

Time Management

“If I don’t have enough time.” Have you ever said that? It basically means that you want more hours in the day or the same rate — 1,440 minutes a day, 365 days a year. What makes us good or bad managers is how we use those minutes. Some people view time management as a quick gimmick to cram more activities into their life. Actually, time management is a systematic process that helps you

Here are a few quick tips to help you manage your time more effectively:

• Take a few hours to plan the next few months
• Invest in one, easy-to-use time management system, and keep the planner close at hand
• Create and maintain a “to-do” list
• Do first things first — determine what is urgent and what is the most important (these may not be the same thing)
• Delegate responsibility
• Know your biological clock — determine if you are more effective in the morning, afternoon or evening, and schedule tasks accordingly
• Continually ask yourself, “What is the best use of my time right now?”

When evaluating your current level of stress, ask the following three questions:

• How well are you avoiding unnecessary stress?
• How well are you responding to unavoidable stress?
• How well are we practicing good health, which includes being well-fed, well-rested and well-exercised?

Some remedies to reduce stress include:

• Getting organized
• Doing relaxation exercises, such as deep breathing, stretching or massage
• Getting out of a rut or routine (i.e., try taking a different route home from work)
• Taking walking breaks
• Incorporating music or a favorite song into your day — choose something that will relax you
• Taking up a hobby — be sure to make it significantly different from what you do on your job
• Smile and laugh often

Tips to Reduce Stress

“Stress is the feeling of having to be on 24/7, and juggling crises back at the office while putting out fires onsite.”

Karen Fiorini

Meeting Planner and Founder, Global Planning Source Inc., Aurora, Ontario, Canada

The reality is that most people don’t need more time, they just need to re-prioritize the time they’ve got. Time is rationed out to every one of us at the same rate — 1,440 minutes a day, 365 days a year. What makes us good or bad time managers is how we use those minutes. Some people view time management as a quick gimmick to cram more activities into their life. Actually, time management is a systematic process that helps you

You’re not using your allotted time to your best advantage. The reality is that most people don’t need more time, they just need to re-prioritize the time they’ve got. Time is rationed out to every one of us at the

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you’re not using your allotted time to

our health, our happiness or for those around us. The busier you get, the more stressed out you’re going to get. I find a lot of friends in the industry say, ‘Well, when I make more money, I’ll …’ but no matter how much money they make,
they don’t pause and find out the root cause and start to work on reducing it. You only live your life once. If you don’t take a moment to manage stress, your life will pass you by, and you will never feel a part of it.”

Meeting planners should take a step back. Practice a moment of gratitude. When you feel that stress creep in, pause for a minute and take a deep breath. Write down your stressors. Usually once written out, you can either accomplish them or feel they hold less validity on paper than in your mind.

Embracing Available Tools
There are several apps and tools out that help meeting planners stay focused and eliminate stress and feeling overwhelmed. Below are a few of Curran’s favorites.

Sanebox: Like many professions, an event planner’s inbox can be a huge stressor. It’s a constant battle to make sure you are seeing the emails that are important and filtering through the spam. Sanebox helps by cleaning up and organizing your inbox so you can get your life back. With Sanebox, you can eliminate distractions, get notifications when someone opens important emails and make sure important emails stay right in your inbox so you can see them!

Todoist: Todoist is an app that allows you to make “to-do” lists and put deadlines on tasks. You can make as many separate lists as you would like to organize. It will send you reminders when tasks need to be completed. This app is very helpful to a busy planner juggling multiple tasks and jobs.

Trello: Curran uses Trello to create assembly lines for streamlined production. But there are so many uses that would benefit event planners. You can share a Trello board with your entire event team and move/assign tasks to the person that needs to handle each portion of your event. This not only makes it clear who is designated for each task, but allows event planners to have a quick glance at what progress is being made and what needs to be done.

Train your brain to take a moment to enjoy what others in your personal life and health will also suffer when you are back at your office. Enjoy it. We are truly blessed to help create moments and experiences for people on this planet to enjoy. So take a moment to enjoy what others in your life have planned for you.” Curran agrees. “When it’s your off-time, really take breaks ... whether that is going for a run outside or getting coffee with your friends,” he says. “You can’t help others if your cup is empty, so self-care is crucial to remain calm and in control as an event planner.”

If a planner does not get a handle on the stress of their job, they will more than likely burn out. On top of that, a meeting or event planner’s personal life and health will also suffer for the abundance of stress, and it could affect their relationships, well-being and so much more.

“The best way to handle event planning stress is to prioritize your tasks and roll with the punches.”

Will Curran
Chief Event Einstein, Endless Events, New York, NY

Workout Apps/Subscriptions: It’s been proven time and time again that working out can greatly reduce stress. Event and meeting planners are constantly on the run and crunched for time. For this reason, Curran recommends a subscription-based workout program or app. These programs allow you to fit in a good workout anywhere with the click of a button and can accommodate any time restrictions and fitness levels.

“You are blessed to be working in a profession you love,” Collins says.
Managing Incentive Programs

The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful

By Christine Loomis

R

searchers of the study, “Voice of the Market, Part 2: Engaging Program Owners in the Incentive Marketpace,” interviewed 50 program managers representing a wide range of non-cash and cash rewards programs who “spent anywhere from $25,000 to millions of dollars annually on programs that included one or more of the following types of reward: travel, award points, merchandise, gift cards and branded items.”

Among the insights gleaned from the study:

- Incentive and recognition program design and management is not universally included in standard business school curricula.
- A career in incentive and recognition program management is not universally visible or relevant to most people entering the workforce.
- Resources are hard to find on the internet, since new program managers do not know what industry-specific search terms to use.
- Networking is a critical and valued source of learning for program managers.
- We asked six industry professionals from across North America for their insights on how their careers in the incentive industry have progressed, and what they see as important for the future and for those coming into the industry today.

All of our experts agreed on a few things, including the importance of certification, and most relayed that the critical resources they depended on early in their careers to learn the ins and outs of the job were their experienced colleagues and industry partners. Beyond that, our experts had a variety of insights to benefit today’s incentive managers.

Philip Eidsvold, CIS, CITP, senior director of client services at Minnesota-based One10, and president-elect of the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), has spent his entire career in incentives—at the same incentive house.

“T started as a travel director in 1999, overseeing onsite operations for a wide array of award and recognition group travel programs. I landed in the world of incentives by chance, but quickly learned it was the industry,” he says. “It was made clear to us in our training that we were integral to the reward experience and that our guests worked very hard to earn the travel reward; therefore, their onsite experience had to be flawless and extraordinary.”

Like other incentive professionals, Eidsvold learned his job within his company, and he feels lucky to have been with a group that provided solid training and support. What has changed today, he says, is the increased importance of research and data related to incentives.

“As our industry has evolved, and especially after the great recession, there has been a major focus on driving the right kind of industry research and advocacy efforts that truly demonstrate the value of incentives,” he says. “We now have data-driven case studies and other proof points that clearly articulate that incentives drive better business results.”

Eidsvold says challenges often come from lack of education or understanding of the process. “From an agency perspective, our largest challenges often occur when our client-stakeholder isn’t properly trained in incentives or doesn’t understand the value of the program from an ROI perspective. This often happens when a meeting planner is assigned to oversee an incentive travel program,” he notes. “Rather than focusing on the winner experience or the work the attendee must do to earn the reward, they tend to focus their time on logistics vs. experience, and thus, aren’t optimizing the incentive strategy. We spend a great deal of time educating our clients to clearly understand the mechanics of the incentive so their organization can best benefit from the investment.”

Eidsvold traces much of the trajectory of his career to involvement in SITE. “As the only industry association focused on the advancement of incentive travel, SITE offers a wide range of education and networking opportunities through events at a regional, chapter and global level,” he says. “These events are full of CMP-certified educational opportunities that keep my incentive travel practice on its toes and allow me to bring that expertise and experience to our clients.”

Not surprisingly, Eidsvold recommends industry organizations as a good path for those starting out.

“They provide foundational education opportunities and compelling data-driven research that will allow you to add value to your organization,” he says, noting that they also provide multiple opportunities for critical networking and relationship building.

“Listen to fellow planners, listen to your suppliers and listen to your clients. There’s always something you don’t know or have yet to experience.”

Erica White, CMP
Client Onboarding Specialist, Event Operations
ITA Group
West Des Moines, IA

To those starting out, he says, “Don’t be afraid to be assertive and ask questions! Find an industry mentor willing to coach you and offer advice on how you can maximize your career potential in the incentives space ... because to be honest, it’s a great industry!”

Changes Over the Years

Gabrielle Spanton, executive vice president of business development for Host Global’s alliance of DMCs, says she has seen changes in both programs and award achievers over the 25 years she’s been in the business. Two areas in particular are, “No. 1, a higher demand for CSR activities that are unique and authentic to the destination, and No. 2, interest in destinations that were once considered ‘off-the-beaten track.’”

Additionally, Spanton says, award achievers have become more sophisticated and well-traveled, and many achieve awards over multiple years.

Like Eidsvold, Spanton points to the company she worked for early in her career as her source of education and training.

“When I started my career, our industry

...”Our guests worked very hard to earn the travel reward; therefore, their onsite experience had to be flawless and extraordinary.”

