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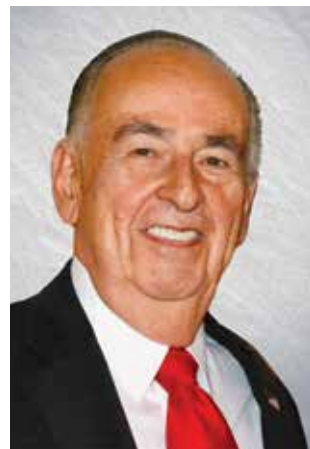
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A World Of Choices

IMEX America recently closed on another high as a catalyst for change and meetings industry advancement. If you didn't attend this year's event in Las Vegas, you missed a great opportunity to attend educational sessions and meet with properties and destinations from around the world. The show achieved a new high with a 3% increase to 76,000 appointments recorded.

Highlights of IMEX this year included dozens of high-level partner events such as EIC's Hall of Leaders and Pacesetter Awards, MPI Foundation Rendezvous and SITE Nite. IMEX's efforts to provide a wider range of healthier food and drink choices, including Impossible Burgers and Beyond Meat hotdogs proved a big hit, together with its Water Wise menu options. According to IMEX chairman Ray Bloom, "We're opening people's eyes to what's possible with health, well-being, sustainability and better nutrition on the road and during large events. We really appreciate all those partners who have stepped up to help us make these massive strides forward. It's also noteworthy that, thanks to Sands Expo, this year's show was 100% powered by renewable energy."



IMEX America takes place again next year in Las Vegas September 15-17, 2020.

If you include golf in your programs or if you would like to learn how to successfully include golf in your meeting and incentive programs, you don't want to miss an opportunity to participate in Corporate & Incentive Travel's hosted, inaugural invitational golf tournament at the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate March 26-29, 2020. Hosted planners will enjoy the three-day event with golf, instruction, networking opportunities and fun. This event is ideal for novices and seasoned golfers. See our ad on Page 33 for further details or contact me to be considered for this exciting event. Since participation will be limited, I suggest you get complete details as soon as possible to reserve inclusion in a foursome.

Looking for destinations that have everything to help make your meeting or incentive program a success? Look no further than the informative destination reports in this issue focusing on Orlando and Texas.

Harvey Grotsky

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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NEW CONSTRUCTION

Majestic Las Vegas Resort Scheduled to Break Ground

LAS VEGAS — Majestic Las Vegas, the brainchild of Las Vegas native and uber-developer Lorenzo Doumani, is set to break ground following the project's unanimous approval by Clark County commissioners. The revolutionary \$850 million, 620-foot-tall contemporary architectural masterpiece is scheduled to commence construction next year and is slated for completion in early 2023. The five-star, non-gaming, 720-room, luxury-branded resort will sit on the more than 6-acre site formerly occupied by the Clarion Hotel. This unparalleled location is directly across from the site of the new Las Vegas Convention Center opening in 2021.



Rendering of the Majestic Las Vegas.

RENOVATION

Los Angeles Marriott to Complete \$50 Million Transformation With Meeting Spaces

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Airport Marriott (LAX Marriott) recently broke ground on its meeting space renovation, which brings the

hotel to the final phase of its expansive \$50 million transformation. Set to open later this year, the property's redesign of its 47,817 sf of meeting space further solidifies it as a premier West Coast airport property. Offering an ideal setting for planners to coordinate convenient and impactful meetings near an international travel hub, the LAX Marriott boasts more than 29 meeting rooms,

including the 12,320-sf Marquis Ballroom, which can accommodate a variety of groups and events for up to 1,700 people. In addition to its proximity to Los Angeles International Airport, the LAX Marriott is centrally located near Downtown Los Angeles, Manhattan Beach and the various restaurants, shops and museums that capture the essence of the iconic Hollywood city.

RECOGNITION

New York City Snags Top Spot for Meetings and Events

NEW YORK — CWT's 2020 Meetings & Events Future Trends report was published September 10, based on proprietary and industry data, including volume of business and booking trends. New York City takes first position on CWT's top 10 cities for meetings and events in North America in 2020; London leads in rankings for Europe, the Middle East

and Africa (EMEA); Shanghai is No. 1 in the Asia Pacific (APAC) market; and Sao Paulo is foremost among Latin American destinations. While London, Shanghai and Sao Paulo occupied the same top spots on CWT's 2019 lists, New York rose from second place last year to first in the latest rankings for North America, beating out Las Vegas, which fell from first to 10th place. That change, Beau Ballin, CWT's vice president, commercial leader, North America, noted, is tied to myriad factors, including the cyclical nature of event bookings.

CAREER

Tourism Toronto Appoints Scott Beck as President and CEO

TORONTO — Following an extensive international search, Tourism Toronto appointed Scott Beck as president and CEO. For the past 14 years, Beck has served as the president and

CEO of Visit Salt Lake in Salt Lake City, Utah, and will begin his new role on Oct. 15. A proven leader in the destination sales and marketing industry, Beck served on the



Beck

Executive Committee of Destinations International for six years and served as the organization's international board chair from 2014-2015. Before joining Visit Salt Lake, Beck worked in the hotel industry for 18 years, most recently with Ocean Properties Ltd. (OPL) as the general manager of the Salt Lake Marriott City Center.

TOURISM

San Francisco Travel Projects 10th Year of Record Visitor Volume and Spending

SAN FRANCISCO — For the 10th year in a row, the San Francisco Travel Association is forecasting record visitor volume and spending for 2019. San Francisco's destination marketing organization is projecting 26.2 million visitors to the city for 2019, up 1.5%. On the convention side, San Francisco Travel has set a new record for the Moscone Center. The year 2019 will be the first to have 1.2 million definite room nights booked. Visitor volume for the region is projected to reach 57.7 million for 2019, with a total of \$19.7 billion combined visitor spending.



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5 Problems Facing Social Media in 2019

In this article, we'll look at five main problems that are causing people to 'break up with their phones' or quit social media altogether. These are the toxic parts of the new online world.

As businesses, we need social media to be relevant and stay in the eyes of the consumer, too. However, there are lines that could be crossed if you aren't careful. Here are just a few issues that are erupting every day on the internet:

1. Too much content: Ever heard of the 'endless scroll'? People become addicted to constantly checking their social media feeds and companies are constantly posting ads, blogs, photos, questions and podcasts.

The brain can go through serious fatigue even without the added visual stimulation of the real world. Many young people are being diagnosed with ADHD and similar behavioral issues because of this kind of content overload.

2. Jealousy and constant competition: With photoshopped images and filters everywhere, it's no wonder that the statistics for depression, loneliness, self-esteem issues and suicides are on the rise. Sadly, plenty of companies are taking advantage of this and posting envy-worthy bodies and lifestyles to make a quick buck from those with low self-esteem.

3. Cancel culture: This is a more recent phenomenon for social media, where many are being 'called out' for their past transgressions. In some ways, it's great — the #MeToo movement and

other similar movements are weeding out awful people that have held power for far too long.

However, this trend is also affecting people in a bad way. Many 'cancellations' were incorrect but already forever ruined someone's reputation.

Does cancel culture mean you can't make mistakes? We're human, and mistakes are bound to happen, no matter how careful you are as an individual or company.

4. Not enough fact-checking: 'Fake news' is everywhere and sometimes people can't tell the difference. Of course, Facebook and other companies are attempting to mitigate the problem, trying to stop conspiracy theories or forcing articles to go through fact-checks. However, it's still a very real problem that, in some cases, can cause huge political upheavals and deadly consequences.

5. Diagnosis without experience: This isn't just medical. It also calls upon other service industries as well.

Suddenly everyone's a doctor, plumber or dietitian from watching a YouTube video when, in reality, we know that most of the expert work comes from years of hands-on experience and education.

This causes a lot of issues and has a real-world impact. Sure, you can pick up some handy tips from the internet, but you can't diagnose yourself with a deadly disease just because a website said you had a few symptoms.

These problems aren't going anywhere for a while unless the social media companies, governments and other technologies can start combating them correctly. Social is now too integral to business success to stop using, but these are just a few things to keep in mind next time you're hitting 'post.'

— Mashaal Hashmi, MultiView.com

ACTIVITIES

Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort & Spa Provides Team-Building Activities

AUSTIN, TX — Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort & Spa, one of Texas’ leading resorts located right outside Austin, provides a menu of adrenaline-inducing, team-building activities for groups. In partnership with the Lower Colorado River Authority, the resort provides everything from zip-line excursions and rock-climbing walls to guided tours on Utility Task Vehicles; and in partnership with T & D Adventure Parks LLC, parent company to Renegade Trailhead, groups can enjoy wrangler-led horseback trail



Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort & Spa

rides. In addition, Hyatt Regency Lost Pines provides more than 60,000 sf of indoor and 240,000 sf of outdoor

event space, including the 15,913-sf Lost Pines Ballroom and 7,616-sf The Baron’s Ballroom.

EXPANSION

Grand Hyatt Nashville Releases Renderings of Expansive Meeting and Event Spaces

NASHVILLE, TN — The Grand Hyatt Nashville hotel, opening next year, recently released new renderings of the luxury hotel’s expansive indoor event spaces. The hotel, which will be one of the largest in the city, will offer 77,000 sf of state-of-the-art event and pre-function space, including: a 20,000-sf Grand Ballroom; a 13,000-sf Junior Ballroom; more than 15,000 sf of pre-function



Grand Hyatt Nashville will offer signature restaurants, a rooftop lounge and a pool deck overlooking the city.

space ideal for receptions, exhibits, event registrations and meeting breaks; 32 separate meeting and board rooms; and a 1,100-sf, covered outdoor terrace with west-facing views of downtown Nashville. The Grand Hyatt Nashville hotel will also offer 591 modern guest rooms, and will be located on Broadway within walking distance of many of Nashville’s most popular attractions, including the Nashville Convention Center, Country Music Hall of Fame, and Bridgestone Arena.

INDUSTRY NEWS

New Tourism Alliance Highlights Unique Connection of Two Destinations

NEW YORK — NYC & Company, New York City’s official destination marketing organization, and visitBerlin recently signed an official city-to-city tourism collaboration agreement. It marks the first time New York City has partnered with a city in Germany



Brittany Petronella

for tourism development and management. New York City encourages visitors to experience what NYC & Company is calling a “Monumental Year” for the destination. “New York City and Berlin are world-class destinations that share so much in common — from outstanding culture, attractions, entertainment, nightlife and events to beautiful, multicultural neighborhoods to navigate and explore. The two cities have extraordinary appeal,” says Fred Dixon NYC & Company president and CEO.

OPENING

Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood Opens New Spa & Salon

HOLLYWOOD, FL — Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood recently announced the opening of the new Rock Spa & Salon. The 42,000-sf luxury spa, salon and state-of-the-art fitness center will be one of the largest wellness venues in South Florida. It offers rejuvenating services, beauty-enhancing treatments and a relaxing retreat for local visitors and guests. The wellness-focused enclave offers 21 individual treatment rooms; ladies and men’s locker rooms with steam, sauna, hot tubs and relaxation areas; as well as co-ed lap pool, hot and



Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino

cold plunge pools and sauna. Fitness routines will benefit from the technology-based equipment from Technogym, a world-renowned manufacturer of quality, technology-based

fitness products. Known for their ‘Connected Wellness Experience,’ fitness enthusiasts can access their personal content and training programs no matter their location.

ANNIVERSARY

The Peabody Memphis Celebrates its 150th Anniversary

MEMPHIS, TN — This year, The Peabody Memphis will celebrate its 150th anniversary with a series of special offerings and events. The Peabody first opened its downtown Memphis doors in 1869, and has since become world famous for its

charm, elegance, Southern hospitality and five resident ducks that march daily through the lobby at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. The Peabody’s rich history includes: countless stories of first dates, last dances and memories made, but also of blues musicians creating influential recordings in guest rooms in the 1920s; of famous orchestras and big-band dancers swinging atop the hotel’s rooftop in the 1940s; and of a young rock ‘n’ roll icon named Elvis

Presley signing his first major record contract in the lobby in the 1950s. In addition to completing a renovation of its Grand Lobby and all 464 guest rooms and suites, the “South’s Grand Hotel” will invite travelers to visit throughout its 150th anniversary year with a Grand Anniversary Package for \$1,500, and multiple celebrations, including a throwback summertime Rooftop Party and an elegant ballroom celebration.

DESTINATIONS

Cancun Ranked Top Destination in Latin America, Caribbean Region

CANCUN, MEXICO — According to Hosteltur.com, the Global Destination Cities Index 2019 found that six of the Top 20 most-popular destinations in the world were found in the Latin America and Caribbean region. Cancun is the top destination in the region, with 6.04 million international visitors in 2018 and a growth forecast of 1.35% for 2019. The majority of visitors came from the United States and Canada, with an average stay of



Paradisus Cancun

6.1 nights and a daily cost of around \$146. Research also found that Punta Cana was the second most-visited destination, welcoming 3.89 million international visitors, and Riviera Maya rounded out the top 3 with a total of 3.17 million tourists arriving last year. Mexico City, Lima and

Santiago de Chile round out the top five destinations in the region. The Global Destination Cities Index also found that seven of the Top 10 cities in Latin America and the Caribbean grew in terms of international arrivals last year, indicating positive overall growth in the region.

IMEX America

Las Vegas, September 10-12, 2019

A catalyst for change and industry advancement closed on another high. Exhibitors and buyers alike reported business success, whether it involves deals or getting new ideas to provide inspiration and creativity to help them in their jobs.



What Do Meeting Attendees Really Want? 5 Tips on What Matters for Meeting Content

BY MICHELLE KENNEDY

Noah: “Would you stop thinking about what everyone wants? Stop thinking about what I want, what he wants, what your parents want. What do YOU want? What do you WANT?”

Allie: "It's not that simple."

This is one of the great scenes in the 2004 movie drama “The Notebook” by Nicholas Sparks, where a love-struck, poor country boy challenges the rich city girl to reveal her final decision on the next step of their extraordinary love story.

When it comes to events, we can't imagine we are the only ones who have felt this same frustration, especially during the process of planning the content and flow of an event. Beyond this Hollywood storyline, meeting planners are looking for the answer to one simple question: What do meeting attendees really WANT? We reached out to our event professionals to answer this age-old question. Here's what they suggest:

Input

When it comes to planning a program agenda, attendees want greater input, however only a handful are often asked to do so. Rather than a conference committee doing all the work to determine speakers, topics and other meeting elements, shift the focus and ask attendees for feedback. Survey your audience and crowdsource ideas to find out which topics interest your attendees and what they're eager to hear more about.

Engagement

Attendees like to be stimulated, and they expect the event to keep them active and engaged. Did you know the human brain is looking for something new every eight minutes? And, while an audience may want something

new, their attention span requires a little less time — five minutes to be exact. Most humans are not able to multi-task. They are mono-taskers who need to start and stop frequently to process information. So how do you keep them involved and participating? According to our team at One Smooth Stone, you need to engage the audience through repetition, color pallet changes and technology.

Our recent blog article suggests one way to increase attendee engagement is by using personal devices to take back the audience through digital and personal engagement tactics. Attendees want to be part of something bigger, and audience engagement activities can help create this.

Small Doses

If you want attendees to remember the information you are presenting, chunk your information to maximize retention. According to Business Insider, people tend to remember 3-4 things at a time before becoming overwhelmed, so be sure your event speakers keep this in mind. Likewise, most

people remember what is first and last in a presentation, so make those minutes count.

One more tip: Presentations that ask questions as opposed to giving answers do a much better job at engagement and retention.

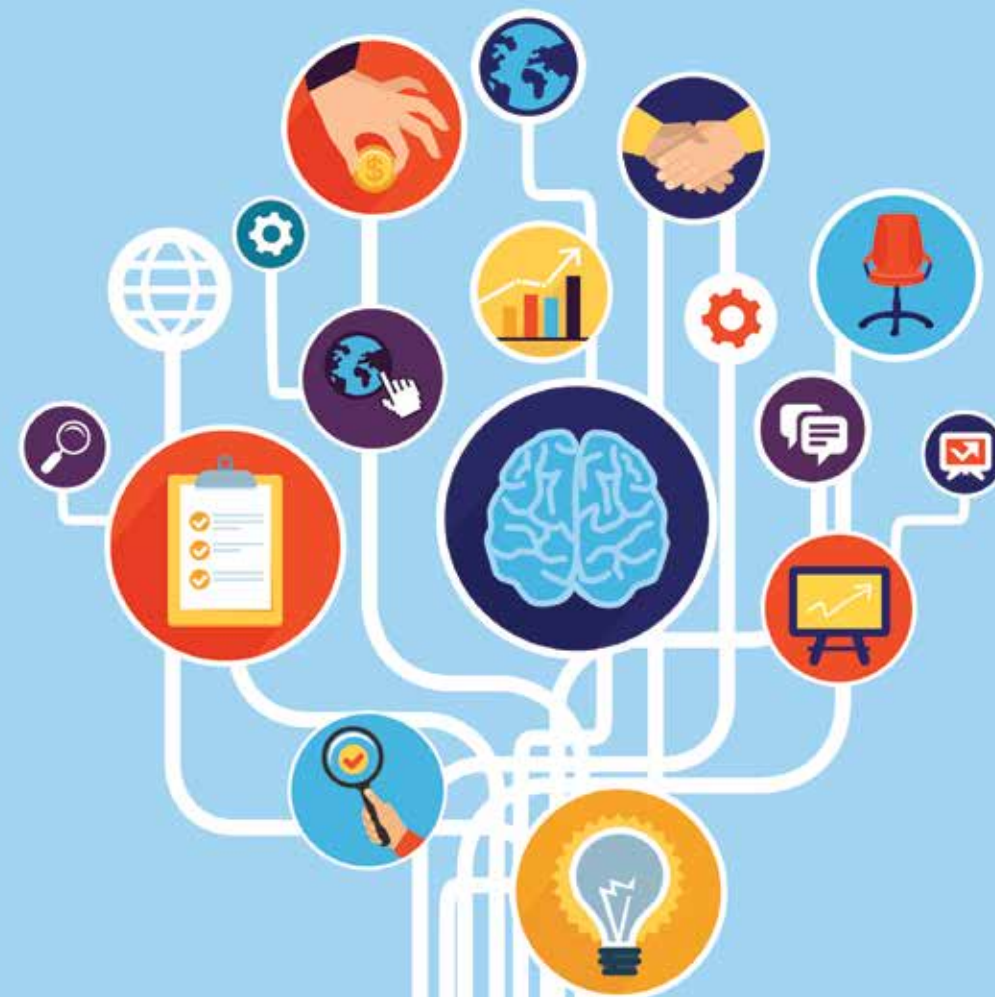
Ease of Information

Here's where you can really make an impact. Meeting attendees — and people in general — like to know what to expect. Consistent communication and technology are the strongest assets here. A single platform or website for registration and ongoing communications is key. Use it to ease the registration process, provide real-time updates, promote networking opportunity or personalized event experiences. From directions to sessions, start

“ If you want attendees to remember the information you are presenting,

CHUNK YOUR INFORMATION

to maximize retention.”



