Life Lessons From an Industry Leader

Anne Hamilton, Vice President, Global Travel, The Walt Disney Company

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features

18 Anne Hamilton
Life Lessons From an Industry Leader
BY RICK SYLVAIN

32 Bring on the Business
These Destinations Are Getting Ready for More Attention From Planners
BY RON BERNTHAL

46 Picking the Perfect Speaker
The Right Message Can Get an Event off to a Great Start
BY DAVID SWANSON

52 Make it Happen
Tips for Helping Attendees Justify Coming to Your Meeting
BY KEITH LORIA

56 Vendor Value
Third-Party and Corporate Relationship Building is Often Crucial for a Successful Event
BY DEREK REVERON

destinations

60 Destination:
The Gulf Coast States
Delivering Diversity, Charm & Meeting Excellence
BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS

departments

04 Publisher’s Message
06 News & Notes
07 Tips & Trends
10 Snapshots
14 Perspective
When Things Don’t Go Your Way
BY JOHN TSCHOHL
16 Perspective
Innovate or Cease to Exist
BY CHRISTOPHER KAI
66 People on the Move

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Honoring An Industry Legend

Our cover this month features Anne Hamilton, vice president global travel, the Walt Disney Company, recently honored with the MPI Industry Leader Award at the MPI WEC in Toronto. The award is presented to individuals who through their personal and organizational commitments have made a significant, lasting and positive impact on MPI and our community.

Hamilton says, “I have a saying: Why be ordinary, when you can be extraordinary? I want my teams and leaders to be extraordinary so that they stand out.”

Anne is a fierce advocate for the value of meetings and events, leading the way for women in leadership and a mentor for future generations. To quote Christine Duffy, president of Carnival Cruise Line, “Anne is to be admired for her courage, strength and resilience.”

Also in this issue, all-inclusive resorts offer planners a pricing structure that could make budgeting easier. All-inclusives today offer every type of accommodation, with destination choices in the U.S., Caribbean and Mexico.

While some planners have never considered all-inclusives, bids often show tremendous value. In fact, working with an all-inclusive resort can be easier, especially with F&B considerations.

If you are looking for an appealing destination that you haven’t considered before, take a look at our selected emerging destinations that are asking you to bring your business to them. While not necessarily undiscovered, a destination like Savannah, Georgia for example, offers a meeting-friendly destination for your next meeting or event.

While some have been around for a while, take a look at our selected emerging destinations that are asking you to bring your business to them. While not necessarily undiscovered, a destination like Savannah, Georgia for example, offers a meeting-friendly destination for your next meeting or event.

As our ongoing magazine redesign continues, your comments would be helpful and greatly appreciated. Please email me at harvey.grotsky@themeetingmagazines.com and let me know your thoughts and suggestions.
Caesars Entertainment Celebrates Milestone for Caesars Forum

LAS VEGAS — Caesars Entertainment Corporation reached an important milestone recently, topping off its new state-of-the-art 550,000-sf conference facility, CAESARS FORUM.

More than 450 construction workers as well as meeting and conventions customers joined Caesars Entertainment executives for the monumental moment of placing the final steel beam atop the structure. The $375 million conference center will carry a LEED Silver rating and feature the world’s two largest pillar-less ballrooms, anticipated to open in 2023.

“This is one step closer to offering this one-of-a-kind option in the meetings and conventions industry,” said Michael Massari, chief sales officer at Caesars Entertainment. “The interest and bookings for our world-class facilities and bookings for our world-class facilities and events space in Las Vegas.

Award-Winning Lip Smacking Foodie Tours Welcomes Dining Experiences in Las Vegas and Beyond

LAS VEGAS — Innovative Lip-Smacking Foodie Tours has raised the bar again, this time by being the first tour company to offer a LEED Silver rating and feature the world’s two largest pillar-less ballrooms, anticipated to open in 2023. “CAESARS FORUM is one step closer to offering this one-of-a-kind option in the meetings and conventions industry,” said Michael Massari, chief sales officer at Caesars Entertainment. “The interest and bookings for our world-class facilities and events space in Las Vegas.

Sanderling Resort Reveals Renovated Beach Chic Venues

DUCK, NC — Sanderling Resort, the quintessential coastal Carolina getaway, is shaking things up for groups and events with newly renovated beach chic venues, including the Ocean Side Event House and the sound facing Pavilion. Sanderling is committed to providing their guests with the best place to host meetings, events or group gatherings. Continuously named as a top event destination, Sanderling Resort just unveiled its newly renovated Oceanside Event House & Deck, which features sweeping views of the Currituck Sound and Atlantic Ocean. This multipurpose, two-story event space comes complete with boardrooms, breakout spaces, an indoor reception area and outdoor fire pits and lawn games. Dedicated to providing guests with the best waterfront venues in the Outer Banks, the sound facing Pavilion, complete with its own private dock and over-water gazebo, was also recently renovated.

Registration Now Open for SITE Young Leaders Conference

The SITE Young Leaders Conference, “Breaking Barriers, Building Young Leaders”, which takes place Sept. 8-9 in Las Vegas, provides education and networking opportunities for incentive travel professionals new to the incentive travel industry. The mission is to create a strong group of individuals who will become leaders in SITE, their local SITE chapters and the greater industry. To help build this next generation, the program awards a scholarship to qualify applicants so they can travel to and attend the SITE Young Leaders Conference for free. The event takes place annually in Las Vegas, prior to IMEX America, SITE members who are interested in professional development or personal growth, or have less than five years of experience, are encouraged to participate.

Sarasota Marriott recently topped off its new 550,000-sf conference facility, CAESARS FORUM.

The Meeting Magazine - July 2019
Osceola County

8themed venues, unparalleled enter
Orlando offers a variety of amazing
ings and events experience within its
Universal Orlando and Loews Ho

OPENINGS

Universal Orlando Opens Surfside Inn and Suites

ORLANDO — Universal’s Endless Summer Resort - Surfside Inn and Suites recently welcomed its first guests and added 750 rooms to the growing, world-class destination. Universal Orlando and Loews Hote

CARERS

Michael Dominguez
Named President and CEO of ALHI

BOSTON — Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI) has appointed hospitality industry veteran Michael Dominguez as its president and CEO. For the past seven years, Dominguez has served as senior vice president and chief sales officer for MGM Resorts International (MGM-R). Prior to his tenure at MGMRI, he di

NEW VENUES

Offshore, the Largest Rooftop Deck, Offers Unparalleled Views of Navy Pier’s Fireworks

CHICAGO — See views of Chicago’s magnificent skyline at Offshore, the nation’s largest rooftop venue built for Chicago and its locals atop one of the city’s most iconic buildings, Navy Pier. Offshore, a chic 36,000-
sf, all-seasons/all-weather venue, offers Chicagoans a full-service lu

AWARDS

Direct Selling Association (DSA) Honors The Sea With the Partnership Award

PLANTATION, FL — Buy The Sea was honored by the U.S. Direct Selling As

CARERS

Beverly Nicholson-

SAINT LUCIA — The Board of Direc
tors at the Saint Lucia Tourism Authority (SLTA) has appointed Beverly Nicho
dson-Doty as the organization’s CEO. Nicholson-Doty has more than three
decades of industry leadership experi
ence, including most recently serving as Commissioner of Tourism at the USVI

INDUSTRY NEWS

Incentive Research Foundation Welcomes 500 Top Industry Professionals to its Annual Education Invitational

MIAMI — The Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) hosted its 26th Annual Education Invitational at Loews Miami Beach Hotel. More than 500 sponsors, buyers, trust

UPDATES

The Roosevelt New Orleans Celebrates 125th Anniversary

NEW ORLEANS — The Roosevelt New Orleans, A Waldorf Astoria Hotel, announced the near comple

MILESTONES

Caesars Atlantic City Celebrates 40th Anniversary

ATLANTIC CITY — Caesars Atlantic City is celebrating its 40th anniversary this summer to commemorate four decades of achievements and mile
stones. Achieving the 2019 TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence in this milestone year, Caesars Atlantic City is also a proud Hall of Fame recipi

CONSTRUCTION

Gaylord Palms Resort Breaks Ground on $158 Million Expansion

KISSIMMEE, FL — Osceola County Commissions joined representatives of Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center for their “groundbreaking” cer

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MPI WEC Snapshots

TORONTO — More than 2,550 attendees gathered at MPI WEC last month in Toronto for a shared experience centered on thought-provoking education from the main stage to intimate breakouts throughout the Social, Leadership, Experiential and Innovation villages.
Recognized a total of 251 times with Forbes Five-Star and AAA Five-Diamond awards.

For 188 years, The Broadmoor and Sea Island have provided distinctive, magnificent settings and extraordinary experiences for groups ranging from intimate board meetings to trade shows. Each resort features world-class golf, dining, spa, and outdoor adventures to enhance your event. With both of these iconic properties in a 100-year family trust, our guarantee is that while the setting will vary, the consistent quality of meetings and meticulous attention to detail never will.

We invite you to call to begin planning your next event.

HISTORY • TRADITION • SERVICE • EXCELLENCE

Meeting Space—Unique

With 185,000 square feet of sophisticated event space, The Broadmoor understands the unique needs and attention required to create memorable, successful meetings. From boardrooms and Broadmoor Hall's 60,000 square feet at the main campus to Cloud Camp's Overlook at 9,200-foot elevation, we have the space to make your meeting memorable.

Activities—For Everyone

Meeting attendees can hike scenic trails, experience horseback riding and mountain hiking, or archery. Broadmoor Outfitters offers expert instruction in fly fishing, falconry, zip lining and much more. Championship golf courses, and our Forbes Five-Star Spa provide rest and reward.

Accommodations—Variety

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

Where extraordinary facilities, activities and Southern hospitality blend to create exceptional meetings. Come see why we are the only resort in the world to receive four Forbes Five Stars for eleven consecutive years and the only one in the U.S. chosen to host a G8 Summit.

Meeting Space—Flexibility

With more than 42,000 square feet of indoor space and an island full of outdoor gathering options, Sea Island venues range from boardrooms to ballrooms, accommodating 5 to 500 people. From food and décor to technical expertise, our seasoned team brings creativity and attention to detail to every conference, executive retreat, and customized meeting.

Activities—Variety

Sea Island provides an extensive array of options for your meeting attendees including customized team building activities, outdoor experiences such as fishing, water sports, shooting school and falconry, a 65,000-square-foot spa and fitness center, championship golf courses, and the nation’s finest Golf Performance Center.

Accommodations—Choice

Our 400 rooms and suites ensure we have a room type to meet your needs from The Cloister, nestled between the Black Banks River and the Atlantic Ocean to The Lodge, overlooking golf and the ocean, to The Inn, our select-service property. Or for those seeking outdoor adventure, we offer Broadfield, our 5,000-acre sporting club.
When Things Don’t Go Your Way

BY JOHN TSCHOHL

The journey toward your goal may not be as easy as expected, but the twists and turns you are facing is what makes it worthwhile. Some of the greatest successes are by the people who dared to fail ... but they did not give up! Thomas Edison’s teachers said he was “too stupid to learn anything.” He was fired from his first two jobs for being “non-productive.” As an inventor, Edison made 1,000 unsuccessful attempts at creating the light bulb. When a reporter asked, “How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?” Edison replied, “I didn’t fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps.”

He went bankrupt several times before he built Disneyland. In fact, the city of Anaheim rejected the proposed park on the grounds that it would only attract riffraff.

From rejection to workplace screw-ups, everyone has experienced that all-too-familiar, gut-wrenching numbness. The great paradox is that the people who enjoy the most successes often endure the greatest failures.

A few common sense things to remember:
Don’t lose confidence in yourself when things don’t go as planned. I cannot stress this enough, and I talk about this in my book “Moving Up.” We are all a work in progress. But if you don’t take the time to critique yourself and your behaviors along the way, you run the risk of becoming complacent.

Improve your relationships with people because it is your relationship with people that make you successful in both life and business. If you discover that the same issues continue to arise, it’s time for some tough self-examination. It takes hard work to make dreams into reality. If you set clear goals, have self-confidence to act and believe you will succeed, over time you will get where you want to go. Sitting still is easy. Make sure you look at all aspects of your life and make some changes.

We take advantage of opportunities, those bad moments can be nothing but a footnote in our success story.

A step by step guide to creating your success.

Jean Tschohl
John Tschohl is a professional speaker, trainer and consultant. He is the president and founder of Service Quality Institute, the global leader in customer service, with operations in more than 40 countries. He has written several books on customer service, including “Moving Up, A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Your Success.” Tschohl is a self-made millionaire who travels and speaks more than 50 times each year. He is considered to be one of the foremost authorities on service strategy, success, empowerment and customer service in the world. His monthly strategic newsletter is available free online. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.
The McKinsey Global Institute released a report where they studied 46 countries and 800 occupations and found that by 2030 there will be 800 million workers in the world—that’s more than two times the size of the entire U.S. population—who will be replaced by automation. And, they aren’t just retail clerks or Uber drivers who will lose their jobs. It would include jobs you might not think would be automated, such as radiologists, lawyers and pharmacists. Directly or indirectly, automation will affect everyone. The report states that up to one-third of the U.S. workforce in the U.S. will need some form of job training to meet the work up to the new automated, such as radiologists, lawyers and pharmacists. Directly or indirectly, automation will affect everyone. The report states that up to one-third of the U.S. workforce in the U.S. will need some form of job training to prepare them for other forms of employment.