Philip Eidsvold, CIS, CITP
Senior Director of Client Services
One10
Minneapolis, MN
we didn't have the benefit of resources she says. “In short, my main resource ter understood is the timing required for training and education coupled with outcome if they afforded their partners ents would be truly delighted with the go outside the traditional incentive box from collaboration and require more brainstorming, “ she says. “The most er time in the process. ”

Theresa Link, CMP, CMM, Senior Buyer, Event Purchasing & Industry Relations ITA Group Shakopee, MN

Find a Mentor

White’s top suggestion for those new in the industry is to find a mentor. “Not just a point of contact to answer questions,” she says, “but someone willing to invest themselves to be part of your professional growth. This is such a great job, despite the stress, and having an advocate for yourself is important.” It’s also important to remain humble. White advises not to make the mistake of thinking you know everything. “I’ve been fortunate to have been surrounded by experienced planners,” she says. “Experience is a great teacher. I would not have known where to start if I had not talked to someone.”

Link says. “When I initially interviewed with that company, they described to me what his role entailed: administer- ing incentive sales trips, which allowed him to travel to destinations all over the world as part of researching each incentive. I jokingly said, ‘That’s actually the job I want.’ Within the year, I had taken on responsibility for incentive trips. Over the years, I’ve transitioned to third-party incentive houses, as well as managing an in-house corporate meetings department. Currently, I work within the sourcing and purchasing arm for ITA Group, which focuses on creating powerful results by inspiring authentic, lasting emotional connections.”

Link believes that career progression is often about learning on the job, too. “This industry is constantly changing and evolving. The world seems to have gotten smaller and our reach to have gotten larger. Through technology, we can accomplish more than we could ever imagine when I began. But doing ‘more’ isn’t always what’s most important; doing ‘greater’ is the key,” she says. “As our clients and their clients become more well-traveled, attend more events and become savvier, we have to raise the bar creating memo- rable experiences that will resonate for a lifetime. My role continues to evolve along with the industry. I learn more about events and how to create mean- ingful connections through events each and every day.”

There are challenges related to those savvy clients who also have access to technology and can research destina- tions. It means, Links says, that incen- tive managers must dig even deeper into their options and possibilities and be ever more creative.

“While the greatest challenge today might be that our clients have gotten smarter, that actually creates tremen- dous opportunity for us to be better and to partner together on amazing projects industry, “ Link notes. “It might be easier with current technology to forget this. I encourage anyone start- ing out to reach out to as many people as possible who are in the industry in whatever capacity. I encourage them to read industry publications, subscribe to industry emails/blogs and to join a local chapter of a relevant association. All of these items will build on each other and help them to make the con- nections that will likely become lifelong

Erica White, CMP, an Iowa-based White believes her biggest stum- bles early on was, ‘getting into the tactical weeds too early. I wanted to dive in and start choosing entertainment, décor and menus. I didn’t take the time to review historical data and truly understand the objec- tives of the event and the demographic- ics of the attendees. With experience and the evolution of our industry, I’ve learned to first step back and develop a master plan. From there, I made sure each decision was tied into the overall theme of the event.”

Budgets and unrealistic expectations are her most likely challenges today. “Many times I find that another organization did and then asks us to duplicate. Often, their budget won’t allow them to do exactly what they say, “White says. “Finding a way to meet their expectations, within their budget, can feel nearly impossible at times. I’m pretty sure there isn’t an event planner that doesn’t struggle with it, but I also don’t want to pay for it.”

And then there are the questions that White says keep her up at night. “Intuition plays a strong part in the success of any good planner, and I was fortunate to find mine early on,” she says. “I incorporate these exciting new ideas and still stay in budget?”

Link adds. “Listen to fellow planners, and the evolution of our industry, I’ve that are hard-earned, “ she says. “I’ve always wanted to be in travel and am living my dream,” he says. He believes the resources within the industry have been incredible. “Talented and knowledgeable ven- dors have helped me learn about des- tinations I have not seen personally,” he says. As for a career path, he sees that impacting his personal development and his company. “I see growing our company to be the leader in Utah and beyond. I will need to be adaptable to grow. I will need to stay on top of technology available to us. I will need to maintain the focus on delivering wow experi- ences,” adds Lambert.

Challenge, he notes, often relates to many industry magazines. ”

“Many of our customers have had the same budget for 10 years.... This means the pressure is on to deliver more for less.”

Rick Lambert President and CEO Destinations, Inc. South Jordan, UT

“Therese Link, CMP, CMM, an Iowa-based planner, says keep her up at night. Ever-evolving technology is a pro- verbial double-edged sword for those new to the industry, as well. “This is and always has been a rela- tionships industry,” Link notes. “It might be easy with current technology to forget this. I encourage anyone start- ing out to reach out to as many people as possible who are in the industry in whatever capacity. I encourage them to read industry publications, subscribe to industry emails/blogs and to join a local chapter of a relevant association. All of these items will build on each other and help them to make the con- nections that will likely become lifelong

As for her best advice for those starting out, she echoes Eidsvold. “Find a mentor who is truly willing to share their knowledge and takes a genuine interest in helping you expand. A great mentor will be with you for years, so choose wisely,” she says.

Therese Link, CMP, CMM, a Minnesota- based senior buyer, event purchasing and industry relations, with ITA Group, has been in the industry for 25 years. “I started as an executive assistant working for the head of a sales division,” she says. “Now, 12 years in, I have access to many of the industry’s best minds. A mentor will be with you for years, so choose wisely,” she says.

As for her best advice for those starting out, she echoes Eidsvold. “Find a mentor who is truly willing to share their knowledge and takes a genuine interest in helping you expand. A great mentor will be with you for years, so choose wisely,” she says. “In short, my main resource ter understood is the timing required for training and education coupled with outcome if they afforded their partners ents would be truly delighted with the go outside the traditional incentive box from collaboration and require more brainstorming, “ she says. “The most er time in the process. ”

Therese Link, CMP, CMM, a Minnesota- based senior buyer, event purchasing and industry relations, with ITA Group, has been in the industry for 25 years. “I started as an executive assistant working for the head of a sales division,” she says. “Now, 12 years in, I have access to many of the industry’s best minds. A mentor will be with you for years, so choose wisely,” she says.
“Many of our customers have had the same budget for 10 years, and costs have increased significantly, especially in the last five years. This means the pressure is on to deliver more for less. Another challenge is avoiding being cookie-cutter and finding creative new enhancements.”

Lambert’s top advice for planners coming into the field: “Always learn. Recognize you may not have the answers and that saying, ‘I don’t know, but I will find out’ is an OK answer.”

Erica Gibbons, DMCP, regional president, Hosts Washington DC, Hosts Baltimore and Hosts Chicago, says she has relied throughout her career on “an amazing network of passionate planners within our Hosts offices and consortium of Hosts Global DMC members. Catching up with these business owners and experience designers — whether at formal Hosts Global Best Practices meeting, in a casual phone call or seeing what they are up to on Instagram — keeps up the cycle of sharing and encouragement required for continual creativity and professional inspiration.”

Gibbons believes the job has changed and will continue to change. “Ten years ago, these programs had a more standard agenda, i.e., three days, welcome reception, offsite, dine-around, a room drop every night,” she says. “Now, the sky’s the limit, especially for planners who love to get out of their comfort zone. Everything can be tailored for the individual/couple participating in the program. Agendas and itineraries used to need to have ‘something for everyone’ but now it’s something for you, the individual. Your day doesn’t need to look like anyone else’s, yet you have this incredible shared experience, too.”

Feelings First, Details Second

There are some things Gibbons wishes she knew when she started. “I wish I knew that just because every logistical element went off without a hitch it doesn’t mean it was memorable. When you focus on the feeling first and details second, the details come together to support the emotional engagement ensuring guests are fulfilled and develop incredible memories,” she says.

And there are a few things she wishes clients better understood about creating incentive programs. “I wish our clients understood that if you want something truly ‘never been done before,’ you have to be willing to A) take a risk and B) provide the time needed to develop, vet and present what that program can be,” she says echoing Spanton. “When you need a proposal with a 72-hour deadline, the better course is to ask for something that has been done before (with great success) and customize it from there to fit the unique needs of your audience. “Also,” she adds, “that the ‘never been done before’ experiences often can’t come with photographs! You have to be more open to collaborative brainstorming and visual storyboards that ultimately produce the experience you’re seeking. Most of our clients find this to be the fun part, and I’m lucky to work with so many awesome clients who are true partners in the process.”

To those coming into the industry, she says, “Be engaged. Be there onsite. Watch the guests and their interactions with the experience you designed. There’s nothing more satisfying than seeing the fruits of your labor come together and witness the positive impact of your work. Take time to take in the results.”

Our experts provided a multitude of insights and suggestions. Most of all, they made one thing very clear: The incentive industry is an amazing, creative and wonderful industry in which to work, learn and grow.

Erica Gibbons, DMCP
Regional President, Hosts Washington DC, Hosts Baltimore, Hosts Chicago, Hosts Global
Washington DC

“Nothing more satisfying than seeing the fruits of your labor come together and witness the positive impact of your work.”
Venue Selection

Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs is an IACC-certified meeting facility with more than 40,000 square feet of function space and offers many engaging experiences.

Conference Centers Have New Appeal

Destination Immersion and Recreational Offerings Deflect the ‘No-Frills’ Stereotype

By Patrick Simms

Since Wyndham acquired Dolce in 2015, the company has welcomed four properties to the Dolce portfolio, making it more attractive since Wyndham came in with its $60 million renovation earlier this year. The new facility is LEED-certified and houses more than 40,000 square feet of flexible meeting space.

