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CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

In the plaid jacket, Houston designer David Peck created this stylish wardrobe collection for hotel associates at the JW Marriott Houston Downtown.



New Look Hotels

How They're Changing to Attract Millennial Meetings
PAGE 44

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TABLET VERSION**

Arizona Guide ● PAGE 22

Meeting Goofs ● PAGE 34

Multigenerational Meetings ● PAGE 38

Credit: JW Marriott Houston Downtown



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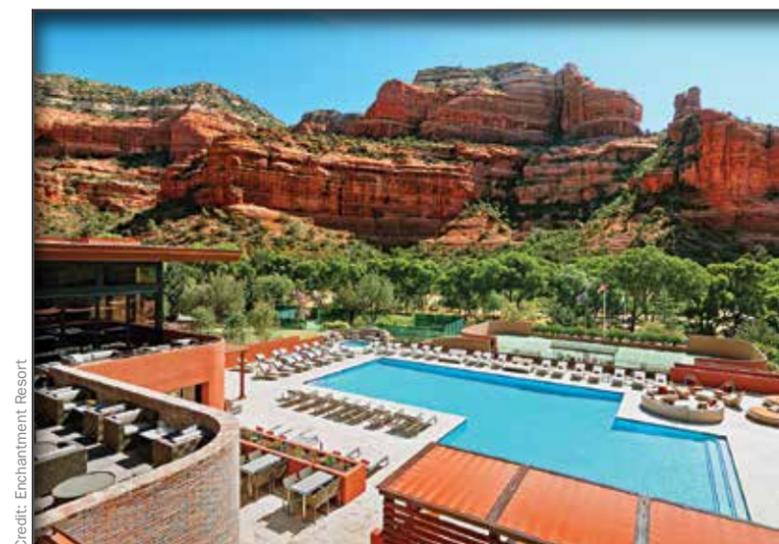
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The HIMSS Innovation Center boasts 30,000 sf of space at the Global Center for Health Innovation in Cleveland. **PAGE 16**



The Enchantment Resort pool, nestled within a natural arena of rock formations, near Sedona, Arizona. **PAGE 22**

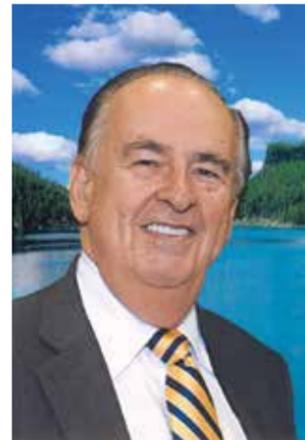


The entrance to The Logan, Philadelphia's Hotel, located in the center of downtown's vibrant cultural district. **PAGE 44**

Publisher's Message

Millennials Rule

As a proud member of the Greatest Generation or sometimes known as the Silent Generation, I often work side by side with three other generations: the baby boomers, Gen X and the millennials also called Gen Y. The rise of the millennials is the hot topic all around town. Born approximately between 1980 to 2000, marketing gurus and hoteliers are examining their every move, every like and dislike to determine how best to cater to them when it comes to meetings, social media, technology, local experiences and F&B flavor.



Hotels have been listening and watching for some time now, and several brands such as Starwood's Aloft and Hilton's Curio are particularly good at attracting this group that will comprise half the work force by 2020.

In our cover story this month on page 44, we outline how planners can partner with hotels that cater to millennials to engage their audiences and make the experience truly Gen-Y friendly.

Hotel brands have gone the extra mile to make millennials comfortable by bringing the local experience indoors in the design of the hotel, creating networking areas that are stylish, cozy and boast local art and flavor. Moreover, some hoteliers outfit their hotel staff and associates in designer duds, which most millennials would be happy to have in his or her own closet.

For example, Houston's own David Peck designed and curated a full wardrobe for the associates of the JW Marriott Houston Downtown (see cover photo). "Traditional uniforms can mask individuality so we wanted the associates to stand out and feel confident," said Peck. "The employees have to wear the clothes all day, so they need styles that last, would pop, but not be too cumbersome," he said.

"The inspiration for the wardrobe program came from the building itself and its rich heritage," said Peck. "I love that it was Houston's first skyscraper and that it has been brought back to its original splendor. The hotel's thoughtfully curated art program, its iconic architectural design and décor and its exquisite attention to detail inspired us to create a wardrobe program that the associates could have in their own closets and make personal, but still remain put-together, stylish and appropriate for a luxury hotel."

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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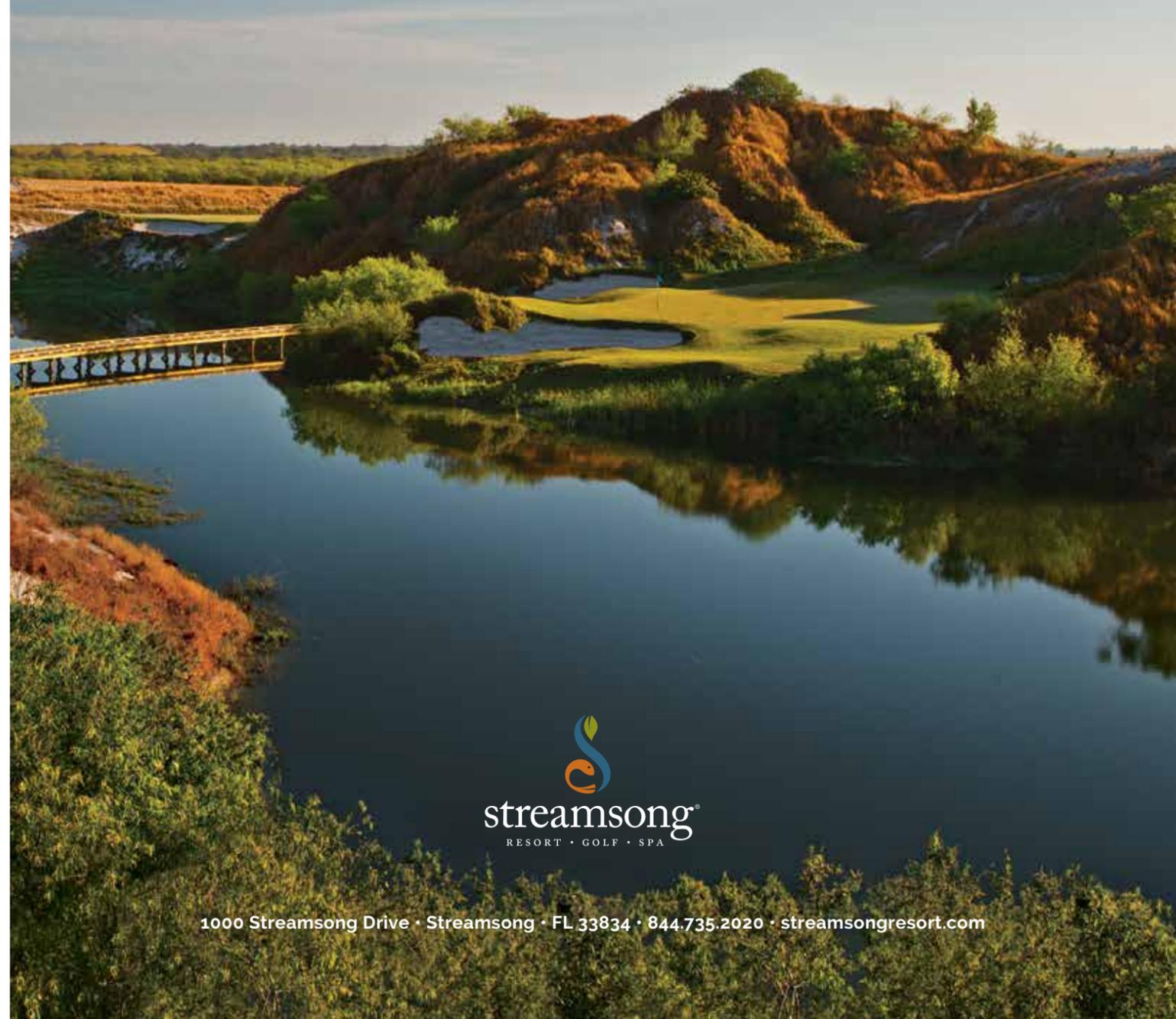
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News & Notes

Atlantis, Paradise Island and Caesars Entertainment Announce Marketing Alliance



Atlantis, Paradise Island.

PARADISE ISLAND, BAHAMAS — Atlantis, Paradise Island resort in The Bahamas announced a partnership with Caesars Entertainment Corporation designed to offer Atlantis' world-class resort experience to members of the gaming industry's premier loyalty program, Caesars Entertainment's Total Rewards. Under this arrangement, Caesars will be the only brand of its kind that offers a Las Vegas-style island gaming destination as a benefit of their loyalty program, granting their Total Rewards members access to Atlantis, the largest casino resort in the Caribbean. "Partnering with the Caesars brand on this initiative allows guests even more access to elite gaming destinations," said Paul Burke, president and managing director of Atlantis, Paradise Island. "Our brands have great synergy including similar customer service cultures and clientele."

This new benefit became available to Caesars Entertainment's Total Rewards members on April 7, 2016. www.atlantisbahamas.com

Salamander Hotels & Resorts Announces Renovation of Hammock Beach Resort

MIDDLEBURG, VA — Salamander Hotels & Resorts, the luxury hotel management company founded by Sheila C. Johnson, is renovating Hammock Beach Resort — a Salamander Golf & Spa Resort, located in Palm Coast, Florida. The oceanfront resort will receive several upgrades: The lobby will be completely refurbished, 75 spacious one-bedroom suites will receive an interior makeover, and the property's expansive meeting and function spaces will be entirely refreshed. Renovation will be completed in stages and finished in its entirety by Labor Day 2016, and the property will remain fully operational throughout the project. Hammock Beach Resort features more than 300 spacious accommodations, including a 12-story tower of luxury suites. The property boasts two golf courses designed by legends Jack Nicklaus and Tom Watson, a spa and fitness center, multiple restaurants and bars, a multilevel pool complex with adult and children areas, and an unspoiled beach. www.hammockbeach.com, www.salamanderhotels.com

Wynn Resorts Plans New Entertainment and Meeting Destination

LAS VEGAS, NV — Steve Wynn and Wynn Resorts discussed plans at a recent investor conference for a new entertainment destination built around a first-ever recreational lake concept. The development, which is subject to approval by the company's board of directors, will include a 38-acre lagoon, surrounded by meeting and convention space, a 1,000-room hotel tower, a small casino, and extensive dining and nightlife. The elaborate water attraction will include both daytime and nighttime entertainment elements.

"We have a chance to reinvent Las Vegas and make the whole venue an entertainment attraction... an idyllic beach paradise surrounded by white sand beaches," said Steve Wynn chairman and CEO of Wynn Resorts. "People come to Las Vegas from all over the world to live large and have a good time, and we can dish up an irresistible entertainment attraction."

Tentatively called Wynn Paradise Park, the expansion will be constructed on approximately 130 acres of real estate that currently houses the Wynn Golf Club. The proposed lagoon will be lined by a white sand beach and boardwalk and feature an array of daytime activities including water-skiing, paddleboarding and parasailing. At night, the space will transform with an elaborate fireworks display that is launched from the center island and surrounding areas.

Wynn Paradise Park will add 260,000 sf of premium meeting space with unobstructed views of the waterfront, spacious guest rooms with a separate bedroom, living room and balcony, and a variety of restaurants. www.wynnlasvegas.com



MCCORMICK

GBTA Says Brighter Outlook Forecasted for 2017 Despite Global Uncertainty

ALEXANDRIA, VA — U.S. business travel will continue to grow only moderately in 2016 as global uncertainty looms. This is one of the key findings from the GBTA BTI Outlook — United States 2016 Q1, a report by the GBTA Foundation. The new forecast report projects that business travel volume growth will increase slightly in the first quarter of 2016 — growing 1.8 percent on a year-over-year basis due to a number of domestic and international factors that are causing global uncertainty and corporate caution. There is cause for optimism about 2017 as the health of the global economy becomes clearer

and a number of factors including the U.S. presidential election and the possible "Brexit" of the United Kingdom from the EU become resolved later this year.