The only way we can all keep our jobs, businesses and clients is to innovate how we individually do things as employees, teams and companies or our jobs, companies and clients will cease to exist. We often think of the word “innovation” when we think about technology companies like Apple creating the iPhone but the very definition of “innovate” is much more simple and it pertains to all of us. Innovate simply means to “make changes in something established by introducing new methods or ideas.” We can all be more innovative and creative in our jobs so that work isn’t a chore, but a career we choose that is fun, fulfilling and massively rewarding. Here are three simple ways we can be more innovative:

Innovate as a Person

Do you eat the same breakfast each day? Take the same route to work? Have the same work routine every single day? According to author Steven Kotler in his book “The Rise of Superman: Decoding the Science of Ultimate Human Performance,” we are all hardwired to seek novel experiences if we want our brains to be stimulated and perform better. So whatever you are doing in your daily life, mix it up a little. Try a new breakfast, take a different route to work or challenge your boss or employees to offer different solutions at a meeting. These simple changes will help you become more innovative at home and work.

Innovate as a Team

For more than seven years, MIT’s Human Dynamic Laboratory studied thousands of employees in various departments in different companies around the world. They found that team building is indeed a science that can be measurable, observable and most importantly improved. By just changing how you communicate to co-workers you can be 50% more effective in a team setting. The words you use are only 7% of your effectiveness, which means 93% of your effectiveness as a communicator is based solely on your tone of voice and body language. Try this simple exercise: Record a video of yourself for 1-minute talking about one of your favorite passions. Now watch that video of yourself and ask yourself objectively, “Do I sound convincing?” Just because you say you’re passionate about something doesn’t mean others will hear and see that passion if you aren’t communicating with the right tone of voice or body language. If you don’t sound convincing to yourself how can your team members believe anything you say?

Innovate as a Company

According to a Gallup poll, 87% of U.S. employees are either disinterested, dislike or hate their jobs. And beyond the monetary gain of a bigger check, Daniel H. Pink, author of “Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us” found that the three most basic things that really motivate us are:

Autonomy: You want to have the freedom to do the work as you see fit if you achieve the desired results.

Mastery: You want to feel like you are learning, growing and improving at your job.

Purpose: Your job can’t just be about a paycheck. If you don’t believe in a shared purpose, you won’t be very motivated to work at all. As a company create a clear, inspiring vision. For example, Amazon is obsessed with serving their customers. Howard Schultz, the former CEO of Starbucks, wanted people to have an Italian experience when they walked into a Starbucks. It was never about selling a cup of coffee, but about creating a memorable experience. Elon Musk wants us all to be a multiplanetary species. When we all individually as employees and collectively as teams and companies focus on being more innovative, we will be more successful as professionals and our very satisfied clients with keep hiring us for decades to come.

Christopher Kai

Christopher Kai is the world’s leading authority in story-based leadership and a Fortune 100 global speaker. His main keynote topics are about story-based leadership, team success, sales, connection and persuasion. He is a former business strategist and executive speechwriter at American Express. Elon Musk once exclaimed during an interview, “Wow! You really know a lot.” Kai can be reached at christopherkai.com
Life is all about chapters. Anne Hamilton has written her share. There was the chapter that became her first foray into marketing — at age 10. There was the chapter of growing up (Anne has six siblings) and family tradition was for everyone to gather around the dinner table every evening. More than buttered carrots were passed. Every topic under the sun was discussed, dissected and — if the topic was yours — defended.

There was the chapter of post-graduation enlightenment. After getting her degree in Business Administration from Florida State University, Anne immersed herself in the businesses within her industry — what was on the minds of clients — whether it was food & beverage, sales or marketing. At 50, she felt the need to again challenge herself and think differently, so she went back and earned an MBA from Stetson University.

There is the chapter she writes today as vice president, Global Travel, for The Walt Disney Company, which follows more than two decades leading the Sales and Services organization for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts. In the meetings and events industry, Anne Hamilton is the gold standard, earning such accolades as the recent Meeting Professionals International Industry Leader Award for many significant contributions, including advocating for women in leadership and serving as a mentor to future generations. Her industry leadership reads like alphabet soup — MPI, PCMA, ASAE — and she never stops extolling the creativity of the Disney Meetings & Events teams at the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida, Disneyland Resort in California and Disney’s Aulani resort in Hawaii.

There is another chapter she’s writing now — the fight of her life but one she approaches as she does everything. With hard-as-nails tenacity.

After an already illustrious career that included executive positions with Hilton, Hyatt, the Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau and Miami’s iconic Jockey Club, Anne began her Disney career in 1996 — unceremoniously enough on a routine flight returning from an industry conference in San Francisco. At the time, she was director of sales for a Hilton partner hotel on the property of Walt Disney World Resort. The passenger in the next seat struck up a conversation.

“I was all decked out in my Disney attire which caught his curiosity,” she remembers. “I told him that despite appearances I didn’t work for Disney.” That seat mate happened to be then Vice President of Resort/Park Sales & Services for the Walt Disney World Resort, George Aguel, who is now President and CEO of Visit Orlando.

“Three weeks later I was working for George and never looked back,” Anne recalls. “George took a chance on me, a single mom, how many would have done that back then?” She quickly proved her business savvy, promoted to the executive ranks only 11 months after hiring on as a sales director.

“George gave me an opportunity to join the best company in the world and for 23 years it’s been nothing but great moments, one after another. Extraordinary people define the company. They love what they do and they work together.”
Anne Hamilton: In Their Own Words...

With decades of success under his draw, Anne Hamilton puts a can-do attitude to everything she touches. She’s an attitude she has always instilled in the teams under her. And family, friends and her industry peers take notice.

“We’d have a lot of events on the golf team in high school and she’d show up in a full business suit because she had come straight from a meeting. But she made sure she was part of Disney culture,” Anne says. “If I chance meeting with Aguel. She’s never going to be the person who wants pity or anything Anne can’t do when she puts her mind to it.”

“Surround yourself with people smarter than you are and learn from them.”

“Throughout my career I have worked with brilliant industry leaders and not only were they supportive in growing my career, they were kind, generous and understanding. I have been fortunate, and from that learning is how I’ve tried to be as a leader and as a person.”

“Sitting at a table with my team and partners and understanding what’s working and what isn’t really resonated with me.”

Anne’s son

“I admire most her courage, her strength and her resiliency. Anne has always set high goals for herself and I can’t think of anything Anne can’t do when she puts her mind to it.”

“I have been fortunate to have so many great leaders throughout my career and diverse roles which gave me the opportunity to keep developing my leadership and knowledge skills. I sought out leaders who’d learn from and who had a complete commitment to excellence. Because if they were going to be excellent, I would be excellent. It was always about excellence.”

“Sitting at a table with my team and partners and understanding what’s working and what isn’t really resonated with me.”

Anne recalls one non-negotiable rule that everyone had to be together for dinner. “Our family had a rule that everyone had to be together for dinner. My parents set a table for 12 because someone was always joining us, whether friends or a client of my dad’s. You never knew who would show up. Topics came up every evening — politics, religion, diet fads, whatever. We were expected to weigh in with our opinions and back them up. Around so much diversity of thought, it would sometimes get heated. Our parents always loved to stimulate our minds and thoughts. That upbringing fostered my work ethic. It gave me confidence in being able to articulate a point of view and back it up. My mantra is always have an opinion whether it’s welcomed or not.”

THEME PARKS

“When I think about Disney I think of Anne and the culture they have. She epitomizes what it is. She cares about her industry and she cares about her company.”

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“Anne’s son

“She gave her heart to everybody every day. Everybody receives a little bit of Anne every day.”
enforces my belief that feedback is a gift. Sometimes you gotta swallow your pride. Your idea may be great or not so great but if you have an open environment you are all winners because of diversity of thought and everyone in the room feeling their opinion is valued. Take a shot and go for it. It doesn’t matter whose idea it is, we’re going to celebrate as a team. You’re never going to win every time. Take time out to celebrate the victories because it feels good — and don’t be afraid to examine your failures because of diversity of thought and everyone in your opinion is valued. Take a shot and go for it. It doesn’t matter whose idea it is, we’re going to celebrate as a team. You’re never going to win every time. Take time out to celebrate the victories because it feels good — and don’t be afraid to examine your failures because of diversity of thought and everyone in your opinion is valued. Take a shot and go for it. It doesn’t matter whose idea it is, we’re going to celebrate as a team.

BE ENGAGED 110%

“I love thrill rides and I’m a gamer. Those who can play the game win. If you’re not engaged it’s all but impossible to win. Engagement is a critical attribute that people need to have to be successful.”

UNDERSTAND AS A LEADER YOU ALWAYS VALUE HERITAGE BUT ARE WILLING TO CHANGE TRADITION

One of our creative directors at the Disney Event Group, says it’s important to know the difference between heritage and tradition. Disney is a company with a rich heritage. And we have lots of traditions but one thing we have learned is that traditions can change but not the heritage. Heritage is who you are, how you present yourself and the culture you want to have. Traditions says we may have done it that way 10 years ago but we have to change how we do it today. Traditions evolve but heritage is your core.”

CHAMPION LEADERSHIP AND CONSISTENCY

“Be a leader who can make decisions. Be accountable for your decision. It’s all about consistency. Disney has always had a diversity of leadership. The day I walked in I thought this is where I belong. My life has been touched deeply by Disney and the extraordinary people who are at its heart.”

YOU CAN’T BE A HOVER LEADER. EMPower AND SUPPORT YOUR TEAM

“I delegate to my team. You can’t be a hover leader. Have the best people back to my leader 50% because he or she let me do what I needed to do. They supported me and that’s always paid back in the work effort. That was a big lesson for me.”

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Anne Hamilton, The Walt Disney Company

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ANNE ON ANNE...

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“DEEPEN YOUR ETHICAL FUNDAMENTALS

There are two things people need to have the attribute that people need to have - honesty and I hope you can live by. It only takes a little bit of effort to be extraordinary.”

“Be uncommon. It’s something I’ve always lived by. It only takes a little bit more effort to be extraordinary.”

“Be a leader who can make decisions. Be accountable for your decision. It’s all about consistency. Disney has always had a diversity of leadership. The day I walked in I thought this is where I belong. My life has been touched deeply by Disney and the extraordinary people who are at its heart.”

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Hotel Xcaret Mexico offers unlimited access to its 6 parks and offers 8 bars and 10 restaurants from which attendees can choose.

There are many reasons for planners to consider all-inclusive resorts as a setting for meetings, events and incentives. Today’s all-inclusives are not the typically downscale properties of yesteryear. All-inclusives today can be found in every hotel category, including uber luxe with amenities enough for upscale incentive programs and in every type of lodging and destination, from traditional and historic resorts to guest ranches and from Arizona and Michigan to the Caribbean and Mexico.

Perhaps best of all, all-inclusive resorts inherently take some of the work of planning an event off the shoulders of meeting planners, which is especially nice when a company’s planning department consists of a staff of one.

ANNUAL CHOICE

Cathy Vestrand, owner of Vestrand Consulting Services, has set her company’s annual dental meeting at the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, Michigan, every year since 2012. Like other grand, historic resorts, the Grand Hotel runs primarily on a Modified American Plan — meaning breakfast and dinner are included in the room rate even for meeting guests — but other packages are also available. The Grand is also a great choice for meetings to which attendees bring family along, and Mackinac Island serves up a special ambiance as no cars are allowed.

“This is an historical, iconic destination meeting place for Michiganders who return year after year and make the meeting a tradition,” Vestrand says. “The quality of lodging is superior and with all of the lovely color and touches, just sitting in the lobby watching people dressed for dinner listening to the harp is a treat.”

Vestrand says attendance at her meeting has increased each year “because of the value of the rooms with our discount and the meeting room. You could have breakfast and dinner but I prefer to let them be on their own for dinner. There are restaurants in the Grand Hotel or they can walk 10 minutes into town and find a place to eat on the island. Or if they prefer, they can take a carriage ride to The Woods, a lovely old hunting lodge with wild-game entrees.”

Vestrand doesn’t buy lunch either because the timing doesn’t work with her seminars. “People are OK with that,” she adds. And she calls the planning “easy.” For one thing, she points out, “So much is here on property — regardless of the weather — it’s always lovely inside.”

