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*Meet 7 Women
Speakers Who Are
at the Top of
Their Game*

*peak
performance*

Alison Levine,
former team
captain of
the American
Women's Everest
Expedition

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ISSUE:**

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2019 PREVIEW**



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IN THIS ISSUE //

features

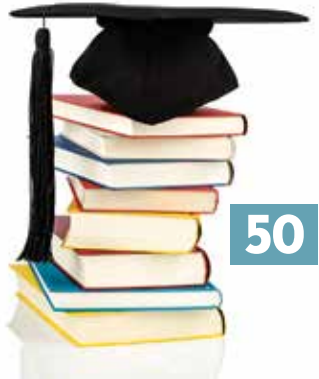
- 30 IMEX America 2019
Your Preview Guide to the Trade Show
- 25 Greens of Distinction
2019 Greens of Distinction Award Winners
- 18 Stronger Together
Team Building is at the Top of the List for Corporations
BY SOPHIA BENNETT
- 44 Challenge Accepted
Planners Explain Their Toughest Tasks
BY MAURA KELLER
- 50 Career Moves
The Benefits of Planner Certification and Education Are Many
BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS
- 54 Peak Performance
Meet 7 Women Speakers Who Are at the Top of Their Game
BY MAURA KELLER



30



25



50



44



60



54

destinations

- 60 Destination: Atlantic City
Getting Better All the Time
BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS

departments

- 04 Publisher's Message
- 06 News & Notes
- 07 Tips & Trends
- 10 Snapshots
- 14 Perspective
Give Attendees a Thoughtful Experience to Remember
BY CATE BANFIELD
- 16 Perspective
Could Facial Recognition Turn Back the Clock on the U.S. Airport Experience?
BY MARK DOMBROFF
- 66 People on the Move

LET YOUR LEGEND BEGIN
AT A ONE-OF-A-KIND
DISNEY RESORT IN HAWAII

Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa, will make powerful connections with your attendees. It's a celebration of Hawaiian culture, history and tradition that's the perfect location for meetings and incentives. Set on the pristine western coastline of O'ahu on the beautiful beaches of Ko Olina, this 21-acre oceanfront resort offers more than 76,000 square feet of stunning outdoor venues and a 21,000 square foot conference center. And all of it – the space, the support and the programming – is fully customizable. Resort guests have the opportunity to enjoy KA WA'A, A Lū'au at Aulani Resort, to experience Hawaii's history and its deep cultural roots in canoe exploration combined with Disney's signature storytelling. Add to that the award-winning Lanikai Spa, diverse restaurant options and shopping, world-class Disney entertainment, Ko Olina Marina, an 18-hole championship golf course and the comfort of 832 rooms you've got everything you could want to create an unforgettable experience for your attendees.



AULANI CONFERENCE CENTER	
KAIONA BALLROOM	4,590 SQ FT
KA'ALA BALLROOM	2,885 SQ FT
COVERED PRE-FUNCTION	4,715 SQ FT
KIPUKA LAWN	5,195 SQ FT
KIPUKA COURTYARD	3,633 SQ FT
NA'ALUA ROOM	240 SQ FT

TOTAL 21,258 SQ FT

OUTDOOR VENUES	
WAILANA POOL	9,250 SQ FT
RAINBOW REEF PATIO	1,766 SQ FT
KULA WAI	3,000 SQ FT
KA MAKA LANDING	16,000 SQ FT
HĀLĀWAI LAWN	21,800 SQ FT
AULANI BEACH	20,000+* SQ FT
'ĀMA'ĀMA PATIO	4,869 SQ FT
KA WA'A LŪ'ĀU	21,800+ SQ FT

TOTAL 76,685 SQ FT

* Additional function space may be available, depending on specific event configuration. Ka Wa'a Lū'au is on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings on Hālawai Lawn (dates subject to change). Option for groups up to 100 guests, based on availability. Buyout also available for large groups with a F&B minimum.

To book your next event, contact us at:
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Are You Ready For IMEX America?

We are only weeks away from the meeting industry's biggest event, IMEX America, in Las Vegas. As you make plans to meet with suppliers, I urge you to review the IMEX section in this issue before finalizing your visit. Whether you are considering hotel or resort availability for your future events or possibly an international destination for your next meeting or incentive program, this issue

offers some great suggestions for you to consider. With thousands of exhibitors from around the world, you are sure to find numerous hotels and destinations to fit your budget.

With so much to do and so many choices, don't overlook the inspiring keynotes and educational sessions offering learning opportunities and providing fresh thinking on making meetings more engaging while exploring innovation and creativity.

Looking for a speaker to captivate your audience? Your answer may be in this issue. See "Peak Performance" speakers. Don't miss our cover story focusing of women speakers who are at the top of their game. These professional speakers are addressing diverse audience groups while

delivering a powerful message that both motivate and excite audiences. No matter what age or background, these subject-matter experts can successfully deliver your message.

Also in this issue is "Challenge Accepted" where planners explain their toughest tasks and accept the challenge. There are many challenges facing meeting planners today, some based on the type of meeting, attendee mix and age, and possibly location and security. There are numerous challenges including tighter budgets or lack of time to add to the meeting planner challenge. Rising costs and last-minute changes can also be a frequent challenge.

If you are planning to make a change in employment, "Career Moves" is a must read. Comments from leaders in the industry can help guide you with continuing education which is critical to staying relevant in the meetings industry. If you are undecided about whether or not to go for certification, it all starts with choosing the right certification for you outlined in this story.

Safe travels! See you at IMEX America.



Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Harvey Grotsky

harvey.grotsky@themeetingmagazines.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Kristin Bjornsen

kristin.bjornsen@themeetingmagazines.com

MANAGING EDITOR

Henry Fitzgerald

henry.fitzgerald@themeetingmagazines.com

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR

Heather Ballis

heather.ballis@themeetingmagazines.com

DIGITAL CONTENT COORDINATOR

Christine Smith

christine.smith@themeetingmagazines.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Sophia Bennett

Sara Churchville

Cynthia Dial

Maura Keller

Christine Loomis

Keith Loria

Derek Reveron

Mark Rowh

Patrick Simms

David Swanson

PRESIDENT & CEO

Harvey Grotsky

VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS

David Middlebrook

david.middlebrook@themeetingmagazines.com

ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES

2700 N. Military Trail, Suite 120

Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394

561-989-0600 Fax: 561-989-9509

advertising@themeetingmagazines.com

NORTHEAST/MID-ATLANTIC/MIDWEST STATES

Fox Associates

800-440-0231 • fox@themeetingmagazines.com

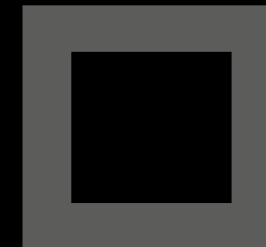
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OPENINGS

Iconic Guitar Hotel & Casino Expansion Scheduled to Open Late October

HOLLYWOOD, FL — The iconic guitar tower at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood resembling back-to-back guitars, with six illuminated guitar strings on each side is scheduled to open late October. The expanded hotel and casino complex will offer a total of 1,271 guest rooms and suites. A vastly expanded casino of 195,000 sf includes more than 200 table games like Blackjack and Baccarat, plus 3,100 of the latest slot machines and a new 45-table Poker Room. Following an outdoor walkway dotted with grottoes, waterfalls and meticulous landscaping, guests will find a completely new, 13.5-acre pool expe-



Seminole Hard Rock
Hotel & Casino
Hollywood

rience at the foot of the guitar tower, part of 19 acres of pools and lagoons on the Seminole Hard Rock property. As part of its commitment to music and live entertainment, Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood is investing more than \$125 million in a new state-

of-the-art Hard Rock Live, the new, highly anticipated theater-style performance venue for 7,000 guests. Upon its completion, the integrated resort will unveil 150,000 sf of premier meeting and convention space, a 26,000-sf retail promenade and more.

UPGRADES

Hilton San Diego Bayfront Completes \$23 Million Renovation

SAN DIEGO, CA — Hilton San Diego Bayfront recently underwent a \$23 million renovation to all 1,190 guest rooms and guest room corridors. In conjunction with the renovation, this year Hilton San Diego Bayfront became the first Hilton Hotels

& Resorts brand in California — and the third globally — to offer Connected Room technology. Connected Room, a first-of-its-kind, high-tech guest room enables guests to personalize and control every aspect of their stay from one central point: their mobile device. Guests who stay in a Connected Room at Hilton San Diego Bayfront will be able to use the Hilton Honors app to manage most things they would traditionally do

manually in a room, from controlling the temperature and lighting to the TV and window coverings. Guests will also be able to personalize their room with technology that loads the most popular streaming media and other accounts to in-room TV's. This is part of Hilton's global commitment to redefine sustainable travel by pledging to cut its environmental footprint in half and double investment in social impact projects.

JOB OPENINGS

IRF Announced Search for Next Generation of Leadership

WASHINGTON, DC — The Incentive Research Foundation, the incentive industry's largest and most prolific foundation, announced its search for the next generation of presidential leadership. Melissa Van Dyke, current president, will leave her position as IRF president on August 2, 2019, to continue her career in the incentives industry

in a new capacity. The IRF has launched its search for an inspirational leader with deep experience in the incentives, rewards, meetings or hospitality industry. The search committee seeks a tenured executive who will be able to establish a strong standing in the incentives industry and influence broad industry support of the IRF's mission. Candidates should possess strategic, operational and fundraising experience and have extensive knowledge of methods to develop, conduct and communicate cutting-edge research.



Melissa
Van Dyke

IN MEMORIAM

Events Industry Mourns the Loss of Roy B. Evans, Jr.

Former PCMA president and CEO Roy B. Evans Jr., CAE, passed away on July 9. Evans was a highly respected and transformative leader in the meetings industry. He joined PCMA in 1961. Evans was named president in 1975 and he became president and CEO in 1982. Evans retired from PCMA in 2000 when the association was headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama. Sherrif Karamat, PCMA's current president and CEO, paid tribute. "Roy Evans was a beloved pioneer and a visionary who provided the framework that makes PCMA the global leader in the business events industry today," he said. "We are forever grateful for his dedication to PCMA, our industry and profession, and will miss him dearly."

AWARDS

Orlando: the Nation's No. 1 Meetings Destination

Everyone recognizes Orlando as America's most visited destination, Theme Park Capital of the World® and the perfect place for an unforgettable vacation experience. But its success extends to business travel as well. For the seventh consecutive year, Orlando has been named America's No. 1 meetings destination by Cvent, an industry-leading global event management company that analyzed booking data from more than 5,000 U.S. cities. The city leads the pack for a variety of reasons — affordability, accessibility, quality and variety of facilities, positive brand awareness about Orlando and its culture of service and hospitality all come to mind. George Aguel, Visit Orlando president and CEO, says Orlando's overall growth this year is very encouraging and will continue to lead the way for all types of travel, no matter the itinerary.

Event Tech Continues to Evolve



DepositPhotos.com

While some trends change over time, virtual reality for one, it's always surprising how many trends stay nearly the same, only subtly evolving over the years. When it comes to technology, the biggest difference in trends is accessibility. As event technology continues to develop and be refined, it becomes easier to implement, making accessibility better than ever. That's good news for everyone.

Virtual Reality and Artificial Reality

After making a dramatic splash, virtual and artificial reality are becoming more dynamic. It's easier and cheaper, therefore more accessible for those with smaller budgets. Use these tools for branding, engagement and more.

Virtual Events

Travel costs and time off are a major deterrent when it comes to attending events. While they are less effective than in-person events, virtual events are becoming popular. From livestreaming on social media channels or twitch streaming, the concept of virtual events has grown. There are now more options for interaction, including chat. While some may think offering a virtual option will cannibalize ticket sales and lower return on investment, in most cases adding a virtual event option in addition to a live event can increase attendance. They're also a great alternative to a live event for those with tighter budgets.

Chatbots — Artificial Intelligence

Chatbots have been around for a while now, but they're only getting smarter. From recommendations to answering attendee questions, they serve as

another point of communication. Done well, chatbots can reinforce the brand and serve a necessary purpose. It'll be interesting to see how further chatbots develop in the coming year.

Mobile Event Apps

Mobile event apps were once unique, challenging to create and expensive. Now? They're practically ubiquitous. It's no longer a selling point if your event has a mobile event app, rather a negative if it doesn't. Mobile event apps are a gateway to capturing new attendee data to use for personalization.

Facial recognition — Biometric Authentication

While still facing some privacy hurdles (among other challenges) facial recognition is yet another way to track attendees and make ease the check-in process. Security is always a worry at events and making sure you know who's attending yours is key. This is another trend worth keeping an eye on as privacy laws tighten around the globe.

Event Automation

If you've been waiting to take the plunge, the good news is: event technology is improving by leaps-and-bounds. If you're still doing most event planning tasks manually, it might be time to change things up. From automation to data gathering, push notifications to event insights, event management technology gives you the ability to improve the attendee experience and prove the ROI of your event. Now is the time to prove your success.

— Madison Layman, from Cvent.com

AWARDS

Québec City Recognized by Travel+Leisure's World's Best Awards

QUÉBEC CITY, Québec — In Canada, it's tempting to lose yourself in the beauty of the natural landscapes. From the pulsing energy of Toronto to the old-world grandeur of Québec City, the best cities in Canada have something for any traveler. Every year for the World's Best Awards survey, Travel + Leisure asks readers to weigh in on travel experiences around the globe — to share their opinions on the top cities, islands, cruise ships, spas, airlines and more. Québec City has once again landed the winning spot on the list of best



Canadian cities. Readers found lots to love about Québec's capital city, from its famous monuments to its European sensibility and grand hotels, despite the city's frigid winters. "Even in the depths of winter, the city still works its charm

on you," wrote one reader. For enthusiasts, Québec City is the next best thing to the City of Light, what with its cobblestone streets, atmospheric cafes and classic bistros. "You'll feel like you're in Paris," wrote one reader.

MILESTONES

Hilton on Track to Open Most Luxury Hotels in Company History

MCLEAN, VA — Hilton President and CEO Chris Nassetta recently announced the company is on track to

open more luxury properties in 2019 than in any year of its 100-year history. With seven hotels expected to open by year's end — in addition to four openings earlier this year — across its luxury brands: Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts, LXR Hotels & Resorts and Conrad Hotels & Resorts, this year marks



Nassetta

the beginning of impressive momentum for Hilton's luxury category and stems from more than a decade of strategic investments and planning. Following this year's openings, Hilton's luxury pipeline will include more than 30 properties, approximately 25 of which are expected to open through 2025.

MEXICO

Mariachi Band Charms Group Events at Velas Vallarta

PUERTO VALLARTA, MEXICO —Thanks to a new program, Velas Vallarta in Puerto Vallarta pairs the resort's legendary mariachi band with groups attending on-property meetings and other corporate events. Groups can now request a custom song from Velas Vallarta's Mariachi Butler Felipe Romero, who will compose and perform a song — along with his eight-member mariachi band. The song could include the group's name and any additional information the group submits and requests. The band, dressed in their traditional black charro suits and adorned jackets, perform mariachi with trumpets, violins,



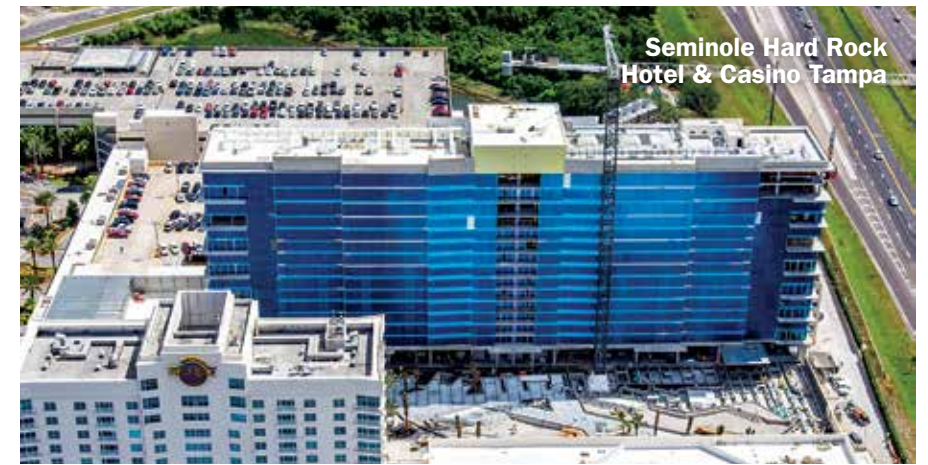
guitarróns, vihuelas and guitars. While mariachi is its own musical genre, today, mariachi covers many other genres including: dance, classical, romance, and folk — any of which can, of course, be used for a group's cus-

tomized tune. Additionally for groups and guests alike, Velas Vallarta showcases Mexico's cultural customs with traditional arts and crafts workshops, including the prehispanic technique of Arte en Popotillo and Mexican cuisine.

OPENINGS

Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa Sets October Grand Opening

TAMPA, FL — Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa, one of the largest and most successful casinos in the world, plans a series of opening reveals throughout the summer, leading up to a grand opening in early October. The \$700 million expansion includes a new 14-story hotel tower with 562 guest rooms and suites, three ultra-lavish pools and extensive gaming space. The casino complex has already completed expansions to its state-of-the-art Poker Room, Mezzanine Level Casino/Rock Walk and Orient Road Garage. Hard



Rock International acquired Elvis Presley's 24-karat gold-leaf plated 1928 Kimball Piano Company Grand Piano in 2015 as its 80,000th piece of memorabilia. The Hard Rock Event Center with seating for 2,000 guests is set to

open on the second level of the casino complex. A companion 17,000-sf grand ballroom will host conventions, trade shows, private events, large-scale poker tournaments and concerts, including 60 major entertainment acts each year.