"If the past several years could be summed up as, 'cautious but slow growth,' 2016 is looking like it will be summed up as, 'uncertainty causing slow growth.' Thankfully, a much brighter 2017 appears on the horizon," said Michael W. McCormick, GBTA executive director and COO. "There are a number of factors leading to uncertainty, which is affecting growth in both our sector as well as the overall global and domestic economies. However, these issues will likely resolve themselves later this year and create more confidence for individuals and organizations alike in 2017."

The overall health of the business travel industry remains one of the strongest barometers of the health of the overall U.S. and global economies as an indicator of business confidence, economic growth and market stability.

Despite the slow year-over-year growth, caution at home and uncertainty in the global economy, the outlook for business travel in the coming months and years remains positive. www.gbta.org, www.gbta.org/foundation

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News & Notes

JW Marriott San Antonio Adds Event Venues



The JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa.

SAN ANTONIO, TX — JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa has just debuted its \$16 million expansion of the River Bluff Water Experience, which includes new additional meeting and convention space. The five-month project adds three acres to the water park, which includes a new 13,000-sf multi-use pavilion area for additional indoor and outdoor function space, an additional 130-foot long beach-entry pool, sand play area, whirlpool spa, private cabanas, two body slides, 230 additional lounge chairs and artificial turf lawn space.

The new 13,000-sf standalone ballroom brings the resort's total event space to 288,000 sf. The ballroom and event lawn provides unparalleled venues for any size or type of meeting or group gathering. www.jwsanantonio.com

Omni Nashville Ranked No. 1 Meeting Hotel in U.S.

DALLAS, TX — Omni Hotels & Resorts announced that the Omni Nashville Hotel ranked No. 1 on Cvent's list of the Top 100 U.S. meeting and events hotels in 2016. In addition to Omni Nashville Hotel taking top honors, the Omni Dallas Hotel ranked No. 35; Omni Atlanta Hotel at CNN Center at No. 65; Omni Shoreham Hotel in DC ranked No. 85; and the Omni Fort Worth Hotel rounded out the list at No. 90.

Known as the "Key to Music City," the Omni Nashville Hotel offers a one-of-a-kind Nashville experience. It is located across the street from the Music City Center, fully integrates with an expansion of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum on three levels, and is within walking distance of the city's burgeoning restaurants, cultural attractions, live music and sports venues. www.omnihotels.com

Las Vegas Celebrates the Opening of T-Mobile Arena

LAS VEGAS, NV — Las Vegas celebrated the opening of the T-Mobile Arena, a 20,000-seat, world-class arena, and The Park, an immersive outdoor park district, on the Las Vegas Strip.

T-Mobile Arena, a joint venture between MGM Resorts and AEG, is located on Las Vegas Boulevard between New York-New York and Monte Carlo and will host more than 100 events annually, including UFC, boxing, hockey, basketball and other sporting events, major headline entertainment, awards shows, family shows and special events.

Las Vegas' newest landmark features 50 luxury suites, more than two dozen private loge boxes, complete broadcast facilities, and



The T-Mobile Arena.

other specially designed exclusive hospitality offerings and fan amenities. Toshiba Plaza, an adjacent two-acre outdoor entertainment space, features performance stages, a variety of video screens and other

interactive content and display areas. Industry-leading architect Populous designed T-Mobile Arena to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's standards for LEED Gold Certification. www.vegasmmeansbusiness.com

Snapshots



1



2



3



4



5

Credits: 1,3,4 Jim Woods, 2 SITE, 5 MPI

1, 4 Participants at The Dallas/Fort Worth chapter of Meeting Professionals International (MPI), which co-sponsored the Trade Show Technology Summit (TSTS) at the Irving Convention Center, a full day of seminars and networking dedicated to technology that impacts the event industry. **3** (L to r) iDesignMeetings' Jessica Geesing, Jordan Lambert and Matthew Parker at TSTS. **2** SITE hosted the first Incentive Summit Americas at the Viceroy Snowmass in Snowmass Village. Pictured (l to r) are SITE Foundation Trustee Lynn Pavony, director of incentive sales, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts; SITE Board Member Jennifer Glynn, managing partner, Meeting Encore Ltd.; SITE Foundation Trustee Chris Wheeler, executive director, global incentive sales, Atlantis, Paradise Island; SITE V.P. Business Development Philip Eisvold, account director, Aimia; Fred Brodsky, group sales director, Snowmass Tourism; Brian Mordecai, regional director group sales, Viceroy Hotel Group; and Kathy Fort Carty, CEO, Destination Services Corporation. **5** These lucky planners participated in MPI's Experiential Event Series at the recent SXSW 2016 and shared operational insights from the SXSW teams that plan, program and produce the nine days of conferences, festivals and exhibitions.

By Cliff Kennedy

Better Speeches = Better Events: Event Approaches from a Speech Coach

You can't have a successful event without successful speakers. They bring your agenda to life and engage your audience on a personal level that can't be replicated by any other meeting element.

From the keynote speeches in a general session to the break-outs, improving the effectiveness and impact of the speakers at an event leads to real and meaningful results: ideas and messages are communicated more clearly and effectively, the credibility of the speakers and the organization is enhanced, and the audience is inspired to believe and motivated to act. This leads to an event with increased impact and value, as well as one that generates a much greater ROI.

As a meeting planner, you have an incredible opportunity to elevate the performance of the speakers at your event. Though you may not work directly on the development of each speech or presentation, you can help to create a plan for the success of every speaking opportunity.

Engage. Empower. Energize.

The process begins with a clear strategy. I believe that every event, and therefore every speech or presentation at an event, must engage the audience by offering a clear vision that appeals to their interests. It must empower the audience with the information and direction needed to achieve this vision. And finally, it must energize them with a clear call to action. Though not all speeches and presentations at an event have to achieve all three of these strategies, each must focus on at least one.

A Theme That Works

Great event themes don't just sum up the purpose or topic of an event, they also guide and support the development of the speeches and presentations. To work in this manner, a theme should represent the overall vision of the event or organization. It then becomes a verbal shorthand that speakers can use to share this vision with their audience. And, even better, the audience can use it to spread this vision beyond the event.

The Experience Arc

Audiences don't just listen to speeches and presentations, they experience them. Just like every other aspect of your event, including the lodging, meals, social activities and en-

tertainment, the speeches contribute to the overall experience. Great speech experiences lead to a great event experience.

Remember this when you are developing the master agenda for your event. Don't look at each session as a series of speeches, but as an opportunity to add to and enhance the audience experience.

Primary and Secondary Messages

Speeches are made of messages: Primary messages, which are the conclusions, and secondary messages that support those conclusions via facts, data, arguments, comparisons and stories. Speakers often spend the majority of their time discussing the support and never really get to the key takeaways. Make sure your speakers can clearly identify their primary messages.

Here's an exercise I use with my clients: Pretend you only have three minutes to speak and you can only make five declarative statements. What would those statements be? Those are your primary messages.

Meaningful Media

Your speakers' graphics and other media should support them and their messages, not the other way around. Many events provide a graphics template for speakers to use. Why stop there? How about offering a collection of stock images or high-end illustrations to help create more exciting and dynamic graphics? Or, if budget allows, hire a professional graphic designer to oversee and guide the media creation process for all speeches and presentations.

Design Great Panels

What's the difference between a dull panel and a great one? Conflict or, more specifically, healthy conflict. Differences in ideas and perspectives that lead to real dialogue, real insights and a real experience for your audience. This means interaction between panelists who may not agree with each other. And that's okay. But, it's critical to choose the right person to moderate. Make sure he or she knows their role is to guide the discussion to a conclusion that has relevance to the audience.

Support Your Speakers

By providing your speakers with information and guidance, you will help them succeed.

Develop a clear process for speakers to follow in preparing

“Audiences don't just **listen** to speeches and presentations, they **experience** them.”



for their speaking opportunity at the event. This could include a development schedule with key delivery dates for drafts and media as well as a detailed briefing packet that includes information about the audience, key messages and an explanation of the event theme. Further support may include a broad program of activities, including webinars on content development and public speaking skills and pre-site and onsite rehearsals.

Finally, include the speech and presentation development process in the master schedule for the event and make sure the speeches are always on the agenda of every status meeting.

Measuring Outcomes

To raise the bar and create even better events in the future, closely look at the speech and presentation outcomes you are measuring. Instead of just asking audiences to rate a speaker on a scale of one to five, try to dig a bit deeper. How engaging was the speaker? Did he provide value? Did she create a memorable experience?



Cliff Kennedy

is the founder and president of Kennedy Speech Communications, which has offices in Chicago, Illinois and San Diego, California. He is an executive speech coach who has spent his entire career creating high-stakes, high-impact audience experiences. His background as a creative director, writer and executive producer of corporate events has given him unique insight into what audiences expect and how they connect with speakers and presenters. cliff@kennedyspeech.com

Great events come from understanding what the people in your audience believe is valuable.

- What do they need?
- What are their concerns and challenges?
- What is happening in the world that affects them?

Your audience is the final arbiter of success. If you want to know what they consider important when it comes to the speakers at your event, ask them.

Change Your Perspective. Change Your Expectations. Change Your Results.

Whether you are a seasoned pro or are just getting started in your event planning career, I strongly recommend that you look at your events from a fresh perspective. One that recognizes the critical role of the speeches, presentations and panel discussions. This new perspective will lead to greater expectations and more meaningful and lasting results.

C&IT

By Terri Woodin, CMP

Planner Alert! Making the Shift From Logistics to Strategic

It is safe to say that today, there are increased expectations from senior management and stakeholders for improved meeting planner productivity, added meeting value, cost savings, contract risk mitigation and ROI. This heightened focus on value can be traced to many factors, including concerns over a turbulent global economy, increased competition and the introduction and impact of the Strategic Meetings Management (SMM) initiative. All this has fueled a new era of meeting planner scrutiny and expectations for measurable meeting value and reporting.

an industry survey of meeting planners who had implemented Strategic Meetings Management standards, revealed that 43 percent did not feel that they were leveraging meeting spend and maximizing overall meeting value and ROI results. Don't be overwhelmed by the process to collect and use meeting and spend data. Since you are sourcing and contracting with hotels and venues, this is the low hanging fruit. Track your RFP distribution and which specific hotels and venues that you contract with. Capture important information, such as contracted rooms (the hotel's biggest profit center), versus actual

“A carefully planned and implemented SMM can save an organization **12–20 percent** annually, which is a good way to **get the attention** of key managers and stakeholders.”

Why Make 'The Shift'?

Many thought the Strategic Meetings Management (SMM) initiative was a knee-jerk reaction to the recession, but in reality, this meeting accountability and value business model is here to stay. Whether corporate and association meeting planning meeting responsibilities are enterprise-wide, within a department, division or cluster of meetings, it is essential to embrace and implement SMM components that will work for you. A carefully planned and implemented SMM can save an organization 12–20 percent annually, which is a good way to get the attention of key managers and stakeholders. There is an umbrella of benefits, including a focus on stakeholder goals and objectives, improved meeting management systems and procedures, improved team productivity, emphasis on core competencies, leveraged spend and cost savings, contract risk mitigation, attendee communications and learning, and more.

