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It's That Time Again

Budgeting your meetings and incentive programs for 2020 and beyond presents the annual challenge of "How do I do it to satisfy the objectives without busting the budget?" Rising air travel costs for a few destinations are causing some planners to look at more domestic destinations, rather than international, especially for incentive programs. It is estimated that the average cost per attendee per day excluding airfare ranges from \$539 to \$685 depending on the type of event.

Aside from airfare and lodging costs, food and beverage increases are also important to factor into the budget. Some hotels have special market menus that focus on local and sustainable meals, which may have a higher cost associated with your choice. Also, beware of resort fees and other charges that may not be negotiable. You will find our "Budgeting for 2020" story in this issue to be a helpful reminder of some pitfalls that you may be facing.



If you are looking for resorts that provide an exciting and entertaining experience, look no further than gaming resorts, which are sure to please most attendees. You'll find the ideal venue in "A Sure Bet" in this issue, which highlights a limited selection of gaming resorts

both domestic and in the Bahamas. Most attendees will no doubt consider the gaming aspect as an added attraction.

Our cover story in this issue presents "Menus That 'Wow,'" which explains how to choose food and beverage options sure to create memorable experiences. In many cases today, seeing the trend of food as entertainment continues to gain in popularity and importance. Check out the food options for groups of all sizes, and don't forget the 'trendy tastes.' In reality, foods will always be evolving and changing, so it pays to be aware of the latest trends.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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Corporate & Incentive Travel (USPS 716-450) is published monthly by Coastal Communications Corporation, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394; 561-989-0600. Single copies \$12.00 U.S.A. only. Yearly subscription price is \$125.00 in the U.S.A.; Canada and foreign is \$165.00. Back copies \$14.00 U.S.A. only. Distributed without charge to qualified personnel. Periodicals Postage Paid at Boca Raton, FL, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Corporate & Incentive Travel, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394. Nothing contained in this publication shall constitute an endorsement by Coastal Communications Corporation (Corporate & Incentive Travel), and the publication disclaims any liability with respect to the use of or reliance on any such information. The information contained in this publication is in no way to be construed as a recommendation by C&IT of any industry standard, or as a recommendation of any kind to be adopted, by or to be binding upon, any corporate/incentive travel planner or agent. Reproduction of any portion of this publication by any means is strictly forbidden. Editorial contributions must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care. However, the publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited photographs or manuscripts. Subscribers: Send subscription inquiries and address changes to: Circulation Department, Corporate & Incentive Travel, 2700 North Military Trail — Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394. Provide old and new addresses including zip codes. Enclose address label from most recent issue and please allow five weeks for the change to become effective. Printed in U.S.A. © 2019



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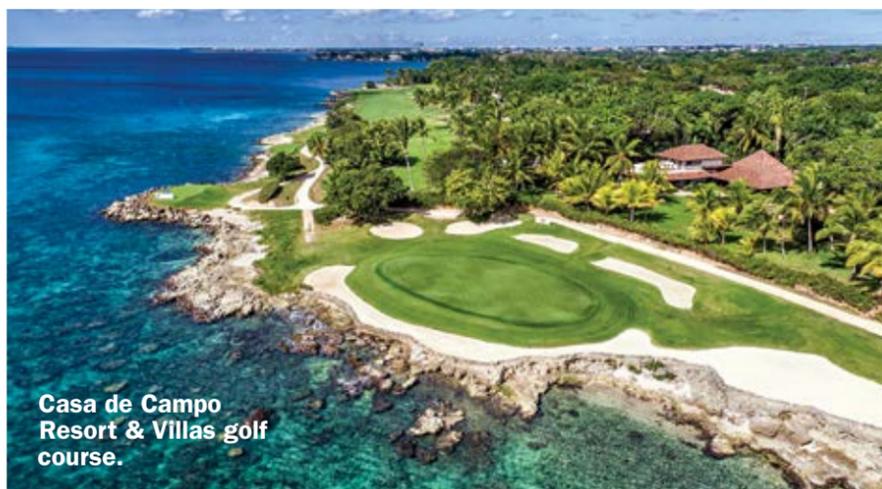
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CITInvitationalGolfEvent.com

RECOGNITIONS

Casa de Campo Resort & Villas in Top 100 Resorts

LA ROMANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC — Casa de Campo Resort & Villas, home to the Caribbean's premier, luxury golf experiences, including the iconic Teeth of the Dog course — has been honored in GOLF Magazine's inaugural "Top 100 Resorts in North America" list featured in its October issue. Showcasing the 'best of the best,' Casa de Campo joins premier destinations including Pebble Beach Resorts, The American Club, Bandon Dunes Golf Resort and Pinehurst Resort, in the elevated rankings. Casa de Campo was featured in the 'General Luxury' category, identifying exemplary resorts highlighting their



Casa de Campo Resort & Villas golf course.

polished customer service, superb golf, high-end amenities and outstanding off-course experiences. "We're flattered to receive this significant honor from GOLF Magazine," says Andres Pichardo Rosenberg, president of Casa

de Campo. "The coveted accolade is a tribute to our superlative golf and resort amenities, as well as our exceptional customer service. We cordially invite one and all to visit us here in paradise for a getaway to long treasure.

OPENINGS

Frenchman's Reef Marriott Resort & Spa and Noni Beach Resort Opening in 2020

ST. THOMAS, USVI — DiamondRock Hospitality recently announced the highly anticipated return of the Frenchman's Reef Marriott Resort & Spa, and the addition of a new, adjacent resort under Marriott's Autograph Collection, Noni Beach, a

St. Thomas Resort — a \$200 million dual resort project well underway. The re-envisioned resorts are expected to open in 2020. The Frenchman's Reef Marriott Resort & Spa, dramatically situated atop a harborside cliff with panoramic ocean views, will boast 384 guest rooms and includes 85,000 sf of extraordinary indoor and outdoor event space. Noni Beach Resort, the first Autograph Collection hotel in the U.S. Virgin Islands, is comprised of series of intimate, beach-house style villas containing 94 guest rooms,

and features a 3,000-sf beachfront ballroom. "DiamondRock is creating two truly unique resorts in the Virgin Islands. The irreplaceable location and superlative quality of DiamondRock's resort property in concert with Marriott's world-class brands will create an unparalleled and authentic island guest experience. Moreover, we take pride in bringing well over 400 new jobs back to the St. Thomas community," says Mark Brugger, president and CEO, DiamondRock Hospitality Company.

INDUSTRY NEWS

SITE Classic Raises More Than \$250,000 for Research And Education

NASSAU, BAHAMAS — The 13th annual SITE Classic was recently held at Grand Hyatt Baha Mar with 300 incentive travel professionals. Attendees connected and built their professional networks, learned new skills and discovered the pulse of a truly stunning

host destination while raising more than \$250,000 for SITE Foundation projects on research, education and advocacy. "SITE Classic is our flagship fundraising event. Its success is down to our incredible sponsors who donate amazing bucket-list travel packages, and our patrons and supporters who dig deep to buy them. It's fitting too that we raise money in and through extraordinary travel experiences ...", says Didier Scaillet, CIS, CITP, CEO of SITE & SITE Foundation. SITE Classic 2020 will be held Sept. 27-30 in Seattle.



SITE's Ellie MacPherson, CITP, and Jennifer Glynn.

OPENINGS

The Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas Reopening This Month

ST. THOMAS, USVI — The Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas, which shuttered in the wake of Hurricane Irma in 2017, is set to reopen this month. The 180-room property has undergone an extensive \$100 million makeover. Among the offerings of the resort include: four restaurants, featuring a Sicilian menu at Alloro; a remodeled infinity pool; a new family friendly pool; five indoor meeting spaces; six outdoor event spaces; a renovated Club Lounge; and a luxury catamaran for sunset cruises, snorkeling tours and private events.

RECOGNITIONS

Visit San Antonio Named a Top Workplace for 2019

SAN ANTONIO, TX — The public-private nonprofit, Visit San Antonio, the sales and marketing arm for the City of San Antonio, has been selected by its employees as a Top Workplace for 2019. The organization was recognized at an awards luncheon held at the J.W. Marriott Hill Country Resort & Spa, and will be showcased along with other



Matej

winners in a Top Workplaces special section to be published in the San Antonio Express-News. The city welcomes 39 million visitors a year as part of a tourism and hospitality industry that generates \$15.2 billion in economic impact. Visit San Antonio, which includes 87 employees, works daily to position San Antonio as a leading leisure and meetings destination. "Visit San Antonio takes great pride in its ability to attract and retain top talent," says Casandra Matej, president and CEO at Visit San Antonio.

Lincolnshire Marriott Resort Offers Tips for Top-Notch Team Building on a Budget



Lincolnshire Marriott Resort

Lincolnshire Marriott Resort Porte Cochere

The sales and event team at the Lincolnshire Marriott Resort in Illinois doesn't mind being called frugal — as long as they are helping clients have fun with rewarding team-building activities.

"We get a kick out of being as creative as possible for our meeting clients," says Julie Berry, director of sales and marketing at the Lincolnshire Marriott Resort. "Plus, we've found that the best team-building exercises don't have to cost a lot of money to be extremely valuable and memorable."

The Lincolnshire Marriott Resort has 28 meeting rooms and more than 40,000 sf of event space and acres of outdoor space, and groups can do a team-building exercise anywhere in or outside the resort. The tenured sales and event team welcomes the ingenuity and the energy these activities bring to the property.

Some recent budget-friendly and fun ideas have included:

Recycled Regatta: Three teams competed to each build a boat out of recycled materials that would actually hold a person and float. The first team to complete a boat and have a team member propel themselves across the pool was the winner.

Egg Drop Tournament: Corporate participants had a chance to redeem their middle-school egg-drop failures in a grown-up version of the activity. Using easy-to-find materials, each team

member created protective gear for a raw egg to drop from the second-story balcony above the main lobby — which the Lincolnshire Marriott Resort team was happy to completely ensconce in plastic wrap.

Chi-town Chili Cookoff: Chili tastes better when teams compete. It works as a cost-saving measure for meetings as well — no catering is needed when guests make their own dinner.

The meeting planners at the Lincolnshire Marriott Resort recommend incorporating meal preparations and cooking contests into team-building events to maximize their event budget.

Berry and the rest of the sales and event planning team look forward to inventing even more ideas for group team building on a budget.

"When the ideas are out of the box and crazy, it's more likely participants will build lasting connections with each other and gain a feeling of team unity that can last for a long time," Berry says.

For more information about the Lincolnshire Marriott Resort, for reservations or to inquire about events, meeting planners can visit the resort's website at marriott.com/chiln or contact the hotel sales team at 847-634-0100.

— Julie Berry, director of sales and marketing

RECOGNITIONS

Caesars Entertainment's Atlantic City Properties Receive Green Key Global Awards

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — Caesars Entertainment's three Atlantic City properties received 'green keys' from Green Key Global in recognition of leadership and commitment to corporate social responsibility and sustainability initiatives. Together, Harrah's Resort Atlantic City, Bally's Atlantic City and Caesars Atlantic City participated in the Green Key Meetings Program. In collaboration with Meeting Professionals International (MPI), the Green Key Meetings Program awarded each Caesars Entertainment property at least four out of five green keys for their sustainable operations at the facility level, including Harrah's Atlantic City's Waterfront Conference Center — the largest hotel-conference center from Baltimore to Boston —



Three Caesars properties in Atlantic City were recognized for corporate social responsibility efforts.

Caesars Entertainment

offering more than 208,000 sf of flexible meeting space. Green Key Global highlighted the meeting space for its strategies to reduce waste during meetings, such as: exclusively electronic communications with meeting planners; donating used goods to the community; and displaying a preference for reusable, versus disposable table settings. In contributing to a high sustainability rating, Green

Key Global noted that the three Caesars Entertainment properties feature guest rooms that have high-efficiency plumbing fixtures. "I'd like to commend Harrah's Resort Atlantic City, Bally's Atlantic City and Caesars Atlantic City for demonstrating a commitment to Responsible Meetings," said Gwen Migita, Caesars Entertainment global head of social impact, equity and sustainability.

NEW CONSTRUCTION

Austin Marriott Downtown Celebrates 'Topping Off' Event

AUSTIN, TX — To celebrate the completion of its structural framework, Austin Marriott Downtown hosted a 'topping-off' event in collaboration with local spirit masters, Garrison

Brothers Distillery. In place of raising the 'final beam,' the Austin Marriott Downtown raised three Garrison Brothers bourbon barrels via crane onto the hotel's rooftop to commemorate structural completion. The barrels will remain on the roof throughout the duration of the construction period until opening in mid-2020, at which time the hotel's first guests will

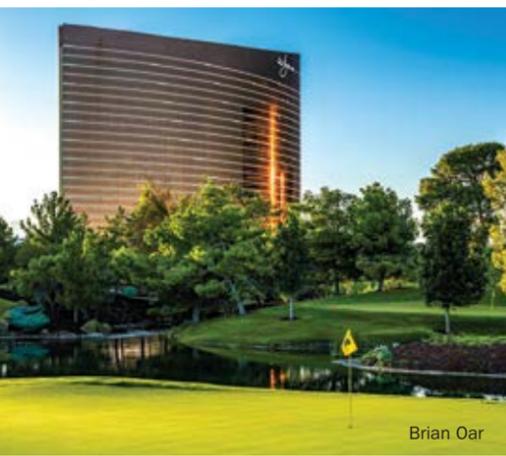
be treated to an exclusive Austin Marriott-inspired whiskey tasting. Austin Marriott Downtown will feature 613 guest rooms, including: 25 stunning suites, a rooftop pool and bar concept with breathtaking views, three bars and two locally inspired restaurant concepts on the ground level. Additionally, the hotel will offer more than 60,000 sf of meeting space.

GOLF VENUES

Wynn Golf Club Las Vegas Returns With Championship Course

LAS VEGAS, NV — The only resort golf course on the Las Vegas Strip recently returned at Wynn Las Vegas, with the grand reopening of the Wynn Golf Club. The original 18-hole championship course, established in 2005, has been reimaged by legendary golf course architect, Tom Fazio. The course sits on 129 acres of the resort's private

back yard, with eight all-new holes and 10 revamped holes. Fazio took special care to create a course suitable for players of all skill levels. New golfers will find it approachable and fun, while more experienced players will be tested by the movement of the land, locating the proper angles and getting close to the pins on the large flowing greens. "Tom Fazio has outdone himself designing a beautiful and unique new course that is even better than the one before," says Marilyn Spiegel, president of Wynn Las Vegas and Encore.



Brian Oar

OPENINGS

Grand Hyatt at SFO Officially Opens

SAN FRANCISCO, CA — Now boarding at San Francisco International Airport (SFO), Grand Hyatt at SFO has officially welcomed guests to experience the airport's first, and only, luxury hotel. From global and corporate business travelers to leisure guests, Grand Hyatt at SFO is offering travelers thoughtful amenities that bring together luxury and convenience, whether staying overnight or for the most comfortable layover. Within minutes, guests can travel from the hotel's own AirTrain to the lobby for check-in and be immediately greeted at Grand Hyatt at SFO with an abundance of natural light, soundproof, floor-to-ceiling windows, expansive airport views and an impressive art collection exclusively curated by the San Francisco Arts Commission. To de-stress pre or post flight, guests can rejuvenate with



The newly opened Grand Hyatt at SFO has soundproof, floor-to-ceiling windows.

Hornberger & Worstell

spa treatments and on-demand fitness classes at the 24-hour StayFit gym with Peloton bicycles. As part of Hyatt's expansion of 40 new West Coast hotels by 2021, the \$237 million luxury hotel sits on 4.2 acres and features 351

rooms with 22 suites; 14,435 sf of well-appointed meeting and event space; a 24-hour market; and signature restaurant, Quail & Crane, where guests can enjoy a vibrant, multicultural dining experience.

RENOVATIONS

Seminole Hard Rock & Casino Tampa Completes \$700 Million Expansion

TAMPA, FL — In true Hard Rock style, Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa recently unveiled its highly anticipated, \$700 million expansion following the brand's signature Guitar Smash and a high wire walk by the 'King of the High Wire,' Nik Wallenda. Home to Elvis Presley's iconic 24-karat, gold-leaf plated 1928 Kimball Piano Company Grand Piano, Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa now houses: 14 delectable food and beverage offerings;



Celebrities Nicole Kidman and Christie Brinkley with members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

a new, 14-story hotel tower offering 562 additional hotel rooms and suites; three pools; a 26,000-sf Rock Spa & Salon; and a 223,900-sf casino with an additional 1,000 slots and 41 table games throughout its new gaming spaces. "Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa is already one of

the largest and most profitable casinos in the United States," said Jim Allen, Hard Rock International chairman and CEO of Seminole Gaming. "The expansion will increase entertainment and dining options, and help us attract guests from throughout the country and around the world."

CRUISE INDUSTRY

Princess Cruises Welcomes New Ship, Discovery Princess

LOS ANGELES, CA — Princess Cruises has announced its sixth Royal-class

ship, due in November 2021, will be named Discovery Princess. It will be the first new ship in Princess history to be homeported in Los Angeles. Cruises are open for sale beginning early October, with itineraries set in the Mediterranean, Caribbean and South

America — before Discovery Princess arrives for its West Coast debut. The 3,660-passenger Discovery Princess is under construction at the Fincantieri shipyard in Monfalcone, Italy. Princess' repeat guests are eligible for a special promotion when booking early.

Guns, Mass Shootings & The Events Industry: Our Missing Voice

BY HOWARD GIVNER



For a number of years, I've been giving a presentation at industry conferences on "Disruptions Facing the Events Industry." Of all the various potential disruptions – economic, political, technological, social, etc. – gun violence and mass shootings at events is the one I've been most worried about. They pose an existential threat to the meetings and events industry: to the safety of our event attendees, the viability of the businesses that produce them and the livelihoods of the people they employ.

As of this writing, the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history – the 2017 Route 91 Harvest music festival in Las Vegas, in which 59 people were killed – took place at an event. Other mass shootings in recent years have also occurred at events: a movie premiere, a food festival and an employee gathering.

Recently, 145 CEOs sent a letter to the U.S. Senate, urging them to take action on this issue, including: Uber, Levi Strauss, Dick's Sporting Goods, Gap, Twitter, Condé Nast and Omnicom. Additionally, event and hospitality industry companies include: Eventbrite, Airbnb, Splash, Royal Caribbean Cruises and Stanlee Gatti Designs. It is long overdue that our industry join this effort.

The 'Duty of Care' Principle

At its core, this is a safety issue. The 'duty of care' principle calls for planners to do whatever is reasonably feasible to safeguard the well-being of event attendees, staff and other stakeholders. When thinking of all the things that could go wrong at an event, surely nothing would be worse than mass murder. This is our responsibility, plain and simple. Just about any other safety risk would galvanize the events industry to action

on numerous fronts. Yet the only discussions I've seen in the industry have focused on reactive measures, such as increased security and active shooter drills. We can, and must, address both the cause and the symptoms.

The Business Risk

One of the 9/11 Commission Report's most haunting statements is that those attacks could have been prevented. This shouldn't be a problem for our industry, since there have been shootings at festivals and other events. If, however, you're thinking, "Yeah, but that's different; I plan conferences," let's paint an image closer to home:

Picture someone committing a mass shooting at your most important, high-profile event. What would the fallout be for that event and your organization? What lawsuits would your company be facing? Other companies would likely cancel or dramatically curtail their own events. If a mass shooting occurred at a banking conference, for example, you can bet that executives at the other banks would be re-evaluating their event plans as well. Attendees outside the U.S. will start re-thinking coming to events here. In fact, more countries are issuing advisory warnings about the risks of gun violence when traveling to the U.S. The events industry could take years to recover.

Increased Costs

Further, events would start to incur significantly higher security costs, due to additional guards, metal detectors, physical barriers, surveillance cameras, etc. Registration lists may have to be scrutinized more carefully. Tighter security for vendors at the loading dock would slow the

installation process and require longer rental periods. The small armies of catering and event staff may have to go through background checks. Insurance for venues, hosts and vendors would increase.

Open Carry Laws

While a mass shooting is clearly the worst of the gun scenarios, event attendees openly carrying firearms should also be a cause for concern. Picture the impact of someone with an AR-15 slung over their shoulder walking your show floor, or someone with a holstered handgun arguing with registration personnel.

And even if you're able to bar firearms at your event, which a number of states won't allow you to do, it's unlikely you'll be able to stop people from being armed in common areas – e.g. convention center or hotel lobbies – or ancillary event sites like restaurants. (See: Can We Keep Guns Out Of Meetings?) Currently 44 states allow open carry of rifles and shotguns. Further, 31 states allow open carry of handguns with no permit required, while another 15 states require some permit or license. (Source: Giffords Law Center)

Where Is the Industry's Voice?

Given the potentially devastating impact of guns and gun violence, it's surprising, and quite frankly disappointing, that the meetings and events industry hasn't been more vocal in advocating for sensible gun safety. We have a voice when we want to use it. The movement to fight human trafficking has received broad support at the highest levels. The same can be said of incorporating sustainability and inclusiveness practices.

Ah, but those issues aren't controversial, some might say. No one is actually in favor of human trafficking, right? Well, look at the industry's response to recent anti-LGBTQ state laws, which did have strong support in those states. This is not a zero-sum issue. Tackling gun safety at events need not

come at the expense of any other worthwhile causes. We can walk and chew gum at the same time. What will it take before we start speaking out on the mortal threat gun violence poses to our businesses and the people we are charged with safeguarding at our events? Where is our outrage?