OPENINGS

Casa de Campo Announces New Marina Riverside Center

LA ROMANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC — The Dominican Republic's Casa de Campo recently announced the opening of the new Marina Riverside Center, a stunning new meeting and event venue that is as singular and exclusive as Casa de Campo itself. Set on the shore of the Chavon River, this beautiful indoor/outdoor structure with its dramatic, open-air tent design is surrounded by breathtaking water views. The Marina Riverside Center features the most advanced technology and has a capacity of up to 1,360 attendees, perfect for meetings, trade shows, award ceremonies, product launches, training, team building, concerts and more.

STAFFING

Teneo Hospitality Group Doubles Washington, DC Sales Staff

EDEN PRAIRIE, MN — Teneo Hospitality Group has doubled the size of its Washington, DC Sales Office staff with the hiring of Kyla Knudson and Helena Dechant. Both Dechant and Knudson bring valuable luxury sales experience and business relationships to their new positions. Dechant brings a wealth of hospitality sales experience to her new position — much of it in the Washington, DC area. Most recently, she was director of global accounts at Conference Direct. Knudson's career spans leadership roles in hospitality sales and business development in the US and Canada. Prior to her appointment with Teneo, she was director of sales and marketing at Business Events Canada.

UPGRADES

InterContinental Chicago Magnificent Mile Hotel to Refresh Meeting Space

CHICAGO — InterContinental Chicago Magnificent Mile Hotel has recently unveiled phase one of a multimillion-dollar refresh to its meeting and event spaces. The iconic property, known for its legendary Magnificent Mile address and one-of-a-kind architectural beauty, is proudly on the Na-

tional Register of Historic Places. InterContinental Chicago Magnificent Mile Hotel contains over 45,000 sf of breathtaking meeting space and can host up to 1,000 meeting attendees. The largest of the hotel's event space, aptly named the Grand Ballroom, features a 6-ton Baccarat crystal chandelier —the largest in North America. Phase one of the restoration project, completed earlier this year, included the hotel's large historic ballrooms and its event prefunction space. Phase two of the project is set to be completed in early 2020.



2019 Hosts Global Forum Punta Cana, Dominican Republic

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The Denver Central Market

Give Attendees a Thoughtful Experience to Remember

BY CATE BANFIELD



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A meeting or event begins long before attendees pick up their name badge and ends long after hotel check out.

Successful events consider and address every component of an attendee's journey, eliciting deep emotion that creates engagement and encourage positive, post-event behaviors.

Fostering FOMO at the Get-Go

How do you break through your prospective attendee's clutter? It's all about harnessing the power of FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out). Delivering marketing communication that taps into the qualities, values and experiences they most covet is key.

Market Early and Often

Brand awareness starts the moment you engage your audience. Establishing a registration site early provides increased opportunity to build your brand and to build anticipation. Remember, your messages

are not simply instruments to drive action, they are opportunities to build brand love.

Tap Into What Matters

As attendees navigate your registration, track what garners the most traffic, where people spend the most time; what gets bookmarked. Pay attention to what matters to attendees most to spur excitement among both newbies and legacy participants.

Make it an Event to Remember

Back in the day, attendees were delighted over goodie bags. Not any more. There's pressure to provide more engaging and exciting experiences over swag. Today, engaging companies provide experiences like sunrise yoga, sunset fireworks, ice cream trucks, even one-on-one puppy-time during breaks.

However, please note, not all bells and whistles are created equally. If they don't speak specifically to your audience's interests, they will not make an impact.

Every attendee is different, but they do share commonalities with their fellow meeting-goers. A thoughtful assessment of their psychographics, demographics and behaviors provide clues as to what will resonate best with the group. Also, consider what helps them to be fully engaged and focused on your meeting/event. Perhaps it's phone charging stations, chair massages, headshots or new business cards.

In addition, meeting-goers often only see the inside of their hotel and convention center, never sampling what the host city has to offer. Capitalize on the benefits and unique experiences of your destination. Provide opportunities to immerse guests in local culture and cuisine.

- Lounges with comfy chairs and charging stations.
- Hallways and tunnels that facilitate movement.
- Touchscreens as guideposts.
- Round tables with seating for conversation and networking.

Technology and Tracking

Smart tech can enhance attendees' experience and provide you with important data.

- Use your event app to gauge interest, guide traffic and encourage interaction.
- From questions about a speaker to feedback about opening night events, interactive Q&A provides oppor-

“ A meeting or event begins long before attendees
PICK UP THEIR NAME BADGE
and ends long after hotel check out. ”

Again, rather than chasing the splashiest activities, consider first which elements will make the biggest impact on your guests. Here are other ways to heighten their event experience.

General Session

- Consider a start to the meeting with an activity to bring the group together — something as simple as a group morning stretch or outrageous like a marching band meandering through the audience.
- Think about ways the presenters can interact verbally and physically with the audience. Think about tweaking stage design, lighting, etc.
- Keep things interesting and balanced. Intersperse official announcements, panel discussions, entertainment, networking, inspiring keynotes and downtime throughout the time together.

Embrace Space

The physical space of your gathering can help or hinder attendee enjoyment. The goal of the space should be to immerse participants in your brand while ensuring smooth traffic flow, opportunities for conversation, special areas/experience spaces to create buzz and space for reflection. So consider:

tunities for real-time information sharing.

- RFID tracking informs traffic flow, allowing you to make real-time changes to spaces and programs. This monitoring also gives you guidance for future planning.

It's Not Over When it's Over

Robust and thoughtful follow-up extends the attendee experience, provides you valuable insights on ROI and gives you guidance for your next event.

- Surveys are an absolute must. Elicit feedback about event logistics, learnings, applications, accommodations, program quality, etc.
- Start FOMO for next year! Send select content to those who didn't attend so they will next time.
- Continue the conversation year-round with thought-leadership messaging, virtual networking, microsites for program deep dives and ongoing polling.

Thoughtful events *are* successful events. They create eager and active participation, brand involvement, and relevant real-world application before, during and after the gathering. Thoughtful events tap into what makes attendees the same as well as unique. Thoughtful events provide ample opportunities for comfortable, captivating, meaningful and memorable experiences. Be thoughtful and you will reap the rewards.

C&IT

&IT



CATE BANFIELD

VICE PRESIDENT, EVENT SOLUTION DESIGN & STRATEGY OF BCD MEETINGS & EVENTS

With 20+ years experience in the events industry within both agency and global corporate companies, Banfield leads the Solution Design team at BCD Meetings & Events in Chicago and is responsible for collaborating across internal departments and resources to develop innovative, integrated strategies and solutions to support the growth and expansion of our Events business.

Forward-Facing: Could Facial Recognition Turn Back the Clock on the U.S. Airport Experience?

BY MARK DOMBROFF

If you flew commercially prior to 9/11, you can recall how different the experience used to be. You could pull up to the airport 15 minutes before the flight, speed-walk to the gate, flash your boarding pass and take your seat on the plane. If your heart was racing, you saw it as a consequence of your own tardiness — not fear of terrorism or outrage over the sluggish pace of the security line. By contrast, the post-9/11 “new normal” is one in which travelers feel compelled to get to the airport two or three hours early. They expect everything from unruly passengers shouting at gate attendants to the awkwardness of holding up your pants while your belt sits in a plastic box on a conveyor.

Fortunately for airport operators, some encouraging signs suggest that this could change. An optimist might even wonder whether a trip to the airport in 2029 will feel a bit like 1999. Chalk it up to rapid advances in biometric ID technologies as well as the evolution of highly efficient approaches to passenger pre-check. One technology in particular — facial-recognition scanning — could be a game-changer. But as our society adjusts to what can seem, at least to some, like an invasive change, the aviation industry will need to handle the onboarding of this technology with care and sensitivity.

Hints of a Brighter Future

Government officials and aviation professionals have been working for years to break up the logjams at airport security checkpoints. Launched a decade after 9/11, TSA PreCheck has spread to at least 200 airports and 67 airlines. The program allows low-risk domestic travelers to

move through security with minimal disruption, reportedly with wait times of less than five minutes on average. In addition to forking over an \$85 enrollment fee, TSA Pre-Check travelers must undergo fingerprinting and submit to an in-person interview. Meanwhile, the newer, privately administered CLEAR program is now up and running at more than 45 airports. With its slogan “You’re the perfect person to verify your identity,” CLEAR relies on fingertip and retinal scans to rapidly ID travelers. They pay a \$15 monthly fee to zip to the head of security lines.

Airports across the globe are also investing in facial-recognition systems that promise to, in essence, transform the entire terminal into an always-on security checkpoint. Encino, California-based startup FaceFirst (the author has no relationship to this company) bills its Guardian system as a way to “radically reduce friction, from curbside check-in to boarding the plane.” In promotional materials, FaceFirst contends that its AI-driven system, which works in tandem with surveillance cameras, is vastly superior to approaches that rely on humans. “Guardian compares millions of images per second,” the company claims, “helping to identify travelers in checkpoints against a vast image database.”

Meanwhile, more airports and airlines are sending digital images of passengers’ faces for crosschecking against biometric profiles in a database maintained by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

An Increasingly Vocal Opposition

The challenge here is that facial recognition clearly spooks some Americans. Over the past few months, vocal critics of these systems appear to have gained ground. San

Francisco has become the first major American city to ban government use of the technology. Meanwhile, the Bay Area cities Oakland and Berkeley, along with New York state lawmakers and officials in Somerville, Massachusetts, to name a few, were also taking aim at the technology, according to media reports.

Another headline-grabber was the \$1 billion lawsuit, filed this past April, by a New York college student alleging that Apple had used facial recognition to falsely accuse him of shoplifting at several Apple stores around the Northeast. That same month, a JetBlue passenger’s outraged Twitter post went “viral” after she described being asked to peer into a camera prior to boarding a flight at JFK.

“If you flew commercially prior to 9/11, you can recall **HOW DIFFERENT** the experience used to be.”

The Electronic Frontier Foundation, the ACLU and other privacy advocates have expressed alarm at U.S. government plans to roll out facial recognition for all international passengers at the top 20 American airports by 2021. They fret that airlines will get their hands on the data and use it in nefarious ways; that false positives will ruin lives; and that hackers will penetrate these systems, steal identities and otherwise invade travelers’ privacy. Alleged instances of racial bias by facial-recognition systems, and their alleged use to crack down on undocumented immigrants, have added fuel to the debate.

How Should Airports Respond?

For now at least, these systems clearly do stir fears of Big Brother in some quarters of our society. One key protection to keep in mind is the SAFETY Act of 2002. Passed in the aftermath of 9/11, it was designed to safeguard businesses offering products or services that stand to protect Americans from terrorism. Under the highest level of protection, registrants are exempt from certain punitive, exemplary and other damages. In addition, they cannot be forced to pay so-called non-economic damages unless the plaintiff suffers physical harm. That means that embarrassed or offended travelers — including, potentially, those misidentified as terrorists by facial-recognition technology — would be barred from

capturing large sums in court for the likes of emotional pain and suffering, so long as the system had been successfully registered.

The PR Dimension

Ultimately, litigation may not be the greatest threat to facial recognition technology in aviation; rather, that could come in the form of growing public distrust spurred by outrage-laced social media storms, conspiracy theories and negative headlines. The JetBlue incident highlights how important it is for airlines and airports to be proactive about countering misinformation and making sure passengers understand how these systems work.

Through signage, social media messaging and other means, the industry needs to make abundantly clear when and how people can opt-out of the scans. Travelers also need to know that their biometric data will never be shipped around globally. Given that this technology is relatively young and is bound to have the expected bugs and errors, screeners also need to be trained to anticipate misidentifications. When they get a “hit,” they should respond professionally, take the passenger to the side and engage in a standard ID check. Aggressive “red alert” responses to misidentified passengers are a PR nightmare in the waiting.

Facial Recognition Technology is Here to Stay

Millions of Americans already use it to unlock their Apple iPhones, and these systems will undoubtedly get faster and more accurately. Could stakeholders in U.S. aviation leverage the technology to essentially roll back the clock on the airport experience? FaceFirst cites the potential for a combination of facial-recognition technology, walk-through scanners (they can scan multiple travelers at once without any need to stop or even slow down) and 3D CT scans for carryon luggage to radically improve the speed and efficiency of the security-screening process. The upper limits of what is possible, in other words, may outpace our imaginations — so long as we handle these tools skillfully and build in the right safeguards. **C&IT**



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MARK A. DOMBROFF

Mark A. Dombroff co-leads the aviation team at national law firm LeClairRyan. With decades of experience, the veteran aviation attorney has represented clients on landmark cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and federal as well as state appellate courts. A widely consulted expert on aviation law, Dombroff routinely appears in global media to comment on industry events and trends. He can be reached by email at mark.dombroff@leclairryan.com. This article originally appeared on AviationPros.com.

Stronger Together

Team Building is at the Top of the List for Corporations

BY SOPHIA BENNETT



Team-building activities that give back to the community such as this “Military Home Makeover” by ACCESS Destination Services also create lasting memories for attendees.

Before the economic crash of 2008, team-building events were often passed over in favor of conferences or fun-filled parties, according to Sharon E. Sullivan, president of Sullivan Custom Planning Inc., a full-service destination management company that serves New England and is based in Providence, Rhode Island. But when event budgets took a nosedive and planners had to rethink how they organized company gatherings, that began to change.

“During the recession, meetings were harder

to justify,” she says. “Corporations could justify having team-building programs.” After all, they still needed a way to help employees perform at their best — especially as sales goals and other milestones were getting harder to reach. Planners stripped away things such as fancy décor and expensive entertainment in favor of offering more meaningful content to staff.

That change is still being felt today. “Team-buildings activities about problem solving, strategy, organizational skills, building camaraderie and group decision-making have gotten so much more popular,” Sullivan says. “I think

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every sales meeting I'm seeing incorporates a team-building activity, either to start off the meeting with a morale booster or an ice breaker. When you start a meeting that way, it shifts the energy and shifts the intention of the meeting. Companies know that to keep their employees happy that they need to do something special, and this doesn't break the bank."

Tina Boris Lafferty, DMCP, managing director of COTC Events, a Hosts Global member, agrees that team building still plays an important role in modern meetings and incentive trips. "In the 20 years I have been doing this, I have seen the team-building activity really evolve from something that planners had to do to as an essential part of their programs," she says. "Team building is no longer an opportunity to push through management agendas; it becomes a bonding experience that will last longer than the couple of days attendees spent together."

Lafferty continues, "In a world of remote offices and less human interaction within firms, team building is a chance to 'play' together while incorporating face-to-face communication, philanthropic experiences through CSR programs, and allowing people to capture all the fun in their social media for everyone else to have FOMO and want to be there next time around. It helps cause the buzz that people keep talking about so that others will work hard to be a part of that special experience year after year."

TEAMS GIVING BACK

Planners provided input on the more microlevel trends they've seen in team building in recent years. Perhaps the biggest one is increasing interest in activities focused around corporate social responsibility (CSR). Sullivan often works with companies to plan philanthropic activities such as charity bike builds, stuffing backpacks with school supplies and gathering treats to send to military personnel. In her mind, the reason for the burgeoning interest in these types of programs is simple.

"The attendees feel good about giving back," Sullivan says. "It also boosts morale. Companies always have an objective for team building, and we always find out what the objective is. More and more, companies just want to give back. I also think the attendees are more likely to show up and will be more enthusiastic because they want to give back as well."

Amanda Hill, an account director for ACCESS Destination Services, a destination management company based in San Diego, California, says companies are eager to do more. "Especially this year, we're seeing that instead of just doing your standard building bikes for the community, we're seeing companies that really want to get out into the community," she says. "They might go out as a group and do a beatification project with the Boys and Girls Club or cook a meal at the Ronald McDonald House. They're making it more of an experiential team-building program instead of sitting in a ballroom." These offsite activities also allow people to see the city and learn more about what's happening there.

For groups that have to stay at their event facility, Hill has arranged for local community groups to come to them. In one recent instance, a group built dog houses for a humane society with assistance from a Girl Scout troop. The Girl Scouts earned a patch and the staff at the company got to know people in the community.

CSR projects are getting more creative as they grow more popular. "We have even seen groups ask people to bring their old jeans from home, then after all the jeans are collected there is a team-building event where we make shoes with the old jeans for kids in underprivileged countries," Lafferty says.

When thinking about CSR projects, "A question we will always ask is are there organizations or genres of organizations that the company already supports or has a heart in?" Hill says. "We'll have clients that always like to do a children's charity, or they're tied into a Boys and Girls Club."

The audience for team building has also changed over time, which may be an important thing to take into consideration when organizing an activity. "Executive teams are no longer untouchable," Lafferty says. "The CFO wants to be there creating hygiene kits for local homeless people right next to the salespeople who are doing well in his company."

"We're seeing that instead of just doing your standard building bikes for the community, we're seeing companies that really want to get out into the community."



AMANDA HILL
Account Director
ACCESS Destination Services

TEAM SKILL BUILDING

Hill used to get a lot of requests for team-building activities that were little more than a reason to get out of the hotel. "These days companies are really looking to drill down the purpose behind doing the team building," she says. "Instead of just doing a sailing regatta or a scavenger hunt, they're really trying to focus on a team-building program that has purpose in people's day-to-day work. For example, we're doing a lot of escape rooms where we bring escape rooms on-site to the hotel property. It's fun, it's interactive, and it's a great way to get a team together so they can find how they communicate with each other and learn more about the process of collaboration."