Leveraging Meeting Data

The reality is that meeting planners are sitting on mounds of important meeting information, but generally, this data is “in silos” and is time-consuming to access. A couple of years ago,

pickups, by night, including pre and post rooms, your actual F&B revenues (second biggest profit center), audio-visual/production and miscellaneous spend (business center, spa, etc.). Now what, you say? When you are negotiating with a hotel or venue, print a report that breaks down revenue contributions, by category, as listed above. In addition to the value generated by the RFP being evaluated, clearly, consolidated revenues to a specific hotel or chain will improve savings and value-based outcomes, often by an additional 5–15 percent. When meeting planners track and leverage total meeting spend and create value reports, they will be “armed and dangerous” when communicating with managers and stakeholders.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution, so conduct your own needs assessment and game plan. Additionally, it is important for planners to grow their company business knowledge. For corporate and association planners, improving business acumen is a combination of both an in-depth understanding of “how your organization works” and how meetings and events can play a role in achieving stated stakeholder goals and objectives for each meeting. A good place to start is to evaluate your organization's annual report, website,

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mission and vision statement, and strategic initiatives announced by the company.

Getting Heard at the Top

Communicating meeting value to senior management is an important part of the equation. Senior managers seldom have career paths in meeting management, so it is important that they understand your role and how you will achieve stated goals and deliver ROI (some with dollar signs, some not) for these investments called meetings and events. If you do not have access to senior managers, perhaps your direct report does, and if you prepare them with good meeting value data, they can be your path to the top.

Tips for Communication With Senior Management

- Build your business acumen/understand how your organization works/business priorities.
- Understand management and stakeholder goals and priorities for each meeting.
- Create transparent metrics to define and measure results.
- Track and leverage all meeting activity, data and spend by category (individual hotel and chain).
- Prepare meeting value reports, including cost savings/risk mitigation, by meeting.

- Communicate SMM benefits/meeting value reports to key stakeholders.
 - Introduce SMM technology that integrates multiple meeting management functions, automates workflow and delivers 24/7 data access.
- Today, it is essential for planners to know what value lens their senior managers and stakeholders are looking through. As drivers of strategic solutions, we must all focus on what is important to each stakeholder, and post meeting, report on what was requested, and specifically, what was delivered (yes, you must keep score).

Conclusions

There are many factors that make the shift from logistics to strategic essential for corporate and association planners. The good news is that today, business executives see meetings as essential to solve business challenges and achieve company goals, and the tools and resources are there to make this happen. So enhance your communications with stakeholders, track and leverage your meeting spend, and create metrics and value reports for each meeting. When you make “the shift,” you will see a big impact to your organization...and career!

For a complimentary copy of Terri’s “SMM Action Plan for Success,” contact twoodin@meetingsites.net. **C&IT**



Terri Woodin, CMP

is Senior Director of Global Meeting Services at Meeting Sites Resource. MSR is a strategic meetings management solutions organization with a 23-year track record of meeting excellence. This includes global hotel sourcing and custom contract negotiations, professional meeting support services and Strategic Meetings Management (SMM) consulting. Terri contributes articles to industry trade publications and speaks at many industry events. She also serves on many industry advisory boards including MPI, PCMA, APEX Standards Committee and the School of Hospitality Business at Michigan State University.



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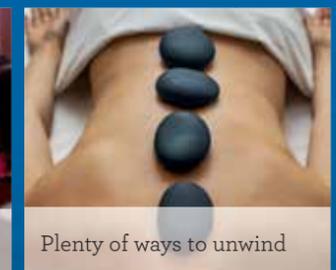
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Planners Look to Cities With Suppliers Who Understand Compliance Guidelines

By Patrick Simms

What makes a city a major player in the medical meetings industry? The answer is manifold, ranging from generic advantages such as great airlift and diversified lodging options to factors that are more industry specific, such as a strong local medical

community and suppliers who are cognizant of strict compliance guidelines. Many cities, both domestic and international, appear to have the formula worked out, as they do significant meetings business in this sector.

American Express Meetings & Events,

with a clientele that is over 30 percent health care companies, has a bird's-eye perspective on site selection trends. "Within North America, Chicago, San Francisco and Boston are predominant cities for congresses and conventions," observes Richard Parker, director of

health care. "For standalone medical meetings, we see a lot of activity in Philadelphia, although not as much in Jacksonville or Cleveland. Globally, Barcelona, London, Vienna, Munich, Copenhagen, Paris, Rome and Milan are also key cities."

In any of these destinations, planners abiding by the pharma code can have confidence that they will find supplier partners who can provide value while respecting their budget limitations. Cities with "an adequate number of venues that are within spend and compliance guidelines are ideal hosts for medical meetings," Parker says. Additionally, medical meetings-friendly CVBs and hoteliers take into account "confidentiality on leads, exclusivity (full disclosure/approval on competitors in the same hotel) and the ability and flexibility to provide food and beverage within stringent meal caps."

According to Kristin Wilcox, team lead, pharma purchasing for ITA Group, "The pharma company that I support has really come down on being audited and whether they are following the F&B and room rate guidelines, from an open payment standpoint and the transfer of value to the health care providers. So definitely that's what we're looking for when we send out our RFPs."



Cities with "an adequate number of venues that are within spend and compliance guidelines are ideal hosts for medical meetings."

Richard Parker
Director of Healthcare
American Express Meetings & Events
Kent, UK

Compliance-Savvy Hoteliers

Hoteliers who are especially keen on catering to pharma and medical device groups can earn the HMCC (Healthcare Meeting Compliance Certificate) offered to both planners and suppliers by MPI and St. Louis University. "Hoteliers may

not need to understand (compliance) like a planner would, but just knowing that there are rules and how to be sensitive to meal caps and why planners are requesting what they're requesting makes (the certification valuable)," says Taya Paige, business development manager with ITA Group and contributing author

to the CMP-Healthcare (CMP-HC) certification. "It's really hard to work with people who have no education in that area. And definitely the CVBs can play a role. They can insist with their hoteliers that if you're handling pharma, you need to obtain this compliance certification so that we know that you understand this industry that we're going after. So they'll recommend the property for pharma bids that come in." Paige adds that it is helpful when hoteliers have purchased a subscription to My Compliance Wizard, an app launched last spring by Pat Schaumann, director, profession-

al development, health care sector at MPI, and BusyEvent Mobile. The tool keeps users up to date on changes in compliance rules for HCPs from various countries.

In short, the destinations most appealing to the medical meetings market are those whose suppliers are knowledgeable and proactive when it comes to compliance. They are not "complacent" when it comes to those rules, Parker explains, "but instead embrace compliance initiatives, invest in their people to make sure they are informed about international regulations governing health care meetings, and commit to a creative approach, despite the obvious budgetary limitations. Compliance does not mean innovation should be stifled."

Medical Communities

Apart from the proficiency of local suppliers to accommodate these needs of medical groups, a secondary advantage that a city can offer is a robust medical com-



Taya Paige
Business Development Manager
ITA Group
El Segundo, CA

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munity. Among the standout cities in this regard are Orlando, with its Medical City in Lake Nona under development; Philadelphia, with its dynamic biotech startup scene; and Cleveland, with its Global Center for Health Innovation. The presence of these companies and facilities can mean stronger local attendance for client-facing meetings, the availability of medical institutions for offsite events, as well as the possibility of culling speakers from the institutions. "These resources are advantageous for medical groups meeting in these cities as they offer access to a larger pool of key opinion leaders and facilities that enable

showcasing medical, surgical and hospital goods," adds Parker.

For example, management consulting firm Stafford Snyder found Cleveland's local medical facilities advantageous when holding its health care executive conference, Disrupted Healthcare, in the city last September. The Global Center for Health Innovation has 27 tenant partners, including HIMSS, Siemens Healthcare, Philips Healthcare, Cardinal Health, GE Healthcare and the Cleveland Clinic. Stafford Snyder was able to utilize several speakers from tenant companies. According to Dave Johnson, director of public relations and communication for the FirstMerit Convention Center of Cleveland and Global Center, "Health care is far and away the leader in terms of events that we host; 27 percent are health care related. The Global Center hosted over 300 meetings last year, all health care related, primarily in the tenant partner suites." Half of those events took place in the fourth-floor HIMSS Innovation Center.

An indirect benefit of the presence of numerous health care companies and institutions is that it tends to promote an



Credit: MacBethPhoto.com

Orlando's 650-acre health and life sciences park Medical City in Lake Nona.

awareness of the industry among local hoteliers and DMOs. For example, Paige notes that Newport Beach, California, is up-and-coming in the medical meetings arena, an initiative spurred in part by the medical community surrounding the venerable Hoag Hospital. "It's really driven them to understand that environment," she says. "So while (the presence of a strong medical community) may not be the first thing a buyer thinks of, I believe suppliers may have a better understanding (of the medical meetings

market) if they have a strong medical community. Visit Newport Beach, for instance, is making sure that all of their hoteliers have the HMCC, and so they attend shows like the Global Pharmaceutical and Medical Meetings Summit and the Pharma Forum where the certification is offered, and they additionally exhibit there."

The Perception Factor

The initiative Newport Beach has taken may compensate for its "resort"



Credit: Hilton Chicago Hotel

The Hilton Chicago Hotel is one example of hotels that offer specialized sales and marketing teams familiar with medical meeting compliance issues.

Citywides: The Challenge of Finding Meeting Space

The country's biggest hubs for medical association meetings naturally draw health care companies seeking to reach potential clients. While there is a great deal of business opportunity at these conventions, the massive draw these events have can make it difficult to find a suitable gathering space outside the convention center to conduct business — with hundreds of companies trying to do the same thing.

It's a challenge with which Christine M. Eggert, office manager and manager, IT with Ewing Township, New Jersey-based Celator Pharmaceuticals Inc., is quite familiar. "We are a startup biopharmaceutical company, and we feel that it's important to participate in the really large industry conventions," she says. "So the big one that we always have participated in is the annual meeting of the American Society of Hematology, which took place this past year in Orlando. We sent most of our clinical team to man the booth, and my challenge, more so than in past years, was to try to find a venue for a big block of people." The venue had to be as close to the Orange County Convention Center as possible and, given that Celator is still in the startup phase, as cost-effective as possible.

"We want the opportunity to get the word out to the thousands of clinicians in attendance about our products. Lately

being the norm is trying to find a meeting room where we can meet with other people while we're in the area. We have used hotel meeting rooms, but the problem is that when you're using the housing bureau for the conference they get booked up super quick," Eggert explains. "So we often wind



The Celator Pharmaceuticals booth at the American Society of Hematology's annual meeting in Orlando.

Credit: Celator Pharmaceuticals Inc. © Copyright 2015-2016 All rights reserved.

up using a suite, but it's got to be one where there is a living room area with a table so we can actually have the meetings there and we have flexibility that way."

While the CVB and hoteliers can be helpful in making venue suggestions, oftentimes booking requests must go through the convention's housing bureau. That is the case in Chicago, where Celator attends the American Society of Clinical Oncology's convention. "It is extremely difficult to try to go on your own to try to book something outside of the bureau," says Eggert. "They want to have complete control of the city, so they lock down the city, a considerable amount of the hotels and even the meeting rooms. And if you don't go through the housing bureau, you're not going to be able to get a nice, comfortable room for your staff and you're not going to be able to find let's say a boardroom where you could have a meeting."

In order to avoid having to meet clients in lobbies, Eggert recommends booking a space with the bureau "just to have something because you can always cancel (free of charge) up to 72 hours before arriving. Then on my own I look outside of (the bureau) for any place that would be more feasible, maybe closer to a potential client. If I am fortunate enough to find something, I'll cancel the housing bureau reservation."



Christine M. Eggert, Office Manager and Manager, IT
Celator Pharmaceuticals Inc., Ewing Township, NJ

"(The convention's housing bureau) wants to have complete control of the city, so they lock down...a considerable amount of the hotels and even the meeting rooms."