DepositPhotos.com

times or room changes — short, to-the-point communications throughout the day are essential for a positive overall event experience. Attendees are tech savvy and expect their experiences at the event to be the same, so give attendees the tools they need to navigate your event like a pro.

Networking Opportunities

Contributing positively to the overall event experience is networking with other attendees. Networking is and will always be one of the primary reasons attendees sign up for events. Networking personalizes the individual event experience and has become crucial to professional success. Attendees want to ensure their time spent out of the office

is time well spent, so make sure networking tactics are part of your larger event strategy.

Put a twist on networking and go beyond business cards and networking cocktails. Through apps designed to encourage networking behavior, meeting participants can skip straight to meaningful conversations that should happen at events. One example of this technology is the digital matchmaking platform Braindate, which uses detailed algorithms to pull from attendees' profiles, helping connect people with like-minded interests. Attendees can check in and met up with their connections in designated onsite areas. Besides — why should match.com have all the fun?

C&IT



MICHELLE KENNEDY

Michelle Kennedy oversees integrated marketing for global Business Event Management firm, PRA, serving over 100 destinations worldwide. Kennedy brings more than 20 years of industry experience, having held head marketing positions with several Fortune 500 companies and leading brands.

The New Tools Leaders Need to Succeed

Simple Shifts in Strategy and Thinking Can Help Tomorrow's Leaders Turbo-Charge Business Success and Growth

BY SCOTT STEINBERG

As a futurist and a trends expert, I attend numerous conferences on how to create positive change and accelerate business growth each year. Ironically, the No. 1 buzzword as of late at these events isn't 'innovation' anymore. Rather, it's actually 'incentivization' — how to motivate your workforce to routinely speak up, share their insights and make more concerted attempts at rapidly transforming ideas into actionable solutions. Happily, finding ways to boost employee engagement, and your ability to spark positive change, doesn't have to be difficult. You can radically increase your ability to lead and succeed just by making a few simple adjustments in strategy and thinking to your leadership and workforce development strategies going forward.



DepositPhotos.com

them and strike up conversation. Within three months, it had blanketed the nation and increased consumption of its beverages among young adults by double digits. Likewise, when Liberty Mutual Insurance wanted drivers to behave safer behind the wheel, one of the company's most popular solutions for doing so was to launch an app for mobile phones called Highway Hero that lets you turn the act of driving into a game — and that awards deeper real-world insurance discounts the better you comport yourself on the road.

MAKE EMPLOYEES COMFORTABLE

But in addition to reminding people how easy it is to create positive change at every turn when you apply simple shifts in thinking, you should provide them with welcoming and inviting forums where they feel comfortable speaking up — and can

make their voices heard. For example, one large government agency we work with has found ways to fast-track learning and growth by specifically adding positions for young professionals to contribute to on its internal committees, and holding regular breakfast meetings where experienced and emerging team leaders are encouraged to sit down, share fresh ideas and collaborate in casual settings. Likewise, a popular nonprofit association has found ways to unleash innovation at scale — and more rapidly identify emerging trends and topics of interest — by offering online matchmaking tools to members that allow them to quickly find and partner with researchers who have similar interests in different fields. In effect, finding ways to win with innovation isn't just about implementing a variety of programs and platforms that allow for greater teamwork and communication. It's also about offering staffers more rapid ways to transform ideas into

action, and creating more opportunities that allow them to consistently speak up, take ownership of challenges and make necessary shifts in strategy when they see the need for change impending.

WHAT DRIVES EMPLOYEES?

As you think about how to fuel this transformation in your business, it may help to consider which factors most effectively drive employees to positively engage with your organization as well. Counterintuitively, you'll often find that the answer to encouraging peak performance is most frequently not found in financial rewards. In fact, contrary to popular belief, the fastest way for your business to encourage people to speak up and participate more is seldom to just throw money at the problem. Because not only are today's workers — especially younger generations such as millennials and Gen Zers — more motivated by opportunities to learn, grow and build lasting careers than a paycheck. They're also increasingly drawn to businesses who champion innovation and give employees an opportunity to make an impact — especially those that consistently work to equip workers with the skills and insights needed to succeed.

It's especially worth noting, as with 73 million people and counting, millennials — born roughly between 1981 to 1995 — have now surpassed baby boomers as the single-largest generation in America and are now the single-largest generation in the workforce. So if you're looking to better engage and inspire them, remember they won't necessarily be looking for bigger paychecks going forward. Instead, they're going to demand more regular opportunities to exercise and boost their skills and insights through hands-on exposure in real-world environments — and want to see immediate, instantly visible ways in which their contributions are making a difference.

GENERATIONAL SHIFT

Gen Zers — individuals born after 1995 — are also predicted to be a major group in the workforce. And like millennials, they much prefer interactive exercises, lifelike simulations and opportunities to shuttle between roles and responsibilities over traditional training and career development programs. However, these scrappy young professionals are also harder to reach and engage than previous generations, especially noting that their average attention span lasts 8 seconds — less than that of the common goldfish. So if you want to connect with tomorrow's top workers,

and boost employee engagement around various initiatives, it's important to design every program you're offering to be more interactive, more instantly attention-getting and more approachable and social. Likewise, for that matter, be aware that most of tomorrow's workforce — regardless of their age — won't measure success in terms of money, but rather their ability to accomplish goals and make a meaningful impact on the organization.

So basically, if you're looking to empower

tomorrow's leaders to succeed, let alone encourage them to be more involved or inspire them to greatness, you won't just need to make a point to offer them more leadership opportunities and more favorable salary and benefits packages. You'll also want to work with your colleagues in every department to create a more welcoming and supportive environment that emphasizes professional growth and development — and offers ample opportunities to spotlight leading performers and their work. That said, the secret to radically boosting employee engagement isn't all that secret when you come down to it. In fact, enabling and inspiring people to do great things can be far easier and more cost-effective than you think when you make a point to find ways to more actively work with top performers — not just have them work for you — in the years to come. **C&IT**

“ Millennials have now surpassed baby boomers as the **SINGLE-LARGEST GENERATION** in America, and are now the single-largest generation in the workforce.”



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Located less than 1 mile from The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Seven Falls is a captivating series of waterfalls and hiking trails.

MOUNTAINMAGIC

How a Mountain Setting Elevates Meetings in Every Way

BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS

There's something about the mountains, whether the cloud-piercing peaks of the Rockies, the high slopes of the Sierra Nevadas or the Appalachians folded into green forests and valleys in the east. Mountains can humble. Mountains can challenge. Mountains can inspire — all of which makes them ideal for corporate meetings and incentives.

CALIFORNIA

The Sierra Nevadas offer more than a few mountain towns worthy of a planner's attention. Among them, Mammoth Lakes in the Eastern Sierra Nevadas.

MAMMOTH LAKES

Sandra DiDomizio, CMM, MBA, founder/chief experience officer at Green Fox Events & Guest Services, brought 75 neurosurgeons to Mammoth Lakes, California, for an annual retreat. The group was based primarily at The Westin Monache Resort, Mammoth.

One reason for the choice of Mammoth was personal. "The primary of the group, Dr. Dorsi, loves Mammoth Lakes and has a personal connection to the area. The date also originated around his birthday, so he decided to invite all his colleagues and industry peers to his favorite place during his favorite time of year. The client wanted access to snow sports and activities for all the attendees and their families."

DiDomizio says, "Neurosurgery is one of the most stressful professions in the world. It's relaxing for these doctors to be in the mountains and enjoy daily outdoor activities, while convening in the mornings and eve-

nings. They also enjoyed the camaraderie. Some brought their spouses and children who could also enjoy all the winter recreational opportunities. In addition to snowboarding and skiing, there's tubing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, sledging, natural hot springs and more. Many of these attendees don't have time in their personal and professional lives for much recreation, so having a

included a pick-your-own-adventure day of various activities, a brewery tour, a bowling tournament at Mammoth Rock 'N' Bowl and we had special dinners at private restaurants for the group. We work with Mammoth Mountain and Mammoth Rock 'N' Bowl often," she adds. "They're great partners. It's important that we maintain good relationships with all venues in the area — especially the big ones with a lot of space and activities."

The group used space at both the Westin and at other venues operated by Mammoth Resorts. "To be honest," DiDomizio says, "Mammoth Lakes lacks large meeting and convention space, but for groups of 40-90 it's

"Resort communities offer so many nontraditional, team-building experiences."

SANDRA DIDOMIZIO, CMM, MBA
Founder/Chief Experience Officer
Green Fox Events & Guest Services



meeting in a recreational mecca makes their time together more special and makes the event more memorable."

DiDomizio calls the drive from Southern California to Mammoth Lakes beautiful. "And while some might deem it difficult to get here, the surroundings and recreational activities make up for it."

The group took part in much that Mammoth offers. "We included family activities and games on the ski mountain and a scavenger hunt in town. We

perfect. We have many spaces — meeting spaces, restaurants, event spaces — that we use creatively."

DiDomizio admits the group has at times experienced strong snow storms, closed roads and winds during event days. "We try to predict and be proactive, such as providing guests with alternate means of transportation. We work with a local shuttle company to drive down to Los Angeles to pick up guests if their flights are cancelled. We find alternate activi-



ties and create indoor games if it's unsafe to go outside."

A major upside to a meeting in Mammoth, DiDomizio notes, is that "Resort communities offer so many nontraditional, team-building experiences."

She advises anyone considering Mammoth Lakes for a meeting to be open. "Don't restrict yourself to one season. While winter in Mammoth Lakes is popular, the summer offers almost more, and different, recreational opportunities. Always ask about 'shoulder' seasons when the resort is a bit slower and quieter. These are usually the weeks in which you can get great pricing, though weather may be a bit unpredictable. Additionally," she points out, "local guides, pros and athletes are often excellent speaker resources."

Most of all, DiDomizio says, "Mammoth is a place where you can get your group outdoors doing something they cannot normally do at home."

COLORADO

The Rocky Mountains have an 'embarrassment of riches' when it comes to mountain towns and resorts that can draw attendees to a meeting.

COLORADO SPRINGS

While The Broadmoor is not exactly a mountain venue, it sits at the

base of Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs. Some 3,000 feet above the main property, on top of Cheyenne Mountain, is the aptly named Cloud Camp, the resort's private rustic wilderness retreat with stunning views and The Broadmoor's exemplary service. This is where Conner Wege, regional marketing strategist with Envirosight, brought a group of 20 for the company's marketing seminar.

"Logistically, we needed a secluded, mountainous, yet premium location located in the middle of the U.S. to

"The quality of location combined with a fantastic meeting space and unique activities made Cloud Camp the most exceptional venue to host our event."

CONNER WEGE
Regional Marketing Strategist
Envirosight



which our attendees — who were coming from all over the country — could easily travel. Denver International Airport offers a wide availability of direct flights, which made travel convenient for them. We needed the perfect mix of high-end accommodations and fully functional meeting space along with catering options, quality food and available entertainment for group activities all packaged up in a one-of-a-kind setting. Cloud Camp offered just that and more with precise and professional event planning

Conner Wege, regional marketing strategist with Envirosight, brought a group to The Broadmoor's Cloud Camp in Colorado Springs.

and incomparable customer service."

The mountain setting underscored an important theme. "An underlying message we wanted to communicate to our attendees was that we were all ascending to greatness together by being there," Wege says. "The ascension up the mountain from The Broadmoor to Cloud Camp was a literal representation of our intended goal to elevate our guest's marketing acumen. The sheer beauty of Cheyenne Mountain combined with the authentic rusticity of the main lodge and guest cabins only made Cloud Camp's location and setting more impactful to our attendees."

Wege notes that the group has met in the past at other ranch-style locations, and after discussions with Cloud Camp's sales manager, he thought the camp had all the amenities necessary "to create a memorable and one-of-a-kind experience for our guests. The quality of location combined with a fantastic meeting space and unique activities made Cloud Camp the most exceptional venue to host our event."

Among the activities the group took part in were a guided hike, archery, disc golf, a mixology class and various lawn games. The food, Wege says, was a major highlight. "The attention to quality and preparation of the meals was amazing."

Wege points to the camp's sales manager as a standout. "She was highly professional, organized, accommodating and a pleasure to work with. She made the experience from planning to execution a very positive experience." That said, he also notes, "Every staff member of Cloud Camp provided unmatched professionalism and customer service."

In terms of meeting space, the

group used the camp's stand-alone Overlook meeting space, perched on the mountain with stunning views. "The Overlook meeting room was the perfect setup for our seminar," Wege says. "The A/V system was simple, easy to use and effective for our purposes. The Cloud Camp staff allowed us to set up the day before, which was very helpful. When we arrived, the room was ready for our use with tables and tablecloths arranged, charging stations, water and coffee and snacks nicely set up. We ordered lunch catering for our final seminar day, which was very well put together. The staff consistently checked in to make sure we had enough coffee, water and snacks without interrupting our meeting — not to mention, the back-deck view was incredible."

There were some challenges, but the Cloud Camp team worked to solve them. "Due to the logistical nature of the drive from Denver's airport to The Broadmoor and up to Cloud Camp, the arrangement of our guest's flights and travel time to the venue was challenging at times. The staff helped us resolve these issues by working diligently with us to coordinate our arrival timelines and facilitating custom shuttle pickup times. If we were to do it again, however, we would direct attendees to fly into Colorado Springs."

To planners considering Cloud Camp, Wege advises, "Ensure you have a solid plan of what you want and need to accomplish it. Be aware of the 1 1/2- to 2-hour drive from the Denver airport to The Broadmoor, which doesn't account for check-in time and the 35-minute shuttle from The Broadmoor up to Cloud Camp. The altitude did have minor effects on certain guests, but nothing to worry about as long as plenty of water was consumed." However, he adds, "Guests need to understand that although the accommodations and venue are pre-

mium, climbing staircases and walking on gravel or dirt to get around is necessary, which could be challenging for certain guests. I would recommend planning three to six months out, have a detailed event plan and share all event-related details with the sales manager, who will aid in the planning process."

Challenges aside, the end result was clear. "Nearly all our guests commented that Cloud Camp was one of the most amazing experiences, venues and locations they've ever visited."



California's Mammoth Lakes offers unique team-building activities in the winter.

ASPEN

Colorado is not lacking in spectacular mountain settings, but few towns have the cache and global recognition of Aspen. Jeanie Seehof, president of Docherty Incentives & Meetings, brought an executive retreat of 32 to Aspen earlier this year, basing the group at the equally renowned Hotel Jerome, which underwent an expansion and renovation last year.

"The group was looking for a high-end location for an executive retreat with top-quality restaurants, an abundance of activities and easy to get to. Aspen offered all that and more," Seehof says. "Most of the group flew directly into Aspen which was easy. Some chose to fly to Denver and rent a car to see more of the beauty of Colorado."

Because this company typically does 'sun and fun and Europe' for its incentive programs, they felt that for the executive retreat, "the mountains would offer enough variety for every-

one and yet be different from the incentive programs they do," Seehof says.

Biking, white-water rafting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, golf, jeep tours and a spa were among the activities. And because they were on their own for two nights, Seehof says they were able to experience some of Aspen's highly regarded restaurants, "including The Wild Fig, Campo de Fiori, element 47, Steakhouse No. 316, Cache Cache, French Alpine Bistro — Crêperie du Village and Jing."

About the Hotel Jerome, Seehof says, "The team at the Hotel Jerome is amazing — great food, flexible, detail oriented, customer-service oriented and supportive. I can't say enough good about the team there."

Seehof set functions in the hotel's various spaces. "We used A/V for lighting our function and nightly hospitality space," she says. "Our welcome event was in the Aspen Times Room with the reception outdoors at the property. The food and beverage was excellent. I used Aspen Branch for florals and they were great to work with."

In addition to hotel staff, Seehof highly recommends planners work with the Aspen Chamber of Commerce during planning and throughout the event. "The Chamber was a huge help with the program. They provided insight, ideas, maps and brochures. They have a lot to offer in terms of updated current events, etc."

She also worked with local destination management company PRA Colorado, which she calls "fabulous." In the end, she says of Aspen, "considering the variety of activities, restaurants and shopping offered, you won't be disappointed. And the sheer beauty of the city of Aspen surrounded by all of the mountains has so much appeal."

Other venues include the W Aspen, which opened late summer. Among other niceties, it features a 12,000-sf rooftop bar and pool. Another venue,



Miles Weaver Photography

The Little Nell, underwent a refresh this past spring, and Hunter Loft is the town's newest venue, able to accommodate up to 200 guests.

SNOWMASS

Last year, a \$600 million development at the base of Snowmass Ski Area made its debut. It includes the new 99-room Limelight Hotel Snowmass and a reimagined base village around a plaza that features an ice rink in winter and grass lawn in summer. Inside the Limelight is a five-story climbing wall. Lodging also includes One Snowmass, with ski-in/ski-out residences, new shops and restaurants. Vice-roy Snowmass also got a refresh this spring, including complete redesign of all guest spaces.

VAIL

This year the Grand Hyatt Vail opened, the first Grand Hyatt in a mountain destination. The hotel features ski-in-ski-out convenience, 285 rooms and its own chairlift exclusively for hotel guests, a nice touch for incentive groups.

MICHIGAN

Yes, the mitten-shaped state has mountains, ski areas and resorts that provides a mountain magic of its own.

CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN

Among the recent improvements at this Midwest ski resort is a new pavilion tent near the base of the slopes. It has a concrete floor and can hold 250-300 for receptions. The Inn at the Mountain's rooftop terrace is part of a \$12 million expansion the resort completed last

year. The space-with-a-view can host private functions of 70-80. Over at the Crystal Center, the resort's conference center, new carpeting and furnishings provide a nice refresh, and new screens have been added to many of the resort's conference spaces. And for meetings that have a bit of free time, attendees should know that Crystal Spa was recently rated the top spa in Michigan.

VERMONT

The Green Mountains are part of the impressively long Appalachian chain, and the setting for one of the state's revered ski areas.

STOWE

In the northeast, Topnotch Resort provides the perfect spot for the annual sales and branding meeting of Cabot Creamery, with about 65 in attendance. The resort is tucked into Vermont's Green Mountains, and Kurt Weber, Cabot Creamery senior vice president, says as soon as he saw it, he knew it was right. "The second I saw Topnotch and the facilities, rooms and access to Stowe, I was convinced."

The company has held at least four meetings at Topnotch, which Weber calls ideal for events with fewer than 100 people. "The resort sets the right tone for a meeting," he says. "People are out of the office, outside their comfort zone and there are fewer distractions than in the office. I want people to be more open and let their guard down a bit. For what I'm doing it's a great spot."