Roy Charette, managing partner and director of training for Best Corporate Events, a Palm Harbor, Florida-based company that focuses on corporate events, professional development training, team building, interactive entertain-



Sullivan Custom Planning Inc. arranged Greybeard's Treasure Scavenger Hunt for attendees.

it probably comes as no surprise that companies are also looking for more customized, creative team-building activities.

"We did a photo hunt in Little Havana that included rolling cigars, playing dominoes, learning the local catch phrases, salsa dancing and making mojitos. This allows the participants to really get a taste of the local flavor, while bonding with each other throughout the process," Lafferty says.

Sullivan adds, "We get a lot of inquiries for a scavenger hunt, but ... they want something very creative."

When she was working with a group at the Hotel Viking in Newport, Rhode Island, she put together a pirate scavenger hunt. Participants used a treasure map to find people dressed as pirates who provided them with further clues. In Boston, she's arranged similar hunts but with historical figures instead of pirates.



SHARON E. SULLIVAN
President
Sullivan Custom Planning Inc.

"Companies know that to keep their employees happy that they need to do something special, and this doesn't break the bank."

have a winning team and we'll all hit the pub afterward."

Whenever possible, Charette looks for activities that may start out seeming competitive but gradually move into being more collaborative. These exercises introduce people to the importance of acknowledging people's ideas, rewarding them for tasks well done and positioning each other for success. Groups often end up mentoring and coaching each other or

developing a lesson plan so they can teach other teams something. They're engaging in the moment, he says, but when people are asked to reflect on how they can apply these same ideas in the office every day, they become a powerful way of providing tangible lessons.

CUSTOMIZED TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Meeting participants want more personalized, interactive experiences in all aspects of their lives. So

Another really popular activity is what Sullivan calls The Incredible Race, a take on the TV show "The Amazing Race." Similar to a scavenger hunt, teams must race around the city to find clues that will lead them to the hunt's proverbial finish line. Sullivan has also done spy hunts and asked teams to solve a mystery as part of their activity.

Culinary programs are also big today, Sullivan says. With some groups, she's had participants divide into teams and cook different dishes.

COTC Events knows team-building activities with modern technology such as the indoor skydiving venture, iFly, provide attendees with new experiences.

A team of judges tries all of the finished dishes and awards winners.

With other groups, she's set up a "moveable feast." For this, people switch tables every time they change courses. "This is program for companies where the people don't all know each other and it's the first time they're coming together. They all get to sit at each table, so they get to know everybody. We'll do a little team-building activity, they'll eat and then they'll move to the next table."

For one of her groups, Lafferty created a signature cocktail activity. Each team worked with an expert mixologist to create a mixed drink based on the gathering's theme. The winning drink was the featured cocktail at a gathering one night.

One thing that's proving less popular today is ropes courses and similar physical activities, Charette says. Increasingly, not all members of any given team are physically fit enough to complete these challenges. "That's the last thing you want, is for a team-building event to eliminate people who aren't able to even go bowling or do paintball," he says. "Nowadays there are so many incredible team-building programs that are done primarily indoors that allow everyone to be involved — activities that are more cerebral while also being fun."

ADVICE FOR MODERN-DAY TEAM-BUILDING EVENTS

One of the most important considerations for planning a team-building



activity is understanding your audience. "Not everyone wants to be active and outside or likes to perform in front of others," Lafferty says. "Make sure there are parts of the team building that will allow everyone to shine. Maybe you are not the one that will get up and do the physical activity, but you may be the one that will create the team name and sign or write the song that will be performed. All are so very important to the big picture, yet it allows everyone to be part of the experience."

"Make sure there are parts of the team building that will allow everyone to shine."

TINA BORIS LAFFERTY
DMCP
Managing Director of COTC Events



Another important thing to consider when planning a team-building activity is length, Sullivan says. "It can't be so long that you lose people. An average program is an hour and a half to two hours. Anything over that and people get bored."

Sullivan's first step in planning team-building activities is to find out the group's demographics, including age, and what the company wants to get out of the program. From there, she can start thinking about designing an exercise that will help planners

meet their goals. "There are some programs that do not work if you have mistrust," she cautions. "If you have people who don't particularly like each other or trust each other or are highly competitive, we can help you steer your activities in the right direction to something that will work with these group dynamics."

Hill also stays focused on understanding a company's objectives when she plans team-building activities. "For a lot of planners, team building is a checkbox, something they have to

accomplish with the meeting," Hill says. "But it will mean more and people will remember that experience more if they are 100% bought in."

"I think the best thing that a planner can do is really come to what the purpose is behind the team-building program before they decide what they're going to do. Is the purpose to have their team collaborate?

Or is it that they really want to go out and give back to the community? When we get to the end of our program, what are the two things you want your guests to talk about? Is it a sense of community spirit? Is it that they gave back to something? Is it that they have better camaraderie with people they spend their lives with at work?" Figure out to help people achieve these lasting feelings and memories, and team building will move far beyond a reluctant checkbox on their list too.

C&IT

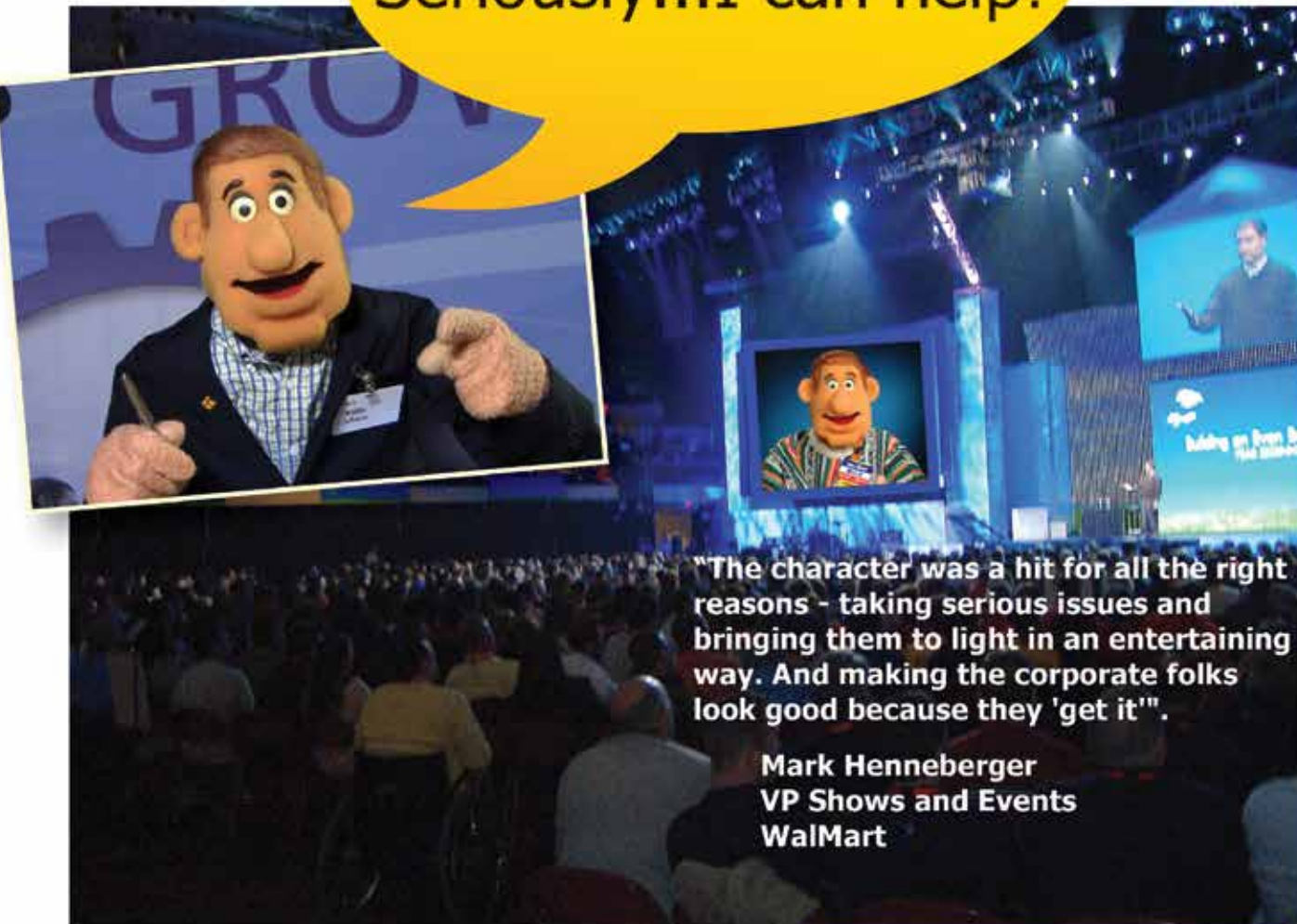
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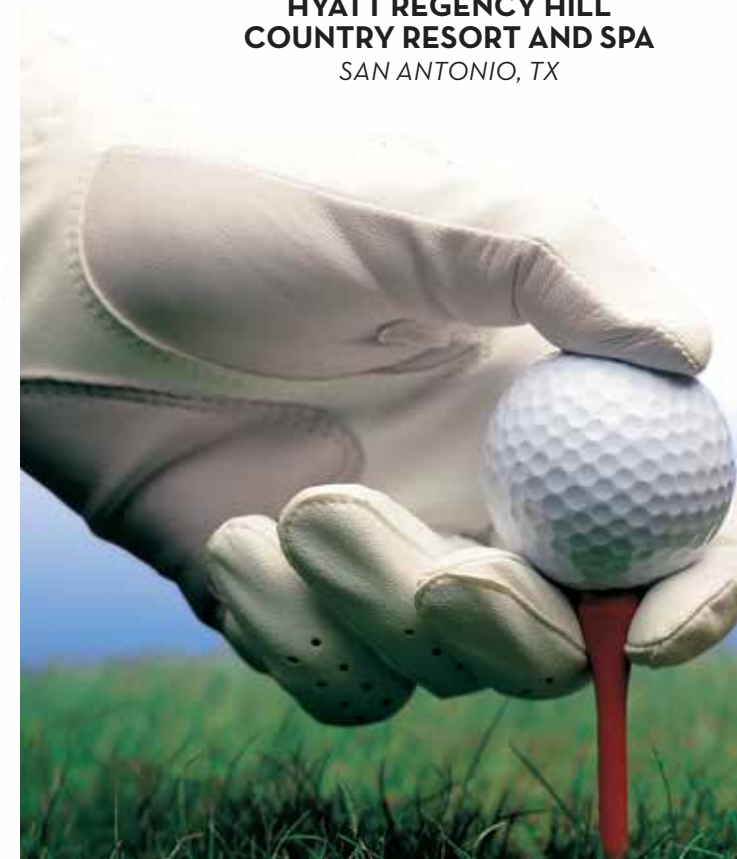
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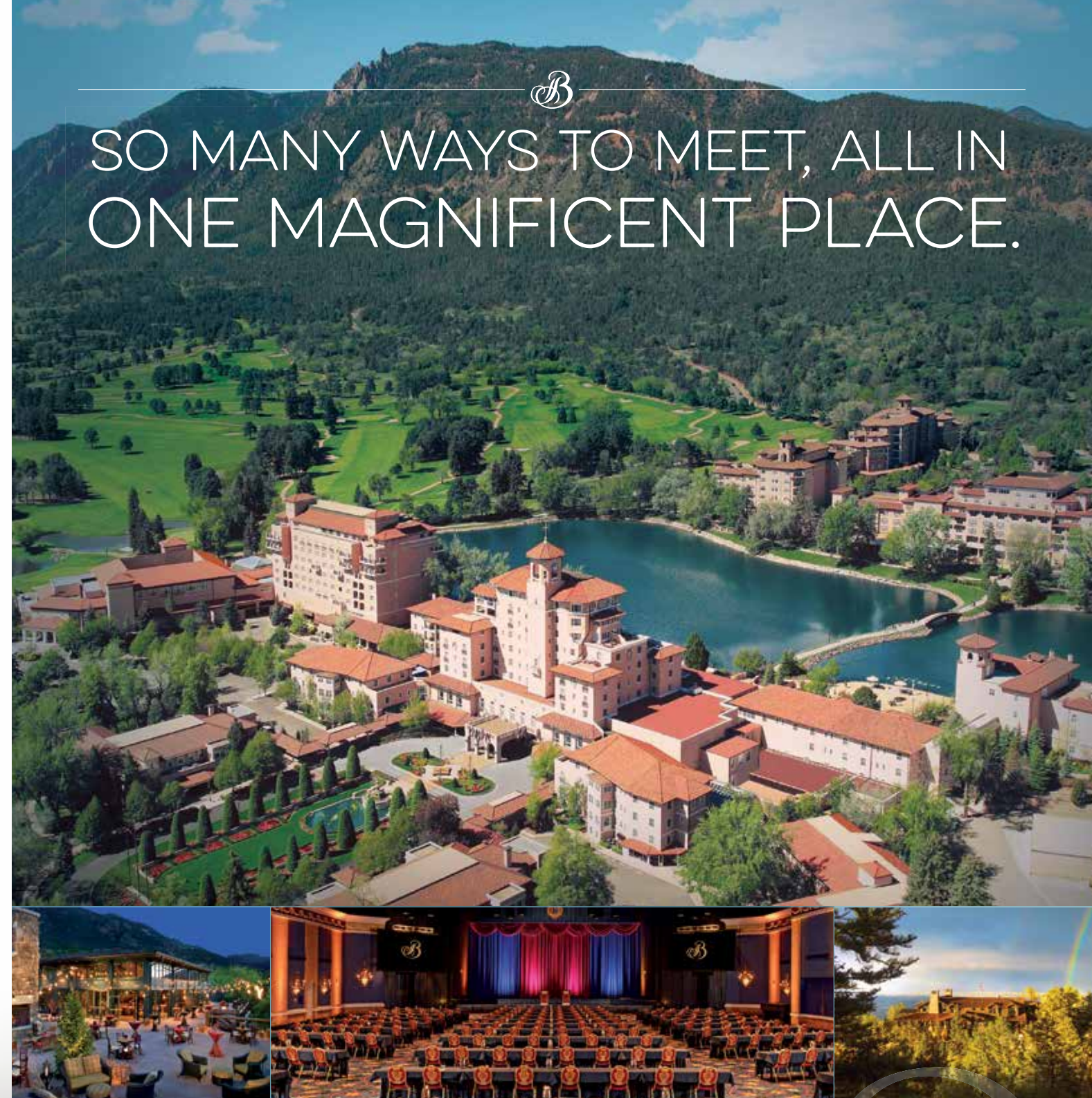
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SMART MONDAY HELPS MAKE YOU SMARTER

IMEX America kicks off with a full day of free education September 9 with Smart Monday, powered by Meeting Professionals International (MPI). The day of cutting-edge professional development launches with an inspirational

keynote address by artist and TED Talk speaker, Phil Hansen. Having developed a career-ending tremor in his drawing hand, Hansen decided to “seize the limitation.” His keynote, “Embrace The Shake: Transforming Limitations into Opportunities” will outline how limitations for meeting planners — which can be reduced budgets, limited resources, rushed timelines, etc. — can be an impetus for creativity and imagination, which ties to this year’s Talking Point. He breaks down resistance to limitations by recognizing their role in driving — not stifling — creativity.

Hansen’s keynote is part of more than 180 educational sessions over the entire show designed for meetings and events industry professionals at all levels — both buyers and exhibitors. The learning opportunities — deep dives, one-to-one sessions and hot topic tables — provide fresh

An Insider’s Guide to **imex** 2019 america



SMITHS
BY
HIDDEN
GEMS
TIPS

Hilton

HELLO IMEX

“The type of dreaming that appeals to me has nothing to do with reverie, an idle daydream. It isn’t wishful thinking. ...What I speak of is a brand of imaginative thinking backed up by enthusiasm, vitality, expectation, to which all men may aspire.”

– CONRAD HILTON



Remember John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s famous “Bed-In for Peace”? They found the perfect platform at our Hilton Amsterdam.



Hover your smartphone camera here and watch the story unfold.

Imagine learning something new about the company you love. Something that connects you and inspires you. That’s exactly how it felt when, during the preparation for our 100 year anniversary, I learned that legendary John Lennon and Yoko Ono had one of their most iconic moments, the world’s first “Bed-In for Peace,” at the Hilton Amsterdam.

But if we think about it, it really doesn’t surprise us. Conrad Hilton set this company on a trajectory that placed a value on humanity and hospitality. He spoke often and sincerely of his belief that travel could make a difference in the struggle for world peace.

Conrad’s vision set forth a century ago—the responsibility to spread the light and warmth of hospitality around the world—is the lens through which we at Hilton view the world and our place in it. People and purpose fuel our imagination and drive what we call The Hilton Effect, or the ongoing positive impact

of the world’s first global hospitality company on guests, Team Members and communities.

Throughout these pages, and throughout your time with us at IMEX, we’ll be sharing our stories of pioneering, imaginative moments that reinforce our promise to the traveler, then, now and for our next 100 years.

We hope to see you at IMEX where the theme, Powered by Imagination, sets the stage for big thinking and big ideas. (It’s as though Conrad himself planned the theme.) In the meantime, drop this Insider’s Guide into your carry-on. Use it to glean tips from an IMEX legend and rising star and discover Vegas’ hidden gems, among other highlights, to make this your best IMEX experience ever!