She also advises planners to be on the ball when it comes to booking rooms through the convention's Web portal. "I've found through experience that I have to log in five minutes before (the scheduled opening time for the portal) to hope they open it quick enough that I can get in and book something," she says. "Because if I wait until it opens, everybody tries to get into the portal and it crashes. Then by the time I try to go in again everything's booked already."

Also important to bear in mind is that some of the conferences require online registration before allowing access to the booking portal for lodging, so that takes extra time that must be factored in.

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Jennifer Moore
 Event Team Lead
 eClinical Works
 Westborough, MA

meeting so attendees could learn of various free-time entertainment options.

The historic Grand Ole Opry served as the site for eClinicalWorks' keynote speech, given by the company's CEO and founder. "Having the keynote at the Grand

Ole Opry is a bucket-list item, you feel like you're part of history," says Moore. "For us to be there and see the gold albums on the wall and to know that Dolly Parton sang on this stage, it was magical in a lot of ways. People truly loved it."

The city also has a vibrant medical community, including HCA Healthcare and Lifepoint Health, companies that are clients of eClinicalWorks. "They truly appreciated the fact that we were in their hometown, and we were very proud to be in their hometown," says Moore. "I

image, which can be a deterrent for medical groups bringing in HCPs. "The perception factor is a key component, especially for meetings where HCPs are in attendance," says Parker. But the concern tends to apply more to hotels than destinations. "For my clients, if there is 'resort and spa' in the property name, we are not to select that or even send out a bid," says Wilcox. "Some hotels will even (identify as) a four star vs. five if they really want to go after pharma groups, or they will change the name of their hotel (to exclude 'resort and spa')," Paige adds.

Nashville Experience

One of Nashville's primary meeting hotels balances "resort" with "convention center" in its name: the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center. Health care IT company eClinicalWorks found the Gaylord to be an ideal hotel partner, in part due to its ability to handle the numerous breakouts medical meetings are known for. Within the hotel's 700,000-plus sf of function space, eClinicalWorks staged 120 breakouts in eight concurrent sessions for its 2015 National Conference, bringing in thousands of doctors, office managers, physician's assistants and others medical professionals.

Nashville itself was quite appealing to the group. "Our attendees loved going to Nashville, everything from the Southern hospitality to the entertainment options," says Jennifer Moore, event team lead at eClinicalWorks. "We always provide opportunities for our attendees to enjoy the city itself." The Nashville Convention & Visitors Corporation assisted with information booths at the



The UCLA Meyer & Renee Luskin Conference Center will open in August.

don't think (their presence in the city) made us choose to go there, but it was one of the added perks. People (from those companies) knew we were there and that allowed them to bring more attendees and welcome us to their city."

Los Angeles Option

Like other top medical meeting destinations, Los Angeles has a rich infrastructure of medical organizations, including UCLA Health, Orthopaedic Institute for Children, Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute and the Los Angeles Medical Center. And opening in August in the heart of UCLA's campus is the new 254-room UCLA Meyer & Renee Luskin Conference Center, which will host medical meetings in 25 meeting rooms and a total of 25,000 sf of meeting

space, equipped with advanced AV and videoconferencing technology.

Genetic testing company Natera, based in San Carlos, California, finds L.A. to be ideal for its consultant board meetings and national sales meeting.

"We have several employees and doctors (flying in from overseas) and we try to look for locations where airports have lots of direct flights, so that's one component. And L.A. has a major airport that's easy to get to," notes Connie Cruz, MAE, marketing manager, global events. "L.A. also has great nightlife and a lot of activities, so that way after the meetings are done there are many opportunities for our doctors and our employees to also have fun without having to travel very far."

Accordingly, Cruz looks for hotels that are in walking distance of entertainment. She also needs hotels to be flexible with

logistical details and support a significant number of breakouts. "We can have last-minute room list changes because the doctors have a lot of last-minute requests," she says. "We use 300 guest rooms (for the national meeting) and we need anywhere between 20-25 breakout rooms. Our group likes a lot of small breakout rooms, and finding a hotel that can meet that is important."

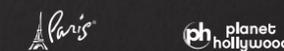
Cruz has found the 628-room Loews Hollywood Hotel, with 76,000 sf of flexible meeting space, to be accommodating on all these counts. Yet another site criterion has become a familiar one in the industry: the ability and willingness to work within compliance guidelines. Natera became a public company in July, Cruz notes, and the "pharma code is new territory for us." **C&IT**

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Arizona

Where Planners Create Exceptional Events on the Desert Canvas

By Christine Loomis

Arizona is a place where the term “larger than life” might have originated. The scale of grandness here is off the charts, starting with the mother of all grand things, the Grand Canyon. Even Arizona’s state flower is, by comparison to most flowers, larger than life, blooming as it does on those soaring towers of the Sonoran Desert, saguaro cactus.

Some of the state’s most famous, and infamous, characters loom large in our history and collective imagination — Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, Geronimo and Cochise, among them. Arguably the most famous shootout in American history, the gunfight at the O.K. Corral, took place in Tombstone, Arizona, and the incident still conjures up the very essence of the Wild West, a place where those who were strong enough, fast enough, smart enough, brazen enough and bold enough could not only survive but thrive — at least long enough to make a fortune or a name for themselves...or both.

The inherent wildness of the West lives on in the vast landscapes of the Sonoran Desert and in the culture and history of Native Americans and cowboys, which visitors can tap into; however, brand-spanking new, trending and sophisticated define the state, too.

The combination of all the above makes Arizona a compelling meeting destination — that and glorious weather much of the year. As for summers, budget-friendly options pair nicely with AC, and most desert evenings cool down to surprisingly pleasant temps. Beyond all that, each city and region also brings its own special something to the meeting table.

2016 MEETING & INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNER GUIDE

Valley of the Sun

Part of the greater metropolitan area called The Valley of the Sun, Scottsdale embodies everything that name conjures up — a stunning valley edged by mountains under deep blue skies with the bright Western sun shining down. Upscale and the epitome of modern sophistication, Scottsdale also celebrates its Western roots in Old Town, where some of the city’s top restaurants can be found alongside galleries and eclectic shops.

That’s just the start of its diversity. Heather Husom, DMCP, general manager of Scottsdale-based Hello! Arizona Destination Management, says, “A planner may bring the same group several years in a row, yet each year the guests will be in awe of the experiences and discoveries to be made.”

She notes that incorporating local culture, for example, has almost endless possibilities. “It may include entertainment such as Native American storytellers or hoop dancers, an all-female mariachi band, an aura reader, potbellied pig racing, state historians or a foot rodeo.”

Ditto activities. Of course there’s riding horses and learning about cowboy life, Husom notes, and there are historic native ruins and ancient petroglyphs that provide insight into the past.

But, she adds, groups also can book four-wheeling adventures in the desert in a variety of vehicles, from Jeeps and Hummers to a military-grade Tomcar off-road vehicle, and there’s rafting, fishing, kayaking and even drone shooting, too.

And because Scottsdale is “the embodiment of casual elegance,” Husom says it’s possible to create extraordinary events on the desert canvas.

“We recently had a client who wanted a unique evening to reward top producers and make them feel incredibly special. The group had a history of fine dining, so we created a sensational desert dining experience of a lifetime. We built 20 tasting tables, each to seat 12–15 people. Each custom table had its own décor, menu, wines and its own award-winning chef who prepared a four-course dining experience under the stars — 20 chefs at 20 tables.

“Each table featured a menu to showcase the chef’s signature dish plus a pre-selected wine pairing to enhance the culinary experience. The artistry of the individual chefs coupled with the individual table décor, entertainment and the



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Valley of the Sun

backdrop of an Arizona sunset mesmerized our guests,” Husom says.

The event was a huge success, but it’s just one of countless possible custom experiences to be found or created in the Sonoran Desert.

Scottsdale accommodations range from moderately priced hotels to opulent resorts. A favorite is The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa, which brings the region’s Scottish heritage into the mix with a resident bagpiper who plays to the sunset each evening, and a Scotch Library where individuals and groups can learn, among other things, about Scotch pairings and taste from an extensive collection of fine Scotch whisky, both blended and single malt. There are even a few very rare bottles among the more than 200 labels.

Ed Siegel, president of Pittsburgh-based EBJ Consultants Inc., brought the IMARK Group Inc. to The Westin Kierland for the company’s 2012 annual meeting. Based on the success of that meeting, the group is booked at the resort for its 2016 annual meeting, which will take place in October.

“Scottsdale has just about everything we look for in a meeting destination: great and dependable weather, a very good airport with non-stop service from many of our participants’ home cities, excellent optional dining and shopping opportunities, and an enormous number of quality golf courses for our very avid players,” Siegel says.

The resort met the group’s requirements for “superior meeting space, a large number of upscale sleeping rooms in an easily accessible area, high-quality recreational facilities and a reasonable rate during the high-demand convention season.” Its walking distance to Kierland Commons and Scottsdale Quarter was a bonus.

Siegel says The Westin Kierland’s sales team and staff were also factors. “Tracy Davies and Lara Anderson made us feel welcome and comfortable during the negotiation process, and were very visible and helpful in follow-up during our weeklong

conference. The staff of the golf shop, headed by Nancy Dickens, could not have been more professional or helpful to both myself and our guests, before and throughout our stay.”

The group utilized a large number of breakout rooms and the Kierland Grand Ballroom for the two-day, one-on-one sessions and group banquets. The Marshall’s Outpost area worked well for the outdoor welcome dinner, which included more than 700 guests. Siegel says many of the attendees used the Agave Spa, and a large number of golfers “thoroughly enjoyed the very fair yet challenging golf” on the resort’s Troon-managed course.

“Since our meeting in 2012 was such a success, there is very little that we plan to change for this year’s meeting,” Siegel notes. “We did add entertainment to our welcome dinner at Marshall’s Outpost, where we once again expect over 700 guests to enjoy a warm October evening in an outdoor setting.”

Siegel advises planners considering the property to reserve the space as far in advance as possible. “The hotel is extremely busy during the high seasons and is even heavily booked in the traditionally slower seasons of winter and summer,” he says.

Phoenix

There’s so much new in Phoenix, especially in the downtown area, that planners may have a hard time keeping up. Within a mile of the Phoenix Convention Center are more than 3,300 hotel rooms with an additional 320 coming in 2017.

Occupying the historic former Professional Building, Hilton Garden Inn Phoenix Downtown melds art deco architectural details with a stylish design and stellar location. In April, the Lexington Hotel reopens as FOUND:RE, a property centered on local and modern art. Lurhs City Center Marriott will open this year downtown, featuring two Marriott brands, a Courtyard and a Residence Inn. Just north, The Camby, its name a nod to horizon-defining Camelback Mountain, offers more than 20,000 sf of meeting space and a look that’s timeless, bold, innovative and contemporary all at once. Perhaps most interesting, Phoenix now has the state’s first and only distillery using locally grown grain. Arizona Distilling Company won a double gold in one prestigious competition for its Desert Dry Gin. Ask about private tours for groups.

Greater Maricopa County: Mesa, Carefree and Paradise Valley

Maricopa County doesn’t end with Phoe-



Credit: The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa

The Acacia Course at The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa.