Typically the group comes in on Monday and leaves Thursday afternoon. "I usually do two dinners on the property," Weber says. "One is a

barbecue and the other, in the upper restaurant, is buffet style. We take over the whole restaurant. On Monday night they're on their own. Some stay on property and others might go into Stowe."

Weber's group uses the resort's meeting spaces, workout facility and many of the available amenities. Weber says they spend the majority of time in meetings — beginning with breakfast at 7:15 a.m. and concluding at 5 p.m. But when they're not working, there's hiking in summer and skiing in winter. "And Stowe is just five minutes away," he adds.

Topnotch isn't a typical ski lodge though it captures some of that rustic warmth. "It's very light with a contemporary feel," Weber says. "It has good food and good access and activities including tennis, pools and spa. It's the whole package."

He says the area offers many opportunities for team building, and the group often volunteers as well. "We might do something at a trailhead, such as trail cleanup. We have a good connection with the state of Vermont."

Of the staff at Topnotch, Weber says "All the staff is great. I'm very picky about my meetings and how they're run and how they're set up, especially with food because as I'm a healthy eater. They always come through and do a good job. One of the reasons we've been coming back is because they're so great to work with."

Topnotch has fewer than 100 rooms. "This year they didn't have enough rooms but it wasn't a problem. There are condos on the property and I used those as well," Weber says.

To those looking for an excellent meeting hotel in the mountains, Weber recommends a site visit. "I've done 25 years of meetings in a lot of rooms and Topnotch does a really nice job. If you have an opportunity to go there, you'll be convinced just like I was."

Whichever mountain range, town or resort a planner chooses, the meeting is likely to be atop the list of a group's memorable events. **C&T**



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MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Qualified Medical Meeting Planners Are in High Demand

BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS

The health care meetings landscape is changing at a staggering pace. Privacy issues, compliance requirements and payment transparency regulations grow increasingly complex to manage. Some regulations conflict with others and many differ from country to country, or state to state. Planners whose meetings include an international audience must know not only the regulations of the place in which the meeting is set, but those in the destinations from which attendees come.

All of this makes planners with a certification in health care meeting management highly valuable. Unfortunately, there aren't enough of them.

A PRESSING NEED

"What's critical," says Pat Schaumann, CMP, CSEP, DMCP, HMCC, president of Schaumann Consulting Group LLC "is the lack of trained professionals. With more than 1 million medical meetings on tap for 2019 in the U.S. alone, we're experiencing a crisis in the number of trained medical meeting planners."

Jacqueline Beaulieu, HMCC, MPI MD Advisory Board member and director of strategic marketing and client engagement with Poretta & Orr, a full-service experiential exhibit, event and strategic marketing agency. She agrees that qualified planners are in short supply. "It's a challenge for companies looking for trained, experienced medical meeting planners."

On the other hand, she points out,

planners "who invest in the effort to elevate their stature in this field will rise to the top."

That should be a call to action for planners who want to gain a competitive advantage. With the number of health care meetings on the rise worldwide and the complexity increasing beyond the skill set of those without specialty certification, qualified planners will be in high demand well into the future.

TOP CHALLENGES

There are additional challenges in medical meetings today. Schaumann, author of "Breaking the Code to Healthcare Compliance," now in its fifth edition, leads a consulting group, that helps companies improve their processes and bottom-line performance in medical-meeting compliance and transparency reporting. She lists four problem areas:

"Reporting requirements differ by country, creating data-entry errors and missing or incomplete information."

JOCELYNE CÔTÉ

Director, Strategy and Business Development, the Americas
American Express Global Business Travel



"Frequent changing of codes, including: state and city ordinances, changes made on-site once the meeting has been planned, food and beverage caps for health care professionals (HCPs) and privacy issues are all major challenges," she says.

She thinks other issues will factor

in as well. "Medical meeting professionals will continue to see challenges because of the effect of politics and reactions to the opioid epidemic. The new SUPPORT Act will impact Open Payments by expanding the definition of a covered recipient, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will expand to other states and countries, more countries will add compliance and transparency regulations and so on."

Beaulieu points to increasing globalization. "As companies and organizations continue to look for business growth opportunities, locations outside of the U.S. will be considered more often. So learning how best to conduct business globally will be a vital component to what medical meeting planners will need in their arsenal of skills," she says.

That includes learning cultural differences in addition to differing compliance rules. Given that some 90 countries currently require compliance rules, Beaulieu adds, "Staying up-to-date and understanding the intricacies and impact they have on a meeting is critical. But global and federal regulations may be easier to stay on top of than state and city codes, which are also continually in flux."

Jocelyne Côté, director, strategy and business development, the Americas at American Express Global Business Travel, points out several issues, including "balancing corporate requirements with



Medical/Pharma meetings are increasingly complex to plan as compliance and other issues are rapidly changing, forcing planners to continually adjust.

country requirements for meals and accommodations.”

These issues, she says, impact not only planners, but the quality of the meeting experience. “It’s difficult to create a unique experience with limited spend amounts. And the focus on compliance and regulations takes away from a planner’s time to plan the meeting. Additionally, reporting requirements differ by country, creating data-entry errors and missing or incomplete information. Information can also be inconsistent if it’s collected in multiple different ways, such as manual or tech platform, especially when there’s no standardized approach.”

Dominic Bemrose, business development director at UK-based The Turner Agency, a global health care agency, says issues such as sustainability practices are the same as in any industry. But he points to “stronger demand for digital interaction that is health care compliant, along with wellness, to be incorporated into meeting agendas, and timely and accurate Transfer of Value (TOV) reporting” as challenges facing planners of medical meetings.

“Balancing tight budgets and increased pressures on resourcing as a result of ever shorter project lead times with the well-being and happi-

ness of our team is a challenge facing our agency and many pharma event agencies,” he says. “Effective forward planning and management of skills and resources is crucial to ensure we effectively balance the needs of our clients with those of our dedicated and talented teams.”

On the positive side, he notes, as regulations regarding reporting and compliance become routine, they’re less of a challenge.

“We prefer to work with hotels that understand healthcare events and this is fed back to stakeholders.”

DOMINIC BEMROSE
Business Development Director
The Turner Agency



MEAL CAPS

Some issues have more potential solutions than others, such as the cost of meals provided for HCPs at meetings. Allowances are not the same for every attendee, yet planners, hosts, restaurants and hotels must provide a way to meet them for every attendee. One way to decrease complexity is to set meeting caps at the lowest amount. If one physician’s home region allows \$25 per day, but another’s allows \$35, the cap should be set at \$25 for all rather than trying

to offer different meals or plans for different attendees.

Bemrose says the same strategy exists in Europe. “We ask our client/stakeholder the countries where the delegates are coming from and work with the strictest code. We also work with our clients to ensure that this matches with their own corporate policy. In some cases, the client’s policy is stricter than the regional regulations.”

In addition to differences from country to country and state to state, Beaulieu echoes Bemrose in noting that companies have their own internal requirements. “Planners often make the mistake of assuming that all company business practices are the same. Planners should be aware that there’s an element of interpretation when it comes to some compliance issues, so practices may vary from company to company.”

Likewise, one hotel, restaurant or destination that’s off limits for one company isn’t necessarily off limits for another. Communication is key. “Let your attendees know how much your company will be paying for meals,” Schaumann advises. “Give HCPs the

opportunity to pay the difference on their own, give them food vouchers to use within the hotel or venue or have a sales rep take the HCP out to a meal. And work with chefs from the start. If anyone can creatively design budget menus, it’s the chef.”

Fortunately, more hotel staff are taking training to better understand medical-meeting compliance. With so many medical meetings projected in the U.S. this year and 250,000 in the U.K., “Hotels want the business,” Schaumann says. “I always say the first question to ask your hotel or venue rep should be, ‘Do you have experience with medical meetings?’ If there’s no experience or no staff member with a Healthcare Meeting Compliance Certificate (HMCC), it might behoove a planner to move to another property. It definitely should

GDPR, which protects personal data, can be a big challenge for medical meeting planners.

affect site selection for medical meeting professionals.”

Côté says meal caps help ensure consistent and fair meeting practices, particularly in meetings with multiple meals in a day. “Caps should be reviewed on an annual basis to assess fair market value. To accommodate tight meal caps,” she suggests, “include the meal-cap thresholds in the requests for proposals (RFP) and work with hotels that have pharma-friendly menu options. While most hotels today have medical/pharma expertise within their sales staff, we’ve found that restaurants are not as advanced in the compliance space,” she says. “Communicating constraints upfront is key to achieving the desired outcome. If the hotel or restaurant is aware of the meal cap well in advance, creative menus can be designed.”

Beaulieu points out that meal caps are set for different events in different ways. “There may be one cap for promotional events and a different cap for education events,” she says, “so giving thought to how an event is structured could help with meal-cap compliance.”

Both Bemrose and Beaulieu say limiting a meeting to a shorter timeframe, around a break rather than a full meal, is also an option. And Beaulieu adds, “Planners can also give HCPs the option not to participate in a meal at all or to fully pay for their own meals.”

SPONSORSHIPS

“Although medical device companies can no longer provide sponsorships under the latest MedTech Europe regulations,” Bemrose says, “pharma companies still can. When some of the stricter regulations came into place, a few pharma companies stopped sponsoring HCPs to congresses, fearful of contravening codes. Over time, companies have found that sponsoring physicians and remaining compliant and ethical is still possible and several have reverted to sponsoring HCPs.”

It’s important to note that MedTech Europe’s code regarding sponsorship



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isn’t exclusive to Europe. “MedTech Europe wants other medical device companies worldwide to support their initiative,” Schaumann says. As they do, more meetings will be affected.

Despite added scrutiny, Beaulieu agrees sponsorships remain available. “My recommendation to anyone interested in leveraging their participation at a meeting or convention is to call the sponsorship managers. Tell them what your goals are while at the meeting or convention and share your thoughts and ideas for what type of sponsorship your company would find valuable. Sponsorships need to be created with a customized approach today, one that aligns with the goals of the planner and the company participating. Sponsorships have become more of a custom collaboration than a one-size-fits-all approach.”

GDPR

GDPR mandates aren’t specific to medical meetings. Not only should companies list their internal privacy rules and processes used to protect personal data, Schaumann says, “Attendees should have the choice to opt-in and agree to these policies on the meeting registration form. This should apply to all meetings.”

But what happens when regulations conflict? “An example often used to demonstrate this relates to how requirements of Open Payments can conflict with the rules of GDPR,” Beaulieu says. “The Open Payments

law requires meeting organizers to track and report TOVs between health care companies and U.S. physicians. GDPR mandates that European health care professionals have the right to ask that their data be removed from a database. We know a significant percent of U.S. physicians hold dual citizenships, so it’s safe to assume some are European. This would make it impossible to report any TOV that Open Payments mandates. The only clear answer is to be certain everything is done with oversight from your legal and regulatory department.”

As if that weren’t enough, Côté notes, GDPR affects meetings not only in terms of what data is being collected and what it will be used for but in terms of the type of technology is used. “We’re creating new sign-offs and different technology to accommodate certain operating systems and their compliance with GDPR requirements,” she says.

THE RIGHT PARTNERS

While Beaulieu says working with hotels, restaurants and venues that really understand medical meeting compliance can be challenging, she’s optimistic. “Many companies are investing in training for their staff so they understand the complexities of the medical meetings industry and how best to offer solutions. Many are making the investment in the HMCC program and earning their designation, which is helpful in terms of work-



ing with medical meeting planners.”

In a strong market, Beaulieu says, venue sourcing and finding space, dates and rates becomes challenging. But working with partners who have invested in trying to understand their customers’ needs and industry is a plus for planners.

Bemrose, too, sees more hotels — globally — becoming compliance savvy in part due to education, in part due to wanting health care-meeting business. “We’re seeing hotels more willing to break out package rates to help with TOV reporting, ask questions regarding therapy areas and competitors, and often have a dedicated health care specialist on their team. We prefer to work with hotels that understand health care events, and this is fed back to stakeholders.”

Restaurants aren’t making the same changes. However, he says, “As long as they’re perceived not to be deluxe and are willing to work with meal caps, we’re happy to put them forward.”

THE EDUCATION SOLUTION

While issues will always arise, “They will only be challenges if companies and planners are not educated on the regulations,” Schaumann says. “An ignorance of the law is not excusable.” That’s where the HMCC, the most recognizable designation in the medical-meeting industry today, comes in.

“It’s not just necessary to take courses, it’s imperative,” Schaumann

says. “Planners and suppliers need to know what compliance, transfer of value, spend track and reporting mean. There are nearly 2,000 HMCCs representing 17 countries, and MPI launched the first HMCC class in Asia this year in July. It’s an extensive course covering every aspect of medical-meeting compliance.” To keep up with evolving regulations, the HMCC is updated weekly and the HMCC Refresh courses are updated as well, Schaumann says.

“It’s a challenge for companies looking for trained, experienced medical meeting planners.”

JACQUELINE BEAULIEU, HMCC
MPI MD Advisory Board Member
Director of Strategic Marketing and Client Engagement, Poretta & Orr

Planners holding the certification must recertify every two years, but they have to keep up with changes far more frequently. There’s an app to help planners and companies do just that. “My Compliance Wizard is the easiest way to look up a country or state and immediately be in touch with local planning information and the latest codes of compliance,” Schaumann says. The app is available on www.mycw.info, and MPI members receive a discount.

Planners holding the HMCC certification must recertify every two years, but they must keep up with changes far more frequently.

If a company has a compliance director or compliance attorney on staff, Schaumann adds, planners should defer to them for advice.

Being unprepared, Beaulieu says, is a mistake. “One way to address that is to have a foundation of information and I think the HMCC course that MPI offers is a must-have first step for any medical or health care meeting planner.” She advises planners “to get involved in the industry and attend meetings.” In addition to the app, she suggests using the Policy & Medicine Compliance Update as a good resource.

“Medical/pharma meeting planners must balance the changes and demands on understanding the global impact of health care compliance to be fully successful,” Côté says. “They should always do a quick review of rules in the destination where they’re planning the meeting.”

Europe, too, has education options. “HMCC is quite U.S.-centric, so European-based planners don’t often have access to its courses,” Bemrose says. “As well as conducting our own internal and Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries (ABPI) training, we meet with external trainers in the U.K. It’s always good to keep up to date with compliance regulations and any external course that helps with your understanding can’t be a bad thing.”

LOOKING AHEAD

So what’s coming down the road? Bemrose points to the way meeting content is formed. “HCPs receive and interact with information through many channels and this is altering the shape of what is required at face-to-face meetings. We’re beginning to see the personalization of agendas, where the content or breakout sessions are shaped around the physicians as opposed to the association or health care company. I still see face-to-face meetings as a vital part of the HCP’s learning cycle,” he says. “However, there are now other plat-

forms that can be used such as virtual/hybrid meetings, digital content and even forums where HCPs share their learning. I also see patients and patient groups influencing meeting content more and more.”

Côté sees a shift in prioritizing the attendee experience. “Many organizations want to be the ‘meeting of choice’ for HCPs, which means attendee-focused, content-driven sessions, innovative experiences and hands-on training, including soft skills,” she says.

“The good news is that we’ll continue to see an increase in medical meetings worldwide,” Schaumann notes. “Politics will continue to affect medical-meeting policies, Asia will become the second-largest pharmaceutical destination in 2020 and there are changes taking place in Asia that planners will need to address.”

THE BEST ADVICE

“Ensure you’re educated, stay connected to an expert in the industry and stay current on changing laws and regulations,” Côté says.

Schaumann encourages planners not to give up. “It’s funny how many times an attendee at one of my training sessions will throw up their hands and say, ‘I quit.’ I encourage them to not be frustrated, but to embrace the specialty field they’re in. There’s a lot to know and a lot to absorb about compliance, but the more you learn the more knowledgeable you’ll be, and that’s a huge benefit to an advancing career path.”

Beaulieu advises planners to get involved in groups and organizations that can help them stay connected to information, and to carve out time each week for reading information, listening in on webinars and attending meetings. “And take advantage of the support community,” she continues. “MPI started the MPI MD community to specifically address the needs of medical-meeting planners. We’ve done some great work and created resources that are useful. We’re excited about some of the initiatives we’ll share by the end of this year. It’s vital to keep your network alive and robust. There’s nothing greater than interactions

with industry peers and learning how they’ve met head-on challenges they’ve faced in the industry.”

She also reminds planners that their work should make them proud. “To provide better patient care is not just the work or responsibility of physicians. There are so many components that fit together to make this happen and each of us plays a small part. Collectively, our efforts are helping advance health care at a rapid rate.”

Bemrose advises much the same in Europe, “Read the major compliance regulations such as EFPIA, ABPI, PhRMA and the Sunshine Act, particularly around hospitality and meetings. Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Use the newspaper test: Would you be happy that the meeting/function was reported in the papers? And don’t forget,” he says, “in some small way, you’re helping to improve patient lives.”

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ATLANTIC CITY

Golf Resorts Support Lively Meetings

BY MARK ROWH

There are golf courses, and then there are golf courses. And to the benefit of meeting planners looking for outstanding settings, some of the most outstanding courses can be found at resorts that have incorporated the sport as a major part of their operations.

More than just one more attractive feature, golf courses at many resorts can help build prospects for success for any meeting.

“Successful meetings are characterized by achieving business goals and giving participants a taste of the destination and its offerings,” says Heath Carter, regional vice president of sales and marketing at Coral Hospitality, a Naples, Florida-based hospitality management company. “Golf resorts are a prime destination for such events because they allow planners the ease of fun activities within a well-appointed facility.” He adds that golf resorts also tend to have peaceful and relaxing environments because of the scenery and the greens of the golf courses, contributing to a stress-free tone for corporate meetings. Having a golf course close to the meeting facilities can be a major asset for team-building activities.

A WINNING COMBINATION

Properties well known for golf often provide top-notch meeting facilities. With a profile as full-fledged resorts

rather than simply hotels, this combination offers much that meeting planners should find attractive.

The Broadmoor, for example, has been a highly desirable Colorado location for meetings held by TWO MEN AND A TRUCK, a logistics company headquartered in Lansing, Michigan.

“The Broadmoor offers the perfect mix of meeting space, the best customer service, first-class accommodations, and so many fun things to do right on site,” says Cindy Wilhelm, executive assistant and special events coordinator. “Their food and beverage offerings are amazing, and you have to

appreciate the on-site A/V services.”

The resort has two courses offering a diverse golfing experience. The highly-rated East Course combines challenging terrain with mountain vistas. Along with rolling fairways, the West Course has multilevel greens and steeply angled greens, all at an elevation of 6,800 feet.

The Broadmoor’s meeting and convention facilities, with 185,000 sf, accommodates groups of up to 6,500. The space includes a 60,000-sf pillar-free ballroom. In addition, nearby attractions expand entertainment options available to attendees. They



Sea Island offers recent improvements such as an 18-hole putting course and a 17,000-sf golf performance center.