Dolce has been the points program. Another beneficial feature is class rooms with tiered seating. “That’s not something you’re going to run across in a standard hotel; it would be more the exception than the norm,” says Durocher. “Yet they also have great restaurants and locations that are conducive to getting out into nature and exploring the landscape. My clients also like that they’re close to major airports, but they’re not in the city center. For their type of programs, that works well because they are able to keep their attendees focused and not lose them to the distractions of being right on main street in an urban area.”

The centers “have really been able to meet the needs of my clients, who need multiple breakouts for small group work and a general session room … which is conducive to faculty-led sessions.”

Amy Durocher, Director, Global Accounts
Global Cynergies, LLC, Scottsdale, AZ

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In addition, Dolce has “always been extremely collaborative in my dealings with them. If things haven’t gone the way my clients wanted them to, they’ve

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"They get really high marks on F&B and service levels from attendees," Du rocher remarks. "For the coffee breaks, they have hubs where they set up refreshments and make sure there are healthy options. That’s always something my clients are looking for."

Durocher has partnered with Wyndham since its acquisition by Wyndham. "One of the things that’s been very attractive since Wyndham came in with Dolce has been the points program. That’s something that is a benefit to my client and was not in place when they were our entity," she says.

In addition, Dolce has "always been extremely collaborative in my dealings with them. If things haven’t gone the way my clients wanted them to, they’ve
always been willing to jump in there and find a solution to keep the client happy.”

Rhonda Walton, program coordina-
tor for Siemens Corporation, has also
partnered with Dolce since before the
acquisition. Among the brand’s prop-
erties she has successfully utilized for
global executive leadership programs
is the Q Center, set on 95 acres and
featuring more than 40,000 square feet of IACC-certified event space, including
16 individual meeting rooms. Groups also
have at their disposal an eight-story atrium,
a rooftop garden and a health club.

A reopening that is making headlines
in the conference center world is the
Monterey Conference Center. The Cali-
ifornia property debuted its $60 million
renovation with a ribbon-cutting cere-
monies in January. Situated in downtown
Monterey since 1977, the new facility is
modernized, LEED-certified and houses
more than 200 miles of nature trails.

A key thing for me is the food
because our attendees are there for
weeks, and I want to have food that’s high-
quality, with a diversity in taste.”

Rhonda Walton, Program Coordinator
Siemens Corporation, Jersey, NJ

create company-branded signs with
team names for the different breakout
rooms. Between sessions, the Q Center
offers various teambuilding events. On
one occasion, the staff organized mar-
garita- and nacho-making competitions
for Siemens participants, Walton relates.
“A key thing for me is the food be-
cause our attendees are there for
weeks, and I want to have food that's high-
quality, with a diversity in taste because
it’s a program where we have a diverse
ethnic group of people.” The Q Center
meets all those requirements, she notes.

The Summit, A Dolce Hotel, is a new-
build hotel and conference center lo-
cated less than 10 miles from downtown
Cincinnati, Ohio. The hotel offers 22,000
square feet of function space, including
16 individual meeting rooms. Groups also
have at their disposal an eight-story atrium,
a rooftop garden and a health club.

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and II guest wings.

Conveniences
And the transportation logistics are
streamlined. Located about 45 minutes
down from downtown Chicago, the Q Center
ers its own transportation service.

“So I can just tell my group, ‘Here is
this number or here is the registration
link — just go in and put in your re-
quest,’” says Walton.

The meeting rooms themselves offer
many conveniences, she adds. “The Q
Center has been a plus for me over other
hotels because their meeting space has
all these white boards, and we use a lot
of posters. So, for me, that’s phenomenal
because they have white boards with
magnets that I use to hang up posters
that connect to the wall, and it makes
life so much easier.”

The size of the facility allows Sie-
mens to run concurrent programs on
two separate floors, and facility staff

The Woodlands Resort & Conference Center in Texas revitalized its 60,000
square feet of meeting space as part of its $75 million renovation.

Teambuilding Activities
Located just 12 miles from Dulles International Airport and 35 miles
from Washington, D.C., The National Conference Center houses 917 guest
rooms and more than 265,000 square feet of function space, including
a 16,552-square-foot ballroom. The facil-
ity prides itself on being at the forefront
of teambuilding and leadership develop-
ment, supported by its partnership
with The Browne Center for Innovative
Learning. The program “Challenge by
Choice,” an experiential teambuilding
program designed for participants of all
physical abilities, was introduced at the
2017 Reston Herndon Meeting Planners
(RHMP) Summer Camp.

A wide selection of teambuilding
activities is also available at Hilton Chi-
cago/Oak Brook Hills Resort & Confer-
ence Center, set on a 150-acre estate.

Options include a scavenger hunt, bask-
ketball free throw, putting contests and
a golf simulator competition. Partici-
pants of intensive conference sessions
can also benefit from a 15- to 30-min-
ute stretching or light exercise routine,
led by a SMART Golf & Fitness Instruc-
tion staff member.

The 386-room Hilton Chicago/Oak
Brook Hills Resort & Conference Center
features more than 42,000 square feet of IACC-certified event space, including
a 13,432-square-foot Grand Ballroom
and 36 meeting rooms. Other property
features of note include the Audubon-
certified 18-hole Willow Crest Golf
Club and a 145-seat amphitheater and
outdoor pavilion.

The Frank Lloyd Wright-designed
Emory Conference Center Hotel in Geor-
gia is home to what is billed as the larg-
est amphitheater in the Southeast, seat-
ing up to 240 attendees. That facility
complements more than 32,000 square
feet of conference space, including
a 5,376-square-foot ballroom.

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a 5,376-square-foot ballroom.

Unlimited possibilities await guests at
The Emory Conference Center Hotel. In addition to the 386-room
Hilton Chicago/Oak Brook Hills Resort & Conference Center, the
property includes a 170-room wing known as the Oak Brook
House via a short walking bridge. The
property also offers its own transportation service.

During their free time, attendees
can explore 26 acres of forest preserve,
or stay inside and play at Wisteria Lanes
— an onsite bowling alley. Located near
downtown Atlanta, the 325-room prop-
erty is connected to the Houston Mill
House via a short walking bridge. The
1920s Georgian fieldstone manors
make a quaint setting for a special event,
surrounded by gardens and oak trees.

Conference centers like the Wood-
lands, Oak Brook Hills and Emory
take full advantage of their natural

Hilton Chicago/Oak Brook Hills Resort & Conference Center offers a wide range of activities, including a golf simulator to prepare attendees for a teambuilding golf competition.
surroundings in order to both foster a sense of seclusion and afford attendees recreational activities. While the South San Francisco Conference Center does not offer acres of nature, it ranks among the most environmentally conscious centers in the nation. Certified LEED Gold for Existing Buildings in 2015, the South San Francisco Conference Center is a model of sustainable practices and would appeal to groups who prioritize green meetings.

For example, the facility diverts and recycles high volumes of materials, does not print brochures, maintains a food composting program and green cleaning program and features water stations with reusable water containers.

The South San Francisco Conference Center is located 15 minutes from San Francisco and 20 minutes from Silicon Valley. Featuring complete wireless connectivity, the meeting space spans 20,500 square feet, including a Grand Ballroom divisible into 10 meeting rooms.

Another conveniently located conference center out west is the IACC-certified Conference Center of Las Vegas (CCLV), rebranded from IPEC Las Vegas in 2016. Located just five minutes from McCarran International Airport and the Las Vegas Strip, this sleek, modern facility offers more than 20,000 square feet of flexible function space suitable for groups of 50 to 720 attendees.

Highlights of the function space include a 10,000-square-foot ballroom and 5,000-square-foot reception foyer with a 29-foot-high ceiling. Events are supported by state-of-the-art AV (including two 22-foot-high LED screens in the reception foyer and south lobby) and a 2,500-square-foot kitchen.

From a service perspective, the CCLV went the extra mile: Sales & Operations Director Catherine Price and her staff “were there every moment for any request we had.” In addition, “they provided a free continental breakfast to the guests staying at the hotel, which was very nice,” Dooley notes.

Today’s conference center market is so diverse that planners do well to eschew stereotypical ideas about how they can be utilized. They may be suitable for customer-facing events, or perhaps internal meetings where a recreation and reward aspect is an important complement to learning.

And as Dolce’s European properties are demonstrating, destination immersion is within the scope of today’s conference center, as well.

For example, Queen Bee Market, a San Diego-based artisan market, held two events at the CCLV over three days, says company co-owner Kellie Dooley. The first one was craft night,” a ticketed event for 50 guests that included a catered dinner and dessert, swag bags, raffle items and three crafts done on-site and led by a renowned craft leader. The second one was Queen Bee Market, a handmade and vintage shopping experience that was open to the public. It featured 70 vendors that sold handmade and vintage goods, as well as food trucks and live music. More than a thousand shoppers attended the event.”

While an IACC-certified venue typically does not host events such as these, the CCLV had advantages for the Market. “We chose the conference center for its location, size, flexibility in space and setup,” Dooley explains. “We require a surround-sound system and liked the ability to display our logo in their many AV screens throughout the facility. We also loved that it serves as a private hotel, as well. Vendors and guests can stay at the same location as the event, which is a huge draw for us.”