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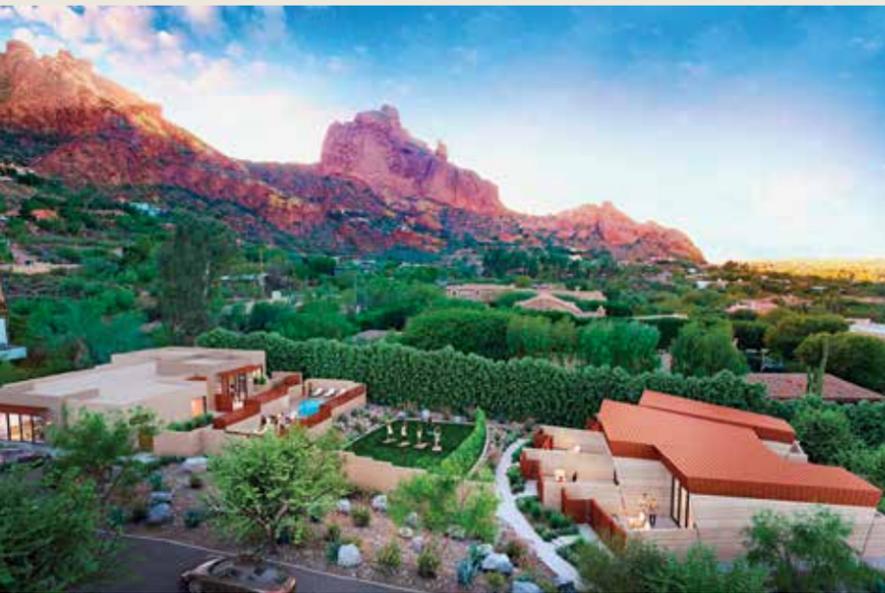
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Valley of the Sun

nix and Scottsdale. It has an embarrassment of riches when it comes to hotels and resorts, and its towns showcase the diversity of the extended metropolitan area.

Arizona's third largest city covers 133 square miles. Sitting 20 miles east of Phoenix and less than 12 miles from Sky Harbor International Airport, Mesa prides itself on offering planners the Arizona experience they want for their attendees — at a lower cost. The city's multitude of lakes and rivers and its proximity to Tonto National Forest make it easy to incorporate Arizona's natural landscapes into a meeting via offsites and team-building options. Mesa hotels include 5,452 guest rooms and 140,000 sf of meeting space; some have adjoining conference centers.

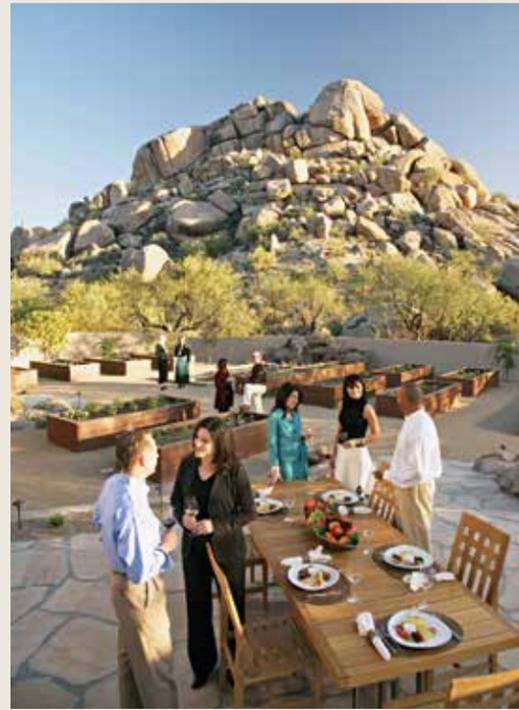
Among the city's stellar venues is Mesa Arts Center, with performances, meeting spaces and a host of programs, including immersion art experiences and options for spouses and teambuilding. Several area museums have meeting space and education opportunities, particularly related to native cultures, and Visit Mesa's Fresh Foodie Trail takes attendees to local farms, gardens, a dairy, a winery and mills in Mesa and neighboring Gilbert and Queen Creek, as well as to farmer's markets and food-truck events.



Credit: Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort

A rendering of the new Spa House debuting this month at Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort.

Thirty-five miles north of Phoenix, Carefree encompasses 8.9 square miles of spectacular nature. The Boulders Resort & Spa has thoroughly embraced its landscape and made it part of the resort experience — a bonus for guests and for planners looking to inspire attendees and incen-



Credit: The Boulders Resort & Spa

A gathering in the Herb Garden at the Boulders.

tive qualifiers. The resort encourages attendees to get out of meeting rooms and into its 1,300 acres.

Options include Cowboy for a Day programs and a culinary hunt via golf cart where every clue leads to a striking vista and interesting culinary bites. The resort offers a glowing hot-air balloon and nighttime vertical rides above its golf course, and foraging for edible goodies under the guidance of a master gardener. Wellness programs include outdoor yoga and brain-fitness classes, as well as a group shamanic experience for spiritual growth. Perhaps the most endearing option is inviting Mijja and Burrito, the resort's two "beer burros," to a group's reception where they offer beer from their saddlebags and memorable photo ops.

Paradise Valley, 14 miles northeast of Phoenix, is known for its dramatic mountains, including Mummy Mountain in the central valley and Camelback Mountain to the south. It is also known among C-suite execs and high-end incentive groups as home to Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort, where luxury, privacy and exclusive amenities provide a top-tier experience. The resort's private homes offer a combination of luxury lodging and a venue for intimate gatherings and high-level meetings, and they're close to all the resort offers. Debuting this month is the Spa House, a 3,500-sf, four bedroom private hideaway for executive corporate gatherings and featuring in-home spa services. Nearby are four new 875-sf casitas. ■

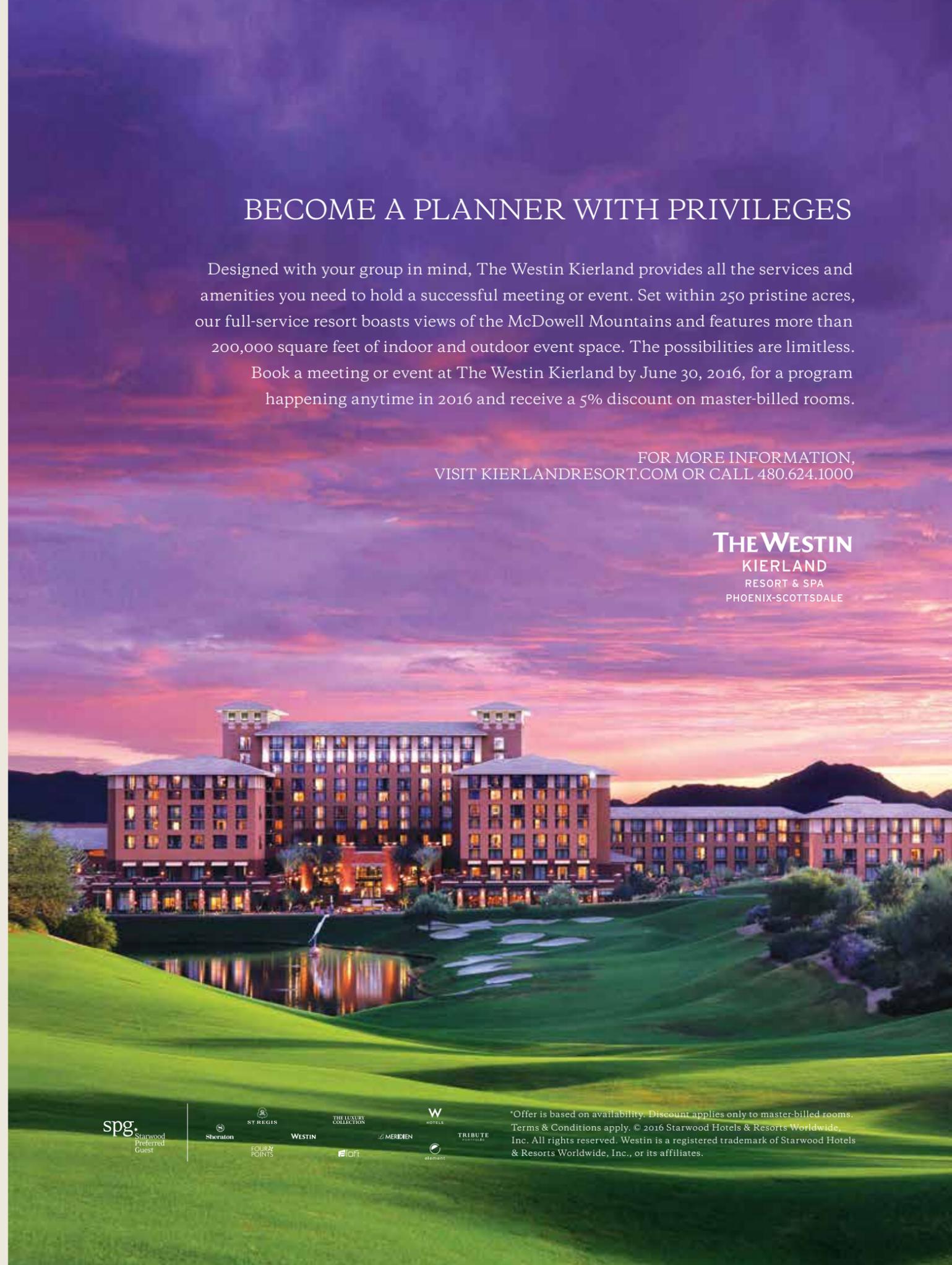
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Tucson & Marana

Tucson has its own compelling geological drama, surrounded as it is by five mountain ranges. It sits at 2,643 feet above sea level and is one of the sunniest cities in the nation. In addition to miles of paved bike paths, Tucson also has more than 300 miles of mountain biking trails



The Fiesta de los Vaqueros Tucson Rodeo, Tombstone street performers and Old Tucson Studios (opposite page) capture the Wild West spirit of Tucson.



Credit: Visit Tucson



Credit: Desert Diamond Casino & Hotel

and many more miles of trails for hikers, horseback riders and shared use, giving outdoor enthusiasts plenty to do when business wraps up — no wonder the city draws 7 million visitors annually.

Tucson's historical roots include Hohokam people who lived and farmed in the valley for 4,000 years, Spanish missionaries, soldiers, Mexican families, Western expansionists and others. The rich cultural mélange gives Tucson a colorful vibe, and planners will want to bring some of that culture into meetings to provide a compelling sense of place.

The city and surrounding area have no lack of meeting-friendly hotels and resorts to choose from, and there are ranches where groups can

mix business with authentic ranch activities that foster teambuilding and leadership training. At White Stallion Ranch, for example, groups can participate in Wisdom Horse Coaching, a highly interactive leadership program that requires no previous equestrian experience. There also are resorts with phenomenal golf and tennis facilities, The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa and Loews Ventana Canyon Resort among them.

The Desert Diamond Casino & Hotel offers options for private group entertainment and events in the Monsoon Night Club.

Hotel updates in Tucson include the historic

Credits: Visit Tucson

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Tucson & Marana



Credits: The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain



The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain (top) offers a slate of localized activities for groups that want to experience the wonders of the Southwest, including astronomer-guided stargazing.

Marana

In Marana, just west of Tucson along I-10, are more choices for planners. To start, Marana is home to the AAA Five Diamond Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain, with more than 40 options for meeting and function space, from ballrooms and boardrooms to outdoor venues with the Tortolita Mountains as backdrop.

Groups can participate in such activities as cooking classes, nighttime golf, guided rock art tours to discover ancient Hohokam petroglyphs, geocaching hikes, cactus discovery tours and astronomer-guided stargazing, to name a few, all of it enhanced by Ritz-Carlton's impeccable service and upscale amenities. Attendees also can gain some cultural inspiration during a nightly Spirit of Adventure Celebration that features a Native American flutist performing from the surrounding Tortolita Foothills.

To more meaningfully connect with the local community, The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain also offers VolunTeaming programs, which combine teambuilding activities with community service volunteer activities.

Marana is more than an adjunct to Tucson. The city has its own draws including easy access to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (100 miles) and Tucson International (31 miles), as well as its own regional airport where private jets can touch down and their passengers can be at five-star resorts in minutes.