Developing relationships at preferred hotels is always the goal for planners, and Vestrand has that at the Grand. “Jane Thomas is super to work with. She really cares about me as a planner and thinks about ways she can assist. She has even linked me with other dental sales people who have attended my classes. Ashlea Flores is a top-notch meeting planner who executes my events with every detail and also anticipates my needs and makes it easy for me,” Vestrand says. “The Grand Hotel staff have this down to a science. I’ve done this meeting for so many years it runs like clockwork. I don’t have prob-

A plus for Vestrand is that the resort includes A/V, a champagne reception, coffee and tea as part of the meeting package. “Grand Hotel is top-notch as far as customer service and treating the meeting planner with grand appreciation.”

Vestrand’s group uses Brighton Pavilion, part of the resort’s Woodfill Conference Center. “Our function was held mostly in the Brighton Pavilion, complete with colorful chairs and chandeliers, where we had a champagne welcome reception with hors d’oeuvres on Friday and coffee and pastries on Saturday morning,” Vestrand notes. “One year we were in the Theatre, also part of the conference center, and had a small orchestra play during our reception. In the Brighton Pavilion we have had a piano playing — all very nice details to create a wonderful event.”

Vestrand says her attendees appreciate starting the day with the included breakfast. “That’s the package I buy, which includes hotel guest rooms at a special discount and the meeting room. You could have breakfast and dinner but I prefer to let them be on their own for dinner. There is an annual choice.

BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS
leaps up there. One time I left my laptop power cord at home. They bent over backward but we couldn’t find one to fit.”

Vestrand’s advice to anyone planning a meeting at Grand Hotel is to advertise early so attendees can plan for it. “I have them pay separately for the meeting and the Grand handles the hotel reservations,” she says. “Have the hotel reservation form handy for attendees in all emails to make it easy to make a reservation. I also got the Grand to create a very cute postcard to advertise my meeting and I send it out to all of my clients every year.”

Vestrand says once they experience the Grand Hotel, “People will come back. It’s a ‘bucket list’ kind of place.”

JOHN SEVERSON
President
Severson Compass & Associates

Nicholas says, “Your stakeholders may never have considered an all-inclusive, but when you put an EP hotel bid and all-inclusive bid in front of the stakeholder, you can show tremendous value for money.”

Heidi Stevenson, global sales manager, CIS, with Destinations Inc., also went to the Riviera Maya for a February 2019 incentive trip with 188 in attendance. The chosen hotel was UNICO 20° North 87° West, just south of Cancun in Puerto Morelos.

Stevenson says the area has many benefits. “The Cancun/ Riviera Maya area is a fabulous destination for groups with year-round favorable weather and a wide range of properties to select from. Most of the attendees for this program come from the West Coast and the lift to Cancun is ideal. The area boasts countless properties that can accommodate incentives and meetings, including many of the large all-inclusive properties.”

There’s a nautical meeting and function space. “All of our events were handled onsite at UNICO 20° North 87° West,” she says.

The choice of UNICO 20° North 87° West was ideal for this program. “It’s a newer property only having been open for the last two years,” Stevenson says. “And it is without a doubt one of the higher-end, all-inclusive properties in the area. The service, lodging and food are all top-notch. The resort has great event space that can accommodate large groups.”

Like other planners, Stevenson says working with an all-inclusive property can be easier, especially on the F&B front. “There is not as much to contend with,” she says, “adding that many all-inclusive properties also don’t charge extra fees for group functions, which can be a great cost savings for a group. That is the case with UNICO.”

“OUR CSM was amazing,” Stevenson says. “This resort does not charge fees for group events or meetings. It was part of the all-

Nicholas adds, “It’s all about the environment. You want to work with this amazing environment not against it. Work with Carol and with Russell True, one of the owners, at the ranch. Let the ranch do what it does best — your guests will be pleased.”

MEXICO OFFERS GREAT VALUE

Mexico and the Caribbean are well known for all-inclusive resorts, so it’s no surprise that Cancun, on Mexico’s Caribbean coast, is often a first choice for corporate and incentive groups looking for a tropical destination.

Neil Nicholas, senior director, Global Meetings & Incentives, with HelmsBriscoe, calls Cancun a terrific destination, “for so many reasons — breadth of airlift both domestic and international, affordable airfares from all major origination points, a variety of properties from boutique to large and a plethora of beachfront properties.”

Moreover, she adds, “You can always count on great value for money in Cancun, which has something for every budget and every type of program from large-scale incentives to small board retreats.”

The DMCs in Cancun, Nicholas notes, “are also top-notch professional and priced appropriately. And contrary to what some may think,” she says, “the food and beverage possibilities onsite are excellent. The food is very fresh. Much of our U.S. ‘off season’ fruits and vegetables come from Mexico, so a U.S. winter program in Mexico will offer your attendees some of the freshest ingredients.”

Nicholas brought an annual incentive trip to the Paradisus Cancun in 2018 with approximately 70 in attendance. While she says attendees at all-inclusives typically stay on property, this group was a bit different. “Our group likes to venture out primarily on a group catamaran ride or perhaps an afternoon shopping trip. Cancun is unique in that there are also multiple cultural choices for excursions as well, including the Mayan ruins at Tulum; Rio Secreto, a natural park featuring an underground river; and Xcaret, a park combining nature and culture.”

Paradisus Cancun was the client’s choice. “The client chose Paradisus Cancun for the access of the destination, proximity to the airport and value for money,” Nicholas says. “We were able to upgrade all attendees at the highest category of room product at Paradisus. If we did the same program in Playa Del Carmen, for example, our attendees would not have been able to enjoy a high-end room product.”

Additionally, she says, “I particularly enjoy the added service of an onsite DMC. It eliminates the guessing game of on-site selection.”

Nicholas has several clients that prefer all-inclusives, in part because setting a meeting or program at an all-inclusive makes their job a bit easier. “Many corporate meeting planners are a one-person department, so anywhere we can one-stop shop, at an all-inclusive resort, the better from a planning standpoint. One company I work with doesn’t have the budget to send the planner to the incentive, but with a quality all-inclusive she has peace-of-mind that attendees will be well cared for. The best part? No meal planning for the attendees.”

While some program details are taken care of in the all-inclusive model, planners still have to be on top of things. “Ask about the liquor brands in the package you’re purchasing for the attendees,” Nicholas advises. “I find I need to upgrade the liquor brands for my clients from call brands to top shelf.”

Nicholas says she has no real challenges in the site-selection process for her 2018 group. “My NSO, Beatriz Kauzsky, for Meldá Hotels, always does a great job and is always on top of the negotiating and contracting process.”

That said, she does have a strategy suggestion for planners looking at Cancun for their corporate meeting or incentive program. “Send the RFP to several brands across the board to show your stakeholders the variety of options, the ranch reinvests in the property every year, upgrades rooms and amenities and the service is world class.”

Paradisus Cancun can host events for up to 1,200 attendees and offers very good value for the money, planners say.
inclusive price.” And the property works well with groups. “From the sales process all the way through execution of the program, this property is great with groups,” Stevenson says. “They’re extremely detail oriented and quick with responses and planning.”

While there were no bumps in the road in the planning process for this program, Stevenson advises planners to see the property firsthand. “Definitely include a site visit so that you can map out your group’s needs. This property really can accommodate most any group and it will also do buyouts. This should absolutely be in your considerations,” she says, “especially for an incentive program.”

Another ultra luxury all-inclusive Riviera Maya resort in Mexico for meeting and incentive planners to consider is the Grand Velas Riviera Maya, set on 206 acres of pristine jungle and mangroves and within the finest white sand beach. All 539 designer-like suites are exceptionally spacious, all with balconies and some with private plunge pools.

The AAA Five Star resort recently unveiled new meeting offerings for groups that puts an emphasis on the history, gastronomy and culture of the region. Groups can pick and choose among the options a la carte or opt for the entire experience in a Mexican fiesta program. Locally made tequila, a tasting of another ancestral drink, cooking classes, a showcase of traditional pottery and a curated welcome amenity of an Olinalá box and amber bracelet — traditional artisanal crafts — are among the possibilities.

Velas Resorts has catered to planner’s needs for over 25 years with resorts that feature excellence in service, world-class hospitality, beautifully appointed accommodations, signature luxury all-inclusive superb facilities and expansive convention centers.

Another resort operator with a proud history of satisfying meeting and incentive planner’s needs is Barceló Resorts. With the opening scheduled for December this year, the adults only Barceló Maya Riviera is perfect for meetings, conventions and incentive programs.

The resort offers 850 rooms that are junior suites and full suites, all fully equipped. The crown jewel of this resort is its convention center, which is the largest in Riviera Maya with 190,000 sf of meeting space and a capacity for 7,000 people. Additionally a 3,400-sf terrace is available for gala receptions. With a wide range of excellent facilities, the resort will offer a choice of restaurants, bars, pools, spa and gym. The resort also has its own theme park, Ventura Fly & Ride Park, offering high altitude and other rides. Attendees will discover everything the new Barceló Maya Riviera all-inclusive resort has in store. Located only 47 miles from Cancun International Airport and its amazing surroundings on a more than 1 mile beach make it a perfect resort to host any type of event.

Another exciting new destination resort in Mexico is Hotel Xcaret Mexico, which has an exceptional approach to architecture. Meeting and events attendees can enjoy spectacular views of the turquoise sea, white sand beaches, underground caves and rivers among the Mayan Riviera. The meeting spaces include an impressive convention center, useful for both large and small groups, and a Mexican Hacienda. Multifunctional rooms and venues, private beaches and the spectacular events room located in the hotel’s pyramid-shaped hill provides everything necessary to achieve a successful event.

Xcaret offers unparalleled outdoor facilities that are perfect for team building and other activities, including new product launches. Outdoor venues such as Hacienda Henequenera in Xcaret, a unique venue, will make events stand out. The hacienda has a sliding roof and its patio can accommodate 500 attendees for cocktails, dinners and endless function possibilities. The hacienda also has a room with a capacity for up to 1,420 attendees divided in to four spaces.

Hotel Xcaret Mexico has everything to make for a successful event. The resort’s experienced team specializes in coordinating everything for planners, perfectly covering every detail to make events memorable.

Whether a group prefers U.S.-based grand hotels, a rustic but amenity-filled ranch stay or a sojourn in the tropics, all-inclusive resorts should be in the mix of considerations. For some groups and planners, they are in fact the perfect answer for a meeting or incentive program.
Bring on the Business
These Destinations Are Getting Ready for More Attention From Planners
BY RON BERNTHAL

Emerging destinations aren’t necessarily undiscovered places. Savannah, Georgia, one of our selected destinations, was founded in 1733 and Columbia, South Carolina, in 1786. But the seven cities listed here all share a common thread as their recent urban revitalization plans are now coming to fruition, resulting in new or expanding convention centers, hotels, creative mixed-use facilities and vibrant downtown neighborhoods.

These exciting new urban environments, along with an increase in airlift and a business-friendly attitude, are attracting corporate meeting planners interested in providing their attendees with new experiences in new surroundings.

The local CVBs are more than ready to assist planners with organizing large or small conferences, meetings, events and offsite experiences. These cities are open for business, and proud of their product.

SAVANNAH FOR SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY
“The final hotel data from last year tells us that the previous two years have been the best two years in Savannah’s tourism history,” says Joseph Marinelli, president of Visit Savannah. “Even with the addition of a number of new hotels throughout the market and an increase in short-term rental inventory, the occupancy and average rates continue to hold their own. We are extremely encouraged by this, especially with several new properties planned to open later this year. It also tells us that all of the increased non-stop air service from around the country is making a difference.”

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JOSEPH MARINELLI
President
Visit Savannah
Hotel development includes several new luxury properties. There were also major renovations of each of Savannah’s four largest hotels: The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa, Hyatt Regency Savannah, Savannah Marriott Riverfront and The DeSoto.

Savannah’s low cost of living, 14% below the national average, makes it a cost-efficient destination, while the city also is also frequently selected for its well-preserved historical heritage and laid-back Southern lifestyle. “The popularity of Savannah as a leisure destination is now carrying over nicely for us in terms of attracting future conventions, meetings and trade shows,” Marinelli says. “Locally, a designation like this helps to boost business levels for area businesses, restaurants, tour companies and attractions, while increasing traffic on all of the new flights coming in and out of town.”

The Telfair Academy, in Savannah, the oldest public art museum in the South, can host hundreds for corporate meals in its rotunda.

“I love the feel of the crisp modern space at the Jepson while you’re overlooking historic Telfair Square, the feeling of old meeting new.”

JULIE FORD MUSSELMAN
President and Event Planner
Hostess City Celebrations

The Telfair Academy, in Savannah, the oldest public art museum in the South, can host hundreds for corporate meals in its rotunda.

The Jepson Center features a sweeping, museum building designed by internationally acclaimed architect Moshe Safdie, it can accommodate large groups with its soaring, three-story atrium, expansive galleries, and on the third-floor, outdoor sculpture terraces. The Jepson Center features a sweeping, three-story central staircase, a 225-seat auditorium for presentations and small performances, a fully equipped boardroom and a prep kitchen.