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Meeting Trends

Interactive Meetings and Events Help Build Professional Relationships

By Maura Keller

These days, teambuilding activities are the "name of the game," with companies and organizations of all sizes investing time, resources and energy into building better teams with fun, interactive, creative meetings and events.

The popularity of certain types of group participation exercises changes from year to year. Themed meetings are also likely to encourage attendance as prospective attendees anticipate what is to come.

Corporate event planner Beth Lawrence, president and CEO of Beth Lawrence LLC, says, “Teambuilding has actually become increasingly popular, in my opinion, as we become more and more dependent on technology. It’s ironic that in our tech-savvy and global society, we are now looking for more real-life connections. Almost every event I have planned has some sort of networking or teambuilding component.”

But these connections don’t just happen. Meeting and event planners have to provide opportunities for them to occur.

“Teambuilding has grown up,” says Bailey Roth, president of Redstone Agency, a boutique event management company. “These days, it’s more than just playing interactive — and, let’s be honest, sometimes silly — games. In the corporate world in particular, organizations want to create a culture that’s broadly relevant. In practice, that has meant a shift toward using teambuilding to develop longer-term relationships and communities based on a shared culture and mission, rather than short-term relationships based on transient factors. People want to build professional relationships that can last beyond a single conference or event. There’s no relay race for that.”

Roth stresses that teambuilding remains popular because collaboration and professional relationships will always be important. But the reality is a bit more nuanced: There are different kinds of teams and various types of teambuilding options.

“The first and more typical kind of teambuilding involves enhancing collaboration and relationships within a corporate environment,” Roth says.

Another type of teambuilding employs activities at events to make participants experience a connection to a cause or mission.

“As corporate event planners, we are always asking whether participants feel like they belong at our events,” Roth says. “Do they share the cause? Are they engaged with other participants? As long as we are asking those questions, there will be a need for effective teambuilding.”

Elizabeth Sherry, meeting planner and engagement manager at the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, says teambuilding activities in their once-traditional sense of creating the tallest structure out of spaghetti, tape and newspaper is out.

“But what is becoming more popular is creativity in engagement, such as having a Jenga competition spanning a day, or ‘forcing’ people to have conversations with each other not about work, which in the end will create better synergy when work conversations begin again,” Sherry says.

Now teambuilding has transformed to gather people in order to actually have conversations and get to know each another on a personal level.

“I am sure technology has played a huge factor into why this has become more valuable today,” Sherry says. “Think of the last standard meeting you went to. Did everyone show up right at the time of meeting start? If they were there early, were they on their phones not talking with the person next to them? A decade ago, the five minutes of waiting would have been filled with talk about how someone’s kids were doing or how their parents’ health was. Now it is filled with ‘click,’ ‘tap’ and ‘swipe.’”

What’s Hot/What’s Not

There is a reason why so many meetings and events seem to be cookie-cutter productions. There are people to please and placate, funds to be allocated, guest lists to be trimmed and complex rules of etiquette to be followed.

It is no wonder that so many people end up with the same event they have attended a dozen times before. Why not orchestrate a teambuilding event that creates a distinctive atmosphere and helps these meetings stand out from the crowd?

As with any facet of the meetings and events industry, the popularity of certain types of teambuilding activities ebbs and flows from year to year. Lawrence says two types of programs are gaining in popularity. These include event apps and gamification activities.

“There are branded apps that allow guests to connect prior to conferences and after, as well as Slack, which can be used to build community,” Lawrence says. “Onsite, there are gamification options within these apps or supplemental event technologies.”

In fact, Roth says technology is absolutely critical and, used effectively, can help foster the type of


relationships and communities within the teambuilding arena.

"Technology allows people to connect pre- and post-event, facilitating connections beyond the breakfast buffet," Roth says. "And it doesn’t have to be complicated. A tool as simple and accessible as an Instagram hashtag can go a long way. For those interested in exploring more sophisticated online community apps, I’d recommend looking at Poken by G2S."

"The trend very much favors activities involving a single, united group, so ‘color wars’ and other competitions involving multiple teams are out of favor," Roth says. "That’s a positive development, in my view, because connections based on shared objectives are more likely to foster loyalty and appreciation of culture than those based on assignment to a given team in a competition."

Charitable team activities are also favored. Companies and participants like how their event has a dual purpose — they are growing closer as a team and helping others at the same time. Some meetings and events find teams participating in a treasure hunt to collect items needed by a local charity — offering ways for teams to work together in a different way than a traditional ‘let’s stuff care packages’ event.

Some meeting planners are also seeing an emerging teambuilding trend in the area of technology. Today’s scavenger hunts are taking a big leap forward by using smartphones and tablets, offering interactive technology that will far surpass the scavenger hunts of yesteryear whereby participants documented their success with Polaroid cameras.

The novelty in teambuilding these days “Classic” events, such as Wacky Olympics and Cardboard Boat Regattas, are “so passé.” Also, planners have seen a long and successful run of reality television shows as teambuilding experiences. However, Survivor-type events to Dancing With the Stars themes are coming to an end. "Major corporations have implemented a more positive and fun work culture. The future looks bright for more teambuilding within the corporate market."

Elisabeth Sherry
Meeting Planner and Engagement Manager
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
St. Paul, MN

The exception to that is culinary teambuilding, which remains “hot,” bringing teams together through food.

What to Look For

When considering appropriate teambuilding activities, planners should talk to the teambuilding company about the group and what they hope to achieve with the event. The more information that can be shared with the teambuilding facilitator, the better job they can do at customizing the program to make sure it is a really great fit.

Be sure to trust the experts. A meeting or event planner may not know what’s best for their group, but a good teambuilding company can work with the planner to help determine what would be the perfect teambuilding opportunity.

In fact, a common mistake meeting professionals make is assuming that each teambuilding company will run programs the same way. Remember every teambuilding company has different nuances to their programs and facilitators with different levels of experience running them.

“I predict that teambuilding serves a secondary purpose, such as being active in coming the years, as demands on time continue to be a factor,” Roth says. For many planners, teambuilding is not just a novelty, but the popular reality show of the same culture. “The future of business will be working with companies that are like-minded in their approach with how they treat employees, whether it be in customer service, business culture,” Sherry says. “Major corporations have implemented a more positive and fun work culture. They are building their brand of off with working with people who share the same vision. The future looks bright for more teambuilding within the corporate market.”

Options to Explore

Successful organizations have capitalized on the strategic value of teambuilding, the imperative of bringing people together to accomplish real business results. Engaging meeting and event attendees via unique Sherry experiences can positively impact the bottom line. Teambuilding, if properly planned and executed, will improve, educate and inspire those who attend.

It sends a loud message to all stakeholders that employees matter, are valued and that building a strong team mentality is vital to the success of an event and creating some key teambuilding ideas include:

• One-Day Adventures

For meetings and events that feature teambuilding activities that can last an entire day, considering exploring private teambuilding resorts or a private ranch where teams can enjoy bonding activities, such as paintball, a ropes course, challenge course, or an eco-adventure race, a leadership challenge and zip line. The ropes/challenge course, for example, could provide a teambuilding program that incorporates communication, trust, problem-solving and fun.

• City-exploring Options

Corporations can offer unique and memorable teambuilding experiences and scavenger hunts, utilizing all things Old West!” Several ranches throughout the West and Southwest areas of the U.S. offer a variety of teambuilding activities that will enhance a group’s cooperation, decision-making skills and encourage teamwork.

Some teambuilding offers include team penning and foot rosettes, while celebrating all things Old West!” Several ranches throughout the West and Southwest areas of the U.S. offer a variety of teambuilding activities that will enhance a group’s cooperation, decision-making skills and encourage teamwork.

C&IT

"We need to continue to be a factor, considering the reality is people want a unique event that will not only appeal to those who have been."
Meetings Management

Budgeting For Today's Market

What Planners Need to Know to Calculate Strategically

The 2019 Global Meetings and Events Forecast, released by American Express Global Business Travel Meetings & Events in October, gives planners and stakeholders in the meetings industry reason for optimism. Issa Jouaneh, senior vice president and general manager, American Express Meetings & Events, a divi-

sion of American Express Global Business Travel, provides some insights in this year report.

“The meetings industry has bounced back after its dramatic slowdown 10 years ago to settle into a new normal of steady and stable growth,” he says. “After four consecutive years of growth in both spend and number of attendees, meetings are thriving, and incentives have not just come back, but continue to grow.”

Yet even in positive economic times, changes related to client demands, attendee needs and the evolution of tools and the way in which meetings are constructed put pressures on planners and, ultimately, budgets.

Trends & Changes

One continuing disruptor impacting all facets of meetings is technology. “The evolution of technology is having a substantial impact on meeting budgets,” Jouaneh says, particularly regarding the end-to-end management of delivery and the attendee experience. Emerging technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence and facial recognition, and the ongoing development of mobile-app and hybrid-meeting solutions, are creating innovation and value-added opportunities for both meeting owners and attendees.

Consolidation and growth, Jouaneh continues, are also changing things up. Consolidation across the industry and the rise of new players creates an environment where meeting planners have an eclectic range of choice and capabili-
ties but are under significant pressure to meet growing demands. Meetings activ-

ity is expected to grow across all meeting types and regions in 2019. Meetings will be both larger and longer, with attendees increasing as much as 2.4 per-
cent and meeting length growing up to 1.9 percent in some regions.