Gerilyn Horan
Vice President, Group Sales, Hilton

TOAST OF THE TOWN

Enjoy the refreshing flavors of Hilton with two sweet tastes from one renowned drink.

Our favorite flavor, the piña colada, was invented by Caribe Hilton bartender Ramón “Monchito” Marrero in 1954. The Caribe Hilton reopened its doors this summer after a \$100 million renovation, just in time to celebrate our 100 year anniversary—and welcome your next meeting.



cheers to the piña colada!

Invented at the Caribe Hilton

RECIPE & INSTRUCTIONS:

- 2 oz rum
- 1 oz coconut cream
- 1 oz heavy cream
- 6 oz fresh pineapple juice
- ½ cup crushed ice

Mix rum, coconut cream, heavy cream and pineapple juice in a blender. Add ice and mix for 15 seconds. Serve in a 12 oz glass and garnish with fresh pineapple and a cherry.

booze-free refresher

Try our piña colada smoothie for a healthier drink option.

RECIPE & INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1 cup frozen pineapple chunks
- 1 banana
- ½ cup vanilla Greek yogurt
- 1 cup light coconut milk
- 1 Tbsp honey

Combine all ingredients into a blender and puree until smooth. Pour and enjoy!

So many temptations ... but for many, a nonalcoholic version is the winning combo for late nights and early mornings at IMEX.



For healthier menus, wellness and philanthropic activities that WOW meeting attendees, visit meetwithpurpose.com.

INDUSTRY LEGEND & RISING STAR SHARE TRADE SHOW TIPS & TRICKS

INDUSTRY LEGEND



KATHIE O'BRIEN
Sr. Manager, Global Events,
Veeam

"I have the pleasure of overseeing a small but mighty team of super planners who pull off some of the most incredible programs throughout the world."

Best advice you got when you started attending trade shows?

Get your game plan in place

before you arrive on-site. Look at a vendor floor plan and map out who you must see and make your appointments based on where they are located in proximity to each other on the show floor. Also, respect calendars, show up on time, keep your appointments to a respectable time and follow up on mutually agreed-upon actions.

What's your "best" show blooper? What did you learn from it?

Once, during off-show hours at an event in Aspen, I organized a VIP dog sled ride for key customers, executives and spouses. Because the

sleds were pulled behind the dogs, and the dogs were running on a mixture of snow and dirt trails, the executives and spouses ended up completely covered in mud. **Lesson learned:** Whenever possible, test run all incentive activities before you offer them to guests.

"Instead of dragging around a whole roll of tape with me, I take a Sharpie® wrapped with packing tape. I can use this to seal packages, write labels, create an emergency hem on a pair of pants, or use as a lint brush."



RISING STAR



ROBYN FRANKO
Conference Coordinator,
ISACA

"I am a problem-solver and people-pleaser all wrapped up in one job."

What's one piece of advice for people new to trade shows?

I know this sounds random, but smile and always have hand sanitizer on you. You'll be shaking hands and meeting all kinds of people.

Smiling makes you more approachable and hand sanitizer prevents you from getting sick.

What do you do after a trade show to help you recap everything that happened?

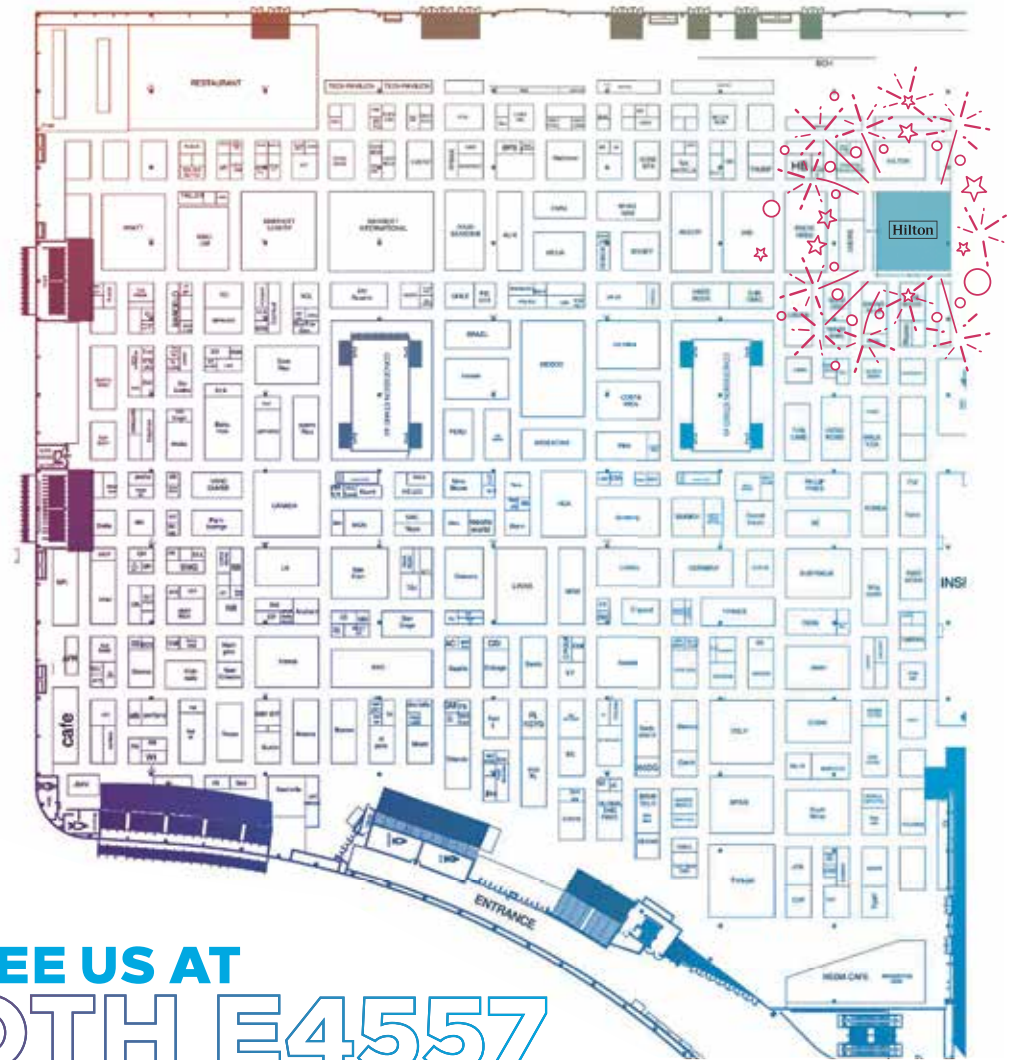
When we get back to the office, we do a team exercise called What's Hot & What's Not. The idea is to sort out the things that we did that worked and the things that didn't, to be able to re-create the magic or solve the problem. Feedback also reassures you when you feel like something didn't work out well, but others may see it another way. You talk it

through in this meeting and get other perspectives.

What is one thing that will surprise people to learn that you always pack in your carry-on?

(Laughing) A stuffed-animal goat. A friend randomly sent it to me for my birthday, and it's become my travel companion ever since.

"I always ask myself, 'Have I had enough water?' If the answer is yes, I drink more. You're running what feels like 10 miles a day, so you need to stay hydrated, and it helps with jet lag."



COME SEE US AT BOOTH E4557

You need a lot of space for 3,500 exhibitors, 6,300 attendees and rows upon rows of lights, action and imagination. So before you head out to IMEX, pack this Insider's Guide in your carry-on. We'll be in the northeast corner celebrating our 100 year anniversary with a stunning new footprint and special activities to match the occasion.



Hover your smartphone camera to launch a special birthday greeting card from Hilton to you, celebrating 100 years of firsts.

GETTING FIT ON THE STRIP

When you're 100, it's important to stay fit so we're throwing a 5K Birthday Bash happening after the IMEXrun on September 11. The race takes off from the bridge outside The Venetian and ends 3.1 miles later at our Birthday Bash, an event open to runners, early-rising non-runners and those finally calling it a night.

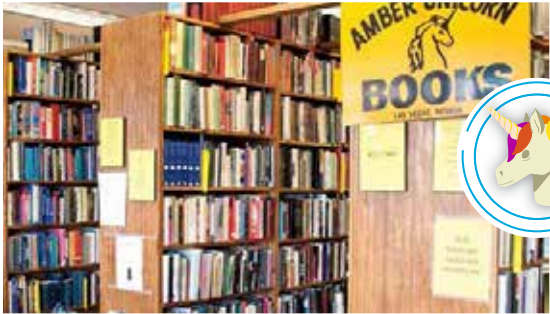


VIVA LAS VEGAS:
OUR LARGEST HILTON SPACES
& MUST-GO PLACES



VEGASHIDDENGEMS

Discover these hidden treasures that make Vegas really rock!



AMBER UNICORN BOOKS

With over 200,000 used books, including over 20,000 cookbooks, you could easily spend a day in these stacks. *bon appétit* even named Amber Unicorn as one of the top seven cookbook stores in the U.S. **2101 S Decatur Blvd #14** | amberunicornbooks.com



GÄBI COFFEE & BAKERY

Gäbi serves craft coffee and artisan pastries in an exotic multicultural cafe. Combining the best of the East and West, Gäbi's is a feast for the eyes and for the taste buds. **5808 Spring Mountain Rd, Ste 104** | gabicafe.com



SECRET PIZZA

Shhhh ... this place is literally a hidden gem, a New York-style pizza eatery tucked away on the third floor of The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. After passing rows of vintage album covers, you've arrived at the tiny, standing-room-only Secret Pizza. **The Boulevard Tower, 3708 S Las Vegas Blvd, Level 3**



NACHO DADDY

This locally owned Mexican restaurant serves all-day breakfast and Mexican-American "collisions," offers a vegan menu and guarantees you'll never find a dry chip! Try the Best of Las Vegas "Daddy's Margarita" or the famous Scorpion Shot as seen on *Tanked* and *The Food Network*. **3663 Las Vegas Blvd** | nachodaddy.com



SIEGFRIED & ROY'S SECRET GARDEN & DOLPHIN HABITAT

Talk about magical, here you can explore an enchanted world filled with dolphins, white tigers, lions and leopards. Plus, one-of-a-kind experiences like Trainer for a Day and Yoga with the Dolphins. **The Mirage, 3400 S Las Vegas Blvd** | mirage.mgmresorts.com/amenities

IMAGINE WHAT
WE CAN CREATE

Together

Curious to see how we're helping planners create **WOW** moments at their events? Follow us on Instagram—and then imagine what amazing things we can do together.



Find us at:

@WowWithHilton

Meeting, Event & Travel Planning with Hilton



Signia
Hilton



The new Signia brand has arrived. Hover your smartphone camera here.

MODERN SPACES AND PLACES FOR THE MEETINGS & EVENTS PLANNER.

Hilton's newest hotel brand infuses innovative technology and design into every space, so top meeting planners like you work more efficiently and more boldly. With signature culinary and wellness experiences, elevate your meeting into your finest inspiration. Opening in 2020.

Hilton

WALDORF ASTORIA LXR CONRAD canopy Signia Hilton Hilton CURIO COLLECTION DoubleTree TAPESTRY COLLECTION Embassy Suites MOTO Hilton Garden Inn Hampton Inn Home2 Suites Hilton Grand Vacations

Hilton
HONORS

fresh thinking on how to make meetings more engaging, embrace new ways of thinking, consider the big issues and explore innovation and creativity.

INSPIRING IMAGINATION

The show is especially important as a source for new ideas and for unleashing attendees' imaginations, which ties to the Talking Point for this year's show. The IMEX Group is championing imagination through encouraging meeting and event professionals to consider how they can collaborate with other organizations and the benefits this can bring. Through its Talking Point, IMEX celebrates diversity and focuses on best practices in event sustainability, including offering education sessions designed to encourage exhibitors and buyers to reduce the environmental impact of their show participation. EventMB, an online resource for event professionals, will present research on imagination in events.

"We're working to bring the power of imagination to everything we're doing at IMEX America," says Carina Bauer, CEO of the IMEX Group. "Absolutely everything and everyone is connected or capable of becoming connected, and the driving force behind all the positive changes we're witnessing is the power of the human imagination — a uniquely human quality. So, we're exploring and celebrating this aspect of being human — one that we frequently take for granted. Think of it as a human superpower; our instinct to ask, without judgment or limitation, 'What if ... ?'" *C&IT*



CAN'T-MISS KEYNOTES

Get Inspired by These
IMEX America 2019
Keynote Speakers

EMBRACE THE SHAKE: TRANSFORMING LIMITATIONS INTO OPPORTUNITIES

Speaker: Phil Hansen
Monday, Sept. 9 | 8:30-9:30 AM

After developing a career-ending tremor in his drawing hand, artist Phil Hansen embraced his "shake" by redefining his limitation as an impetus for creativity. He restored his artistic abilities and has helped businesses approach their limitations in new ways.

"YES, AND": THE POWER OF IMPROVISATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Speaker: Four Day Weekend Comedy
Tuesday, Sept. 10 | 8:30-9:30 AM

Four Day Weekend Comedy describes how we have built our 22-year-old business on the methods of "yes, and ..."

We take our onstage skills and apply them to the corporate world through customized training that brings improv philosophies to life through activities and conversational debriefs.

THE OPTIMISM QUOTIENT: CHANGING OUR MINDSET, FUELING SUCCESS

Speaker: Michelle Gielan, Nationally recognized
researcher and best-selling author
Wednesday, Sept. 11 | 8:30-9:30 AM

Research in neuroscience and positive psychology is showing the ripple effect rational optimism can have on performance, profitability and happiness at work. Michelle Gielan will empower you with practical, research-based positive communication strategies to increase happiness and success.

IMEX America will return to the Sands Expo Convention Center in Las Vegas Sept. 15-17, 2020 and to Mandalay Bay Nov. 9-11, 2021. IMEX Frankfurt will take place May 12-14, 2020 and May 18-20, 2021.

HARD ROCK HOTEL & CASINO ATLANTIC CITY

IT'S TIME TO BREAKOUT

MEETINGS AT HARD ROCK HOTEL & CASINO ATLANTIC CITY

With 150,000 square feet of spectacular meeting space plus 2,000 luxury hotel rooms, we have the perfect place to make your moment shine. Discover how our team of professionals can help inspire yours. Join us on the Boardwalk and feel the new vibe in Atlantic City.

For your next meeting, event or incentive, please visit
hardrockhotelatlanticcity.com/meetings
or call 609-449-6060.



1000 Boardwalk, Atlantic City, NJ 08401

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ATLANTIC CITY

1000 Boardwalk
Atlantic City, NJ 08401
Contact: Julie Green Davis
609-449-5251
julie.greendavis@hrhcac.com
hardrockhotels.com/atlantic-city/meetings

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City has more than 150,000 sf of meeting and event space for groups of all sizes. Go big with expansive venues like our Hard Rock Live at Etes Arena, which can host up to 7,000 or orchestrate a successful conference in the 29,000-sf Seminole Ballroom. You'll also find 30+ additional traditional and non-traditional meeting rooms and hospitality suites for more intimate sessions, along with a lively outdoor area for celebrations. You can also count on our team of professionals to ensure your group enjoys the red-carpet treatment, including creative catering, expert A/V and technological integration and special extras that transform meetings into unforgettable experiences.

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City features 2,000 stylish suites ranging from 1,000 to 4,000 sf for guests to unwind. State of the art amenities and our amazing suites overlook partial and full ocean views. Enjoy our Sound of Your Stay; tracks, picks and wax that will provide a unique musical experience throughout your stay.

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City is a great destination for everything! *C&IT*

IMEX BOOTH #E3454

GREATER MIAMI CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

701 Brickell Avenue, Suite 2700
Miami, FL 33131
Contact: Barry Moskowitz
Vice President, Sales
and Industry Relations
barry@gmcbv.com
Tel.: 305-539-3042 | Fax: 305-530-4276
miamimeetings.com

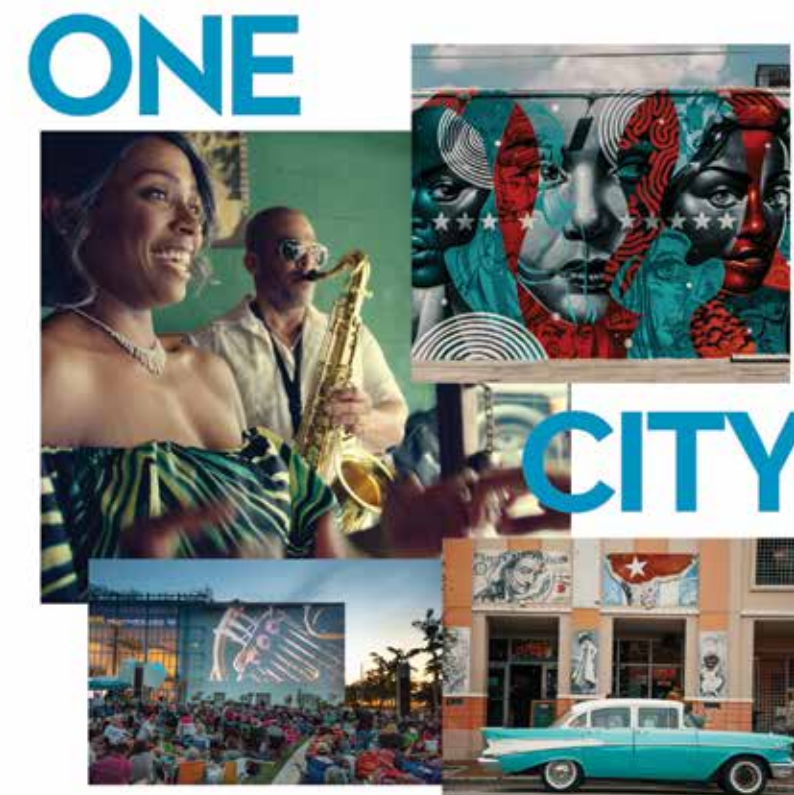
Avibrant and dynamic global hub, Miami offers a stunning array of creative venue options for even the largest meeting needs, including the new Miami Beach Convention Center, now open!