“I did a corporate event in early 2019 with about 175 attendees,” says Julie Ford Musselman, president and event planner for Hostess City Celebrations Inc. “It was a conference to discuss current happenings in the industry, strategically plan for the year, network and, of course, to have some fun in a great city.”

She adds, “Our host hotel was The DeSoto, a beautiful, iconic property located in the historic district, and with 246 rooms, it was perfect for our group.” Musselman says. “Basically, Savannah offers corporate planners rates rise, but average room rates are still very attractive to planners. University of South Carolina is home to many football games bring in fall weekend visitors, state government and business travelers arrive mid-week, and local culinary and music festivals take place throughout the year.

Many hotelsiers are seeing big increases in meeting bookings. “It’s a real combination of things, such as the banking and insurance sectors and law firms,” says David Erbacher, director of sales and marketing at the Hyatt Place Columbia/Downtown/The Vista property. “That’s in addition to the university, government visitors and of course the military. And when many of those folk come here, they like what they see and want to return for a weekend. So many companies are using Columbia as a starting point.” He also noted that Columbia’s proximity to Charlotte, Charleston, Greenville and even Atlanta make it a great central location for business meetings.

Bill Ellen, president and CEO of Experience Columbia SC, says demand for meeting space in local hotels and at the convention center often exceed capability. “We need additional hotels that can accommodate a large block of rooms,” Ellen says. “The hotels work great with us now, but they have so much business they sometimes don’t need to offer discounted group rates. We need more room availability for group blocks, but that will be coming as more hotel projects get into the pipeline.”

COST EFFICIENT COLUMBIA, SC

Few cities in the country have emerged as a new meeting destination as quickly as Columbia, the capital city of South Carolina, with its big-city amenities and small-town feel. There are numerous new hotel properties catering to every budget, good highway and airport logistics and friendly, Southern hospitality inherent throughout the state. Add in a major state university and a business-friendly attitude among city officials, and meeting planners can introduce attendees to a relaxed and fun-filled meeting experience.

Experience Columbia SC is the DMO that will help corporate planners with research and options for off-site venues as well as introductions to hotel personnel. Attendees will enjoy the city’s walkable downtown, including the 142,500-sf Columbia Metrocenter Convention Center, located within walking distance of 1,500 downtown hotel rooms and hundreds of restaurants and shops.

For off-site venues, there are numerous options, including the Riverbanks Zoo & Garden, The Columbia Museum of Art and the South Carolina State Museum.

Columbia is also known for its downtown growth and development, driven by a large student population, a resurgent Main Street and more food and beverage venues, has helped downtown hotel occupancy completed a $25 million renovation and The Shores Resort & Spa completed a multi-million-dollar renovation project. The Daytona Beach Resort & Conference Center reopened earlier this after a $12 million renovation.

Three years ago, a $400 million overhaul transformed Daytona International Speedway into a state-of-the-art motorsports facility located less than a half-mile from the World Center of Racing. These days the Speedway features premium amenities on three concourse levels spanning the front stretch; five expanded fan entrances; 11 social areas called ‘neighborhoods,’ each the size of a football field; dozens of video screens to capture the on-track action; more than 3,000 upscale suites with patios; and 101,500 new grandstand seats with backs and arm rests.

In addition to car and motorcycle races, the stadium also is home to a growing number of events and shows as well as unique meeting and convention space for corporate groups. For planners who want to include golf in their agendas, Daytona Beach is experiencing a number of new and expanded hotels in Daytona Beach include Daytona Beach Convention Hotel & Condominiums, a 9162 million, 300-room, oceanfront complex under construction just north of the Ocean Center convention center complex. It is expected to be completed next year. The 200-room Hard Rock Hotel Daytona Beach, a luxury oceanfront resort, opened last year. Also late last year, the 744-room Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort

FLORIDA FAVORITE

One of the most famous “Spring Break” destinations in America, Daytona Beach is a great venue for corporate planners. University of South Carolina is home to many football games bring in fall weekend visitors, state government and business travelers arrive mid-week, and local culinary and music festivals take place throughout the year.

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Memphis is embarking on the $950 million Union Row project, which will transform its downtown, revitalize the city’s center and invigorate the east end of Beale Street.

The Memphis Convention Center (MCC) is undergoing major renovations and enhancements, including interior and exterior improvements. The vision is for meeting spaces to offer river and skyline views along with outdoor terraces, glass-enclosed concourses, pre-function space, 46 breakout rooms, and a column-free, 118,000-sf main exhibit hall. The MCC will complete its renovations and expansions by fall 2020.

Although Memphis has lots of great meetings properties, including the Sheraton Memphis Downtown Hotel, directly connected to the MCC, the Crown Plaza Memphis Downtown, the Hilton Memphis and others, it is the iconic The Peabody Memphis that remains one of the most popular hotels for corporate groups. “The NSM is a celebration and recognition of the accomplishments of the prior and a launch event for the programs and work planned for the current year. Peak attendance for the NSM is around 3,000. The Vendor Summit is an invitation-only event that combines information sharing and relationship building with our company’s product and service needs, and many other value-added activities for this program is approximately 800.”

Glancy says their space needs are different for each group, but there is never a shortage of Memphis with accommodations available for groups of varying sizes. “For the NSM, we use the entirety of the Memphis Convention Center, as well as meeting space in six different hotels” Glancy says. “We have one evening where everyone is together at an offsite location, perhaps in AutoZone Park, the FedExForum, Beale Street or Mud Island. We also have smaller groups that will go to different restaurants and many terrific downtown restaurants.”

She adds, “For training and teambuilding, we have held events at the National Civil Rights Museum, at Tom Lee Park and in our own Store Support Center, which faces the Mississippi River. Memphis is AutoZone’s hometown, and we are very proud of the opportunity to host our attendees in the city where our company was founded. We have been, and continue to be, very pleased with the affordability of the location and the wide variety of venues that are available for our programs. Easy access to downtown from the airport, the close proximity of the venues we use to our convention center and the great hospitality and service we receive from the CVB, hotels and event staffs are just a few of the reasons we stay in Memphis.”

**Portland, A PREMIERE MEETING DESTINATION**
Rising from the corner of Southwest 11th Avenue and Southwest Alder Street, the new Hyatt Centric Downtown Portland hotel will offer 220 rooms, 3,000 sq of meeting space and a restaurant and bar from a soon-to-be-named Portland restaurateurs. The hotel is expected to open for business in January next year.

These days the Hyatt Centric is just one of seven hotels under construction in Portland’s Central City district, and seven additional properties have been recently completed. With over 4,000 hotel rooms added in the past six years, Jeff Miller, president and CEO of Travel Portland, says many of those new rooms already have leisure travelers and corporate group attendees waiting to check-in.

“Downtown Portland has seen a significant number of new hotels open over the past three years,” Miller says. “Even with the new inventory, occupancy rates remain high, and Portland remains a premiere travel destination for the more than 8.6 million visitors who traveled here last year.”

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open early next year is the 600-room Hyatt Regency. The hotel will offer corporate planners a block of 500 rooms right across the street from the Oregon Convention Center. The property will be Hyatt's first full-service hotel in Oregon.

Like many other downtown properties, it will be within walking distance of shopping, dining and professional sporting events, and the MAX Light Rail system takes riders from downtown directly to Portland International Airport.

A renovation of the Oregon Convention Center is also underway. The project includes numerous upgrades to the center’s public spaces and ballrooms, as well as a reconstruction of the exterior plaza on the northeast corner.

The new designs, inspired by Oregon’s landscape, will include lichen-like carpets and forest canopy ceilings. The north plaza will be renovated to provide more flexible and usable space and to improve access for adjacent hotel guests and transit commuters. Renovations are expected to be completed by year end.

**SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA’S CAPITAL DESTINATION**

This is one of California’s most affordable and accessible cities, served by 150 flights daily. The soon-to-be-expanded Sacramento Convention Center currently offers 384,000 sf of event space and 31 meeting rooms. Construction is expected to be completed next year. There are more than 2,000 hotel rooms within walking distance of the convention center, and with a total of 4,000 hotel rooms within a 5-mile radius of downtown, Sacramento offers corporate planners plenty of accommodations options.

The Sacramento City Council approved an expansion and renovation plan for the convention center that will transform the building to provide more flexible and usable space and to improve access for adjacent hotel guests and transit commuters. Renovations are expected to be completed by year end.

**SIoux Falls, A South Dakota Favorite**

This city continues to grow its hotel occupancy with new hotels each year. Two Marriott properties with conference center space are scheduled to open in Downtown Sioux Falls next year and BNSF Railway reached an agreement with the City of Sioux Falls to sell 10.25 acres of land downtown for future development. While no plan has been announced at this time, the land could potentially support hotels. Village on the River will be a new 11-story hotel next to the Golden 1 Center, six blocks from the convention center.

The Arc of Dreams is a resounding steel structure that will span the width of the Big Sioux River 70 feet above the water. The Arc, which will be a cornerstone piece of the SculptureWalk, is expected to debut soon.

**Your Quebec City City, Your Success Makes History.**

The soon-to-be expanded Sacramento Convention Center now has 384,000 sf of event space.

“During our Dealer Meeting we hold classes about our products for our sales staff and employees,” says Callan Jarabek, meeting planner and marketing manager for Rosenbauer South Dakota, LLC. “We have industry vendors display their products and attend our banquets, and we have guests from Sioux Falls and surrounding area businesses that we also conduct business with on a daily basis, which includes local banks, manufacturing supply companies, shipping companies and state and local political representatives.”

Jarabek says she booked several Sioux Falls’ meeting properties for three-to-five nights, depending on attendee needs. “We rented out the entire Sheraton Sioux Falls & Convention Center with covered access to Premier Center for our dealers, as well as some of the surrounding hotels for our vendors and employees. All of the activities were onsite, including classes, training and meals.”

She adds, “Sioux Falls was chosen because our North Dakota office is based in Lyons, just north of the city, and it is a central location for our plants in Nebraska and Minnesota. Sioux Falls is simply the best place to host. The city and the hotels are affordable and they are so easy to work with, I just can’t imagine us ever trying a different location again.”

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Why do some people rise to leadership positions while others do not? Are there common practices that leaders engage in, common thought processes? And what makes a woman leader stand out? We found five incredible women to tell us what they think.

One thing Amanda Armstrong, CMP, assistant vice president at Enterprise Holdings Inc., has learned in her career is to “Become an expert in areas that excite you on a daily basis.” She says leaders shouldn’t be afraid to make an informed decision even if it turns out to be wrong. “If you’re wrong, course correct and move on.” And she points to the importance of effective communication, which she calls critical “in terms of influencing, inspiring and empowering others.”

Armstrong’s path to leadership included the decision to not let fear be a factor. “I remember being a meeting coordinator and recognizing that I could do the job above me. But did I want more responsibility and to be held accountable for major outcomes? I didn’t let fear of failure creep in and the answer was — ‘Yes!’”

Armstrong is adamant in her view that everyone brings different skills to the leadership table and that inclusion should be our focus. “While we can group skills by gender,” she says, “I prefer we don’t. It can reinforce stereotypes that already divide us. If inclusion is our larger goal in the workplace, we need to be careful about grouping skills or characteristics by gender, age, race or sexual orientation.”

She lists her own critical skills as recognizing the contributions of others on a regular basis, clearly articulating the vision and bringing people back to it when needed and actively listening. “It’s critical to remove obstacles, find solutions and attain goals.”

Of all she’s accomplished, she’s most proud of being the 2018 chair of the international board of directors for MPI. “MPI played a major role in my career development; I gained leadership training, education and a trusted supplier network. Being elected by my peers and serving as MPI chair was a true honor.” However, she adds, last year was no cakewalk.

“Our industry faced commission cuts, GDPR compliance and the #MeToo movement. I’m particularly proud of the chapter leaders, MPI staff and the board for demonstrating agility and decisiveness to address sexual harassment in our industry. We created tools, training and resources to increase awareness and provide support. Our membership is 80 percent women and studies show 60 percent of women have experienced harassment in their careers. With those stats, you don’t just shrug your shoulders and move to the next agenda item … you mobilize and that’s what we did.”

Like others, Armstrong lists unrealistic self-expectations as a hindrance. “I wanted to hit a home run every time I was up to bat. When I didn’t, I used to self-critique pretty harshly. I still want the home run, even with new endeavors,” she notes. “Now I gather feedback, course correct and apply what I’ve learned. I removed emotion and judgment from the equation and celebrate the effort, rush and never-ending learning curve.”

Armstrong prefers to assess opportunities rather than challenges. She’s grateful for being able to address the social issues she cares about in the workplace. “Unconscious biases creep into our everyday decision-making and are obstacles to inclusive and harassment-free work environments. As a leader, I have a responsibility to address it when and where I encounter it. I think we can agree we all want safe, productive and healthy work environments. What are we doing in our day-to-day lives to achieve that mutually beneficial goal?”