While economic and geopolitical in-

fluences continue to spark uncertainty and affect budgets, Jouaneh says, “The meetings industry remains resilient and focused on creating successful experiences. The localization of meet-
ings programs is a growing trend as meeting owners to clearly articulate their desired outcomes for meetings, so budget can be allocated to items that directly sup-
port meeting goals — particularly when tough choices need to be made during the planning process.”

Despite tightening budgets and an underlying shift in funding, Jouaneh says, “Planners are managing competing demands for strong meetings activity and optimal attendee experiences to es-

establish a healthy and optimistic outlook for the meetings and events industry on both a global and regional level.”

The nitty-gritty details often have just as much of an impact as larger global conten-
tions. “Clients when it comes to tech, they see increased budgets for technology rather than sticking to what they’ve ever had in history, allowing them to continue to support the budget for meetings and incentives. While there’s still pressure to meet growing demands, they are also craving the F2F expe-

rience,” she says. “As planners putting together a budget, we need to shift our focus and ensure that both tech and F2F have the financial support to be outstanding, and that can be costly.”

Additionally, Milgram says, “I’ve seen a significant increase in event cancellation insurance costs. With everything going on in the world, it’s not just earthquakes and hurricanes we have to worry about. It used to be a quick calculation of a dol-

lar amount times anticipated attendance. Not so simple anymore, and while this expense is maybe 3 to 4 percent of an overall expense budget, cutting back on the coverage because it wasn’t properly budgeted will cost far more in the end.”

Emily Thibodeau, CMP, CITP, senior director operations, event management with Maritz Travel Company, says she’s seeing increasing client demand for more personalized experiences, as well as high expectations around technology, and both add to the budget. “Clients request events that allow guests to experience things that they couldn’t do on their own,” she says. “I see that even in meetings. In addition to extra budget for personal experiences, we see increased budgets for technology items such as onsite imple-
mementation of RFID, interest in facial recognition check-in or mobile apps, which are now almost standard.”

But, she continues, “The most revolutionary thing I’ve been reading lately is that corporations are a bit more cash rich today. Fortune 500 companies have more in the bank than they’ve ever had in history, allowing them to continue to support the budget for meetings and incentives. While there’s still pressure to get more done for less, companies are investing in experiences, rewards and recognition for their teams, perhaps more than in the past.”

For Amy Maxey, manager, global con-

ferences and events at Hyland Software, two trends are impacting budget. “Costs and competition are on the rise,” she says. “Compression in the marketplace has definitely impacted budget plan-

ning. Hotels and meeting venues are being less aggressive with incentives as the demand for meeting space increases.”

In terms of competition, she says, “We have a lot of folks tell us that due to budget limitations, they can only attend one conference every year or every other year. Many times, organizations have to alternate employees, as well. We offer mechan-

isms to ensure clients are getting the most out of their budget.”

“Competition is coming not just from other meetings but from leisure travelers, too, notes Thibodeau. “Hotels continue to see revenue going through more transient travel, which makes booking group travel more competitive. I see our budgets affected by this such that clients are feeling they don’t have as much room for negotiation as they previously had or where decisions are having to be made earlier than they normally would be.”

Challenges Big & Small

Regardless of the economic situation or time period, planners will face challeng-

es and have to find ways to mitigate them.
**What Do Planners Wish Their Clients/Companies Better Understood About Budgets?**

**Alison Milgram**: "A budget is a big-picture item and often based on location. Your vacation to Florida this year is costing more than last year. Why is it different? However, when it comes to our business budgets, we almost take it more personally than our individual budgets."

**Emily Thibodeau**: "Our event management team enjoys designing fantastic experiences on a budget. As a result, they are maximizing funds to achieve the desired outcomes while providing the best experiences. If there could be more understanding of how timeline dates and decisions affect budget, it would be helpful in an ever-increasing cost and getting clients to understand the event budget to be any different. However, when it comes to our business budgets, we almost take it more personally than our individual budgets."

**Amy Maxey**: "Actual costs. Not only on F&B and AV but also labor costs. In some cities where union labor is required, you may have to pay a four-hour minimum call just to move a few boxes. And, when you're maximizing costs, you continue to rise, especially for overtime, it can make a big dent."

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**In order to mitigate potential problems, it’s important to understand the client’s priorities and the desired business results.**

Emily Thibodeau, CMP, CITP

Senior Director, Operations (Event Management) Maritz Travel Company

Fenton, MO

“Our 2019 Global Meetings and Events Forecast predicts 2019 will be a busy year for the industry,” says Jouaneh. But, he notes, with global expenses increasing at a faster rate than meetings budgets, planners are being challenged to master this increased volume and maintain an effective ROI despite limited funds. More than half of planners surveyed, including 68 percent of North American planners, say they are working with smaller commission pools from which to fund their meetings.

“Mitigating this problem requires a commitment to creating strategic meet- ing priorities that prioritize the attendee experience and embrace technology to meet the desired results.”

For Milgram, “The No. 1 challenge that can throw off a budget is other people, specifically, those in a decision-making position. They get to a destination and just start ordering — equipment, food, additional signage, etc. — and seeing how much it costs. None of their plans in an organization, the venue and/or supplier may not come back and ask the planner before they go ahead and order. This can be a tough challenge to manage; however, making it clear with suppliers/vendors/venues that all requests must go through you first will at least help you track any onsite or additional expenses and make it easier to be more cost-efficient.”

Maxey points to last-minute items added by venues. “Sometimes you have to stand your ground, and you always have to reference what’s in the contract.”

**Budget-Busters**

What’s most likely to throw off a budget? The most prevalent answer is the unforeseen and unexpected. "We were able to successfully negotiate a site fee, for example, and was able to negotiate smaller rates for the event managers face today. For instance, meeting planners are still expected to get more for less. "I think the biggest challenge our clients are now willing to share is the unexpected costs that seem to keep going up and beyond the budget line items prioritized by planners. As a result, there can be a lack of agreement among meeting owners and stakeholders about what is the desired outcome of the event.”

**Drilling Down on Increases**

Calculating the greatest increases impacting budgets today is no simple task, according to Jouaneh, who says increases vary depending on such things as meeting priorities and location. "The 2019 Forecast discovered that budget line items prioritized by planners varies greatly by location," she says. "For example, North American and European planners value "Vehicle Rates" and "Air Lift & Access" the most. Meanwhile, Asia-Pacific and Central/South America meetings and events industries both place a 2019 Forecast discovered that budget line items prioritized by planners varies greatly by location," she says. "For example, North American and European planners value "Vehicle Rates" and "Air Lift & Access" the most. Meanwhile, Asia-Pacific and Central/South America meetings and events industries both place a greater emphasis on "Economic/ Political stability.""

Milgram has been watching room rates rise over time. "Then, one day, you’re reviewing a proposal in a second city, although you’ve noticed it’s costing more than the first-tier city you used a year ago,” she says. "That rise in cost may be worth it if a hotel has had a substantial renovation, she notes. “But that’s something a planner should investigate before committing.”

Echoing the 2019 Global Meetings and Events Forecast, Thibodeau sees overall costs outpacing inflation in all general program areas. "The most noticeable two increases I’ve seen in recent years, however, are related to hotels and airlines. Hotels price it, room rates, meeting space rentals or rising food and beverage minimums, have contributed to increased spend. But I’ve also consistently seen clients now looking to budget more for ancillary airline charges, such as seat assignments and baggage fees,” she says.

"What Do Planners Wish Their Clients/Companies Better Understood About Budgets?"
Ramp Up Your Skills

The Current Status of Planner Certification and Education

The U.S. meetings industry is an economic powerhouse, with 1.9 million meetings in 2016 contributing $845 billion in economic impact, according to the Event Industry Council’s 2018 Economic Significance of Meetings to the U.S. Economy Report.

Meetings require qualified, educated, knowledgeable planners who understand budgets, contracts, ROI and value, not to mention design, F&B, space re-use and budgets, contracts, ROI and value, not to mention design, F&B, space re-use and legal and other intricacies of particular meetings marketplace and arguably better in the special events industry in the last 12 months.”

Certified Meeting Management (CMM)

The CMM is different than the CMP. To start, it’s a certificate program, not a certification. “It’s important to note the distinction between certifications and certificates,” Aman says. “Certification is an accredited designation that demonstrates event planning expertise and experience. It’s a title that a planner earns after passing an exam after a set number of years of experience in planning events. A certificate is a document that proves you’ve taken a course for the purpose of learning about event planning; and that you’ve passed that particular program’s requirements for showing that you understand the material.”

The assessment-based CMM certificate is offered through MPI. “Our CMM certificate program prepares meeting professionals for leadership roles in the industry,” says Jessie States, CMM, manager of professional development at MPI. “It’s an intensive, three-phased executive education program that packs the highlights of a world-class graduate degree program into four days, followed by eight hours of advanced-level online coursework and a final project focused on solving a real-world, work-based problem. Taught by Indiana University faculty, the entire program takes 15 weeks to complete. Upon successful completion of the coursework, attendees earn 48 clock hours and 48 university CEUs. They also have the opportunity to earn three graduate credit hours, which can be applied to the Indiana University Kelley School’s Executive Degree Program (EDP) Business Management Certificate.”