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

The space also features a terrace where attendees can step out, mingle and soak up the city's signature sunshine and ocean breeze.

Now, the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau is also excited to announce that the Miami Beach Convention Center will soon be home to a connecting 800-room headquarter hotel, making Miami the ultimate convenient meetings destination. *C&IT*

IMEX BOOTH #A2108



SO MUCH CULTURE

When it comes to planning your next meeting, Miami has it all. Breathtaking landscapes and diverse neighborhoods set the perfect stage for innovative art, world-class entertainment and family-friendly attractions that visitors never forget. Plan your next meeting today.

Visit us at IMEX America,
Booth A2108.

800-933-8448 ext. 3071
Meetings@MiamiMeetings.com



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ARIA RESORT & CASINO

Las Vegas, Nevada
Contact: Stephanie Glanzer
sglanzer@mgmresorts.com
mgmresorts.com/meetings



ARIA Resort & Casino in Las Vegas, a AAA Five Diamond resort, completed a 200,000-sf expansion of its LEED Gold Certified convention center. The resort added technologically advanced, flexible meeting spaces across four stories, bringing its total size to 500,000 sf. Highlighted by stunning indoor open-air verandas, dramatic views of T-Mobile® Arena, and the one-of-a-kind Cypress Executive Lounge with private suites, stocked pantry, conference room and library, the expanded space really puts the “wow” in any event.

ARIA’s new convention space has maintained MGM Resorts International’s commitment to build all new venues to LEED Gold standards or better, creating one of the most expansive high-end, environmentally friendly meeting facilities in the world. Already an established leader in

this area, ARIA has integrated environmentally responsible practices and services for all meetings, conventions and events, earning it a prestigious five keys from Green Key Global’s Eco-Rating Program.

The first level features an open ballroom with ample pre-function spaces and access to an exclusive loading dock for events that require sizable displays. Versatile indoor-outdoor breakout rooms provide meetings flexibility to enjoy the Las Vegas weather while conducting business highlight the second level, while the third level offers a large ballroom as well as naturally lit pre-function spaces connecting to ARIA’s existing convention center. The top-floor patio features stunning views overlooking The Park and T-Mobile® Arena, both of which opened in April 2016.

C&IT

IMEX BOOTH #B2829

ARIA is dedicated to providing support and services to help organizations who share the same passion for environmental responsibility extend these values when planning a meeting. A green meeting is an event in which environmental considerations are incorporated into all elements of planning and execution in an effort to minimize the environmental impact.

TURN ANY MEETING INTO A SHOW.

THE COMPANIES YOU WORK WITH VARY. YOUR COMMISSION SHOULDN'T.



Steve O'Malley, Michael Guerriero, and David Peckinpugh (pictured left to right)
Maritz Global Events

 **MGM RESORTS**



HOTEL XCARET MÉXICO

1-844-795-4525
Contact: Diana Martínez
dmartinez@hotelxcaret.com
www.hotelxcaret.com



For unique locations to host conventions, team-building activities, incentives and many other group experiences, Hotel Xcaret México is the most original option in Riviera Maya. Its one-of-a-kind, ALL-FUN INCLUSIVE™ concept offers all the benefits of a traditional all-inclusive resort plus unlimited access to the nine natural parks and tours of Grupo Xcaret: Xcaret, Xel-Há, Xplor, Xplor Fuego, Xenses, Xoximilco, Xavage, Xenotes and Xichén, with ground transportation to airport and parks.

About 45 minutes from Cancun International Airport (CUN) and 45 minutes from Tulum, the surrounding natural wealth of Hotel Xcaret México — with unparalleled views of the Caribbean Sea, white-sand beaches, underground caves, inlets and a crystal water river — provides perfect spaces for meetings and events. For those who are looking for the perfect location to celebrate love or a successful year for the company, the resort features a wide variety of interior and exterior dream-like venues.

Hotel Xcaret México is not bound to just one space. Planners who are looking for the perfect venue to impress will be interested in the Convention Center HUN KA OX for 1,200 people, divisible into 3 separate rooms, or the Xpiral Restaurant with a spectacular 180-degree view of the sea. The hotel and the parks of Grupo Xcaret integrate nature, offering a wide variety of unique events settings with the utmost technology, great logistics and breathtaking views.

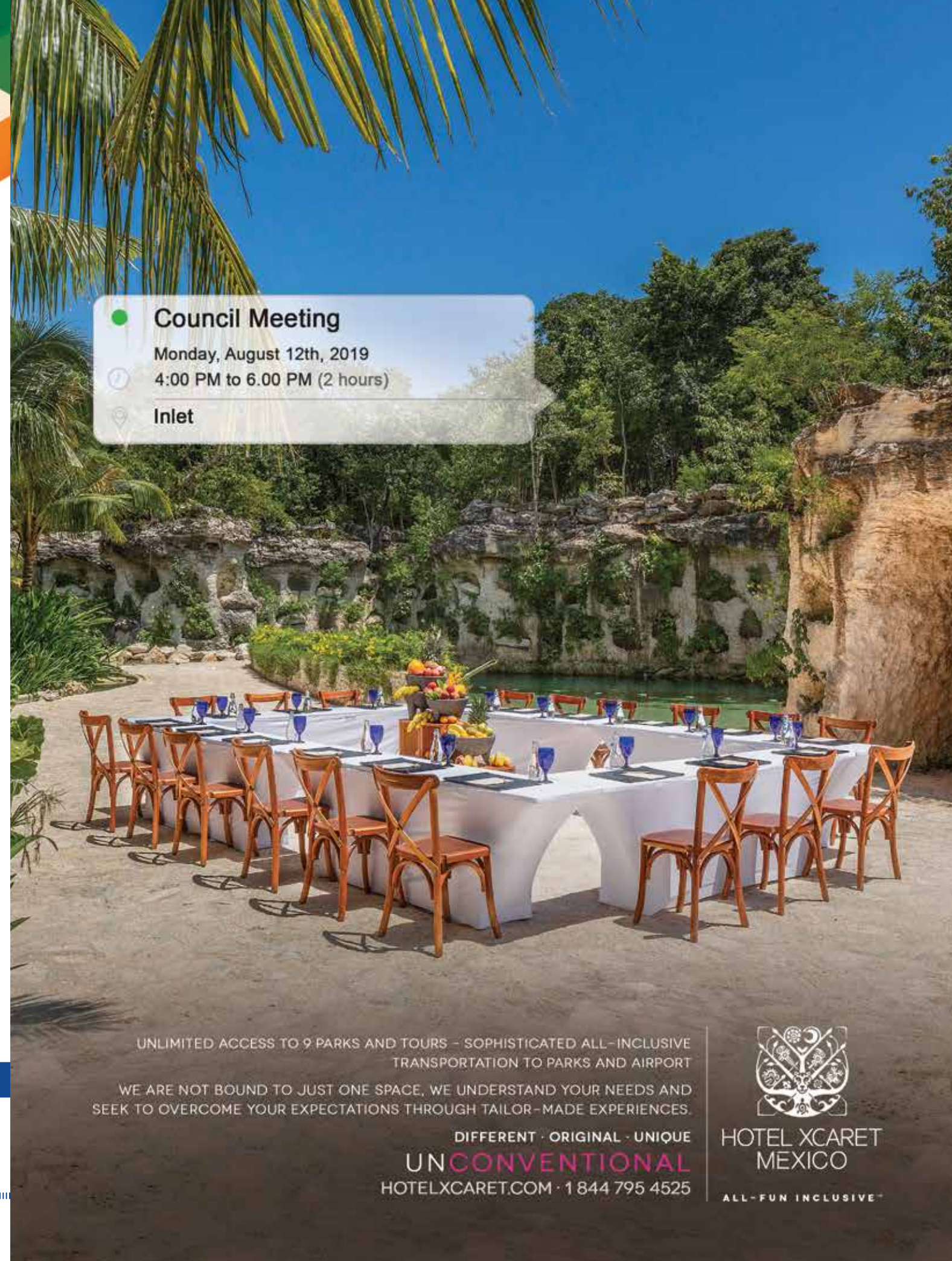
Our 12 restaurants and nine bars invite guests to go on a culinary journey of global flavors, where Mexican gastronomy — awarded Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO — is the protagonist. Banquets also satisfy the most demanding palates. Welcome dinners, private cocktails, exclusive dinners, buffets and coffee breaks will be a total success.

There are 900 suites designed to frame the most amazing views of the Caribbean Sea, the Mayan rainforest and our iconic inlets and caves.

C&IT

IMEX BOOTH #D2951

An unparalleled destination with a new concept of sustainable tourism recreation created to make the world a happier place offering the very best of Mexico all included: ALL-FUN INCLUSIVE™.



Council Meeting
Monday, August 12th, 2019
4:00 PM to 6.00 PM (2 hours)
Inlet

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RENAISSANCE ORLANDO AT SEAWORLD®



EXPAND YOUR GROUP EXPERIENCE

Discover an innovative and inspiring group experience at the recently expanded Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld®. With the addition of our Peninsula Ballroom and seven breakout rooms in January 2019, we now offer over 200,000 square feet of versatile indoor and outdoor space. Located near the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando International Airport and countless local attractions, our distinctive hotel is all at once convenient and compelling.

Learn more at renaissanceseworld.com, and visit us at IMEX at booth number E1657.



RENAISSANCE ORLANDO AT SEAWORLD®
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6677 Sea Harbor Drive
Orlando, FL 32821
Contact: Ron Reinhold
Director of Sales and Marketing
ron.reinhold@renaissancehotels.com
Tel.: 407-248-7359 | Fax: 407-351-9994
www.renaissanceseworld.com

At the Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld®, you'll discover a distinctive setting that encourages both new connections and local exploration.

With the addition of the Peninsula Ballroom and seven breakout rooms in January 2019, this hotel now features more than 210,000 sf of indoor and outdoor event space.

Beyond these versatile venues, groups will enjoy spacious guest rooms and suites, creative bar and restaurant concepts, a refreshing on-site water park and a soothing full-service spa. Nearby, popular theme parks and attractions provide an opportunity to add adventure to the agenda. Our central location near the Orange County Convention Center and just 20 minutes from Orlando International Airport makes it easy for a group of any size to relax and explore.

Host your meeting at Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld® and delight your group with an unexpected and unforgettable experience. *C&IT*

IMEX BOOTH #E1657

Learn more at
renaissanceseworld.com
and visit with us at IMEX
at booth E1657.

MARINA DEL REY

Located in the heart of the beautiful Los Angeles coastline and only 4 miles north of Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), **Marina del Rey** is a waterfront playground with breathtaking harbor views and a relaxed, resort-like vibe. The unique waterfront meeting space options are endless in L.A.'s Marina, with over 100,000 sf of event space and 1,100 hotel rooms. Marina del Rey is equally appealing to high-end corporate business programs as it is to tech industry powerhouses that want a laid-back but trendy meeting destination. Traditional meeting space takes a back seat to creative waterside options such as outdoor reception

lawns with 360-degree harbor views or a rooftop ballroom with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the coast. No visit to L.A.'s Marina is complete without some time on a boat, and having your opening reception, client party or seminar at sea on a private luxury yacht is the perfect way to make a splash with your next corporate function. *C&IT*

IMEX BOOTH #B1033

For details, go to visitmarinadelrey.com/groups

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MARINA DEL REY
convention and visitors bureau

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ROSEN SHINGLE CREEK

9939 Universal Blvd.
Orlando, FL 32819
Contact: Leslie Menichini
Vice President of Sales and Marketing
lmenichini@rosenhoteles.com
407-996-9939
rosenshinglecreek.com



Rosen Shingle Creek in Orlando is a warm welcome for business travelers who have seen and experienced it all. An oasis of luxury, the AAA Four Diamond property has everything all under one roof for the most successful meeting and memorable event.

While the hotel's Spanish Revival-style architecture conjures a quiet elegance from the moment guests arrive, it is its contemporary décor and current amenities that satisfy every need and want. The 1,501 well-appointed guest rooms feature modern furnishings and trend-setting bedding for enjoying floor-to-ceiling views of the surrounding lush greens. A newly enhanced grand lobby is perfect for congregating amid the sophisticated glow of brightened natural hues, complemented by more charging outlets for all of your "screens."

Located on the banks of historic Shingle Creek, headwaters to the Florida Everglades, the luxury hotel not only boasts a unique natural Florida setting, but one of the best locations of any convention hotel in Orlando. Just 10 minutes from Orlando International Airport and the area's world-famous shopping, dining and theme parks, Rosen Shingle

Creek presents planners with an array of possibilities among its 524,000 sf of indoor and outdoor creative spaces. Among these are three column-free ballrooms at 95,000, 60,000 and 45,000 sf, including 99 breakout rooms.

Add 15 dining/lounging options, including two AAA Four Diamond restaurants, a full-service spa, the 18-hole Shingle Creek Golf Course for tournaments or individual play, sand volleyball and basketball courts, four outdoor swimming pools and a nature trail for the most inviting environment to strengthen relationships and exchange ideas.

Because the hotel is independently owned, every amenity and experience is wrapped with the bow of the Rosen Difference. Whether it is creating signing offers with real value, providing on-the-spot decisions or simply exhibiting that extra level of service, planners feel the love from a staff empowered to exceed their every need.

Visit our **IMEX booth E3057** to learn about our special Sapphire Anniversary Offer and how Rosen Shingle Creek can make your next meeting shine, all of which can happen under one roof.

C&IT

IMEX BOOTH #E3057

The AAA Four Diamond Rosen Shingle Creek specializes in exceeding expectations. Expect the Rosen Difference — the highest standard of service, flexibility and personalization that makes every meeting unique.

DESIGNED FOR GOLF DEVOTEES AND
DEALMAKERS.



Independently owned and operated, Rosen Shingle Creek is the ideal Orlando meeting hotel, able to deliver the quality incentives you expect from a AAA Four Diamond property. We invite you to experience the Rosen Difference for yourself by selecting one of our Added Value offerings:

- Signing bonus starting at \$5,000 applied to master account*
- Discounts on meeting Internet
- Complimentary coffee break
- Suggest your own incentive, designed just for you

To take advantage of these limited-time concession offerings, visit **RosenShingleCreek.com/ROI**.

No Resort Fee • Complimentary In-room Wi-Fi • RFID Key Locking System

*Concession offerings are valid for NEW bookings received on or after 8/1/19 for meetings booked and consumed over select hot dates in 2019 (call or email for hot dates). Bookings must meet a minimum of 250 room nights and a designated minimum of food and beverage contributions at Rosen Shingle Creek. After signing, bonuses will be awarded starting at \$5,000 and applied to master accounts.

ROSEN
SHINGLE CREEK
ORLANDO

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A new Grand Concourse with 60,000 square feet

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MORE VERSATILITY

20,000-seat multipurpose venue



Conceptual rendering by Populous.
For illustrative purposes only.

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CHALLENGE ACCEPTED



Planners Explain Their Toughest Tasks

BY DEREK REVERON

DepositPhotos.com

Asking planners what their biggest challenges are is like asking a firefighter what's the most difficult part of responding to and extinguishing a multiple-alarm office building fire.

According to Mary Beth Jenson, CMP, CMM, strategic meetings manager, Travel and Transport Inc., "There are many, many challenges facing meeting planners today. These challenges can differ based on meeting type, attendee types and meeting location. So, to list the biggest challenge is a challenge within itself."

The seemingly innumerable challenges include tighter budgets, rising costs, a seller's market for hotels, lack of time, technology and multigenerational and multiethnic attendees. Even the smallest and simplest meetings can present big challenges. In addition, stakeholders, attendees and vendors are demanding more than ever from planners as their resources shrink.

According to a survey by Teneo Hospitality Group, tight meeting budgets, lack of time, rising F&B costs and stakeholders' desire for more enriching experiences are among planners' top challenges in 2019.

Another survey, the American Express 2019 Global Meetings and Events Forecast, reports that planners think that shrinking budgets will remain a top concern. Meanwhile, planners expect meetings to attract more attendees and be longer, according to the survey. Here are some of the biggest challenges planners face:

LACK OF TIME

Planners have always faced a time crunch, but it's getting tighter due to heightened client demands and expectations, increasingly complex meetings, lower budgets and lack of planner resources.

Lack of time itself creates several other challenges. It's more difficult to build in spare time for unex-

pected challenges. Planners are unable to discover and learn new technology tools that can increase efficiency and cut costs. There is also less time for long-term strategic planning. In addition, the procrastination of stakeholders and clients contributes mightily to planners' time crunch.

According to Jenson, "The single most difficult challenge is getting meeting owners, hosts and VIPs to understand the importance of 'time is of the essence.' Meeting owners usually don't understand the importance of early decision making around meeting management. They have to understand that hotel proposals are not good indefinitely and the original offer may be off the table if another group comes into the picture."

