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# CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND TRAVEL PLANNERS



*Love,  
Frank Sinatra*

## Meet Like Frank

**'Do It Your Way' at Frank Sinatra's Favorite Hotels & Haunts PAGE 10**

Frank Sinatra with Wynn Resorts CEO and Chairman Steve Wynn, who recalls the "several glorious years" he associated with Ol' Blue Eyes in Las Vegas and Atlantic City.

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2016 GLOBAL INDUSTRY  
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**Risk Management** ●  
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**Entertainment Trends** ●  
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**Caribbean**  
PAGE 42

Credit: Wynn Resorts

# 600k<sup>SQ FT</sup>

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MEET  
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Planners need to be prepared for all kinds of crises  
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Temporary tattoo designer Tattly sets up "Tattly Parlors" as an  
intriguing, lively event option for corporate groups. **PAGE 38**



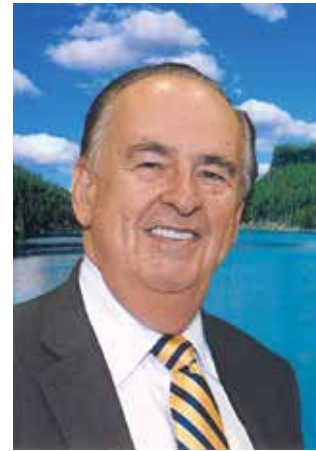
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# Publisher's Message

## 2016: Meetings Mean Business

As we approach 2016, it's time to look forward to a new year full of promise and opportunity. We invited Mike Dominguez and Richard Harper, the co-leaders of the Meetings Mean Business Coalition (MMBC), to share their thoughts with us in the Perspective department on page 8. They proclaim that 2015 was "a landmark year" as the coalition grew its membership to more than 50 board members and supporters, developed an infrastructure for proactive communication and advocacy, and released two research reports. In addition, the MMBC also led the first-ever North American Meetings Industry Day (NAMID), and next year on April 14, they will host the first-ever Global Meetings Industry Day. Dominguez explains, "To start, we'll release a suite of new materials that helps industry advocates stage a rally, host an educational event, request an official meetings day proclamation and promote the value of our industry on social media. Keep an eye out for those during the next several weeks and go to [www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com/GMID](http://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com/GMID) to learn more." Interestingly, Harper describes how the presidential campaign provides "a proactive opportunity to highlight the industry's value, using debates, town halls, retail politics, caucuses and conventions as proof points for the importance of face-to-face."



Risk management is top-of-mind these days as the fear of terrorism spreads. Meeting planners know all too well that even with the best preparation, there is always the possibility that a meeting can be ruined by an unexpected act. To stay current, review the timely tips from fellow planners in the crisis management feature on page 18.

On a lighter note, check out how planners can "save the day" by selecting the best entertainment for their event, in our feature on entertainment trends on page 38.

Lastly, I am sure you will relish the showpiece of this issue: "Meet Like Ol' Blue Eyes — 'Do It Your Way' at Frank Sinatra's Favorite Hotels & Haunts" on page 10. Born 100 years ago on December 12, the man and his music remain as popular as ever. Wynn Resorts Chairman and CEO Steve Wynn, who associated with Sinatra in Las Vegas and Atlantic City, stated, "Those moments and memories light up my life, even today."

Harvey Grotsky  
Publisher

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## News & Notes

### Recap: A Year of Growth for Meetings in Atlantic City

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — Meet AC and the Atlantic City Sports Commission announced they had a stellar year in 2015, and landed two major industry shows for 2016 as Meeting Professionals International and TEAMS each selected Atlantic City as their convention host city.



WOOD

In 2015, future hotel room night bookings are projected to be up 34 percent over the previous year, and in just two years, hotel room night bookings have doubled. Also, future convention delegate spending is up 31 percent over 2014, and projected delegate spending is up 70 percent over the past two years. The total Meet AC projected production year end will consist of 228,986 room nights, and delegate spending will reach up to \$185,639,748. In addition, for every \$1 of luxury tax Meet AC invested in 2015, it's returning \$23 back to the local economy.

Jim Wood, president and CEO for Meet AC, stated, "I am very pleased with the accomplishments that Meet AC and the Atlantic City Sports Commission have achieved in a short amount of time. The meeting and convention industry is vital and helps support the overall tourism industry in Atlantic City." [www.meetac.com](http://www.meetac.com)

### Miramonte Resort & Spa Transforms Guest Rooms and Social Spaces

INDIAN WELLS, CA — Miramonte Resort & Spa, a Destination Hotel, announces the completion of a \$4 million renovation, reinvigorating its luxury accommodations and amenities. Located in the heart of the valley and nestled at the base of the scenic Santa Rosa Mountains, the resort boasts transformed guest rooms, suites and social spaces — including the installation of a bocce court and numerous fire pits and seating areas throughout the 11 acres of grounds.

The renovation showcases new, contemporary artwork throughout the rooms, lobby, restaurant and bar. All rooms, suites and villas have been upgraded, featuring new carpet and furniture from sleek desks to chairs and couches as well as the installation of new lighting fixtures and mirrors. Additionally, the public spaces offer new indoor and outdoor furniture, a number of new fire-pit installations for lounging and refined landscaping. [www.destinationhotels.com](http://www.destinationhotels.com)

### Robert Enriquez Named Vice President Sales & Marketing for Visit Spokane



ENRIQUEZ

SPOKANE, WA — Industry veteran Robert Enriquez was named vice president of sales and marketing for Visit Spokane. Enriquez has held sales and marketing leadership positions for several destination marketing organizations including Reno Tahoe and Palm Springs, California. Most recently, he worked at the Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"After conducting a nationwide search to ensure we selected the best candidate, we are

very excited to have Robert as part of the Visit Spokane team," said Cheryl Kilday, president and CEO of Visit Spokane.

"I couldn't be happier to be a part of the Visit Spokane team," said Enriquez. "The Spokane region is the ideal location for convention and leisure travelers, and I'm looking forward to using my experience in collaboration with partners to bring even more visitors to our amazing destination." [www.visitspokane.com](http://www.visitspokane.com)

### Tania Armenta to Lead Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau

ALBUQUERQUE, NM — The board of directors of the Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB) unanimously selected Tania Armenta as the new president and CEO, effective January 6, 2016.



ARMENTA

Currently the organization's chief operating and marketing officer, Armenta has been with the organization for more than 17 years. Armenta is a forward-thinking and proven marketing leader known for building partnerships to reach goals, as well as developing strong and talented teams that have received numerous international, national and local awards.

"I am grateful for the confidence of the board in my skill set and approach. I believe in this organization, industry, city and state. I've been honored to work with Dale Lockett for the last 12 years, learning from him and many other wise mentors along the way. I'm excited to begin this new era with our tremendous ACVB team. The industry is currently a very bright spot for the economy, and we have an opportunity to build on that momentum and move forward aggressively working with our partners," said Armenta. [www.visitalbuquerque.org](http://www.visitalbuquerque.org)

## Snapshots



1



2



3



4



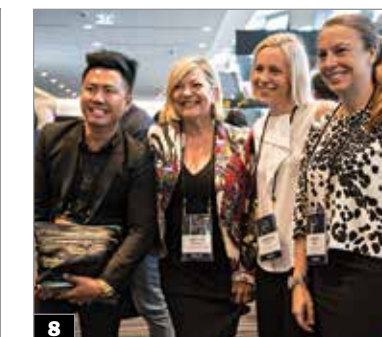
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6



7



8

Credits: 1-3 Hosts Global Alliance, 4-5 Florida Encounter, 6 IAEI, 7-8 Dreamtime

**1, 2, 3** Attendees were transformed into songwriters during a Music City-themed teambuilding activity led by KidBilly Music at the Hosts Global company meeting in Nashville, which included employees from Hosts Baltimore, Hosts Chicago, Hosts DC, Hosts Las Vegas, Hosts New Orleans and Hosts Global Alliance. Local Hosts Global Alliance member Maple Ridge Events and the Hosts Global corporate team created a memorable meeting. **4, 5** The 2015 Florida Encounter was held in early December at the beautiful and serene Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort. Florida Encounter is the premier appointment-based trade show showcasing all the Sunshine State has to offer for meetings, conventions and incentive professionals. **6** Attendees at the 2015 IAEI Expo! Expo! Annual Meeting & Exhibition in Baltimore, which drew more than 2,500 participants and was described by David DuBois, IAEI's president and CEO, as "the biggest one ever." **7, 8** Selfies from Dreamtime — the biennial, signature events showcase for Tourism Australia. At the end of this year's event in Adelaide, delegates experienced the business offering of Cairns, the Gold Coast, Melbourne and Sydney, Australia. Buyers also attended a showcase on Adelaide, highlighting incentives in the city and surrounding area as well as educational visits to other parts of Australia, including the Great Barrier Reef and Sydney.

By Michael Dominguez and Richard Harper

## The Meetings Mean Business Coalition Paves the Way for the Industry

The Meetings Mean Business Coalition (MMBC) was created in 2009 to showcase the incredible value that business meetings, travel and events bring to the U.S. economy. Its members span all facets of the face-to-face meetings and events industry, which have come together behind a common goal: providing the resources, tools and information to show the real impact the industry has on businesses, economies and communities.

Leading the coalition are two longtime industry advocates, Michael Dominguez, senior vice president and chief sales officer, MGM Resorts International, and Richard Harper, executive vice president, HelmsBriscoe. Both agree that 2015 has been a landmark year. The coalition grew its membership to more than 50 board members and supporters, while creating an infrastructure for proactive communication and advo-

**Michael Dominguez:** Building on the success of NAMID, we'll host the first Global Meetings Industry Day (GMID) on April 14, 2016. We'll work with the Convention Industry Council and partners across the globe to develop programming that reinforces the local impact of our global industry. To start, we'll release a suite of new materials that helps industry advocates stage a rally, host an educational event, request an official meetings day proclamation and promote the value of our industry on social media. Keep an eye out for those during the next several weeks and go to [www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com/GMID](http://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com/GMID) to learn more.

**Richard Harper:** A year ago, if you asked a room full of industry professionals, "Who's familiar with MMBC?" less than a third of hands would go up. Ask that question today and almost every hand is raised high. This shows that we're

“The presidential campaign provides a **proactive opportunity** to **highlight** the **industry's value**, using debates, town halls, retail politics, caucuses and conventions as proof points for the importance of **face-to-face**.”

cacy. MMBC released two research reports — one examining the value of government meetings for federal workers and another analyzing how and why millennials value conferences and conventions. MMBC also led the first-ever North American Meetings Industry Day (NAMID) — a continent-wide day of advocacy that resulted in 88 events across the U.S., Canada and parts of Latin America, 3.2 million social media impressions and a trending hashtag on Twitter.

According to Dominguez and Harper, plans for 2016 are already well underway.

**It's been an exciting year for the Meetings Mean Business Coalition. What's on the horizon for 2016?**

making inroads in the industry and are successfully getting our messages out. It also means that in 2016, we can pursue more opportunities to engage those outside of the industry, who can help validate our messages among decision-makers in business and government.