Young women, Armstrong adds, expect more from their leaders these days but are also taking things into their own hands. “From what I have experienced, they’re less tolerant of workplace banter that floats ‘close to the line’ and have zero tolerance for harassment. I think new planners are already leading the way in this area; their expectation for equal treatment and equal pay has empowered other generations to speak up and speak out.”

If there’s one thing she wishes she knew earlier in her career it’s this: “Titles don’t make leaders. Great leaders don’t set out to be a leader; they set out to make a difference."
Dana Bartle

Treating everyone like they’re the CEO as you never know if the most casually dressed person in the room actually owns the company,” advises Dana Bartle, vice president of sales and events at Brooklyn Bowl, a combo event and venue, bowling alley, restaurant and bar. Bartle’s wide range of experience includes being a sommelier for a Manhattan restaurant and owning her own video production company. She recalls a turning point in her career when she had to wait 18 months for a large NYC ad agency to pay her for her video work although she was on the hook for paying the additional five people she brought in to work on the complex project. She decided to shut down her production company and look for a full-time position. She was recommended for the job of event director at Brooklyn Bowl and it turned out to be a perfect fit. She thinks her key leadership skills are thinking outside the box to find creative solutions to execute events and a strong ability to collaborate. “Every day I work with multiple departments to produce events. This collaborative effort helps me to see our events from every facet and gives me a better understanding of how to make events a success.” One thing she’s proud of accomplishing was having Brooklyn Bowl chosen as the only Brooklyn event venue to do a live broadcast with VH1 for the Super Bowl. “This was our first-ever live television broadcast. We had Fall Out Boy performing live, Stacy Keibler hosting, a marching band marching down the lanes, two Steadicams on the dance floor, plus a full house to watch the show. It was a two-day load in, 18-hour day and not a single thing went wrong. The client was thrilled and we all walked out of the venue at 3 a.m. high-fiving each other.”

Bartle says occasionally male clients question her ability to answer specific questions related to an event and she’ll have to pull in a male counterpart to reiterate what she’s already said. “But ultimately,” she adds, “at a certain point you have to step back and let them know you’re the expert in the field. At the end of the day when you execute their event flawlessly, your expertise is palpable.” Bartle notes that her entire team is comprised of women, and her goal is to set them up for success. “When you work with a close team you’re responsible for giving them the tools they need to succeed in their current position and in the future. I take the mentoring aspect very seriously and it’s important to me to help them grow in their positions so they can grow in the industry.” Likewise, she says, “My team is so supportive of me and any accomplishment I achieve on the job.” One thing, that’s been a challenge is finding that balance between being an effective boss and also being friends with the team. “It’s crucial to effectively manage your team to get the job done right,” she says.

To young women in the industry she advises, “Find good female friends in leadership roles and connect with them regularly. So much of my success has been about having a network of female friends in various industries whom I trust for professional advice.”

Deanna Griffith-House, CMP, CMM, PMP

Deanna Griffith-House, CMP, CMM, PMP, director, strategic initiatives at Charlotte, North Carolina-based Spectrum Reach, says trust is the No. 1 quality of a valued and successful leader. “Trust provides individuals, teams and colleagues with a starting point of belief.”

Communication and transparency are also key. “By being transparent with your team(s) as the situation provides, you gain the team’s continued support and their dedication to success,” she says.

Griffith-House thinks it’s important for leaders to “put themselves out there. By being curious and staying curious, you gain volumes of knowledge and solidify your position within the organization.” She has followed her own advice to be involved, which stems from her mother. “My mother was a staunch advocate for volunteerism and by default, so now am I. Over the years, I’ve joined and volunteered for several organizations whose missions spoke to my core. Through volunteerism, I’ve met so many amazing people and have been provided tremendous opportunities for networking, training, leadership and just learning!”

One thing is that there’s no one single path or set of attributes that make a leader. “I think my most critical skills,” Griffith-House says, “are to see the connective tissue or thread connecting systems, processes and practices. I can easily see the proverbial forest for the trees and lead a team to greater success accordingly.”

Is there a difference in what men and women bring to leadership? Griffith-House is among those who say yes. Women, she says, have “the ability to easily see most angles of a situation and separate the possible from the plausible, moving forward accordingly and getting to results faster.” As a leader, she puts high value on her team and its successes in evaluating her own success. “I’m always most proud of the success of my team, collectively and as individuals. I am most proud when members of my team exceed their own expectations and gain the trust, respect and loyalty of others in the organization simply by performing their job duties well above the norm.”

In addition to identifying time, or lack thereof, as an ongoing challenge — as in finding the time to do all she wants to for herself, her team and her organization — Griffith-House says making a shift from “doer or taskmaster” to “leader” is tricky. But one way to move past that is to have trust in the team.

“Our industry demands that we excel at managing the details and delivering a quality effort with that emphasis. As a leader, you truly should not ‘sweat the small stuff,’ but rather leave that in the very capable hands of the team you trust. Let go and lead, let the team excel as you excel,” she says.

Griffith-House is among those who think women in the industry have different expectations for female vs. male leaders. “I firmly believe we’re most hard on ourselves due to the expectations, realistic or not, we have set for ourselves. We often more harshly judge those we see as a challenge to our own success. Unfortunately, we often don’t see males as challenging to us, which they are for sure.”

As for what wishes she had known early in her career, Griffith-House says, “To be intentional about the industry you choose, not just your career path. The meetings industry is enormous and provides many opportunities. For example, I wish I would have known to choose healthcare meetings or technology meetings, to not only hone my expertise, but that of the company’s industry.”

To the young women hoping to rise to leadership she says, “Raise your hand. Get involved. Volunteer. There are opportunities all around you to grow, learn and give back.”
Anne Marie Rogers, CIS, CITP, director, meetings, incentives, events at Direct Travel, Minneapolis, Minnesota, which provides corporate travel, meetings and events among other services, has been active in sales, marketing, travel and event planning for more than 20 years. Along the way she’s learned a lot about what it means to be a leader, including that it’s important for leaders to surround themselves with good people and empower them. Among the things she’s also learned is to be a good listener, ask a lot of questions and to not be afraid of making a mistake — own it, learn from it and move on, she advises — and the importance of education and certification, which she says helps planners evolve and increase their expertise.

Rogers lists her strengths as being curious and asking a lot of questions, always wanting to learn, good people skills, gathering good people around her and the ability to work every day and feel that they work in a supportive environment.”

She puts emphasis squarely on teamwork. “An effective leader should always promote a ‘team-focused’ mentality and ensure that praise is directed to the team.”

Moreover, Rogers says, “It’s imperative to clearly define your company culture, ingrain it, its values, into each team member and adhere to it. Defining a company culture means nothing if you don’t act on it and live it.”

“As a leader your top priority is to create an atmosphere that people want to work in. While normal job stressors are inevitable, your team should be excited to come to work every day.”

Her best advice to those coming up in the industry now is, “Seek out people that are successful at what you want to do, but don’t be afraid to look outside your industry for different perspectives. Get involved with industry associations, which often have a career-building path and certifications that can help you and be open to feedback and use it to better yourself.”

Adding something she wishes she had understood earlier, she says, “Trust your gut and don’t be afraid to speak up, while of course being respectful.”

Among the things she’s proud of in her career is being part of the SITE International board of directors. She was a SITE Minnesota board member for five years.

“After being part of the local board for several years,” she says, “it’s exciting and stimulating to look at things from a global perspective and see how it all fits together.”

“Rogers thinks it’s a great time to be a woman in the hospitality industry. There are so many more opportunities than in the past. I think it’s important to find good mentors and be not afraid to bring up new ideas and perspectives.”

That said, she notes that “this is a career that evolves,” she advises. “This is a career that involves long hours and a lot of energy. It’s important to delegate and work smarter, not harder.”

For that and other reasons, she echoes the other women highlighted here in encouraging young planners to find good mentors, whether male or female. “I think it is important to look in many different places for people with good experience who can teach or help you,” she says.

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Regional general manager of PRA Nashville and PRA Louisville, at PRA Events Inc., Jacqueline Marko, CMP, DMCP, says, “As a leader your top priority is to create an atmosphere that people want to work in. While normal job stressors are inevitable, your team should be excited to come to work every day and feel that they work in a supportive environment.”

She puts emphasis squarely on teamwork. “An effective leader should always promote a ‘team-focused’ mentality and ensure that praise is directed to the team.”

Moreover, Marko says, “It’s imperative to clearly define your company culture, ingrain it, its values, into each team member and adhere to it. Defining a company culture means nothing if you don’t act on it and live it.”

At 28, Marko started in this industry at her own wedding-planning company. An aunt, who owned respected DMarge Destination Nashville and a SITE Minnesota board member for 10 years. She was the turning point in my career and what set me on a leadership path,” she says. “An important skill of being an effective leader is instilling confidence in others to believe in their abilities and guide them to fruition.”

Women are traditionally good listeners, which is the key to any successful relationship, both personal and professional. “There are so many more opportunities than in the past. I think it’s important to find good mentors and not be afraid to bring up new ideas and perspectives.”

Among her top skills, she says, is organization. “I have lists for everything and write down all discussion points with my team members so that I always follow up with them in a timely and thorough manner. Additionally, I am an ‘over-communicator’ and believe that communication is the key to any successful relationship, both personal and professional. I’m quick with responses to my team members and our clients, striving to set the example on expectations of our level of communication.”

Marko points out that many of the strong leaders in the industry are women. “I learned from my aunt, Rhonda Marko, CMP, DMCP, CMM, who owned Destination Nashville for 24 years before selling to PRA Events Inc., which is currently owned by a private equity firm but was founded in 1961 by industry pioneer Patti Roscoe. We are a female-dominated industry and the only foreseeable challenge our industry may face is any personal apprehension that holds them back from achieving their own leadership goals.”

And, she notes, it takes grit to succeed. Although some may expect women to take a “softer” approach, Marko says, “In our industry, and especially when working on behalf of our clients, we have to be tough. While I don’t think the expectation is necessarily different for men, I think it can be surprising to some to see that women are not afraid to put in the long hours and roll up our sleeves to do the hard work needed to produce successful events.”

Marko says mentoring is extremely important. “It’s our duty to mentor current and future planners, pushing them to become the leaders that will take this industry into the next century.”

What she wishes she had learned earlier is that being an effective leader is not about doing everything yourself. “Being an effective leader is learning the art of delegating, trusting in your team’s abilities with the delegated tasks and empowering them to have confidence in their actions and decisions.”

To new planners she advises, “Don’t be shy and don’t be a ‘yes’ person. ‘Yes’ people are regarded as nice and will always be employed, but leaders ask challenging questions. They assert themselves and their opinions when they know they have merit and because of that they gain respect. Start acting like a leader and you will become one!”
TRADE TIPS //

The Right Message Can Get an Event off to a Great Start

PICKING THE PERFECT SPEAKER

BY DAVID SWANSON

Rory Archibald, Business Development Manager for VisitScotland Business Events, suggests planners use a CVB to find a speaker.
Atractive destination? Check. Great venues, a solid lineup of sponsors? Check, and check.

Pulling a successful conference together should be as easy as ticking off a checklist. But as almost any meeting planner knows, the boxes rarely get checked off in a neat order. And one of the bigger tasks that can easily get shunted to the side during the months of planning is speakers.

It shouldn’t be, because a solid keynote speaker can set the tone for an entire conference — for good or ill.

“A great speaker can set the stage as far as theme is concerned,” says Richard Schelp, president of the International Association of Speakers Bureaus (IASB) and CEO and owner of the Executive Speakers Bureau.

“They also help establish the level of energy the event is going to have and maybe the direction it’s going to take on the front end. A conference might be blase’ without having that speaker involved or maybe there’s a level of excitement because that speaker is so outstanding.”

Sheldon Senek, president of the New Jersey-based Eagles Talent Speakers Bureau, concurs.

“A great speaker brings credibility to a conference and they can elevate the meeting,” Senek says. “At the heart of it, attendees have to be able to walk away with value and that comes in different ways. It can be actual education, it can be inspiration or entertainment. When they’re in the midst of an all-day workshop, sometimes they just need a keynote who can lighten things up.

The most important quality of a great speaker is that he or she is a great storyteller, says Marc Peck, CEO of the National Speakers Association (NSA). They will bring prepared, customized content relevant to the audience and communicated in a way that resonates.

She continues: “Professional speaking is more complex than simply giving a PowerPoint presentation or delivering a canned speech. The biggest benefit of hiring a professional is that they can communicate the subject matter in a way that engages the audience and helps them really hear and understand the message and also leaves them inspired to take action when they get back to their office or after the meeting.”