Toby Parks, tourism and marketing manager for Discover Marana, a local DMC, says, "Been there, done that? Check out Marana. As the gateway to Southern Arizona, Marana is brimming with adventure, excitement and fun for the whole family or the most serious of meetings."

Among the city's highlights, Parks points out, are an array of accommodations from five-star to mid-range hotels, venues for every possible purpose, outstanding local restaurants and catering, easy-to-navigate roadways, easy access to I-10 and exceptional recreational activities — especially in the Tortolita Mountains.

"The Tortolita mountain range offers nationally recognized hiking and biking trails," Parks says, "and a visit to awe-inspiring Saguaro National Park provides memories that will last a lifetime."

The national park is home to the nation's largest cactus, the giant saguaro. Although it's found in only a small portion of the United States, this desert giant is a singular symbol of the American West, especially when silhouetted against a brilliant orange sunset. ■

Tucson landmark Hacienda Del Sol Guest Ranch, which just completed a multimillion-dollar expansion that added 32 guest rooms and a new 5,100-sf event space, the Casa Luna Ballroom.

Hilton Tucson El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort embarked this spring on the largest makeover in its 34-year history. Renovations of all 428 guest rooms and the lobby will be completed by spring 2017. Started last fall and completed this spring was a redesign of the pool area and the addition of new courtyards.

Miraval Resort & Spa recently introduced a program that offers a new taste of the area — an immersive beekeeping experience led by a local resident professional beekeeper. Participants don protective gear and harvest honey; partake in a tasting of local honeys; and learn all the buzz on bees' role in our ecosystem through a series of lectures.

Desert Diamond Casino & Hotel adds something else to the meeting experience. Owned by the Tohono O'odham Nation, Desert Diamond is a place where attendees can enjoy gaming in their free time, but also where they can experience native culture firsthand. Planners can incorporate a traditional basket-dance performance into receptions or learn about and taste traditional native foods at a local co-op farm. The Mission San Xavier del Bac, a historic Spanish mission on the Tohono O'odham San Xavier Indian Reservation, provides insight into the history of missions throughout the Southwest.

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Sedona

Sedona is a four-season destination with typically balmy temperatures and 300 days of sunshine annually. Add its famously rose-hued rocks, widely acknowledged spiritual connections and a location almost halfway between Phoenix and the Grand Canyon, and it's a destination with powerful drawing potential.

Sedona offers a range of resorts and hotels to meet a planner's needs and easy access into a surrounding landscape that can be described without hype as breathtaking. It effortlessly provides what incentive groups are looking for — “wow” and all. But it's also an ideal site for an executive retreat, a corporate teambuilding event or a leadership training session. Phoenix's airport is just two hours away.

For those who may not make it as far as the Grand Canyon, Sedona offers its own smaller but incredibly beautiful Oak Creek Canyon, which sits within Coconino National Forest. The red-rock canyon gives visitors plenty to do, from hiking to fishing and swimming in Oak Creek. Slide Rock State

It is Sedona's more mystical elements, however, that set it apart. It's said that powerful vortexes in the area emit energy that has a positive effect on all who come in contact with it. Sedona is known as a place of spiritual healing where meditation and self-exploration enhance personal growth. Many visitors feel that Sedona is inspiring and rejuvenating, a place that's good for body, mind and spirit. Those elements may make it ideal for leadership sessions, which require self-reflection and openness to doing things in new ways. Life coaches, spiritual counselors and shamans are all on hand to offer their expertise. Whether one believes in the specifics of Sedona's mystique or not, there is no question that its incredible natural beauty will inspire anyone who visits.

Among Sedona's most inviting properties is aptly named Enchantment Resort, tucked into a red-rock canyon where the juxtaposition of grand geologic formations and luxury amenities wields a seductive power. It makes a planner's job easy — attendees need no coaxing to come here. Enchantment Resort's Meeting Village was designed with flow of space in mind. The Village Terrace is the centerpiece, situated perfectly for al fresco dining. Spanning 5,100 sf, the grand Anasazi Ballroom with adjacent foyer, boardroom and business services center is ideal for general sessions. And the Juniper House, a separate space replete with fireplace and exposed beam ceilings is a comfortable “war room” for event planners seeking both privacy and proximity. Ample breakout space is available opposite the terrace in the Agave and Ocotillo Ballrooms, along with the exquisitely designed Manzanita Executive Boardroom.

In addition to the award-winning spa and a golf course surrounded by 100,000 acres of Coconino National Forest, Enchantment offers a wealth of group activities, including rugged jeep tours, horseback riding, hot air ballooning, air tours of Sedona and the Grand Canyon, private train excursions, hiking and mountain biking, archeological site tours and more. ■



Credit: Enchantment Resort

The stunning view from Enchantment Resort's signature restaurant, Che-Ah-Chi, the Apache name for Boynton Canyon.

Park, within the canyon, is a must-visit for outdoor enthusiasts, kids and kids-at-heart. The famous natural slide on the creek was named by *USA Today* as one of the nation's 10 best swimming holes.

Arizona's Powerful Sense of Place

In total, Arizona is home to three national parks — Grand Canyon, Saguaro and Petrified Forest — and 14 national monuments, plus numerous national forests, recreation areas and historic sites. All are able to add immeasurably to a meeting experience by providing attendees with a deep sense of place via immersion in the powerful natural landscapes of the West.

As if that weren't enough for meeting planners to put Arizona at the top of their destination lists, Husom adds this: “Three hundred thirty sunny days a year, friendly locals, inspiring sunsets, vibrant nightlife, fine dining, wine bars, microbreweries, world-class resorts, historical properties, Western ranches, destination spas and the best Prickly Pear Margarita you will ever taste — those are just a few reasons for a planner to consider Arizona.” **C&IT**

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Mistakes Happen

How to Avoid Those Dreaded Meeting Goofs

By Mark Rowh

There may be no such thing as a perfect meeting. Even with the best of efforts, every event will have its flaws. But at the same time, many “goofs” can be avoided with a combination of foresight and adequate follow-up.

Here’s an overview of some of the most common mistakes encountered by meeting planners, along with tips for avoiding them.

Some goofs start well before a meeting takes place, according to Gladi Colon, CMP, assistant director of events and catering at the Waldorf Astoria Orlando and Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek. She says that waiting too long before making arrangements with meeting venues is a very common mistake.

“Some planners take for granted how long it takes to create the meeting spec-

ifications,” she says. “Don’t wait until the last minute.”

Instead, she suggests creating a “shell” to use for every meeting and then updating it as information becomes available. “When meeting specifications are due to the hotel or venue, it’s easier to send what you have instead of burning the midnight oil trying to make the deadline,” she says.

Colon notes that another questionable move is assuming that signs can be placed anywhere.

“Sometimes groups do not acquire their foyer space as early as they would like in order to place group-specific branding,” she says. “It’s a good idea to talk to a contact at the venue or hotel early on to get their advice on the best places for signage and when it can be installed.” Similarly, it’s also wise to ask if the hotel has any restrictions on

where signage can be placed. “If you are able to make it to the venue before the event, plan a walk-through with a map and mark on the areas the optimal placements of signage,” she says.

F&B Timelines Are Key

Inadequate meal planning is another avoidable problem. “Check your venue contract to see when your menu selections are due so you can develop a plan to stay ahead of the decision deadlines,” Colon advises. “You should connect with your catering manager three to six months out from your event to review your catered events on a high level.” Initially, she says, that would mean having an in-depth conversation with your catering manager to ensure that the right spaces have been reserved for your catered meal functions, and that the anticipated number of attendees

for each event is correct. Three months prior to your event, confer with the catering manager to review menu needs, especially if planning custom menus, to allow the chef ample time to create something special for the group. To avoid problems related to individual dietary needs, Colon suggests polling attendees during the registration phase to see if they have any dietary restrictions and then incorporate the results in meal planning. When working on menu development, also take care of budgetary planning.

“Every hotel and every state is different,” she says. “Some states require that a service charge or gratuity be taxable, which will affect the budget. And don’t forget to start working on room set-up diagrams well in advance, providing opportunities for creativity, modifications and fire marshal approval.”

Carolyn Davis, CMP, owner of Strategic Meeting Partners, a full-service meeting and event management services company in San Diego, says careful planning can help avoid problems with food. For example, it can be a challenge if attendees are asking for vegetarian, gluten-free, peanut-free or other special diet menus onsite.

“Avoid problems with food by requesting special dietary needs on the registration form,” she says. “Or if this didn’t happen, then request this infor-

“Avoid problems with food by requesting special dietary needs on the registration form. Or...request this information upon check-in onsite and request allergies only.”

Carolyn Davis, CMP, Owner
Strategic Meeting Partners, San Diego, CA

mation upon check-in onsite and request allergies only.”

She also suggests notifying the conference service manager as soon as possible and creating special diet cards that attendees can hand to the waitstaff at each meal. With buffets, dishes can be labeled with any special dietary considerations.

Tips for Goof-Free Meetings

Hugo Slimbrouck, director of strategic partnerships, Ovation Global DMC, MCI Group, offers these tips:

- **Be helpful.** This seems obvious, but we always make sure the client feels important and that their requests are always top of mind. At the end of the day, this is their event, and while our teams are experts at breathing life into the event, the client’s main objective should not be overlooked by venue, theme, etc.
- **Always have an answer.** If a client has a request, or a situation needs attention, we advise our staff to find ways to problem solve. If there isn’t an immediate answer, find one.
- **Pay attention to detail.** For example, double-check the transportation, route and if coaches can maneuver/exit without turning around at your venue. This way a traffic coordinator can be put in place if needed so the meeting group doesn’t block venue traffic and disturb other guests.
- **Make sure check-in goes smoothly.** For example, advise clients well in advance of the guaranteed time when all rooms will be available. Additionally, get a ranking VIP list from your client so as to deliver rooms according to ranking and categories. — MR

Assumptions Lead to Goofs

Nathan Karsten, director of sales and marketing at the Hilton Chicago/Oak Brook Hills Resort & Conference Center, notes that failing to consider meeting needs from a supplier point of view can be problematic.

“Make sure the supplier has a full understanding of your needs,” he says. “Is this corporate training, year-end

says. “AV can make a presentation last in one’s memories, and slow Internet can kill a presentation.”

Many of the most common goofs seem to come from that all-too-easy practice of making assumptions.

“We have found that a common mistake meeting planners make is to assume that amenities, such as audio-visual, are included with meeting room rentals,” says Suzan Carabarin, director of conference services at Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove, California. “They are often surprised after contracting with us that various amenities aren’t included because they didn’t read the contract.”

Too, relying on information that might be outdated is almost a sure bet to lead to difficulties.

“We had a group that was hosting a company meeting,” Carabarin recalls. “When planning for the event they referenced data from a past event as the guideline for room reservations, food and beverage, and so forth. Unfortunately, they hugely overestimated attendance and ended up paying





This might involve booking a car or van with extra space or making sure the staff fits within the event's main theme or purpose.

significantly more than was necessary." They could have avoided the extra costs if they had taken the time to get an accurate number of attendees, Carabarin says.

One way to avoid problems is simply projecting the needs of attendees throughout their entire experience, notes Hugo Slimbrouck, director of strategic partnerships, Ovation Global DMC, MCI Group, who regularly plans meetings at Hilton Paris Opera. Ovation Global DMC is a leading network of destination management companies providing DMC services to associations, corporations and agencies at 100+ locations throughout Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia, North America and South America. Slimbrouck is based in Brussels, Belgium.

"Meeting planners should always aim to complete a guest's experience from start to finish," Slimbrouck says. "This means not letting things like transportation or staffing fall to the bottom of your priority list, as guests will remember their entire travel experience."