Taking a Stand

Now is the time to act. Let's not wait until yet another atrocity occurs at an event. Let's start by advocating two policy initiatives already enjoying widespread and bipartisan public support, and can make a huge impact:

1) Institute universal background checks by having the Senate pass the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019 (H.R. 8) which passed the House of Representatives early this year.

2) Reinstate the federal assault weapons ban that expired in 2004.

This is the bare minimum our industry should support, and is still a far cry from the regulations in most industrialized countries. Here are a few things you can do:

- Sign the Petition for Gun Safety at Events on behalf of our industry, supporting the

two basic gun safety proposals outlined above, which will be delivered to members of Congress and state legislatures, in consultation with the corporate affairs team at Everytown for Gun Safety.

- Join a growing coalition of CEOs, thought leaders, influencers and industry professionals who want to make a difference.

- Contact your elected officials and let them know how this issue affects your events and businesses.

- Speak out. Share your concerns on social media. Email editors at industry publications. Talk to your association leaders.

Stand up and be counted. The current system is unsustainable and we must work toward a solution together. Your event attendees' safety, and your livelihood, depend on it.

C&IT

“What will it take before we start speaking out on the **MORTAL THREAT** gun violence poses to our businesses and the people we are charged with safeguarding at our events?”



HOWARD GIVNER

Howard Givner is the founder and CEO of the Event Leadership Institute, which provides professional development resources for the meetings and events industry through a Netflix-style library of micro-learning videos and professional development courses. Previously, he was the founder of an award-winning event agency. Givner is a frequent industry speaker, educator and consultant on business growth, event strategy, innovation, event ROI and other topics. He can be reached at Howard@EventLeadershipInstitute.com.

5 Ways to Ensure Overachieving Isn't Undermining Your Success

BY MERILEE KERN, MBA

Overachievement is a concept that's seemingly become a gold standard on how to become a 'superstar' in business, career goals and life overall. Just Google search 'how to overachieve' and the web will dutifully deliver more than 355,000 resources to help propel your prosperity.

In today's fast-paced business climate, masses have surrendered themselves to overachievement in pursuit of business and career success. Not just ordinary success, but rather, the kind that exceeds expectations courtesy of excessive 'above and beyond' effort put forth. Some relent to a life of overachievement willingly and enthusiastically as they yearn to earn, while others grievously succumb to a multitude of pressures — both external and self-inflicted — and work themselves to extremes.

While overachievement certainly has its share of virtues, having induced profound innovation, breakthroughs, productivity and abundance for individuals, organizations, industries and economies at large, there's often a dark side to this extreme approach to advancement. For some, yes, dreams come true, but throngs of others miss the mark despite best efforts. "This often happens because they're aiming for achievements instead of at a deeper understanding of themselves and of what they want," says Keren Eldad, a certified business coach, keynote speaker and trusted adviser to industry-leading executives, acclaimed entrepreneurs and premier organizations.

"It's a silent story shared by many who present a happy, accomplished and enviable image; one of putting on pretenses and internally writhing with angst and anxiety; of never having enough, of insecurity, doubt and dis-

satisfaction — a state I have coined the 'Superstar Paradox,'" Eldad says.

Below, Eldad offers the five foundational insights to help ensure some of your overachievement behaviors or mindsets won't actually undermine your success or your level of life satisfaction even after you've actually realized 'superstar status.'

1. Reframe your success story. Overachievers often believe success only comes from power, money or status. Yes, those things are important benchmarks, but being successful in life overall should be the true Holy Grail.

So, if you are a C-suite executive, or aspire to be one, but are riddled with anxiety, stress, pain and dissatisfaction, it's evident that money and status isn't proving as worthwhile as it can and should be. To initiate change, be brave enough to reframe your personal story. Life isn't meant to be one-dimensional or even work-centered, so actually sit down and map out what you would hope for each facet of your life to look like if it were a true

success. This can include: marriage, children, extended family, friendships, professional networks, social media/networking, investments, travel, physical fitness, self-care, beauty, fashion and style, transportation, entertainment, hobbies and passions and so on. You'll soon see that life fulfillment means so much more than what happens on the work front. Once you start mapping it all out, you might come to the realization that you've been missing out on quite a lot in your quest for career glory.

2. Get out of your own way. Even 'superstars' create self-imposed limitations based on what they originally perceived their goal or benchmark of success to be. Once achieved, it's instinctive to want to bask in 'that place,'

both emotionally and physically. After all, you worked to extremes to get there. But, overachievers inevitably will want more, and then other kinds of self-imposed limitations kick in that are often founded on what we perceive our own capabilities and opportunities — or lack thereof — to be. Even the most confident overachievers suffer the 'can't rant' internal dialogue. Take heed that 'can't' usually is not a real thing. From "I can't afford to do what I really want" to "I can't start over now," — this word usually really means "I won't." Yes, you worked hard to earn your accolades and are pleased with where you are, but sometimes a hard pivot is needed to get you where you really want to go.

3. Classify and conquer your 'fatal flaw.' One definition of a 'fatal flaw' is that which causes an otherwise noble or exceptional individual to bring about their own downfall, which can be their own death — whether figuratively or literally. The idea that any particular 'fatal flaw' is holding us back is a primary reason why so many overachievers become hooked on their actualized achievements and come to rely on fake confidence and aggrandizement versus operating from a place of vulnerability and authenticity. Sometimes the phrase 'character flaw' is synonymous with this notion, revealing a bit more that the flaw is about the person themselves and not really his or her circumstance. So, to achieve 'superstar status' while fostering genuine, lasting happiness, it's imperative to discern if you have a 'fatal flaw' and, once identified, work wholeheartedly to resolve it — or learn how to function at a high-level with it.

4. Course-correct crippling self-constructs. A common obstacle to a 'superstar' realizing genuine happiness is their own reliance on self-esteem, which is different from self-acceptance. Self-esteem is defined as "a positive or negative orientation toward oneself; an overall evaluation of one's worth or value" and, for overachievers, depends on external conditions being met and how

they then 'rank' against others. Self-acceptance, which is a critical factor in genuine happiness and authenticity, is founded on other key self-constructs like self-compassion — a person's ability to forgive themselves for essentially being human and imperfect. Overachievers and aptly accomplished 'superstars' are susceptible to being heavily dependent upon the opinions of others, their corresponding status and their perceived stature versus understanding, and primarily relying on, self-acceptance. In many cases, this feeling of unworthiness is what coaches like

me consider fatal flaws for the overachiever. It's that 'something' about themselves they feel makes them 'less than.' For overachievers, what becomes fatal flaws are often regular imperfections like weight, assets, health, children, relationships and their home.

5. Pray for a storm. If you didn't buy all the above points yet and think, "Nah, I got this," then brace yourself because a curve ball is bound to throw you off your game. But, this unimagined disruption can be a GOOD thing! So many overachievers spend most of their lives working to avoid the pain of uncertainty or problems, assuring themselves with zealous overconfidence that "it's all going to work out" based on the current

approach or way of thinking — and never mind that nagging dissatisfaction and angst. However, I've found that when 'superstars' are most comfortable and when stress finally boils over, they not only find themselves immersed in a major issue, but often a major 'storm.' When this happens — embrace it — open yourself to the series of new possibilities it presents. Yes, it will be uncomfortable and tremendously unsettling. But it can also present an exciting opportunity: the 'wake-up call' to finally recognize where you are and what got you there, what weaknesses and threats have gotten the best of you, and work on thoughtfully strategized resolutions that'll make you emotionally stronger and your circumstances better than before. **C&IT**

“Life isn't meant to be one-dimensional or even work-centered, so actually **SIT DOWN** and **MAP OUT** what you would hope for each facet of your life to look like if it were a true success.”



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MERILEE KERN, MBA

As the executive editor and producer of "The Luxe List," Kern is an internationally regarded brand analyst, strategist and futurist. As a prolific branding and marketplace trends pundit, Kern spotlights noteworthy industry innovators, change makers, movers and shakers. Experts, brands, products, services, destinations and events across all categories are spotlighted in her exclusive cross-media platform through print and online publications, TV and radio. Connect with her at www.TheLuxeList.com, Instagram www.instagram.com/LuxeListReviews, Twitter www.twitter.com/LuxeListEditor, Facebook www.facebook.com/TheLuxeList, and LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/in/MerileeKern.

BUDGETING FOR 2020

Attendees Continue to Crave Engaging Experiences, But You Don't Have to Bust Your Budget

BY PATRICK SIMMS

The experiential trend in the meetings industry looks to continue into 2020, and into the foreseeable future. Attendees of all types of meetings, not just incentive programs, seem more than ever to crave engagement beyond run-of-the-mill sessions and meal functions. The budget for the program must therefore support an impactful experience — however it is defined for a given group. A telling statistic

comes from the American Express Meetings & Events' 2020 Global Meetings and Events Forecast: With a 10% budget increase, most respondents said they would invest in an "improved on-site experience."

Guiding that investment is the corporate culture, notes Amy Durocher, director of global accounts with Scottsdale, Arizona-based Global Cynergies LLC, a venue sourcing company. "More creative companies and

those that have a higher percentage of millennial employees are going to be looking to create experiences that are different than perhaps your more traditional Fortune 500 or 100 type of companies," she observes. Naturally, the type of meeting also informs the 'design' of the experience. A unique experience is clearly a high priority for incentive trips, for example, and that can involve a more significant investment. "Every year we have to raise the bar, so they want to qualify and have this experience they couldn't have on their own," says Ira Lawrence Almeas, CITE, president of West Orange, New Jersey-based Impact Incentives & Meetings Inc. For example, while a standard city tour at the destination may be more affordable than an exclusive 'behind the scenes' tour, the latter is more conducive to the goal of delivering that unique experience.

The experiential trend even extends to training meetings, which are often stereotyped as a 'no frills' kind of event. "We've noticed an overall trend in the meeting and training space, in that people are very interested in experience," says Beth Becker, Global Meeting Services Manager with Downers Grove, Illinois-based MicroTek, a training solutions company. She finds that millennials and Generation Z attendees want training spaces and experiences that are 'interesting' and schedules that allow for more networking and impromptu breakouts. In some cases, a little added investment can create a more engaging meeting setup. "If budget allows — rent couches and chairs that create a more casual, comfortable look and feel," suggests Kim Hentges, CMP, event manager with Flower Mound, Texas-based IntelliCentrics. "For a working breakfast, lunch or dinner, rent unique tables and chairs to create a different vibe that is felt as soon as the attendees

walk through the door. Décor adds to transitioning from the normal to the unique or different."

ENHANCING THE MEETING EXPERIENCE

Decisions about whether to invest in elevating the meeting experience must be made in the context of impending increases in air and lodging costs, as these may impinge on the budget available for such enhancements. The 2020 Global Meetings and Events Forecast predicts that overall meetings budgets in North America will rise only moderately next year — by 1.8% in the United States — and notes that this budget expansion is "likely not enough to cover the increase in air and hotel rates." The survey predicts

"I do think that people are a bit more sophisticated in the way they eat, and they want that to be tended to when they're at a hotel for several days."

AMY DUROCHER
Director, Global Accounts
Global Cynergies LLC



a 4.3% rise in daily hotel rates for the United States and a 2.8% rise in group air rates for North America.

While many corporate meeting and travel departments are surely preparing for such effects of inflation, Durocher observes that other companies may be more focused on the immediate future when it comes to meeting costs. "We at Global Cynergies and myself specifically, are still seeing quite a bit of short-term business, especially when it relates to our corporate clients. So, some of that forecasting can seem a little less top-of-mind, because we're still working with such short booking windows. Many clients are still booking meetings within 90 days," she explains. "But when corporate clients are forecasting out for their larger programs that do have a more extended booking window, then certainly the forecast in

room rate and air travel increases is something to talk about."

DEALING WITH RISING COSTS

Rising air travel costs may especially affect incentive programs, which are often taken to exotic destinations to entice potential qualifiers. Planners may wish to look closer at domestic cities that can offer an intriguing experience along with travel savings. "If you have a limited budget, you're not going to go a far distance where the air might be half your budget," Almeas says. "Within the U.S., going to a second-tier city such as Charleston, for example, or going to Sedona or even Sonoma/Napa could make for very unique experiences." Most recently, Almeas planned an incentive trip to Toronto, which boasts attractions such as the Hockey Hall of Fame and is accessible to vineyards in Niagara. The air cost is reasonable and the exchange rate is favorable, he notes.

Another way to reduce air travel costs is to reduce the number of attendees. The savings certainly extend beyond transportation.

According to the 2020 Global Meetings and Events Forecast, the average cost per attendee per day — excluding air travel — in the United States begins at \$539 for internal team meetings/training meetings; \$632 for product launches; \$640 for senior leadership meetings/board meetings; and \$685 for incentives/special events. For many companies, a more palatable option along these lines is to reduce the physical attendance. Younger professionals in particular are more receptive to the idea of virtual participation in meetings, Becker observes. "Much of the new generation is very much tied to work/life balance, and they're very technically adept and used to a virtual learning environment," she says. "So they don't feel it necessary to get on a plane



Courtesy Amy Durocher

Amy Durocher, of Global Cynergies LLC, says a charitable activity creates a positive experience for the team and for the community, and is always budget-friendly.

Request For Proposals (RFPs) in order to force the hotel to fully disclose any hidden fees that they might have, so we make sure to include those in our total cost,” Becker explains. “And you can put in your contract, that if you didn’t disclose these fees to me, I don’t have to pay them.” The next step is to try to get the fees waived or reduced. Unfortunately, resort fees and service fees will not be open to negotiation in many cases. According to the 2020 Global Meetings and Events Forecast, 83% of responding global hoteliers indicate they are most open to negotiating room rates; 75% say amenities; and 75% say Wi-Fi. But only 27% and 42% were open to negotiating resort fees and service fees, respectively. Becker’s experience reflects this result: “I have not been very successful in negotiating resort fees. Occasionally, I’ve been able to come down a few points on service fees, but even then it’s really difficult. So, it wouldn’t be my first place to go to negotiate, because I don’t think there is a lot of flexibility in those costs.”

and would rather take the eight hours for the event, instead of a day before and after to fly there.” Virtual meeting technology can also assist companies in regionalizing a meeting, i.e., breaking it down into smaller meetings held close to regional offices so as to reduce or eliminate air travel costs. General sessions can then be mediated by videoconferencing, for example.

Apart from rising air and lodging costs, F&B increases from suppliers are also important to factor into the budget. “Certainly, that’s something that can be a percentage increase year over year,” Durocher says. In addition, there is an ongoing trend toward healthy and organic foods, specialty foods and culinary exploration, etc., which tend to carry a higher price tag. “I do think that people are a bit more sophisticated in the way they eat, and they want that to be tended to when they’re at a hotel for several days,” Durocher says. “Hotels may have a special market menu that focuses on local and sustainable, and there can be a higher cost associated.”

BE AWARE OF SURCHARGES AND FEES

As the ideal lodging budget takes into account all of a hotelier’s surcharges and fees, it’s important to be

fully aware of these costs. Some planners are seeing familiar fees repackaged or renamed. The resort fee, for example, may be called a facilities fee or a destination fee. “I think hotels are getting very creative with add-on or hidden fees,” Becker says. “You’re also seeing an increase in service charges. There was a recent forum discussion about people adding on to the service fee and they were calling it an event fee. So you may see a 23% service fee and an 8% event fee, which brings them to a 31% service fee, basically. And, they justify it by saying that the

“We’ve noticed an overall trend in the meeting and training space in that people are very interested in experience.”

BETH BECKER
Global Meeting Services Manager
MicroTek



event fee is for room setup and tear-down, but that’s really just part of the cost of your event. The service fee used to be the tip for the staff, and that’s changed over the years to where now it encompasses a lot of other things and goes more to the hotel than the staff.”

The first step is to secure transparency on such fees. To that end, “We’ve implemented language in all of our

“Sometimes we will get RFP responses from the hotel and it will say very clearly, ‘We do not negotiate on our resort fee’ or ‘We do not negotiate on our facilities fee,’” Durocher says. “So at that point, we are very transparent with our client and say, ‘We’re looking at your overall budget and you need to know

upfront this is not an area the hotel is going to negotiate on, so to find some additional value for you, we’re going to need to work on the other areas of the program.” The inflexibility on these fees isn’t “so common that I see it multiple times in any given destination, but common enough that I might see it in one or two hotels in a particular destination,” she adds.



“Every year we have to raise the bar so they want to qualify and have this experience they couldn’t have on their own.”

IRA LAWRENCE ALMEAS, CITE
President
Impact Incentives & Meetings Inc.

CONSIDER OTHER HOTEL OPTIONS

Planners looking to save on lodging while delivering an engaging on-site experience might look to some of the boutique brands that major chains have introduced. These can be especially appealing to younger attendees, and offer a more modest price point. Along these lines, Almeas suggests Marriott’s Moxy Hotels. “It’s Marriott’s new entry-level, hip hotel. When you check in there’s no registration desk; there’s just a bar at the entrance way. You check in at the bar and get a drink. Their rooms are nothing special, but they’re a little funky and off-beat. If you have a millennial group, they might not need the chocolate on the pillows and the slippers under the bed at night when there is turn-down service. You can then use the savings and do some really cool experiences that are local, such as distillery tastings or a give-back for the community.” Durocher cites Marriott’s AC Hotels as “a more modern, streamlined approach to hotel design, but there are also many independent and smaller brands, especially in the urban centers, that kind of tick those boxes and appeal to the younger clientele. Their focus is on the public spaces of the hotel versus the accommodations, but the accommodations are still very chic and trendy.” The caveat to these properties is that meeting space can be rather limited.

For some groups, opting for a lower-tier hotel, even if it’s part of a trendy brand and has adequate meeting space, will be seen as compromising the experience for the participants. Among the most popular options for reducing costs while preserving

upscale lodging, F&B and perhaps off-site events, is to cut the number of nights in the program. This is identified as the primary area to cut costs in the 2020 Global Meetings and Events Forecast. Compared to eliminating events from the annual meeting schedule, holding shorter programs appears to be the best option. Even holding the meeting at a lower-quality venue is arguably preferable to canceling the event. “When budgets become tighter and/or the economy takes a turn, it is still important for purpose and branding to be present, whether that is having a smaller meeting in a three-star venue, restaurant or even at your office,” Hentges says. “Being visible does add value, versus the alter-

native of your customers or potential customers wondering why that annual meeting is not taking place.”

The second most-preferred cost-cutting area identified in the American Express Meetings & Events survey is off-site evening events. While eliminating such events may be seen as running counter to the experiential trend, that’s not necessarily so. “You do see corporate clients who are giving their attendees a free evening,” Durocher says. “That limits the expense and might appeal to those attendees who like to have a little more freedom on how they’re spending their time in a particular city. So I think it can tick more than one box.”

Overall, planners budgeting for 2020 will face the typical escalations in air, lodging and F&B costs, together with the challenge of hard-to-negotiate resort and service fees. But thankfully, there are many strategies that can help them offset these costs while ‘ticking the box’ of an engaging experience for attendees. Once the ‘must haves’ for that experience are identified, the most sensible cost-cutting measures will emerge. **C&IT**

Be Budget-Friendly

Cost-Saving Tips From a Planning Pro

Kim Hentges, CMP, event manager with IntelliCentrics, a healthcare credentialing company, and former senior planner of corporate events and incentives with Lennox Industries Inc., has accumulated a variety of tips that can help her colleagues come in under budget. She says, “Know your audience and purpose in order to create the appropriate meeting or event, so the budget is created and spent wisely.” In addition, planners should remember that “There is always more than one way to execute something; know your options.”



Hentges

Her key points include:

- Be sure to ask for all fees and

service charges associated with each quoted proposal, in order to budget accordingly.

- DMCs are great partners, but it can be more cost effective to go directly to each supplier partner for their services and/or products.
- Utilize what the venue or hotel has in-house versus rental.
- Work from program history when ordering food and beverage, to maintain realistic minimums.
- Reuse centerpieces throughout the program. And if utilizing floral centerpieces, check with the venue to see if they can store and refrigerate them overnight. **C&IT**

Getting Down to Business at Gaming Resorts

BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS

A SURE BET

Photo via Pixabay

When it comes to deciding where to set a meeting, gaming resorts are often an excellent choice. For some groups, gaming properties — and often the larger destinations in which they're located — are a big draw that boosts attendance. In addition to casinos, many gaming properties also feature high-profile, in-house entertainment and exceptional restaurants helmed by acclaimed chefs, decreasing the need to go off-property, which saves on transportation costs. And many feature additional amenities such as spas and golf courses.

NOT A DISTRACTION

While conventional thinking may be that casinos are a distraction enticing attendees away from the business at hand, most planners don't find that to be true. And though gaming destinations sometimes get a bad rap as more about extravagance and indulgence than business, that's not generally true, either. Las Vegas, for example, is famed for casinos but is also a huge draw for conventions and meetings because it has the infrastructure and support to make meetings productive and successful, and a wealth of opportunities to provide the much sought-after 'wow' factor.

Lee Bentley MacLeod, CMP, president and owner, Sterling Event Planning of Williamsburg Inc., brought a group from a national food company to the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas with great success.

"We chose the hotel because of location, price, sales group, meeting capacities and the fact that we were able to have exclusive use of all meeting and venue space. It was a perfect fit for this national sales meeting as we were able to control all meeting space for our specific needs," MacLeod says. "The meeting space was isolated so that all focus was on the goals of the meeting. The venue locations, both outside and inside, were very convenient for the attendees and the out-



Pechanga Resort Casino was the ideal venue for Southwest Traders Inc.'s annual trade show. Above, attendees enjoy the MVP dinner at Journey's End.

door space was much appreciated after long hours in meetings."