Plus, find the right speaker and you’ll not only ensure buzz that inherently stokes interest in subsequent conferences, but you’ll also alleviate some of the burden born as aspects of your event that may be beyond your control, such as technical challenges or catering problems.

**FINDING THE PERFECT SPEAKER**

The search for speakers should begin with identifying the meeting’s themes. Understand the primary goals of your overall conference — is it motivational, educational, sales-focused or celebratory? Ideally, this process starts more than a year ahead of the conference — some top speakers can be booked up to a year in advance — but it should at least get under way before conference announcements begin.

Then, identify whether speakers are expected to perform the heavy lifting — for instance, to get a message over the finish line — or if speakers are there to provide inspiration, color or pure entertainment. Don’t overlook internal resources. Pinpoint any stars at the company who might serve as a speaker or at least as a moderator for a panel or a Q&A session.

Or maybe you are aiming for a “naming” who will help drive event registration and add a bit of dazzle, perhaps sparking social media hits that help build your brand? A celebrity speaker will cost more than typical motivational speakers — generally well into five or even six figures — but if they successfully engage with the audience they can launch a conversation that gets future attendees to pencil in the date for your next conference.

“When a meeting planner is looking for a speaker and doesn’t know who they really get to start with a large list,” Schelp says. “I’m not talking about 75 names, but about 10 or 12. The biggest challenge most meeting planners face is narrowing the list.”

**EVALUATE THE SPEAKER**

Evaluate how that speaker performs. If you can’t find your way to an event to see the speaker in action, watch videos of them live on stage. Many speakers can be found on YouTube, while speakers bureaus will have a larger supply of videos for the talent they represent. Many speakers often have a professional reel. As you watch your prospects, consider carefully how well they will communicate with your audience. This is particularly important if you are tapping a speaker for expertise that may not be directly tied to your industry.

“Ensure that the speaker has content relevant to your audience,” Peck advises. “Most professional speakers have videos, blogs, podcasts or books that meeting organizers can review. A true professional speaker will also want to talk with the meeting organizer to again understand their goals and get a feel for what they’re looking for.”

She continues: “Educating and inspiring others is the very definition of a true professional speaker and it should at least get under way during the months of planning is speakers.

Schelp recommends at least one or two meetings with speakers before final decisions begin. Schelp recommends at least one major call between the speaker and the important players with the company. “Ask the speaker to come for a set of low-down-calls where the speaker speaks with executives and they can help set the stage for him,” Schelp adds. “At the beginning, they need to understand where his experience lies. There are speakers who are clearly energetic and others are more content focused.”

**WORKING WITHIN YOUR BUDGET**

While most professional speakers are represented by an agent or speakers bureau, some are not. It doesn’t hurt to reach out to speakers independently — especially if there are synergies that work to the benefit of both the conference and speaker. Yours might be an audience to which they particularly want to speak or they might have a connection to the event location.

Perhaps they have a book or project to promote. If they are represented, the negotiations will still involve the agent or speakers bureau, but you may be able to establish a relationship up front that will work to your benefit. Peck recommends reaching out to speakers directly.

“Ask what your standard rates are,” she says. “Professional speakers who are not represented by a bureau will work with you directly or they have staff members who can work with you. If their standard fee is outside of your budget, talk with them about your budget and your goals. They may be able to work with you, offer alternative ideas, or they may know someone in your price range. It’s a tight-knit community and a speaker’s No. 1 goal is to help the organization.”

Senek adds, “If there’s not a budget for a big name, find the commonalities. Find speakers who align with your message and see what might be incentives. The more transparent and collaborative you and the speaker can be, the quicker you can get to an answer. Even if you get a no, it allows you to move on.”

If your budget is limited, Senek also suggests diving into the searchable Ted Talks database, where hundreds of speakers are available for inspiration.

“There are really interesting people there. They might not be the right fit for a lot of corporate groups, but they might work for your niche industry. Budget or no budget, just make sure

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**RICHARD SCHELP**

CEO and Owner, Executive Speakers Bureau
President, International Association of Speakers Bureaus (IASB)

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**Photo by D. Liebman**

Motivational keynote speaker Ben Nemtin inspires an audience in Orlando with his keynote “5 Steps to Making the Impossible Possible.”

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**Lior Arussy is one of the world’s leading consultants on customer experience and customer-centric transformation.**

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**Photo courtesy David Appleby Latin America**
Some CVBs have stepped up to help provide inspiration for a speaker. From the CVB, getting help of $50,000 for his services, but for an who normally charges a speaking fee example of one Chicago-based speaker have your heart set on, Senek gave an successful conference. When you find a speakers bureau you like, the longer you work with them the more they’ll get a feel for your audience and their likes and dislikes, refining your program and building on past successes. Meanwhile, Epstein suggests the path is not dissimilar to the other aspects of building a successful conference. “Make sure you have the money in your budget which you’re offering,” he explains. “Make sure your venue is secured. Make sure you have the authority to move forward with that speaker internally. Once you’ve ensured all of these elements, you’re ready to begin partnership with a speaker and be on the path to a great event.”

He plays the role of forgotten sales rep. Disgruntled dealer or franchisee. Store manager with the most remote location. That lets the Corporate Sidekicks character voice the concerns of your audience to management in a humorous way. So along with management they can laugh off their differences...then get to work on solutions.

"A self-effacing respite amid the rally’s pep talk" THE NEW YORK TIMES

InnovateFilm, an event organized by VisitScotland Business Events, featured speakers Lindsay McGee, John Archer and Mark Stothert. Examples of New Orleans-based motivational speakers include Robert Fogarty (Dear World) and Candy Chang (Before I Die), while political commentators James Carville and Mary Matalin are the locally-based husband-and-wife team who usually find themselves at opposite ends of the political spectrum. They can be hilarious together.

Still, a quality speakers bureau can be an excellent resource, especially guiding planners whose day-to-day responsibilities go well beyond identifying a keynote speaker for the annual conference. When you find a speakers bureau you like, the longer you work with them the more they’ll get a feel for your audience and their likes and dislikes, refining your program and building on past successes.

"Nowadays, the services offered by a CVB are much more than just assistance with room blocks," suggests Rory Archibald, business development manager – associations and sectors for VisitScotland Business Events. “We have utilized many Scotland-based innovators to speak at our national ambassador network events.”

He continues: “CVBs have well-developed ambassador programs with local experts in various key sectors. These local experts have an established relationship with the CVB and are willing to work with conference organizers to host programs in their cities. They are passionate at what they do and are eager to tell people about their work, their institutions, and their industries.”

Experts on renewable energy, precision medicine, equality, fintech and marine science are just a few of the sectors Archibald identifies that VisitScotland Business Events can provide.

New Orleans & Company is another CVB that assists planners with local speakers. “If it fits into their programming and education goals, we often work with GNO Inc., our local economic development organization,” says Tara Letort, CMP, senior director of Group Public Relations for New Orleans & Company. “We sometimes help match subject-matter experts with incoming conventions based on need. Sometimes, it’s motivational speakers that they’d like to find in the destination, so there are no travel costs involved.”

Examples of New Orleans-based motivational speakers include Robert Fogarty (Dear World) and Candy Chang (Before I Die), while political commentators James Carville and Mary Matalin are the locally-based husband-and-wife team who usually find themselves at opposite ends of the political spectrum. They can be hilarious together.

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**Make it Happen**

Tips for Helping Attendees Justify Coming to Your Meeting

**BY KEITH LORIA**

Companies are invited to different conferences and incentive travel opportunities all the time, and must choose which events make sense to attend and which to skip. Even if a potential attendee wants to go to the meeting, often he or she must convince their boss as to why the meeting is important and how it will help going forward.

Corporate and incentive meetings are all about building relationships, networking, leaving a say at the table and learning. Attendees benefit with valuable takeaways that cannot be underestimated, says Debbie A. McClure, director of communications for Strategic Incentive Solutions, a Canadian corporate and incentive travel company based in Ontario. “While modern technologies are great, sometimes it’s extremely beneficial for even a once-a-year, face-to-face meeting to accomplish or set goals and objectives, iron out problem areas and discover machinery that will save your crew 20% of the time needed to clean your building.”

“Being viewed as part of the team, building lasting relationships and trust with others, are the true intangible benefits that can’t be underestimated,” says Craven.

**“We make attending as easy as possible. No fees, free parking and in some cases shuttle service from transportation hubs.”**

Lauren Grech, CEO and co-founder of New York-based LLG Events, says it’s important to find common ground between the attendees and the speakers. “We strive to bring emerging trends and technologies to our conference in order to make it compelling and attractive for our attendees,” she says. “Our letter template focuses on the ROI and professional development in addition to networking opportunities.”

“During the event, McClure understands that corporate and incentive travel are typically viewed as high-value perks of the company or particular position. “Some of the most compelling reasons to attend are the opportunity to network with co-workers, clients/suppliers and higher-ups, being viewed as a team player, management, participating in round table discussions at the event and fitting in with the overall company culture of collaboration and team work,” she says.

“Moreover, trade shows offer the same overall benefits, but are more work-focused. These events, she says, are about making connections with potential new suppliers and sourcing new product and information to share with management. That’s why people want to come.”

**For example, “I know sustainability is important to you, please come to our Expo where you can see all of the latest green products and attend a seminar addressing the trends and municipal requirements.” Or, “I know cost-savings is a big deal, so come to the Expo and check out the floor cleaning machinery that will save your crew 20% of the time needed to clean your building.”**

She adds, “We also do email campaigns which are more effective for repeat attendees so they know what to expect. They look forward to coming back and seeing what is new. We make attending as easy as possible. No fees, free parking and in some cases shuttle service from transportation hubs. We also offer complimentary F&B during the event.”

**“The secret ingredients to get attendees to attend are location, education and networking.”**

Lauren Grech, CEO and co-founder of LLG Events, says a luncheon creates networking opportunities.

“Some conferences and incentive travel companies offer complimentary F&B, comply with legislation but are more work-focused. These events, she says, are about making connections with potential new suppliers and sourcing new product and information to share with management. That’s why people want to come.”

**“How will this be of value to our attendees?”**

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**“We create events that provide opportunities for the attendees to discover ways to save money, increase their customers’ satisfaction, comply with legislation and have some fun while they’re at it,” she says.**

Craven has found that personalized invitations that include a conversation work best for “convincing people.” “Our sales reps will invite people to the show and discuss what will be available that will address that customer’s needs,” she says.

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DEALING WITH EXCUSES

The one excuse that is heard throughout the industry is "I don’t have time."

"Ultimately, there are no good excuses, and that is a fundamental component to the way we run our business," Grech says. "Everyone is inundated with responsibilities these days, so you just have to prove that your event will be worth their time."

Craven addresses the "I’m too busy" excuse much in the same way.

"We address that by pointing out some of the things we will have available that will help them save time and money and/or solve a problem," she says. "Many of our restaurant customers are having their margins squeezed by rising labor costs, higher rents and legislation that requires them to make changes. We design our seminars around current issues." McClure says that if there is a cost to the employee to attend an event, i.e. gas or travel costs, this could be a reason someone might try to decline.

"That’s when it’s important to remind attendees of the personal and career benefits. Sometimes people just don’t think about why conferences and trade shows are necessary; they see them as more work, losing sight of the intangibles associated with these types of events," she says.

APPEALING TO ABOVE

Sometimes, potential attendees need to convince the higher-ups why a convention or meeting is important, and it’s vital that they know all the benefits when they pitch the idea.

"If you’re able to attend a conference and consolidate business — meet with partners, site a location and get some training in — the pitch is easy," Payne says. "In this one trip, you’re gaining so much done."

Grech advises that attendees should be discussing how this will impact the senior management and the company in terms of education and networking, she says. "Meetings should always provide networking and education opportunities. The most crucial component of networking is the follow up. I always follow up with an email, note card or phone call."

The spell to a higher up is easy, Craven says, and gives an example of what they should be saying: "By attending this event I will be able to see the latest products available and find ways to enhance our brand and stand out among our competition, improve our health inspection scores, and/or meet LEED certification requirements."

MORE THAN ROI

It’s no secret that the ROI of a meeting plays a big role in a company’s decision to send someone to a meeting or not. "It absolutely impacts a decision, as well as other factors such as time of year, location, etc." Burdette says. "MPI offers registration scholarships through our MPI Foundation which has awarded over 200 scholarships annually."

ROI and money issues are always a concern, which is why it makes sense to hire professionals to create corporate or incentive events that not only "wow" attendees, but are packaged within set budgets. Incentive travel and marketing firms work hand-in-hand with HR and/or management personnel who’ve been put in place to make events a success," McClure says. "These professional meeting planners have the connections with destinations, venues and team-building, experiential sup-

pliers to make events not just successful, but outstanding." By working within established budgets, they have the experience and connections to know where to suggest an event can or should be held, and sometimes even leverage their relationships with venues to keep costs in line with budgets. At the very least, they provide insights into what can be done effectively for what costs. This takes tremendous pressure off company personnel who may not have the time, connections or experience to accomplish the task.