Our prep course enables learners to earn those credits while studying for the exam. Certified Special Events Professional (CSEP)

For planners interested in focusing on special events, there’s CSEP certification. “The CSEP is the only other openly recognized certification in the event planning industry,” Aman says, “and focuses more on special events than meeting planning. Just like with the CMP, candidates are required to have three years of experience in the industry and must be currently employed or have been employed, in the special events industry in the last 12 months.”

“Recruiters and prospective employers recognize CMP Certification as the most prestigious designation in the growing industry.”

Karen Kotowski, CMP, CAE, CEO Events Industry Council, Washington, DC

Candidates must have three years of event planning experience and a full-time job in the industry in order to apply. The value of the CMP program is in part monetary for planners — those with CMP certification earn about $10,000 more per year in salary than planners without it. Additionally, it may help with jobs. “Certification opens the door to better and more opportunities,” Kotowski says. “Clients’ expectations for meetings have many ways to ramp up their skills.

Certified Meeting Professional (CMP)

The most recognized industry certification is the CMP. Karen Kotowski, CMP, CAE, chief executive officer of the Events Industry Council (EIC), says, “Events Industry Council has delivered the CMP program since its inception in 1985. The CMP recognizes industry professionals who meet the established prerequisite education and experience requirements and pass a rigorously comprehensive exam designed to assure baseline competencies and to differentiate professionals. CMPs continue to demonstrate their professional competency through continuing education and experience every five years in order to maintain the credential.”

By Christine Loomis

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That teaches immediately applicable, in-demand skills. “What has more and more taken the place of training certificate, with both onsite and online courses available. Tim Rozzi, executive director of The International School of Hospitality (TISOH), Las Vegas, says, “The CMM, States adds, “is structured to complement the CMP and focuses on strategic initiatives and executive decision-making.”

Aman agrees. “As we approach the digital learning age, clients are asking CMPs to address their needs — digital meetings, on-demand training and from our actual experience, we believe many are coming to the realization they are not as prepared or comfortable as they would want to be. The EIC documents last year that the top trend shaping event industry education is around safety and security.”

Rozzi says, “The DES credential, “Aman says, “is designed for event and meeting planners who want continuing education and on the management and production of digital events. The DES certifica- tion course covers planning, producing and ensuring results of live stream and digital engagement events.”

The design of the DES may grow as technology continues to disrupt and influence how meetings are designed and experienced.

According to Aman, “The CMM is an MBA-level executive education program for meeting professionals with more than seven years of experience, including a minimum of three years in management positions.”

Planners wishing to pursue a CMM have several options. “Many planners work toward their CMM by attending local colleges that have disciplines or curriculums designed to focus on the business events industry,” Aman says. “Other planners use the MPI program to complete the required coursework and hours needed to gain the certification. In any program that prepares you for the CMM, courses are designed to develop the event professional’s ability to analyze real-life application of tactical skills, strategic-planning techniques and mastery of the fundamentals of meeting and event planning. Instructors here work in the industry, which contributes to the power of the courses,” Rozzi says.

The program encompasses interactive and experimental learning, including going offsite to venues. In addition, students are required to volunteer for 10 hours in the hospitality industry, which also offers 45 hours of experiential learning in the CMM program.

Her best advice for planners: “Get engaged in the industry and network! Join professional industry associations, volunteer for events, keep relevant by continually updating your skills, get certified and make an effort to know the local CVB staff in your area — they’re a valuable resource.”

Annette Gregg, CMM, MBA, advisor, Meeting & Event Planning Certificate Program San Diego State University, San Diego, CA

“We teach from a practical point of view. Our stories are current and from our actual experience, so we can give students the most relevant and real picture possible.”

Digital Event Strategist (DES)

“The DES credential,” Aman says, “is designed for event and meeting planners who want continuing education on the management and production of digital events. The DES certifica- tion course covers planning, producing and measuring results of live stream and digital engagement events.”

The design of the DES may grow as technology continues to disrupt and influence how meetings are designed and experienced.
A vibrant and dynamic global hub, Miami offers a stunning array of creative venue options for even the largest meeting needs, including the new Miami Beach Convention Center, now open.

Located in the heart of South Beach, the new Miami Beach Convention Center is a bright, glass-encased facility as innovative and tech-rich as it is beautiful. In addition to the nearly 500,000 square feet of versatile exhibition space and more than 180,000 square feet of meeting space, the new Miami Beach Convention Center includes a 60,000-square-foot grand ballroom, a 20,000-square-foot junior ballroom and 84 breakout rooms.

The space will feature a terrace where attendees can step out, mingle and soak up the city’s signature sunshine and ocean breeze. The new Miami Beach Convention Center is also environmentally friendly and LEED Silver-certified.

DOWNTOWN MIAMI HIGHLIGHTS
Along with the new Miami Beach Convention Center, Miami has continued to reinvent itself with incredible hotels, meeting spaces and enhanced infrastructure. Some highlights that shouldn’t be missed when visiting the city include:

• Brickell City Centre

Spanning 9.1 acres, Brickell City Centre includes a 352-room hotel, an open-air shopping center, two luxury condo towers, two office buildings and an entertainment center.

• Brightline

This stylish, best-in-class express train service provides intercity travel, connecting Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. And service between Miami and Orlando is coming soon.

• Frost Science Museum

The Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science, located in Downtown Miami’s Museum Park, is a state-of-the-art 250,000-square-foot facility that combines a planetarium, aquarium and science museum on one campus.

ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES
Along with its world-famous weather and beaches, the city also offers nearly endless possibilities for entertainment and exploration. From unique hotel and dining experiences to culturally diverse neighborhoods and a thriving arts scene, Miami seamlessly blends the benefits of a sophisticated international destination with the natural beauty of the tropics.

And it’s easy to get to, with Miami International Airport (MIA) offering more than 400 flights from around the globe daily and serving more airlines than any other airport in the U.S.

These are just a few of the memorable and magical highlights awaiting any meeting planner thinking of Miami. Visit MiamiMeetings.com to learn more.

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Special Services: In addition to the nearly 500,000 square feet of exhibition space and more than 180,000 square feet of meeting space, the new Miami Beach Convention Center includes a 60,000-square-foot grand ballroom, a 20,000-square-foot junior ballroom and 84 breakout rooms.

Set beneath stunning blue skies, Miami is a vibrant and dynamic global hub that offers a myriad of creative and versatile conference spaces for all meeting needs, including the newly reimagined Miami Beach Convention Center. Now space. New possibilities. Now open.

Learn more at MiamiMeetings.com
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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE
GREATER MIAMI CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
23-Time Winner

INSPIRATION BEGINS WITH A CHANGE OF SCENERY.
First-Time Winner

Rising 30 stories above the edge of the San Diego Bay, the AAA Four Diamond Hilton San Diego Bayfront is the West Coast’s premier waterfront hotel where business meets pleasure.

This alluring retreat, surrounded by city and coast, features 1,190 guest rooms and 30 luxury suites, with upscale amenities and state-of-the-art technology. Spacious guest rooms and suites offer breathtaking views of the city, across the San Diego Bay, Coronado Island and beyond the Pacific Ocean.

With an upcoming $25 million renovation of all guest rooms and suites, guests will find comfort in the refreshed room design inspired by maritime culture and modern ease.

Luxury Amenities
Hilton San Diego Bayfront offers a variety of amenities to provide guests with a comfortable and memorable experience.

Guests can indulge in a relaxing spa day at the recently renovated eforea spa or soak up the sun by the heated saltwater pool overlooking the San Diego Bay.

Additional convenient amenities include six onsite dining venues plus room service, a business center with internet access, The UPS Store, a fitness center, valet parking, award-winning concierge services and more.

Versatile Meeting & Event Space
The award-winning hotel boasts more than 165,000 square feet of elegant indoor and gorgeous outdoor event and meeting spaces. Hilton San Diego Bayfront offers the perfect venue and location for banquets, meetings and conferences, and the excellent flow of space allows for seamless events.

A variety of inspired outdoor options includes the lush 4.3-acre Bayfront Park, 10,000-square-foot waterfront Promenade Plaza and 7,000-square-foot terrace overlooking San Diego Bay. The Sapphire Ballroom features 34,000 square feet of pillar-free space. Meeting and event services include in-house A/V services, first-class catering facilities and dedicated, experienced personnel to ensure each event is a success.

Premier Downtown Location
The hotel is adjacent to the San Diego Convention Center, across a pedestrian bridge from PETCO Park and minutes from the San Diego International Airport (SAN). It is a short walk from downtown San Diego’s historic Gaslamp Quarter, where guests can immerse themselves in the rich Victorian architecture, dance the night away at nationally recognized nightlife venues and dine at world-class restaurants.

Additionally, the nearby trolley stop provides convenient transportation to nearly all of San Diego’s popular destinations, including Old Town, Little Italy and more.

Contact us to learn more. 619-270-2600
hiltonsandiegobayfrontsales@hilton.com
www.hiltonsandiegobayfront.com
Located in the heart of the beautiful Los Angeles coastline and only four miles from LAX Airport, Marina del Rey is making waves as the premier meetings destination in Southern California.

“Marina del Rey is a great option for meeting planners looking for value, quality, convenience and a prime location,” says Janet Zaldua, CEO of the MdR CVB. “Our hotels have all recently undergone renovations and offer rates that are very competitive with other destinations on L.A.’s Westside.”