The accommodations also worked well. "We were able to handle our VIPs with a private check-in and upgraded accommodations very efficiently and effectively in one tower. The two additional towers housed our attendees and special guests. These towers were closer to the meeting space so that was also a great benefit."

"The entertainment options that this location brings to any group are amazing."

LEE BENTLEY MACLEOD, CMP
President and Owner
Sterling Event Planning of Williamsburg Inc.



As for Las Vegas itself, MacLeod sees it as a positive. "We really enjoyed being very close to the airport and off the main Strip," she says. "Our attendees were focused on the meeting but were able to move onto the Strip in the evenings after our schedule was concluded. Flights were easy and economical from both coasts and ground transportation was uncomplicated. The entertainment options that this location brings to any group are amazing."

Las Vegas hosts many conferences far larger than MacLeod's group of

700, but that didn't make MacLeod feel any less important. "The hotel management and employees made us feel very much the center of attention," she says.

While gaming didn't factor into the decision to meet in Las Vegas, MacLeod notes that it was viewed as an additional amenity. In addition to providing the right meeting space and range of accommodations,

MacLeod says the hotel supported the meeting in multiple other ways, not the least of which was with an incredible staff. "Michael Catalano, our sales manager, was outstanding and responded to all of our needs.

The entire service team was outstanding and truly unbelievable. And the entire hotel staff — including the setup team, culinary group and top management — all went beyond their normal duties to insure the program's success." Moreover, she adds, "The hotel helped us to connect to the right people for our décor and entertainment needs. Although we brought our own A/V team, the hotel's A/V team became a part of our family and we all worked together toward the success of this program."

As with any meeting, there were



Pechanga Resort Casino has 200,000 sf of gaming space, and recently completed a 27-month, \$300 million expansion.

just a casino and that it has many other things to offer. And we did offer our best customers a free night to enjoy the resort.”

Orozco’s group didn’t have any need to go off-property. “We didn’t have to use another venue.

Pechanga has everything you could possibly need. We used hotel functions for our vendors and guests. Rooms were very nice, and I heard everyone loved the new pools,” Orozco says, noting that the resort had recently been renovated. “The proximity to the rooms from the conference hall was very close, and our conference space was exactly everything we needed and more.”

The group made use of the resort’s A/V and Wi-Fi, which Orozco describes as “great.” She also has high praise for Pechanga’s A/V staff. “The A/V manager was always checking to see how things were going. There were no issues.”

In fact, she notes, “Every staff member at the hotel was super friendly. You couldn’t ask to work with anyone better than our sales manager and our catering and conference managers. They are always one step ahead.”

Some of the Southwest Traders Inc. attendees took part in a tournament at the resort’s golf facility. “We had a golf tournament the day before our product show,” Orozco says. “It was amazing. The golf course is beautiful and our guests really appreciated the venue.”

As for meals, the group used a couple of different options for dinners: Journey’s End, one of the resorts many dining venues, as well as one of the conference halls. “The food was absolutely amazing,” Orozco says. “Everything was superb and we received a lot of compliments on the quality of the food.”

occasional challenges, but none without solutions. “Problems always arise when working with this many people as change is constant,” MacLeod says. “When these instances occurred, we worked together to resolve any issues and come up with a solution that worked for everyone.”

Her advice to planners considering Las Vegas, “Analyze the goals of the meeting and size of the meeting before looking at any particular hotel. Once this is established, find the location that will best service your needs and respond to your changes as they come.”

In this case, the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas was the perfect choice. And it will no doubt continue to be a perfect choice for many groups — but under a new flag with a new design. In February, construction begins on a project to develop the property as the new Virgin Hotels Las Vegas, part of the Curio Collection by Hilton. Slated to open at the end of next year, the design will include 1,504 ‘chambers’ with considerable in-room technology, an ‘immersive’ 60,000-sf casino, more than 5 acres of poolside spaces, multiple dining venues from some of the nation’s hottest restaurateurs and 110,000-plus sf of ‘re-inspired’ meeting, event and convention space.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

With an office in Temecula, Cali-

fornia, choosing Pechanga Resort Casino for an annual trade show was an obvious choice for Rosalinda Orozco, HR manager and event planner with Southwest Traders Inc., a product distribution company with centers throughout the west. This year’s trade show drew about 500 attendees.

“We chose Pechanga as a venue not only because of the convenience that it’s in the same town as our warehouse, but also because it’s the halfway point to our customers in San Diego and Los Angeles,” Orozco says.

“Pechanga will have whatever you need. And if not, they will do their best to make it happen.”

ROSALINDA OROZCO
HR Manager and Event Planner
Southwest Traders Inc.



But it was more than just location. “Pechanga Resort Casino has something for everyone to enjoy,” she adds. “Pechanga will have whatever you need. And if not, they will do their best to make it happen.”

While the casino was not part of the meeting, Orozco says, “The casino itself and the new pools were an added bonus to attract our customers.”

She did have some concerns that not all customers would like meeting in a casino venue. “We made sure that everyone knew that Pechanga is not

If there’s any downside, it’s that Pechanga is increasingly growing in popularity. “Plan ahead,” Orozco advises, “because the word is getting out about how great Pechanga is for an event. It is a go-to destination for sure.” Orozco and Southwest Traders Inc. were so pleased with the meeting this year that they’ve already selected Pechanga Resort Casino for next year’s show.

ISLAND FLAVOR

Far to the east, the Bahamas also offer resorts featuring casinos along with a slew of other amenities, not the least of which is the balmy, blue ocean teeming with marine life. Atlantis, Paradise Island is one of them. The luxurious complex boasts: 3,400 rooms across five distinct properties; the largest casino in the Bahamas; a 30,000-sf spa; a 141-acre water park; the world’s largest, open-air marine habitat with more than 50,000 aquatic animals representing more than 250 marine species; and more than 100 marine biologists ready to guide guests into the wonder of ocean life with hands-on experiences at Dolphin Cay. Atlantis’ Conference Center encompasses 200,000 sf of indoor meeting spaces, including the Imperial Ballroom, which has the capacity for groups of up to 4,000. Additionally, there are 300,000 sf of outdoor event space with multiple meeting facilities. While Atlantis has made its mark, it continues to evolve. Most recently, the



Attendees of an event for Business Incentives Worldwide took advantage of the oceanfront atmosphere at Grand Hyatt Baha Mar in the Bahamas.

all-suite accommodations at The Reef property were refreshed.

Across the bridge in Nassau proper, Baha Mar is another increasingly popular choice for meetings and conventions. Norma Baumann, senior account manager with Business Incentives Worldwide, brought a group of executives there this past summer.

“We loved that the destination is one-of-a-kind, and that its relaxing atmosphere allows guests to take a step back and take it all in,” she says. The group used the Baha Mar Convention, Arts & Entertainment Center for meetings and Grand Hyatt Baha Mar as the base hotel.

“As we were planning the event, the quality of lodging had to be suitable for our attendees,” Baumann says. “Grand Hyatt Baha Mar’s high-end resort feel was aligned with what we were looking for. The convention center’s meeting space is incredible as there’s a lot to work with, and we appreciated how central it was to other venues and resort amenities.”

With nearly 1,800 in attendance, the group required a large hotel and the Grand Hyatt Baha Mar is exactly that. “Grand Hyatt Baha Mar had the inventory to keep our entire group together. We also knew that we wanted to embrace local culture and we appreciated that the Hyatt rooms have a Bahamian touch to them, in addition to being spacious and elegant.”

The Convention, Arts & Entertainment Center creates a strong sense of place, not only in its island style, but also because it prominently features the artwork of Bahamian artists. “For our events, we used the convention center and conference space, which was an eight-minute walk from our guests’ rooms. The convention center provided adequate A/V, and Wi-Fi

Atlantis, Paradise Island in the Bahamas remains one of the top gaming resorts for planners and attendees.

throughout the property was strong and reliable,” Baumann notes. “We were also pleased with the catering capabilities — the presentation, timing and taste were fantastic. While we did not use the hotel for décor, we were satisfied with all elements of the convention center and planning process. We were so impressed with how the staff worked to help deliver an outstanding President’s Club event.”

“We loved that the destination is one-of-a-kind and that its relaxing atmosphere allows guests to take a step back and take it all in.”

NORMA BAUMANN
Senior Account Manager
Business Incentives Worldwide



Baumann especially appreciated the high level of service. “The sales office provided excellent support throughout the planning process,” she says, “specifically the director of group sales and the senior sales manager. We understand that the process takes a village and their willingness to listen helped quell our worries for the event. While on property, we always had one direct, on-site contact, who proved to be absolutely great. He was incredibly responsive, and truly understood our program and what we were trying to achieve.”

Like other planners who set meetings in casino resorts, Baumann didn’t necessarily consider the casino a factor in choosing the hotel and destination. “But the gaming aspect was an added value to our guests’ stay as our

attendees skewed younger,” she says. There were some potential challenges to work through in terms of island infrastructure. “Over the course of several site inspections, we realized

that the power goes out from time to time and could impact our group events and awards nights,” Baumann says. “The team decided to bring in two additional generators to ensure that the elaborate evenings would run seamlessly.”

For Baumann, it really is all about teamwork. To planners thinking about meeting at Baha Mar — or anywhere for that matter — she advises, “Communicate your expectations immediately. As we are all working toward the same goal, it’s imperative to work side-by-side as a team to accomplish our joint vision.”

Planners should also know this about Grand Hyatt Baha Mar: It may be the only property where you can introduce your attendees to ‘flamingo

yoga.’ Yes, real flamingos practicing yoga with attendees.

According to a representative for the property, “The flamingos are actually ‘participating’ in the class — as best as they can. The flow is led by an instructor who is very comfortable with the flamingos and understands that the birds are very ‘hands on.’ The birds will get on the towels, mats, hair and anything else they can find. Their beaks are like fingertips and

whenever there’s something new, their curiosity takes over. They especially love the mats, because they play into all of their senses. They love the sound from their feet on the mat, and the texture seems to be fun to them.”

Alas, there may not be many destinations offering ‘flamingo yoga,’ however, there are a ton of destinations and resorts that provide excellent meeting options in addition to top-level gaming opportunities. The two are definitely not mutually exclusive.

MORE RESORTS TO CONSIDER

Planners who have not visited MGM Resorts lately will find much that’s new. Last year, ARIA Resort & Casino Convention Center underwent a \$165 million expansion resulting in an additional 200,000 sf of technologically advanced, flexible space within four stories. Highlights include a dramatic glass-enclosed venue and striking indoor/open-air spaces.

The MGM Grand Conference center underwent a \$130 million expansion late last year that added 250,000 sf and included an expansion of the resorts’ Stay Well Meetings. Of interest to association executive boards is the new, 77,000-sf conference space at Park MGM, which includes Madison Meeting Center and Ide-

Talking Stick Resort offers attendees gaming, fine dining, golf, a spa and three pools.

ation Studio, the first executive meeting center in Las Vegas specifically designed to meet the needs of small groups. Large groups have the Park Theater, which accommodates up to 5,200. The expansion was completed late last year.

When the much-anticipated CAESARS FORUM opens next spring, it will already have significant bookings. Caesars Entertainment says it has now secured more than \$300 million in business for the new 550,000-sf facility. Industry powerhouses MPI, Cvent, Conference Direct and HelmsBriscoe all have selected the space for upcoming annual meetings.

Of course, Las Vegas doesn’t have a lock on desirable gaming resorts. Atlantic City is the gaming go-to on the East Coast, and plenty has been happening there as well. Last year, Revel re-opened as Ocean Casino Resort with 1,299 guest rooms, an expansive spa, 160,000 sf of event space and a Topgolf Swing Suite. After a \$500 million investment, Hard Rock International completely transformed the former Taj Mahal Casino, reopening it last year as a Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City.

Resorts Casino Hotel has expanded the Margaritaville LandShark Bar & Grill on the boardwalk with Fins Bar, a year-round beach bar experience. Live entertainment, an expanded bar and a 2,300-sf boardwalk deck are among its highlights. Tropicana purchased The Chelsea Hotel, bringing its room total to 2,730. The new Chelsea Tower at Tropicana Atlantic City includes the newly reopened Sea Spa, and for groups holding rooms in both properties, they’re conveniently linked via skybridge.

Finally, Harrah’s Resort Atlantic City’s Coastal Tower is in the midst a \$56 million upgrade, various infrastructure projects continue, the Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall underwent a \$10 million renovation and the city has approved a micro-brewery/axe-throwing facility scheduled to debut later this year.

In Scottsdale, Arizona, Talking Stick Resort offers 113,000 sf of flexible meeting space and gets high marks

for its casino and luxurious accommodations. The casino has more than 50 table games, 800 slot machines and hosts daily poker tournaments. Attendees can visit Topgolf at Riverwalk right across the street, or play a few rounds at Talking Stick Golf Club’s two courses.

Groups that love meeting in Florida in the winter months are in luck as two properties should be on planners’ radars. A combined \$2.2 billion project includes expansions of the Seminole

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa and Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. In Hollywood, the expansion includes a 638-room guitar tower. There’s also a new, 13.5-acre pool experience, expanded casino and spa and a new Hard Rock Live. In Tampa, the expansion features a 14-story tower with 562 guest rooms, three new pools and an expanded casino, plus the Hard Rock Event Center with its 17,000-sf ballroom among other spaces. **C&IT**

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THE IMPORTANCE OF FACE TIME



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By Every Measure, Face-to-Face Meetings Beat Virtual Meetings

BY DEREK REVERON

Throughout the history of meeting planning, attendees have traveled to gather in one destination.

However, in recent years, advancing technology, the rising cost of air travel and the need to use time more efficiently have prompted some planners and stakeholders to hold more virtual meetings.

Meeting via video conferencing, web conferencing, Skype, FaceTime teleconferencing and by other virtual means are becoming more common because technological meetings are relatively inexpensive, convenient and easy to organize.

Planners typically use virtual meetings as an add-on to in-person meetings for certain groups and purposes. Indeed, virtual meetings are sometimes necessary depending on a planner's needs and goals.

Virtual meetings, like those held in person, can allow participants to share content and ideas, make presentations and review documents. But virtual meetings won't ever replace face-to-face meetings because they best help planners meet all their goals.

Beau Ballin, vice president, commercial leader, North America, CWT Meetings & Events, explains why in-person meetings are best.

MEETING WITH A PURPOSE

"Every meeting has a purpose," Ballin says. "Most fall into the categories of engaging attendees to sell more, buy more or learn more. Ultimately, these meetings drive bottom-line profitability for their sponsoring

organizations. The bottom line: It's not about which meetings are best for face-to-face, but rather can you afford not to meet in person?"

Surveys generally show that attendees almost always prefer meeting face-to-face to meeting virtually.

"Face-to-face meetings in our experience, as measured by CWT, have a 90% preference," Ballin says. "Stronger relationship building, less distraction and better decision making are the top reasons for such a strong preference."

Ballin adds: "In-person meetings create emotional connections to peers, products and corporate

created and enhanced."

"If business results are a product of relationships, then results follow," Axtell adds. "Candid conversations are tied to trust and safety, which are hard to obtain unless a relationship is first established."

Axtell adds that, while in-person meetings may be more expensive than technologically enabled versions, in-person meetings are more cost-effective in the long run.

Ballin agrees. "In almost all cases, an in-person meeting will pay significant dividends in sales growth compared to meeting cost," Ballin says.

And, adds Ballin, planners can show that face-to-face meetings are more cost effective.

"There is a myth in the meetings community that ROI is difficult to measure," Ballin says. "I would submit that for the purpose of sales kickoffs, product launches and user conferences, that it's quite easy to measure the cost per attendee against incremental sales growth

"The bottom line is, it's not about which meetings are best for face-to-face, but rather can you afford not to meet in person?"

BEAU BALLIN

Vice President, Commercial Leader, North America
CWT Meetings & Events



visions. While virtual opportunities continue to emerge, they lack the connectivity amongst attendees and the memory recall driven by experience and emotion."

Paul Axtell, author of the book "Meetings Matter" and corporate trainer and consultant at Contextual Program Designs, specializing in how to run productive and effective corporate meetings, agrees.

"Face-to-face meetings will always be important because they are best at helping planners get results," Axtell says. "Face-to-face meetings allow relationships to be

following three months, six months, nine months and 12 months from the meeting date."

Axtell says that the financial benefits of in-person meetings stem from the ability to better align goals and strategies.

"People need to be heard before they will align with each other," Axtell says. "Aligning requires eye contact, non-verbal clues, attention and empathy. These rarely happen except when people meet in small groups in the same location."

Face-to-face meetings also prosper because people have an innate need to see each other in order to cement



Shelby Soblick

Amberlee Huggins, DMCP, of CSI DMC, says in-person meetings are crucial for networking. Pictured, employees from CSI DMC offices nationwide met for their All Hands Meeting 2019 held in Hollywood, Florida.

important business and social relationships. Meeting in person makes it easier to make an impression and build a personal business 'brand' based on conduct, speech, intelligence, etc.

According to Amberlee Huggins, DMCP, president and chief marketing officer at CSI DMC, "People are social beings, and while social media provides an outlet to engage virtually, face-to-face connection is at the core of how we experience each other in a holistic way. Networking in person allows us to build trust and empathy and an opportunity to bond over a shared moment."

Huggins adds that in-person meetings provide a multitude of ordinary ways for attendees to meet and bond.

"At its simplest level, take having a meal together, how it feels to share food flavors and talk about it with those around you," Huggins says. "Over and over again it's been proven that team-building activities or give-back projects yield far greater results and a sense of unity when people gather together in a single place."

Technology will increasingly enhance, not replace, face-to-face meetings.

According to the American Express 2018 Global Meetings and Events Forecast, "Regional meeting leaders across regions agree that bringing people together virtually may be helpful for smaller meetings or to complement a live, face-to-face meeting, but virtual meetings will not replace face-to-face."

However, technology will continue to complement and transform meetings and events.

"We expect that technology will continue to make an impact on the overall end-to-end management of the delivery of meetings and events, and on the attendee experience perspective," according to the American Express report.

The report adds, "Modern attendees expect an online experience will be available to enhance their face-to-face experience and are eager to deploy technologies that facilitate personal event attendance goals, such as networking and interacting more deeply with content."

Ballin agrees with the American Express report. "In-person meetings are in fact most effective when followed by virtual or remote meetings to reinforce key learnings, conduct knowledge checks or reach those unable to attend in person," Ballin says.

Ironically, face-to-face meetings grow more important as the world becomes more virtually interconnected. That's a big reason why in-person meetings are on the rise even as planners selectively use technology-enabled meetings.

According to last year's CWT Meetings & Events Future Trends report, corporations are having more meetings due to the strong economy. In addition, according to the survey, 92 percent of planners think face-to-face meetings have intangible benefits that outweigh any savings through long-distance meetings.

FACING BUDGET CONCERNS

The CWT report also notes that planners continue to juggle face-to-face meetings and budget concerns.

"Budget restrictions were the most commonly cited hurdle, with nearly two in five respondents saying this had prevented them from meeting face-to-face," according to the report. "Instituting a travel freeze towards the end of the year is an annual ritual at many companies. It's frequently used as a relatively painless mechanism to save money."

Despite budget issues, surveys and studies show that in-person meetings are better at fostering engagement, trust, networking brainstorming and strategic thinking.

Research shows that all generations, including millennials and Gen Xers, prefer in-person meetings because they provide many ways for attendees to have the formal and casual interactions necessary to forge business relationships.

Attendees also prefer face-to-face meetings because they are considered more credible.

The expectations and returns are higher with in-person meetings because, more often than not, there is a deeper investment of both time and money, two very valuable commodities for planners.

Here are some other crucial advantages of face-to-face meetings:

- In-person meetings provide some flexibility if an issue occurs that threatens the agenda. "Have you ever presented to a new client online only to lose the internet connection?" Huggins says. "The recovery is not always easy. In person, with worst-case scenarios, you can switch gears and improvise if you need to."
- Face-to-face meetings are more likely to get positive feedback from participants. Says Axtell, "If the meeting goes well, planners get high marks. If attendees feel like nothing was accomplished, low marks. One thing that attendees remember is when they really click with someone and that rarely occurs outside of face-to-face meetings." Huggins agrees. "Face-to-face meetings are more likely to get both positive and negative feedback from attendees in my experience, and both are important for improvement," Huggins says. "If attendees find value in the investment, the likelihood of positive feedback increases. Conversely, if attendees don't find merit, they very quickly become critics."

One of the biggest advantages in-person meetings provide is the opportunity to read non-verbal communication which, according to research, accounts for most of what attendees really intend to say. Virtual meetings don't allow attendees to read crucial body language, inflections and tone to determine true intentions.

It's also easier to control distractions and multitasking during face-to-face meetings. Sure, attendees in meeting rooms may check their mobile devices periodically. However, long-distance meeting participants can mute audio, listen to music, type and view documents on a laptop and more.

Virtual meetings are sometimes necessary depending on needs and goals.

Without such distractions, it's easier for planners to drive attendee attentiveness and participation during sessions, breakouts and workshops. Being in the same room also encourages attendees to participate and get to the point when they talk.

"Remote communications can be lengthier, lead to missed opportunities, and therefore become costlier in the long run."

AMBERLEE HUGGINS, DMCP
President, Chief Marketing Officer
CSI DMC



According to Axtell, "Attention is a primary advantage because it is tightly associated with caring, connecting and self-expression. Otherwise, the conversations feel merely like transactions."