"When attendees look forward to an event, they become and stay motivated, which means they’re less likely to find reasons not to attend," McClure says. "They arrive excited and ready to get the most out of the experience. When attendees feel bonded to co-workers, management, clients, or suppliers, great things happen for the company. The ROI is seen both before an event in increased motivation and productivity and after the event with relationships and team work."

If someone uses money as a reason for not attending, Grech tells them to look at this event as investment in their marketing and promotion — no risk, no reward. By attending this event, meeting the right people and making the right connections, you may make a fruitful partnership that pays off the cost of attending and then some," she says. "The best way to create these opportunities for yourself is to come prepared with background on your company, your upcoming goals and what projects you might be able to collaborate on."

When it comes to ROI matters, she notes when she goes to a PCMA Convening Leaders conference, her team will meet with three to five different city partners to discuss upcoming events, meet three to five of the company’s current vendors to talk about fine-tuning the program, review new technology, get new ideas for attendee engagement and get its CEUs. "This is extremely valuable and a great use of our time and money," she says. "Surveys are free and an invaluable tool. It will help us save money, find ways to improve our brand and stand out among our competition, improve our health inspection scores, and/or meet LEED certification requirements.

Ideas for Justification

1. Provide an experience they might never get elsewhere.

This is the most effective way to build and enhance relationships among colleagues versus simply doing speaking presentations. For example, attendees can schedule “brain dates” throughout the meeting that provide direct, one-on-one, face-to-face, information sharing and corporate culture building.

2. Create a personalized learning experience: Today’s destination meeting programs are increasingly focused on providing hyper-learning and engagement opportunities to your profile or email can only improve your relationship with clients, vendors, press, etc.," she says. "Also, you never know where your next client will come from."

For example, she went to a networking event last year that included a private dinner on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, which was a fabulous way to help attendees approach their boss with a case for attending.

Craven explains that the day out of the office will be well worth the time based on the experience and what they can learn from attending.

"Because our event is free, that is easier than for events with a cost," she says. "For those types of events, providing a pre-written letter with the benefits of attending would be one way to help attendees approach their boss with a case for attending."

Craven champions experiential marketing as one of the most effective ways to build and enhance relationships.

"I have seen it year after year. Attendees meet our leadership team and get to know the people behind the brand," she says. "They start to buy from our company and are not as willing to let competitors in their doors. Potential customers that are deciding between suppliers will choose our company based on the positive experience they have had at our event."

Grech advises people to attend every meeting pertaining to their profession that they can.

"People are very used to interfacing with others through a device in today’s technological world, so adding a face to your profile or email can only improve your relationship with clients, vendors, press, etc.," she says. "Also, you never know where your next client will come from."

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Craven champions experiential marketing as one of the most effective ways to build and enhance relationships among colleagues versus simply doing speaking presentations. For example, attendees can schedule “brain dates” throughout the meeting that provide direct, one-on-one, face-to-face, information sharing and corporate culture building.

3. Localized events: Instead of the traditional after-hours gala, how about effective events at venues that provide attendees with a true neighborhood vibe that helps them live like a real New Yorker, even if it is just for a few days.

"I followed up, never gave up on the lead, and made sure I was ahead of the game," she says. "I made sure to have patience, persistence, and capitalize on a little luck." C&IT

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Other reasons might include family conflicts, such as arranging child or pet care, or spousal/family member illness.

"Honestly, if there is a valid reason an employee can’t attend a corporate or incentive travel event, HR or the supervisor needs to listen and respect the individual’s reason," McClure says. "This tells the employee that the company, and management, care about their personal issues and will make adjustments, encouraging attendance at the next event. It’s also imperative that the company let attendees know well in advance of an upcoming event, so adequate arrangements can be made on the home front, if possible."
Vendor Value
Third-Party and Corporate Relationship Building is Crucial for Successful Planning

BY DEREK REVERON

Establishing and maintaining good relationships with suppliers and vendors is crucial because they implement so many visible and behind-the-scenes details that can make or break meetings. In addition, strong relationships with suppliers can damage a planner’s professional reputation.

Creating successful short-term, one-off relationships with vendors can be challenging enough. However, building thriving long-term planner-supplier relationships can be even more problematic.

Potential conflicts include work and contract disagreements, lack of communication, personality conflicts, and poor performance. Navigating such pitfalls is a key to successful planner-supplier relationships.

The benefits of maintaining good relationships include valuable help they can provide to resolve emergencies. That’s especially true regarding hotels, which can sometimes result in lower rates. A planner’s goal should be to provide the most ‘wow’ with this number. If you’re not providing the best possible deal, then it’s not worth it.

In a true partnership, a well-done program review will leave everyone feeling respected and excited about working together in the future.

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ASHLEY CASE
Director of Client Services, Meetings + Incentives, Cadence Travel

One such instance occurred during a meeting planned by Jennifer Collins, CMP, president and CEO of Silver Spring, Maryland-based JDC Events.

“We had an instance where we needed more equipment than was contracted due to changing needs and desires onsite,” Collins says. “We were traveling with our supplier, who brought with them what was planned in advance. Because we had good relationships with them, and they were just as invested as we were in our client’s success, they rented additional equipment at no cost to us.”

STRONG VENDOR CONNECTIONS

Collins says the long-term connection with the vendor saved the day.

“Had we not developed a strong relationship with them, including using them on more than one occasion and being fair in our working relations, this matter could have turned out the same way,” Collins says. “We believe that our vendors are partners and critical to the success of our events.”

Ashley Case, director of client services, Meetings + Incentives, for La Jolla, California-based based Cadence Travel, provides the following example involving a hotel renovation delay.

“Because of the delay, the hotel did not have enough rooms completed to host our group,” Case says. “We were notified that the group would need to be relocated just eight days prior to arrival. With some creative negotiation, the hotel relocated the rooms and events to a nearby sister property of a higher caliber.”

The hotel also covered several costs. “They paid to rebrand all signage, hosted client rental cars and spa treatments, comped the group’s welcome event bar and provided room credits with apology letters to guests,” Case says. “The hotel also added entertainment and lawn games to a reception and covered all additional transportation costs to the new location.”

Case says her relationship with the hotel helped side-step disaster. “We were certainly thankful for our long-term partnership with this brand and their sales team during the hotel renovation delay. It’s a successful event and we would have lost money if it hadn’t happened the way it did.”

Collins recently experienced a situation in which a vendor partner didn’t provide an accurate estimate for its services.

“This meant that we didn’t fully budget for their work,” Collins says. “However, because we had some cushion in our budget, and they were a good partner, we were able to make adjustments that didn’t provide full funding, but enough to make up some of the deficit. This approach is definitely an exception done on a case-by-case basis. In other instances, this may be a loss for the vendor.”

Creating and maintaining productive long-term connections with suppliers requires effort from planners on several fronts, including transparency about the upfront costs. Planners agree that providing thorough and realistic budget figures can set the tone for teamwork.

According to Collins, “Transparency is vital in establishing a good working relationship with vendor partners. It can also streamline the decision-making process by understanding priorities, highlighting areas of negotiation and knowing how to give and take. This creates a sense of fairness and trust, which is the lifeblood of any partnership.”

Case agrees. “Being upfront about budget requirements allows both parties to be consultants and make the best recommendations,” Case says. “It also shows trust and partnership, as it saves everyone time. Vendors aren’t spending time proposing items out of the client’s realm and the planner isn’t grabbing pieces from a lengthy proposal and desperately trying to negotiate down later.”

DEVELOPING A TRUE PARTNERSHIP

Case thinks developing a true partnership should be a planner’s goal. “If the goal of both parties is ‘How can we provide the most ‘wow’ with this number?’, then you’re not only going to have a fabulous event, but a great partnership going forward.”

Danielle Miles, manager of conferences and meetings for Minneapolis, Minnesota-based metroConnections, an event services and conference management company, also thinks long-term relationships and valuable input from third-party suppliers can result from budget transparency.

From a third-party perspective, budget transparency and accuracy are critical in establishing good, long-term relationships and valuable input from third-party suppliers can result from budget transparency.
GOOD COMMUNICATION COUNTS
Failure to establish open and frequent communication, especially about the details of services and deadlines, can result in big problems later. That’s why it’s best to communicate with vendors before, during and after meetings to make them part of the team and ensure they share its goals and vision.

Collins thinks planners should provide vendors with a full briefing of the event prior to its start. “This process would help the vendor fully digest the scope of what’s requested and understand the organization of resources,” Collins says. “During the event process, the vendor should be included in regular meetings and discussions on project progress and other interactions so they are fully integrated in the success of the program.”

Linda Nelson, CMP, president and CEO of Asheville, North Carolina-based To Plan Ahead, has a strategy for establishing good communications. “I like to meet with them individually so I can see if there is a bigger picture and what the various steps will be,” Nelson says. “There has to be a two-way dialogue to enable trust and commitment from each party.”

“No meeting space may be reassigned by the hotel after prior written approval from the client,” Nelson says. “Two months from the meeting, the hotel contacted me to say they had double-booked the room we were scheduled for our general session with a large evening dinner which needed several hours set-up time.”

After some back-and-forth, Nelson settled the matter. “In an effort to maintain and build on the relationship we had developed with the hotel, we agreed to move our meeting and dinner to a different room even though we knew it was not as ideal as the room we had secured,” Nelson says. “Additionally, we received several compliments from the hotel.”

Planners agree that a balanced approach works best, and offer the following advice:

- Drive a hard bargain but don’t be a two-way dialogue to enable trust and commitment from each party.”

LINDA NELSON, CMP President and CEO To Plan Ahead

“At a post-conference meeting with key vendors is imperative, not only to celebrate the successes but to identify the areas of improvement and how communication could be improved in the future,” says Case. “In a true partnership, a well-done program review will leave everyone feeling respected and excited about working together in the future.”

AVOID CONTRACT CONFLICTS
Even the best of supplier-planner communication can’t prevent disagreements and conflicts, which are often related to hotel contracts. Conflicts with hotels often result from clauses in the contract.

“Every contract of supplier-planner communication can’t prevent disagreements and conflicts, which are often related to hotel contracts. Conflicts with hotels often result from clauses in the contract. A planner may be reading something in the contract one way that may benefit the client,” Case says. “A hotel will be looking at the contract from a different angle or from a revenue management perspective. I always find that it’s best to prioritize the client’s needs and be upfront with the vendor.”

Case takes a balanced and direct approach to conflicts. “If it’s a major hot button, then express that a time and express that the vendor should be told what you can trade back that your client may not even use, Case says. “Also, look at other elements your client may be bringing to the contract as an overall win for the planner’s goal of the contract, as the vendor may not be aware of additional opportunities with add-on items or future business.”

“Do the best you can with what you have and work with the hotel to get the best possible outcome,” Nelson says. “Two months from the meeting, the hotel contacted me to say they had double-booked the room we were scheduled for our general session with a large evening dinner which needed several hours set-up time.”

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Planners agree that a balanced approach works best, and offer the following advice:

- Drive a hard bargain but don’t squeeze too hard. Even if high-pressure tactics result in low prices, it doesn’t make the vendor feel good about the job, hurts the chances for a long-term relationship, and damages the planner’s brand among vendors.
- Compare vendor proposals and show them to all parties to encourage competition. Don’t accept an off-the-shelf, one-size-fits-all proposal.
- Recommend top-performing vendors to other planners and let vendors know. “This builds goodwill which may be useful in the future.”
- Thorough vetting is one of the best ways to increase the chances of having a good relationship with vendors.
- Ask suppliers for references and pose the following questions:
  - Does the supplier provide planners with timely feedback on the progress of projects and potential problems?
  - Are there examples of the supplier anticipating the needs of the planner?
  - How does the vendor handle unexpected problems?

Danielle Miles, manager of meetings and conferences for Minneapolis, MN-based metroConnections, says nailing down contract specifics before signing can help create good relationships.

- Is the price transparent about prices and services?
- Is there a reputation for submitting accurate proposals without low-balling or inflating prices?
- Is the vendor transparent about prices and rates?
- Planners say building good relationships with suppliers is about “give and take” without compromising meeting goals and standards and making them feel like part of the team. Wendy Burk, founder and CEO of Cadence Travel, says the bottom line for a planner is doing business honestly and with respect for all parties. “We view our suppliers as partners, instead of a means to an end. When you refer to someone as your partner, you make a very clear statement about working towards a common goal. Transparency is just one key component of a successful relationship that also includes things like listening well, being open to new ideas, feedback and, of course, genuine caring for the other party.”

As Miles puts it, “Look to your suppliers as strategic partners. When you find good suppliers treat them well and they will do the same in return. By maintaining a good relationship, they become loyal and are more apt to negotiate price based on the good history of the relationship.”
The Sunshine State’s Gulf coast cities and towns are a bit more casual than many of their Atlantic coast counterparts. They provide an excellent setting for groups wanting to conduct business with a splash of blue-green water, a swath of fine sand and plenty of dazzling sunshine to go around. One city to consider: Tampa.