It's also time-consuming to simultaneously juggle the needs of several stakeholders and clients. According to Teri Abram, president of Dallas, Texas-based EventLink International Inc., "As a third-party corporate event planner, managing time is very important. Clients often have needs and time deadlines that coincide or conflict with each other. It is imperative that all deadlines are met, and this can create stress to get it all done."

Abram offers the following advice on time-managing competing client deadlines:

"Create and consistently update timelines and deadlines of all tasks to be accomplished before, during and after the event," Abram says. "Try to build in extra time into timelines for inevitable unexpected surprises and delays. There will always be pop-up client needs, which planners should be able to react to if they are staying on top of the overall planning timeline."

Educating stakeholders about the need for timeliness can help prevent challenges. Says Jenson, "The advice I would offer is — educate your meeting owners at the start of the process. Help them understand



Paragon Events Inc.

what information you need and why you need it. The more the meeting owner knows about your challenges, the greater your chances of delivering what they expect — great event with minimal risk and maximum cost savings for the company.”

TIGHTENING BUDGETS

Many planners see shrinking or flat budgets as their No. 1 challenge. The problem: Meeting-related costs are rising but budgets aren’t keeping pace, making the challenge of delivering more with less even tougher. Stakeholders expect big “wows,” memorable experiences, high attendance, engagement and value, all on lower budgets.

According to Katherine Stokoe, manager of meetings and events for Paragon Events Inc., “Cost awareness and budget management are the most difficult to manage from my perspective. The constant tug of war between big dreams and a very tight budget is something that happens to everyone. Expectations for unique and innovative experiences are higher than ever and there is a constant desire to always want the best and biggest on a limited budget.”

Stokoe suggests the following strategy for taming the low-budget, high-expectations beast: “Setting budget goals up front allows you the information to be prepared to make the best use of funds provided,” Stokoe says. “As a best practice, always ensure that you start your budget early and update it regularly. If something pops up that needs to be added or discussed, you always want to ensure that you have

the most updated budget numbers.” Stokoe also suggests, if possible, adding 10% to the budget for emergencies and working with vendors who offer partner discounts.

Budget challenges are most acute for small independent, third-party corporate planners with limited budgets. Even small meetings demand more technology, services, experiences, engagement and entertainment, all of which are more difficult to provide on small-meeting budgets.

RISING COSTS

As meeting budgets shrink, costs rise. According to Abram, “If you are a good event planner, your typical nature is to want to help and please others. This is especially the case with clients. We work very hard to make sure our corporate clients are delighted and that their goals are met at or under budget. This can be difficult with the rising cost of venues and activities.”

Abram fights rising costs with non-stop efforts to curtail expenses, starting with the site visit. “During the site search and budgeting phase, we often challenge the preferred hotels to go the extra mile and find unique ways to lower costs,” Abram says.

In addition, Abram finds creative ways to achieve desired outcomes for clients within their budgets. “For example, if a client wants to offer an upscale sponsored coffee lounge but their budget cannot afford to bring in an outside vendor or furniture, we will work with the venue to create the same look and feel by repurposing

existing furniture and creating menus to mimic a coffee lounge.”

A SELLER’S MARKET

Rates for sleeping rooms and meeting spaces are at or near record high rates, creating a big challenge for planners to uncover value in hotel rates and concessions. Planners lack leverage over hotel pricing because of high demand for meeting space. So, hotels can practically pick the kind of business they want to accept.

According to Genny Castleberry, CMP, director of sourcing for Brightspot Incentives and Events, “Hotel availability and rates are at a premium and we no longer have the luxury to have properties offer courtesy holds for programs. Even if hotels offer a courtesy hold on the space you may want, there is no guarantee they will keep the hold. Nothing is truly guaranteed until all contracts are signed and deposits received.”

Jenson agrees. “It’s a challenge to negotiate and execute a good hotel contract which protects the corporation’s best interests,” she says. “Agreeing to terms and conditions is sometimes a long process and planners are in a crunch for time. When time is limited, planners may lack due diligence and important terms may be omitted.”

One term Jenson makes sure to include is a construction clause, because not doing so can result in nerve-racking challenges. Jenson offers the following example. “Having a construction clause for an incentive program I was planning proved to be invaluable when, two weeks before the start date, I was informed the swimming pool and golf course would be out of service over the program dates due to construction,” Jenson says.

Due to the construction clause, Jenson was able to cancel the booking without liquidation damages and move to another property. “The only loss was the additional collateral costs in changing the venue name on incentive-

related materials,” Jenson says. “This was a small price compared to having 100 guests attend their incentive trip in Florida with no access to a pool or golf.”

HIGH STAKEHOLDER EXPECTATIONS

Throughout the planning process, planners face more demanding and sometimes unrealistic expectations from clients, stakeholders, attendees and even vendors. Expectations are higher than ever in every area of planning, including creativity and knowledge of properties. Says Abram, “With so much information available to corporate clients and attendees, expectations for exceptional and creative events are high. As planners, we must be able to speak to and potentially recommend any new or renovated hotels or activities that are offered in the preferred city.”

Expectations for planner knowledge are also high in non-planning areas related to meetings. “We also must stay abreast of all current hotel issues, and even new laws and legislation in the cities in which our clients are having events,” Abram says.

As an example, she cites the recent passage of newly restrictive pro-life, anti-abortion legislation throughout the South.

“It provoked deep feelings on both sides and created a concern for one client that planned to hold an event in a city of one of these states,” Abram says. “We had already been following the local city’s messaging, and we quickly went into action to gather as much information as possible to make the client more knowledgeable to respond to these concerns among attendees.”

Meeting expectations is especially challenging when they come from more than one stakeholder who have different visions of a meeting. It’s also taxing when clients try to execute their visions by jumping the gun on key decisions without enough information. For example, some stakeholders shrug off a site visit and insist on making their booking decisions based on online information.

According to Gregorio Palomino, CMP, CDMP, CEP, CWP, CSEP, CTA,

“Sometimes it’s challenging to set expectations when someone who isn’t in the industry makes decisions without going through the proper process.”

GREGORIO PALOMINO
CMP, CDMP, CEP, CWP, CSEP, CTA
CRE8IVE Executive Officer (CEO)
CRE8AD8 LLC



CRE8IVE Executive Officer (CEO) at CRE8AD8 LLC, “A property or destination can look great online but many times, in person, it’s not the same. We highly encourage clients to go with us on site visits to ensure the decisions we make and the locales are for sure of interest. We have seen some less-than-positive looks from a CEO who arrives and is disappointed.”

Palomino offers an example. “We had one software company based in Texas publish to the entire company the location, date and hotel of the annual incentive before he ever approved bidding on the property or even made sure it was available,” Palomino says. “Sometimes it’s challenging to set expectations when someone who isn’t in the industry makes decisions without going through the proper process.”

LAST-MINUTE CHANGES

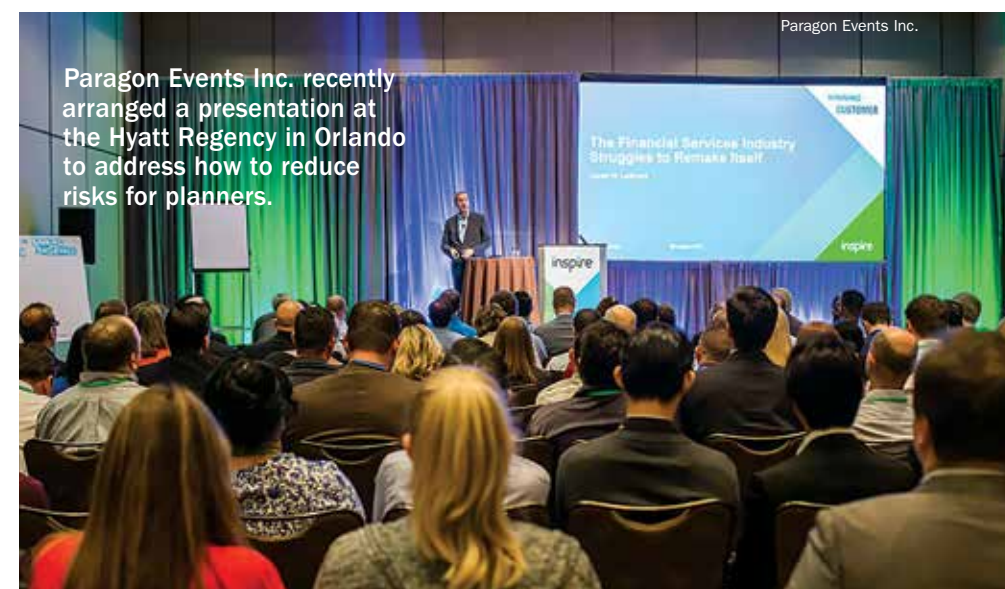
Practically every planner has felt a temporary surge of panic due to last-

minute challenges, including sudden changes in hotel needs. According to Palomino, “We see lodging, expectations and changes as a challenge most days.”

He offers this example: “We find and source a destination, which in turn helps us with costs for larger events and city buyouts or coordination of multiple properties, only to have one client move room blocks from a hotel that we had at 80% down to 50%, and for another property that was meant for attendee overflow from 20% up to 50%,” Palomino says.

Palomino cites another example: “We see clients who, in fear of spending too much or trying to beat attrition, aim low for room counts, but then on the week of the program, somehow they’re over on the contract and we’re scrambling to find space for them,” Palomino says.

Handling F&B challenges can also be daunting because increasingly



Paragon Events Inc. recently arranged a presentation at the Hyatt Regency in Orlando to address how to reduce risks for planners.

Paragon Events Inc.



Paragon Events Inc.

diverse attendees have a greater variety of food preferences and requirements, including vegan, vegetarian, keto, pescatarian, paleo and religious diets. As a result, menu planning is more complicated and expensive than ever, especially when menus change at the last minute.

According to Palomino, “We see food change orders when we’re three days out from the program. At this point, it’s almost impossible to alter an entire menu for hundreds of people for two to three meals a day plus breaks, but we do it. Change orders like this are rare, but it keeps us on our toes.”

AVOIDING STRESS

Planners carry almost non-stop stress due to myriad job tasks, their own high expectations and those of stakeholders. According to Jenson, “In my experience, changes are the causes of stress for meeting planners. The changes could be as major as date changes, location changes or, at the worst, on-site changes. After all, a planner plans and when those plans must change on the fly, stress follows.”

De-stressing is also a challenge. According to Castleberry, “Not being able to fully disconnect outside of your work week or while on vacation is a huge stress factor in this industry. Technology is present in every aspect of our daily routine and setting boundaries is a daily struggle for meeting planners.”

However, more planners are confronting the stress challenge. “Our industry is putting a big focus on well-

ness and how to overcome the daily challenges we face,” Castleberry says. “Planner conferences are including topics such as well-being and wellness in their agendas to address this growing need.”

SECURITY, SAFETY

According to a 2018 survey, “A View from Meeting Planners: Winning Strategies in Destination Marketing” by Development Counsellors International, safety and security topped the list of concerns for meeting planners.

Jenson agrees with the survey’s results. “If ranking overall challenges, I would have to say ensuring the safety of attendees while attending your meeting is high on the list,” Jenson says. “Considering today’s environment, one can ever predict when a crisis or critical situation will occur.”

Not having a crisis management plan can greatly exacerbate a sudden security issue. “It is imperative to have a plan in place,” Jenson says. “Planning for a crisis should start at the time a new meeting request has been made. Checking with your risk management or travel department for high-risk cities is a good start.

OTHER CHALLENGES

Technology is having a big impact on how meetings and events are planned and produced. However, many planners lack the funds to add or improve technology to reap the efficiency and benefits.

Meetings technology is advancing so fast that keeping up with it is essentially a job itself. As the num-

ber of tech-savvy attendees increase, planners feel more pressure to engage them with event apps and other technologies.

In addition, the nation’s fast-changing demographics is challenging the ability of planners to engage attendees who are increasingly multigenerational, female, minority and gender diverse. It’s a big challenge to simultaneously engage millennials, baby boomers and Gen Xers without some groups feeling disconnected. For example, according to the Global Meetings Survey, many millennials are dissatisfied with event ambience.

Most challenges often have one thing in common: They can be prevented or ameliorated by planners who know meeting stakeholders well and constantly communicate with them.

According to Jenson, “Most planners know their executive teams and are in tune with their past behaviors. So, if you know you’re a senior manager who is famous for changing up the order of speakers, prepare everyone to be ready.”

Also, Jenson suggests, run through the program with all stakeholders who have the power to make changes.

“Do this well in advance of the event start date,” Jenson says. “Make a point to get on their calendar and brief them about every detail, right down to the wine selection for dinner. After all, you don’t want to order chardonnay and find out the night of the event the president’s guest only drinks cabernet.”

Perhaps the biggest challenge of all is the unexpected, which happens despite the best planning. Challenges big and small will become even more numerous and complex as stakeholder expectations rise, attendees demand a greater variety of experiences and budgets tighten further. That means planners must sharpen their time-management abilities, crisis-management skills, creativity and ability to do even more with even less. **C&IT**



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CAREER MOVES

The Benefits of Planner Certification and Education are Many

BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS



You already have a job as a meeting/event planner. It's even possible to move up in your company over the coming months and years if you work hard. So why, then, do you need to pursue a CMP, CIS, DMCP or other certification? Why do you need to take time out of your already over-scheduled schedule to attend industry education sessions?

The answer is that the benefits are substantial, even career-changing. But don't just take our word for it. We went to the experts — industry stars who have taken the time to get certifications in their respective areas of expertise within the meetings and incentives industry. All of these credentialed meeting planners, incentive specialists and destination experts are believers in education and certification and can tell you exactly how education and certification benefitted them — and why they know they will benefit you, too.

STAY RELEVANT

Lori Pugh Marcum, CMP, CMM, manager of global education and event production for Meeting Professionals International (MPI), puts it this way: "Continuing education is critical to staying relevant in our industry. I knew that

the knowledge and skills I would gain through pursuing my CMP and CMM would help to advance my career. The designations act as a visual resume and I am taken more seriously when our event attendees and stakeholders see the designations on my email signature and on my name tag. I've used the education I received in my CMM program to make improved process changes in my department."

Planners should certainly make the investment in themselves to pursue both the CMP and CMM certifications today to advance their careers and to improve upon their meetings and events, Marcum says. But there's another reason as well: "To help mentor junior planners with the knowledge they have gained."

Marcum also points to interaction among peers as an important element of education classes, especially at conferences and industry events. "There are so many peer-to-peer learning activities at a conference such as WEC that you simply can't learn from a book or webinar," she says. "The knowledge-sharing, creative brainstorming and attendee connections that take place at conferences and industry events can be game-changers for your career advancement."

It goes without saying that all education sessions are not equal in terms of supplying exactly what planners need. The most successful sessions, Marcum notes, are those that are interactive and provide time for reflection as to how the content can best be used in a planner's professional as well as personal life.

And regardless of how good an education presentation may be, planners need to augment and use what they learn, and setting goals is a good way to do both. "Give yourself professional development goals that need to be met yearly," Marcum advises. "Some examples could be: watch one webinar quarterly, attend one conference this year or earn enough clock hours to qualify for the CMM/CMP this year."

Michelle Crosby, CMP, DMCP, general manager of Hosts Texas, a DMC focusing on events in San Antonio and Austin, emphasizes that learning is a lifelong proposition. "I personally believe that a person is never done learning. My pursuit to obtain and maintain both my CMP and DMCP certifications are my desire to keep myself on the cutting edge of education both for myself and for the clients we serve."

CAMARADERIE AMONG PEERS

She says certification has definitely advanced her along her career path. "Having and maintaining my certifications

provides both a sense of accomplishment for myself and proves to the clients I work with that I am committed to the industry that I love so much. It also provides a sense of camaraderie. When I'm working with a fellow CMP or DMCP in the industry, there is an unspoken sense of comfort. Each of us have been through the study sessions, read the books, taken the exams and worked hard to maintain these certifications. It's like a rite of passage."

To planners and others in the industry who are unsure of why to pursue certification, Crosby provides multiple reasons for doing so.

"First, this industry is constantly evolving. Education and certification help maintain a handle on this evolution and provide the tools to keep a person on the forefront and not left in the dust. Next, additional credibility is a plus among peers and with clients and vendor partners. Who doesn't like that?"



LORI PUGH MARCUM
CMP, CMM
Manager of Global Education and
Event Production, MPI

And finally, she says, "If nothing else, do it for personal accomplishment. It's so gratifying to say that you took the time to invest in yourself and that you will continue to do so by maintaining a designation in the field that brings you joy."

As for continuing education, Crosby emphasizes the importance of that as well. "One never knows when the next big idea or solution to a problem

you might be experiencing will pop up. Continuing education is a great way to bounce ideas off of colleagues, learn about new cutting-edge technology and get insight into upcoming trends."

Seeing education in action, she adds, is one of the most successful ways that adults learn. "I personally have found that it's all about immersing yourself in an education experience with friends and fellow industry colleagues that provides the best return on my education investment."

But we've all been at industry events where some education sessions become the buzz of the event and others are merely so-so. What makes the difference? "The elements that make a successful education session," Crosby says, "lie in the details of the room layout and delivery method. Knowing the audience demographics and attendees' learning style in advance plays a large part in getting a positive outcome from any education offering."