**What industry trends are the ones to watch?**

**Michael Dominguez:** Technology and meeting design are two that instantly come to mind, in part because they offer so many opportunities for growth. To understand these trends — and to learn more about the next generation of meeting attendees — MMBC partnered with Skift to issue a co-branded research report called "What Millennials Want

“Technology is seen as a way to **complement live engagement** and network virtually, before and after a meeting occurs.”

in Meetings.” We found that millennials value face-to-face interaction as much as previous generations. Like most of us, they're interested in developing external professional networks and engaging in real-world education.

Because millennials make up the largest segment of our work force, they are a natural group to turn to for information about industry trends. For them, advancements in technology and meeting design make an experience exponentially more valuable. Technology is seen as a way to complement live engagement and network virtually, before and after a meeting occurs. It helps connect participants and sustain new relationships over time, whether through event apps, social media or online forums.

The move toward open-learning meeting spaces is equally as interesting. Now, meeting attendees can personalize their experiences and roam between casual “campfire” sessions rather than a series of presentations and panels. The result is more spontaneous and organic process for learning and development.

**What issues do you expect to rise to the forefront?**

**Richard Harper:** Because 2016 is an election year, nothing is off the table. In fact, the presidential campaign provides a proactive opportunity to highlight the industry's value, using debates, town halls, retail politics, caucuses and conventions as proof points for the importance of face-to-face. Understanding that other issues may arise — in the media, political arena or corporate America — MMBC will continue to monitor for relevant news and legislation, remaining vigilant (and appropriately vocal) on issues that threaten the industry.

**What's being done to engage leaders from outside of the industry, particularly those in the business community?**

**Michael Dominguez:** We're asking business leaders, just as we're asking industry professionals, to lend their voices and provide testimonials about the importance of the meetings industry. We want to know about the deals they've closed with a handshake, the motivating educational conference they've spoken at and the innovative idea that wouldn't have been possible without bringing people together face-to-face. We want to know how investing in meetings and business travel for their employees has improved morale and facilitated professional development.

Personal stories and real-life examples help generate more interest and credibility in our work. We're able to share them out, through earned and social media and, of course, the MMBC Sidebar blog. The blog launched in January 2015 and since then, has become a hub for personal stories, ops, industry trends and relevant news.

**How can meeting planners play a larger role in advocating for the industry?**

**Richard Harper:** They can join our campaign. One of the things I enjoy most about MMBC is that there are opportunities for everyone and anyone to become an industry advocate. For some planners that means hosting an advocacy event. For others it means amplifying MMBC messages on social media or downloading our app. For others still, it means sharing their industry value story with colleagues and clients. All they need to get started is to express interest at [www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com/join](http://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com/join). **C&IT**



**Richard Harper**

As executive vice president at HelmsBriscoe, Harper draws on his 30 years of industry experience to ensure the company's success in sales and grow its role in the meetings industry. Prior

to his position at HelmsBriscoe, he served as executive vice president of sales and marketing for MGM Resorts International, where he led the company's strategic sales initiatives for the meetings, transient business and leisure segments.



**Michael Dominguez**

With more than 25 years of experience and as senior vice president and chief sales officer at MGM Resorts International, Dominguez provides oversight for the company's sales strategies in the convention, leisure and transient

segments, including industry relations, diversity sales and MGM Resorts events. Prior to his position at MGM Resorts International, he served as vice president of global sales for Loews Hotels & Resorts, where he oversaw sales efforts for 18 luxury hotels in the U.S. and Canada.

## Site Selection



*Frank Sinatra loved "winning" those who were at the top of their game, such as Ella Fitzgerald to Hollywood including Judy Garland and Humphrey Bogart. He surrounded himself with the most talented people. He married Ava Gardner and Mia Farrow at the height of their careers.*

FRANK SINATRA



Credit: Joe Buck/Las Vegas News Bureau



Credit: Las Vegas News Bureau



IN HONOR OF HIS 100TH BIRTHDAY

# Meet Like Ol' Blue Eyes

## 'Do It Your Way' at Frank Sinatra's Favorite Hotels & Haunts

By Christine Loomis

Frank Sinatra's rendition of "Fly Me to the Moon" was the first song ever heard from the moon when Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin played it on a cassette recorder after stepping onto the lunar surface in 1969.

Fortunately, you don't have to fly to the moon to play among the stars, or to meet and play in the places where

the stars once played. Ol' Blue Eyes frequented many of the great hotels across the country, singing in their famed lounges and cavorting with his cronies in the hotels' well-known watering holes. Crowned by legions of critics and fans alike as "the greatest singer of the 20th century," Sinatra was born on December 12, 1915, in Hoboken, New Jersey.

Today, the man and his music are being celebrated from coast to coast to mark the 100th anniversary of his birth, reminding us that wherever corporate and incentive groups want to meet, there's a hotel that exudes the style and panache Sinatra was known for. The moon? No. Las Vegas, LA, Chicago and New York? Absolutely.

### Las Vegas

Few cities had a more complex relationship with Sinatra and the Rat Pack than Las Vegas. Sinatra and The Strip rose together, and if it can't be said that the singer made Las Vegas, it can be argued that he brought East Coast sophistication to a town rooted in the West.

Frank Sinatra and Las Vegas hotelier

Steve Wynn were longtime friends. "For several glorious years, I had the chance to be associated with Frank Sinatra here in Las Vegas and also Atlantic City," Wynn said in a statement. "Those moments and memories light up my life, even today." Wynn Las Vegas and Encore are honoring Sinatra's birthday in several ways, including a yearlong

*"For several glorious years, I had the chance to be associated with Frank Sinatra. ...Those moments light up my life."*

**Steve Wynn**, CEO and Chairman Wynn Resorts, Las Vegas

(Left) The Frank Sinatra Centennial Exhibit by the Las Vegas News Bureau on display in the Las Vegas Convention Center. (From top) Frank Sinatra dealing a Baccarat game at the Sands in 1959. At the Sands in 1960 (l to r) Peter Lawford, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr. and Joey Bishop.



Credit: Barbara Kraft

Sinatra at Encore features many of Frank Sinatra's favorite Italian-American dishes. "I think he would dig this place," said Las Vegas hotelier Steve Wynn.

special five-course tasting menu at Sinatra at Encore, featuring many of the singer's favorite Italian-American dishes. "This restaurant gives me a delicious opportunity to share Frank with my friends once more," Wynn said. "I think he would dig this place." The restaurant displays awards that showcase Sinatra's long career and achievements, and plays a soundtrack of classic Sinatra music.

The Sahara Hotel opened in 1952. Its new tower in 1959 was the first high-rise on The Strip, setting the stage for what would come over the next half-century. Stars who performed at the Sahara are a who's who of entertainment, and the hotel itself achieved stardom after appearing in the 1960 Rat Pack heist classic "Ocean's 11." The Sahara closed in 2011, and in 2014 the property reopened as sleek SLS Las Vegas.

Mimi's Cafe, part of Dallas-based restaurant group Le Duff America, booked its 2015 GM Leadership Conference at the hotel in February 2015, drawing 220 attendees. Tracy Cruz, senior manager, operations services, says Las Vegas worked because it's affordable and a convenient location, and SLS Las Vegas was the perfect size. "It's not too large a venue for our group size," Cruz says. She also points to the hotel's attributes, including that it offers excellent meeting space, provides a high level of service and has great dining options.

"SLS Las Vegas' restaurants were definitely appealing," Cruz notes, "as was our first site visit with Sasha Lee

and Melanie. And the fact that the hotel had just opened and everything was new was a wow factor."

The hotel served as the primary venue. "Meeting spaces were perfect for our group. We used Foxtail Nightclub for our reception the first night and attendees still talk about that event," Cruz says. "The attendees had a great time with good food, great drinks and a fun venue that opened up to the pool."

The group also hosted an awards dinner in its general-session space. "The

***"The (Beverly Hills Hotel) Sunset Ballroom is a great venue with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the pool. ...The entire experience was top notch."***

**Beth Braley, Event Planning Specialist  
Mercedes-Benz Financial Services, Farmington Hills, MI**

room transformed beautifully," Cruz says. "The staff was pleasant and quick with service. The food that was served for our dinner came from banquets and was delicious, and the service from the staff that night was quick and seamless."

To other planners considering a meeting at SLS Las Vegas, Cruz has two words: "Do it." She calls the hotel a great venue, adding that, "The décor and rooms are very hip, trendy, unique and comfortable."

If there's a downside, it's how to top this event. "They have set expectations high for our next conference."

**Los Angeles**

The epitome of Golden Age glamor, the Beverly Hills Hotel was built in 1912, before there was even a city named Beverly Hills. In the 1940s the hotel received its now-famous pink exterior, and

for decades the Polo Lounge has drawn Hollywood celebrities and business leaders. Sinatra and the Rat Pack infamously overindulged there in the 1960s.

Sinatra liked to stay in the Paul Williams Suite (117), named for the architect who created the hotel's logo and many of its signature venues. Today, the hotel melds classic and contemporary styles, offering 208 accommodations, 22,000 sf of indoor function space and 4,800 sf outdoors.

Beth Braley, event planning specialist with Mercedes-Benz Financial Services, part of Daimler AG, set a September 2015 Dealer Appreciation Event for 40 attendees at the Beverly Hills Hotel. "Our attendees were all dealer principals/owners and as such live lifestyles similar to that of the residents of Beverly

Hills," she says. "The location, culture and dining options worked very well for the group."

The hotel's reputation for superior services and its location, history and renovated rooms played into the decision to hold the event there, and Braley calls the banquet staff "exceptional."

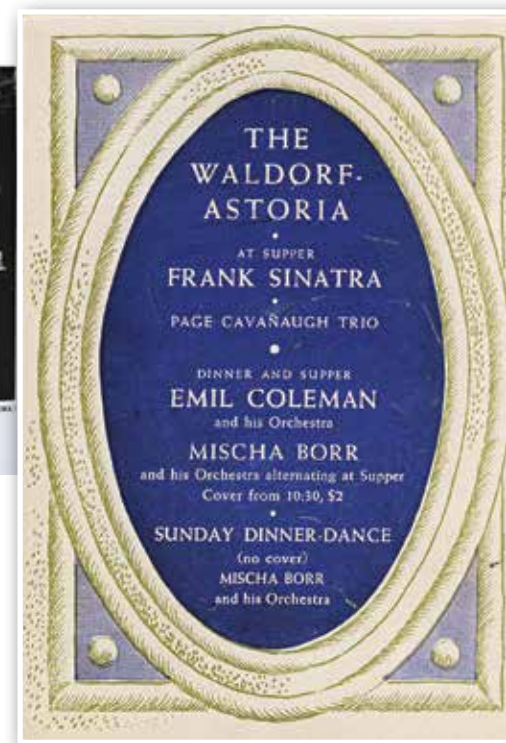


Credit: Mimi's Cafe

SLS Las Vegas, former site of the iconic Sahara Hotel, hosted the Mimi's Cafe 2015 Leadership Conference.



Frank Sinatra was the hottest thing in show biz when he moved into the Waldorf, drawing cops, kids, society, and—in this picture—an entranced Irving Berlin.