Photo by Elliot VanOtteren / Courtesy Sea Island

The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs has two courses — the East Course and the West Course — to challenge golfers of every skill level.

include the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Garden of the Gods Park and Colorado Springs U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Training Center. Planned for a spring 2020 opening is a digital experience guests can enjoy at the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum.

Holding a meeting at a golf resort offers benefits not only for experienced golfers, but novices as well,

complemented by features that appeal to those who are not golfers at all, says Amy Long, chief innovation officer for Visit Colorado Springs. Not only are golf resorts invariably located in beautiful surroundings, but they typically offer other amenities such as: spa experiences, tennis, pickle ball, swimming pools, excellent restaurants and boutique shopping.

For golfers, a plus is that often they have the convenience of an on-site course that’s usually not open to the public, Long says. And for those who are inexperienced but would like to learn, a lesson with the resident pros may be appealing. In addition, group activities can be structured around the game.

“There are some consultants who offer group golf experiences where they



Rosen Shingle Creek Golf Club is home to the well-known Brad Brewer Golf Academy.

Barton Creek Resort & Spa in Austin, Texas, which offers four championship courses. Fazio Canyons, designed by highly regarded Tom Fazio, is 7,153-yard, par-72 course with attractive scenic views. Planners who want to offer options for those with varying golf abilities will appreciate the Fazio Foot-hills course. It offers five different sets of tee boxes, meeting the expectations of both beginners and more accomplished golfers. Featuring the natural beauty and native vegetation of the Texas hill country, Coore Crenshaw has rolling hills, natural plateaus and soft contours in a championship layout. And located on a secluded lakeview hilltop, Palmer Lakeside offers another attractive option.

Omni Barton Creek recently completed newly designed guest rooms and offers more than 76,000 sf of meeting space, with more than 50,000 sf of it inside, along with two outdoor event lawns. Facilities include 16 meeting rooms, two ballrooms for up to 1,500 guests and a 5,550-sf pavilion with retractable windows and panoramic views. Attendees will also enjoy a spa and other amenities.

Situated on Michigan's Lower Peninsula, Grand Traverse Resort and Spa also offers three outstanding courses. The Bear is a Jack Nicklaus signature design, while the Wolverine is

a Gary Player design, and the Spruce Run was designed by Bill Newcomb. The resort has 86,500 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space.

"The natural beauty of golf courses surrounding your property creates a sense of leisure and relaxation, which helps set the stage for a great meeting," says Ryan Buck, director of sales.

The expansive Casa de Campo Resort & Villas in La Romana, Dominican Republic covers 7,000 acres situated between the Caribbean and the

Chavón River. Jason Kycek, senior vice president of sales and marketing, reports that the hotel has undergone an extensive improvement plan in recent years. Guest facilities include not only suites and other rooms, but more than 50 villas that come with maid and butler service, daily breakfast, private pools, Jacuzzis, golf carts and other amenities. Some 15,000 sf of meeting space is currently available, and an additional meeting facility is scheduled for opening this year with a capacity of 600. Golfers can choose from three highly-rated courses with features ranging from coral shores to rolling hills and steep cliff sides.

Located in the headwaters of the Florida Everglades, Rosen Shingle Creek boasts more than 1,500 guest

groves. A nine-hole par three course, lighted for night play, can be ideal for beginners. A driving range and practice area are also available. The resort easily accommodates large groups. Its more than 248,000 sf of meeting and banquet space includes three large and four smaller ballrooms.

Along with 265,000 sf of meeting and event space, the JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa features two PGA tour certified golf courses on-site. Designed by Pete Dye and Greg Norman, respectively, the courses are located on 2,800 rolling acres and are watered by an eco-friendly, closed-loop irrigation system. Golf instruction includes two, three and five-day schools for golfers of all skill levels.



Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate

rooms and 524,000 sf of meeting and event space, including a 95,000-sf ballroom. The resort's championship golf course was designed by Arnold Palmer Design Company. Other amenities range from volleyball and tennis to fishing.

For meeting participants interested in improving their games, Orlando's Shingle Creek Golf Club is home to the well-known Brad Brewer Golf Academy. Its new short-game practice area has doubled in size from the original practice area, and state-of-the-art swing analysis and game improvement technology is also offered.

Highly regarded by golf aficionados is Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate, which boasts two challenging 18-hole courses in an area that includes not only wind-swept dunes but also woodlands, wetlands and orange

Meeting options include 40 indoor and outdoor venues with 52 maximum breakout meeting rooms, a nearby ranch for a uniquely Texan meetings experience and a 5,000-sf pavilion. Other features include a 9-acre waterpark, lazy river and hiking and biking trails.

The two courses of Omni La Costa Resort & Spa, near San Diego, California also offer outstanding experiences for meeting attendees. One is a links-style course with fast conditions, while a second is a parkland-style course with an emphasis on accuracy off the tee. Along with traditional golf lessons, attendees can improve skills with a robotic swing trainer.

use golf as a metaphor for how a person approaches professional and personal challenges, and an analogy for strategic planning and execution," Long says.

A distinct advantage is that more likely than not, planners can count on good weather.

"If a golf outing is planned, you're pretty sure you will be in a warmer climate," Wilhelm says. "Warmer climate means fewer flight delays, more attendees and confidence to book outdoor venues at the resort."

Another plus is that when the wide spectrum of physical activity is considered, more meeting attendees may be able to take advantage of this long-standing sport than some other, more physically demanding activities. While golf certainly requires certain basic skills, it's still a less rigorous outdoor activity than say, skiing or hiking mountain trails.

"Warmer climate means fewer flight delays, more attendees, and confidence to book outside venues at the property."

CINDY WILHELM
Executive Assistant and
Special Events Coordinator
TWO MEN AND A TRUCK



OTHER GOLF RESORTS

For those who find the game enjoyable, the availability of golfing provides options for attendees to network on the course, aids in physical and mental exercise and ultimately allows for them to recharge in nature, says the Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau's Mark McMinn, vice president of business development. "It's a transformative meeting experience that will inspire attendees and reinvigorate them."

Among the Northern California region's properties offering scenic

views and appealing venues are Quail Lodge & Golf Club and Carmel Valley Ranch. Along with nine meeting rooms, Quail Lodge has an 18-hole championship golf course, an all-grass, nine-hole putting course and a golf academy for those wishing to improve their game. Guests can also take advantage of a heated pool, sand bocce ball pits, tennis and pickleball courts and a Land Rover experience where participants learn new skills while enjoying an adventuresome experience.

At Carmel Valley Ranch, golfers are challenged by a par-70, Pete Dye-designed course that features captivat-

ing scenic views. A multimillion-dollar enhancement has restored the course to its original design with bent grass, enlarged greens and improved tees. Golf carts are equipped with GPS technology. Meeting possibilities include more than 11,000 sf of indoor space and 35,000 sf of outdoor function space, including three event lawns.

One feature appreciated by many golf lovers is the chance to experience different courses at the same resort. That's the case with Omni

Get Lessons

The Resort at Pelican Hill

Pelican Hill Golf Academy offers technology-driven lessons for corporate group clinics and individuals.

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Leveraging TrackMan technology, Tim Mitchell takes your game to the next level with this 50-minute evaluation of your swing, ball flight, club head speed, smash factor, angle of attack, spin, true distance and much more. Cost is \$175 per person.

3D My Swing Evaluation

Using advanced 3D equipment in a wireless outdoor environment, this two-hour evaluation focuses on your swing and how your body moves. Better than video analysis, this personalized 3D motion study provides quantifiable data about the angles, speeds and velocities of your golf swing. Tim Mitchell, certified PGA golf instructor and Glenn Deck, a former Golf Magazine 'Top 100 Teacher in America,' evaluate the 3D data to better understand and improve your swing. Cost is \$400 per student per session.

For golf events, Pelican Hill features two award-winning, Tom Fazio-designed golf courses with ocean views and five sets of tee boxes on every hole, which caters to all experience levels of golfers. With two 18-hole courses, Pelican Hill welcomes golf events of all sizes, including dual-course buyouts for the largest tournaments. Collaborating seamlessly with meeting planners, the experienced, service-oriented staff expertly plans and operates a range of event formats and golf programs.

Before or after golfing, groups enjoy dining and entertainment at the beautiful outdoor Golf Pavilion and an ocean-view, private dining room at Pelican Grill restaurant. Conveniently located at the Golf Club, these spaces are suitable to accommodate registration, breakfast or barbecue buffets, boxed lunches, receptions, auctions, awards celebrations and more.

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Planners may choose from 46 meeting rooms with 110,000 sf of meeting space available. Facilities include an event center with a ballroom, breakout rooms and a state-of-the-art learning center.

Trump National Doral Miami offers 643 rooms on an 800-acre resort. It offers more than 100,000 sf of meeting and event space including several large ballrooms. A popular attraction is a moonlight golf experience, where a putting green is transformed into a glowing miniature golf course and players, including novices, use glow-in-the-dark golf balls. Night driving and putting contests are also held.

Located on Georgia's Southeastern coast with 5 miles of private beach, Sea Island resort features three championship golf courses. One course, Seaside, is an ocean-side links course bordered by dunes, wildflowers and bunkers. Players find that the changing winds offer an interesting challenge. Recent improvements include new cottages, an oceanfront pool and pool house, and an 18-hole putting course. Earlier this year saw the addition of a 17,000-sf golf performance center. The resort offers 42,000 sf of indoor meeting space. Groups up to 500 can be accommodated.

Last, but not least, South Florida's Naples Grande Beach Resort in Naples, Florida offers a Rees Jones-designed private course located a short drive from the hotel. The club recently completed \$8 million renovation and

added its first formal clubhouse. Originally completed in 2000, the 18-hole, par-72 course has been highly rated in golf magazines. It features a variety of native Florida trees and outstanding water features.

The resort offers more than 83,000 sf of space to support both indoor and outdoor events. The resort's second-floor ballroom level underwent a multimillion-dollar renovation last year.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF GOLF RESORTS

From supporting recreational interests to promoting meeting goals, golf offers planners a variety of opportunities. "Golf as team-building can be a great option," Buck says. "Regardless of experience or skill level, you can find

"By allowing some extra time in the schedule, people will not feel rushed and enjoy their round more."

HEATH CARTER

Regional Vice President of
Sales and Marketing
Coral Hospitality



something for everyone, whether it be a quick lesson with a golf pro, a few swings at the driving range, or play a full 18 holes." He says groups can use golf in exciting ways for interactivity or incentives for attendees such as long-drive or closest-to-the-pin contests.

Good planning should also take into account that while golf may be among the country's most popular pastimes, it's

Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa offers four courses for attendees.

not for everyone. If group activities are planned, they should include options for those who are unable to hit the links or who are simply not interested.

To gauge individual interest, an easily executable strategy is to survey participants during the registration process and ask if golf will be a part of their plans. If not, alternative activities should be identified.

Carter says a simple strategy for planners is to allow extra time for participants to get ready for their tee time after the conclusion of meetings.

"Many attendees will need to change clothes, get their clubs ready and want to putt or warm up on the range," he says. "By allowing some extra time in the schedule, people will not feel rushed and enjoy their round more."

Along with golf outings, the overall experience can be enhanced with related activities or giveaways.

"A golf resort would be a choice venue for many people just for the opportunity to get a few holes in between meetings," says Shelley Grieshop, creative writer/public relations director for Totally Promotional in Coldwater, Ohio. "But if you truly want to make your event memorable and interesting, infuse the golf theme into the itinerary." That might mean posting golf quotes in conference materials or offering golf-themed gifts or prizes.

An all-out approach might include steps such as inviting a personality from the golfing world to serve as a speaker, or asking keynoters to incorporate golf jokes or anecdotes in their presentations. Even without such efforts, planning a meeting at a golf resort can be a win-win proposition. It could draw more participants than would otherwise be the case, and attendees may go away satisfied with the experience and more likely to want to attend future events. **C&IT**

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Can Psychological Techniques Help Planners When Negotiating Contracts?

These Industry Experts Say 'Yes.'

DepositPhotos.com

BUSINESS MINDED

BY DEREK REVERON

Asaying among professional negotiators is, "Whoever is talking the most is probably losing." That's especially true when the person talking most depends on words alone without using basic behavioral psychology that can help in face-to-face negotiations.

Using psychology can improve overall negotiation skills for veteran and novice planners as well as increase the odds for getting the best deal possible. However, adopting psychological techniques isn't easy for two reasons: There is so much for planners to remember, analyze, interpret and decide while negotiating. And many planners aren't accustomed to using psychology, although including such an approach can boost negotiation skills.

Experts agree that negotiation is part research, part business savvy, part creativity — and part psychology. According to Jonathan Howe, founding partner and president of Chicago-based law firm Howe & Hutton and a widely recognized leader in the meetings and hospitality industries, there are no specific psychological techniques that work best for planners. "Your basic negotiation skills, whether you are negotiating with a spouse or in today's marketplace, are somewhat the same and that is important," Howe says. "We all have our developed skills that we use."

Howe adds, "You must evaluate the other side as an individual as well as the other side's positioning relative to what they are trying to achieve. All of that gives you a clue to what you can put on the table and what might be reasonable in one situation, which might not be reasonable in another."

A key to negotiating successfully is research, which goes hand in hand with psychology. Says Howe, "Information is power, and part of that is being able to know what you can

about the other side. Psychology comes into play because part of the evaluation is knowing what works with that person. You want to evaluate the other side; find what makes them tick and what approach you should take."

Carroll Reuben, CMP, CMM and president of Meeting Excellence, a Los Angeles-based meeting planning firm, agrees. Reuben says pre-negotiation research helps determine the difference between the best deal possible and the one a counterpart wants to provide. "The most important thing from my perspective is my preparation before I go into the negotiation," Reuben says. "Having a good knowledge of the company or hotel is important as is demonstrating it. You definitely have leverage because you know where the profit centers are and where they may have flexibility to do anything."

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Once research is complete, use it to help understand the other person's thinking going into the bargaining and gain a psychological advantage. Accomplish that, experts suggest, by asking yourself the following questions before negotiating:

- What does the other side really want?
- Who are the stakeholders and negotiation influencers not sitting at the table? Try to know how they can impact your counterpart's state of mind.
- What are you going to do and say if you don't get the deal you want? Knowing what you will do if there is no agreement provides a sense of power and confidence.
- What interests do you share and how can you use them at the right time to gain leverage?
- Which facts can you use most persuasively?
- Is this a one-off negotiation or will you meet the person again?

Once research is complete, marry it with basic behavioral psychology tactics. For example, before negotiations start, make subtle ‘power moves’ that can improve leverage. One way to do that: When possible, choose the time and place to negotiate. Don’t be too flexible. People who are more accommodating have less perceived power.

Howe says it’s important to avoid showing what a counterpart can see as weakness leading up to negotiations even in small ways and offers the following example: “What if someone calls and says, ‘Let’s have lunch on Wednesday,’” Howe says. “I might say ‘I can’t do Wednesday, but I can have lunch on Thursday and recommend a specific time and place. Does that work for you?’ I’m setting the game plan and using some type of power. It’s not aggressive power. But I’m trying to see what kind of sway I might have later.”

In addition, some experts suggest, when possible separate negotiations into two meetings because people tend to bargain a little less aggressively when they know they will meet again.

BUILD A CONNECTION

Once negotiations start, establish rapport with light chat and niceties to build goodwill. This is important because, according to a study in the Journal of Applied Sciences, the first five minutes of a negotiation can predict the outcome. According to Greg Jenkins, a partner in Bravo Productions, an event planning and production company in Long Beach, California, “Engage others beyond what you are negotiating. When you also can connect on a personal level with the person you are negotiating with, that might just improve your chances of getting what you desire.”

There are several ways to build rapport. Anthony Taccetta, owner of Anthony Taccetta Event and Design in New York City, includes a unique approach to establish a connection. When negotiating with vendors on



Before negotiations start, make subtle ‘power moves’ that improve leverage. One way to do that: When possible, choose the time and place to negotiate.

behalf of corporate clients, Taccetta personalizes the client to the vendor. Such an approach psychologically invests the vendor in the outcome.

“In order to do that, I often mention why the event is so important to the client,” Taccetta says. “It may be that the corporate stakeholder is a new hire, has a new role within the company or has been at the company for a long time, but with internal restructuring at a more senior level has been tasked to shake up an annual event and make it more modern and exciting. I make sure the vendor understands there is a lot on the line for that person.”

“Psychology comes into play because part of the evaluation is knowing what works with that person.”

JONATHAN HOWE
Founding Partner and President
Howe & Hutton, Ltd.



Reuben cautions that building rapport has its limits. “It’s very important in the beginning to build rapport by chatting,” Reuben says. “Sitting down for a cup of coffee or sandwich is great. But I don’t want to make the person my new best friend. Don’t overdo it. It might come across as desperation, which puts you at a psychological disadvantage.”

Reuben says establishing rapport is especially important if you are dealing

with prospective repeat customers. “But even if you build good rapport with a salesperson, he or she might be gone in a year or two because salespeople don’t last very long. It’s the nature of this business.”

So according to Reuben, planners are left having to repeatedly create rapport with different salespeople within relatively short periods of time. That’s why Reuben offers the following advice: “Take a far more professional approach rather than trying to be best friends. I wouldn’t waste too much time on it because the main thing is you must listen. Listening can be used as a psychological advantage.”

Listening builds trust and separates you from peers who push too hard. Listening also helps one learn and speak the ‘negotiation language’ of the other person and use it to gain an advantage. Says Howe, “Being a good listener and asking some good questions upfront helps you get to know the other side and what might be a need for them.”

Listening also demonstrates confidence, a key psychological trait of successful negotiators. According to Jenkins, “Listening to others demonstrates you are comfortable in your own skin and value other opinions even when you might disagree. Asking questions when you don’t know some-

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thing also demonstrates confidence.” Jenkins adds, “It’s OK not to know. When you’re afraid to ask questions, it may come from a point of insecurity, weakness or fear. Approach the situation with, ‘Enlighten me. Tell me what I need to know.’”

EXUDE CONFIDENCE

Educated curiosity sends a verbal message of confidence which, accompanied with non-verbal signs of confidence, lends more psychological weight to negotiation stances. According to Jenkins, “Walking into the negotiations standing tall, believing in yourself and your ability to achieve your goals will increase the chances of getting what you want. A firm handshake and good posture demonstrate confidence. A weak or less-than-firm handshake may come across to another as a person lacking confidence.”

When it comes to demonstrating confidence, Jenkins suggests something that may seem counter intuitive.

“Ability to demonstrate flexibility shows confidence,” Jenkins says. “Rigid thinking is a symptom of lacking in self-confidence and will be counterproductive in responding to the changes needed in negotiating with others.”