As an example, she notes, "Last year, our company held our annual client forum, which provided an internal company meeting and a client meeting experience during the event. Both were approached differently with a variety of seating styles, perimeter décor, snacks and mood lighting. The internal company meeting was brightly lit and



Jane Scaletta, DMCP, CIS, believes strongly in planner certification. Here she is with a CIS (Certified Incentive Specialist) class in January 2019 and faculty member Fernando Compean, CITE, CMM, CMP, CIS, CMS, CCM, CITP at the SITE Global Conference in Bangkok, Thailand.

featured lots of low-seating options in the front of the room and high-table seating in the back of the room. There were power outlets available in all areas of the space and lots of high-energy snacks available to keep attendees operating at peak efficiency. Presentations were fast paced and always started and ended on time.

The client experience, she continues, was more organic. “We had a variety of table sizes, soft-seating options for lounging, greenery around the perimeter of the room, warm lighting concepts, light music and more comforting snacks to ease everyone into each education session. All elements were uplifting, insightful and presented by various industry minds and educators to provide a well-rounded experience for everyone in the room. Each group walked away with positive comments about how easy it was to collaborate with others at their specific breakouts and how much they learned throughout the week.”

In terms of advice for those debating whether to continue their education to pursue certification, Crosby has this to say: “My biggest tip if you’re considering certification in the industry is to not hesitate. Do it now. Don’t wait for someone to ask you to do it or wait until it’s necessary to obtain it. Figure out what will help catapult you to the next step in your career and aim for that certification. Go for the gusto! You won’t regret it.”

STAND OUT FROM COMPETITION

For Jane Scaletta, DMCP, CIS, president at Dolfin Destinations Inc., certification is a way to stand out from the competition. “I wanted to have a competitive advantage over my competitors by differentiating myself and my company from other professionals. It was important for me to demonstrate my commitment to the industry that I work in. I also wanted to learn more and stay current with the latest industry information. This advance training allowed me to gain professional credibility with our clients and show them that I have the commitment and dedication to our industry.”

Like our other credentialed industry stars, Scaletta is unequivocal that certification has helped to advance her career. “Absolutely it has,” she says. “Not only do I have the tools to perform my duties with advanced education and training, but I am also more efficient due to the skills and knowledge I’ve gained. It has also opened the doors to many opportunities as I’m recognized as a peer to clients who seek to work with a similar network of people.”

As to the primary reasons planners should move forward toward obtaining certification, Scaletta is succinct. “It will increase your learning potential and update your knowledge and skills,” she says. “It will give you a

competitive advantage over your competition and it will help you build professional credibility.

While certification is certainly important, it’s not the only critical component of standing out. Like the others, Scaletta is a proponent of continuing education for those in the meetings industry, and she says there are added benefits to participating in education in person.

“We need to continue our education because there is always a faster, more efficient and highly successful way of doing business. You’re either going to stay on top of it with continuing education ... or get left behind. Our industry is forever changing and it’s vast,” she points out. “We can’t know everything about it.”

In addition, she says, “We also need motivation on a regular basis to keep us fresh and alive as our industry has high demands on our professional and personal lives.”

There are of course many ways to deliver education and one design she favors is interactivity. “Continuing education is fast becoming more interactive as it’s proven that this type of learning experience helps increase the retention of material learned. So having continuing education at industry events and in interesting venues can actually draw more attendance than a three-hour computer test.”

In addition to interactive sessions, Scaletta thinks the most successful

education session is the one where you actually implement what you’ve learned. To that end she provides an example from her own education experience.

“I attended a Positive Impact training session on how to create a Roadmap for Sustainability through SITE Global as I am on the SITE Global Sustainability Committee,” she says. “Through this learning, I’ve taught other SITE chapters how to implement their own Roadmap. I’m the president-elect for SITE Florida & Caribbean’s chapter. Last year we implemented the Roadmap to Sustainability for our chapter and we now work off it continuously. I have helped other chapters such as Texas, Canada, Mexico and Chicago with their Roadmap as well and they’ve all shown their passion for sustainability in the events industry.”

“Not only do I have the tools to perform my duties with advanced education and training, but I am also more efficient due to the skills and knowledge I’ve gained.”



JANE SCALETTA
DMCP, CIS
President, Dolfin Destinations Inc.

PICK THE RIGHT ONE

If you’re on the fence about whether or not to go for certification, Scaletta has three things for you to consider — and ways in which you can achieve the success you want. It all starts with choosing the right certification for you.

No. 1, she says, “Pick a certification program that enhances your day-to-day job. For instance, if you work with incentive programs, get your CIS and then your CITP. If you do meetings, then get your CMP followed by your CMM and CSEP.”

No. 2 on Scaletta’s list: “Join an association that helps you network and allows you to learn from people in your industry. There are many possible organizations to join and you need to join the one that best matches your industry and that you feel comfortable with. I’m a member of SITE, MPI and FICP because they all speak to my industry and my clientele.”

No. 3, Scaletta says, “Go big! Attend the large conferences of your association or industry. Each association takes great pride in pulling together fabulous speakers, learning experiences, destination activities and networking opportunities. I try to attend at least three to four conferences each year that are all different from each other. The result is that I come away with amazing connections, learning experiences and friendships.”

C&IT

Weighing In

Top Industry Organizations Weigh in on Certification

Here’s what the Events Industry Council says about the CMP program:

It was launched in 1985 to enhance the knowledge and performance of meeting professionals, promote the status and credibility of the meeting profession and advance uniform standards of practice.

The CMP credential is recognized globally as the badge of excellence in the events industry. The qualifications for certification are based on professional experience, education and a rigorous exam.

CMP certification is mark of excellence in comprehensive events management. Certification opens the door to better and more opportunities. Client expectations for meetings are higher than ever and recruiters and prospective employers recognize CMP certification in the growing industry.

The CMP program aims to increase the professionalism of meeting management professionals in all sectors of the industry by:

- Identifying a comprehensive body of knowledge in the meeting management profession.
- Promoting industry standards, practices and ethics.
- Stimulating the advancement of the art and science of meeting management.
- Increasing the value of CMPs to their employers.
- Maximizing the value received from the products and services provided by CMPs.

PCMA’s research puts a monetary value on a CMP:

Meeting planners who hold the CMP earn on average more than \$10,000 annually than their non-certified counterparts.

SITE Global encourages those in the incentive sector to get their CIS. Here’s why:

All emerging professionals, faculty members and students aspiring to enter this specialized segment of the meetings and events industry may use CIS as a steppingstone to reach higher levels of professionalism.

Individuals will — in a two day seminar/workshop — learn the fundamentals of incentives, the origins of incentive programs and incentive travel, the value chain, the value proposition of motivational programs and non-cash awards, the composition of the market, the makings of a program and a program budget, industry tools and platforms and other valuable information.

Should you already be a professional with previous experience, CIS will provide you with elements to reach higher standards of education and industry best practice. The CIS is for SITE members and non-members alike.

C&IT

Meet 7 Women Speakers Who Are at the Top of Their Game

Walk into any corporate meeting or incentive event and you're bound to see a diverse group of individuals. From suit-donning executives carrying leather-bound portfolios, to sandal-wearing 30-somethings with iPads in hand, to middle-age leaders lugging their laptops from meeting to meeting. You are also likely to see and hear something else — professional speakers who are addressing these diverse audience groups and delivering powerful messages that both motivate and excite. In fact, finding the ideal speaker is part art, part science and requires due diligence on the part of meeting planners. The professional women speakers we are highlighting below are exceptional individuals; subject-matter experts who use a variety of delivery formats to connect with audiences of all ages, backgrounds and experiences.

As a serial entrepreneur and vocal advocate for women, Cindy Eckert's professional path has defied convention and delivered big returns. Her business results have been a globally covered business success story with Fortune magazine dubbing Eckert as a "tireless force of nature," Entrepreneur magazine putting her on their cover of Women to Watch, Triangle Business Journal awarding her CEO of the Year and the National Association of Women Business Owners electing Eckert to the Women in Business Hall of Fame.

Eckert also is a highly regarded business owner, a strong advocate for female entrepreneurship, a pharmaceutical leader and one of the few women to have ever sold a company for a billion dollars.

"My work today continues to break barriers as I invest in and mentor other women to get to my same outcomes," Eckert says.

Today, Eckert is focused on mentoring, launching and building other women-led

or focused businesses. In recent years, she founded The Pink Ceiling, a consulting enterprise where Eckert is CEO. At The Pink Ceiling, she has invested \$15 million across 10 different health tech companies at various stages of development.

In her role as a professional speaker, Eckert has had the privilege to stand on the stages of global corporations to chambers of commerce to SXSW to Fortune's Most Powerful Women.

"I'm passionate about discussing the choices you must make to be successful, how to find opportunity in the overlooked people or projects and building a culture of ownership," Eckert says.

When speaking, Eckert loves the moment the first hand in the audience goes up with a question and she knows she's connected.

"There are too few women that have this opportunity," Eckert says. "And while it is an honor to have others listen to my



story, it is magical when others see themselves in it."

Having spent her whole career in rooms where she wasn't expected, Eckert has perfected her sense of humor.

"Humor has a way of setting the stage for hard-hitting truths," Eckert says. "Between putting the room at ease, insisting on time for questions and prepping in advance with organizers so that I can tailor my messages with challenges and catchphrases important to those listening, I take pride in audience engagement."

JULIA LANDAUER

When professional speaker Julia Landauer was a senior at Stanford University, she was asked to give a talk at their TEDx Stanford event. The title of her talk was “Can Nice Girls Win Races?” and was focused around negative stereotypes that women face and how they can push past them.

“I found my voice in that talk and loved that my personal experiences and stories could make people laugh, could start discussions and could be inspiring,” Landauer says. “From there I started pitching myself and over the last four years have spoken to all types of audiences, such as AIG, Accenture and BlueCrossNC, universities, various associations and trade shows.”

Landauer typically discusses motivational topics, such as self-awareness and taking ownership, building relationships and leadership and perseverance and

dealing with fear. She also discusses gender dynamics and women's empowerment.

“I feel lucky that my talks are relatable and entertaining to a wide variety of audiences — from millennials to corporate executives to students to women's groups, etc.,” Landauer says. “With that being the case, I speak with corporate clients, universities and colleges and various other organizations.” Landauer loves that she can be vulnerable; be herself on stage and tell stories that are entertaining and informative.

“I'm very honest with my audiences and my style on stage is very similar to my one-on-one discussions with people,” Landauer says. “It's really rewarding to engage with an audience, especially with Q&A's after my talks and hear their perspectives and questions.”

In fact, Landauer speaks to audiences the way she would speak to her friends.



Her goal in doing so is to have a conversation with the group, rather than speaking at them.

“I strive to make them laugh, to sometimes give the kick-in-the-butt we all need from time to time and leave them with something to think about,” Landauer says. “I share videos; ask questions to my audiences. I give them a glimpse into my life and I love hearing their questions afterwards.”

DR. TRACI LYNN

Whether she's in her role as an in-demand motivational speaker and author or as the owner and driving force behind the hugely successful direct-sales company, Traci Lynn Fashion Jewelry, entrepreneur, Dr. Traci Lynn has the same mission. “I call it ‘passing the MIC,’” Lynn says. “MIC: Motivate, Inspire, Change. My goal is to motivate people to step out of their comfort zone, inspire them to greatness and to change their lives. It's about letting people know that they can do anything they set their mind to if they see the bigger picture. We have the power to change our own financial future and our destiny.”

Lynn has an unwavering commitment to offer women a chance to own their own businesses and achieve financial independence. This has also enabled her to grow her Fort Lauderdale-based business,

launched with \$200, into a multimillion-dollar enterprise with nearly 35,000 sales consultants in 47 states, Canada and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Lynn has received several honors, including the Madam CJ Walker Award, 2017 Woman of Distinction Award, 2018 Mother of the Year Award and the 2018 Jim Moran African American Achiever Award. In 2017, Lynn was recognized by Direct Selling News as one of the most influential women in the industry. She continues to mentor and encourage young professionals to follow their dreams. “The topics I cover when speaking vary based on the audience, but I'm all about inspiring people to be the best at whatever it is that they were put on this earth to do,” Lynn says. “I speak internationally, at corporate events, award ceremonies, seminars, summits, trainings conventions, you name it. You hand me a



microphone and I'm ready.”

Giving back also is something Lynn feels strongly about and for the last six years her nonprofit organization, Traci Lynn Cares, has raised more than \$300,000 for the American Cancer Society. “I enjoy inspiring others to greatness and reminding the audience of the power they possess inside,” Lynn says. “I speak with an authentic heart and make sure I know exactly who my audience is so I can meet their needs.”

ALISON LEVINE

Alison Levine is represented by one of the world's largest speakers bureaus — Keppler Speakers — and has been their top speaker in terms of bookings and demand for eight years. Levine delivers more than 100 keynotes a year and considers it a privilege to do what she does.

“I am incredibly humbled by the number of audiences who invite me to speak year after year,” Levine says.

Last year Levine was named by Huffington Post as one of their “Top 7 Business Speakers to Hire and See.” She also had the honor of being invited to speak at the World Economic Forum at Davos and the Milken Institute Global Conference.

“It's always a little surreal to be speaking at the same events with world leaders,” Levine says. Most recently, Levine received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, presented annually to Americans whose accomplishments in their field and service to the United States are cause for celebration. Past medalists include seven U.S. presidents, two Nobel Prize winners and leaders of industry, education, the

arts, sports and government.

Levine has two very different keynote speeches. One is based on her experience as the team captain of the American Women's Everest Expedition and focuses on leading teams in extreme environments. Her other speech, new this year, is based on her journey of skiing 600 miles across Antarctica to the South Pole and focuses on the importance of reframing the way we view people's strengths and weaknesses and helping people become the best possible version of themselves.

“I have spoken at global events such as the World Economic Forum at Davos and for thousands of Fortune 500 companies here in the U.S. and overseas and for professional sports teams,” Levin says. “I have spoken for an audience of 20,000 and an audience of 8.”

What Levine enjoys most is the chance to influence people positively in their careers and personal lives. “I want them to lean into the challenges that lie ahead, even when they know they might fail. And most of all I want them to know what they do and who they are matters — a lot.”



Levine is very cognizant of the fact that time is our most valuable resource, and if people are giving her an hour, she feels like she better make sure that she delivers something that will make them say, “There's nowhere else I would have rather been than in that room listening to that keynote today.”

“In order to have maximum impact, I want people to go through a range of emotions as I am speaking to them,” Levine says. “There's a lot of material in my keynotes that is very, very intense. And there are parts that are very, very funny. I figure if I can make an audience think a lot and also make them laugh a lot — then I've hit the mark.”

SIRI LINDLEY

When Siri Lindley, a two-time world champion, retired as No. 1 in the world in triathlon, she began coaching a very select group of athletes — athletes who won multiple world championship crowns and Olympic medals. As a longtime athlete, the only speaking Lindley did was in front of her athletes by sharing stories, lessons and training.

But in 2016, her professional experience changed significantly when we was asked to do the Tony Robbins podcast.

“I thought they must be contacting me to get in touch with one of my champion athletes. When I asked which athlete they were looking for, they said, ‘We want you on the podcast,’” Lindley says. “I was so excited because Tony Robbins literally changed my life at age 20, through his book, Unlimited Power. I couldn't believe I was going to be on his podcast.”

That same year Lindley was provided the opportunity to offer a keynote speech at Robbins' Leadership Academy in San Diego.

“I got up and gave a 90-minute keynote, which ended up being a huge

success,” Lindley says. “I was so nervous beforehand, but once I stepped out on that stage in front of 2,000 people, it's like I was being guided. I spoke from my heart. All I knew is that I wanted to serve these beautiful humans in front of me. I wanted to give them something of value, something that would touch their lives in some way. I wanted to be a blessing. In wanting to give, wanting to serve, wanting to share my story in a way that would resonate with them, I was able to deliver exactly what they hoped for. I had never felt more aligned with my calling than in that moment.”

Today, Lindley speaks about how what we focus on, the meaning we give things and what we do about it, can change our entire lives.

“I talk about being fearlessly authentic and how this is what leads to us tapping into our fullest potential and truly allowing us to have a positive impact on the world around us,” Lindley says. “I also talk about gratitude and the gift in the struggle. And I talk about failure and how we must be willing to fail — as it is in



our failures and disappointments that we learn and we grow the most.”

Lindley says that when she speaks, she is able to offer up alternative ways of managing the struggles in our lives. “I show people that in changing our ‘stories’ we can change our lives for the better,” Lindley says. “Knowing that I can truly impact someone's life in a beautiful and powerful way is the most humbling, beautiful gift. If I can help others free themselves from what causes them pain or holds them back from achieving their goals, this is the ultimate for me. This is what I dream of — being able to touch lives, make a difference and empower others to see the beauty in themselves.”

THERESA PAYTON

As the first female to serve as White House chief information officer and named Enterprising Woman of the Year from Women in Business for two years in a row, Theresa Payton is one of America's most respected authorities on Internet security, data breaches and fraud mitigation. With real-world strategies and solutions, she identifies emerging trends and techniques to help combat cyber threats.

"I am very blessed to be able to evangelize to the business person, the consumer, the fellow geek and others about the threats that are facing us," Payton says.

Today Payton pulls from her experiences on the front lines within her company, Fortalice Solutions, of defending against "bad guys," from her previous work in the financial services industry, her time at the White House working for President George W. Bush and her two books.

Prior to her time serving at the White House, Payton spent more than 16 years as an executive in banking technology fighting cybercrime and fraudsters at some of the largest financial institutions in the world.