“Tampa is a great meeting destination for our group due to a variety of factors,” says Kathleen Butcosk, vice president, corporate meetings and travel for Lumbermens Merchandising Corp. (LMC), which held its annual meeting last year at Tampa Marriott Water Street with 1,700 attendees. It was the fourth time LMC hosted a meeting there.

“The most important factor is a great convention center surrounded by many hotels within walking distance. The center and the Marriott sit right on the water, which gives the destination a very resort-like feel. Tampa is an easy city to access with great airlift, and the airport is only 20 minutes from downtown. It is an affordable city with great restaurants and nightlife including historic Ybor City.”

Beyond the Tampa Convention Center and hotel, LMC hosted an event for 770 at Topgolf. “Topgolf provided an ideal venue with activity options, great food and an exceptional staff.”

The group used space at the hotel and the convention center. “LMC used the Tampa Convention Center for its...
trade show,” Butcosk notes. “The center is the perfect size for our exhibits (200,000 sf) and has enough meeting space to host our educational sessions and other meetings. It’s a wonderful facility with an experienced, professional staff. The building has a breathtaking location right on the water and its many windows provide natural lighting.”

Butcosk says the Tampa Marriott Water Street works well at every level. “It has great meeting space, a beautiful lobby and a wonderful outdoor terrace overlooking the water. The hotel’s rooms were recently renovated with soft colors, hardwood floors and beautiful new bathrooms. It has a terrific staff and takes very good care of the LMC group when we are in-house. It is truly one of LMC’s favorite hotels.”

In addition, she says, “The Marriott has a lovely outdoor pool and sundek and is located right on Tampa Riverwalk.”

The hotel’s conference space accommodated LMC’s six small meetings, Butcosk says, “as well as a breakfast for 800 and another for 300. The food was excellent and the staff is very capable of handling large groups.”

Butcosk’s main advice for planners considering Tampa is, “Definitely work with Visit Tampa Bay, the city’s CVB. The staff is experienced and extremely knowledgeable about Tampa and everything it has to offer. They were a tremendous help to us during the planning process and helped make our job so much easier. They are a great group of professionals and a delight to work with.”

The recent $40 million renovation of the Tampa Marriott Water Street is not the only hotel news in the city. The Sheraton Tampa Riverwalk Hotel underwent a hotel-wide re-do of rooms, the pool area and lobby. In the Westshore District, there is a 175 room AC by Marriott, and in the Rocky Point area, Godfrey Hotel & Cabanas Tampa opened last year with 276 rooms and views of the bay as well as a waterfront deck and pier. The former InterContinental hotel is now the 325-room Westshore Grand, and the former Westin Harbour Island is now the completely reimagined Westin Tampa Waterside, thanks to a $20 million renovation. The Hilton Tampa Downtown created a cool new outdoor banquet space and redesigned the rooftop pool and outdoor bar. Farther down the Gulf Coast, Sarasota announced that its meeting and group hotel inventory has increased by 1,200 guest rooms and additional meeting space. The 240 room Westin Sarasota, has 26,000 sf of meeting space. Embassy suites by Hilton Sarasota and Even Hotel, a wellness fitness brand, also launched recently with 128 guest rooms and 2,566 sf of flexible meeting space. Planners would be hard pressed to find a major meeting city or town along the Gulf that isn’t evolving. The Gulf Coast offers meeting planners distinctive new options, history, culture, beaches, creative chefs, casinos, panoramic waterfront views and a legendary level of hospitality.

LOUISIANA - NEW ORLEANS

It’s well known that New Orleans knows how to throw a party. But it knows how to throw a business meeting and conference, too. What it brings to the table in addition, perhaps more so than any other U.S. city, is a lively, engaging culture all its own. Last year New Orleans celebrated its 300th anniversary. “New Orleans is an expert in hosting events from corporate board meetings to Super Bowl games and everything in between,” says Stephen Perry, president and CEO of the city’s CVB, New Orleans & Company. “The authentic culture, unique meeting venues and experienced hospitality industry make New Orleans an ideal destination for meetings and events of all sizes. New Orleans has topped every major publication’s list of must-visit destinations last year. From the historic French Quarter to the up-and-coming Bywater, the picturesque Garden District and the bustling Warehouse District, the city is filled with excitement and local treasures,” she says. “As airlift options continue to improve, it’s hard to find a reason to not select New Orleans when considering where to host a group.”

New Orleans, she adds, “has incredible history, colorful people, unique architecture, superb food, incomparable music and a kaleidoscope of traditions. Opportunities are endless when it comes to creating indelible, unforgettable touchpoints for attendees.”

Perhaps the city’s most well-known “touchpoint” is its Mardi Gras traditions. “Whether it’s a custom mini-float parade, second line or an evening at Mardi Gras World, it’s an experience that embraces so many of our cultural nuances and always provides lasting impressions with attendees,” she says. But that’s not the only one-of-kind option. There’s also the Mercedes-Benz Superdome. “Recently when tasked with finding a venue that offered enough space to accommodate seating for a 1,600-person awards dinner as well as a custom stage with extensive lighting, video components and the ability to host a pyrotechnics finale,” Syock says, “We sourced the Superdome as our solution. Based on size and wow factor, it met all the criteria the client was looking for and then some.”

“Team-building opportunities? Check. Syock points to volunteer tourism with ArcGNO. “The Arc promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabili-
New Orleans is renowned for its unique culture and distinctive cuisine.

full of trivia, history, delectable food and fun for all. The event also provides attendees with the knowledge and skills to recreate a bit of New Orleans when back home.

Syock also points out that the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center accommodates groups of different sizes. “The convention center offers a variety of space options, making it ideal to produce custom themed events and experiences. The team at the convention center works with planners to make events flaw-

loss from set-up through event execu-

tion and tear-down.”

The city has a monster festive vibe and, Syock says, “Our culture is infec-
tious. Boasting 300 years of diverse heritage provides attendees the opportunity to experience uncommon and authentic cultural thrills in every moment spent in New Orleans.”

That includes during business meetings and conventions. Of note to planners, the Hard Rock Hotel New Orleans will open later this year, and two restaurants of note are now open: Manoalto, a Cuban bar and café in the French Quarter launched by two of the city’s top lead bartenders, and Bywa-
ter American Bistro, the newest eatery from Chef Nina Compton, located in the Bywater district. Also, the long-

awaited new terminal at Louis Arm-
strong New Orleans International Air-

port is slated to open later this year.

TEKS GULF COAST

It doesn’t get any more “Gulf Coast” than Galveston, a barrier island 55 miles southeast of Hous-
ton. Approximately 200 square miles in size, Galveston has plenty to offer groups, from rich history and bird watching to a diverse collection of meeting facilities.

Mary Alice Kahanek, CMP, senior manager, events and trade shows, for Goodman Manufacturing, bought the company’s national sales meeting last year to The San Luis Resort, Spa & Con-
ference Center with 775 in attendance.

The resort has completed a sig-
nificant renovation, notably around and near the pool, which includes a new custom-built firepit area where groups can gather.

“The hotel and convention center were a perfect size for this group. The San Luis Resort is the largest on the island, which is what we needed. The cost was less than our last meeting. The convention center had a great exhibit floor size, so we could grow if we sold more sponsorships.”

The setting was also part of the draw. “The location on the beach is beautiful. The convention center is set up so you get plenty of natural light on breaks and while moving around the meeting. Attendees don’t feel like they are closed off from the world stuck in a meeting room. The group used only the meeting space provided by the resort and convention center.”

Kahanek calls the sales staff and the group’s CSM amazing. “They were on top of everything we needed and on call the entire time. The ease and flex-
lily of the banquet leaders and staff was refreshing,” she says. While there were no real road blocks to the event’s success, Kahanek notes that the lighting at the Galves-
ton Island Convention Center was an issue for her because the can lights in the ballroom don’t dim. Because of that, she suggests planners meet directly with the lighting person to assess specific needs.

In fact, she advises, “Have a few planning meetings and speak to each person responsible for each specific task. Our CSM was very accommodating and wanted to say yes to every-
thing. But it’s best to double check directly with the people that know 100 percent what options you have. We used an A/V company that also made some assumptions. That’s our best takeaway.”

The group bought out the property, which was a different experience. “We were definitely positive. “They were at our beck and call the entire time. We were their priority and it showed.”

Moody Gardens, another group-friendly resort, held its banquet, completed a $37 million renovation to its Aquar-
ium Pyramid. New extended-stay luxury suites opened at The Tremont House, Hotel, an eight-story, 356-room renovation. The Tremont’s sister property, Hotel Galvez & Spa reno-

vated its pool area.

MISSISSIPPI - BILOXI

Biloxi sits 90 miles northeast of New Orleans. The city of 45,000 offers casinos and golf in addition to miles of beaches. Two new hotels are opened last year and a new aquarium will open later this year or early next year. Amenities include exports are Betsy Ann Riverboat Cruises and the $15 million, 30,000-sf Ocean Adven-
tures Park & Center.

A project manager with an inter-

national beauty retailer brought a Loss Prevention Ag-

In addition to the new hotels com-

ing on line in Biloxi, MGM Resorts International last year completed a $10 million suite renovation at Beau Rivage, its AAA Four Diamond beachfront resort. The redesign of 95 suites was the final piece in a multi-

year renovation.

ALABAMA - MOBILE

Mobile is Alabama’s Gulf Coast city. It’s accessible from three major airports and two interstate. It has more than 1,000 hotel rooms in walking distance of the Arthur R. Out-

law Mobile Convention Center, and its Southern charm, Mardi Gras history, deep-sea fishing, and outdoor activities make it a good bet for groups and planners.

One popular event sure to attract attendees is ArtWalk, which offers the latest in local art, music, food and culture on second Fridays from 6 p.m. to 9 downtown. Downtown also offers more than 50 restaurants featuring every-
thing from Southern-style barbecue, seafood straight from the Gulf to local delicacies.

It’s also home to the USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park, where groups can book private events for up to 100 or more who.
BENCHMARK, a global hospitality company, appointed Donna Esparza director of sales and marketing for Lake Arrowhead Resort and Spa, a Benchmark Resorts & Hotels property in Lake Arrowhead, California. Geoff Young, Benchmark’s managing director for the resort, made the announcement. “I am extremely pleased to welcome Donna to our resort and to Benchmark.”

BENCHMARK, a global hospitality company, named Linda Maurer global account manager-southwest, a newly created position designed to develop and grow Benchmark’s group sales success in the regional southwest. Previous to joining La Cantera Resort & Spa and Benchmark, Maurer was director of national accounts northeast for Terranea Resort of Rancho Palos Verdes, California.

The Brown Palace Hotel & Spa, a legend among downtown Denver hotels since 1892, welcomed Justin Budyak as complex director of sales and marketing of the iconic landmark and the adjacent Holiday Inn Express Denver Downtown, part of The Brown Palace hotel complex. Budyak will be responsible for generating maximum revenue through developing and executing marketing strategies.

Union Station Hotel Nashville, a Nashville, Tennessee, property managed by Sage Hospitality, appointed Trevor Bondarchuk director of sales. Previously, Bondarchuk had been director of group sales and events for Sage Hospitality.

The St. Jane Hotel, Chicago, named Pete Zudyk vice president of sales and marketing. Previously, Zudyk spent two years as director of sales and marketing at Chicago’s Ace Hotel.

The London West Hollywood at Beverly Hills in West Hollywood, California, appointed Greg Velasquez as director of sales and marketing. Previously, Velasquez was chief marketing officer at Hotel Figueroa, Los Angeles, and held the role of director of sales and marketing at Four Seasons Los Angeles at Beverly Hills in Beverly Hills, California.

As the first luxury hotel in San Antonio, The St. Anthony Hotel announced sales team appointments with the promotion of Lena Gutierrez to sales account manager and welcomed Ana Francesca Garcia to the team as a sales account executive.

The Woodlands Resort appointed Nicole Kubitza as director of sales and marketing. Kubitza will lead a team of 17 in establishing and executing creative strategies to drive revenue from corporate and social clientele.

Visit Seattle announced the promotion of Troy Anderson to director of sales. Anderson will take on several new responsibilities, chief among them to provide day-to-day leadership of the Seattle-based contingent of Visit Seattle’s strong convention sales team, which also includes several regionally-based sellers.
Meetings and events take on a special energy at The Broadmoor. Our magnificent Colorado setting will inspire your people. Our world-class golf, spa, dining and more will refresh them. The unique venues and activities of our Broadmoor Wilderness Experience properties will challenge them and change their perspectives. Our 185,000 square feet of meeting space is flexible enough to meet your most demanding requirements. And amidst it all, The Broadmoor’s legendary tradition of quality and service will ensure your event is a success. Contact us today and start planning your meeting now at broadmoor.com.