It's also easier for on-site meetings to create common experiences that are more memorable and impactful than those in virtual meetings.

According to Ballin, "In-person meetings have a way of delivering information through experiences which are personal and meaningful. The emotion, experience and the corresponding memory recall simply can't be replicated with today's technology in a virtual environment."

That's because memory is driven by emotional cues, Ballin adds.

"Ask someone what they did, who they saw or about their day some time

in the past, and they will likely return a blank stare," Ballin says. Conversely, ask them about what they did, who they saw and about their time at a national sales meeting, and they will likely fill the air with conversation."

Shared in-person memories are also more effective than remote meetings for creating trust and personal connections essential for following up and getting results from business leads.

According to Huggins, "For driving business outcomes, meeting face-to-face is often key to building rapport, especially in the formative stages of the relationship. The ability to

read each other's body language, correct course and troubleshoot ideas and outcomes in the moment are often better served in person."

FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS VERSUS VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Ballin notes some other pluses of in-person meetings compared to virtual versions.

"Additional advantages of face-to-face meetings include access to key executives or business stakeholders that are often difficult to come by for most employees," Ballin says. "The ability for stakeholders, decision makers or regional leaders to gather in a common place often allows for decisions and timely decision-making."

In addition, Ballin says, "In-person meetings allow for more complex



thinking as technology-enabled meetings are often disrupted by multi-tasking or competing priorities both personal and professional.”

Here’s another key advantage of on-site meetings: Research shows that attendees remember much more of what they experience, see and hear in person. More importantly, attendees are more apt to remember face-to-face meetings and how events made them feel.

Says Huggins, “I do feel that attendees remember how the experience and meeting made them feel, how they could engage, how they could make an impact, what they did, where they laughed, what moved them and, hopefully, the results. That experience and interaction can best be done in person while follow up and further connection is possible remotely.”

Studies and surveys back up the advantages of on-site meetings for emotional engagement.

- According to a poll by Eventbrite, 69% of millennials say live events make them feel more connected to others.

- According to a Meetings Mean Business Coalition report, 91% of business leaders think face-to-face meetings improve engagement, and 94% say that they advance collaboration.

- The Harvard Business Review found that in-person meetings are 34 times more likely to get positive responses than a virtual meeting.

- According to a study from Oxford Economics USA, organizations that cut business travel such as face-to-face meetings experience a 17% drop in profits during the first year following the reduction.

- Oxford Economics also reported that every dollar invested in business travel resulted in \$12.50 in incremental revenue.

Given the comparative costs of face-to-face meetings and virtual alternatives, an important question for planners is: Are attendees more likely to value experiences of in-person meetings? “Absolutely,” Axtell says, “unless

technology is present at the meeting in ways that take away from conversations. Intimacy requires physical presence. The question is whether attendees leave feeling they were self-expressed, heard and their presence acknowledged.”

While face-to-face meetings may be more expensive than the virtual variety, they continue to be well worth the investment.

According to Huggins, “Cost needs to be viewed in a short- and long-term position. Let’s talk about an organization that is growing. The cost of bringing a group of people together to work through new information, find challenges and solutions, bond in shared

“The question is whether attendees leave feeling they were self-expressed, heard, and their presence acknowledged.”

PAUL AXTELL

Corporate Trainer, Consultant at Contextual Program Designs and Author of “Meetings Matter”



outcomes and experience is often less expensive long term than losing attendees because you didn’t take the opportunity to connect them to a sense of unity and fellowship.”

Huggins adds, “Meeting face-to-face with clients better affords attendees the opportunity to learn and understand their individual needs and challenges and offer thoughtful and cost-effective solutions. Remote communications can be lengthier, lead to missed opportunities, and therefore become costlier in the long run.”

Ideally, says Huggins, virtual meetings should only be used to connect those who can’t attend on-site.

“At CSI DMC it costs a considerable sum to bring a team of 140-plus people together each year, and certainly we supplement some regional meetings via video conferencing throughout the year,” Huggins says.

“However, we have learned that even once a year, face-to-face meetings for the whole team is one of the

core reasons we continue to retain and grow talent,” Huggins notes.

People typically attend face-to-face meetings because they want to connect with others and are receptive to it. Although many people attend alone, they are primed to establish new relationships with other professionals.

However, even with attendees’ predisposition to network and learn at meetings, they must be well-planned and structured to reap the advantages of face-to-face contact.

Huggins offers the following advice to maximize the advantages of face-to-face meetings:

“Look at the goals of the meeting before deciding whether it should be in person or virtual,” Huggins says. “I do think there will always be certain meetings, with certain goals, where physical synergy and face-to-face interaction and bonding will yield better results.”

In addition, planners and meeting stakeholders should ask the following question, Huggins says:

“Is it important to get an agreement from attendees to move forward with a critical business decision? If so, giving attendees a tangible, human element of interaction can add a level of comfort and ease when moving into uncharted waters.”

In-person meetings are best at networking, creating business relationships, education and training for a range of meeting types. These include sales meetings, product launches, customer events and medical meetings.

That is likely to remain the case even as virtual meeting technology advances. Although it’s becoming easier to have virtual meetings, that doesn’t mean businesses should have them — something that former Apple Inc. president and technology guru Steve Jobs realized.

Jobs once said, “There is a temptation in our networked age to think that ideas can be developed by email and iChat. That’s crazy. Creativity comes from spontaneous meetings; from our random discussions.” **C&IT**

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MENUS that 'WOW'

Global Master Chef Karl Guggenmos, senior culinary adviser at Healthy Meals Supreme.



Shanken Photography/Healthy Meals Supreme

Unique Food and Beverage Options Please Attendees and Keep Clients Coming Back for More

BY MAURA KELLER

As corporate and other meeting and event attendees become food savvy, crave variety, and demand a wider range of flavors, unique food and beverage options are now viewed as an easy avenue to please attendees and keep clients coming back for more.

Of course, food and beverage trends depend on the event being held. Cuisine for a convention group is definitely much different than a corporate social event or a board meeting.

Kalsey Beach, president and meeting planner at Do Good Events, continues to see an evolution toward 'power foods' that increase attendee energy and encourages productivity and attention. "We have also seen a trend to food being a very thoughtful choice instead of just something that needs to be provided," Beach says.

From interactive dinners to large pop-ups, Cynthia Samanian, founder and CEO of Hidden Rhythm, plans one-of-a-kind events that are designed to build meaningful brand loyalty. Hidden Rhythm's mission is simple: Spark engaging relationships that build loyalty between brands and their communities with one-of-a-kind events such as interactive dinners and pop-ups that showcase brands to influencers, media and more.

From her event planning experience, Samanian says that as the range of dietary preferences con-

tinues to broaden, there is a greater expectation that events will accommodate all guests.

"It's no longer enough to just have a vegetarian meal as your alternative option," Samanian says. "More and more, we're finding that attendees are interested in plant-based options, even if they're not vegan. Often times, they're motivated by the environmental benefits of a plant-based diet."

"We have also seen a trend to food being a very thoughtful choice instead of just something that needs to be provided."

KALSEY BEACH

President and Meeting Planner
Do Good Events



Indeed, Beach adds that there is always discussion around food allergens and preferences when menu planning. It is important to have a variety of options to accommodate all needs and ensure they are properly labeled for guests. "It is especially helpful if the chef is present during meal and snack times to answer any specific questions that may arise," Beach says.

MEMORABLE FOOD EXPERIENCES

Incorporating unique vessels or presentation components when serving food and beverages is paramount for many events. In fact, how the food

and drinks are served is almost as imperative as what you are serving.

Consider presenting items in mini stainless pails or baskets, using edible presentations such as a pastry spoon, baby red potato cups or a bacon slice, using lemon grass as buffet platters/centerpieces with different foods on skewers or laid right on the grass. Or combine a comfort food duo like grilled cheese and tomato soup as a

cocktail. For example, a bloody mary with a side of cheese, bread, bacon, avocado or a shot glass of warm tomato soup and a miniature grilled cheese, can certainly be memorable.

Samanian and her team love creating experiences that enable guests to connect and engage with their food. Examples of this include

DIY chia seed pudding bars, cocktail garnish bar stations and more.

"Whenever possible, we believe in making dining as hands-on and involved as possible," Samanian says. "With a small group, you have an advantage in creating a more personal experience that connects guests with their food. We've found great success in hosting cooking classes or adding an educational element to the dinner that works well in a more intimate setting."

Ashley Lampe, senior director of catering sales for Wolfgang Puck Catering in Los Angeles, is seeing the trend of food as entertainment continuing to gain in popularity and



Photo by Emma Feil

importance. Lampe is seeing requests for chef action stations, foods that spark conversations or are photo worthy, as well as foods that boast a local focus.

“Dietary restrictions, green initiatives — including eco-friendly, no waste, plastic-free, refillable water bottles — also are prevalent,” Lampe says.

According to Andrea Correale, celebrity caterer and president of Elegant Affairs Caterers, Off-Premise Catering & Event Design, today’s meeting attendees are far more food savvy. “They are expecting restaurant-quality cuisine in a catered setting,” says Correale, who has provided multileveled, luxecatering to notables and brands like Billie Eilish, Bebe Rexha, Mariah Carey, Jimmy Fallon, Ralph Lauren and Jimmy Choo.

Correale says that today’s meeting planners are all looking for healthy and fresh choices, including vegan, gluten-free alternatives and plant-based foods. “Salad bars are popular, but over the top with elaborate selection and choices,” she says. “Event planners should consider exploring: vegan sushi bars; California-style, open-pit barbecues; Impossible Burger bars; and Korean food.”

Global Master Chef Karl Guggenmos, senior culinary adviser at Healthy Meals Supreme, agrees that food for meetings has been undergoing a number of changes:

“Foods in the past have been very

predictable, such as chicken breast, steak, salmon steak, along with comfort side dishes like pasta and mashed potatoes,” he says. “Foods are now becoming more focused on a variety of new and revived cooking methods such as sous vide, braising and more ethnic diversity. Seafood has also become more diversified.”

Guggenmos is also now seeing more Asian vegetables, pulses such as lentils, chickpeas, split peas and

“Farm to table, locally sourced foods are probably more suited for smaller groups as the costs tend to be higher.”

JESSICA TOSTO

Assistant Clinical Professor - MS Nutrition and Dietetics, College of Health Professions at Pace University



dried beans, and ancient grains such as bulgur wheat, quinoa and a variety of meat cuts suitable for braising. “Braised or slowly cooked and sous vide foods, such as ribs and chicken thighs, are much more flavorful and moist. We are simply seeing a trend towards more flavors, textures and a more exciting presentation,” he says.

There also seems to be a growing expectation that food at events is going to be high quality, nutritious, provide a wide variety of selections, and be able to accommodate any special dietary need or restrictions an attendee may have.

Experts say attendees today want to engage and connect with their food.

As Jessica Tosto, assistant clinical professor — MS Nutrition and Dietetics College of Health Professions at Pace University, explains, “You can’t just put out trays of sandwiches and sodas and expect people to be happy they got a ‘free meal.’ I think attendees are much more vocal about how the foods served met or did not meet their expectations, and how it impacted their perception of the event as a whole. There are also so many different diet fads and/or health-related dietary restrictions that people follow — it is very challenging to please every different need.”

Organic, local, sustainably sourced, and farm-to-table foods are also gaining in popularity. When people travel to different locations they often want to experience the foods that are native to the city they are visiting. As Tosto explains, incorporating regional menu items from local producers and promoting the source is a great way to support local businesses and also to help attendees feel like they are getting an authentic, local dining experience.

“It is a lot of fun to create a snack menu that highlights local farms,” Beach says. “Creating interesting signage about the cheese or vegetables, can make it a unique experience for the guests. When the venue allows, it is also well received to highlight

local shops — this might be a small bakery that employees disadvantaged youth or another form of supporting businesses with big impact.”

local shops — this might be a small bakery that employees disadvantaged youth or another form of supporting businesses with big impact.”

FARE FOR GROUPS OF ALL SIZES

Experts agree that while smaller groups allow for more intimate touch points, simply due to the nature of the size of the event, larger groups can provide a similar element as more of a ‘showpiece.’

“Farm-to-table, locally sourced foods are probably more suited for

smaller groups as the costs tend to be higher and also local vendors may not be able to support the demand for large numbers of attendees,” Tosto says.

For smaller groups, Correale recommends a chef’s tasting-plate menu and for trend snacks consider edamame, vegetable and herb tonics or pick-me-up shots as well as acai bowls. Unique displays, such as doughnut walls and vertical buffets, are very popular now, as is the ‘grab-and-go’-style of service where items are served in individual portions in a bowl.

The HUNGRY catering company offers a chef experience for clients that is perfect for smaller groups. As Chad Lambie, national director of training and client experience at HUNGRY explains, the chef experience allows the guests to see their food being made and learn about each of the dishes.

“There is a reason there are so many cooking shows on television right now. People enjoy seeing the chef prepare, interacting with the chef, and learning about what makes the dish special,” Lambie says.

Guggenmos says the only issue for large versus small groups is the cooking methods used. For example, short-order foods or dishes are not suitable for large groups as they are difficult to



Daniel Gevirtz / HUNGRY

execute and tend to lose quality after being kept in hot boxes or reheated.

“Braised, sous vide, roasted or stewed foods are ideal,” Guggenmos says. “Grains and moisture-retaining vegetables are also better for large groups.”

In addition, Samanian adds that cheeseboards and ‘grazing’ boards are very popular for larger groups as they make it easy for guests to pick and choose what they’d like to eat. As a bonus, these boards are visually beautiful, which inspires guests to take photos and share the board — and possibly the event — on social media.

Lambie also sees ‘build-your-own’ meals as very popular right now for

‘Build-your-own’ meals is a popular approach for groups of all sizes.

groups of all sizes. “With so many dietary restrictions it becomes very difficult to please a large number of attendees,” Lambie says. “Build-your-own gives the attendees the choice and control over what they are eating and how healthy they want to eat. Healthier food options will not change. If anything, people are going to be getting smarter about what they are putting into their bodies and this trend will continue. The old days of attendees only being

given the choice of beef, fish or vegetarian are gone and people will continue to want control over what they are eating.”

SNACK ATTACK

When it comes to breaks or refreshment services, today’s meeting planners recognize that groups no longer just want healthy foods as was the trend two years ago. While they are still requesting the high-energy items such as hummus and vegetable shooters or energy bars, they also seek a sweet-and-naughty element such as truffle lollipops or chocolate-dipped pretzels.

For snacks between meals, Asian-type foods such as tapas, tempuras, shawarma, as well as mini burgers,

Trendy Tastes

Some of today’s hottest food and beverage trends include:

- Global and ethnic foods
- Sushi, sushi, sushi
- South American wines
- Craft and local micro beers
- Flavored ice for drinks and alcohol-infused popsicles
- Cupcakes and pies in creative presentations
- Super foods that are high in minerals and provide vitality and wellness benefits
- Bacon in every way possible
- Unique wheats and barleys
- Spicy options, both sweet and savory
- Allergy-free menus **C&IT**



DepositPhotos.com



Wolfgang Puck Catering

pickled vegetables/fruits, Keto bombs and similar low-carb, low-sugar snacks, are currently trending.

“Low-carb brownies made with dried beans, avocado/no flour and maple syrup are the newest trend,” Guggenmos says.

In addition, healthy snacks that meet all dietary restrictions are being mixed in with the more decadent options, such as a great trail mix but also a delicious brownie. A snack like feta and watermelon is also very popular.

“We are seeing a lot more healthier options being served, that are delicious,” Lambie says. “There are more people today on specialized diets than ever before, and healthier options allow more people to enjoy the dishes.”

As a meeting planner, Beach strives to make the food and beverage found within the snack breaks more of an experience for the attendee such as a build-your-own trail mix bar.

“Consider energizing snacks that encourage mindfulness and productivity,” Beach says. “You can also incorporate branding into the snack moment. Consider having sponsors support a snack break and then branding the napkins or coffee cups with their logo. And elevate your water or coffee. Consider making the water station a hydro station with infused waters and adding gourmet enhance-

ments to the coffee bar.”

In fact, when it comes to drinks, today’s guests want to be entertained. They don’t want the regular soda products. They want drinks such as lavender flavored soda water, cucumber infused still water, a garnish such as muddled blueberries and mint or classic cocktails with a new twist.

So what does the future hold for food trends and to what should meet-

“There are more people today on specialized diets than ever before, and healthier options allow more people to enjoy the dishes.”

CHAD LAMBIE

National Director of Training and Client Experience
HUNGRY



ing planners pay attention?

“Proteins will come more and more from non-animal sources. Side dishes will feature a variety of new ingredients, such as ancient grains and new sources for sweeteners,” Guggenmos says. There will certainly always a swing back to the past. Comfort food such as macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes and pasta will always be around. However, they will be made from a healthier source.

Guggenmos says we will also see a lot more pulses. Bone broth, collagen, more exotic fruits, vegetables and greens, especially kale, will be a com-

Chefs now focus on presentation, once overlooked in importance.

mon occurrence. And processed food will hopefully be a thing of the past.

In addition, the ‘small bites’ reception trends are still very popular and are expected to continue to be a sought-after trend in menu offerings. These ‘small bite’ options include minimal portions presented in smaller, more interesting shaped vessels and can be paired with a signature cocktail, or local wine or beer selection for each food station.

Lampe adds that classics and comfort foods have remained popular over the years and will remain so. “The influence of international cuisines with the ability to explore will bring variety and excitement to events,” Lampe says. “Local, sustainable and menu balance are here to stay.”

Industry professionals expect the plant-based trend also will continue, especially as more players in the space, such as Beyond Meat and Miyoko’s Creamery, become more popular. “The greater trend will be towards sustainability, not only in the agricultural and food production space, but also as it applies to food waste,” Samanian says. “Companies such as Imperfect Produce will continue to grow in popularity as consumers become increasingly aware of issues in the food system.”

Lambie says foods will always be evolving and changing. “New chefs bring new ideas and it sparks innovation and creativity,” he says. “I think we will always have our ‘classics’ that people grow up with and love, but we will keep adding new ideas that expand our pallets. We are seeing so many talented chefs from around the world that are bringing family recipes and new dishes from their home countries. Specifically, countries that have not been in the forefront of cuisine. I think people are much more open to trying new foods than ever before and they are going to discover they are delicious.” **C&IT**



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Dana Graham, CMM, of SAGE Publishing, pictured with Ean Kleiger, DDS, says developing her confidence made her a better leader.



Helene Graessman

What Is Capable Leadership and Why Does It Matter?

Successful Planners Offer Tips on How to Lead a Team

BY PATRICK SIMMS

Unlike the high-profile CEO, the head of a company's meetings department often remains 'behind the scenes,' and only impacts great numbers of employees and clients through the events he or she oversees. Yet, to the meetings department and supporting teams of vendors, that individual is quite visible. Indeed, the meetings director or manager is relied upon to keep many team members with diverse skills moving forward toward the delivery of a successful event. Leadership skills thus become increasingly vital the higher one ascends in the planning profession.

But great leadership is not an exact science. Effective leaders exhibit a variety of skills and qualities in different measures, making for different leadership styles. Certainly, much learning and experience is involved in acquiring these skills and qualities, even if one considers oneself a 'natural leader' who has always been comfortable being in charge. Most fundamentally, one has to gain confidence in one's ability to lead, a factor that was part of Dana Graham's evolution as a leader. Graham, who holds a CMM and serves as associate director, corporate events & community relations with Thousand Oaks,

California-based SAGE Publishing, relates how she grew into her present role: "Without question, my personal growth as a leader was a building process. It resulted directly from my personal satisfaction in meticulously working through event details behind the scenes, coupled with visible, tangible, positive results. By conceiving, designing, planning, orchestrating and ultimately implementing successful events, my confidence increased." A self-described "former introvert," Graham credits her supervisors and mentors for offering her "the chance

would never do that to somebody," recalls Sharon L. Schenk, CMP, director of conventions and event management with Manchester, New Hampshire-based CCA Global Partners. If she had a positive experience, she would "Remember that if I'm ever in a position of leadership, I will recognize people's skills and appreciate their contributions to try to get them to grow in their careers. That's something that some people have done for me."

Importantly, a planner need not wait until he or she is in a formal leadership role to begin exercising the relevant skills. Leadership happens on smaller scales in one's corporate life — leading a two-person team on a project — as well as in one's personal life — leading a church group. "There is a distinction between a leadership role and leadership. I think we're all leaders, and developing our leadership skills can happen no

matter where we are within a hierarchy of an organization," explains Jessie States, CMP, CMM, director, MPI Academy. States, who oversees MPI's Women in Leadership Certificate Program, advises planners to take stock in their leadership skills. "Look at where you want to go with your career and then look at your current skills and where there might be gaps. You don't want to enter a leadership

"Situations might come up where if we stay calm and handle things, we can keep our client calmer as well."

TERI ABRAM
President
EventLink



to get up at bat" and demonstrate what she could do as the leader of the events team. "Their belief in me was inspirational, but so too were their own exceptional executive and leadership skills," she adds.

On the flip side, a planner can also learn what not to do from experiences with higher-ups. "When I had leaders and supervisors treat me a certain way, I would say to myself, 'I



Alex Olivia

Teri Abram, center, with Julie Boggs, left, and Shannon Guggenheim, two members of Abram's team. Abram, president of Dallas, Texas-based EventLink, says it's important that a leader also be part of the team.

role unprepared, so look at where you want to go and map out what skills are going to get you to that point."