**Waterside Meetings**

With more than 100,000 square feet of waterfront meeting space and 1,100 hotel rooms, the marina is equally appealing to high-end corporate business programs as it is to tech industry powerhouses that want a laid-back but trendy meeting destination.

Traditional meeting space takes a back seat to creative waterside options, such as outdoor reception lawns with 360-degree harbor views or a rooftop ballroom with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the coast.

No visit to the marina is complete without some time on a boat, and having your opening reception, client party or seminar at sea on a private luxury yacht is the perfect way to make a splash with your next corporate function.

**Recreation**

Marina del Rey’s plentiful recreation options make for exciting teambuilding and pre/post-function entertainment. Treat your delegates to a parasailing or sportfishing excursion, group kayaking or stand-up paddleboarding, a dining or cocktail harbor cruise, beachside biking, water yoga or a sailing regatta.

**Tourist Attractions**

With Marina del Rey as a home base for your group event, you’re within a short drive to L.A.’s popular tourist attractions — the world-famous Venice Beach and Santa Monica are right next door.

And after a busy day, there’s no better place to come back to than any of the marina’s six waterfront hotels, all of which offer sparkling harbor views.

**Special Incentive**

Meeting planners can save up to $2,000 by booking a program or event in the marina. The Marina del Rey CVB offers a special incentive for groups with more than 25 rooms.

For details, go to visitmarinadelrey.com/groups.
New Orleans is a truly authentic destination and an ideal backdrop for any meeting. With live music filling the air, world-class cuisine in more than 1,500 restaurants and a unique culture that offers a feast for the senses, there is never a dull moment in the Big Easy. Take a stroll through one of the world’s most walkable cities and enjoy the southern charm and rich history.

New Orleans boasts more than 22,000 hotel rooms within walking distance of the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, with its 1.1 million square feet of contiguous exhibit space, as well as many award-winning attractions, unique venues, outstanding restaurants and the historic French Quarter. The Crescent City is a hub of innovation making it the perfect place to bring great minds together to inspire creativity, network and collaborate.

Celebrating the Tricentennial

As New Orleans commemorates the past and looks toward the future, the city is buzzing with progress and new developments to celebrate the city’s Tricentennial. The Eliza Jane hotel opened its doors this year, offering 1,729 square feet of event space, including an open-air courtyard. The Ernest N. Morial Convention Center has begun the first phases of its 47-acre district development project with the revitalization of Convention Center Boulevard. The project will include more than $60 million of improvements that will establish an urban public park and serve as the gateway to the development of a tree-lined pedestrian plaza, fountains, green walls and gathering places. The National World War II Museum continues its expansion, adding the Higgins Hotel and Conference Center, opening in the fall of 2019.

To accommodate the millions of passengers to New Orleans, new airlines and additional domestic and international flights being added, the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport is in the process of building a $1 billion world-class terminal. The 972,000-square-foot terminal will feature three concourses, 35 gates, improved passenger experience with a consolidated checkpoint for ease and efficiency going through security and an in-line baggage system where passengers will drop off their checked baggage at the ticket counters. There will also be a 2,190-space parking garage with surface parking, built with the new terminal. The airport is expected to open in May 2019.

The Crescent City

Thanks to its strong entrepreneurial ecosystem, New Orleans is a top city for businesses big and small, technology and innovation. The inspiring nature of the city along with the incredible talent that calls the city home, New Orleans has been named a top city for creatives and among the top tech cities in the country. Whether for business or pleasure, the Crescent City is a one-of-a-kind destination. With a vibrant restaurant scene, countless cultural and family-friendly attractions and rich history and mystery around every corner, there’s something in New Orleans to appeal to everyone.
An outdoor city filled with urban adventure, Denver pulses with an entrepreneurial vibe that makes it an emerging business hub. Then there’s the majesty of those ever-present mountain views! Add more than 11,000 downtown hotel rooms, 300 days of annual sunshine, a thriving chef-driven dining scene and unique venues, and you’ve got the combination for the perfect meeting destination. VISIT DENVER, The Convention & Visitors Bureau is a helpful and experienced organization ready to assist planners in crafting the perfect meeting. The award-winning staff is available to help you stay on top of all the exciting changes in the city.

“Meeting planners are looking to meet in a unique destination,” says Rachel Benedick, vice president of sales and services for VISIT DENVER. “Denver is a four-season, outdoor city. Winters are milder than you would expect, and the rest of the year mostly enjoys warm days and cool nights. The arts and cultural scene is thriving, and the dining scene has really reached its breakthrough moment.”

Getting There

Getting to Denver has never been easier. Denver International Airport (DEN) has one of the top three largest domestic networks in the U.S. with 1,600 daily flights and nonstop service to 25 international destinations. Plus, DEN airfares are 20 percent lower than the national average. Once you’ve landed, take the affordable and convenient A Line from DEN directly to Denver Union Station in the heart of downtown.

A short walk or free shuttle ride away from Union Station is the Colorado Convention Center (CCC), designed by meeting planners for meetings planners. Big changes are on the way—an upcoming expansion will bring up to 80,000 square feet of new flexible meeting and ballroom space, as well as 50,000 square feet of prefunction space and a 50,000-square-foot rooftop terrace. The expansion will also provide best-in-class technology improvements.

Around Town

Hosting an offsite meeting? The city is abounding in unique, only-in-Denver venues. Try a morning yoga class at the world-famous Red Rocks Amphitheatre or get inspired by a breakout session at Denver Art Museum, the renowned home of one of the greatest American West art collections in the world. For an exceptional dining experience, visit one of the many award-winning, chef-owned restaurants. Recent James Beard Award winners are Rioja, located in historic Larimer Square, and Mercantile dining & provision, housed inside the renovated Union Station. Check out one of the city’s innovative food halls, such as The Source, Avanti F&B or the brand-new Milk Market, where you can get everything from poke bowls and pasta to crêpes and charcuterie. Zagat recently listed Denver in its top five most exciting food cities.

RAPID CITY, South Dakota

Downtown is home to the client’s microwave, and the police department has a margarita machine. Add to that the fact that the client’s son is a police officer and you have the perfect storm.
ATLANTIS, PARADISE ISLAND
Eight-Time Winner

Atlantis, Paradise Island, the lush, oceanside resort in The Bahamas, recently embarked on a new chapter (“Bahamas at Heart”) tied to a meaningful connection with the property’s 7,300-plus employees and the rich history, art, people, food, marine life and festivities of the country.

Atlantis features five distinct properties at which to stay, from the iconic The Royal to The Beach and The Coral to the newly built luxury properties, The Cove and The Reef. The Coral, newly renovated, has reopened as a fully redesigned escape, while The Cove recently celebrated a series of new design collaborations, restaurants and guest experiences, each paying homage to Bahamian culture.

Marine Conservation
The ocean-themed resort is built around Aquaventure, an innovative 141-acre waterscape of thrilling slides and river rides, pools and white-sand beaches, and features one of the largest open-air marine habitats in the world, with more than 50,000 marine animals from 250 species.

In addition to various habitats across the property, guests are able to visit Dolphin Cay, the 14-acre marine mammal habitat and education center, whose first residents were rescue dolphins and sea lions from Hurricane Katrina. A portion of the cost of each of the on-property marine interactions goes back to the Atlantis Blue Project Foundation, the resort’s nonprofit organization dedicated to saving sea species and their extraordinary habitats.

Meetings & Events
With the largest conference center in the Caribbean, Atlantis boasts 200,000 square feet of indoor meeting space highlighted by the 50,000-square-foot Imperial Ballroom and 25,000-square-foot Grand Ballroom.

The 60 meeting rooms on-property allow Atlantis to accommodate groups of 15 to 4,000 and more than 20 distinct outdoor venues totaling 300,000 square feet to entertain parties of up to 5,000.

Experiences
Atlantis is known as one of the ultimate culinary and nightlife destinations in the Caribbean, housing a collection of more than 40 restaurants and lounges from world-renowned chefs including Nobu Matsuhisa, José Andrés and Todd English. The resort also has one of the Caribbean’s most renowned casinos, with more than 47,000 square feet of gaming options spread across the property.

Other amenities include the Atlantis Marina, Marina Village marketplace, Mandara Spa, Kids and Teen Clubs, award-winning 18-hole Tom Weiskopf-designed golf course, tennis courts and duty-free shopping complemented by some of the biggest names in the industry.

Atlantis plans to announce more renovations and property upgrades in the coming months, including news of redesigned rooms and suites at The Royal & The Reef in 2019.

WENDY BLANEY
Chief Sales Officer

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AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION
HOTELS

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 now 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 December 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 www.meetingsatatlantis.com.

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Nestled in the foothills below Pikes Peak on 5,000 stunning acres, The Broadmoor is the longest-running consecutive winner of the Forbes Five-Star and AAA Five Diamond awards. Here, authentic Western experiences combine with European elegance and a setting that inspires at every turn.

Legendary Golf
Ranked among the best in the world, The Broadmoor’s championship courses were designed by some of golf’s most notable names — Donald Ross and Robert Trent Jones Sr. Over the past 100 years, The Broadmoor has played host to 28 national and international tournaments, including eight USGA tournaments, two U.S. Senior Open championships, three U.S. Amateur events and two U.S. Women’s Open championships.