Credit: The Waldorf Astoria



(Far left): A clipping of Frank Sinatra performing in the Waldorf's Wedgewood Room, now the Empire Room (above).

The welcome reception in the Sunset Ballroom was especially memorable. "The servers stood out," she says. "The Sunset Ballroom is a great venue with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the pool. The size of the room was perfect for the group."

The only negative for Braley was a food and beverage minimum imposed for semi-private space at Bar Nineteen 12. "I felt this should not have been imposed as the bar was somewhat empty the nights the group was there. If this was an ultra-popular lounge, such as the Polo Lounge, then I would completely understand; however, the lounge was not losing any revenue by the group taking up a section of the space."

That said, Braley recommends the property without hesitation. "The entire experience," she says, "was top notch."

***"The elegance, rich history and commitment to first-class service that exudes from the moment you walk through the (Waldorf's) doors...create the type of experience we want for our event guests."***

**Michael Taylor, President and CEO  
M.J. Taylor & Company, Grayslake, IL**



**New York and New Jersey**

Sinatra developed his cocky swagger and cool style growing up in gritty Hoboken, across the Hudson River from Manhattan. Today, it's one of Manhattan's sought-after bedroom communities with a view of the city Manhattanites can only dream of. Margaret Frasher, regional administrative specialist with car brand Infiniti, calls Hoboken ideal for Infiniti East's Oc-

tober 2015 organizational meeting with 35 attendees.

"It all worked," she says. "It was a combination of the convenient, fun location and beautiful setting on the Hudson River. The area was very safe and clean, and it was walking distance to great dining. Our group had a great time hopping from bar to bar."

The meeting was based at W Hoboken. "Everyone," Frasher says, "was absolutely wonderful and very accommodating. Sherrin Thomas, first point of contact,

was very pleasant and eager to work with our group. Ona Magnacavello has a wonderful personality, was easy to work with, made sure everything ran smoothly and was always checking in onsite. Julia Egli stayed on top of daily changes and updated me as far as room accommodations, and when we picked up the phone in the meeting room there was Christopher making everything better, like magic."

Meals were high on Frasher's list of positives. "The breakfast was perfect but the lunch superseded my expectations. We had the Fiesta package and among the things that stood out were the churros."

Monday evening's welcome reception at Lulu's went off without a hitch. "Everyone enjoyed the inside and outside areas since it turned out to be a beautiful night," Frasher says, "and that really made it a great time."

She credits the team at the W for taking a lot of the pressure off. "The only suggestion I have for other planners is to not worry so much about it — any of it. The team at the W made sure that everything went smoothly."

While Sinatra was born in Hoboken, he made a name for himself in Manhattan and gave the city its enduring theme song. He wasn't the first to sing "New York, New York," but his version is the one most often heard at city events. The singer is closely associated with one of the most recognized addresses in the world, the Waldorf Astoria on Park Avenue. He

performed three times a week in the Wedgewood Room, later called the Empire Room, and lived in the Cole Porter Suite (33A), a five-bedroom, 5.5 marble bath suite still in the hotel's inventory.

The Waldorf Astoria New York has always been known for elegance and service, and that hasn't changed. For Michael Taylor, president and CEO of Illinois-based M. J. Taylor & Company, whose clients include the American

# More Sinatra Hot Spots

## LAS VEGAS

"The Voice" began performing at **Sands Hotel and Casino** in 1953. One of his top albums, "Sinatra at the Sands," was recorded live there in 1966, and like the Sahara, the Sands starred in the Rat Pack caper flick "Ocean's 11." The Sands was demolished in 1996. In 1999, **The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino** mega-resort rose in its place. With a major renovation completed this year, The Venetian features 4,028 guest rooms and more than 2.25 million sf of convention space.

After a feud with Howard Hughes who bought the Sands in the mid-1960s, Sinatra began singing at **Caesars Palace**, where he performed over many years. The hotel today has 3,960 guest rooms and 300,000 sf of meeting space.

Sinatra's final album, "Live From Las Vegas," was recorded at the **Golden Nugget** but not released until after his death. The Golden Nugget Las Vegas has 2,419 rooms and 100,000 sf of meeting and event space.

## NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Sinatra and friends often gathered in the top dining spots of whatever city they happened to be in. In New York, that included prohibition-era-speakeasy-turned-upscale-restaurant **21 Club** and **PJ Clarke's**, declared "the Vatican of saloons" by *The New York Times*, where Sinatra sat at table 20.



The wine cellar at the famed 21 Club in New York City, which reportedly still stores Sinatra's private stock, is a popular private event space.



## CHICAGO

Before it was **Ian Schrager's Public Chicago**, it was the swanky Ambassador East Hotel and home to the Pump Room, which began ushering in celebrities in 1938. Everyone from John Barrymore to Mick Jagger dined there, including Sinatra. The only place to sit: Booth One. Today, the reimagined Pump Room, helmed by James Beard-award-winning chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten (who customizes menus for private events), and the 285-room hotel provide a modern take on their rich heritage.



Three Sinatra movies were shot on location at the Fontainebleau Miami Beach, where Ol' Blue Eyes often performed.

You also can dine where Sinatra dined at **Twin Anchors Restaurant & Tavern**, opened in 1932 and a longtime favorite of the singer's, and **The Italian Village**, where Sinatra celebrated one of his four wedding receptions, a fixture in Chicago since 1927.



Credit: Terry O'Neill/Iconic Images

## MIAMI

Three Sinatra movies were filmed at the **Fontainebleau Miami Beach**: "A Hole in the Head," "Tony Rome" and "The Lady in Cement," and Sinatra often performed in the hotel's nightclub. The Fontainebleau is marking Sinatra's 100th birthday with events including the opening of the Frank Sinatra Photo Gallery, nightly toasts at the Bleu Bar, 1950s-inspired menus at the hotel's restaurants and a Live Like Frank hotel package.

With a design rivaling the extravagant fantasy of Hollywood sets, **Eden Roc Resort Miami Beach** opened in 1956 and immediately became a place to see and be seen. Sinatra and comedian Joe E. Lewis famously performed together there for two weeks in 1965. Today, the hotel's 631 guest rooms and 70,000 sf of indoor and outdoor function space provide a striking setting for private meetings and events.

Joining the list of iconic Miami Beach properties undergoing renovations is **The Carillon Miami Beach**, which opened in 1959 as The Carillon Hotel and regularly hosted Rat Pack entertainers Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin. The Carillon, which was purchased and rebranded earlier this year as The Carillon Miami Beach by Z Capital Partners, will embark on an extensive property-wide \$25 million renovation in spring 2016 to recapture a retro vibe, with a completion in winter 2016.

One of Miami's most evocative venues is **Vizcaya Museum & Gardens**, where scenes from "Tony Rome" were filmed. The winter estate of James Deering, built along Biscayne Bay from 1910 to 1922, was modeled on an elaborate Italian villa. The National Historic Landmark provides an exquisite setting for private events of up to 300.

## LOS ANGELES

The original Art Deco **Sunset Tower Hotel** has been a landmark since 1929. Among the celebrities who lived there were Frank Sinatra, Elizabeth Taylor and Marilyn Monroe, as well as gangster Bugsy Siegel. Sunset Tower Hotel features

Football Coaches Foundation, the Waldorf is an exquisite venue — one he returns to time and again.

"The American Football Coaches Foundation CEO Coach of the Year Dinner, which began in 2006, held its inaugural event at the Waldorf Astoria in the Grand Ballroom, and it continues to be held there," he says. "The elegance, rich history and commitment to first-class service that exudes from the moment you walk through the doors and make your way to the main lobby create the type of experience we want for our event guests."

And when it comes to charitable events, the Waldorf has history. "The Waldorf is at the nucleus of where charitable events began in the United States when the original hotel opened in 1893," Taylor says. "To be a part of that storied tradition is important to the American Football Coaches Foundation."

Taylor points to the hotel's long list of illustrious guests, including royalty, presidents and leaders in the realms of business, politics, religion and sports. In many ways the staff has been just as illustrious.

*"(Hoboken) was the combination of a convenient, fun location and beautiful setting on the Hudson River. The area was very safe and clean, and it was walking distance to great dining."*

Margaret Frasher, Regional Administrative Specialist  
Infinity, Somerset, NJ

"I have been working with the Waldorf staff since 1998," Taylor says. "Many people have stood out for the American Football Coaches Foundation and for me. One person who embodied the history and character of the Waldorf was the former senior catering sales manager, Larry Amato, who was always quick to point out many histori-

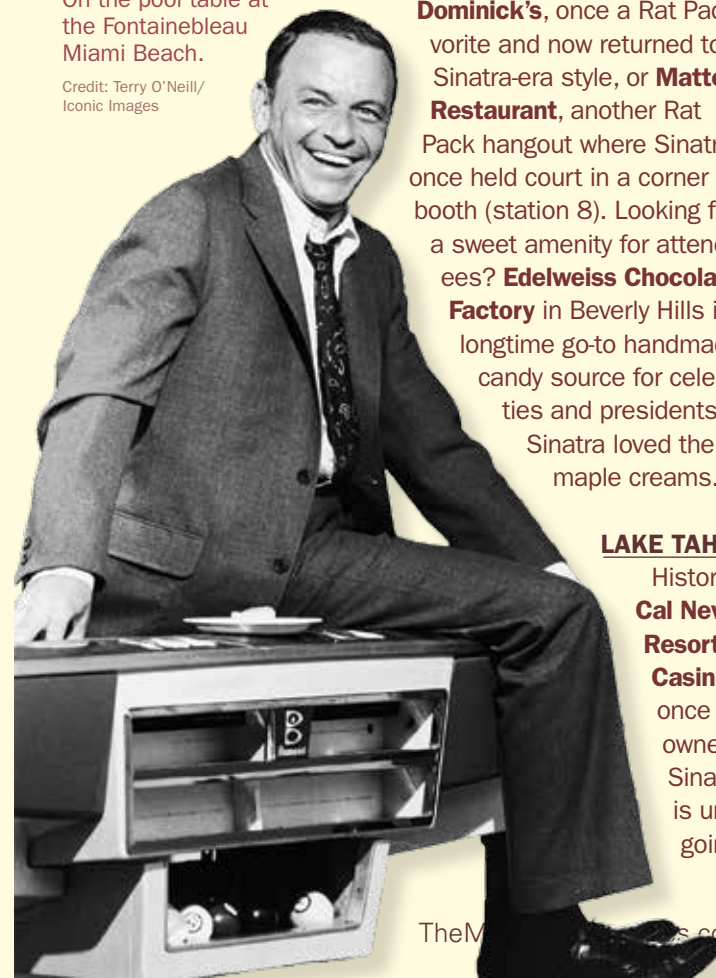
cal pieces at the Waldorf. Jim Blauvelt made a great impression as well. From time to time he would smile and say, 'Nothing is impossible at the Waldorf.' I still get that feeling when I walk through the Park Avenue entrance."

The foundation's primary event is set each year in the Grand Ballroom, and Taylor works with the hotel's catering, décor, lighting and AV staffs. "Each one of these functions has been first-class in service and product," he says. "It is a luxury to have a team of dedicated people who are great at what they do but who can also change course

four event venues, including The Terrace, which accommodates up to 500 attendees in indoor/outdoor space with a private entrance off Sunset Boulevard.