To provide a starting point for that self-reflection, the following is an overview of some of the myriad qualities and skills that go into capable leadership.

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Grace Under Pressure: Planners at all levels need the ability to handle the

pressure of delivering a live event, but it is especially important for leaders to exhibit a 'cool head' when deadlines loom or things go amiss. Their grace under pressure will influence other team members in such situations, and will facilitate quick, rational decision-making. "I think it's easier to 'never let them see you sweat' if you can make quick decisions,

especially when you are caught off guard," Graham says. "For instance, when an award show honoree showed up late with 24 extra guests in tow, I said, 'Give me a minute' and sprang into action." In another case, flowers weren't delivered as expected, and Graham led her on-site staff in carrying out a backup plan: "The catering staff and I went around with scissors and cut lavender from the bushes and put it down the middle of the table. There was no need to get mad at my colleague who was in

charge of ordering the flowers, but instead I handled it with class and grace. Me getting upset wasn't going to make the flowers appear."

Not only does this quality influence and maintain good relations with staff, but it also puts clients at ease. "Situations might come up where if we stay calm and handle things, we can keep our client calmer as well," says Teri Abram, president of Plano, Texas-based EventLink. "Clients get very

"I think we're all leaders, and developing our leadership skills can happen no matter where we are within a hierarchy of an organization."

JESSIE STATES, CMP, CMM
Director, MPI Academy



nervous, and I can understand that because you're out front and center at an event and you want everything to go perfectly."

Willingness to Take Risks:

Whether it's a new type of team-building activity or a first foray into virtual meetings, the head of the meetings team is often the one to drive a change that may improve meetings operations or ROI. The key word is 'may.' There is the risk that the new ways of team building won't engage attendees, the

virtual meeting will prove less successful than the face-to-face version, and so on. This quality — a willingness to take risks — tends to need development among meeting professionals, States observes. "We're not necessarily an industry of first adopters. When you're planning meetings, it's crucial to have everything buttoned up — and you want to have the perfect experience. And that means sometimes risks aren't taken," she explains. "We're rather risk-averse. And so oftentimes meeting professionals need to practice risk taking."

Accepting Responsibility: When things don't go right due to a team member's negligence or incompetence, great leaders are willing to 'step up to the plate' and take responsibility when addressing their internal or external client. "I give my team all the praise they can be given, and if there is a problem or something went wrong I am as responsible as anyone else on the team, and I am willing to say to the client, 'We made a mistake, I am responsible,'" says Abram, who oversees about 10 staff members and a variety of contractors.

Yet, this overarching responsibility should be accepted because one is the team leader, not because one feels a sense of ownership of the event. No matter how high on the corporate ladder the planner is, he or she should keep the right perspective on whose meeting it is. "I don't think of it as my event; rather, I produce the event for the stakeholder," Graham says. "I don't personalize it, which I think is key, because that way I don't have an ego about it. Having an ego doesn't really help you in my position."

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Assembling a Capable Team: Hiring great team members, whether staff or contractors, paves the way for successful leadership. The more capable the team is, the easier it is to manage them, and the less management they will need, in fact. "I need someone who's creative, innovative, enthusiastic, takes direction well and can work independently," Graham says in summarizing her ideal staff member.

Arguably, 'enthusiasm' is the most fundamental trait. "So many different types of people bring so many different types of skills, and so what we try to do is find people that have the right mindset, the right attitude — serving clients is in their DNA," Abram says. "And then we train from there."

Along the same lines, Schenk explains that "You can teach many things, but what you can't teach is attitude and personality. So if you have someone on your team who has the right attitude and the right fit, you can teach them any skill. I've been very lucky that I have people with a wonderful attitude, and we've been able to grow them professionally."

Facilitating Communication:

The importance of effectively communicating with team members is a platitude in the leadership literature. Without clearly explaining the details of a project and defining expectations, it's unlikely the team will perform optimally. Somewhat less discussed is the importance of facilitating communication; ensuring team members communicate adequately with each other and with other stakeholders. As Schenk explains, her leadership role includes serving as the "conduit for different teams." Making sure everyone is on the same page is "almost a full-time job for me," she says. "For example, I recently sent an email out to three of our presidents because we're changing the format of our convention next summer, and there are all these side conversations going on. 'We may be doing this, we may be doing that.' So I took it upon myself to reach

out to the presidents and said, 'We need direction from you. Let's assign people to carry out these tasks. Let's stop the false rumors and start a dialogue.' The discussion needed to start, so I initiated it."

Abram also ensures there are open lines of communication among her staff, and that helps in preventing or resolving conflicts. "We have a policy as a small company that we don't talk about one another if we have a problem. You go straight to the other person, or you come and talk to me about it," she says. "It has been so successful. We talk about it when we first hire someone and say 'This is our philosophy.'"



Helene Glassman

Graham, with SAGE president and CEO Blaise Simqu, credits her mentors and supervisors for offering her a chance to demonstrate her leadership abilities.

Delegating Tasks: Along with risk taking, States identifies delegation as the area where the meeting professionals likely struggle the most when it comes to leading a team. That's because planners often have a background of being very hands on and personally involved in all the details of a project. In a leadership position, they must let go of that approach to some extent and trust in the abilities of their team members. Delegation can be a hard skill to learn, and there is always the temptation to micromanage once one has delegated. "I truly believe that when you're hiring some-

body, whether it's internal or external, you're hiring them for their skills. So what you don't want to do is hire somebody and then tell them how to do their job," Schenk says. "I can lead and direct them in things that I need; however, how they get the job done is their concern."

At the same time, a great leader doesn't just delegate and then remain on a pedestal. He or she will be involved to some degree in the projects that team members are carrying out, even if just as a source of general direction and feedback. This gives staff a sense that the leader is also a team member. "I want them to respect my leadership, because I'm a part of

that team," Abram says. "I'm not just telling them what to do and going off and doing my own thing."

Motivating Team Members:

Effective leaders have always been sources of encouragement, and strive to elevate their team's morale. Words can always be backed up by tangible morale boosters. "I do try to show appreciation regularly with gifts and dinners to recognize work that has been done," Schenk says.

Part of motivation is also delegating tasks that help someone grow in their role, so the individual doesn't



feel stagnant. “We have a fairly new hire and she’s come on so strong; she’s better than we ever thought she would be at this point,” Abram says. “And so we’re starting to get her more small programs and guide her through them. I’m boosting her confidence because she has the ability to do everything at this point. I talk with her before a client call and let her know how I would recommend she do it, for example.”

Evaluating Performance: The difficult aspect of this skill is learning how to constructively criticize, and learning not to take a tone of hostility when a team member has dropped the ball. “It’s a tough thing for me personally, but I feel that if I don’t tell them exactly what they haven’t done appropriately and how it could be done better, I really am not doing them justice,” Abram says. She describes her approach as “conversational,” where she engages the person in a dialogue about the poor performance instead of launching into a tirade.

RESOURCES

Developing these qualities and skills as well as others may not be easy, depending on the person. Some are naturally risk-averse, or have a hard time not micromanaging, or find it difficult to criticize another’s performance, for example. But thankfully there is no shortage of resources for leadership development, and plenty of meetings-specific resources. Graham highly recommends MPI’s Certificate in Meeting

“One of the best parts about leadership is having a seat at the table, being able to be the subject-matter expert with our executives.”

SHARON L. SCHENK, CMP
Director of Conventions and Event Management
CCA Global Partners



Management Program, which she completed at Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business. For women planners in particular, there is the aforementioned Women in Leadership Certificate Program, also offered by MPI. States emphasizes that “Many of the

Jessie States, CMP, CMM, director, MPI Academy, says to develop into a leader, do a skills assessment and work to fill in the gaps.

skills, such as strategic problem solving, innovation or creativity, are ones people may or may not innately have, but they’re all skills that can be learned.” Toward developing the leadership skills a given individual needs, the program utilizes tools such as CliftonStrengths at www.gallupstrengthscenter.com, to assess where participants’ strengths lie.

For those who prefer reading their way to becoming better leaders as well as careerists, Graham recommends three titles: “Good to Great,” by Jim Collins; “Grit,” by Angela Duckworth; and “Basic Black,” by Cathie Black.

THE BEST PART OF BEING A LEADER

With all the challenges involved in becoming a great leader and then actually guiding a team on its way to success, what’s the payoff? “The best part is watching my team work together and achieve amazing results and being so proud of them,” Abram says. “I love it when my team knocks it out of the ballpark.” From a career perspective, heading an events department can allow one to directly collaborate with the C-suite. “One of the best parts about leadership is having a seat at the table, being able to be the subject-matter expert with our executives,” Schenk says.

Toward gaining that seat, an aspiring leader should take advantage of any opportunity to demonstrate to upper management that he or she understands the strategic role of meetings in the company, and is not just immersed in logistical details.

“Share with senior leaders how you are utilizing meetings to truly drive change and positive growth for the business,” States advises. They’ll see you’re thinking like a leader, and perhaps like someone who deserves a promotion. **C&IT**



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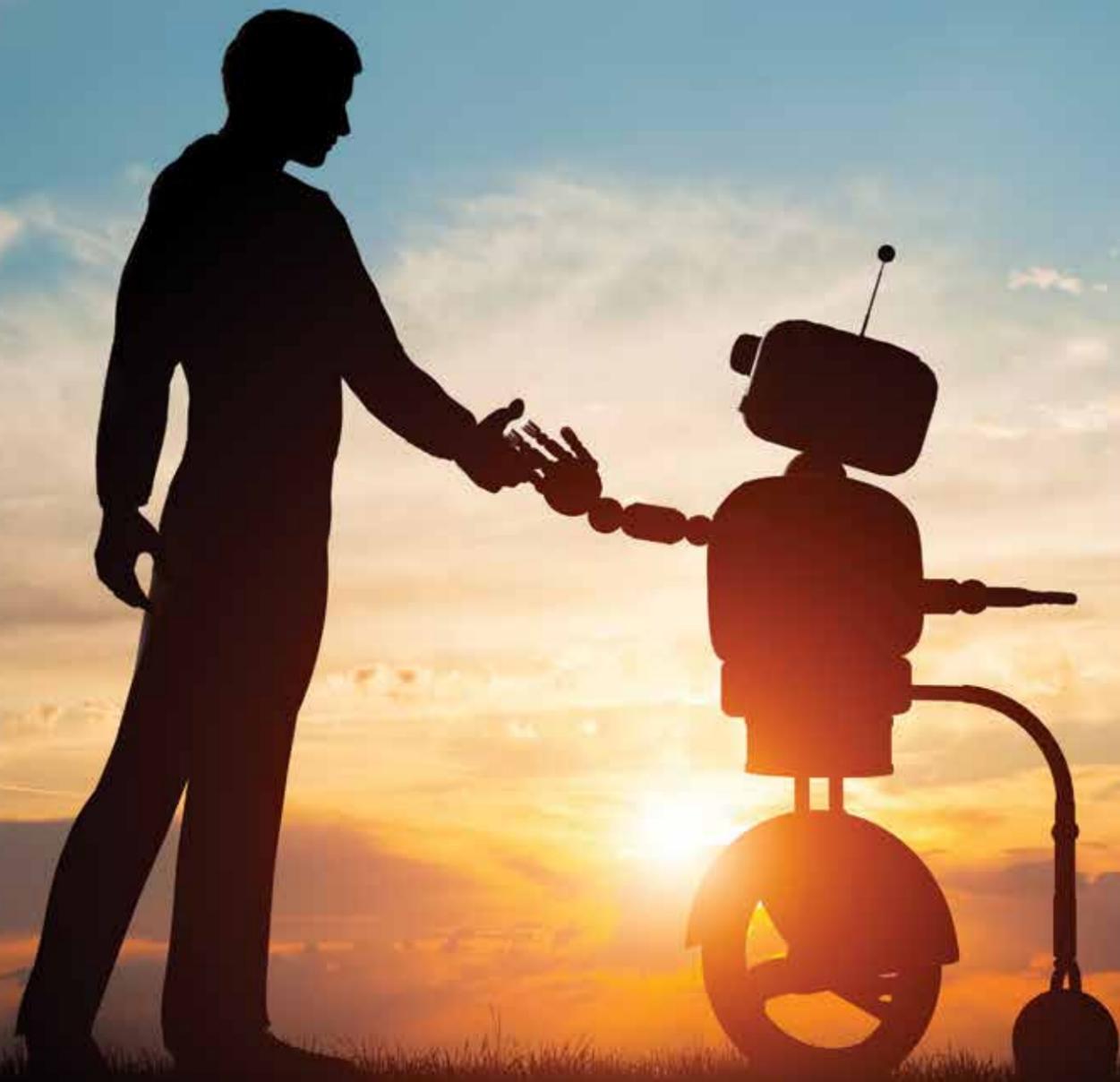
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MEETINGS IN 2025



Industry Experts Look Into the Future of Meetings and Tell Us What to Expect

BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS

What will meetings look like in 2025? What are the biggest game changers and what new skills might meeting planners need? We asked experts from across the industry. Here's what they said.

MEETINGS IN 2025

Marissa Torres, CMP, operations manager with COTC Events in South Florida, a Hosts Global member, believes tech's impact on meetings will lessen. "Tech is reaching its peak in the meetings industry and the focus will be redirected as technology becomes a basic requirement. I think the redirection will be more 'experiential' ways of thinking and content will reflect that — no more cookie-cutter session formats."

Lauren Buffington, CMP, CIS, senior event producer with PRA South Florida, says, "Attendees will have more input and control over the planning of events. The planner's role will be responsive to the attendee's wishes rather than determining meals, activities and even destinations from a corporate perspective. From marketing and creative design to the final execution, planners will have to consider every aspect of the event all while responding to attendees' wants."

Diversity will be important says Elizabeth Glau, CMP, director of strategy at Oregon-based EGCX Group. "Most events will consider all elements of diversity as basic

requirements. Today, that feels like something extra planners must do. In the future, events will make each attendee feel included. We'll move beyond 'Who is my audience?' to designing content that purposefully includes voices not in the room."

According to Kristi White Cline, creative director with PRA Nashville, the rise in home-based employees will impact meetings. "In the past, meeting goals, objectives and content have been devised to accommodate attendees that worked in an office with their team." With more employees working from home, she says, that will change.

Didier Scaillet, CEO, SITE, in Chicago, sees four major areas of change.

"Attendees will have more input and control over the planning of events."

LAUREN BUFFINGTON, CMP, CIS
Senior Event Producer
PRA South Florida



"A more holistic approach with interaction and engagement; more informality, versatility and flexibility; increased use of nontraditional venues, meaning fewer hotel ballrooms and more art galleries, warehouses, car parks and co-working spaces; and shorter sessions."

Cline's colleague, Amy Nathanson, senior experience designer at PRA Nashville, believes social media such as Instagram will force changes.

"Instagram has empowered clients and others to lean into design trends that go beyond the typical corporate rinse and repeat. They're all hyper-aware of new developments in fashion, food and play and are willing to take risks and translate those experiences to their attendees," she says. "Everyone can pull out their phones and instantly be a part of New York Fashion Week, the live feeds of celebrity planners and elaborate brand launches. They know our secrets now. Clients want us to put on our experiential marketing hats these days and I feel like that will intensify leading up to 2025. I can't tell you how many of my conference calls start off with, '..."

So I saw this new thing on Instagram ...'"

Jessie States, CMP, CMM, director of MPI Academy, in Dallas, Texas, says information will be delivered differently. "Lectures won't be in our vernacular. They're a dying knowledge-delivery format that will finally no longer be considered a useful

method for conveyance of applicable and actionable learning. In their place will be a burgeoning number of thoughtfully designed and curated educational experiences that encourage learners to practice and apply new knowledge and change behavior in positive ways."

As meetings become more global, States continues, there will be answers to language differences at meetings as well. "Language will no

longer be a barrier to entry or engagement for event participants. Artificial intelligence-based (AI) technologies that already exist will experience broad adoption. These will enable participants to communicate freely and in any language with each other via their own mobile devices and hearables.”

Environmentally friendly conferences will be a hallmark of the future says Scott White, global sales director with PRA Inc. in Washington, D.C. “The ability to reduce our carbon footprint is paramount. Everything will ‘go green.’ There will be no handouts, everything will be done in advance, information during meetings will come via apps. Venues, food and food/waste,” he adds, “will need to be eco-friendly. Hiring the right partners

its function as a component to successful events to a paramount role in achieving goals while simultaneously providing a measurement of meeting success. Attendees,” she says, “are expecting planners to integrate sustainable efforts into multiple facets of programming, from elimination of printed materials and bottled water to guarantees that florals are re-distributed or donated to a worthy cause.”

Additionally, Patriquin says, “Expectations will include incorporation of interactive technology and modernization of event spaces purpose-built to allow for flexibility and increased networking. Meetings will evolve to ensure there are multilevel experiences to meet the diverse generations and expectations

to-face and render it ever more special and effective. Face-to-face may be less frequent, but infinitely more desired,” he says.

For many, technology is the game changer as use of AI, virtual reality (VR) and holograms ramps up. “Technology will be a large factor in how meetings change,” says Heidi Stevenson, CIS, global sales manager with Utah-based Destinations, Inc. “There will be more technological interaction and interface with social media or networking sites such as LinkedIn.”

New locations also will factor in. “So many businesses are becoming more global,” Stevenson says. “I see meetings shifting to a more global focus, opening up many more locations for meetings.”

Madelyn Marusa, DMCP, CIS, vice president of industry relations for PRA Business Events in Southern California, agrees. “There will be emerging destinations in second- and third-tier U.S. cities and more international choices.”

Anne Marie Rogers, CIS, CITP, director of meetings, incentives and events for Direct Travel in Minneapolis, Minnesota says, “Technology is improving every day and changing how we do business. Meetings are far more interactive now and more customized to the population.”

Wellness, she adds, is also a future factor. “It affects everything from length of sessions to integration of movement into meetings and healthy food options.”

There will be more use of flexible meeting spaces and alternative furniture to make things interesting, she continues, and adds her voice to the sustainability bandwagon. “What we do and how our behavior impacts the world and future generations is of utmost importance and will only get stronger.”

Rebecca Mass, team lead, customer success at Bizzabo, an event software company in New York, New York, underscores the impact of technology. “The future of professional events will rely heavily on technologies such as big data, analytics and AI to help create more personalized experiences

for attendees and ultimately drive key business outcomes. While incorporating technology into events isn’t new, the impact it has on attendee experience will be different.”

For example, she says, “By using AI, organizers will see what content each attendee interacts with the most and can recommend sessions and future events based on that data. Technology will allow organizers to be more strategic. At Bizzabo, we raised \$27 million after doubling our revenue last year. The new funds are being used to build capabilities in data science and AI, which will make it easier for event organizers to make data-driven decisions and further personalize attendees’ event experience.”

In addition to answering the demand for increased personalization and customization of experiences, Marusa says, technology will enhance security with better background checks and more personal information available on attendees.

Technology will also drive increased interactivity at meetings. “I envision increased use of touch-screen technology, gathering in-the-moment audience feedback or survey results, providing links or portals to more information and allowing attendees

to interact directly with presenters and fellow attendees,” says Scott Goss, experience designer with PRA Events Inc., in Washington, D.C. “Imagine presenters not having to select a raised hand and pass the mic during a session. Instead, perhaps, they’ll select a virtually raised hand, allowing that attendee to use the camera feature on a device to project their name, face, company information and a live stream directly from their seat to the stage for questions or comments.”

The industry will see more inventive event apps for presentations and social gatherings, he says. “We’ll see more branded photo and gif apps, interaction with event entertainment — whether musical requests or vir-



Amy Nathanson, of PRA Nashville, left, with colleague, Kristi Kline, says future planners will be forced to adapt to trends spotted on social media.

tually enhanced décor/lighting elements that change based on attendee activity or input.”

The key to future meetings will be creating ‘experiences,’ White says. “Things like 4D technology, increased car sharing and even hoverboard transport will increase. Large motor coaches will be less prevalent. Meetings will more likely be handled with hotels and vendors via apps and online

tive to a meeting, a potential cost savings,” he says. “AI, augmented reality (AR) and VR are all increasing and will be utilized more.”

Driverless buses? They’re coming, too. “We’ll have to determine whether we want to use that technology,” Kun says. “I also think it’s likely that space tourism will become a reality within five years.”

Kun says he’ll consider taking an incentive group on a space trip, “When it’s totally safe and totally incentive worthy. These things carry risks even if they’re cutting edge and that, too, is a factor.”

“Meetings will evolve to ensure there are multilevel experiences to meet the diverse generations and expectations of modern attendees.”

HILLARY PATRIQUIN, DMCP
Director of Operations
Hosts DC and Hosts Baltimore



HOW MEETINGS WILL STAY THE SAME

“You can’t get away from the key building blocks of what a good meeting or education session is about,” Kun says. “But, I think we’ll learn to be more efficient and creative.”

Most of our experts agree that the goals and purposes of meetings, including return on investment (ROI), networking and education, won’t change. Attendees probably won’t change either. They’ll still want something fresh or out-of-the-box,

platforms. Few clients will need to access a central call center. Companies that show ease to streamline these new processes will be paramount.”

George Kun, founder and president, George Kun Travel & Incentives, in Dublin, Ohio says the future is already here. “The use of holograms will soon be commonplace. We’ll use them to bring a celebrity or key execu-



Experts agree that attendees will demand ‘experiences’ in the future.

to achieve a balance on going green and successful planning will be key. Companies that get in front of this will have an advantage.”