In addition, Jenkins says, avoid over-confidence because it sends the wrong psychological message. “One can be over-confident and completely miss the mark,” Jenkins warns. “Over

“I often mention why the event is so important to the client.”

ANTHONY TACCETTA
Owner
Anthony Taccetta Event and Design



confidence could come across as arrogant, less-than-flexible and give the impression that you think you are smarter than the other person. When that happens, negotiations are off to a bad start and there is a good chance

you may not get the outcome you expect or desire.”

Choices of words and phrases can also impact negotiation outcome by communicating weakness or limiting options. “I will never forget early in my career arriving in Japan on a Tuesday and driving with people I would be negotiating with,” Howe says. “We had a lot of small talk which is good and helps rapport. They asked when I was

going back. I said Friday. Well, Tuesday and Wednesday came and we didn’t get much done. On Thursday we moved well, but were not where we needed to be. So, I’m under the gun because I had boxed myself in by saying I’m leaving on Friday. Finally, I said I’d like to leave when we finish the negotiation, but the people in Seoul are really interested and I’m going there on Friday if we don’t make a deal here.” Howe was able to make the deal before leaving Japan.

Experts offer the following tips on the types of phrases that can gain a psychological upper hand and don’t weaken leverage. Use cooperative words such as ‘collaborate,’ ‘we,’ ‘us’ and ‘brainstorm’ because they imply a shared goal and working together. Don’t say “I have a better offer.” Instead, ask “How would the deal you offer differ from the following alternative?” Don’t use passive language such as “I hate to ask this but,” or “I know this might sound like a lot but,” or “Would you ever possibly consider?”

Use verbal mirroring. This involves repeating parts of the other person’s previous statement in the form of a question. It establishes rapport and indicates that you have listened. It also encourages the other person to clarify or provide more information. Example: Your counterpart says, “I can’t commit to that offer because it limits the hotel’s profitability.” The response: “ You can’t commit because of limited profitability?” Pause and wait for additional comments. Pausing can also be useful when responding to the other side’s first offer or when making a counteroffer.

Some negotiation researchers

think making the first offer can yield a psychological advantage. According to a study published by Harvard Business School, making the first offer sets an ‘anchor number’ that nails down the highest financial range, causing the other party to make the first adjustment with a counteroffer. Also, according to some experts, making the first offer shows confidence and bolsters the perceived value of the offer.

However, other experts think making the first offer puts one at a psychological disadvantage because it communicates weakness.

According to Jenkins, “I don’t believe making the first offer necessarily demonstrates confidence. The first offer by the other side can be viewed as ‘getting the ball rolling’ by offering something that may or may not fly, but merely serves as a starting point.”

He adds, “Your counter-offer may be the one that demonstrates you have a firm grasp of the value of what something is worth and how much the services should cost. That shows confidence, too, without making the first offer.”

If the other side’s first offer is exactly what’s requested or exceeds expectations, don’t accept it immediately. Doing so can make your counterpart feel as if he or she gave in too easily and should have pushed for a better deal. Instead, pause before accepting the offer or make a modest counteroffer.

Reason: You want to reduce negative feelings about the agreement. This is especially important if there’s a possibility of eventually negotiating with the person again. In addition, don’t offer meeting budget specifics because doing so can diminish psychological and strategic negotiating clout.

According to Reuben, “It’s weakness to tell your budget up front. Provide a range but not a top line. If someone asks what your budget is, and you say \$30,000 dollars, what do you think you will pay? Know what the bottom line on your budget is and be willing to walk away if you don’t get it.”

NOTICE NON-VERBAL CUES

Whatever a planner says and thinks about a counterpart’s offer can be reinforced with non-verbal behav-

ior at key points during negotiation. A vast body of research shows that most of what people truly communicate to each other face-to-face in any situation is mostly nonverbal.

According to Howe, “Non-verbal behavior is extremely important when you are sitting face to face, but it’s not much of a factor if you are communicating by email or phone. Having said that, a form of non-verbal communication is silence. I always say that, when an offer is made, pause and wait and see what evolves.”

Howe also urges caution when interpreting another’s non-verbal behavior.

“So many times, body language can be misinterpreted,” Howe says. “Crossed arms might mean the person is inflexible. Or it might mean the person is cold. Does the person form a temple with their hands in front the face? That can be seen as trying to assert authority, or the person might be praying. Sometimes you don’t know.”

When it comes to non-verbal negotiating behavior, Reuben offers this advice: “Just relax your own body language. If you show any tension, you are going to get in trouble during the negotiation because it’s seen as weakness.”

Experts suggest the following non-verbal strategies:

- Use nonverbal mirroring to subtly reciprocate certain behaviors. Social science research shows that nonverbal mirroring engages the other person and builds empathy. Example: When the

other person leans forward and smiles, do likewise.

- Use the ‘pained pause’ — a pause in talking accompanied by a slight grimace, to show disappointment.
- Feign indifference when reaching an impasse. Downplay a sense of urgency and time as issues by being relaxed. This can create slight psychological tension in the other party and improve chances for an agreement.
- Cross your arms to reinforce inflexibility just before you make a final offer or refuse an offer. Psychologists say it’s a powerful move.
- Spread arms or use other ‘open’ gestures to indicate receptiveness to what the other person is saying.
- Pay attention to the other person’s body language, tone of voice and word choice. Do the verbal and non-verbal cues match? If not, there may be an opening to gain an advantage.

Some planners absolutely love the challenge of negotiating while others don’t. But even veteran planners who like negotiating may feel tinges of uncertainty and anxiety during the process.

Howe offers this advice: “The basic thing to remember is that both sides are there to make a deal and nobody wants to make a bad deal,” he says. “My rule is you make the deal, and if you develop a friend from the other party — you’ve done good. If you develop respect — you’ve done better. And if you achieved all of them — you’ve done best.”

C&IT



According to a study in the Journal of Applied Sciences, the first five minutes of a negotiation can predict the outcome.

ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE

The Right Event Entertainment Improves Corporate Meetings

BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS

“All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” That’s not a meaningless phrase. For more than 300 years that proverb has been part of Western culture with good reason: It’s true. In order to thrive and to succeed at the highest levels, humans need to balance work and play — not just in everyday work and life but also at business meetings and conventions. That’s where entertainment comes in.

But it’s not just about play. Entertainment is a valuable business tool. The right entertainment can: increase attendance; engage attendees; draw clients; and support a company’s values, brand and vision, not to mention enhance employee morale and bond colleagues in the shared experience.

So how do planners ensure they get the most business bang for their entertainment buck?

THE PLANNER PERSPECTIVE

Colleen A. Rickenbacher, CMP, CSEP, CPC, CPECP, co-founder, Global Protocol, Etiquette & Civility Academy, a company dedicated to helping current and future leaders improve their communications skills, business etiquette and professional image, thinks there are three major things planners should consider before booking entertainment. “They should keep in mind the goals, needs and purpose of the specific program or conference, the demographics of the attendees; and budget.”

She adds that, “Entertainment is a key factor to increase attendance at an event. It’s a great way to bring an entire company together from the top down, and entertainment can change the entire outlook of a corporation regarding attitude, morale and even productivity.”

Rickenbacher says entertainment should be incorporated as part of the overall program and part of the agenda and planning from the start.

“The entertainment should always be a necessary tool to the program,” she continues. “It should have a major tie-in to the program and relate to the overall purpose of the meeting and the end result. Attendees should easily see this tie to their goals. Of course, if the entertainer is a well-known artist, than all the better for incentive building, camaraderie and boosting attendance.”

On the downside, Rickenbacher notes many things can go awry with entertainment when performers don’t show up. “Illness, a death in the family, flight delays, weather, simply running late, only half of the performers arrive or they arrive drunk. They may show up dressed inappropriately for the event or use language not appropriate for the

audience. They might be no-shows, for no reason at all.”

Consequently, Rickenbacher says planners must always have language in contracts to protect themselves for any and all events that impact fulfillment of the contract.

“Protect yourself in your contract with a clause that states that if the performer or speaker cannot perform, a substitute of equal or better quality will perform. Additionally, the client will have access to interviewing this substitute, if possible, before hiring. If that’s not possible, a video and/or references must be provided.”

Perhaps most importantly, she adds, “Planners should always be prepared with a Plan B.”

Another thing to consider: You may not need a big, expensive name to meet your objectives. “At times you may need that name for the draw,” Rickenbacher says, “but you would be amazed at the number of speakers and entertainers out there that are excellent and not nearly as expensive as someone ‘famous.’ They may even be in that same city as your program, thus saving you thousands of dollars in travel expenses.”

That said, she adds, “Always get good references, try to

go and listen to them speak or perform and make sure they’re a match for your goals, objectives and the purpose of the event.”

Lindsey Wolf, DMCP, lead creative design manager at Texas-based Ultimate Ventures, part of the Hosts Global network, adds other considerations plan-



ROBYN BASS, DMCP
Owner and President and CEO
Maple Ridge Events

ners should have top of mind when booking entertainment.

Flexibility on-site, price point, guest engagement and interaction with the crowd, and a fast response time are among her top-five recommendations. To those she adds the necessity of an entertainer’s quality promotional photos and videos.

“It’s really hard to sell an entertainer that doesn’t have quality promotional material. I find that photos do not always cut it, and most of the time clients need to see a video before being able to pull the trigger,” she says.

Like others, Wolf thinks the right entertainment can increase guest engagement and “help drive the energy in the room.” And though some events may need a big name to drive attendance, she says, “If the entertainment is engaging enough, it doesn’t matter if they are lesser known.”

There’s also this fact: Entertainment is not a one-size-fits-all proposition.

“What works for some groups doesn’t work for all,” Wolf says. “The more information the client has beforehand about demographics, the better. While one group may live for line dancing and photo ops, another group may find games the best way for guests to interact and bond. No two

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Kyle Gregory

Nathan Belt & the Buckles perform in a custom Beer Garden for a corporate event.

tize its event and which components are the most important,” Bass says. “From there, you can start assigning percentages, ranging from 5-50 percent for entertainment. Here in Music City, there’s a wide price range of acts. Without knowing your priorities, you cannot effectively build your budget.”

Once priorities are established, next decisions include whether to book big-name or relatively unknown entertainment. “Our philosophy goes back to what is dictating the purpose for your event. “If the purpose is to drive attendance, it might make sense to engage name-act entertainment you know your attendees would love. But as far as entertainment value, it’s not necessary to have name acts. If your purpose is to ensure your attendees have the most fun ever, it opens up so many more opportunities.”

And you can mix and match. Bass recently worked on an event that mixed name-act entertainment with local/regional bands with great results.

The biggest decision, however, may be how to find the entertainment you want. Pointing to that same event, Bass says, “The biggest reason it was so successful was the ease of the process. Our enter-

tainment buyer handled the heavy lifting on the entertainment portion. With so many acts it was a lot of heavy lifting and we wouldn’t have been able to do it alone. Having vetted and trusted partners allows us to do our job well.”

Which brings Bass to the best way for planners to protect themselves should something go wrong with entertainment. “We exclusively use entertainment buyers when booking. They’re the experts in entertainment negotiations and have specific entertainment contracts and insurances to cover all foreseeable and unforeseeable eventualities. Serving as an

extension of our team, entertainment buyers allow us to look like rock stars to our clients, including the mirroring of their legal contract verbiage. This is imperative so all sides have a clear understanding of force majeure clauses and are covered using the same language when contracting. It ensures cohesiveness and consistency through any and all layers of service.”

Yet like other experts, Bass says a ‘Plan B’ is imperative, even in a place like Nashville where, as she notes, you could throw a rock and hit incredible musicians and performers. “A ‘Plan B’ of qualified and vetted entertainment acts is crucial to emergency preparedness and the overall success of a program. The entertainment buyer becomes your best friend in these unusual scenarios, able to enact your backup plans at a moment’s notice, giving the guests a seamless experience.”

Among the things that can go wrong: members of a performing group may change, something Bass says clients don’t always understand. “While an Electronic Press Kit (EPK) may have a band photo with certain members, the members are often plug and play. If a client books an act because of the look of the lead guitar player, for example, it may be that a different lead guitarist plays at the actual event. Obviously, we educate our clients on this, but if they don’t express why they chose someone, especially a very specific reason like eye or hair color, style, wardrobe and so on, it can lead to misunderstandings. This just serves as another example of why we always try to find purpose and reason behind everything the client asks for and selects.”

Jennifer Munoz Perez, account manager at Cream of the Crop Events & Logistics LLC in Florida, echoes other experts in noting that group demographics, budget and a company’s messaging goals are important factors in choosing conference entertainment. She also says planners should look closely at the agenda and decide where a live performance can best enhance the experience.

Perez says there are many ways for entertainment to enhance a corpora-

tion’s message, culture and values. “We use a lot of branding and logo-color identification in costumes, DJ surrounds and giveaways provided by performers. Custom song lyrics are highly effective for building cohesion in groups and these custom songs can be used long-term to stimulate great memories when attendees are back in the home office.”

Perez notes that one of the big challenges is “discovering new performers and concepts for savvy corporate planners and their attendees who have ‘been there, done that.’”

Sometimes, however, the right entertainment is not front and center but in the background. “Sometimes a background musician is absolutely

Attendees remember what they saw, heard and felt during a live performance. Breakfast talk often centers on the spectacle of the previous night. Attendees remember a great band and dancing for hours, not the linen that was on the table.”

While providing name entertainment isn’t always necessary, Perez says if the budget allows, using name entertainment sends a message to the audience that they’re valued.

Like Rickenbacher, Perez says local culture is often the go-to because groups want an authentic experience. “Every destination is defined by its culture, history and specialties. Planners demand the authentic experience for their well-traveled and valued attend-

events should be treated the same.”

Locale can also impact entertainment choices. “When groups come to Texas, nine times out of 10 they’re looking for a ‘Western’ experience.” Wolf says. “They want that rustic, laid back, southern hospitality that Texas is known for. As a planner, I always try to find the right balance of a Texas feel without the event feeling too kitschy or cliché.”

Among the western elements Wolf has successfully used are a mechanical bull, armadillo racing, rustic backyard games, a country-western band with line dancing lessons, and whiskey tasting or craft-beer experiences.

Regardless of location, Wolf thinks live music is always a good idea. “Guests don’t want to spend time in a stale, quiet environment. A live band or DJ can read the crowd and know when to turn the energy up or when to fade into the background.”

Considering the potential impact entertainment has on a meeting, how much of the budget should it have? “Twenty-five percent is a good starting point,” Wolf says. “Dedicating a portion of the event to providing quality entertainment is well worth it. In conjunction with great décor and lighting, your guests will remember the total experience and how you made them feel.”

And that will keep attendees generating conversations and social-media buzz about an event long after it ends.

For Robyn Bass, DMCP, owner and president and CEO of Maple Ridge Events in Tennessee, a Hosts Global partner, the primary considerations to keep in mind when deciding what kind of entertainment to book are company culture, attendee demographics, past entertainment options and selections and client expectations.

“Entertainment is more than just music or a performance,” Bass says. “It’s an experience serving as an exten-

“There’s a growing understanding that entertainment spend is proportionally of high value.”

JENNIFER MUNOZ PEREZ

Account Manager
Cream of the Crop
Events & Logistics LLC



sion of everything a company strives for the other 364 days a year. Achieving a ‘wow’ factor doesn’t mean overshadowing or stepping outside of company culture. We aim to tie in custom branding or interactive elements so employees truly feel the entertainment was created especially for them as a part of everything else happening. Nothing is by accident; every experience has a purpose.”

Being clear on purpose is one way to determine how much of the budget should be allotted to entertainment and what that entertainment should be. “Every program should priori-



Gabriela Hassil/Hassil Photography

Cream of the Crop Events & Logistics LLC designed a Miami ‘White-Hot Party’ performance that became the reveal of a company’s new executive.

perfect to set the mood in a room where colleagues can come together to collaborate and celebrate. This personal interaction is recognized as the highest benefit of meetings and events.”

In terms of a ‘Plan B,’ Perez notes, “At a minimum we always have a sound system with backup music ready to play.”

Perez doesn’t believe there’s a set percentage of a budget that should be devoted to entertainment. However, she says, “There’s a growing understanding that entertainment spend is proportionally of high value.

ees because it makes an impact emotionally that builds memories.”

She continues, “South Florida is flooded with unique cultures and locations, including: the newly revamped Wynwood Walls, Florida’s Everglades ecosystem and our huge population of varying Latin cultures, including Cuban, Puerto Rican and Colombian. We highlight the Wynwood district with ‘Live Graffiti’ artists creating custom artworks within an event. It’s an especially cool way to bring branding into our corporate events with a fun Wynwood spin. Our



Dwayne Bass Photography

compassionate animal handlers and ecologists can also come on-site with unique creatures of the Everglades to teach guests about each animal and its habitat — always a fun photo op. And Latin dancers who joyously share their culture through music and costumes embody all of the Latin cultures represented in South Florida.”

As an example of successful entertainment, Perez points to the dramatic reveal of a new executive at an event. “We designed an on-stage reveal that seamlessly integrated into the theme of a Miami ‘White-Hot Party.’ The choreographer created a video, which the executive was shown in advance in order to learn the dance moves. Results? A crowd of attendees watching a stage performance and then recognizing it was also the reveal of their new executive.”

Perez offers planners three strategies to consider when booking entertainment for their events. “Work with a reputable, experienced agency, so you’re hiring the most talented and dependable performers. Corporate event work is a specialty; great club DJs do not make great corporate-event DJs. Next,” she says, “ask detailed questions about costuming to make sure the entertainers are in alignment with your corporate culture.”

Finally, she notes, entertainment isn’t just for the big functions. “Use live performers liberally. A solo background performer during peak registration hours can set the tone for the

entire event. A musician or duo at the morning breakfast or coffee break makes an impact because it is unexpected and delightful.”

FROM THE ENTERTAINMENT PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE

Those who actually provide entertainment view corporate entertainment much as planners do. Annette St. Onge, director of entertainment management/talent buyer for Aspen Ridge Entertainment, encourages planners to consider all those things mentioned by other experts here when thinking about entertainment for their events.

She also puts an emphasis on addressing every conceivable issue — band attire, custom lyrics, logos, brand colors and more — ahead of time. “It’s crucial to have these conversations before you go to contract, so any additional work and/or fees can be negotiated on the front end. Once you go to contract, ‘no’ becomes an easy response from the entertainment. And we know in the event world, ‘no’ is a four-letter word.”

And she emphasizes preparedness. “We work with vetted artists and always have a force majeure clause in our contracts.” If entertainment falls through, “Our first call is to the artist’s agent and management team to find out if anyone else on their roster would be available to step in.”