On the pool table at the Fontainebleau Miami Beach.

Credit: Terry O'Neill/Iconic Images



Sinatra aficionados can dine at **Dominick's**, once a Rat Pack favorite and now returned to its Sinatra-era style, or **Matteo's Restaurant**, another Rat Pack hangout where Sinatra once held court in a corner booth (station 8). Looking for a sweet amenity for attendees? **Edelweiss Chocolate Factory** in Beverly Hills is the longtime go-to handmade candy source for celebrities and presidents. Sinatra loved the maple creams.

## LAKE TAHOE

Historic **Cal Neva Resort & Casino**, once owned by Sinatra, is undergoing ex-

tensive renovation and is scheduled to reopen in spring 2016. The resort's theater — The Showroom, originally imagined and built by Sinatra — will be carefully restored and upgraded. The 191-room hotel will have 16,000 sf of private event space. The resort straddles the California-Nevada state line from its enviable perch on Crystal Bay.

## PALM SPRINGS

Palm Springs was Sinatra's enduring haven. As an article in *Architectural Digest* put it, "Except for his music and his family, Sinatra loved the desert community at the foot of the San Jacinto Mountains longer than he loved anything or anyone else." Frank Sinatra Drive, where the Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage sits, and the highly regarded Barbara Sinatra Children's Center, which serves physically, sexually and emotionally abused children, are enduring reminders of his legacy in the city.

Sinatra spent time at several hotels, including the **Riviera Palm Springs**, where he and his friends gathered and where he hosted charity fundraisers for which he donned an apron and cooked up pasta sauce in the Riviera kitchen. This year, the Riviera is offering a "take over the property" \$1 million buyout, during which a group can evoke the heady days of the Rat Pack and other Hollywood elite.

The Palm Springs Bureau of Tourism has put together a special itinerary so fans can follow in the Chairman of the Board's footsteps. It includes **Twin Palm Estates** where he spent time with Ava Gardner, **The Purple Room** where he proposed to fourth and final wife, Barbara Marx, and **Melvyn's Restaurant & Lounge** at the **Ingleside Inn**, where the couple threw a pre-wedding party.





The historic Beverly Hills Hotel, a favorite haunt of Sinatra and the Rat Pack in the '60s, hosted 40 attendees for Daimler AG's 2015 Dealer Appreciation Event in the Sunset Ballroom, which features floor-to-ceiling windows.

quickly and adapt to new requests and changes without missing a step."

Taylor advises planners "to go beyond thinking about their event details and consider the opportunity to be part of the growing history that is the Waldorf."

\$170 million renovation, ensuring that it meets the needs and expectations of 21st century guests — guests such as the 450 attendees of Benjamin Moore & Company's November 2014 North American sales conference.

Lauren Errico, executive

their clients no matter how big or small the event. Staff that truly went above and beyond includes Flo Fougereuse, Jennifer Marszewski, Kevin Clifford, Sarac Vahap and all AV personnel. Because of their passion, it was an easy decision to return in 2016."



***"You could tell that (Palmer House staff) are passionate about their jobs and their clients no matter how big or small the event."***

**Lauren Errico, Executive Sales Coordinator and Analyst  
Benjamin Moore & Company, Montvale, NJ**

### Chicago

Palmer House, a Hilton Hotel, the nation's oldest continuously operating hotel, has hosted U.S. presidents, Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde, among others. In 1933, the golden Empire Dining Room became an epicenter for entertainment, drawing such luminaries as Judy Garland, Ella Fitzgerald, Liberace and Sinatra. In recent years the hotel underwent a

sales coordinator and analyst with the company, says they chose the hotel because of its staff, architecture, hospitality and prime location. "We fell in love with the décor and meeting space throughout the hotel — the Grand Ballroom and Red Lacquer room made our event!"

Errico says every staff member from the DOS down made the group feel welcomed and cared for. "You could tell that they are passionate about their jobs and

There was a challenge posed by having meeting spaces on different floors, but that became a positive. "The benefits of the architecture and location of the hotel outweighed the meeting space specs." Errico says. "The hotel assured us that with their staff and blue-coat service, no attendee would ever feel lost. Staff members made sure attendees felt comfortable and knew where they were going at all times, some even bringing attendees to the appropriate space to make sure they were where they needed to be."

For Errico, the only surprise was the extraordinary dedication of the staff. "I didn't know the dedication of the Palmer House team prior to our event," she says. "I know now that I am in great hands for 2016 and it will be as successful as our 2014 event."

Something all of these hotels have in common is an elite level of service and expertise. Groups can truly "do it their way" to paraphrase the song, with help from accomplished staff members.

Sinatra would approve. **C&IT**



The Empire Dining Room (right) at the Palmer House in Chicago has hosted luminaries since 1933. The Grand Ballroom (above) hosted Benjamin Moore & Company's North American sales conference.



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LAS VEGAS



# Risk Management

## It's No Longer a Question of IF — but Rather WHEN a Crisis Will Happen

By Mark Rowh

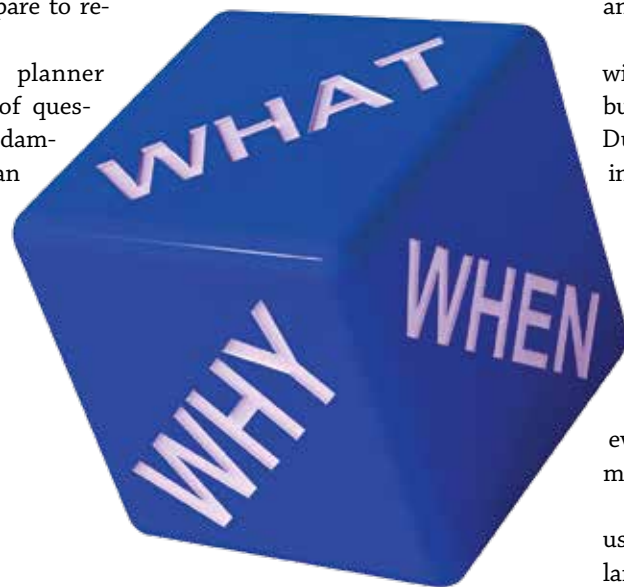
A flawless meeting is every planner's dream. But dreams don't always come true. Sometimes, they even become nightmares. Nowadays, hotels and organizations are paying greater attention to the unlikely but possible threat of an active shooter incident. The unprecedented number of active shooters is prompting companies to teach employees how to protect themselves using such tactics as run, hide and fight.

What happens if your well-orchestrated meeting is suddenly interrupted by a major emergency? Or maybe a troublesome development, even if not a huge emergency, disrupts the normal flow of things. How can you best prepare to respond to such challenges?

Certainly every meeting planner should consider these kinds of questions. After all, the potential damage from any given crisis can be significant.

"The mere threat of a crisis or unexpected incident can have a profound impact on our industry," says Melissa Hahn, CMP, HMCC, account lead, global meeting services for Meetings & Incentives Worldwide Inc. in Caledonia, Wisconsin. Her company implemented a mandatory emergency preparedness plan several years ago to help ensure that staff members are prepared for a crisis. This included identifying common threats to help prepare for worse-case scenarios.

"While organizations can't prepare for everything, by having a rigorous process and toolkit in place we have been able to have our team prepared for an emergency,"



she says. Plans have been developed to cover steps in the case of an earthquake, power outage, tornado, chemical emergency, death, fire, flood, tsunami or food

poisoning. For each type of incident, the plans present an easy-to-follow guideline of what to do in different circumstances, from taking roll call, who to call, security breaches and filling out an incident report afterwards to learn from the experience.

Hahn recalls a memorable day when a tornado was spotted in Nashville during a large event at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. Fortunately, hotel staff were prepared for the possibility of a natural disaster. "They met with our team, explained where all of the shelter areas were and how their team would direct all of our guests to shelter," Hahn says. "I have to say, I was amazed how 6,000 people could follow directions and get to the basement in record time."

Sometimes, a crisis has nothing to do with the potential of a natural disaster but still poses huge challenges, says Nan Dupuy, president of RDS Productions in New Orleans

That was the case when her firm had been preparing for a corporate party for 5,000 guests over a six-month period with a local venue. They had three tastings, at least five site visits, a signed contract and had already submitted a deposit. A week before the event she delivered the check for the remaining balance.

"We dropped it off with smiles and the usual chit-chat associated with such a large program," she recalls. "On the way back to the office I received a phone call from the venue telling me that they were going to have to cancel, due to an oversight on their part."

**Continued on page 35**

**Continued from page 18**

As it turned out, the venue staff had booked a party for 300 people the year before with a signed contract and deposit, but it hadn't made it onto their calendar. That put Dupuy at "second hold" and they were suddenly out.

"Obviously, a venue for the number of people we anticipated is not that easy to come by that late in the game," Dupuy says. "But we got on the telephone as a team and located a venue that the client hadn't even considered."

That venue was the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans. It would meet their needs, but there was a complicating factor. The New Orleans Saints had made it to the NFL playoffs. If they won the upcoming game, they would host another game and the facility would not be available.

"We all wanted a win, but at the same time, in order to save our hides, we needed the Dome," Dupuy says. It was a tough week for all concerned, but the team did lose, giving Dupuy's firm access to the venue. "It turned out to be the most incredible event our client had ever had, but not without a lot of teamwork, re-planning and revamping the style of the event."

Two major lessons learned in the process prompts Dupuy to advise planners to always make sure that there are no other events on the books, while planning for the possibility of mistakes. "Make sure you have, in writing, an agreement for how the venue can be held responsible financially for anything that happens like this. We didn't have that and ended up incurring a lot of excessive, unaccounted costs because of the differences in the venues, both size-wise and style-wise."

The event also highlighted the need for backup plans.

"Always have a backup plan," Dupuy says. "The venue could flood or burn down, making it unavailable or rendering it useless. Make sure you have a second go-to-venue, just in case."

Pam Krebs, director, global communications for Oakwood Worldwide, a global provider of housing solutions, points out that unanticipated events are inevitable.

"It's typically not a question of if, but rather when, a crisis or unexpected inci-

## A Roadmap for Crisis Management

Jim Hutton, chief security officer at Salem, New Hampshire-based On Call International, a travel risk management company with substantial experience in keeping business travelers safe and secure, offers this advice for dealing with situations that qualify as true crises.

When a meeting is interrupted by a crisis such as a political crisis or natural disaster, clear thinking is critical in executing a response aligned with the best interests of your attendees and your organization. Panic is likely to set in, especially in unfamiliar venues, unless there are clear guidelines in place to deal with emergencies.

Every meeting planner — and meeting attendee — should be trained on a simple near/far exercise, which provides a safety roadmap during any type of crisis as follows:

### Near

When a crisis strikes, planners should perform an immediate, 360-degree intake of their surroundings and situation: Is anyone injured? If so, is it safe to leave your current surroundings? Is your location secure? Do you have access to immediate necessities such as food, water and medication? When planners find themselves in a crisis situation, the first priority should always be to ensure the immediate safety and health of their charges.