Another change says White: As 3D representations of hotels and destinations gain traction, site visits will decrease.

Hillary Patriquin, DMCP, director of operations with Hosts DC and Hosts Baltimore, also emphasizes sustainability. “The importance of incorporating sustainability will multiply. We should expect a shift from

of modern attendees. Planners will need to ensure they create opportunities of interaction for all — from the tech-savvy to the networking and social-media phobic.”

These issues are global. Padraic Gilligan, CIS, CITP, DMCP, chief marketing officer at SITE and managing partner at SoolNua in Dublin, Ireland, believes online meetings will increase “under pressure from the movement around climate change, and face-to-face meetings will decrease. However, face-to-face will be the preferred default setting where key decisions are made. Extra online connectivity will increase the appetite for face-



Rebecca Mass, of Bizzabo, in yellow shirt, says future meetings will rely heavily on AI, big data and analytics.

memorable experiences and that 'wow' factor. The demand for custom, personal and immersive experiences will remain strong.

In spite of the tech bells and whistles, face-to-face meetings will remain relevant. According to Bizzabo's data, 85% of business leaders believe in-person events are a critical component of their company's success. "I foresee change coming in the facilitation of making these meetings happen more frequently, more strategically and more efficiently," Mass says. "The power of in-person events and experiences will continue far into the future."

This is a people business, Patriquin says. "Your best ROI is always going to be your investment in the people: the people attending the event and your own team. If you take care of people and remain focused on the true nature of the business, the rest will come together."

Ironically, according to Scaillet, technology itself will sustain face-to-face meetings. "Evolving technology will cause an equal and opposite reaction. The more high-tech we become, the more we'll value face-to-face. AI, VR and AR will be important but we'll appreciate TR even more — tactical reassurance, the unique magic that's unleashed when real people meet

in real places in real time. Only in face-to-face encounters can we trigger the trust component that's at the heart of how we make decisions about the big things."

While technology is important, Gilligan says, "Planners will still require the ability to read situations and people and know how to communicate effectively with the full spectrum of personality types."

"Evolving technology will cause an equal and opposite reaction. The more high-tech we become, the more we'll value face-to-face."

DIDIER SCAILLET
CEO, SITE



For States, it about what meetings are. "Meetings will continue to bring people together ... to meet. This will be an ever-more important focal point as digitization, remote work and online networks increasingly drive the need for people to actually come together in a common space to connect."

By 2025, Nathanson theorizes, "I think sitting down and talking to someone new without the assistance of an app or screen will feel like a retro-style luxury."

SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

With increasing specialization and globalization in the industry, planners will have to become competent in multiple areas such as: expertise in emergency preparedness, security and crisis management. "These will become requirements for planners," Torres says.

Buffington adds, "An ongoing, working knowledge of dietary statistics, social responsibility, wellness and global sustainability will be part of decision-making for events. Planners will need to consider the remote attendee as much as those attending in-person."

Marusa believes meeting professionals will "need better technology marketing skills, website content development capability and speedy access to information."

But planners may not be alone in skills acquisitions. "Research, customization and personalization will be needed to draw participation," Marusa says, "So there may be growth on both the supplier and planner side for this skill set."

As the planner role evolves, States says some 're-skilling' may be necessary for meeting professionals, putting greater emphasis on graduate-level programs such as those at San Diego State University and MPI's Certificate

in Meetings Management, offered at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business. "As we gain access to executive-level roles, greater emphasis will be placed on problem sensitivity and problem solving, change management, persuasion and emotional intelligence — future-ready skills and cross-functional abilities that will ultimately shape the future of what it means to be a meeting professional."

Stevenson believes certification will be increasingly valued. "As clients become more savvy, they'll look

for planners and third parties to be well qualified and have certification to prove it. We're seeing a lot of interest from clients in our CIS, CITP and CMP certifications," she says.

Echoing Stevenson, Rogers notes, "It's important to stay on the cutting edge of knowledge and change. Certification establishes a benchmark to learn and document this."

Those who don't keep up may face consequences. "With new technology, new regulations on data and security, new global requirements," Kun notes, "if you don't keep up as a planner, your opportunities will be more limited."

Nathanson agrees. "If you don't stay current on technology, trends and experiences you'll be making yourself obsolete. I look forward to walking into a ballroom in 2025, pulling out my device of choice and projecting my designs across the room from floor to ceiling."

Certification itself will also evolve. "Certifications may change drastically with old processes and platforms quickly changing or emerging," Goss says. "With more tech suppliers vying for a seat at the table, it's likely organizations will have more choice of registration, planning, exhibit, marketing, presentation and content platforms, requiring a mastery or certification in those systems. There could also be an uptick in companies requiring staff who interact with large groups of people to take on more social, interpersonal and diversity training."

But it's not just about certification. "The focus may shift to include the significance of education on a broader scale of comprehensive project management," Patriquin says, "including developing emotional intelligence skills to learn to direct projects with a focus on how to manage the people responsible for deliverables."

Not surprisingly, expertise in technology will be critical. "Three words," Cline says. "Technology, technology, technology. In the age of instant gratification, planners will need to have the most up-to-date, most efficient way

Future experiences will change based on attendee activity or input.

to build proposals and costing. We'll need to be fluent in multiple software platforms to accommodate each client and the way they assimilate and communicate information."

The typical toolbox of the planner, notes Scaillet, will have to include in-depth knowledge of technology and the advanced ability to use it. "This includes tactical matters such as connecting laptops to screens and managing audience engagement platforms. It will also include awareness of ongoing developments in technology, particularly the crunching and interpretation of big data that'll be available and enable us to personalize the participant experience and make it truly meaningful."

Planners, Gilligan says, "will need to have agility and nimbleness with technology. They'll need to acquire the millennial ability to move deftly and efficiently across platforms on a mobile, handheld device. Data will be a mere click away and planners will need to be able to access it in real time."

On the good news front, planners may already have skills for the future. "I've been studying the philosophy behind human-centered design," Glau says. "I think many planners already have this skill but we're often derailed by competing priorities from stakeholders and our events end up missing the mark with attendees. As more

organizations start to value human-centered design in everything they do, planners will be poised to help facilitate that conversation."

FUTURE PLANNING

Gilligan believes the movement around climate change will profoundly impact business events, bringing "scrutiny of the entire meetings and events process from the perspectives of sustainability, care for the environment or use of fossil fuels."

Goss says planning of the future "will be the same — but faster, more tech savvy and more client-competitive."

For Torres, future planning will require shifting perceptions about the job itself. "As planners, we wear many hats and have to juggle the level of importance each of those hats carry. The job description is going to get larger; key performance indicators will become more detailed. This industry is far behind on transparency and how to convey the value of our services as something greater than commissions on a program," she says. "We need to equip ourselves with knowledge and research to ensure that the job of planning corporate and incentive events is found worthy and respectable across all levels in the hierarchy."

No one is likely to disagree with that.

C&IT



Seattle is known for its iconic Space Needle which, after a \$100M refresh, is available as a unique venue for corporate events.



NORTH BY NORTHWEST

Photo Courtesy Visit Seattle

New and Refreshed Venues Make the Pacific Northwest Prime for Meetings and Events

BY DAVID SWANSON

Hot ‘new’ destinations for meetings and conventions are few and far between. While Seattle has long been utilized for events by Pacific Northwest-based companies such as Amazon and Microsoft, the city’s day in the sunshine may have arrived for meeting planners looking for something fresh and different.

With 431,306 sf of rentable space, the existing Washington State Convention Center (WSCC) — known as the Arch building — has been the smallest meeting facility of any major west coast city, hindering the city’s ability to draw high-profile events. Clearly, Seattle has been ripe for expansion.

Last year Seattle approved construction of a second, non-contiguous building for its convention center, the Summit, located two short blocks from the Arch building. The \$1.7 billion project will add 570,290 sf of event space to the WSCC, anticipated to be completed in spring 2022. Already, 16 meetings have booked into the new facility, three of which will utilize both the Arch and Summit buildings. Additionally, nine new hotels catering to a divergent audience have opened in Seattle over the past two years, adding 2,500 rooms to the downtown core. The jewel in the crown was the opening of the 1,260-room Hyatt Regency Seattle, the largest hotel in the Pacific Northwest. The year-old hotel is already drawing plaudits from high-profile meeting planners.

“I want to say how impressed I was with the new facility and the team at Hyatt Regency Seattle,” says Mark Schmieding, BILT NA partnership

manager at the Digital Built Environment Institute, which operates an annual event series catering to those who design, build, operate and maintain the built environment.

Schmieding adds: “I go to many conferences, and have produced several as a member of the BILT committee. The experience here was my best so far.”

Located in the heart of downtown, the hotel is two blocks from the convention center’s existing Arch building and sits adjacent to the Summit

flow and wayfinding. And the location in Seattle is convenient and well located to allow visitors to walk to sites and stores nearby.”

Along with seven other hotel openings, the debut of the Hyatt Regency helped boost the downtown hotel inventory last year by 19%, with an additional 3% increase in rooms projected for this year. Until the new convention center starts to absorb groups, Seattle may be faced with a temporary glut of rooms.

“While demand is increasing, it is not increasing at the same pace as our supply,” says Jena Thornton, a “hotel data junkie” and principal at Seattle real estate firm Kinzer Partners, who adds that local hoteliers are singing the blues. “The years 2019 and 2020 will be tough for occupancies as our hotels absorb the new supply.”

The Hyatt chain holds an enviable position for

access to the WSCC. In addition to the Hyatt Regency, the Grand Hyatt Seattle and Hyatt at Olive 8 are also within one block of the existing convention center and the expansion. The Grand Hyatt has a 5,671-sf ballroom, along with a unique indoor amphitheater with raked seating for 159 attendees. Across the street, Hyatt at Olive 8, features a 6,641-sf ballroom. The three hotels work closely to accommodate groups small and large.

Another major meeting hotel is the Fairmont Olympic Hotel, Seattle, which originally opened in 1924 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Fairmont has operated the hotel since 2003 and the hotel underwent an extensive renova-



LMN Architects

The Washington State Convention Center is undergoing a \$1.7 billion expansion.

addition. The 45-story Hyatt Regency offers 103,000 sf of flexible meeting and ballroom space and has already enlivened the surrounding pedestrian streetscape and growing convention neighborhood.

Schmieding was particularly impressed by the vertical layout of the building, allowing guests to easily transfer from their hotel room to each conference level. “As an architect, I am particularly critical of design and layout,” he explains. “The design of the conference floors as ‘rings’ with escalators helps with

tion in recent years, updating all guest rooms and meeting facilities, while keeping the hotel's distinctive character. The hotel has 30,000 sf of meeting space and includes a variety of unique, one-of-a-kind spaces.

SEATTLE'S VARIED MEETING VENUES

This year, Seattle's landmark Space Needle completed a \$100 million renovation that takes the visitor experience to a new level, but also makes the iconic structure a viable option for corporate events. The two-level 'top house' can be rented for a memorable event 520 feet above the city, or meeting planners can utilize the Sky-Line Level, a private event and banquet space 100 feet off the ground with capacity for 350 guests reception-style or 300 for a banquet. Immediately next door to the Space Needle, the exquisite Chihuly Garden and Glass — under the same management — can be incorporated with the tower for a one-of-a-kind block party for groups of 1,500 or more.

For its sales meeting earlier this year, Cincinnati-based Cintas chose Seattle based on the city's accessibility to attendees located in the Western U.S. and Canada. "Seattle offered a centralized meeting destination for our teams in Canada, and a short flight from all teams in Oregon and California," says Brielle Griffin, executive administrator for the vice president of sales at the company's Northwest Sales Group. "The city is beautiful, and our group really enjoyed being able to walk at night to look at all the good things Seattle had to offer."

For the 380-attendee gathering, Cintas chose the Sheraton Grand Seattle. "We really enjoyed the fact that the hotel was a short walk from



Hyatt Regency Seattle offers two ballrooms larger than 19,000 sf: the Columbia Ballroom and the Regency Ballroom.

Pike Place, the Waterfront and a short ride from the Space Needle."

The Sheraton Grand completed an extensive refresh of all guest rooms and common spaces last year which led to being re-flagged with the 'Grand' designation. Directly across the street from the convention cen-

"I go to many conferences, and have produced several as a member of the BILT committee. The experience here was my best so far."

MARK SCHMIEDING
BILT NA Partnership Manager
Digital Built Environment Institute



ter, every inch of the hotel's 75,000 sf function space was renovated. The hotel is renowned for having the largest private art collection on display at a Seattle business and features numerous Dale Chihuly glass pieces.

"The Sheraton Grand offered one of the best set-up meetings we have had in many years," Griffin says. "Usually we are in Reno, using one of the casino hotel conference rooms, but we always seem to run into issues with A/V or seating. For this meeting they had a complete set-up that was seamless and wonderful from start to finish." Griffin noted that Cintas required a runway and high-level A/V equipment, but the hotel provided a four-man A/V team that was "superb and professional. They were knowledgeable and helped us tremendously — everything went so smoothly."

"The food exceeded our expectations," Griffin adds. "They met the dietary requirements with ease as well."

The one challenge Griffin cites was holding one of the receptions at the hotel's 35th-floor Cirrus Ballroom.

"The elevators were not prepared to handle such a large group moving up and down, and it ended up making our team late for the awards banquet," Griffin explains. "The Cirrus Ballroom was beautiful, and everyone enjoyed it — it was just not easy to get back down. But as soon as we alerted the staff, they opened the service elevator, and got our teams down ASAP. It was, again, a prime example of their great service offered to our group. The staff throughout the entire hotel was attentive and truly understood how to handle a group of our size."

Griffin recommends planners working with the Sheraton Grand be specific and clear with expectations and needs upfront. "Be sure you review your banquet event orders closely," Griffin suggests. "Once you do that, it will run without a hitch. We were very clear on the front end, leading to

a truly set-and-forget type of meeting with absolutely no hiccups once we were on-site and rolling. We loved it."

Enthusiasm for Seattle as a host destination was also a factor for Weatherbee Resources, which had a Regulatory Boot Camp for 88 attendees earlier this year. "Seattle offered a wonderful opportunity to have participants from the Pacific Northwest who would not normally attend an event on, say, the East Coast," explains Lynn Stange, RN, BSN, MA, CHC, president of Weatherbee Resources, who called the city "a natural fit" for her conference, which was held at the Renaissance Seattle Hotel.

"We also knew that travel into Seattle would be easy for those coming from other areas and that the hotel was well-situated — not only easy access to and from the airport or train station, but also to local entertainment and food. The advantages were numerous: many things to do and see, friendly people, great weather and, of course — great seafood."

Due to the intensity of Weatherbee's program, no off-site events were scheduled. The Renaissance features a wide variety of smaller meeting rooms, spread on five different floors. The largest space is the 5,225-sf Courtyard Ballroom, sufficient for a banquet seating 380. "We have worked with the Renaissance in the past and they have always treated us well, so it was an easy decision to book," Stange says. "We were fortunate to be able to have our event in the hotel meeting area. We loved the meeting rooms, as they were spacious and easy to access from the hotel rooms. The catering was very well done and the food was delicious, and the event staff was professional and easy to work with. We made use of their technology, and although I recall there were some issues with the Wi-Fi,

we were able to work around that."

The hotel's main eatery, The Fig & The Judge Market Restaurant, was open for breakfast and lunch only at the time. "So we went out for meals," Stange says. "This ended up being fine as we got to experience more of the city. I will say the hills in Seattle are reminiscent of San Francisco. Seattle is a great walking city — especially if

"I will say the hills in Seattle are reminiscent of San Francisco. Seattle is a great walking city — especially if you want exercise."

LYNN STANGE, RN, BSN, MA, CHC
President
Weatherbee Resources



you want exercise." Stange adds that guest rooms were "divine."

"They were well furnished, quiet, had nice views, were spacious and clean," Stange says. "I would definitely return to the Renaissance for personal travel."

TACOMA CLOSE TO SEA-TAC AIRPORT

Just 25 miles from Sea-Tac Airport, Tacoma is Washington's third-largest

city, with a population of 200,000. The Greater Tacoma Convention Center offers 119,000 sf of combined meeting and pre-function space, with floor-to-ceiling views of downtown. Hotel Murano, named after the glass-blowing capital of Italy, currently offers the bulk of rooms adjacent to the convention center, along with more than 30,000 sf of flexible meeting space ranging from classroom to theater-style spaces and a ballroom.

Next year, the number of rooms within walking distance of the convention facility swells as Marriott's Tacoma Convention Center Hotel nears completion. The four-star property will be the first hotel attached to the convention center, connected on the ballroom level

by a grand promenade. When it opens in fall 2020, the 23-story hotel will have a 10,000-sf ballroom plus seven breakout rooms totaling 9,000 sf.

PORTLAND EXPERIENCING HOTEL BOOM

Trading Mt. Rainier views for those of Mt. Hood, Portland, Oregon is also experiencing a hotel boom that is helping to reposition the city as a top meeting and convention destination.



Mt. Rainier Gondola rides offer attendees fantastic views of Mt. Rainier and the Cascade Mountains.

The hotel room inventory for the city center is projected to reach 10,000 rooms by spring 2020, an increase of 40 percent since 2015.

While many of the recent hotel openings in Portland target business travelers and the leisure market, the Hyatt Regency Portland at the Oregon Convention Center, opening in March 2020, will help put the city's convention stature on better footing. The hotel will feature 39,000 sf of meeting and event space, including a 11,822-sf ballroom. The hotel is centrally located in the Lloyd District, with high-end restaurants and breweries nearby, plus ample public transportation access.

The Oregon Convention Center itself is now completing a \$40 million, 14-month renovation to update the 30-year-old building, the largest convention center in the Pacific Northwest, sprawling more than 1 million sf. The interior design will bring the aesthetic of Oregon landscapes inside, replete with local accents such as lichen-like carpets and forest-canopy ceilings. The building is now more energy effi-

cient, and the renovations enhance ADA accessibility with the addition of a connector corridor between the original building and the previous expansion. The final phase of the renovation was an extensive update to the 25,000 sf Oregon Ballroom, completed just recently.

Construction software company Viewpoint may have its world headquarters based in Portland, but for

"A tax-free city allows us more budget to spend on attendee experience."

SCOTT SWARD, CCTE, GLP, GTP
Global Travel and Meetings Manager
Viewpoint



its annual Collaborate Conference, the company found hosting the event in its home city meant employees could attend the 2,600-attendee event last year without busting the travel budget.

"Portland is a great city for meetings," says Scott Sward, CCTE, GLP, GTP, Viewpoint's global travel and meetings manager. "Attendees really

enjoy themselves here, and we have had really good feedback in past years. Many attendees come to Portland the week before to explore the city. We have numerous dinners around the city during the week, and attendees always say they enjoy the food scene in Portland."

But there's one other advantage for Viewpoint meeting in Portland: It's tax-free. "A tax-free city allows us more budget to spend on attendee experience," Sward says. "Moving to another city would mean we would have to cut some experiences."

Viewpoint used two hotels for the bulk of its attendees: Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront and the Hilton Portland Downtown. "We needed large blocks and these hotels worked well with us," Sward says. "Basi-

cally, they had to let us block the entire hotel and have space large enough for a large party as well as ample space for pre-conference labs and meetings as well as additional space for receptions during the week. Both are also prominent in the downtown area, and give our attendees not only a good hotel experience but also easy access to all that downtown Portland has to offer."

Sward continues: "We have our welcome party at the Marriott Waterfront; our final customer appreciation party is at the Hilton. Both hotels have excellent catered food. The service is amazing — they really care about you and your event, and they are great partners."

Sward lauds the Oregon Convention Center, where sessions and workshops were held. "They are very easy to work with and very accommodating," he explains. "It's an excellent facility and you can have a great meeting without feeling lost as you might in a city like Las Vegas or Orlando. And the food is some of the best convention center food I have ever had."

One challenge Sward notes is

Oregon Convention Center offers 255,000 sf of contiguous exhibit space and 52 meeting rooms.

Downtown Boise offers everything from retail shops, restaurants, theaters and art galleries to event facilities.

the location of the Oregon Convention Center in relation to downtown, where most hotels are found. "Attendees are apprehensive at first when they hear they have to ride the train to the convention center," he says. "But after they do it they find it easy and convenient."

BOISE CATERS TO CORPORATE EVENTS

The Pacific Northwest region extends inland to Idaho, and downtown Boise has seen the addition of nearly 600 hotel rooms in recent years, bringing the total to nine properties with 1,275 rooms within walking distance to Boise Centre. Additionally, the long-standing Red Lion Hotel Boise Downtowner is scheduled for a complete overhaul that will include a flag change to Marriott's Delta Hotels brand. The planned \$10 million makeover will include a total renovation of all guest rooms with completion expected in 2021.

Boise Centre has also seen a facelift. Last year a renovation boosted space from 50,000 sf to 86,000 sf, with 31 meeting rooms available. Boise can now accommodate groups up to 1,600 attendees as well as multiple smaller groups at the same time. Although Boise is most commonly linked to events for associations, the city was centrally located for the member companies operating the Western Gas Measurement Short Course, (WGMSC) an educational conference that drew 525 attendees earlier this year.

"All members of the WGMSC are employees of Western U.S. and Canadian natural gas utilities and transportation companies," explains Tim Wold, 2019 chairman of the WGMSC, an event that provides classes by industry experts for employees of the



Idaho Tourism

natural gas industry. "The Boise airport has nonstop travel for many of our member companies and the airport is only minutes from downtown Boise."