"The CIO job at the White House, and really anywhere, can be a little overwhelming

because it is a massive undertaking in today's day and age," Payton says. "I had the honor of making the operations work, while protecting the technology and the mission, for a very vast and diverse set of objectives at the White House."

Payton has talked at events from the VIP breakfast for 10 people to the thousands in an enormous room in Las Vegas.

A side benefit at events is that Payton often gets asked to speak to women in a closed-door session.

"Those side events have always been very meaningful for me," Payton says. "I am honored to spend time with other women to offer support and advice — to encourage them to push for their personal goals."

There are several things Payton thoroughly enjoys by being a speaker, but what she enjoys most involves being with people and winning the war against cybercrime.

"Speaking affords me the opportunity to meet amazing, talented and smart people. I learn so much from the question- and answer sessions and from the event sponsors and organizers," Payton says. "I have traveled to locations and I have met people that I doubt I would have had the chance to



do on my own. Many of the people I meet become friends and even clients."

Prior to a meeting or event, Payton requests a pre-conference call to hear from the event planners. This allows her to study the purpose of the event and determine what's one thing she wants them to take from this event and do differently when they get back home or to their office?

"If I can't start a movement with each speech, I am not doing my job," Payton says. "I'm not just on stage to frighten or entertain, I'm there to make everyone safer. I hate it when the 'bad guys' such as cybercriminals, human traffickers, child pornographers and fraudsters win. I want the 'good guys' to win. I focus on providing pragmatic advice so the audience can win."

SARAH THOMAS

When Sarah Thomas, the NFL's first female official, addresses an audience, she rarely stands behind a podium. Rather she lets audiences know that her speech will be interactive.

"Right off the start, I survey the audience and ask them a question about loving football," Thomas says. "And when almost everyone raises their hands, then I tell them to leave them up that we are going to take an oath. It's a simple, funny oath about promising they will not boo the officials. Everyone laughs about it. This just disarms the 'stiffness' in the room."

With a degree in communications with an emphasis on PR, Thomas, who has been speaking for almost 13 years, never thought she would be able to use

her background as a platform about her journey.

"The topics I typically cover are about things that motivate — real stories about everyday life that have molded me and things I've learned along the way," Thomas says. She typically speaks at national sales meetings, white- and blue-collar groups, Girl Scouts, churches, commencements, women's groups, men's groups and to students.

"There's not an audience that my story cannot impact," Thomas says. "I like being able to inspire and motivate others by being real, authentic and sharing who I am; things I've learned from not only successes, but failures too. But most of all having fun, laughing and allowing the audience to feel what I'm sharing. I've had



mothers come up to me with tears saying how much they needed to hear this, students saying how inspired they are by knowing they can do anything they put their mind to, men saying they wish their daughters or wives were there. The joy I have in sharing with others about never giving up, believe in yourself, no matter what, is so rewarding for me." **C&IT**



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Atlantic City remains the destination of choice for many planners because of its host of activities, sparkling sea views and more.

ATLANTIC CITY

Getting Better All the Time

BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS

Atlantic City just keeps getting better. It's long been a preferred destination for East Coast corporate events and meetings and with new additions and/or upgrades to a slew of hotels, the convention center and the city itself, Atlantic City continues to meet and exceed the needs of planners and groups. When it comes to entertainment and dining options in particular, Atlantic City shines.

Perhaps most notably, the city's famed Boardwalk — more than 5 miles of continuous walkway and bikeway with new sections recently completed — stands out, along with the 227-foot-high The Wheel at Steel Pier. But there's so much more.

"Atlantic City is the jewel of the East Coast in so many different ways," says Larry Huttinger, CMP, director/owner of Destination Philly A.C., the only DMC with offices in Atlantic City itself. "One is that being a small community, the level of options for entertainment within the 48 blocks that make up the city can't be replicated anywhere else. Between gaming of all levels, dining, shopping and great outdoor experiences during core spring, summer and fall seasons, you can enjoy the beach, boardwalk sights, fishing, boating and local golfing to name a few activities."

HISTORIC ATLANTIC CITY

In fact, Huttinger notes, the city has excelled at drawing visitors for well over a century. "The city is rich in history going back to the early days when Atlantic City became the go-to place for high society of Philadelphia in the late 1800s and on to the Roaring '20s and Prohibition when gaming and drinking were tucked away behind hidden doors of parlors and dining establishments. Some of the grand hotels built in the 19th century and doomed due to the wooden construction and resulting fires were eventually rebuilt with more substantial materials and still exist."

Huttinger says attendees have a wealth of ways to take advantage of what the city offers. "Visitors can enjoy the his-

tory of Atlantic City on tours of different sites. Boardwalk Hall houses the largest instrument in the world, a massive pipe organ. There are the grand hotels, such as Resorts, and Bally's is located in the old Dennis Hotel. Additionally," he says, "We cover the seafood industry — clams — and Atlantic City is home to the largest fishing fleet in the Northeast, supporting commercial accounts including Campbell Soup. Another site is the Absecon Lighthouse, the tallest lighthouse in New Jersey and dating back to the 1800s."

Water views? Absolutely. "The city's current hotels/casinos all offer incredible views of the ocean or back-bay area,"



JPG Photography

Atlantic City offers great outdoor experiences, including beachfront events with games such as cornhole.

Huttinger says. "And though it's hard to pin down specific hotels, in general corporate groups will find the level they want in Atlantic City, with a range of possibilities for budget-conscious groups as well as groups that have significant money to spend. And many experiences are in walking distance both on the boardwalk and in the marina area."



TOPS IN COST EFFICIENCY

The city overall provides excellent options for the money. “Planners should know that the Atlantic City opportunity is one that really goes far with the money spent. The room rates can easily hover below \$200 for properties year-round and certainly during shoulder season. Winter rates get into the low \$100-plus range. The value you receive with this is just the beginning,” Huttinger notes. “Also we’ve found with our work experience that F&B costs are lower by 20% to 30% compared to other New Jersey-based hotels outside Atlantic City. You get real value with both the room rate and F&B. In addition, thanks to the smaller size of Atlantic City, getting around is quick and you have transportation options with train and air-service to get to this city, along with live entertainment, casino shows, dining and shopping.”

Huttinger also points to many options for that “wow” experience planners look for. “A ‘wow’ opening could be an evening event at one of the beach bars in season with a theme such as a clam bake or other enhancements. Several hotels offer wonderful beach bars including Hard Rock, Resorts and Bally’s. Several others are located in front of Tropicana where attendees can enjoy the beach experience with excellent food and drink. Landshark at Resorts has a great deck overlooking the ocean with a private beach area

featuring beach games, a bar and fire pit. Another option,” Huttinger says, “is to have an event on Steel Pier in one of two tent venues. Catered food with bar is available privately in both locations along with passes to go on all the rides on the pier.”

Team building is also easy here. “Attendees can explore the city via an Amazing Race experience that includes challenges set up across town,” Huttinger says. “They can include go-cart races, arcade-game competitions, salt water taffy tastings, pizza eating, identifying beers at an historic pub, climbing the steps of the lighthouse, listening to show tunes played by the pipe organ at Boardwalk Hall and so much more.”

Huttinger has high praise for the Atlantic City Convention Center. “It’s a place that provides incredibly large space for all types of events. The meeting space is on two separate floors and includes a 500,000-sf exhibit floor on the second level. Most of the staff have been at the center from the beginning when the building opened 22 years ago. They’re always ready to support any type of event and very helpful with a great attitude for any request.”

NEW AND IMPROVED

For those planners who think they know Atlantic City, Huttinger says the city has evolved in amazing ways in recent years. “The location has rebooted to show its expanded offer-

Atlantic City Convention Center, which is now LEED Gold Certified, is undergoing a \$9.1 million refresh to be completed later this year.

ings with new casinos — two last year, Hard Rock and Ocean — and new restaurants, shopping areas and entertainment. Also, urban experiences in the Orange Loop branded with the North Shore location off the boardwalk have opened a trending vibe for the entire area.”

In the final analysis, Huttinger goes back to budget, among a planner’s most pressing concerns when choosing a destination. “Atlantic City is on par being one of the most value-oriented places in the United States at this time. It has plenty to offer without breaking the budget or sacrificing the experience. And when you’re here during the warm-weather season, you get even more by getting outside to enjoy the ocean and beach at the seashore.”

Radwell International Inc. held an employee event for 500 last year, using both the Sheraton Atlantic City Convention Center Hotel and the Atlantic City Convention Center. Shannon Lehmann, assistant marketing manager, says, “Atlantic City is a great destination for our event because the employees like to make a weekend out of it due to all the other attractions Atlantic City has to offer, whether it be the casinos or the outlets.”

Like Huttinger, she says one draw is that the city has so many options from which to choose. “Our event was held at the Atlantic City Convention Center, which has a great staff to work with. Once our decision was made and we discussed what our vision was, the staff worked with us and made that vision a reality. Everything worked out the way we wanted it to.”

She continues, “We chose the Sheraton because of its convenient location. The Sheraton is connected to the convention center, making it extremely easy for our employees to attend our event.”

Although they didn’t use any space at the Sheraton for this particular event, Lehmann says they have in the past. “The Sheraton is great to work

with for any conference or meetings. The staff is great and will do whatever they can to make sure your event is a successful one.”

Lehmann says there were no major challenges in planning last year’s event, “and any little hiccups along the way were taken care of immediately,” she says. “Since AC has so much to offer, I truly feel you can’t go wrong. Each time we have been in AC, whether at the convention center or the Sheraton, the staff has always been wonderful to work with. They want your event to be successful just as much as you do.”

YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITIES

When it comes to describing Atlantic City as a superb meeting destination, Kelly Clark, DMCP, account manager with Roberts Event Group, a Hosts Global Member, points to many of the same attributes listed by Huttinger and Lehman.

“Atlantic City is a strong destination for meetings and conventions all year round. It has proximity to the Philadelphia Airport, the Newark Airport and has its own Atlantic City airport with international flights,” she says. “During the offseason, hotel rates are incredibly reasonable and with the concerts, nightlife and casinos there is still so much to do. The spacious hotel properties are ideal for hosting meetings and conventions.”

A compelling history and the beach also rate high in Clark’s assessment. “Atlantic City has a rich history. We love to take our groups on combined scavenger hunts and tours. The group can have fun in a competitive atmosphere while learning about the city they’re in. Having the beach at your fingertips allows for tons of creative team-building options,” Clark adds. “We’ve hosted beach clean-ups so groups have opportunities to give back. We have also hosted beach Olympics and beach yoga.”

Atlantic City’s famous Boardwalk — at 5 miles long — offers attendees the beach on one side and plenty of shopping on the other.

“Atlantic City is on par being one of the most value-oriented places in the United States at this time. It has plenty to offer without breaking the budget or sacrificing the experience.”

LARRY HUTTINGER, CMP
Director/Owner of Destination Philly A.C.



It’s hard to pick just one hotel as ideal for groups. It depends on what the group is looking for. “Harrah’s Waterfront Conference Center is the newest, largest, most technologically advanced meeting facility,” Clark says. “The conference center brings another 100,000 sf of meeting space to Atlantic City. Another ideal retreat and place to meet is Resorts Casino Hotel, which recently added 64,000+ sf to its conference center. Resorts offers a total of 24 meeting rooms, including four ballrooms.”

She continues, “Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa has added a bi-level, 18,000-sf conference center to its luxurious property, which is situated in the city’s Marina District. With the newest Ocean Casino Resort and Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, Atlantic City

continues to renovate and improve on its meeting space options.”

Clark also notes that the convention center “has lots of areas to host events and meetings. I’ve had great experiences working with the staff, catering and trades.”

But it’s the city itself that commands high praise. “Atlantic City is a full destination,” Clark says. “From golf outings to happy-hour cruises to beach activities and tours, your guests will be able to get out of the hotel and enjoy the city — though with all the freshly renovated spaces they may not even want to.”

Who should planners depend on? Experts point to the CVB and hotel meeting staff. “Your CSMs will be able to recommend the best of the best for your guests,” Clark concludes. “They





are knowledgeable of the area and the local vendors.”

OLD AND NEW MERGE

Accolades notwithstanding, Atlantic City continues to evolve, a boon to groups that have previously visited and those who have yet to experience all this city offers. In Atlantic City, what’s old is new again.

The former Taj Mahal Casino reopened last year as the new Hard

Rock Hotel & Casino

Atlantic City, complete with a new brilliantly conceived restaurant and entertainment experience among other attributes. And the long beleaguered Revel is now the inviting Ocean Casino Resort with 1,399 guest rooms, 160,000 sf of indoor/outdoor

space, the blissful Exhale Fitness Spa and a Topgolf Swing Suite — the largest in the country — perfect for a VIP experience. Recently, it celebrated its one-year anniversary with events, shows and more. In its first year the property generated \$320 million in gaming revenue. This year it opened the Balcony Bar, a new upscale F&B outlet overlooking the Atlantic City Boardwalk.

Just off the boardwalk is the Orange Loop, a reference to Monop-

oly’s orange streets: Tennessee Avenue, St. James Place and New York Avenue. The Orange Loop includes a beer hall and a new distillery — the city’s only one.

Atlantic City’s convention center, which is now LEED Gold Certified, is getting a \$9.1 million refresh to be completed later this year, and Boardwalk Hall is undergoing a \$10 million renovation. Coming later this year: a combo microbrewery and axe-throw-

“We love to take our groups on combined scavenger hunts and tours. The group can have fun in a competitive atmosphere while learning about the city they’re in.”

KELLY CLARK, DMCP

*Account Manager, Roberts Event Group,
a Hosts Global Member*



ing venue — ideal for team-building competitions that require a little edge.

As for existing hotels, Harrah’s Resort Atlantic City is wrapping up its \$56 million Coastal Tower renovation. The tower features 507 tech-rich guest rooms and suites that will appeal to planners and business attendees alike. The tower renovation is the latest facet of the \$250 million Caesars Entertainment has invested in its Atlantic City properties in the past four years, including the \$125

Caesars Entertainment has invested \$250 million in its Atlantic City properties in the past four years, including the Pool After Dark nightclub at Harrah’s Resort Atlantic City.

million Waterfront Conference Center, the revamped Pool After Dark nightclub and the opening of a Gordon Ramsay Steak restaurant.

Included within Tropicana Atlantic City’s \$200 million investment in upgrades and renovations is the sky-bridge, which connects the Tropicana to Chelsea Tower — the destination for those attendees and other guests who want non-gaming amenities. Chelsea Tower offers renovated guest rooms, pools and restaurants. Of particular appeal may be the Cabana Five Bar & Pool Deck, a rooftop pool with full-service bar, poolside dining, cabana rentals and live entertainment for ages 21 and older. Last year the resort wrapped up a complete renovation of the South Tower.

Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa opened its Central Conference Center, an \$11

million project featuring two stories of customizable event space with meeting rooms and boardrooms along with a 6,500-sf, clear-span ballroom. That brought the resort’s meeting and convention space to more than 106,000 sf. Later this year, the resort is open-

ing the Moneyline Bar & Book — the venue opened originally in Las Vegas at the Park MGM — as well as the Level One Cocktail Bar & Lounge, adding another \$12 million in development to the resort. The all-new Level One Cocktail Bar & Lounge is an intimate gaming and entertainment venue with experiential cocktail programming.

Atlantic City is bound to have what planners and groups need — whatever their meeting, F&B, guest room and entertainment requirements are. **C&IT**

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NOSTRAND

L'Auberge de Sedona, a destination hotel, appointed **Christi Windle** director of sales. Windle brings nearly 30 years of strategic sales and hospitality experience to her role. Previously, she was director of sales and marketing at Hilton Santa Fe Buffalo Thunder.

The Benson Hotel, located near Portland's iconic Pearl District and operated and managed by Coast Hospitality, welcomed additions to its sales management team with the appointment of **Stephanie Wood** as group sales manager and **Tracy Ann St. Martin** as conference services manager.

JW Marriott Chicago appointed **Kelli Tretina** destination sales executive. Tretina joins the JW Marriott Chicago team after working with The Ritz-Carlton, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, as senior catering executive.

Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel added a new member to their executive leadership group, promoting **Steve Woods**, formerly the director of group sales, to director of sales and marketing. Woods will lead as the hotel's representative with the Lake Tahoe Visitor's Authority and serve on the LTVA Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Expositions Advisory Board.

The Cincinnati USA Convention & Visitors Bureau named **Tricia Suit** visitor experience manager. In this role, Suit will oversee operations at the Cincinnati USA Visitor Center, manage the Cincy USA Tourism Ambassador Program and create and implement new strategies to welcome the 26 million people who visit the region each year.

Hilton Miami Downtown appointed **Kiri Aitken** sales manager. Aitken will be responsible for the Southeast group markets. Previously, Aitken was group sales manager for The Ritz-Carlton Bal Harbour, Miami.

KSL Resorts welcomed **Susan Barnes** as global sales director, specializing in the incentive market. As the brand ambassador for KSL Resorts, Barnes will focus on selling the world-class destination properties to the incentive market and developing incentive market partnerships in corporate reward and recognition programs.

Omni Bedford Springs Resort & Spa named **Dave Nostrand** the new director of sales and marketing. Nostrand will oversee the direction of the sales team, drive revenue streams for the resort, contribute to the group and convention sales strategy and provide executive leadership.

Sheraton Grand Chicago welcomed **Marcus Cornelious** as the hotel's director of sales and marketing. In his new role, Cornelious will be responsible for the strategy and implementation of all sales and marketing activations, while overseeing a team of more than two dozen directors, managers and associates.

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