Hugo Slimbrouck, Director of Strategic Partnerships
Ovation Global DMC, MCI Group, Brussels, Belgium

coaches would be on time, since they needed at least an hour to get there." So Slimbrouck drove to the bus parking in Bruges where every day about 40 coaches wait for their guests. He went from bus to bus and asked drivers if they could manage to help him get 120 passengers to their destination and still be back in town to pick up their guests.

"Eventually we found someone willing to take us," he said. "Lesson learned!"

Security Is Top of Mind

With security, taking anything less than a comprehensive approach may lead to serious problems, according to Dr. Robert L. Quigley, M.D. regional medical director and senior vice president of medical assistance for International SOS, a global provider of health and travel security services with headquarters in Philadelphia.

"Managing an event can only be successful when all key stakeholders are involved," he says. "Reach out to security,

"Aim to complete a guest's experience from start to finish. This means not letting things like transportation or staffing fall to the bottom of your priority list, as guests will remember their entire travel experience."

Weaknesses to Avoid

Theresa Benedict, international sales leader at Hilton Los Cabos Beach & Golf Resort in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, has identified these weaknesses to avoid:

- **Short-term leads.** Send out leads with enough time to effectively source and contract suitable hotels with the resources to host the event successfully.
- **Mundane experiences.** Be memorable and create experiences that guests talk about for weeks after the event.
- **Limited interaction.** Make meetings interactive with special breaks that create networking opportunities.
- **Lack of online access.** Understand the Wi-Fi bandwidth needed for any specific event.

— MR

HR and legal teams within your organization to map out each group's role in the duty-of-care process." He also advises a planning session in which protocol, responsibilities and desired actions are assigned, discussed and rehearsed.

Possible risks should be always be assessed onsite, Quigley adds.

"Every conference and professional meeting destination comes with its own distinct challenges, making a site assessment absolutely necessary," he says. "Engage your company's security team or security assistance partner to conduct a thorough review of potential threats in and around the location."

He notes that a location should be selected based on a sound understanding of health and security risks associated with a particular destination, and the safeguards required in order to mitigate each one.

Once onsite, careful time management is always helpful in heading off problems. This applies not just to planning teams, but also to other key players such as presenters.

Taking Care of the Basics

"It seems like at every conference, there's always something," says Adrienne Mazzone, president of public relations firm TransMedia Group in Boca Raton, Florida. She recommends taking care of these basic details to avoid problems:

- Print extra agendas.
- Bring extra extension cords, electrical and duct tape, USBs.
- Arrange backups for roles such as photographer, speaker or emcee.
- In communicating about event times, specify a.m. or p.m. and specify locations. — MR



Timing Is Everything

A problem that always should be avoided is having presenters go over their allotted time, says Mike Veny, a New York facilitator of corporate drumming workshops.

"Consistently remind presenters about the importance of staying right on schedule," he says. "Have a system in place to let presenters on the platform know that their time is almost up."

Ask Away and Be Prepared

In avoiding some problems, the key may be a willingness to ask questions. Jennifer Sand, senior event manager with Event Strategy Group in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, recalls an event where a client insisted on hiring a sports celebrity to make an appearance.

"If something looks out of place, even if your clients seem comfortable, go with your gut and question it."

Jennifer Sand, Senior Event Manager
Event Strategy Group, Plymouth Meeting, PA

"With no questions asked, we proceeded to hire him for our event," she says. But when he made his appearance, it quickly became obvious that he did not like crowds.

"He clearly was doing this appearance for the money only and didn't really enjoy it," she says. "He looked stiff like a wax figure in every photo and was visibly uncomfortable the whole time."

To make the most of the session, she and her staff took the initiative to keep the athlete moving through the venues to keep him busy and try to make him appear less unhappy. At the same time, she realized that some awkwardness might have been avoided with better preparation.

"We learned that even if the client insists on something, you are not out of bounds to do your own research and make recommendations," Sand says. "Or at least learn what to expect."

Another incident might also have been avoided with a bit of skepticism. At the end of a week-long event, Sand and her staff took a corporate group on a pub



tour. The last stop was mostly empty except for two men, one of whom proceeded to go around the room introducing himself as the main security contractor who was "sent by the CEO" to watch the group.

"While we were assuming our clients knew the man, they had assumed we hired him," Sand says. "An hour into the evening, we realized that no one ac-

tually knew this man, and he was pretending to be with the group so that he could get free drinks."

The stranger was promptly removed from the venue without further ado, but Sand says the incident was revealing.

"If something looks out of place, even if your clients seem comfortable, go with your gut and question it," she says. Keeping some extra cash on hand can help head off some problems or at least lessen their impact, according to Sand.

"At a conference in Vegas, while we were unpacking, we discovered the box containing our name badge trays was missing," she says. The box was tracked as being delivered, but the venue could not locate it. And since it was a Sunday, it would not be possible to obtain replacements for the event, which was scheduled to open the next morning.

"While we were brainstorming solutions, we noticed another conference that was beginning to pack up," she says. "We walked over and offered to buy their used trays. They didn't think we were serious until we pulled out a few hundred dollars in cash."

Sometimes, she adds, you can throw money at a problem — so always have some handy.

Of course not all problems can be avoided nor easily solved, but many can.

"Oversights and mistakes are bound to happen, but they can be avoided or lessened with proper planning," Carabarin says, who adds that the more you learn about the needs and expectations of attendees, the better. "A meeting is only successful if the attendees leave satisfied," she notes.

Perhaps the biggest goof of all is falling apart when something goes wrong. "Mistakes happen," Karsten says. "It's how we overcome them that stands out." **C&IT**

Generations



Credit: Jonathan Greisen (MPI 2016 EMEC)

Multigenerational



“Incorporating unique features and offerings into mobile apps, such as social interactions and gamification, can be essential to engaging this particular group while also reaching other generations of attendees.”

Issa Jouaneh, S.V.P and General Manager
American Express Meetings & Events
New York, NY

Engaging Four Distinctly Diverse Sets of Values, Attitudes, Lifestyles and Communication Styles

Meetings

By Maura Keller

With millennials set to comprise half of the global work force by 2020, this generation is perhaps the most influential force in meetings today. Just ask Susan Schwedock, director, national events at the Philadelphia headquarters of Cozen O'Connor, a full-service law firm with more than 600 attorneys in 23 cities across two continents. Schwedock works hard to keep the content and the speakers at her company's meetings relevant to each age group — a demanding effort indeed.

“Interactive sessions using technology and devices can be very challenging as

the older generation is typically not as technically savvy,” Schwedock says. “The younger generation seems to respond to learning in interactive and group discussions. But I have found the older generation seems to be skeptical of these sessions. Also, when disseminating the information leading up to the meeting, the older generation still responds better to hard-copy handouts rather than electronically delivered information.”

Each of the four generations exudes four distinctly different sets of values, attitudes, lifestyles and preferred methods of communication. The four genera-

tions are identified by these approximate birth-date ranges:

Millennials or Gen Y	1980 to 2000
Generation X	1961 to 1979
Baby Boomers	1946 to 1964
Greatest Generation	1925 to 1945

Melissa Van Dyke, president of the Incentive Research Foundation in McLean, Virginia, knows the multigenerational work force is a key issue for planners right now, with more than two-thirds of them saying it will change the way they design meetings over the next five years.

“Our research has shown that planners feel pretty comfortable about their abil-

ity to get the information they need from attendees and their ability to convince upper management to change the program. However, planners still encounter significant barriers in creating an event that engages a diverse group and in getting the funding they need to support multiple experiences for multiple types of attendees,” Van Dyke says.

Issa Jouaneh, senior vice president and general manager, American Express Meetings & Events, works with his meeting and event planner team to create meetings that appeal to multiple generations.

“Meeting planners developing meetings programs for diverse audiences can encounter a variety of issues in connecting with different segments of their audience,” Jouaneh says. From a generational perspective, these issues range from the destination selection (with considerations such as travel time, proximity to city centers and access to local culture) to the duration of a meeting and the delivery mechanism for the content (virtual, live, face-to-face or interactive).

“The level of pre-meeting materials, choice of speakers and the flexibility to adjust agendas during the event itself

can also pose issues to meeting planners,” Jouaneh says. “Diverse audiences, particularly multigenerational attendees, place a different focus and have varying expectations for each of these critical components of a meeting.”

While meetings historically have looked to motivate, recognize and reward attendees, the millennial generation also seeks to be engaged and active at meetings and events. Meeting planners are challenged to keep up with this burgeoning portion of the work force, while continuing to appease and appeal to older generations who may be ac-

customed to more traditional business meetings and events.

Van Dyke says their research has shown there is no one silver bullet for handling events with millennials and other generations in attendance. You have to really consider each group individually.

“Life stage and work experience play huge roles as well,” Van Dyke, says. Even where millennials are concerned, the program one designs for a group of millennial sales associates from a high-end retail store should look very different from a program for millennials at a multinational consulting firm.”

Van Dyke finds that planners have less difficulty in finding destinations and venues that will work for multigenerational meetings. The issue is more prevalent in the areas of activities, entertainment, speakers and gifting experiences where it's difficult to please all.

“The mantra in this case tends to be options, options, options as much as possible,” Van Dyke says. “Inviting voices from all the generations to be a part of the meeting design team as a sounding board is usually your best option. Some organizations are even creating completely different programs to target the varying audiences; however this is a luxury most planners cannot afford.”

Challenges Aplenty

The key challenges with staging an event in which several generations are present include all the same components of all meetings: the agenda (including timing, content and delivery of content), food and beverage, destination and duration.

“Millennials love any technology or interactive software onsite for information — digital apps, virtual reality and digital programs.”

Kerry Bannigan
Meeting Planner
Nolcha, New York, NY



“In the audience are people who may prefer to write with pen and paper; use references such as printed slide handouts while many millennials prefer electronic forms of documents and notetaking.”

Jeffrey Cesari, CMP
President, Industrious Meetings
Wilmington, DE

Jeffrey Cesari, CMP, president and creative director of Wilmington, Delaware-based Industrious Meetings, works with many corporate clients in planning meetings and events. Some of the challenges he's facing with multiple generations in attendance is the way people learn.

“In the audience are people who may prefer to write with pen and paper; use references such as printed slide handouts while many millennials prefer electronic forms of documents and notetaking,” Cesari says. “A few months ago, at a meeting that was considered, ‘paperless,’ the client did not want any printed agenda available. Knowing we had several generations attending, we did produce about five percent printed agendas to cater to those who prefer that style of learning. We had to print more since it was so popular.”

Millennials absorb information fast but not always with high retention rates, as they are taking notes digitally and in slang. Gen X and baby boomers are diligent notetakers but Kerry Bannigan,



meeting planner at Nolcha, finds they are also able to listen, absorb and take mental notes. Based in New York City, Nolcha is an award-winning events production and marketing agency specializing in fashion, retail and social impact.

“Millennials love any technology or interactive software onsite for information — digital apps, virtual reality and digital programs,” Bannigan says.

Today's millennials also seek local, immersive experiences. The promise of a vacation and on-trend gifts is no longer enough to inspire this group to do their best in the workplace and be engaged during meetings and events.

Jouaneh says one strategy to engage this population is to create a program that incorporates altruistic work such as building houses or other infrastructures in developing areas.

“This provides millennials with the opportunity to explore the local geography and culture and give back while attending a meeting or event,” Jouaneh says.

Gen Xers expect to acquire knowledge and get many of their questions answered by attending meetings and events. One way meeting planners can address this is by bringing in local experts to encourage interaction and offer attendees the opportunity to learn from the best. Gen Xers value access to subject matter experts, celebrity speakers, and the ability to engage and learn in small groups.