### Far

After taking stock of immediate surroundings, planners should focus on the "far" concerns that await. Where is the closest secure location?

Assess the lines of communication — is the power out, and are phone lines down? If there is still access to phone lines or an Internet connection, can attendees reach their employers to update them on their safety and location? One of a planner's first calls should be to their travel risk management provider, who can offer on-the-ground help and resources.

In addition to "near and far" considerations, meeting planners have a responsibility to proactively build in broader contingency planning to their event protocols. This may involve coordination with the venue, key suppliers and even local authorities. A good risk management plan that accounts for the overall safety needs of all participants is an essential component of a complete meeting strategy.

— MR



HUTTON

dent will happen," she says. "By taking the time to prepare and think through possible scenarios before anything happens, an organization can more effectively deal with any situations that occur and help to minimize disruption to daily business activities."

She notes that as a global organization doing business in 85 countries, Oakwood Worldwide has established a comprehensive duty of care program designed to quickly identify when an issue arises

and escalate as appropriate to effectively manage the event. While her perspective focuses on managing problems from the property owner's point of view, it can hold relevance for meeting planners as well.

"We have procedures in place to help our associates deal with issues before, during and after they have occurred," Krebs says. "They apply whether they are faced with severe weather, a natural disaster, an act of terrorism or an environmental issue, among others."

Oakwood's staff walk through scenarios on what to do if a natural disaster affects one of the company's properties. A dedicated crisis hotline, manned 24/7 by an in-house team trained in crisis response, provides a means for associates to notify the crisis team that something has happened. Guests staying in the affected area are notified via text, voice-mail and email. Clients also are notified of the status of their employees, as are associates in any number of locations who may be called upon to help.

"A crisis or significant, unexpected event can happen at any time," Krebs says. She notes, however, that rarely are they so significant that all other business operations cease while working through the crisis and the aftermath. "Therefore, preparation is the key to not only helping to ensure the best-case outcome of the crisis happens, but also in ensuring business continuity for the parts of the business that are not directly affected."

### Smart Strategies

Dupuy says that a flexible approach is the key to crisis management.

"Meeting planners are always ready

for the unexpected, but sometimes the unexpected can't be planned for," she says. "Always be on your guard and ready to do battle."

In avoiding or dealing with crisis situations, consider measures such as these:

**Plan for the worst.** In schools and many other organizations, emergency planning drills have become routine. Such activities may not be practical when it comes to preparing for meetings, but any time spent anticipating possible problems will be worthwhile. If several staff members are involved in planning an event, consider a table-top drill where your team works through an on-paper scenario and discusses each step that might be taken in response to the situation presented. "Conducting crisis simulation training to create muscle memory and identify any gaps will help any company effectively deal with a crisis," Hahn says.

**Develop a who-does-what checklist.** Then, share it with all concerned. Ideally, developing the list should be a group effort rather than a top-down process. While overall approaches may vary, a commitment to planning is the key.

"When you fail to plan, you plan to fail," Hahn says. "Without the right preparation, meeting attendees are at risk for injury, and the organizations holding meetings are also at risk for bad press, financial obligations and liability."

**Communicate clearly.** Obviously, any contingency plans that have been developed should be shared with key players. But communicating other information also is important. At a minimum, this might include preparing a list of everyone connected with the event (including those at the event location as well as your own staff) with full contact info. Be sure to list more than one point of contact for the venue and any third-party service providers, and take pains to keep everyone in the loop who might have any reasonable need for the information.

Should an incident occur, clear communication is essential. "Once a crisis is occurring, there may be obvious, immediate steps that should be followed, such as evacuating a building, but what is really key is collaboration and clear communication," Krebs says. On a local level, this might mean using radios to confirm that everyone is accounted for

and safe. On a broader level, it might include making others outside the immediate area aware of what has happened so assistance can be provided.

**Participate in walk-throughs.** "A great meeting planner will make sure to walk through the emergency plans with

any way possible," she says. "Others want to work with you and build a relationship. Make sure you know which type you are working with and make certain you have covered all your bases in the initial planning, just in case something goes wrong."

***"When you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Without the right preparation, meeting attendees are at risk for injury, and the organizations holding meetings are also at risk for bad press, financial obligations and liability."***

Melissa Hahn, CMP, HMCC, Account Lead  
Meetings & Incentives Worldwide Inc., Caledonia, Wisconsin



the hotel and all the onsite staff," Hahn says. "This emergency preparedness plan should be available in the command center or your staff office and available at your team's fingertips."

**Know who you are dealing with.** Dupuy urges learning as much as possible about a potential venue before making a commitment. "Some venues are order-takers and are only interested in filling their calendar and sales projections in

**Go the extra mile.** In addition to basic planning, give consideration to extra measures that might take your emergency preparedness to the next level. For example, Hahn's company has an in-house air department that allows offering onsite air agents at meetings. "Having in-house air agents greatly benefits our attendees and planners when there is weather delay, airport or natural disasters," Hahn says. "Our agents are avail-

able to find a solution to get attendees home in a safe and timely manner." Another possibility: Have all onsite staff undergo CPR training, which sooner or later may be needed. And select venues that have equipment such as automated external defibrillators, which can be operated by anyone with minimal training.

**Put things in writing.** Being prepared with written policies and procedures in place is vital. "This should include identifying who should be notified, knowing when and how to reach those people, and ensuring the necessary tools and support are in place," Krebs says.

The same goes for documenting incidents. Once an incident occurs, be sure to document it. And don't just file the information; use it to inform future planning.

"At the conclusion of the event, always have an emergency incident report to include the description of the incident that occurred, date and time of the event, meeting name and the name of the client," Hahn advises. **C&IT**

## Expect the Unexpected

Here are timely excerpts from a recent blog post by AlliedPRA on crisis management. For more than four decades, AlliedPRA has been a leader in the DMC market serving hundreds of destinations across North America.



SULLIVAN

As we have witnessed in recent weeks, an emergency can happen anywhere, anytime. From terrorist attacks to natural disasters to weather-related challenges, our destinations and lives can change in an instant. Because of the nature of the DMC business, we move and "touch" thousands of people every year. The events in California and Paris have shown there is an increased importance for meeting planners to expect the unexpected when it comes to risk mitigation and emergency preparedness. Disasters, whether they be natural, accidental or intentional, can be traumatic for all involved and as best we try, we may never be completely prepared for what may occur.

In an emergency, savvy local partners are a planner's best resource when a program is underway. As destination experts have shown, time and again, the

connections that local suppliers bring to the table are invaluable. When emergencies happen during a program, the best partner a meeting planner has is the team of dedicated suppliers managing the event.

"With emergencies, you have to be prepared for anything and everything," says Patrick Sullivan, president, AlliedPRA New York. "You have to keep the client informed on a constant basis, whether by text, phone, whatever. We're basically their right hand when they're in our city, so we have to be the guiding force and trusted partner for decision-making in these situations."

When it comes to rallying unexpected support from local suppliers such as hotels, restaurants, transportation companies, caterers and smaller entertainment venues, a destination management company is a vital part of the meeting planner's resources. Running a program with AlliedPRA is like buying the additional insurance on a new appliance. It's a guarantee that every aspect of the program will have the right level of experience, emergency preparedness plans will be in place, external factors that may influence the program will be managed and informed, and frequent communication will occur throughout the program.

Each AlliedPRA office has an Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan in place to address any level of disaster or service interruption that may arise prior to or during program operation. This plan is designed specifically to ensure the highest level of safety, comfort and care of our clients, their guests, our supplier partners and our employees.

If an emergency occurs before the program, we alert team members to make the decisions on what action and to what extent of action is taken due to an emergency; evaluate the criteria; identify communication methods; contact city agencies to get an assessment of the damage and impact. Next, we work closely with our clients to communicate information and make decisions regarding the impact to their programs.

If the emergency occurs after the program, these topics come into play:

**Management.** The response to the unexpected sets the tone for the group and the situation. We immediately assign a point person and key members of the emergency management team to spearhead leadership and decision-making authority.

**Communicate.** While we may not have answers or solutions to every question or issue during the initial

moment of the event, AlliedPRA commits to regular updates to our client, their attendees and other stakeholders to reassure everyone that we are managing the situation and working quickly on solutions. Immediate and constant communication during such an event is one of the most crucial elements of a successful plan.

**Compassion.** People may be hurt, hopes and expectations shattered, livelihoods threatened, lives and property lost. But at the end of the day, we're a business about people, and during an emergency, it is the people that matter the most.

Given the sheer number of years we've operated an award-winning destination management company, AlliedPRA has come across our fair share of emergency situations that require advanced expertise and prepared skill sets. From blizzards and ice-storms that have crippled cities during program operations, to volcanic eruptions in Iceland, which temporarily halted travel, to terrorist attacks at home and abroad, we've dealt with these emergency situations on a very personal level, while many of our offices jumped into immediate action to assist clients with contingency plans. For more information go to [www.alliedpra.com](http://www.alliedpra.com) **C&IT**

## Entertainment Trends

Setting the Stage to Meet High Expectations — and Maybe Even Save the Day

By Ron Bernthal

Lenny Kravitz saved the day for a Volkswagen event.



In September of this year a major product launch took place at a huge warehouse at the restored Brooklyn Navy Yard. The corporate host hired water taxis to shuttle guests from Manhattan's Battery Park to the venue, wait staff passed through the space with drinks and miniature crab cakes, and a top company official gave a speech to the media and invited guests. The new products (three models of a particular automobile) were rolled into the building, and then noted musician Lenny Kravitz performed for the attendees.

Unfortunately, for the Volkswagen meeting planners involved in organizing this event, the news about the company's diesel emission scandal broke just a few days before the 2016 Passat launch but months after the Navy Yard warehouse was booked, invitations sent, water taxis ordered, food purchased and Lenny Kravitz's appearance booking confirmed. Media stories about the Passat launch

said that the entertainment (Kravitz) was so good it saved the event from being an even more embarrassing disaster.

Although it is rare when corporate meeting planners have to follow through with major media and VIP events so soon after negative news of this magnitude, it is an example of how fabulous, over-the-top entertainment can overcome the most difficult of situations.

### Edu-tainment

Booking celebrities for private concerts at corporate events has always been popular, but these days most event participants are looking for something different. Although they still love seeing celebrities, they certainly wouldn't mind some culture or education thrown into the mix, or perhaps becoming more involved in the musical acts, rather than standing in one spot moving their hips to the beat.

Because of positive feedback from

meeting and incentive participants whenever elaborate and creative event entertainment is provided at one of her events, Kelsey Anderson, CMP, events manager for Minneapolis-based John Wiley & Sons, is now trying to match the entertainment with the region the venue is located in.

"I do about 85 events a year, including corporate meetings, conferences and incentive trips," says Anderson. "In the past we never spent a lot of our budget on entertainment, but in the last few years I've noticed that attendees have come to expect bigger and more energizing entertainment concepts. I started seeking out local entertainment that would be original and provide a sense of place.