St. Onge says planners should seek out interactive entertainment experiences and team-building experiences

“Nashville” star, Charles Esten, performed in an intimate venue where attendees could get up-close and personal.

as bonding options. One example is a song-writing workshop. “We bring in hit songwriters who will not only perform their hits but also work with small breakout groups to write a song on-site. To end the event, they’ll perform the song they just wrote with their team.”

While it’s true that most companies want an authentic local experience, St. Onge says there are exceptions. For one of her events, set at the Country Music Hall of Fame, a non-country headliner was requested. “We were fortunate to have a great relationship with an agent who represents a super group of three mega-stars from the pop/rock scene of the ’90s, with two of the artists living here in Nashville. After the show, the CEO said he couldn’t have asked for a better event to captivate their diverse audience.”

The take-away for planners? Just because a city is known for one thing doesn’t mean other great options aren’t available.

As for budget, St. Onge says “10 percent for entertainment is average across the board, but at least in Nashville we’ve found that percentages increase when groups want to weave entertainment through an entire event.”

She points out that there is also a cautionary note when it comes to booking big-name entertainment. “Once you bring in high-profile entertainment, that’s going to be the expectation of attendees going forward and planners have to be prepared to continue to book that caliber of entertainment in the future.”

St. Onge’s best advice for planners is to build a team of partners to rely on. “You don’t have to be an expert in the entertainment field. A solid talent-buying partner can be your biggest collaborator, an ally on your side representing you as an entertainment liaison.”

As is true with so many other elements of planning, the best course of action is finding and working with trusted partners and vendors. **C&IT**



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REACHING NEW HEIGHTS



Is there a secret to climbing the ladder of success? We asked that question of some highly successful people in the meetings industry.

They agreed on many things, such as the benefit of finding mentors early in your career and the responsibility to mentor those coming behind you. None believe that success comes by stepping on others, but rather through integrity, cooperation, accountability and treating others with respect. They differed on a few elements; mostly, however, they offered not secrets but a clear blueprint for success.

Jennifer Patino, DMCP, CEO of Hosts Global, says a first step is to, “Create or find a vision in order to garner the passion that fuels successful people.” Future leaders, she says, will also be curious, resourceful and do the right thing.

Being resourceful, however, means looking inward as much as reaching outward. “Many people don’t understand the value of continual self-assessment,” Patino says, “which allows one to consider next steps, pain points and solutions for growth, both personally and professionally.”

Sometimes challenges are about timing. “In my early career, there were few women in management. The biggest challenge was to be acknowledged as a contributor and peer to the management team on a level playing field for the growth of my department,” she says.

Her response was to work harder and longer than others in order to deliver results before due date. “I spent time with all the stakeholders to understand how success would be measured and then I over delivered. Know better, do better,” she says.

THERE WAS A PRICE TO PAY

“When I was moving up the ladder, there was little flexibility related to work-life balance. I missed important moments with my family and had to stretch to find ways to blend my work with my family to ensure my career was on solid footing and my family had me present as much as possible. I

didn’t always achieve this.”

Patino was also willing to take on new projects and responsibilities that were out of her comfort zone. “Ultimately that was an important piece to moving up as I was exposed to the flip side of the risky feeling — accomplishment realized with bold actions.”

Today, Patino says, “I work hard at integrating work-life balance for our team members. I want fulfilled people doing great work and that can be accomplished by encouraging flexible solutions to unique situations.”

In terms of mentoring others, Pati-

Experts Offer Their Advice on How to Climb the Ladder of Success in the Meetings Industry

BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS

no’s goal is simple: “Inspire them to know their worth, encourage them to reach and create the path that will allow them to run fast and far.”

Looking back, Patino wishes she had understood one thing earlier: “That I already had all the elements I would need to build my career. One day I came to the realization that I was super resourceful and I could trust myself to work through any challenge, and that if I tapped into empathy and gratitude I could achieve what I needed to.”

Carole McKellar, CMM, MA, vice president, EMEA, with HelmsBriscoe, puts research and preparation at the top of the list of aids to successful advancement. “When opportunities arise, find out as much as you can in advance and be prepared for multiple outcomes.”

The path to success may be straightforward yet not always obvious. “It takes hard work, determination and integrity. I also believe you need to genuinely care about others and take time

to give back as well,” McKellar says.

Maintaining integrity matters in multiple ways. “The biggest challenge has been dealing with the rare individuals who try to undermine you,” she says. “I’ve experienced this a few times over the past 30 years. In each situation, I had an established professional reputation with strong personal values, so it was clear the attempts to damage my credibility weren’t valid and didn’t align with what people knew of me. If you have consistent values and act accordingly, colleagues know who you are and what and whom to believe.”

Like Patino, McKellar says self-reflection and passion are key. “Be clear on your strengths and the aspects of work that really make you excited,” she says. “If you don’t have clear personal goals, it’s hard to see the next step. I strongly believe that if you aren’t enjoying your work you should analyze what parts you do like and find a new work environment that matches your needs. If that doesn’t exist, create it. In 1992, our first son arrived. As my employer didn’t support part-time working we made the decision to set up an association management company and create a flexible environment for our family. I’ve been self-employed ever since because that gives us the freedom to focus on family and do the work I enjoy most.”

Also key, is to be well informed about your industry in order to have a competitive advantage over your peers, and to be open to new opportunities. “Having sold two businesses in 2009, I was open to new ideas and was introduced to HelmsBriscoe. That discussion wouldn’t have happened had I not been an active volunteer on the MPI International Board. As an entrepreneur at HelmsBriscoe, I’ve had the chance to grow as a leader, build a team, coach and train colleagues and spend time as a volunteer with MPI.”

THE POWER OF TEAMWORK

McKellar believes in the power of teamwork along with good communication and clear goals. “Empower others,” she says. “You can’t do every-

thing yourself. Build a strong team around you and recognize them on a regular basis for their contribution.”

For McKellar, mentoring goes beyond her team. “There are barriers that prevent people with special needs from applying for jobs when they could make a valuable contribution,” she says. “I’m passionate about encouraging managers and supervisors to review their recruitment processes and look at how they can expand their pool of talented individuals. In the UK, HelmsBriscoe supports a project to bring young adults with autism into hospitality. This is funded through the MPI Foundation and Meeting Needs. Over the past seven years, we’ve seen young adults grow in confidence and go on to gain employment through our work experience project.”

To those on the rise, McKellar suggests three strategies: “Examine your strengths and be clear on what you enjoy doing and are good at doing, then focus your job applications in those areas and become known as an expert in your chosen area. Be open to lifelong learning and seek out ways to gain relevant qualifications to support your goals. Finally, get involved in industry activity, be an active member of a professional association and give back where and when you can.”

Paul Van Deventer, is no stranger to the meetings industry. Today he’s president and CEO of MPI and he’s clear on what’s important for those who want to succeed. “Your personal integrity and brand are the most valuable assets you possess in the business world, and the only things completely in your control,” he says.

He considers it imperative to treat others as you want to be treated. “Not



Carole McKellar, CMM, MA, with HelmsBriscoe, puts research and preparation at the top of the list of aids to successful advancement.

cess. “Like any journey, a career has unforeseen twists, turns, ups and downs,” Van Deventer says. “If you aren’t passionate about what you’re doing it can be difficult to weather the challenges and you won’t be prepared when opportunities present themselves. Pursue opportunities that inspire you, that grow you personally and professionally, that you believe make a difference and your career will be fulfilling.”

Van Deventer says he’s blessed “to wake up every day and be able to say I love what I do. But it wasn’t a direct path. My career has gone through several twists and turns, including sideways and backward steps. Early on it was sometimes difficult to stay focused on the ‘long-game’ and not get lost in self-pity during turbulent times. Learning to maintain an even keel has been invaluable for me. Don’t get overly exuberant during the highs, nor too down during the lows.”

Contrary to the belief that success is achieved by ruthlessness, Van Deventer says that approach is actually counter-productive. “Stepping on others may provide a short-term advantage but will inevitably undermine you personally and professionally.”

Moreover, he adds, it’s a mistake to focus too heavily on personal advancement and resume-building. “Your self-absorption will be obvious to others. If instead you focus on finding fulfillment in your work, being adventurous in your career, maximizing opportunities presented to you and working

only is that the right thing to do, but from a practical perspective, the world is really a small place and your career will hopefully be long. Inevitably you’ll run across former business acquaintances in the future.”

Van Deventer’s third insight may surprise some A-types. “Take time to stop and smell the roses. My career has afforded me the opportunity to travel the world, visit unique destinations and meet amazing and diverse people. Thankfully, I had a mentor early in my career who emphasized the importance of ‘savoring the moment,’ advice I’ve ardently fol-

“It takes skill to properly delegate in order to set others up for success and to ensure that what you receive back meets the ask.”

HILLARY SMITH, CMP, CSEP
Executive Creative Director
PRA



lowed and along the way have built a rich portfolio of unique and rewarding experiences and great friendships.”

PASSION IS CRITICAL

He lists perseverance as a key attribute that successful people share. “Or as my mother would say, ‘stick-to-itiveness.’”

Most of our experts agree that passion is critical to business suc-

harder than those around you, career advancement will naturally follow.”

Van Deventer’s advice to those starting out is to be open to new opportunities, take risks and constantly challenge yourself. “It’s also important to build diverse, deep and strong networks and continually nurture them,” he says. Perhaps most of all, “Never compromise your integrity and always treat others with respect.”

Hillary Smith, CMP, CSEP, is executive creative director with PRA. She, too, lists perseverance as essential. “Inevitably, there will be challenges and obstacles,” she says. That’s true for teams as well. “The most important thing leaders can do is motivate and inspire their teams to keep getting up and performing at their best.”

Smith says she spent too much time early in her career apologizing for her opinions and questioning her instincts. “What people don’t know is that the more authentic and true to yourself and your passion you are, the more confident you automatically become. Climbing the ladder takes being bold, believing in yourself and speaking up so you’re heard. No one else can speak your truths or have your perspectives. We’re our own best advocates and if we want something, we need to relentlessly chase it.”

Although delegating is a challenge for some managers and leaders, Smith calls it critical. “Many of us are drivers, but in order to be an effective leader, we need to let go and teach others so they can learn.”

At one point, Smith says, I knew I couldn’t take on any more. “I recognized that my team was willing to help. I just needed to believe they were capable. When I trusted, I got great results, my team got better and our overall performance skyrocketed. It takes skill to properly delegate in order to set others up for success and to ensure that what you receive back meets the ask.”

Thinking about key elements successful managers share, Smith says, “I think there’s an insatiable hunger for growth and a curiosity and capacity to manage through change. I think being a leader means you prop up others

and/or carry them up along with you.”

While being mentored underpins the success of many, negative forces can also drive success. “I had a string of really bad leaders, which ironically influenced me to want to avoid their negative traits,” Smith says. “It gave me grit, cut my teeth and forced me to survive, which may have been a key driver in my climb.”

To others striving to rise in their careers she says, “Ask for opportunities to shadow and learn, be curious and comfortable asking questions about what you don’t know and choose something you love. Being passionate and enthusiastic is contagious and leads to workplace fulfillment.”

“I’m not a believer in ‘one’ of anything, she says. “I do think talent sums up a lot of what it takes to be successful, but I don’t believe talent alone ensures success. From my experience, it’s part talent, part luck. While luck has been something I’ve always felt is an important aspect of what it takes to realize success, until recently quantifying the role of luck in talent and career success hasn’t taken place. It will be interesting to see where some of the recently conducted studies take this theory.”

Echoing Van Deventer, Bojic says the focus shouldn’t be career moves. “Climbing the ladder was never a goal I had for myself. In fact, the concept of ‘climbing the ladder’ can easily distract



Paul Van Deventer, president and CEO of MPI, right; and Steve O'Malley, HMCC, CITP, chair of the MPI International Board of Directors, left; honor Gary Murakami with the 2019 Meeting Industry Leadership RISE Award at the 2019 World Education Congress in Toronto, Canada.

If there’s one regret she has about her journey, it’s not using the resources available to her early on, “that could have made me a better, more effective leader sooner. There isn’t a guidebook. Most young leaders just dive in and learn by experience and mistakes. I finally started my external quest for knowledge five years or more into leadership. I wish I had done it sooner.”

Nicole Bojic is group executive, strategy, at InVision Communications, which provides event management and execution, among other services. Bojic says no one thing leads to success in business.

from what it actually takes to move forward in your career. If you look at most successful leaders, you’ll see they’ve made a lateral move or even taken a step backward at some point in their career in order to move forward.”

She also agrees that taking time to slow down is important. “When you’re wired to move quickly, work hard and drive forward, it’s easy to forget to pause and appreciate all that you, as well as those around you, have accomplished. These accomplishments, no matter how small or big, will be the ones that keep you and your team motivated — especially when things get challenging.”



Paul Van Deventer, president and CEO of MPI, left, speaks at the 2019 World Education Congress Town Hall meeting in Toronto, Canada.

While there may not be one attribute successful people share, Bojic says “getting comfortable with being uncomfortable” should be embraced. “As you move up in an organization, there are more and more unknowns, things you need to solve that have no specific/defined solutions. While this can be scary at times, it’s equally as thrilling because that’s where real creativity and problem-solving come into play.”

Like all our experts, Bojic says stepping on others isn’t the right move. “This doesn’t necessarily mean you can make everyone happy at every turn, but you can try. I’ve found making a good, honest effort goes a long way.”

In pondering what she wishes she’d known earlier in her career, Bojic says only half joking, “everything.” But, she adds, “I do mean this in all honesty: Act like you know nothing and have everything to learn and you’ll get further faster.”

She thinks it’s a mistake to always go for the sexiest role at the biggest brand or organization. “Go for the one that allows you to wear the most hats,” she suggests. “You’ll be uncomfortable at times, but you’ll gain exposure and experience faster. Then see things through even when you hate the task at hand. There will always be aspects of your job you don’t love but demonstrate you can deliver on all aspects of

your role — it’s part of growth.”

Beyond that: “Network, network, network. Then network some more.”

Michael Dominguez, president and CEO of Associated Luxury Hotels International, needs no introduction. His perspectives on rising to become a respected manager and leader come from deep experience. “Servant leadership is a must today,” he says. “People don’t care how much you know, they want to know how much you care about them.”

“The concept of ‘climbing the ladder’ can easily distract from what it actually takes to move forward in your career.”

NICOLE BOJIC

Group Executive, Strategy
InVision Communications



He believes time and team members are a leader’s greatest assets. “As time is a highly valuable asset, a leader should focus on building and maintaining culture. Peter Drucker said it so well, ‘Culture eats strategy for breakfast.’”

Yet focusing on team members and taking time to create a culture in which they’ll thrive, he says, “is a shift for many. But at the end of the day, our industry, our life is all about people.”

Like others, Dominguez thinks grit is a common trait among successful people, “the ability to persevere as even the best laid plans will not go as planned,” he says. “People will go

to your beat so it’s critical to inspire the team to remember that tomorrow will be better.”

Even in the best circumstances, however, time poverty is a formidable challenge. “There are so many asks for your time as you continue to advance. There’s a critical need to eliminate or minimize unnecessary meetings so your time is well spent,” Dominguez says.

He considers the ability to move important for those wanting to rise in their industry. “Early in my career the ability to move was so important as the learning curve is sped up dramatically with moves.”

Beyond that, he suggests, “Always raise your hand for the tasks nobody wants. There have been so many defining moments that have come from those opportunities. And it may be a bit cliché,” he adds, “but our approach and outlook to whatever is put in front of us is so important.”

Looking back, Dominguez didn’t understand at the start how little he knew. “Reflection is so important as you continue to advance to see the inflection points in your life. I can think

back to times I thought, ‘I’ve got this, I know’ and nope, I didn’t have it.”

His advice to those coming into the industry, “First and foremost be humble — get over yourself. This goes to the servant leadership mentality and understanding that humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less.”

Your actions, he continues will be what defines you. “As Thoreau eloquently said, ‘What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.’ And listen — often and with an intensity to learn and understand, not to respond.” **C&IT**

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BalloonCoach.com employees were pleased that Holiday Inn Orlando – Disney Springs Area was within walking distance of activities for shopping, meals and entertainment.

Amazing Orlando

Continues to Garner Planners' and Attendees' Praise

BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS

Orlando was founded in 1875, almost 100 years before the first theme park arrived. The city has history, quality infrastructure and a slew of meeting-friendly hotels. Most importantly, it welcomes and supports business. The fact that there are also theme parks to help drive registration is just icing on this sunny cake.

The Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) has announced an expansion to add 280,000 sf, including a 200,000-sf multi-purpose space able to accommodate up to 20,000 attendees, improving upon an already excellent facility.

SO MANY MEETING VENUES

The biggest choice for planners may be where in the city to meet.

Located 25 minutes from Orlando's airport and 20 minutes from Universal Orlando Resort, SeaWorld Orlando and Walt Disney World Resort, the 862-room Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate is a destination in its own right. Maribeth Nash, corporate events manager with Missouri-based Origami Risk, provider of risk-management software, says, "It's the best resort in the area and they were willing to work with us on our price point and needs. We also liked that it was a little away from Walt Disney World."

The company's User Conference last year drew 450 attendees. All functions were on-site, and Nash says "The resort is large enough that you don't need to do anything off-site and can still feel like you're getting variety."

The hotel delivered on all fronts. "The space was perfect and private as we had the entire Osceola building to ourselves. And attendees and colleagues are still talking about the amazing food."

Nash calls the staff the best she's worked with. "Everyone was on top of things 175 percent. From contract negotiations to running our program, to room coordinator, everyone went above and beyond."

The only hitch was that most attendees checked in at the same time, but not all rooms were ready. Nash suggests planners address that ahead of time and develop a solution.

The experience was so positive the company has booked the resort for 2020, and Nash highly recommends it for others. "Your group will love the space, the resort and the food. You'll absolutely love the staff and how easy they make your job."

In the International Drive area, Hilton Orlando can accommodate large groups on its own, but is also adjacent to the OCCC, making it ideal for a conference of 2,000 managers in December. The meeting planner says Orlando ticks off many boxes, including good airlift and fares and hotels with sufficient room nights and meeting space.

The planner's group used the OCCC for its plenary as well as some meals, and, the planner notes, "Weather in December has been chilly the past two years so unfortunately outdoor options have not worked."

In spite of the hotel's convenient location, the planner says, "We felt the logistics required to get attendees to and from the convention center weren't ideal. A lot of money was spent on transportation for the day of the event along with rehearsals the day prior."

That aside, the planner says, "Based on our past experience with the hotel, the selection was ideal for us." The planner gives the hotel an excellent rating for everything from the contracting process and the sales contact and conference services manager (CSM) team to rooms, cleanliness and customer service.

The hotel also provided 'five-star' food and beverage, presentation, creativity and service, the planner adds. "The

"The chefs also did a great job helping us accommodate dietary constraints, including allergies, kosher and halal meals."

LISA PRATT
Owner
Pinnacle Events Inc.