Wold continues, "The Boise Centre had just recently completed an expansion, and the added square footage allowed us to offer more classes and vendor space. We had plenty of space for our group of 525 attendees and for the 103 vendor booths in the main convention hall.

"We had plenty of space for our group of 525 attendees and for the 103 vendor booths in the main convention hall."

TIM WOLD
2019 Chairman
Western Gas Measurement
Short Course



The A/V staff set up each classroom with a projector, screen and microphone for the speakers, and I was given a radio to contact A/V, catering or the operation staff if anything was needed or to be changed. I was also given a lapel pin to wear so the staff knew that I was the point person for the convention."

"Breakfast and lunch buffets at the Boise Centre were well received by the attendees and the prices

were very affordable," Wold adds. "The staff had water and coffee stations by the classrooms and during breaks snacks were available in the main convention hall. Along with our board members, I was very impressed by the professionalism of the entire Boise Centre staff, from front office to wait staff."

Wold says vendors used downtown restaurants to dine with their customers each night. "One vendor rented the JUMP Center (Jack's Urban Meeting Place) next to the Boise Centre for dinner and a Japanese drum and dance show," Wold says. "I attended some of the dinners and had great food and fun, and there were great comments on restaurants from the other attendees that I talked with during the event."

Wold noted one challenge Boise presented to some attendees: The limited number of nonstop flights from the east. "Several vendors flying in from the East Coast area had a long day," he explains. But the benefits outweighed the inconveniences. "The main advantage of Boise as a destination is the commitment of the convention center, the hotels, the restaurants and the city to make sure everyone attending is wanting to come back."

C&IT



2019 AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

THE BEST OF THE BEST CVBs, HOTELS, RESORTS AND CONFERENCE CENTERS



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THE BROADMOOR



HILTON ORLANDO LAKE BUENA VISTA



SEA ISLAND RESORT

We at *Corporate & Incentive Travel* magazine are proud to present the winners of our 35th annual Awards of Excellence. We thank our subscribers – the meeting and incentive travel professionals – for judging which hotels, resorts and conference centers best served their needs by excelling in staff service, accommodations and meeting facilities, F&B, event setups and arrangements, ambience and accessibility. The subscribers also choose the convention and visitors bureaus that go above and beyond in service and support, promotional assistance, supplier, facility and venue information, coordination and liaison with local attractions and transportation, and comprehensive assistance with accommodations and site inspections.

While others may be content to rest on their laurels, these industry-leading winners prove what it means to be ‘best in class’ by continually reinventing themselves through renovations and rebrandings. Communicating and marketing effectively is all about making real connections through relationship-building. When you make it personal, you make meetings and events an unqualified success. And then everyone is a winner. We salute all the winners of our Awards of Excellence on these pages and invite you to read the success stories of many of the winners featured in this annual section.



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GRAND HYATT BAHA MAR



ROSEN SHINGLE CREEK



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CHICAGO, IL
- Cincinnati USA Convention & Visitors Bureau
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- Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau
DETROIT, MI
- Discover The Palm Beaches
WEST PALM BEACH, FL
- Experience Columbus
COLUMBUS, OH
- Explore St. Louis
ST. LOUIS, MO
- Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau
BOSTON, MA
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FORT LAUDERDALE, FL
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- Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau
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- Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau
PALM SPRINGS, CA
- Greater Raleigh Convention & Visitors Bureau
RALEIGH, NC
- Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau
HONOLULU, HI
- Hilton Head Island Visitor & Convention Bureau
HILTON HEAD, SC
- Irving Convention & Visitors Bureau
IRVING, TX
- Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority
LAS VEGAS, NV
- Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau
LONG BEACH, CA
- Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board
LOS ANGELES, CA
- Marina del Rey Convention & Visitors Bureau
MARINA DEL REY, CA
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ATLANTIC CITY, NJ
- Memphis Tourism
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- NYC & Company
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- Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority
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- San Diego Tourism Authority
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INTERNATIONAL

Aruba Convention Bureau
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Bermuda Tourism Authority
HAMILTON, BERMUDA

Korea Tourism Organization
GANGWON-DO, KOREA

Québec City Business Destination
QUÉBEC CITY, QUÉBEC, CANADA

Singapore Tourism Board
SINGAPORE

Tourism Toronto
TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA

Tourism Vancouver
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HOTELS, RESORTS & CONFERENCE CENTERS

ARIA Resort & Casino
LAS VEGAS, NV

Arizona Biltmore, A Waldorf Astoria Resort
PHOENIX, AZ

Atlantis Paradise Island, Bahamas
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Baltimore Marriott Waterfront
BALTIMORE, MD

Beau Rivage Resort & Casino
BILOXI, MS

Beaver Run Resort & Conference Center
BRECKENRIDGE, CO

Bellagio
LAS VEGAS, NV

Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa
ATLANTIC CITY, NJ

Boston Park Plaza
BOSTON, MA

The Broadmoor
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

Caesars Palace Las Vegas
LAS VEGAS, NV

Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile
CHICAGO, IL

Lincolnshire Marriott Resort
LINCOLNSHIRE, IL

Coeur d'Alene Resort
COEUR D'ALENE, ID

Conrad New York
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FORT LAUDERDALE, FL

Foxwoods Resort Casino
MASHANTUCKET, CT

Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center
NATIONAL HARBOR, MD

Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center
NASHVILLE, TN

Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center
KISSIMMEE, FL

Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center
GRAPEVINE, TX

Grand Geneva Resort & Spa
LAKE GENEVA, WI

Grand Hyatt Baha Mar
NASSAU, BAHAMAS

Grand Hyatt Denver
DENVER, CO

Grand Hyatt Vail
VAIL, CO

Grand Sierra Resort and Casino
RENO, NV

Grand Wailea Maui, A Waldorf Astoria Resort
WHAILEA, HI

Hammock Beach Resort
PALM COAST, FL

Harrah's Resort Atlantic City
ATLANTIC CITY, NJ

Hilton Austin
AUSTIN, TX

Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort
HONOLULU, HI

Hilton New Orleans Riverside
NEW ORLEANS, LA

Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista
LAKE BUENA VISTA, FL

Hilton San Diego Bayfront
SAN DIEGO, CA

Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa
DESTIN, FL

Hotel del Coronado
CORONADO, CA

The Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa
HOUSTON, TX

Hyatt Regency Maui Resort & Spa
LAHAINA, HI

Hyatt Regency New Orleans
NEW ORLEANS, LA

Hyatt Regency Orlando
ORLANDO, FL

Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa
SANTA ANA PUEBLO, NM

JW Marriott Indianapolis
INDIANAPOLIS, IN

JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa
SAN ANTONIO, TX

JW Marriott Scottsdale Camelback Inn Resort & Spa
SCOTTSDALE, AZ

Keystone Resort & Conference Center
KEYSTONE, CO

La Cantera Resort & Spa
SAN ANTONIO, TX

La Quinta Resort & Club
LA QUINTA, CA

The Langham, Boston
BOSTON, MA

Loews Miami Beach Hotel
MIAMI BEACH, FL

Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando
ORLANDO, FL

Loews Ventana Canyon Resort
TUCSON, AZ

Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego
SAN DIEGO, CA

Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino
LAS VEGAS, NV

Margaritaville Hollywood Beach Resort
HOLLYWOOD, FL

MGM Grand Detroit
DETROIT, MI

MGM Grand Hotel & Casino
LAS VEGAS, NV

MGM National Harbor
OXON HILL, MD

The Mirage
LAS VEGAS, NV

Mohegan Sun
UNCASVILLE, CT

Monarch Beach Resort
DANA POINT, CA

Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa & Convention Center
GALVESTON, TX

New York Hilton Midtown
NEW YORK, NY

Ocean Reef Club
KEY LARGO, FL

Ojai Valley Inn & Spa
OJAI, CA

Omni Dallas Hotel
DALLAS, TX

Omni Nashville Hotel
NASHVILLE, TN

Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate
CHAMPIONSGATE, FL

Orlando World Center Marriott
ORLANDO, FL

Palmer House, a Hilton Hotel
CHICAGO, IL

Peppermill Resort Spa Casino
RENO, NV

PGA National Resort & Spa
PALM BEACH GARDENS, FL

The Phoenician, a Luxury Collection Resort
SCOTTSDALE, AZ

Ponte Vedra Inn & Club
PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FL

The Post Oak Hotel at Uptown Houston
HOUSTON, TX

The Resort at Pelican Hill
NEWPORT COAST, CA

The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain
MARANA, AZ

Rosen Centre Hotel
ORLANDO, FL

Rosen Plaza Hotel
ORLANDO, FL

Rosen Shingle Creek
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SANDESTIN, FL

Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa
PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FL

Sea Island Resort
SEA ISLAND, GA

The Sea Pines Resort
HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC

Seaport Hotel & World Trade Center
BOSTON, MA

Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood
HOLLYWOOD, FL

Sheraton Grand Chicago
CHICAGO, IL

Sheraton New Orleans Hotel
NEW ORLEANS, LA

Talking Stick Resort
SCOTTSDALE, AZ

Tropicana Las Vegas
LAS VEGAS, NV

Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago
CHICAGO, IL

Trump International Hotel Washington, D.C.
WASHINGTON D.C.

Trump National Doral Miami
MIAMI, FL

The Venetian Resort Las Vegas
LAS VEGAS, NV

Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort
LAKE BUENA VISTA, FL

The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa
SCOTTSDALE, AZ

Wynn Las Vegas
LAS VEGAS, NV



SEA ISLAND

Two-Time Winner

FACTS AND FEATURES

Guest Rooms/Suites: 390

Meeting Space: 42,000 square feet (interior)

Special Services & Amenities: Sea Island's rooms and suites offer views from oceanfront and river view to golf course. In addition to 42,000 square feet of interior meeting and event space, Sea Island's setting as a barrier island provides myriad outdoor event options as well, from casual, overlooking the river and marsh to oceanfront, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

When it comes to dining, the culinary team ensures that cuisine is customized to meet the theme, style, budget and goals of every event.

Nine restaurants offer dining experiences ranging from casual, oceanfront to Forbes Five-Star. As a semitropical island, Sea Island enjoys an average year-round high temperature of 75° and an average low of 60°.



Steeped in golf tradition, Sea Island is home to three championship golf courses, including Seaside and Plantation, site of the PGA TOUR's RSM Classic, hosted each fall by Davis Love III, Sea Island touring professional, two-time Ryder Cup Captain and 2017 inductee into the World Golf Hall of Fame. With 15 holes flanked by views of the ocean, sound and marsh, Seaside is Sea Island's signature course. Retreat Course, originally designed by Joe Lee, was renovated in 2001 by Davis and Mark Love and features a unique, dramatic layout. Created in 1928 by Walter Travis and redesigned by Rees Jones in 1999, Plantation has again been redesigned, this time by Davis Love III and his brother Mark, as part of a \$30 million enhancement program for golf and The Lodge at Sea Island.

GOLF AND LODGE ENHANCEMENTS

Located between Seaside and Plantation, The Lodge at Sea Island recently added an 18-hole putting course called The Speedway, six new cottages with a total of 14 new sleeping rooms, an oceanfront pool and pool house and a new, 17,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art Golf Performance Center. Now being called by some the finest such center in the world, it features six instruction and club fitting bays, cutting-edge



putting studio, golf club workshop, gym, and indoor and outdoor meeting and event spaces. Phil Kenyon, director of putting instruction and one of the most sought-after putting instructors in the world, has designed the new putting studio for teaching and putter fitting. The Center teaches every aspect of the game to all skill levels, from juniors to Open and Masters Champions.

AN OVERVIEW

Since 1928, Sea Island has been known as an exceptional destination appealing to those who appreciate gracious service and heartfelt hospitality. With four Forbes Five-Star experiences — The Cloister at Sea Island, The Lodge at Sea Island, The Spa at Sea Island and the Georgian Room restaurant — it is the only resort in the world to have received four Forbes Five-Star Awards for 11 consecutive years.

The only U.S. resort to host a G-8 Summit of world leaders, Sea Island provides exceptional settings and service for conferences and executive retreats. Guest accommodations are available at The Cloister, a Mediterranean masterpiece; The Lodge, reminiscent of an English country manor or The Inn at Sea Island. A cottage option is also available.

Located on the Georgia coast midway between Jacksonville, Florida (JAX, 60 minutes) and Savannah, Georgia (SAV, 75 minutes), Sea Island is served by two additional airports, including Brunswick (BQK, 20 minutes) and the private McKinnon St. Simons Airport (SSI, 10 minutes). **C&IT**



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HARRAH'S RESORT ATLANTIC CITY

First-Time Winner

FACTS AND FEATURES

Guest Rooms/Suites: 2,590

Meeting Space: 125,000 square feet of flexible meeting space – the attached Waterfront Conference Center, the largest meeting facility of its kind from Baltimore to Boston, features 100,000 square feet

Special Services & Amenities: Under a 90-foot glass dome sits our indoor oasis, The Pool. It is perfect for a closing reception with up to 2,000 participants.



Harrahs' Resort Atlantic City, the largest facility of its kind from Baltimore to Boston, boasts 125,000 square feet of flexible meeting space to deliver your world-class event. The Waterfront Conference Center features 100,000 square feet of meeting space spanning two floors, with a prime Marina District location. The pillar-less Avalon and Wild-wood Ballrooms each provide more than 49,000 square feet of versatile meeting space and divide into 30 breakout rooms.

The Atlantic City Ballroom is divisible into seven breakout rooms and perfect for an opening reception. It opens into the Gallery, featuring pre-function space for registration or network breaks.

Enjoy an evening at The Pool, surrounded by a tropical oasis and live entertainment under a 90-foot tall dome. It is a perfect setting for a closing reception with room for up to 2,000 participants. At night, it transforms into The Pool After Dark, Atlantic City's hottest pool party. Experience the best nightlife in Atlantic City and dance the night away listening to live entertainment with top DJs and performers.

OUR RESORT EXEMPLIFIES HIGH STANDARDS

With views of the marina, Harrah's Resort Atlantic City guest rooms and suites are exquisitely appointed and designed with your absolute comfort in mind. This includes the recently redesigned and enhanced 507 guest rooms and suites in the Coastal Tower. Coastal rooms, which boast approximately 450 square feet of space, offer fresh design elements, similar in aesthetics to the resort's Bayview rooms, and feature rich hues of lavender and blue accent colors, contrasting white and gray tones and contemporary furniture. Hard-wired for business-minded travelers seeking to be constantly plugged in, all Coastal rooms and suites will be technology-rich with high-speed internet access

and accessible charging stations.

Harrah's Resort Atlantic City exemplifies high standards of environmental and social responsibility in relation to their meetings and convention facilities and practices. This includes documented energy-reduction plans further strengthened by Caesars Entertainment's specific objectives and numeric targets. That is why Green Key Global awarded Harrah's Resort Atlantic City a four-key rating.

We are here to advise meeting planners every step of the way when it comes to F&B, as well – whether you want a breakfast buffet, snack breaks, boxed or plated lunches or an elegant dinner banquet. Caesars Entertainment will help create the ideal menu to fit your vision and budget, from seafood and poultry or gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan options.

All of Harrah's Resort Atlantic City's restaurants welcome groups and complete buyouts are also available. We offer a dine-around arrangement, allowing guests to sample different venues, such as Gordon Ramsay Steak, Martorano's and Veracruz.

Flexibility is key with Caesars Entertainment. With one phone call you have access to all our properties within one destination. One contact, one contract and one food and beverage minimum. The possibilities are endless with Caesars Entertainment. **C&IT**



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CAESARS
ENTERTAINMENT
PRESENTS

Harrah's ATLANTIC CITY



LARGEST CONFERENCE CENTER FROM BOSTON TO BALTIMORE

CaesarsMeansBusiness.com





THE BROADMOOR

35-Time Winner

FACTS AND FEATURES

- Guest Rooms/Suites:** 784/125
- Meeting Space:** 315,000 square feet
- Special Services & Amenities:** Championship golf, spa and fitness center, tennis and pickleball program, falconry, zip-lining, 23 boutiques and 20 restaurants, cafes and lounges.



The Broadmoor and its Wilderness Experiences encompass a total of 5,000 acres within Colorado's Pikes Peak region. The main resort has 784 guest rooms and suites, championship golf courses, an award-winning spa, unique retail, and 20 diverse restaurants, cafes and lounges. The Broadmoor's unparalleled combination of an illustrious history of innovation and distinctive culture of service has made it one of the country's premier event destinations for more than 100 years.

The Broadmoor may be the longest-running Forbes Five-Star, AAA Five-Diamond hotel in the country, but we don't have time to rest on our laurels. That's why in the spring of 2020, the 125,000-square-foot Exhibit Hall will make its debut. Explicitly intended to accommodate trade shows and exhibits, the interior of the space will be less formal and very versatile. Additionally, 32 breakout rooms surround the exhibit space with direct interior connectivity to the adjoining Broadmoor Hall. Together the Exhibit Hall, Broadmoor Hall, International Center and Colorado Hall will comprise 'The Broadmoor Event Center.' Add in the main campus meetings space and you have over 315,000 square feet to offer your group.

The Broadmoor and The Broadmoor's Wilderness Experiences are the perfect destinations to enjoy a temperate climate, consisting of 300 days of sunshine and low humidity. Thanks to the beautiful year-round weather, visitors to The Broadmoor spend much of their time outdoors hiking, golfing, mountain biking, fly fishing or simply relaxing.

NATURE'S PLAYGROUND

Nestled at the base of Cheyenne Mountain, nature's playground is knocking at our back door. Allow yourself to step outside of your comfort zone and experience flora at its finest. To get yourself acclimated, pick up a hiking map from our concierge and warm up as you embark on the 1-mile trail to the Seven Falls gate. Whether you choose to hike the Chamberlain Trail on your way to The Broadmoor or climb the 224 steps to the top of Seven Falls, trail systems are abundant and within walking distance from The Broadmoor's main campus. Need a quick detour? Fly through Cheyenne Canyon, above bristlecone pine treetops and over the 'Grandest Mile of Scenery' with The Broadmoor Soaring Adventure. The Woods and Fins courses consist of 10 zip lines, two suspension bridges, a 180 foot-controlled rappel to the canyon floor and an overwhelming sense of accomplishment.

C&IT



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B
GRAND ENOUGH FOR YOUR
BEST PEOPLE AND THEIR
BIGGEST IDEAS.



Meetings and events take on a special energy at The Broadmoor. Our magnificent Colorado setting will inspire your people. Our world-class golf, spa, dining and more will refresh them. The unique venues and activities of our Broadmoor Wilderness Experience properties will challenge them and change their perspectives. Our 185,000 square feet of meeting space is flexible enough to meet your most demanding requirements. And amidst it all, The Broadmoor's legendary tradition of quality and service will ensure your event is a success. Contact us today and start planning your meeting now at broadmoor.com.

THE BROADMOOR





LOEWS PORTOFINO BAY HOTEL

20-Time Winner

FACTS AND FEATURES

Guest Rooms/Suites: 750

Meeting Space: 42,000 square feet

Special Services & Amenities:

Choose 3 FREE incentives when you book your next meeting at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel by December 31, 2019. Visit our website for more information.



Universal Orlando Resort is the premier destination for meetings and events, offering incredible product, remarkable experiences and a passionate group of people committed to collaborating with you every step of the way.

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

MEETINGS WITH ITALIAN CHARM

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

Planners also will find a variety of beautiful outdoor venues, including the scenic Harbor Piazza and dazzling Villa Pool, where events can be enhanced by the hotel's lush landscaping and distinctive Italian architecture. Adorned with handcrafted details such as Venetian glass chandeliers, the hotel offers a breathtaking setting for both business and social events.

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

MEDITERRANEAN-INSPIRED ACCOMMODATIONS

All 750 rooms and suites at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel have

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

INCREDIBLE EVENT OPTIONS

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

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

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



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MEETING EXPECTATIONS
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UOMEETINGSANDEVENTS.COM

LOEWS
HOTELS

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2019 AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

SEMINOLE HARD ROCK HOTEL & CASINO HOLLYWOOD

Five-Time Winner

FACTS AND FEATURES

- Guest Rooms/Suites:** 1,271
- Meeting Space:** 120,000 square feet
- Special Services & Amenities:** 18 acres of pools/water, including a pool lagoon the length of three football fields; two white-sand beaches; private pools; concierge services; property-wide, high-speed Wi-Fi; 24-hour, in-room dining



Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood just completed a \$1.5 billion, resort-wide expansion. The project included the complete renovation of the existing Hard Rock Hotel and the addition of the iconic Guitar Hotel and Oasis Tower. We are South Florida's premier one-stop destination for fun and entertainment, with 24/7 action and amenities that include an expansive gaming floor, food and beverage outlets, live concert venue, luxury spa and salon with high-end gym, retail shops and more. Boasting 120,000 square feet of meeting and convention space, Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood is primed to compete as one of the top destinations for events in South Florida. With a seasoned team with decades of experience, we can tailor and produce events of any size for any occasion.

EQUIPPED FOR EVENTS OF ANY SIZE

Seminole Hard Rock Hollywood's meeting space includes a 38,000-square-foot exhibition hall large enough to host trade shows, conventions and large corporate groups. Adjacent to the prefunction space that features vaulted ceilings, chandeliered ballrooms and marbled atriums, the opulent and sophisticated setting offers the perfect location for the most productive business events and elegant social affairs. With 46 unique spaces, the flexible meeting space can be reconfigured to accommodate groups as large as 5,000 or smaller, more intimate groups of 15. Additional event space is available at DAER South Florida, the resort's new nightclub/dayclub complex. DAER is a 44,000-square-foot, customizable space that includes an indoor night-

club; a day club with resort-style pool oasis and bungalows and rooftop bar.