"In June 2014, I organized an event in New Orleans at the JW Marriott French Quarter and hired a local group called Jazz It Up to appear at our closing session," Anderson explains. "My meeting and conference groups like to combine

educational speakers with music, so after talking with this New Orleans band before the conference, we asked our attendees to write lyrics about their just-concluded multiday business meeting, and the band then used the lyrics in a song they sang onsite. It was so energizing and entertaining for all those who attended the conference!"

In October, during a small incentive trip to Sonoma County, California, Anderson brought several local sommeliers to the hotel for an educational (and fun-filled) wine-tasting event, and in June 2016, she will again match the entertainment with the local culture.

"We are going to the Loews Vanderbilt property in Nashville and plan to bring in a keynote speaker who is also a Nashville-based singer/songwriter. This should be a great experience for our meeting participants. The attendees at the meetings and conferences we plan want to have an educational component, as well as a great time. We tend to receive even more positive feedback when we incorporate entertainment, themes and various other event aspects unique to the location of our event," says Anderson.

### Out-of-the-Box Ideas

Thinking outside the box regarding entertainment options is something that Ariana Gordon Stecker and her staff have been doing for the past several years at Save the Date, a New York City-based event planning firm. "Two entertainment events we are booking now for our corporate client holiday parties or employee incentive meetings include the new 3-D custom headphone printing technique developed by a company called NRML (Normal), where attendees watch or participate in designing their own personal headphones and then pick them up at a store afterwards.

"We are also doing a Tao (NYC restaurant) Experience, with a kitchen tour, and sushi and saké tasting at both Tao downtown and midtown locations," says Stecker. "We are also looking at graffiti artists for social events and nonprofits, using New York City venues like Gotham Hall and Cipriani.

"Using celebrities at various events has



*"Using celebrities at various events has always been a big plus for attendees, but these days you also try to...choose celebs that deliver a great personal experience."*

Ariana Gordon Stecker, COO  
Save the Date, New York, NY

always been a big plus for attendees, but these days you also try to match the interests of the group and the venue style, and choose celebs that deliver a great personal experience," says Stecker. "At last year's Dysautonomia Foundation event at the historic, art deco-styled Edison Ballroom in New York City, we booked a performance by the Goo Goo Dolls, and we used the same venue for this spring's Bronx Academy of Letters event, where we arranged a tasting with many chefs from local restaurants, and Anthony Bourdain and James Patterson were the benefit hosts."

At Salesforce.com's Dreamforce trade show in San Francisco this fall the conference program agenda included actors Goldie Hawn, Jessica Alba and Patricia Arquette, among a long list of big name corporate leaders, as keynote speakers. Stevie Wonder, the Foo Fighters and Gary Clark Jr. were among the entertainers at the Moscone Center and two downtown theaters. Participants were housed at five nearby hotels.

Other creative corporate entertainment events included Samsung's Galaxy S6 product launch at Studio LA in which Patron staffers conducted an interactive cocktail-making event; and Pottery Barn's New York City event in which local professional chefs taught participants the art of creating heathful brown bag lunches.

### Animals and Living Tables

Some meeting planners have gone in other directions when it comes to event entertainment, staying away from booking VIPs and giving their participants a very different experience. "One of the things that has always been intriguing to our guests is animal

interactions," said Rhonda Moritz, CMP, senior meeting planner for Cadaret, Grant & Co. Inc., in Mt. Arlington, New Jersey. "We've done several with native species in South Florida from Jungle Island, with monkeys, albino pythons, baby alligators, kinkajous, joeys and others. In addition to the thrill of seeing these creatures close up and being able to handle most of them, the photo opportunities are abundant, and it's fun to hear guests exchange stories about each other's encounters."

Other forms of entertainment that Moritz enjoys utilizing at her corporate events are "living tables and statues," which are a great way to add décor and entertainment at the same time. "We're always amazed at the amount of work that goes into the makeup on the entertainers! It's such a unique attraction for our events, and they interact with guests and provide an exciting buzz," says Moritz. "We had 'living statues' for a Roman Holiday theme party at the Waldorf Astoria in Orlando, and during a recent event in the vineyard at the Château Élan Winery & Resort in Braselton, Georgia, near Atlanta, we had 'walking tables' dressed in baroque style for a Marie Antoinette-themed party, complete with an opera



A Marie Antoinette-themed party at the Château Élan Winery & Resort in Braselton, Georgia, featured a baroque-style "walking table."

Although tattoos once were seen only on the arms of sailors and bikers, this type of body art has become so popular during the past decade that it is now not uncommon to see colorful, inked images on the bodies of professional athletes and models, lawyers and architects and, yes, even corporate meeting planners. Now, tattooing has become one of the more popular event entertainment options at conferences, product launches and incentive events. Here are some examples:

**Red Bull.** It is difficult to know precisely when tattoos became so trendy at corporate events, but it seemed to have started about six years ago, in 2009, when Red Bull branded event participants with a glittery semi-temporary tattoo as soon as they entered the firm's pop-up venue at the South by Southwest event in Austin. The tattoo was temporary, but it acted as a badge to re-enter the Red Bull venue at any time during the four-night event.

**Hairroin Salon.** In 2012, for a summer promotion, the LA-based Hairroin Salon partnered with Urban Outfitters to launch Hairroin traveling salons at several store locations, producing weekly launch parties. Visitors to the events could receive a permanent (yes, I did write permanent) tattoo of the Hairroin logo by a local tattoo artist, who was kept very busy filling all the requests.

**Lois Vuitton.** At the 2013 Whitney Museum of American Art Gala, the upscale fashion and design firm Louis Vuitton sponsored the décor and entertainment events held in the raw space of the Skylight at Moynihan Station venue in New York

# Tattoo-Entertainment

Tattly, based in Brooklyn, New York, offers temporary tattoo "Tattly Parlors" for corporate events like this one for Christies' Old Masters Week.



Credit: Angela Pham/BFA

has worked with DreamWorks, NPR and Twitter on custom corporate events; Glitter Tattoo, in New York City, supplied the materials for the Louis Vuitton tattoos at the Whitney event; and Glimmer Body Art, sold in stores all over the U.S., is the world's leading manufacturer of body art and temporary tattoos, including nail and cuticle tattoos and lip paint. — RB

***"In the past we never spent a lot of our budget on entertainment, but in the last few years I've noticed that attendees have come to expect bigger and more energizing entertainment concepts."***

**Kelsey Anderson, CMP,** Events Manager  
John Wiley & Sons, Minneapolis, MN



singer who greeted guests, a harpist who played from the winery's balcony, and a French painter who replicated several Monet paintings, which were raffled off to guests."

## Localized Entertainment

Two years ago, during a multiday group event Moritz organized at Austin's Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort & Spa, she arranged some unique entertainment for each of the three evenings, all themed around one of the city's famed attributes, an idea that has become more of a trend these days. "For our first evening, 'South by Southwest' we hired staff from the Texas Boot Company to bring a few dozen pairs of cowboys boots to

display and discuss their manufacturing, and then they gave attendees coupons for discounts on purchases, and some attendees even purchased boots that evening if the size was right," says Moritz. "We offered three, \$300 gift certificates as raffle prizes and transportation to the store the next day for anyone interested in making a purchase. We also had staff from the Strait Music Company on hand with a dozen or so guitars from the famous store and did demos on these, as well."

Many attendees at Cadaret, Grant & Co. incentive conferences are big car enthusiasts, and "this past year we themed one of our evening entertainment events around Amelia Island's famous Concours

d'Elegance, a beauty pageant for rare and elegant cars," says Moritz, who used the Omni Amelia Island as the host venue. "Bringing in some classics from the area's car clubs truly made the evening memorable, and another option for entertainment doubling as décor! To see their faces light up when asked if they'd like to sit in the vehicle and have photo ops was priceless. Even our DJ worked out of his car to go along with the theme (Mix on Wheels), a portable dance party."

For her next meeting Moritz may jump on a musical trend that is now appearing more frequently at corporate and incentive events. "My next meeting will have a flash mob, something to get the crowd pumped up and create the ultimate musical surprise. I haven't worked out the details yet, but it's in the works!"

## An Entertainer's Advice

One person who knows all about musical entertainment at corporate events is Philip Myers, one of the most highly regarded and successful entertainers in the corporate entertainment market. Myers and his band have traveled throughout

the world, performing at corporate events at top venues, including The Broadmoor, Four Seasons Maui, Casa De Campo, Hotel Del Coronado, Gaylord Opryland, and The Sanctuary at Kiawah Island to name just a few. He shares some advice on planning various types of musical entertainment:

"Event planners face a multitude of challenges as they seek to plan entertainment for corporate programs," says Myers. "All planners are tasked with securing entertainment that is special and memorable, yet fits within budget parameters. One of the most effective ways to assist clients in planning a great program with a focus on keeping costs down is by offering versatility and creativity. By using the same entertainer and band for multiple nights of a program, it is possible to offer discounted pricing. A unique and different event is custom designed for each night.

"Business sessions can be enhanced by adding something patriotic, like the national anthem or medley of 'America the Beautiful' or 'God Bless the USA,' or moti-



Credit: Marc Baroni

Corporate event entertainer Philip Myers (center): "Budget-conscious, versatile and creative programming is crucial."

ational opening or closing numbers, like 'Power of the Dream' or 'One Moment in Time.' Many planners really appreciate having this option, which can be included at no extra charge when an entertainer is onsite for other performances.

"Other ways to add value and variety to the entertainment options include bringing in a spotlight performer to add a special touch," says Myers. "Successful programs incorporating this idea have included using the former lead singers of big name bands, such as Journey, Toto, Santana, etc. with the band backing

them. This gives your guests the wow factor at a fraction of the cost of the original touring band."

Myers adds that any entertainment provider's primary goal should be to team with the meeting planner to help alleviate the inevitable stresses involved in program operation and assume the responsibility of handling the entire entertainment portion of the program. "To create a one-stop shopping concept, it would be beneficial for the musical entertainment to

partner with a production company to create a cohesive package of entertainment and production," says Myers. "The ultimate goal is that in teaming with the planner, the entertainment portion of a program can be as seamless as possible. Budget-conscious, versatile and creative programming that will impress your attendees, program after program, is crucial. The power of music is undeniable, and skillful planning and execution of your entertainment programming will be a tremendous asset in assuring a successful and memorable event." **C&IT**

## Destination



A meeting setup on the beach at Atlantis, Paradise Island, Bahamas.

# The Caribbean and The Bahamas

Few destinations in the world generate the kind of excitement and motivation that visiting an island creates. Year after year for decades, the Caribbean and The Bahamas have been near the top of the favorite destination list of many planners and attendees, especially for incentive programs.

And for some companies, a Caribbean resort is a perennial go-to choice.

Aimia, a data-driven marketing and loyalty analytics company based in Canada but with multiple U.S. offices, plans a total of about 2,200 meetings, incentive trips and events each year. That includes more than 1,000 incentive programs alone, says Tina Gaccetta, the company's vice president of client services and marketing.

They use destinations all over the world for their incentive programs. When they use the Caribbean, key reasons include the fact that "the Caribbean really offers a sense of different cultures and different experiences from what most people have experienced," Gaccetta says. "And the Caribbean is also very convenient for people traveling from North America. The air access is generally pretty good. And there are some very high-caliber resorts that are perfect for incentive groups."