Sea Tow Services International Inc. met last year at Wyndham Lake Buena Vista Disney Springs Resort Area.

hotel worked with us planning creative dinner options. All meals had 'be-well/healthy' options and luncheons were well received with healthy options and creative components. The banquet staff and captains are the finest in the Orlando area."

As for meetings, the planner says, "We basically used all the hotel meeting space as well as hotel vendors for power and Wi-Fi, but brought in an outside production company for A/V."

One caveat for booking here: "With space always at a premium," the planner

advises, "make sure contracted hotel rooms and space are adequate for your meeting."

EASY TO FLY TO, EASY TO DRIVE TO

Scott Washburn, president and CEO of Nevada-based Event Consultants LLC, has brought 3,000-5,000 attendees to Orlando for the past several years. The ConnectWise IT Nation Connect, a conference for companies that sell, service and support technology, is based at another International Drive property, Hyatt Regency Orlando.

"Orlando is a great location due to ease of air travel and easy access for drive-in attendees," Washburn says. "It's also family friendly, so many attendees have family join them before or after the conference or even during. There's so much to do in Orlando for all ages."

Additionally, Washburn says, "The Hyatt's location is great with a lot of hotels nearby, many in walking distance, for overflow rooms. And there are great restaurants in the hotel and within walking distance."

Washburn's group used every inch of the Hyatt Regency



convention space, hospitality suites, restaurants and lounges. “It all tied together very well,” he says. “The Hyatt has large convention space and a large number of breakout rooms. The multilevel meeting space and multistory windows in the foyers make it feel very open, even when packed full of people.”

About the staff, Washburn adds, “The convention, banquet and meeting-support staff in the convention space really know their stuff. They’re accessible at all hours and are great at everything they do. They know how to interact with busy convention attendees, VIPs and planners. The front desk check-in process is monitored well, and additional check-in staff, greeters and bell staff are pulled in as needed.”

The group also books off-site

for the company-wide celebration of a Massachusetts-based global software company.

“Our goal was to find a destination and venue where we could house all of our attendees in the same location and have meeting space and entertainment options close by so our international staff wouldn’t have to spend time being bused from location to location after traveling so far. Orlando and Universal Orlando Resort met both of these requirements. There’s also great airlift from Boston and our international locations.”

The group used Loews Sapphire Falls Resort, Loews Royal Pacific Resort, Loews Portofino Bay Hotel, Universal’s Cabana Bay Beach Resort and Universal’s Aventura Hotel. With the annual meeting and functions on



Loews Sapphire Falls Resort was one of several Loews resorts to host as many as 4,100 attendees for the celebration of a global software company.

events at SeaWorld and Universal Orlando for this conference, just two of the city’s draws. Orlando has so much to offer, in fact, that Washburn advises planners to “Always plan for early arrivals and stay-over attendees as many people like to enjoy the many attractions in the area.”

LARGE GROUPS ARE NO PROBLEM

With multiple hotels, Universal Orlando Resort works well for large groups. In January this year, Lisa Pratt, owner of Pinnacle Events Inc., brought in 4,100 attendees

property, transportation was easy as Universal’s own transportation system accessed most areas.

“We had a private block party at Universal CityWalk, where we had the use of nine fabulous restaurants, and one event at Universal Studios. Attendees got a chance to experience all the rides and attractions at the theme parks, including The Wizarding World of Harry Potter.”

Additionally the group had a free day during which attendees could choose from a variety of off-property options such as an alligator airboat tour, skydiving, shopping and visit-

ing Kennedy Space Center. DMC 360 Destination Group helped facilitate the details. Pratt says this was “a great addition to the program.”

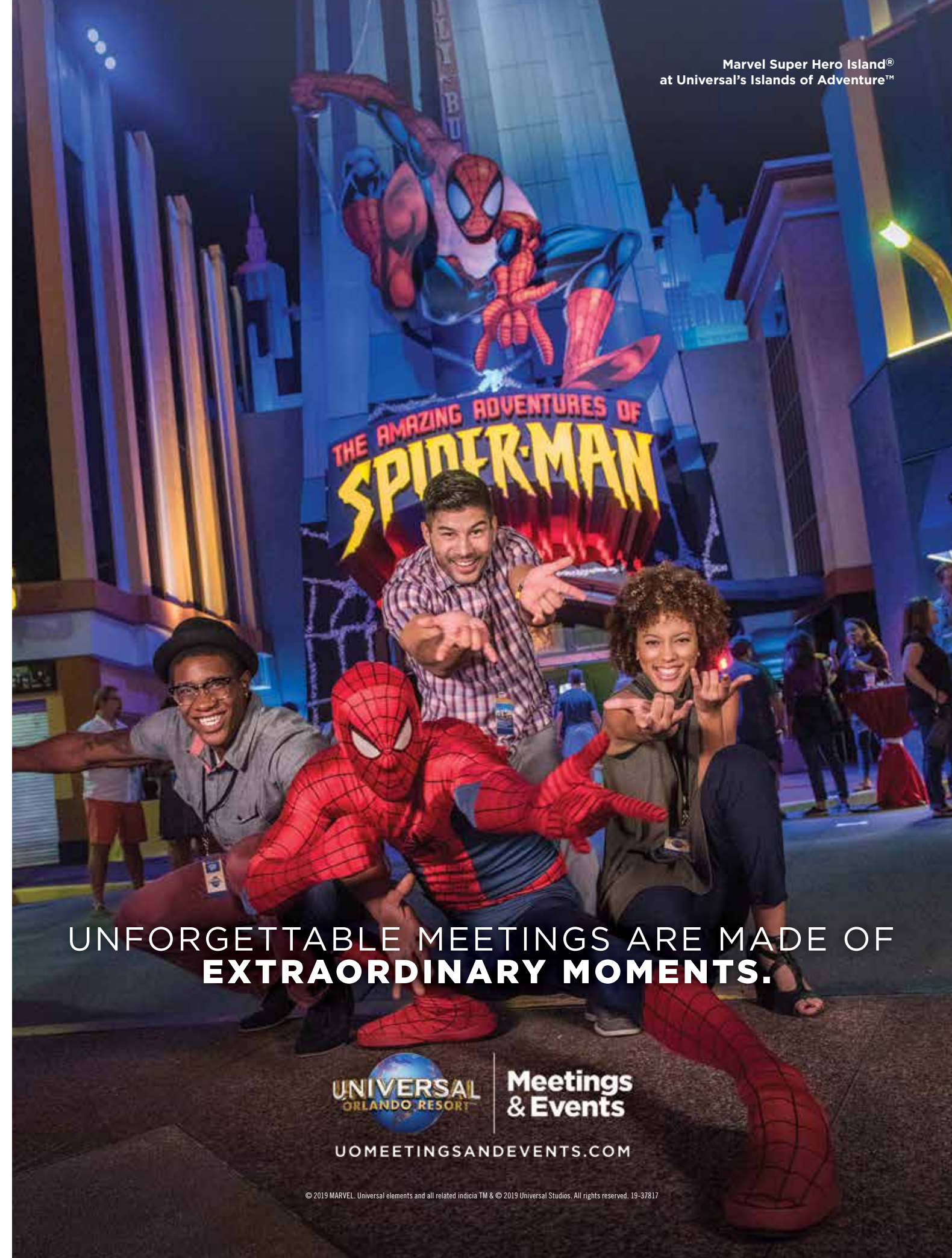
Most meetings took place in the 247,000-sf Loews Meeting Complex, connecting the Sapphire Falls and Royal Pacific resorts; a few utilized space at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel. “We were so impressed by the cleanliness of the bathrooms, the quality of the buffets and the overall space given the magnitude of our program,” Pratt says. “We’ve had smaller programs in the past where keeping the bathrooms clean, the buffets full and the food presentation up to par was an issue. Not here — the food presentation, variety and consistency at the hotels was incredible. The chefs also did a great job helping us accommodate dietary constraints, including allergies, kosher and halal meals.”

Pratt chose Universal Orlando and Loews hotels based on a successful meeting at Loews Portofino Bay years ago. The key was that she maintained relationships from that meeting.

“I kept in touch with our sales person. When I sourced this program, the meeting space at Loews Sapphire Falls wasn’t built, but she and her assistant helped me lay out every one of our projected breakouts, general sessions and meals to ensure the meeting could fit in the space that didn’t even exist yet. My faith in her assessment of how we could make it work, along with the time spent mapping it out, made me confident in recommending it as an exceptional option for our program.”

Pratt says there were a few hiccups, including a shortage of matching chairs for a 4,100-person dinner. “The hotel provided options in a timely manner so we could quickly react.” The solution: They borrowed chairs from one of their other hotels.

Pratt has high praise for the staff and facilities. “The staff was kind, engaging and went above and beyond, including managing a dinner and reception for 4,000+ people all sitting and eating at once. It was flawless. We were concerned about Wi-Fi capabilities given our numbers, but that was flawless as well. We were able



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to use the same access code for Wi-Fi in all meeting spaces regardless of the hotel."

CREATE PARTNERSHIPS

Planning this program was a long process made easier by solid partnerships. "The catering and convention services team spent years working with us to execute a flawless program," Pratt notes. "Our convention services manager worked tirelessly with us to plan every detail from concept to completion."

Pratt's best advice for other planners: "Work collaboratively with your vendors. All of our partners worked incredibly hard on this project and were as invested in its success as we were. Key is creating a respectful, collaborative relationship where everyone is valued and all needs and priorities are considered. At times we could help the hotel by releasing space we didn't need, for example — when you're booking 3 1/2 years out, things change. That way they weren't holding guest rooms we were never going to fill, which helped them meet their business goals. And we needed things that weren't contractually agreed upon from the start, such as transportation support between hotels. Given our relationship and willingness to work as a team, the hotel helped with these kinds of needs and provided valuable support and solutions."

Hotels in Lake Buena Vista's Disney Springs area are owned and managed independent of Walt Disney World. One is Wyndham Lake Buena



Sammy Todd Dyess

Vista Disney Springs Resort Area, where Sea Tow Services International Inc. met last year. The annual conference draws 125-150 attendees.

Cindy McCaffrey, vice president of program development for Sea Tow, says the Orlando area works well because 28 of the company's 100 U.S. franchises are in Florida, with the remainder across the country.

She calls Wyndham's staff key to this property's success. "It starts with the GM, trickles down through sales and on to the convention services and banquet team. This is the third annual meeting we've held at the property, and the first time ever we have repeated a location, let alone booked one three times."

Noting that the hotel's meeting space has recently been renovated, McCaffrey says, "Our meetings, breakouts and vendor showcase flow beautifully within the space at the Wyndham. Our group used the meeting space and outdoor pool area for the majority of functions and meals as well as the vendor showcase. We also utilized the restaurant during the breakfast buffet. Our attendees like to

Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista – Disney Springs Area offers a Disney character breakfast on Sundays.

start the day with a nice hearty breakfast and the Wyndham offers that and more. The character breakfast is always a hit when our attendees bring family along."

She adds that the property is very willing to work with planners who want outdoor functions by the pool. "We had a couple of boats on trailers on display and they worked with us to make sure our attendees had access and the perfect view of them. Also, the food is not 'typical' hotel food. It's tasty, abundant and always displayed with care and creativity." And she says although the hotel is close to Walt Disney World, "It's not so close that you can't run a business meeting."

THEME PARKS ARE NEARBY

Yet theme-park proximity has advantages. "You don't need to worry about planning evening activities" McCaffrey says. "They're right there waiting for attendees to explore."

At a recent Promotions & Profits Retreat at another Lake Buena Vista hotel, Holiday Inn Orlando-Disney Springs Area, attendees gathered for a BalloonCoach.com event. "Our attendees and staff were delighted that the Holiday Inn is in walking distance to Disney Springs' main hub of activity for shopping, meals and entertainment in the evening after a busy day in classes," says Joette Giardina, owner of BalloonCoach.com and marketing director at PartyPeopleEvents.com. Other positives are easy access to a 24-hour grocery store, fast food and sit-down dining outside of that area, and Giardina notes that her staff was "easily able to go out for dinners off-property for small meetings."

The group had lunch at the Holiday Inn daily as well as dinner the final night. "Every meal was presented well



CINDY MCCAFFREY

Vice President, Program Development
Sea Tow Services International Inc.

"We had a couple of boats on trailers on display and they worked with us to make sure our attendees had access and the perfect view of them."



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Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort was perfect for one company's annual conference, a planner says, because of the property's vastness.

and tasted amazing," Giardina says. "I got rave reviews from happy staff and attendees. It's great," she adds, "to have a reasonably priced hotel with delicious food, clean rooms, a relaxing pool and extremely friendly staff," along with such easy access to all that the area offers.

In addition to the hotel providing flexible meeting space for the group, Giardina says the hotel staff is excellent. "The entire team was welcoming and informative on my original site visit, providing timely responses to all my requests," she says. "And customer service during the event was excellent. Everything about the experience was top-notch and we're looking forward to returning for our annual event."

"Customer service during the event was excellent. Everything about the experience was top-notch and we're looking forward to returning for our annual event."

JOETTE GIARDINA
Owner, BalloonCoach.com
Marketing Director, PartyPeopleEvents.com



Attendees felt the same way. "My attendees appreciated they could do things budget friendly or spend all they wanted in the theme parks."

Another choice for planners is the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort, where a company in the medical meetings and education sector held its annual conference last year. This was the group's third year there, and with the exception of 2021, the company is booked through 2026. Teresa

Lovich, former event planner, says the conference outgrew its former location in Hollywood, Florida, and Orlando offers opportunity for expansion.

CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

"There are many different opportunities to be creative and to grow without having to be stuck in a convention center," she says. The company has "four tracks, breakouts, half a dozen receptions and a full-blown exhibit

hall, so it needs space. Unless you go to Vegas, there isn't really anywhere else that could house the programs."

Plus, she adds, "There's the quality of the lodging, the hotel itself and the fact there's so much access to restaurants, shopping and nightlife. Attendees like to bring their families and they like everything the location has to offer."

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin was one of five Orlando

properties considered. The company " ... needed a lot of space but we also wanted to make sure we were taking over that entire space," Lovich says. "When you have a medical meeting, it's not feasible to have it bleed into somebody else's conference. Ultimately, it was almost a 50/50 split between the Dolphin and another hotel, but what really played into the choice was opportunity for branding. The main source of income wasn't registration, it was corporate support. The company does a lot of branding, and at the Dolphin you can literally brand that entire hotel; there are so many unique opportunities and that was a big plus."

Starting over at a new hotel can be challenging, Lovich notes, because you have to explain how you do things. When it came to the group's room coordinator, that wasn't necessary. "We didn't even have to tell her. She knew and ran with it." In fact, Lovich calls the entire team "phenomenal."

The company used "every inch of space" at the Dolphin, but what Lovich loved were the options for creativity. "You can get as creative as you want or go as simple as you want. The hotel team will help you with anything. As big as the property is, once you get there, it's a very easy flow. And I like the opportunities with different restaurants on-site — you don't have to go off-property if you don't want to."

Lovich says the only challenges had been with her own team due to the growth of the conference, but the Dolphin even helps with that. "The goal with this conference has always been to stay in a resort hotel setting and not take it to a convention center," she says. "The Dolphin allows them to do that. That's a great thing for planners to know. If you do get that big, you still have the opportunity to spill over to the Swan side, which is nice."

Planners simply can't go wrong with Orlando. There really is something for everyone. **C&IT**

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BY DEREK REVERON

Texas is diverse in every sense of the word, and when it comes to hotels and convention centers, the state offers everything planners need to make any size meeting a success. No wonder the same groups visit Texas repeatedly and have unique and memorable experiences each time.

DALLAS

'Big D' considers itself the star of meeting destinations in Texas — and for good reason. Dallas offers numerous first-class hotels and 1 million sf of meeting space, including the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center Dallas (KBHCCD), which hosted Tyler Technologies Inc.'s (TTI) annual meeting for clients and employees earlier this year. The company also held smaller meetings at the Grand Hyatt DFW, Omni Dallas Hotel and The Adolphus, Autograph Collection.



The Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge in Dallas spans the Trinity River.

About 3,900 attendees from every state in the U.S., Canada and Europe participated in the annual meeting. It was the first time TTI, based in nearby Plano, held the meeting in Dallas after having convened smaller events in the city over the years. Initially, TTI had some doubts about selecting Dallas, according to Lee Marquis, TTI director of events marketing. "To be honest, we never really thought Dallas had the draw of some of the other cities we rotated between, and it was a long shot."

But meetings with Visit Dallas officials turned things around. "They did their homework," Marquis says. "The first time we met, they knew our history, they knew about our company and they even knew what our stock was trading at that day. They took the time to ensure that we saw everything they had to offer from arts to dining to airlift."

Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center Dallas offers 1 million sf of exhibit space, three ballrooms and 88 meeting rooms.



Justin Terveen

Most convincing of all, Marquis says, "There was a sincerity about wanting our business and a willingness to prove that they would provide a world-class experience."

Marquis was convinced. "This was an overall home run for this meeting," Marquis says. "We had record attendance and positive survey results. The main goals of this event were to provide attendees with education, training and networking opportunities, so easy access to breakout sessions was important."

The event used a total of about 633,000 sf of meeting space citywide, including all available space in the KBHCCD and Omni Dallas Hotel. "Unlike many connected hotels and convention centers, the Omni and the KBHCCD meeting spaces are almost seamless," Marquis says. "You don't feel like you are attending separate conferences."

"The main goals of this event were to provide attendees with education, training and networking opportunities, so easy access to breakout sessions was important."

Marquis also raved about the KBHCCD's layout and configurable space. "The common areas were large enough to accommodate two large and two smaller tech hubs," Marquis says. "Hall F provided great column-less space to accommodate an opening session, a general session and a keynote with former President George W. Bush."



LEE MARQUIS
Director of Events Marketing
Tyler Technologies Inc.

In addition to the ample meeting space, Marquis found meeting costs in Dallas overall to be affordable. "Hotel rates were of average-to-moderate value," Marquis says. "Rates were less than many of those of comparably large cities but not bargain basement. The great value we received on F&B was offset by extra costs to shuttle attendees from other hotels."

Marquis also received very valuable assistance on-site. "We experienced tremendous value from

the CVB,” Marquis says. “They stepped in to assist with some hotel issues and they were in regular contact with myself and my staff.”

Dallas continues adding to its total of more than 6,000 downtown-area hotel rooms. New properties include the Virgin Group’s 200-room Virgin Hotel, which opens this year in the trendy Design District.

Two mixed-use properties are expected to open next year. Plans are underway for the vacant First National Bank Tower to host a 200-room hotel under the Thompson Hotels flag, and the 164-room Pittman Hotel, bearing the Kimpton Hotels flag, will be located in the Knights of Pythias Temple as part of the Epic mixed-use development.