Honoring The Broadmoor’s rich past, a new Golf Heritage Hallway was created to chronicle the traditions, the tournaments and the champions who helped write the pages of The Broadmoor’s golfing legacy. The Broadmoor also proudly partners with Callaway Golf, with custom club fitting onsite for those wanting the latest technological advancements. Calloway rental clubs are also available for play.

Dynamic Meeting Venues
The Broadmoor understands the unique needs and attention required to create successful meetings. With 185,000 square feet of flexible space, unparalleled accommodations and activities, The Broadmoor wows even from the start. From the 60,000-square-foot Broadmoor Hall to intimate spaces, it has played host to countless conferences and special events since 1918. The Broadmoor boasts convenient technology, including wired and wireless internet for all meeting areas and guest rooms, onsite audiovisual equipment rentals and event production. For a unique experience, groups of up to 60 can stay and meet at Cloud Camp, where 15 well-appointed lodge rooms and cabins with spectacular 360-degree vistas are complemented by the 1,500-square-foot Overlook, a fully equipped, A/V-ready meeting space.

Tastefully Yours
With 20 restaurants, cafes and lounges, you’ll find a wide variety of distinctive, award-winning dining options. Group dining has myriad, fully customizable menus for special breakfasts and lunches, breaks and buffets to uniquely themed dinners, all carefully crafted for every occasion, discerning taste and dietary request.

Getting Here
Located in Colorado Springs, Colorado, The Broadmoor is only 15 minutes from the Colorado Springs Airport (COS), and Denver International Airport (DEN) is only 75 minutes away. Door-to-door regularly scheduled transportation is available from both airports through a partnership with Gray Line.

Only The Broadmoor offers so many distinct venues and experiences of all sizes and types. From impressive trade shows to executive dinners. From grand reception halls to eclectic lakeside cocktails at sunset. From state-of-the-art meeting rooms to secluded brainstorming sessions at Cloud Camp 3,000 feet above the main campus. You’ll find all of it and more within our 185,000 square feet of meeting space, connected by a thread of quality, service and meticulous attention to detail. And in 2018, The Broadmoor celebrates its Centennial year, an impressive milestone for this iconic destination. Visit broadmoor.com and contact us today to explore the wonderful possibilities.
Steeped in golf tradition, Sea Island is home to three championship golf courses, including Seaside and Plantation, site of the PGA TOUR’s RSM Classic, hosted each fall by Davis Love III, Sea Island touring professional, two-time Ryder Cup Captain and 2017 inductee into the World Golf Hall of Fame. Created in 1928 by Walter Travis, Plantation was redesigned in 1998 by Rees Jones and features ocean views and plentiful lakes. Created in 1929 by Colt & Alison, Seaside was redesigned in 1999 by Tom Fazio. With 15 holes flanked by views of the ocean, sound and marsh, Seaside is Sea Island’s signature course. Retreat Course, originally designed by Joe Lee, was renovated in 2001 by Davis and Mark Love and features a unique, dramatic layout.

Golf and Lodge Enhancements
Located between Seaside and Plantation, The Lodge at Sea Island is in the midst of a $25 million enhancement program, which includes the addition of The Driftwood Course, an 18-hole putting course, opened this past summer. Six new cottages with a total of 14 new sleeping rooms, an oceanfront pool and pool house debut ahead of the 2018 RSM Classic in November. In early 2019, a new, 17,000-square-foot Golf Performance Center will open with six instruction and club fitting bays, cutting-edge putting studio, full-service golf club workshop, gym with locker rooms, retail area and indoor and outdoor meeting and event spaces. Phil Kenyon, director of putting instruction and one of the most sought-after putting instructors in the world, has designed the new putting studio for teaching and putter fitting. The existing Center continues to serve as one of the finest instructional centers in the country, teaching every aspect of the game to all skill levels, from juniors to Open and Masters Champions.

An Overview
Since 1928, Sea Island has been known as an exceptional destination appealing to those who appreciate gracious service and heartfelt hospitality. With four Forbes Five-Star experiences — The Cloister at Sea Island, The Lodge at Sea Island, The Spa at Sea Island and the Georgian Room restaurant — it is the only resort in the world to have received four Forbes Five-Star Awards for 10 consecutive years. The only U.S. resort to host a G-8 Summit of world leaders, Sea Island provides exceptional settings and service for conferences and executive retreats. Guest accommodations are available at The Cloister, a Mediterranean masterpiece; The Lodge, reminiscent of an English country manor or The Inn at Sea Island. A cottage option is also available. Located on the Georgia coast midway between Jacksonville, Florida (JAX, 60 minutes) and Savannah, Georgia (SAV, 75 minutes), Sea Island is served by two additional airports, including Brunswick (BQK, 20 minutes) and the private McKinnon St. Simons Airport (SSI, 10 minutes).
Universal Orlando Resort is the premier destination for meetings and events, offering incredible product, remarkable experiences and a passionate group of people committed to collaborating with you every step of the way.

With 295,000 square feet of meeting space and 9,000 guest rooms across eight hotels by 2020, three different theme parks and the Universal CityWalk dining and entertainment complex, Universal Orlando Resort offers everything you could want in a meetings destination.

Meetings With Italian Charm
This Italian-inspired hotel offers majestic meeting and function spaces. Loews Portofino Bay Hotel’s meeting space is the epitome of warmth and elegance, from the inviting meeting rooms to the ambience of the impressive pre-function areas.

Planners also will find a variety of beautiful outdoor venues, including the scenic Harbor Piazza and dazzling Villa Pool, where events can be enhanced by the hotel’s lush landscaping and distinctive Italian architecture.

Adorned with handcrafted details such as Venetian glass chandeliers, the hotel offers a breathtaking setting for both business and social events.

Loews Portofino Bay Hotel boasts a total of 42,000 square feet of meeting and function space, including 15,000-square-foot and 7,600-square-foot ballrooms, eight meeting rooms and an impressive 47,000 square feet of outdoor meeting space.

Mediterranean-inspired Accommodations
All 750 rooms and suites at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel have been completely renovated with a fresh Mediterranean-inspired design that enhances the attendee experience. Designers took their inspiration for the new rooms from the upscale, sun-drenched resort of Portofino, Italy, and its historic harbor along the Italian Riviera. Attendees can enjoy three themed swimming pools, seven restaurants and lounges, a world-class spa and complimentary Wi-Fi in guest rooms and public areas.

Incredible Event Options
Three amazing theme parks — Universal Studios Florida, Universal’s Islands of Adventure and Universal’s Volcano Bay — provide unparalleled entertainment and a variety of breathtaking and immersive backdrops for your events.

There’s also outstanding dining, shopping and nightlife at the Universal CityWalk entertainment complex. Here, you’ll find an array of restaurants and nightclubs, many of which can be reserved for special events.

Best of all, Universal Orlando’s hotels, theme parks and entertainment complex are all in close proximity, making getting around the resort easy and convenient for meeting groups.

KATHY CATTOOR
Vice President, Resort Sales

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Facts and Features
- Guest Rooms/Suites: 750
- Meeting Space: 42,000 square feet
- Special Services & Amenities: Book your 2019 meeting at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel and receive guest room rates starting at $185. Select dates only. Visit our website for more information.

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Todd Zint has joined ACCESS Austin & San Antonio as general manager. Zint has more than two decades of executive-level meetings and events experience. He most recently held the role of director, Corporate Travel, Meetings and Events for Mutual of Omaha.

Louis Gonzalez has been promoted to director of group sales of Fontainebleau Miami Beach. Prior to this, Gonzalez held sales and convention operation positions at several Florida resorts.

David Schwartz has joined Haven Riviera Cancun Resort & Spa as director of group and incentive sales. Schwartz has spent more than 30 years in the incentive travel industry and has represented some of the finest hotel brands in the Caribbean and Southern U.S.

Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI) announced three new additions to its global sales team: Daniel Agüero-Duplá, director of global sales; Divya Saighal, director of sales, south GSO region and Christine Squitieri, director of sales, northeast GSO region. Most recently, Agüero-Duplá served as associate director of sales at Hotel Café Royal in London, and Saighal served as director of housing at EM2 Sports. Prior to joining ALHI, Squitieri was the national sales manager for the Ocean Edge Resort & Conference Center in Brewster, Massachusetts.

Vanessa Wilson has been named director of sales and marketing at Hilton Washington DC National Mall. Previously, Wilson served as the director of sales and marketing at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center and the Hilton Washington DC North/Gaithersburg hotel.

Grand Hyatt Baha Mar has promoted Braedan Quigley to director of sales and marketing. His prior director and manager-level positions include: Hyatt Regency O’Hare/Rosemont, Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Resort, Spa and Marina, Grand Hyatt Denver, Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort in New Mexico, Grand Hyatt San Diego and Atlantis Paradise Island.

Devin Gleason has been named director of sales and marketing at Lake Arrowhead Resort and Spa in Lake Arrowhead, California. Gleason was previously director of sales and marketing for Topnotch Resort in Stowe, Vermont.

Conrad New York has appointed Trevor Brune to director of events and catering. He has more than 12 years of hospitality experience.

When you book your Corporate Meeting or Incentive Travel Program with Norwegian Cruise Line, you can relax. That’s because we guide you through the planning process, so your attendees can easily go from team meeting to team building. Whether you’re throwing a posh cocktail party with the Mediterranean as your backdrop, or basking under the Caribbean sun by day and hosting an awards gala on board by night, you’ll enjoy the freedom and choices to customize your group function just the way you like.

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