In addition, there is the obvious factor of seasonality and warm, beautiful weather from late fall until spring, when much of the U.S. is cold.

"So for most of our programs that take place at that time of year, our people want sun and fun in the winter," says senior account director Kelli Slonim, who works with Gaccetta on many of the companies most important incentive programs.

And for years, Aimia's No. 1 choice of resorts has been the fabled Atlantis, Paradise Island, Bahamas.

"And the reason for that is that it can accommodate the larger groups that we do in a single property," Slonim says.

Aimia often uses Atlantis for multiple programs in the same year. Group sizes range from 100–150 total attendees to 2,400 participants.

Their most recent program was in November for 1,300 attendees. In October, Atlantis hosted a program for 2,400 Aimia participants.

"The key reasons we keep going back to Atlantis include the airlift into Nassau," Slonim says. "It's great. And the renovated and expanded airport is very easy to navigate. Atlantis also keeps reinvesting and reinventing itself. They are constantly improving the property. The room product is wonderful. They also have indoor and outdoor meeting space, which gives you a lot of flexibility in planning a program depending on group size. You can scale a program however you want, especially for large groups."

Another major advantage Atlantis offers is the extraordi-

By John Buchanan

## Fun in the Sun + Authentic, Exciting Experiences for Memorable Meetings and Incentives

Credit: Atlantis, Paradise Island, Bahamas

nary list of activity options. “There is something for everybody to do, no matter what they are interested in,” Slonim says. “There are also a lot of activity options on Paradise Island and in Nassau as well. The convention services team at Atlantis is also wonderful. They are a great partner. And finally, there is always the weather. Even if there is going to be some rain that blows through, you know the sun is always going to come out. The weather there is just beautiful. And very dependable.”

Gaccetta adds that another distinct advantage of using Atlantis is its status as one of the most iconic resorts in the world. “Everybody knows Atlantis,” she says. “Everybody gets excited about going there. As a resort brand, Atlantis is probably one of the easiest properties in the world to advertise and promote. It really motivates people. It really creates a major buzz for an incentive program.”

In addition to superb room product in its more upscale Royal Towers and The Cove, Atlantis also deliver extraordinary dining options, including a Nobu sushi emporium. That means that upscale dine-around programs can be offered onsite with great logistical convenience, just like at one of the big box hotels in Las Vegas.

“The dining product is excellent,” Slonim says. “And the celebrity chefs that are there also add to the excitement of going to Atlantis.”

Yet another factor in the appeal of Atlantis for a growing list of companies in today’s market is its status as a premier family resort. A big portion of its business is family business, and

that infrastructure, such as its famous water park and sea life exhibits, make it a perfect choice for groups that include children. “It’s really one of the rare places that can appeal to high-end executive groups who want a luxury resort experience and also to families with children, who want a family experience,” Gaccetta says.

### The Exotic Side

Some Caribbean destinations are incredibly exotic and exclusive.

One is St. Maarten, a small island divided between a French side and a Dutch side.

Janet Glynn, corporate events manager at Woodland Hills, California-based BlackLine, a business technology provider, used The Westin Dawn Beach Resort & Spa last February for the first incentive program the company ever hosted. It was a four-day, three-night program for 50 attendees.

“We knew we wanted to do something tropical,” Glynn says. “And since this was our first incentive program and it was for our top salespeople, we wanted to do something special. One of our top executives, who goes on a lot of cruises, had been to the Caribbean a couple of times. That’s how we ended up settling on St. Maarten. But then the event team found The Westin St. Maarten on our own and decided it was the perfect fit for us.”

Because of the nature of the group, BlackLine opted to make a significant per attendee investment in the trip. “Going into this program, we knew it was going to be relatively expensive,” Glynn says. “But we were okay with that since the trip was meant to motivate and reward our top salespeople. We decided that St. Maarten and The Westin would be a good investment because of who it was designed for. We also felt, after we looked at everything, that not only was St. Maarten the right choice, but that we were getting good value for our money based on the type of program it was. It was designed for our very best salespeo-



Woodland Hills, California-based BlackLine, a business technology provider, used The Westin Dawn Beach Resort & Spa in St. Maarten for its first incentive program. The four-day, three-night program rewarded 50 attendees.

Credits: Meghan Kay Saeder



ple and we wanted to make sure we did something that would really be seen as a reward.”

After experiencing St. Maarten, Glynn and her attendees agreed the company had opted for an ideal choice of destination. “St. Maarten is an interesting place, given the fact that there is a French side to the island and a Dutch side,” Glynn says. “That alone adds some unique interest to the destination and a different kind of experience. And it’s such a small island that you can really get involved in the cultures on each side. It’s

*“Not only was St. Maarten the right choice...we were getting good value for our money. We wanted to make sure we did something that would really be seen as a reward.”*



Janet Glynn, Corporate Events Manager  
BlackLine, Woodland Hills, CA

also very picturesque. The thing that makes it special is just how beautiful it is.”

What made The Westin Dawn Beach Resort & Spa hotel so memorable was actually its extraordinary service, Glynn says. “The thing that made the hotel special was the attention and care that the staff gave us. We all just felt so well taken care of. The staff at The Westin also really knows what they’re doing when it comes to groups like ours. They really went out of their way to give us the type of service that you always remember. It was just such a pleasure to get the kind of service you get when everyone at the hotel goes above and beyond what you expect of them.”

The room product at The Westin also was superb, Glynn says. “Everyone had an oceanfront room. And our people just raved about how beautiful their rooms were and the view. The food-and-beverage was also very good. I also loved the fact that they serve local food. That also adds to the island experience.”

She also gives high marks to the hotel’s spa. “We gave all of our attendees one spa treatment,” she says “And that was another thing people raved about. The spa is gorgeous. And the staff there is also nice and very attentive.”

The bottom line for Glynn is that the destination and hotel worked spectacularly well for BlackLine’s inaugural incentive program. “We got a lot of positive feedback. Everyone said they loved it. St. Maarten is a great destination and it worked really well for us. And we loved The Westin.”

### Bucket List Destinations

Dustin Sorge, director of national accounts at the Madison, Wisconsin-based Fire Light Group, an independent meeting and event planning company, is another veteran user of Caribbean destinations.

Twice in the last several years, he has used St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Earlier this year, he used The Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas for a five-night, four-day incentive program for 55 attendees.

Two years ago, he used Marriott’s Frenchman’s Reef & Morning Star Beach Resort on St. Thomas for an incentive program.

Given the many options in the Caribbean, why did he choose USVI for those programs in collaboration with his clients?

“One big reason is that the USVI is a U.S. territory,” he says. “That means that you don’t need a passport and that the U.S. dollar is the currency. And English is the language. That makes travel easy. The USVI is also a bucket list destination for a lot of people if they have never been there.”

He believes that what he calls the bucket list factor, and the additional reality that USVI is so well known to virtually all Americans working in the corporate world, makes the destination highly marketable and promotable to groups. “All you have to do,” he says, “is put a couple of photos out there and the average person is going to say, ‘I absolutely want to go there. I need to qualify for that trip.’”

In terms of hotel options, Sorge says The Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas is a particularly good choice for upscale, exclusive groups because the brand is globally associated with luxury and exemplary service.

“In the case of St. Thomas, it is a good choice because it’s on the other end of the island from the cruise ship port,” Sorge says. “So you don’t get the kinds of traffic and crowds you do around the cruise port.”

For the high-end group he took to USVI this year, he says, “The Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas was the only property on the island that would have worked.”

The program included a meeting session for 25 people — half the group — that started with a breakfast on an outside terrace near the meeting room. Then the group convened in one of the smaller meeting rooms for their session. “I love the meeting space there,” Sorge says. “There is a lot of natural light. And the views are great. You can look right out over the bay. It’s just gorgeous meeting space.”

Sorge arranged offsite lunches and dinners, except for a spectacular opening night welcome dinner on the beach.

“For the welcome dinner, we built a bonfire and provided a buffet,” Sorge says. “People thought the food was excellent.”

One highlight of the trip was a full-day excursion to nearby St. John via a ferry whose departure point is close to The Ritz-Carlton.

Another highlight was a dinner at Asolare, which serves contemporary Asian-Fusion cuisine in an elegant open-air environment in an old St. John house with unparalleled sunset views of the Caribbean Sea.

For a memorable final day, Sorge rented two power catamarans and took the group to the British Virgin Islands, where stops included the exclusive and intimate Virgin Gorda.

Based on his two recent experiences in USVI, Sorge will definitely take more groups to USVI in the future.

“It’s just an excellent destination,” he says, “and one that delivers good value.”

Puerto Rico is another Caribbean destination that offers the distinct advantages of not requiring U.S. passports and using the U.S. dollar, which is the official currency.

And given the steady demand for Caribbean destinations among corporate meeting planners over the last several decades, Puerto Rico has worked hard to stay atop the list of preferred options for many planners.

In fact, awareness of Puerto Rico as a meeting destination and interest in it have risen strongly as the meeting market has surpassed even its pre-recession peak of 2008.

“Puerto Rico is once again becoming a popular global brand, known for its culture and authentic experiences, as well as being known as a tech-savvy destination,” says Milton Segarra, president and CEO of Meet Puerto Rico. “We have also learned that experiential travel is still important to groups and that brand identity is critical to a meeting planner’s perceptions about the value and experience of the destination. So, we have concluded that now is the perfect time to capitalize on and reinforce that improved branding and use it as a platform to help us secure more meeting business — especially citywide meetings and others that use our convention center.”

## New Development

In that spirit, Meet Puerto Rico has created a more sophisticated and aggressively service-oriented business model that has been rolled out this year.

The centerpiece of the new initiative is the Puerto Rico Convention Center, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2015. The facility is the largest in the Caribbean. Plans to link the convention center to the famous Old San Juan district of the capital are now underway.

A \$289 million Puerta de Tierra project also is underway to build a boardwalk that connects Old San Juan to other popular tourism areas and gives pedestrians and cyclists easier access to the convention center district.

Demand for the destination also has led to the development and opening of several major new hotels, including the intimate, 114-room Dorado Beach, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, which features a Spa Botanico and a Mi Casa restaurant from Jose Andres and is located along three miles of coastline in the former setting of the renowned Laurance Rockefeller property. The all-oceanfront, 100-room, 14-suite low-rise, low-density Ritz-Carlton Reserve brand property is one of two in the world. The property features three championship golf courses and is the site of Jean-Michel Cousteau’s eco-educational program Ambassadors of the Environment. Indoor and outdoor meeting space include a 4,558-sf meeting room, a boardroom and several private dining areas including Su Casa, a 6,000-sf, four-bedroom villa for private events.

The 416-room The Ritz-Carlton, San Juan is located on prime beachfront in Isla Verde and features dedicated concierge service; five onsite restaurants including Laurent Tourondel’s BLT Steak and Il Mulino New York, as well as a 12,000-sf spa, 24-hour casino and pool area

with signature lion-head spouts and lush landscaping. Nine meeting rooms and more than 30,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space may accommodate groups of up to 1,300 persons.