The Hilton Dallas/Park Cities has undergone a \$5.5 million makeover. The 11-story property, in the Preston Center near the Dallas North Tollway and Northwest Highway, offers 224 rooms.

Another property, the 606-room Hilton Anatole is also in the Design District and provides 600,000 sf of function space, including 79 meeting rooms and nine ballrooms. Other properties attracting their share of meetings include the Sheraton Dallas Hotel by the Galleria and the Hyatt Regency Dallas.

“Who doesn’t enjoy great food, music and a laid-back vibe? And Austin has a lot of tech-based companies, so we get a large local draw.”

RACHEL NEDELMAN, CMP

*Associate Director of Event Contracting
SANS Institute*



FORT WORTH

Dallas’ neighboring city, part of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, attracts its share of meetings with a mix of Western heritage, urban vibrance, meeting space and hotels. Looking to improve its meetings infrastructure, Fort Worth is undertaking major projects.

The 14,000-seat Dickies Arena, a new, \$450 million multipurpose arena, is scheduled to open by the end of this year. The arena is just 10 minutes from downtown. Also, Texrail, the new 27-mile commuter rail line connecting DFW International Airport and downtown Fort Worth, operates every day for \$2.50 each way.

New properties opening in Fort Worth in 2020 include the 246-room AC Hotel by Marriott and the 200-

room Hotel Drover, an Autograph Collection property.

Popular meeting properties near the Fort Worth Convention Center (FWCC) include the Hilton Fort Worth, the Omni Fort Worth Hotel and the Sheraton Fort Worth Downtown Hotel. The Worthington Renaissance Fort Worth Hotel nearby offers 504 rooms and 53,000 sf of meeting space.

AUSTIN

Austin reflects its status as one of the state’s most interesting and diverse destinations. The destination’s uniqueness helped attract SANS Institute (SI), which will hold its third meeting in the city for clients later this year. More than 200 people attended SI’s training sessions earlier this year at the Hilton Austin, which connects to the Austin Convention Center (ACC) via an overhead walkway.

According to Rachel Nedelman, CMP, SI’s associate director of event contracting, Austin will continue to be the organization’s first choice. “I don’t know why Austin was initially chosen, but we continue to be in Austin because it is such a cool destination,” Nedelman says. “Who doesn’t enjoy great food, music and a laid-back vibe? And Austin has a lot of tech-based companies, so we get a large local draw,” Nedelman says. “We added a fourth event to our schedule for next year in Austin.”

Next year’s meetings will also take place at the Hilton Austin, which Nedelman says will continue to be a preferred property. “We have partnered with the Hilton Austin for many years for multiple events each year,” Nedelman says. “We receive

great service from the sales side and service side. They know our programs and understand our needs and what is important to us.”

Nedelman considers her strong relationship with the Hilton Austin a big advantage. “Some of my favorite sales managers I’ve ever worked with work at this hotel, so it makes doing business there easy,” Nedelman says. “Plus, the hotel continues to renovate and stay current and has lots of space for us to grow into.”

In addition, the meeting space perfectly matched SANS Institute’s needs. “The space at the Hilton Austin is great,” Nedelman says. “They have so many meeting rooms, which works well because we use a lot of small spaces. They also have bigger ballrooms that accommodate our needs perfectly for a couple of programs. The stacked space makes the meeting flow really easy and cohesive. They definitely designed the hotel with a planner’s needs in mind.”

Yet another advantage the Hilton Austin offers is value. “Due to our great relationships, we’ve been able to keep increases pretty low year-over-year, so we feel as though we receive pretty-darn good value,” Nedelman says.

More meeting and convention space is coming to Austin. The Austin City Council recently agreed on a \$1.2 billion expansion of the ACC. The proposal would expand the western portion of the convention center and rebuild part of the existing facility.

The newly opened, 37-story Fairmont Austin, which is connected to the ACC, features 1,048 guest rooms and suites. The luxury hotel also offers nearly 140,000 sf of total meeting space, including 40,000 sf of prefunction space and 13,500 sf of outdoor space.

Another convention hotel, the 613-room Austin Marriott Downtown, opens next year with 64,000 sf of meeting space.

In nearby Round Rock, the 350-acre Kalahari Resorts and Conventions Round Rock opens next year with 200,000 sf of flexible meeting space, a 22,000-sf ballroom and a 40,000-sf ballroom.



Austin is one of the most interesting and diverse destinations in Texas. Plans are underway for a \$1.2 billion expansion of the convention center.

IRVING

Thriving, modern and exciting — all describe Irving. The city offers live music every night of the week, 14 full-service hotels and a more than 200,000 sf of meeting space citywide, including the Irving Convention Center at Las Colinas (ICC). Irving offers planners even more since the opening of the new, 13-story Westin Irving Convention Center at Las Colinas located next to the ICC. The 350-room Westin complex offers 30,000 sf of meeting space and a 10,000-sf event lawn between the hotel and the nearby Toyota Music Factory retail and entertainment center. The versatile Toyota Music Factory offers an 8,000-seat indoor/outdoor concert hall, more than 20 restaurants and a wide range of musical acts and bars.

According to Maura Gast, FCDME, executive director of the Irving Convention & Visitors Bureau (ICVB), “With the Westin’s opening, meeting professionals now have a perfectly efficient destination package with the convention center and Toyota Music Factory with its Live Nation Pavilion and restaurant options.”

SAN ANTONIO

Downtown San Antonio is filled with meeting options headlined by the Henry B. González Convention Center (HBGCC), with its 1.5 million sf

of indoor space. The HBGCC attracts many repeat customers each year, including the annual national meeting of Sport Clips Inc., which includes employees, franchisees and suppliers.

According to Saronna Maldonado, CMP, director of events for Sport Clips Inc., “We were at the convention center with 2,805 in attendance in 2016 and again last year with 3,019 in attendance. We will be back at the center in 2020 and 2021 with projected attendance to be over 3,200 and 3,300 respectively.”

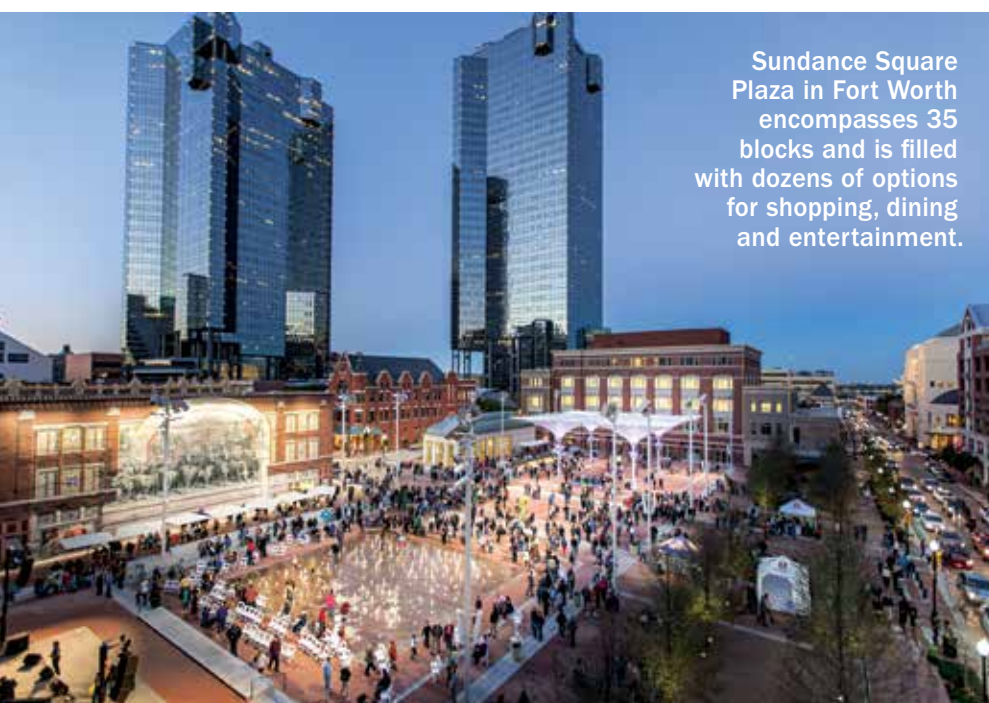
Sport Clips continuously returns to the HBGCC because the meeting space helps the company achieve its goals.

“The convention center has very flexible space,” Maldonado says. “We were able to utilize their new space for last year’s meeting. The meeting rooms can be one big room or broken down into a few smaller ones.”

Maldonado adds, “The space is open and well-lit with lots of natural light coming into the lobby and each floor’s hallway. Being able to use the spaces for multiple purposes was important to us as we were celebrating our 25th anniversary and welcoming a huge group.”

In addition to the HBGCC, Maldonado finds San Antonio’s culture to be a big attraction. “San Antonio’s culture is very unique,” Maldonado says. “When we seek out a venue, there are several

Sundance Square Plaza in Fort Worth encompasses 35 blocks and is filled with dozens of options for shopping, dining and entertainment.





Texas Live! in Arlington is the center of the city's new \$250 million entertainment district.

location between the much larger destinations of Dallas and Fort Worth. Think again. Arlington keeps adding everything planners need, including meeting space, hotels, attractions and entertainment.

Late last year, Arlington opened Texas Live!, the center of the city's new \$250 million entertainment district located a short walk from the 90,000-sf Arlington Convention Center (ACC) and Sheraton Arlington Hotel.

Texas Live! offers Arlington Backyard, a 5,000-person capacity outdoor event pavilion; a Professional Bull Riders (PBR) bar with two mechanical bulls; and the 35,000-sf Live! Arena for concerts and outdoor festivals. There is also a range of dining options.

In addition, the Live! by Loew's — Arlington hotel will open this year. The hotel will feature 35,000 sf of meeting space.

Looking to capitalize on the growing competitive video gaming industry, Arlington also created the Esports Stadium Arlington & Expo Center, the nation's largest venue of its type. The facility,

which opened late last year, offers venues for esports events. Arlington spent \$10 million to convert half of its convention center into a 100,000-sf, state-of-the-art video game arena. Esports Stadium sits among Globe Life Park in Arlington, home of the Texas Rangers; AT&T Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys; Six Flags Over Texas; Six Flags Hurricane Harbor and several hotels and restaurants.

GALVESTON

The port city of Galveston, located 50 miles from Houston, offers a range of properties ranging from coastal B&Bs to luxury resorts, including San Luis Resort, Spa & Conference Center, the site of a recent Villa Healthcare meeting.

things that go into choosing where to go. Proximity to restaurants, bars and entertainment is important as well as if the meeting space will work for us."

Maldonado characterizes San Antonio's culture as part of its value. "There's so much value in that alone," she says. "Attendees are able to visit a city with a great culture and some of the best, affordable food around."

The service of San Antonio's properties and CVB also makes the city a favorite of Sport Clips.

"There isn't a doubt in our minds when we arrive on-site at our event that we're in great hands," Maldonado says. "They take care of their clients because that's their job, but they also enjoy doing it. It's one thing for the CVB itself to have a great culture, but it's another when they can connect us with vendors that have the same vision."

San Antonio is also rapidly increasing its number of hotel rooms, now totaling more than 38,000. A newly opened property is the 22-story Canopy by Hilton San Antonio River Walk. The hotel offers 195 guest rooms and 3,000 sf of meeting space as well as an outdoor terrace overlooking the River Walk. The property features some design elements of the historic Civil War-era Alamo Fish Market building.

Last year, the 1,003-room Grand Hyatt San Antonio completed an \$18 million renovation which included meeting spaces, guest rooms, lobby, bar and corridors. Meeting space updates include state-of-the-art light-

ing, reader boards and A/V technology.

The Grand Hyatt San Antonio recently hosted a meeting for 140 employees of Tyler Technologies Inc. According to Marquis, "This hotel has been in our housing block for three citywide meetings in the past years, but this is the first time we have actually used its meeting space. They have been great to work with and they

"We liked the prices. Value was exceptional, based on comparative shopping at other locations."

APRIL DOREMUS
Vice President of Engagement
Villa Healthcare



came back with the right dates, right spaces and right concessions. We were so confident that we signed a multiyear contract with the Hyatt and received good value."

Marquis cites several other reasons why San Antonio is a good choice, including its walkability and restaurant variety. "It is appealing because of its relatively central U.S. location and provides good value from a cost perspective," Marquis says. "We also find that Visit San Antonio and the hotel community work exceptionally well as a team, more so than we find in most places."

ARLINGTON

One might think Arlington would be a meeting afterthought due to its

The recognition event included more than 100 salespeople, managers and executives. It was Villa Healthcare's first meeting at San Luis Resort and the company plans to return.

According to April Doremus, Villa Healthcare's vice president of engagement, "We will be returning next year for our annual retreat. We reviewed other options for next year, but none could beat San Luis Resort."

Doremus added, "The property's meeting space met the group's needs. All our staff was able to stay at the same hotel. We liked its flexibility to host large events, small breakout sessions and formal galas."

San Luis Resort also offered value. "We liked the prices," Doremus says. "Value was exceptional, based on comparative shopping at other locations."

In addition, Galveston provided several other advantages. "There is ease of access and people can fly into the airport directly from all regions," Doremus says. "There are entertainment options such as Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier, which features rides and amusements; and large conference rooms and meeting spaces facing the water. And there are also plenty of food options."

In all, the meeting was a big success. "Eighty-one percent of attendees rated the event five on a scale of 1 to 5," Doremus says.

PLANO

The city's marketing tagline, 'It's All Here,' says it all. Located in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, Plano offers something for every type of meeting, large and small. Plano offers a blend of luxury and historic charm along with more than 1,000 restaurants.

An elevated view of the Avenida Houston campus looking south over Discovery Green and the George R. Brown Convention Center.



Villa Healthcare's meeting at San Luis Resort, Spa & Conference Center was a fun, formal gala.

Plano and surrounding areas offers authentic slices of down-home Texas with attractions such as Southfork Ranch from the "Dallas" TV series and Bob's Steak & Chop House — Plano.

Groups can take advantage of Plano's 5,045 hotel rooms and 122,500 sf of convention center space. Meeting space is anchored by the Plano Event Center, a full-service facility that accommodates up to 5,000 people and offers 21,600 sf of meeting space.

HOUSTON

Houston is literally a go-to destination for planners and visitors. The city was included on several lists of the best places to travel in 2019. Publications honoring Houston include

The New York Times, Travel + Leisure and Conde Nast Traveler. Visit Houston's latest statistics reflect the destination's popularity.

Last year Houston booked 816,023 room nights, an increase of 6% over the previous year. It was the fourth consecutive year of room-night increases. For the fourth consecutive year, Houston also set a record last year for future meetings and conventions, with a 1.6% increase over the previous year. The number of total bookings rose from 429 to 498. Groups flocking to Houston certainly have no shortage of guest

rooms and meeting space. The city offers over numerous hotels, including Hilton Americas — Houston, which will undergo a \$37 million renovation that will include new design, color, artwork and technology for all guest rooms. The AAA Four-Diamond Hilton Americas connects to the George R. Brown Convention Center (GRBCC) via an indoor skywalk and provides 91,500 sf of meeting space. Last year Hilton Americas' top-notch service earned it the Hilton brand Award of Excellence for the eighth consecutive year.

Houston, like all other Texas destinations, is unique, but has one key thing in common with the others: They all can provide everything planners and attendees need. **C&IT**



ON THE MOVE //



AUSTIN



CHACON



DUTTON



MINOR



SEGURA

Hilton Cleveland Downtown has promoted **Julia Austin** to director of sales and marketing. Austin will oversee the sales and marketing efforts for the award-winning hotel, which is connected to the Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland and offers 50,000 sf of meeting space.

21c Museum Hotels has appointed **Michelle Bearman** as senior director of corporate sales. In her new role, Bearman will oversee corporate sales, work hands-on to provide training and development of 21c Museum Hotels sales teams, support openings and maximize overall sales efforts.

Singapore-based luxury hotel group Como Hotels and Resorts has appointed **Elisa Chacon** senior global director of sales for the Americas. Based in New York, she will manage both East and West Coast global sales offices and forge relationships with luxury consortia, wholesale and high-end travel agencies.

Orange County's highly anticipated luxury travel destination, the JW Marriott, Anaheim Resort, scheduled to open in 2020, has named **Maribel Denner** as director of sales and marketing. Denner brings more than 30 years of hospitality experience to her new role.

The 240-room Sonesta Fort Lauderdale Beach, slated to reopen November 2019 after a multiyear renovation, has named **Michael Dutton** director of sales and marketing. Dutton holds more than 20 years of hospitality sales and marketing experience.

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has named **Kershing Goh**, former regional director, the new senior vice president of Strategic Partnerships & Alliances. Goh will oversee strategic application of next-gen technology to Singapore's tourism efforts, forging partnerships with leading technology providers and relevant lifestyle partners, and accelerating out-of-the-box ideas and projects for growth. STB has also appointed **Rachel Loh** as new regional director, Americas, succeeding Goh. Loh will oversee planning, business development, marketing and tourism promotions efforts in the Americas region, and drive strategies that affirm and enhance Singapore's position as a dynamic, global tourism destination.

Visit Spokane has welcomed **Kyle Minor** as director of national accounts with the destination marketing organization. Prior to Visit Spokane, Minor worked as the senior manager of citywide convention sales at Destination Cleveland.

Teneo Hospitality Group, the premier Global Group Sales Organization, has named **Judith Segura** director of sales in Mexico. Based in Quintana Roo on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, Segura will be responsible for developing international business originating out of Latin America for Teneo member hotels globally.

Prince Waikiki of Prince Resorts Hawaii Inc. has welcomed **Joy Tomita Anderson** as director of sales and marketing. Tomita Anderson will oversee all sales, marketing and public relations initiatives for the 563-room Honolulu hotel, including its expansive meeting and events space and the 27-hole championship golf course, Hawaii Prince Golf Club.

C&IT



BEARMAN



DENNER



GOH



LOH



TOMITA ANDERSON

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 Laniwai 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 | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| KAIKONA 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'AUAO 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 |
| HALAWAI LAWN | 21,800 SQ FT |
| AULANI BEACH | 20,000+ SQ FT |
| 'AMA'AMA PATIO | 4,869 SQ FT |
| KA WA'A LU'AU | 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 Halawai 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:
info@disneymeetings.com

Phone
808-674-6394

Fax
808-674-6399

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INSPIRE

ELINOR STEELE, VP Global Communications,
Tupperware Brand Corporation

WHEN TUPPERWARE WORKED WITH DISNEY FOR THEIR EVENT...

Elinor Steele's goal was clear, but not easy: she wanted to inspire her guests above all else. She says that Disney made this happen, creating an event that reignited passion for the company and its culture—a passion that the people took with them when they left. That's what happens when you work with Disney: your story isn't simply told. It's experienced, by every single guest. If this is the kind of inspiration you're looking for, just use our imagination.


**MEETINGS
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