Seminole Hard Rock has everything from entertainment and culinary destinations to luxury retail and refreshing pools. The new 13.5-acre pool lagoon offers activities such as kayaking, paddle boarding and more — perfect for team building. Blow off some steam at Hard Rock Live, the integrated resort's new concert venue. With unobstructed sightlines from every seat in the house, guests can enjoy music's hottest acts at their leisure.

With Hard Rock Live and the opening of a new comedy club with weekly programming, guests will find much to do at Seminole Hard Rock. True to the brand, live music can be found at the resort's signature bars ranging from jazz sounds to upbeat rock cover bands and everything in between.

The resort is located within close proximity to South Florida's major airports: 15 minutes from Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL); 45 minutes from Miami International Airport (MIA); and an hour from Palm Beach International Airport (PBI).

C&IT



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EVERYONE HAS SPACES WE HAVE VENUES



Following a \$1.5 billion resort-wide expansion, Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood is ready to put your next event on our center stage. Located just 10 minutes from Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, boasting 120,000 square feet of meeting space, 1,271 luxury guestrooms and suites, world-class spa spanning 42,000 square feet, 19 unique dining concepts, 18 acres of pool expanse, and 26,000 square feet of boutique storefronts, Seminole Hard Rock doesn't miss a beat. Combined with our brand standard amplified service, our team of seasoned planners is primed to make your next event our headlining act.



CALL 800.937.0156
 TO BOOK YOUR GROUP TODAY!



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CAESARS PALACE

26-Time Winner

FACTS AND FEATURES

Guest Rooms/Suites: 4,022, including Nobu Hotel's 182 rooms, 18 suites and one villa.

Meeting Space: 300,000 square feet of meeting/convention/ballroom facilities.

Special Services & Amenities: Add a memorable twist to your event by hosting it at the newly renovated Colosseum, the multilevel OMNIA nightclub, or the 4.5-acre Garden of the Gods Pool Oasis.



The iconic Caesars Palace offers luxurious amenities and contemporary elegance for the perfect event. Our five towers, which include high-end suites and villas, will make every guest feel like royalty.

The grandeur and lavishness of Caesars Palace extends triumphantly into 300,000 square feet of stately meeting facilities. Our conference center is ideal for meetings with direct access to the Palace Tower and comfortably set apart from the casino area. These two stories include two 51,000-square-foot ballrooms that can be configured into 25 separate breakout rooms and overlooks the Garden of the Gods Pool Oasis. Meeting planners will find an outstanding range of flexible meeting spaces to accommodate large-scale productions or small groups.

Add a memorable twist to your event by hosting it at one of our unique special venues. The Colosseum, home of the greatest entertainers in the world, is available for general sessions. Imagine your CEO on the same stage graced by Madonna and Jerry Seinfeld. In the summer of 2019, The Colosseum underwent a transformation that includes a new, state-of-the-art sound system, new moving light fixtures, a high-definition LED video wall and refurbished seating to enhance the theater's comfort.

We are here to advise meeting planners every step of the way when it comes to F&B, as well — whether you want a breakfast buffet, snack breaks, boxed or plated lunches or an elegant dinner banquet. Caesars Entertainment will help create the ideal menu to fit your vision and budget, from seafood and poultry or gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan options.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR FLEXIBILITY

Caesars Entertainment features more than 100 restaurants, cafes and lounges. All our restaurants welcome groups and complete buyouts are also available. We offer a dine-around arrangement, allowing guests to sample different venues. Caesars Palace has an array of award-winning restaurants from celebrity chefs, such as Bobby Flay's Mesa Grill, Gordon Ramsay's Hell's Kitchen, Nobu Matsuhisa's Nobu Restaurant & Lounge, Pronto by Giada de Laurentiis, and Restaurant Guy Savoy.

In April 2019, Caesars Entertainment opened Vanderpump Cocktail Garden with television star and restaurateur Lisa Vanderpump. Available for events of up to 150, Vanderpump Cocktail Garden is the newest addition to the iconic Los Angeles-based Vanderpump empire and offers exclusive cocktails and bites, all in a garden oasis setting.

Flexibility is key with Caesars Entertainment. With one phone call you have access to all our properties within one destination. One contract, one food and beverage minimum. The possibilities are endless with Caesars Entertainment. **C&IT**



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GRAND HYATT BAHAMA MAR

First-Time Winner

FACTS AND FEATURES

- Guest Rooms/Suites:** 1,800 guest rooms, including 230 suites
- Meeting Space:** 200,000 square feet of flexible indoor and outdoor space, including 82,000 square feet for The Baha Mar Convention, Art and Entertainment Center
- Special Services & Amenities:** Take a flamingo walk, held twice per day around the pool area with four ambassador flamingos.



Celebrating the ocean, culture and spirit of The Bahamas, Grand Hyatt Baha Mar is a spectacular luxury resort located on the picturesque island of New Providence in Nassau. With stunning views of the ocean and green coastal fairways, Grand Hyatt Baha Mar is a sanctuary of natural beauty, dramatic architecture, art and modern luxury. The oceanfront haven boasts 1,800 opulent guest rooms, including 230 suites that comprise one-, two- and three-bedroom residences with lavish amenities and contemporary décor. Designed to become the preferred venue for international incentives, meetings and events, Grand Hyatt Baha Mar will manage The Baha Mar Convention, Art and Entertainment Center, the destination's 200,000-square-foot indoor and outdoor convention facility.

- Enjoy high-end retail, featuring Tiffany's, Rolex, Hublot, Cartier, Bvlgari, Vilebrequin, Lilly Pulitzer and MAC Cosmetics.
- Take art classes at The Current Art Gallery.
- Experience a celebration of Bahamian art in the largest collection of contemporary art at the Bahamas.

THE LARGEST CASINO IN THE CARIBBEAN & MORE!

At Grand Hyatt Baha Mar, guests can experience a casino with 1,140 slots and 119 table games, indulge in the destination's spa, splurge at high-end retail shops, and savor innovative cuisine at more than 20 restaurants, bars and lounges. A white sand beach with water sports, several pools, The Racquet Club at Baha Mar, a Jack Nicklaus signature design golf course, and a vibrant nightclub will ensure no shortage of activities and fun, accented by unforgettable Bahamian hospitality.

ENJOY BEACHFRONT LOCATION, SPA & GOLF

At Grand Hyatt Baha Mar, attendees can:

- Dine at 40 unique, on-site options, from easygoing poolside bars, a Pan-Asian noodle bar, food trucks on the beach, to fine dining. This includes nine lounges and bars.
- Unwind at six unique pools, with private cabanas and personal attendants.
- Play at Baha Mar Casino, the largest casino in the Caribbean, totaling 100,000 square feet of gaming excitement.
- Relax at ESPA Baha Mar, the ultimate spa experience with 30,000 square feet of total tranquility.
- Tee off at Royal Blue Golf Course, the par-72, 18-hole Jack Nicklaus signature golf course.



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Grand Hyatt Baha Mar is on beautiful Cable Beach just 6 miles from the Nassau International Airport and 5 miles from Downtown Nassau. North American travelers will clear customs on their way out of Nassau International Airport. **C&IT**



GRAND HYATT BAHAMA MAR

Inspired by the spirit and beauty of the Bahamas, our venues are distinctive for their playful colors and airy interiors. With 200,000 sq. ft. of flexible indoor and outdoor event space, and stunning Cable Beach as a backdrop, we can accommodate intimate events and large meetings with a unique Bahamian flair.

Inquire about value dates and exclusive offers.
 Email nasgh-rfp@hyatt.com or call 242-788-7344.





VISIT DENVER, THE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

24-Time Winner

FACTS AND FEATURES

Guest Rooms: More than 11,000; nearly 50,000 metro-wide

Hotels/Resorts: 44 downtown; 150-plus metro-wide

Convention Center FYI: The Colorado Convention Center has 584,000 square feet of meeting space, two hotel-quality ballrooms and a 5,000 fixed-seat theater.



An outdoor city filled with urban adventure, Denver pulses with an entrepreneurial vibe that makes it an emerging business hub. Then there's the majesty of those ever-present mountain views! Add more than 11,000 downtown hotel rooms, 300 days of annual sunshine, a thriving, chef-driven dining scene and unique venues, and you've got the combination for the perfect meeting destination.

VISIT DENVER, The Convention & Visitors Bureau is a helpful and experienced organization ready to assist planners in crafting the perfect meeting. The award-winning staff is available to help you stay on top of all the exciting changes in the city.

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

GETTING THERE

Getting to Denver has never been easier. Denver International Airport (DEN) has one of the top-three largest domestic networks in the U.S. with 1,600 daily flights and nonstop service to 25 international destinations. Plus, DEN airfares are 17% lower than the national average. Once you've landed, take the affordable and convenient A Line from DEN directly to Denver Union Station in the heart of downtown.

A short walk or free shuttle ride away from Union Station is the Colorado Convention Center (CCC), designed by meeting planners for meetings planners. Big changes are on the way — an upcoming

expansion will bring up to 80,000 square feet of new flexible meeting and ballroom space, as well as 50,000 square feet of prefunction space and a 50,000-square-foot rooftop terrace. The expansion will also provide best-in-class technology improvements.

AROUND TOWN

Hosting an off-site meeting? The city is abounding in unique, only-in-Denver venues. Try a morning yoga class at the world-famous Red Rocks Amphitheatre or get inspired by a breakout session at Denver Art Museum, the renowned home of one of the greatest American West art collections in the world.

For an exceptional dining experience, visit one of the many award-winning, chef-owned restaurants. Recent James Beard Award winners include Jen Jasinski, owner of Rioja, located in Larimer Square; and Alex Seidel, owner of Mercantile Dining and Provision, housed inside the renovated Union Station. Check out one of the city's innovative food halls, such as The Source, Avanti F&B or the brand-new Milk Market, where you can get everything from poke bowls and pasta to crêpes and charcuterie. Zagat recently listed Denver in its top five most exciting food cities.

C&IT



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Denver, Colorado



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With airfares 20% lower than the national average, direct flights to more than 200 worldwide destinations and a direct train to downtown, it's easy to see why both *The Wall Street Journal* and Skytrax named Denver International Airport (DEN) the #1 airport in the U.S. DEN makes it easy and affordable for your attendees to get where they need to be.

Explore Denver at CONVENTIONSELEVATED.COM



Photograph provided courtesy of Denver International Airport.



2019 AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

GREATER MIAMI CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

24-Time Winner

FACTS AND FEATURES

Guest Rooms: 55,394

Hotels/Resorts: 426

Meeting Space: 1.2 million square feet

Convention Center FYI: The Miami

Beach Convention Center has 680,000 square feet of meeting and exhibition space, a 60,000-square-foot grand ballroom, a 20,000-square-foot junior ballroom and 84 breakout rooms. An 800-room headquarter hotel will be built soon.



From perfect weather, pristine beaches and top-rated attractions to world-class hotels, dining and a thriving arts and culture scene, Miami has everything you need to host the meeting or convention of your dreams. Few places in the world deliver such a thriving mix of international sophistication, natural tropical beauty and authentic cultural diversity as Miami.

Miami is a place where beauty and richness await to be found across the city, particularly among the many hidden gems it offers. Miami's diverse neighborhoods are a great place to start, where visitors are encouraged to explore the rich cultural roots that make Miami an incredible melting pot. Discover the Latin flavors of Little Havana or the Caribbean heritage of Little Haiti. Stroll through the street art district of Wynwood or the charming bohemian neighborhood of Coconut Grove. If you seek a more cosmopolitan edge, the bustling epicenter of Downtown Miami, with its gleaming skyscrapers, sweeping waterfront bay views, and endless shopping and dining possibilities, is the perfect neighborhood for you.

And no journey to Miami is complete without exploring iconic South Beach, where the eclectic lifestyles and colorful art deco architecture come to life. Along with the stunning beauty of its beaches and colorful buildings, South Beach also offers a diverse mix of world-class boutiques, galleries and stores.

A vibrant and dynamic global hub, Miami continues to reinvent itself with incredible hotels, meeting spaces and enhanced infrastructure. Among the creative venue options is the reimagined Miami Beach Convention Center, featuring nearly 500,000

square feet of versatile exhibition space and more than 180,000 square feet of meeting space, including a 60,000-square-foot grand ballroom, a 20,000-square-foot junior ballroom, and 84 breakout rooms. The space also features a terrace where attendees can step out, mingle, and soak up the city's signature sunshine and ocean breeze. The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau is excited to announce that the Miami Beach Convention Center will soon be home to a connecting 800-room headquarter hotel, making Miami the ultimate convenient meeting destination.

Miami is also easy to get to, with Miami International Airport (MIA) offering more than 400 flights from around the globe daily and serving more airlines than any other airport in the U.S. If you are already in Florida, try the Brightline, a stylish express train service that provides intercity travel, connecting Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach, with service between Miami and Orlando coming soon.

These are just a few of the memorable and magical highlights awaiting any meeting planner considering Miami. Visit MiamiMeetings.com to learn more. **C&IT**



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2019 AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

LONG BEACH CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

15-Time Winner

FACTS AND FEATURES

Total Guest Rooms: 5,196

Total Hotels/Resorts: 27

Total Square Feet of Meeting Space:

Hotel: 219,000+ / **Offsite:** 500,000+

Convention Center FYI: The Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center has 400,000 square feet of exhibit space, three exhibit halls totaling 224,000 square feet, 34 meeting rooms, the 45,000-square-foot Pacific Ballroom and more.



Located in the heart of Southern California, Long Beach offers quick and easy access to all of the attractions of Los Angeles and Orange County.

As the only urban downtown waterfront between San Francisco and San Diego, Long Beach blends big-city excitement, entertainment and amenities alongside the laid-back welcoming atmosphere of a beach resort. Within a compact eight-block area in the downtown waterfront, visitors discover accommodations to fit any budget or style, including shopping, attractions, entertainment, nightlife and more than 130 quality restaurants. Listed on WalkScore.com's "Top 10 Most 'Walkable' Cities in America," Long Beach is pedestrian and bike-friendly, with walkways and promenades boasting stunning oceanfront vistas.

ATTRACTIONS

Long Beach attractions include the Queen Mary, Aquarium of the Pacific, Rainbow Harbor, The Pike Outlets & Entertainment Center, Shoreline Village, two distinctive museums, two historic ranchos, and 11 miles of scenic beachfront, inland waterways and bays. With 345 days of sunshine annually, visitors enjoy endless waterside activities.

Located in the center of the city's downtown waterfront and entertainment district, the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center features more than 400,000 square feet of modern, flexible exhibit and special event space.

A \$60 million modernization created a new model for the convention center of the future. This repositioning gives guests a warm, stylish and welcoming social experience. With today's attendees in mind, the lobbies and hallways have been enhanced to create mini-meeting spots and networking pods where attendees can sit, talk and socialize.

Long Beach is a 'trailblazer' in the creation of cost-saving, 'turnkey' special event spaces. Each venue comes complete with pre-installed, professional theatrical/event lighting and sound systems.

The Pacific Ballroom has become one of Southern California's hottest special event venues, providing an intimate environment for dinners, concerts and special events. The open-air Terrace Plaza comes complete with programmable 'dancing waters' fountains, while The Cove, with its under-the-pier motif, is the perfect place for a Southern California food truck party. **C&IT**



STEVE GOODLING President and CEO

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NEW ORLEANS & COMPANY

19-Time Winner

FACTS AND FEATURES

Guest Rooms/Suites: More than 35,000 city-wide/
26,000 downtown

Meeting Space: 4 million+-square-foot convention center

Special Services & Amenities: The 1.1 million contiguous square feet of meeting space under one roof makes this the sixth-largest in the nation.



You already know what makes New Orleans a successful meeting destination — more than 26,000 hotel rooms, a walkable downtown, world-renowned cuisine, legendary music and an authentic culture that cannot be found anywhere else. But, did you know about the new state-of-the-art airport terminal, additional hotel inventory, convention center capital improvements and 4.5 miles of riverfront developments — plus so much more — that are reinventing the meeting experience? You also have access to local experts at New Orleans & Company (formerly the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau) that can help you with every aspect of your meeting. Your dedicated New Orleans expert can save you time and energy, helping you select hotels, identify venues that fit your needs, and send leads for a variety of vendors — all complimentary!

The Crescent City is home to a wide variety of venues, hotels, restaurants and attractions that can serve as the perfect meeting backdrop for any size or type of event. You can go big in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome or keep it small at the Stage Door Canteen inside The National World War II Museum. Bring in the color and magic of Mardi Gras at Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras World and River City venues. The diverse spaces — from the float den to the indoor mansion to the riverfront — can accommodate a wide variety of events. Gain a new perspective on the city aboard the Steamboat Natchez, Creole Queen or our newest addition, the Riverboat Louis Armstrong, where your guests can eat, drink and enjoy live music while cruising on the mighty Mississippi River.

ENJOY OUR UNIQUE CULTURE

Don't forget about the food. New Orleans is known for outstanding cuisine. Guests will find recipes passed down through generations as well as unique, bold fusions from innovative and award-winning chefs. New Orleans is the best place for fine dining as well as food less than \$5.

The city's compact geographic footprint means that many of these hotels, meeting spaces, attractions and restaurants are within walking distance of each other, as well as the historic French Quarter, allowing guests to relax and experience New Orleans on their own time outside of the meeting room. Take advantage of New Orleans' robust festival and events calendar to give attendees extra incentive to make the trip and share with them the unique culture and spirit of the Crescent City.

Come for the meeting, leave with a story, not just a souvenir. Visitors won't soon forget their experience in New Orleans, so when you're starting to plan your next meeting, contact New Orleans & Company first to get your dedicated New Orleans representative onboard to help you with dates, rates and space! **C&IT**



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ON THE MOVE //



BECK

Westin Tampa Bay has appointed **Colleen Beck** as director of sales and marketing for the waterfront property. Beck brings more than 25 years of hospitality experience to the team. She will be responsible for driving the sales and marketing strategies for the 244-room hotel.

Renaissance New York Chelsea Hotel has named **Yelithza Gonzales** the new director of sales and marketing. Gonzalez will supervise the sales efforts of the hotel while developing new accounts, maintaining existing accounts, managing rate and inventory, managing TPI and implementing sales and marketing strategies.

MSC Cruises USA — the North American arm of MSC Cruises, the Swiss-based, world's largest privately-owned cruise line — has appointed **Michelle Lardizabal** as senior vice president and commercial sales officer, a new position for the company responsible for overseeing the entire U.S. sales organization. Lardizabal brings 25 years of sales experience to her new role.

Hilton Milwaukee City Center has named Wisconsin native, **Christine Lunz**, the new director of events. Lunz brings more than 16 years of experience to the award-winning meetings and events team at Marcus Hotels & Resorts, which owns and manages the Hilton Milwaukee City Center.

Andaz West Hollywood has welcomed **Matt Ojinaga** as director of sales and marketing. In his new role, Ojinaga will oversee all aspects of sales and marketing for the legendary property. Previously, he has received numerous Hyatt leadership awards, including the 2017 Sales Team of the Year and the 2015 Sales Elite Performer.

YOTEL has appointed **James Rattray** as director of sales and marketing for YOTEL Washington D.C. Capitol Hill. Rattray will lead the sales and marketing strategies at Liaison Washington Capitol Hill, a YOTEL affiliate, overseeing the strategic repositioning of the property as it transforms and rebrands to YOTEL Washington D.C.

Chattanooga's historic hotel, The Read House, has appointed Tennessee native, **Andrea Richey**, as director of sales. With an impressive resume, Richey brings more than 20 years of successful, recognized achievement to her new role. Most recently, she served as area director of sales and marketing at The Westin Stonebriar Hotel & Golf Club in Frisco, Texas.

Mission Inn Resort & Club, Howey-In-The-Hills has named **Roy Schindele** executive director of sales and marketing. In his new role, Schindele will implement strategies to promote the Mission's 30,000 sf of conference space and array of outdoor recreational and team building amenities.

The Confidante Miami Beach has welcomed **Macarena Sepulveda** as the new director of event planning and meeting experience. In her new role, Sepulveda will be responsible for managing the planning and execution of banquet events and event services to ensure a seamless and memorable occasion.

Andaz Scottsdale Resort & Bungalow, a mid-century modern inspired resort, has appointed hospitality veteran, **Deanna Zuber-Galloway**, as director of sales, marketing and events. Zuber-Galloway brings more than 15 years of hospitality experience in sales, events planning and food and beverage operations to her new position.



GONZALES



LUNZ



RATTRAY



SCHINDELE



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LARDIZABAL



OJINAGA



RICHEY



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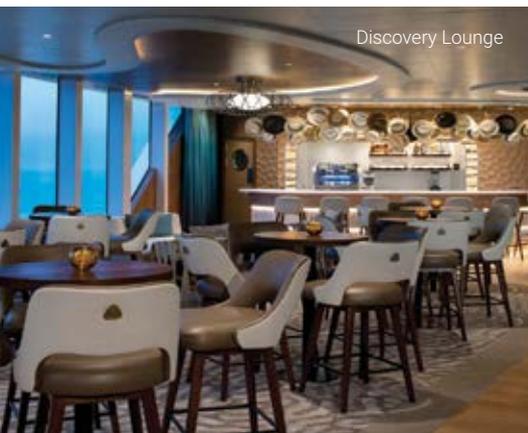
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