Las Casitas Village, A Waldorf Astoria Resort is an enclave of private villas located adjacent to the grand El Conquistador Resort, which offers 157 one- to three-bedroom luxury cottages complete with butler service, ocean views, full kitchens and an exclusive pool area. With myriad meeting and function space options for board meetings to beachfront gatherings, groups can enjoy activities such as golf at the Arthur Hills Golf Course, spa treatments at the Golden Door Spa as well as scuba diving, horseback riding and even taking a plunge at the onsite Coqui Water Park.

The St. Regis Bahía Beach Resort, Puerto Rico, which is nestled between a national rainforest and the sea on the northeastern part of the island, opened in late 2010 and immediately made *Condé Nast Traveler’s* Hot List. The St. Regis features a Robert Trent Jones Jr. golf course, Remède Spa, as well as Jean-Georges’ acclaimed cuisine at Fern, just one of three on-property dining options. More than 26,000 sf of function space includes three outdoor venues, a boardroom, and the Astor Ballroom, able to accommodate up to 420 guests.

Following a \$270 million renovation and expansion project, the 450-room Condado Vanderbilt refreshed the grandeur of the property when it first opened in 1919. The property has 15,000 sf of meeting space including an oceanview ballroom, private lounges and boardroom as well as outdoor oceanview breakout and reception areas.

Meanwhile, a number of the island’s existing properties — including the landmark Caribe Hilton, Condado Plaza Hilton, San Juan Marriott Resort & Casino, Wyndham Grand Rio Beach, InterContinental San Juan Resort & Casino and Embassy Suites Dorado del Mar Beach Resort — have completed renovations.

Other hotels have stayed abreast of the latest technology flourishes. For example, the Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel & Casino has introduced an “Energizer Butler,” a new position that assists planners and attendees overcome the inconvenience of a forgotten charger by delivering extra battery life via wireless chargers.



The Bellavista Lawn at the Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel & Casino, which is across the street from the Puerto Rico Convention Center in San Juan.

Credit: Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel & Casino



Sandals Resorts boasts several properties in the Caribbean that cater to meetings and incentives.

Credit: Sandals Resorts

For the group market, Puerto Rico also boasts a culinary scene that includes celebrity chefs and brave culinary twists on local favorite fare, not to mention the abundance of one-of-a-kind activities such as zip-lining through a rainforest tree canopy, kayaking in one of the world’s only bio-luminescent bays, strolling through the living history of Old San Juan, or even a rum-tasting tour of the Bacardi Rum Factory.

## All-Inclusives Boasting Beautiful Beaches

An all-inclusive brand wildly popular with meeting and incentive planners is Sandals, which operates several “Luxury Meetings & Incentives Collection” resorts on seven Caribbean islands, including some of the region’s most popular destinations such as the Bahamas, Jamaica, Barbados and Turks & Caicos, as well as exclusive and less well known locations such as Antigua and Grenada.

Although each property is distinctly original and tailored to its destination, all the properties offer modern meeting facilities, exceptional resort-style amenities, a vast array of land and water-based activities, personalized service — and some of the Caribbean’s cleanest and most beautiful beaches.

Sandals also offers a superb and innovative value proposition as a result of its all-inclusive pricing, which is further tailored to the unique needs of meeting planners.

Everything is included in a single price, including free transportation from and back to the airport, private group check-in, free meeting space and audio-visual equipment, coffee breaks, one complimentary group dinner for an event such as a welcoming reception or awards banquet, and concessions that start with just five rooms booked.

Kathleen Krawczyk, CMP, event planner at Chicago, Illinois-based Lawson Products, an industrial distributor of maintenance and repair supplies, is keen on Sandals and uses them for

her meetings every other year. Sandals’ two Bahamas locations, the Sandals Royal Bahamian in Nassau and Sandals Emerald Bay on Great Exuma, are longtime planner favorites. “We try to offer something people wouldn’t book themselves; something I feel comfortable with that has a wow factor. We don’t like to repeat if we don’t have to, and I don’t mean to keep coming back to Sandals, but I love that property,” says Krawczyk.

“The first thing we look at is something that is truly all-inclusive,” she says. “With Sandals, everything is included from transportation to a welcome reception for two hours and a private cocktail hour. Our coffee break is even included. We look for the most we can get with the dollars that we’re spending.”

The meeting properties include Sandals Ochi Beach Resort, Sandals Whitehouse European Village & Spa, Sandals Grande St. Lucian Spa & Beach Resort, Sandals Grande Antigua Resort & Spa, Sandals Royal Bahamian Spa Resort & Offshore Island and Sandals Emerald Bay, Golf, Tennis & Spa Resort.

Aztec Office in Middletown, Connecticut, has used a Caribbean property for one of the company’s most important incentive programs for each of the last two years, according to Ann Marie Hall, manager of human resources and employee development. Last year, the company hosted 25 attendees at Club Med in Turks & Caicos. This year, the program was held at Club Med Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic for 37 attendees. Both were President’s Club outings, which rewarded the company’s top inside salespeople.

She selected a Club Med property for the first time in 2014 for the value.

“One thing that appealed to us about Club Med is that they do their pricing strategy a little differently from most resorts,” Hall says. “We looked at a number of options, and one thing we found with Club Med is that you not only get very good group pricing, but also good offerings for what you pay. And we were



specifically looking for an all-inclusive property. So when we looked at the options we chose, we found that Club Med offered the best value. For example, they don't base their pricing on the premise that the Caribbean is one price and another destination for the same kind of resort is a different price. They offer brand-wide pricing, which tends to make them lower in cost than other all-inclusive resorts, especially in the Caribbean. And in my experience, that kind of brand-wide pricing, no matter which property you're going to, is very rare."

Another thing Hall likes about Club Med is that the company "is also very flexible and easy to work with," she says. "For example, you can call a rep and they can tell you about any Club Med in the world. That means you don't have to keep calling

***"That was another reason we picked Turks & Caicos. I looked at the travel advisories from the U.S. State Department, and I saw that Turks & Caicos did not have any warnings."***



**Ann Marie Hall, Manager of Human Resources and Employee Development, Aztec Office, Middletown, CT**

around to talk to someone at each location to decide which one you want to use. That makes decision-making and planning very easy. It saves a lot of time."

For the 2014 trip, Hall chose the Turks & Caicos location simply because she had heard good things about the destination.

#### Adults Only

"And although we've done programs in the past that included families, sometimes when you're doing an awards program it's a good option to have an adults-only resort." The adults-only status of Turks & Caicos does not represent a formal policy of Club Med, she points out. It is simply a market-driven reality driven by the exclusive and upscale status of Turks & Caicos as a destination.

Turks & Caicos also has the distinction of often being cited as having the best beaches in the Caribbean, Hall says. "I hear they have some of the most beautiful beaches anyone will ever see anywhere. And we have people that have traveled all over the world on their own, including all over the Caribbean. And they tell us that by far, Turks & Caicos has the most beautiful beach they have ever seen."

The destination also is safe and clean. "That was another reason we picked Turks & Caicos for the 2014 program," Hall says. "I looked at the travel advisories from the U.S. State Department, and I saw that Turks & Caicos did not have any warnings. It's a very safe destination."

Yet another factor that was important to Hall and her management was the roster of activities available at a Club Med. "They offer so many things, no matter your interest or your

individual skill level, there is something that is perfect for you and that you will really enjoy," she says "There is literally something for everyone."

Her attendees enjoyed the resort so much, in fact, that Hall is taking them back for the President's Club trip in 2016.

As a top-rated meeting and event destination, Grand Lucayan Beach & Golf Resort on Grand Bahama Island is renowned for its paradise-like setting, exceptional amenities and excellent venues. With 20 distinct meeting and event areas totaling 90,000 sf of both indoor and outdoor space, they can accommodate any function.

Grand Bahama Island boasts incredible snorkeling adventures and some of the world's finest collection of beaches such as the private Lucaya Beach or Fortune Beach, where treasure hunters discovered a \$2 million shipwreck. Attendees also can find complete privacy in Paradise Cove at Deadman's Reef or swing by Xanadu beach for an icy local Kalik beer and some spicy local barbecue. Or, they can explore Gold Rock Beach at Lucayan National Park, which is known to many as the most spectacular beach of all.

With its stately Manor House, high-tech convention center and beautifully manicured event lawn stretching to the beach and sea beyond, it's easy to see why groups choose Grand Lucayan for their most important meetings and events. The Grand Lucayan's experienced event planners add a dose of Bahamian style, too.

Grand Lucayan has everything to make group meetings and events successful, from cutting-edge audio-visual equipment to a super-helpful staff. The sprawling conference center can easily be reconfigured and themed for formal or casual events. There's a Grand Ballroom, plenty of intimate meeting rooms and even more space for functions outdoors. It is uniquely infused with a sophisticated Bahamian style — from post-meeting rum tastings to evenings with a local storyteller, right down to the intoxicating Bahamian accent heard island-wide.

Accommodations include Lighthouse Pointe, which is an all-inclusive resort where guests enjoy spacious, stylishly appointed guest rooms and exclusive access to four new restaurants, as well as all recreation, entertainment, meals and premium-brand beverages, gratuities, taxes and service charges.

Additional all-inclusive perks include entertainment such as a weekly Beach Barbecue event, Fish Fry and Bahamian Buffet; unlimited golf; free fitness and spin classes; swimming in the heated lap pool; activities from limbo dancing to yoga sessions; recreation such as ping pong, foosball and billiards; water sports including sailing, kayaking and snorkeling; and much more.

Additional accommodations include Breaker's Cay at Grand Lucayan, an island-inspired retreat filled with light-as-air colors and crisp white bedding that create a setting of Caribbean-splashed comfort and the Lanai Suites, located in a secluded area of the resort, which boast oceanfront, one-bedroom suites showcasing furnished balconies or patios with panoramic sea views.

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# On The Move



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Hyatt Regency Atlanta has named **Christopher Watson** as director of sales and marketing. He most recently was director of sales and marketing at Hyatt Regency Dallas.

Wyndham Hotel Group has appointed **Kathy Maher** as senior vice president, global sales and revenue management. Most recently, she served as senior vice president of revenue management.

**James Kinzer** was named group golf sales manager for the We-Ko-Pa Resort & Conference Center in Scottsdale, Arizona. He formerly served for 25 years at The Boulders Resort in

Scottsdale, most recently as golf sales manager and tournament coordinator.

**Nathan Wood** was named director of sales and marketing for Chateau on the Lake Resort, Spa & Convention Center in southwest Missouri. He was director of sales and marketing for The Westin Columbus in downtown Columbus, Ohio.

The Renaissance World Golf Village Resort and Convention Center in Jacksonville/St. Augustine, Florida, has named **Cathy Jones** as national sales manager. She was director of sales and marketing for the Lajitas Golf Resort in west Texas.

**Catherine Hutchison** was named director of sales and marketing for Montage Kapalua Bay in Maui. She formerly was director of travel industry sales at Montage Deer Valley in Park City, Utah.

The Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau has named **Mary Neister** as vice president, responsible for leading HVCB's sales efforts for meetings, conventions and incentives. Bringing more than 30 years of sales and marketing leadership experience to the Bureau, Neister most recently served as director of sales and marketing at the Hilton Waikiki Beach hotel in Honolulu.

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