Veterans and baby boomers place high value on face-to-face interactions, a clear and well-planned agenda, and the oppor-

How Generations Work

According to Ann Fishman, president of New York City-based Generational Targeted Marketing LLC, each of the four generations has distinctive work styles that need to be taken into consideration when planning meetings and events. The author and publisher in 2015 of “Marketing to the Millennial Woman,” Fishman was awarded four U.S. Senate Research Fellowships to study generational trends and has taught generational marketing at New York University.

- **Millennials are group-oriented, and they expect to be involved.** So, they like working with others in hands-on workshops where they can have input. Make sure your Internet signal is strong and available on every device. They will be texting in every venue.
- **Gen Xers don't want their time wasted.** The way they think is: What's the point of going to a meeting, if they can find what they want on the Internet. The event planner's challenge is to come up with ideas and speakers that are fresh, new and creative, which gives millennials an insider's view they cannot get off the Internet. In addition, keep speeches short. Don't have award ceremonies. These are serious people. They expect substance.
- **Boomers can handle traditional as well as some digital info.** They need a break from social media. When they are with the younger generations, they feel as if they are hearing a different language spoken. Let millennials and Gen Xers bring boomers up to speed digitally. Let boomers help millennials and Gen Xers know how the game is played: how to negotiate, how to ask for a raise, how to deal with other cultures, etc.
- **Greatest Generation still like paper handouts and helping others.** Ask them if they want to be available for chatting about their specialty. They are a wealth of networking contacts. Focused “meet and greets” might be nice. Younger attendees can be shy. Short, themed pre-meeting events where certain topics like “What is your favorite organizing tip?” “What is your most useful app?” can break the ice. — MK

“The event planner's challenge is to come up with ideas and speakers that are fresh, new and creative, which gives millennials an insider's view they cannot get off the Internet.”

Ann Fishman, President
Generational Targeted Marketing LLC
New York, NY



tunity to dedicate meaningful blocks of time on topics of discussions or areas of learning. Social events and the opportunity for shared experiences are highly valued by these groups.

The Role of Technology

Being born into the digital age, millennials are accustomed to immediate gratification. If planners don't deliver engaging experiences, or allow millennials to become engrossed in their smartphones, they risk losing this group's attention.

“Creating mobile apps for a meeting is a great way to engage millennials where they are already very active,” Jouaneh says. “Additionally, incorporating unique features and offerings into mobile apps such as social interactions and gamification, can be essential to engaging this particular group while also reaching other generations of attendees.”

It's important to have multiple options for items where possible. For example if you are going to have a digital app

for the schedule, offer the schedule in PDF format in an email attachment for those not tech savvy. And offer a print copy onsite or welcome the attendee to print a PDF.

Younger attendees have become accustomed to the technology available to them as consumers and expect the ability to engage (at varying levels with meeting attendees and content) using their

personal devices. While they value the choice to use technology, other generations continue to demand traditional opportunities for face-to-face interactions.

Chris Cavanaugh, executive vice president and chief marketing officer at Dallas, Texas-headquartered Freeman, was in a massive general session recently for a large tech company. The audience size was enormous, which could have been

“There was no interaction built in-between the presenters and the attendees; there was no second-screen experience, so the millennial audiences were quickly on their smartphones.”

Chris Cavanaugh
E.V.P. and Chief Marketing Officer
Freeman, Dallas, TX



“When doing interactive sessions with the whole group, we assign seating so there is a mix of generations to allow people to not only meet each other, but brainstorm with those they typically do not interact with.”

Susan Schwedock

Director, National Events
Cozen O’Connor, Philadelphia, PA



a good thing, but the message and the media did not appeal to a multigenerational audience.

“There was no interaction built in-between the presenters and the attendees; there was no second-screen experience, so the millennial audiences were quickly on their smartphones, and the room was so large that all but the folks in the first 20 rows got a true experience,” Cavanaugh says. This is a good example of an opportunity to reinvent the general session, infusing content, interactivity, technology and experience design into the process.

Offering multiple ways to engage also is key. For example, for question and answer sessions, using a microphone is always great but also setting up a texting keyword or ARS (Audience Response System) is a great way for people to engage and usually will allow more shy people an outlet to ask a question or make a comment when they would otherwise keep it to themselves.

While some companies have successfully created totally separate incentive trips to appeal to different generations, not every company has the bandwidth or budget to customize trips by generation.

That said, Schwedock suggests that, if time and space allow, break up groups by age with speakers and topics relevant to each group.

“We have presented marketing and business development sessions to our younger attorneys, and generational diversity and technical training to the older group,” Schwedock says. “When do-

ing interactive sessions with the whole group, we assign seating so there is a mix of generations to allow people to not only meet each other, but brainstorm with those they typically do not interact with. It is important to have a facilitator for each group to keep them engaged.”

Keeping generations of attendees together while maintaining a close eye on evolving preferences, and having an



“Inviting voices from all the generations to be a part of the meeting design team as a sounding board is usually your best option. Some organizations are creating completely different programs to target the varying audiences.”

Melissa Van Dyke

President, Incentive Research Foundation
McLean, VA

active hand in customizing experiences for each group, can be a more successful and sustainable strategy both from an event and overall organization strategy perspective.

At the same time, appeasing multiple generations is not always cited as a challenge. Many meetings planners have found that older generations have developed a new set of standards for meetings and incentives that matches that of millennials.

“One example where this is true is food and beverage,” Jouaneh says. For multiple age groups, there is an expectation of having local food and wine or a craft beer experience as part of the meeting or event, regardless of age among the attendees.”

The reality is that meeting professionals have always been challenged with creating experiences that meet the needs of a diverse group of attendees. While a multigenerational attendee population presents new challenges, it also presents new opportunities to deliver a more targeted attendee experience.

Thus, every aspect of a meeting or event experience is important in creating an overall success. And, with multiple generations this becomes an even bigger challenge. Oftentimes a good experience can be deemed as subpar for the smallest of details. And other times, despite an average experience, the attention to detail that matters to the audience can make all the difference.

“Larger audiences now expect companies to be more sustainable when pro-

ducing their events. They also like and respond to cause-related initiatives associated with a company or an event,” Cavanaugh says. “Use this enthusiasm and optimism to create some positive momentum during events. The younger generations are also less willing to sacrifice wellness for work so events should serve fresh, locally sourced food options beyond soft drinks and rest stations and lounge areas that allow them to reconnect and rejuvenate.” **C&IT**



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The Magic Millennials



Hoteliers Vying for Gen Y Meetings

By Patrick Simms



Neither hoteliers, nor meeting planners themselves, can afford to ignore the preferences of the most rapidly growing demographic within corporate America. Millennials, aka Generation Y, are often defined as those born between 1980 and 2000. According to Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data, Gen Y surpassed Gen X to become the largest share of the American work force in the first quarter of 2015. By 2020, they are expected to comprise almost half the work force.

Hoteliers know this is a customer they need to focus on, and certain brands, such as Starwood's Aloft and Hilton's Curio, are especially geared toward that segment.

"Our clientele is made up of the new emerging global traveler — those that are hyperconnected, hypercurious and hypercommunal," says Paige Francis, vice

GameStop attendees, usually 85–90 percent Gen Yers, experienced the Ultimate Gamer/Geek Playground at GameStop 2016 Expo at the Anaheim Convention Center.

president of global brand management with Starwood's Specialty Select Brands. Sandra Heydt, director of sales and marketing at The Logan Philadelphia, Curio Collection by Hilton, also stresses the prevalence of the millennial customer, having observed a high percentage of them in advertising, legal, fashion, technology, retail and political organizations,

and in the meetings those organizations conduct.

"It's important to note that many organizations have young associates and millennials in support roles, and they plan happy hours and networking events for their organization to drive engagement and collaboration with their coworkers," Heydt says. "Additionally, the technology

sector has exploded in the past 10 years, with meetings becoming more of a dynamic way to roll out new products. Many technology companies also use meetings as platforms to drive employee engagement via social media and other avenues."

By partnering with hotels that cater to millennials, the planners of these meetings go a long way toward engaging their audience. Numerous aspects of the hotel environment, including event space flexibility, local flavor, F&B service and technology, can make the experience Gen Y-friendly.

Event Space Flexibility

Millennials are not opposed to traditional meeting rooms, but they also tend to enjoy gathering in a variety of informal spaces. "As these groups continue to grow, we've noticed that more areas in our hotels are being utilized for meetings beyond our tactic rooms," Francis observes. "Since all Aloft Hotels are fully equipped with fast and free Wi-Fi as well as ample charging stations, on any given day there could be brainstorming sessions being

hosted in the lobby over a game of pool, or during happy hour at the WXYZ bar. We've even noticed huddle sessions held poolside on sunny days."

Part of Hilton's Curio Collection, The Highland Dallas is a prime ex-



Judy Anderson, CMP
Director, Meetings and Travel
GameStop
Grapevine, TX

ample of a hotel that offers event space flexibility. The 198-room boutique hotel is certainly well stocked in traditional meeting spaces, with an overall 13,490 sf including the 6,470-sf Opus Grand Ball-

"Within four to six blocks of the hotel there must be restaurants, bars/nightlife and things to do/see to keep our attendees engaged and excited about the event."

room, Fresco and Impressionist meeting rooms, and Maestro Boardroom. But the hotel is open to planners using nontraditional event spaces in order to design meetings with a spontaneous feel that appeals to millennials.

Amber Allen, CEO of Austin, Texas-based Double A Events, has partnered with The Highland Dallas to create a dynamic meeting for a major U.S. multinational technology company and Anderson Merchandisers that extended well beyond the meeting rooms.

With numerous clients in the video game industry and other areas of high tech, Allen (a millennial herself) understands that a straightforward general-session-and-breakouts format won't keep these professionals fully engaged. Says Allen, "We focus on how to make the conference not boring, how to get them out of the ballrooms and mix it up. You have to get them out of there after three hours or you lose their attention. The problem with some hotels is that they only think ballrooms and conference room breakouts."

It wasn't a problem at The Highland Dallas. "Literally they let us take over their entire hotel," says Allen. For example, the group utilized the top-floor storage space for a live-music event in an industrial setting (the idea was suggested by Sarah Springer, the hotel's catering sales and conference services manager — also a millennial).

A digital scavenger hunt included part of the restaurant and lobby, where attendees also created music videos and engaged in fun challenges. "We had executives in their 20s running down the stairs going to the lobby area where the next challenge was," Allen recalls. "You can't do a sales or summit meeting for millennials without it being active and interactive. You can't show them an experience; they have to be a part of that experience." The conference concluded in the pool area where attendees enjoyed drinks and conversation about their experience, complemented by live feeds from their iPads to the TVs.



Houston designer David Peck (3rd from left) created a stylish wardrobe collection for hotel associates at the JW Marriott Houston Downtown.



Designed with millennials in mind, a chic guest room at The Highland Dallas, Curio Collection by Hilton has Wi-Fi access, a large work desk and more.

Credit: Hilton Hotels & Resorts

“The Highland Dallas couldn’t have been a more perfect fit for our national meeting,” says Mark DuBose, director of client services, Anderson Merchandisers. “Finding a hotel that meshed with program culture was critical, and a young, modern vibe was just what we were looking for. ...Our event couldn’t have been more memorable and team motivating.”

Local Flavor

As compelling as planners can make the onsite experience, “Gen Y attendees want to experience the city when they travel,” says Judy Anderson, CMP, director, meetings and travel with Grapevine, Texas-based GameStop, “so that’s what we give them.” The meetings Anderson plans are typically 85–90 percent Gen Y, which is to be expected in the video game industry, and they look for “the total package” when it comes to the meeting experience, she notes.

Thus, a hotel caters to millennials in part by being in a location that these attendees will want to explore. “We secure hotels that offer a competitive rate, available (hopefully comp) Wi-Fi and an engaging location,” says Anderson. “Within four to six blocks of the hotel there must be restaurants, bars/nightlife and things to do/see to keep our attendees engaged and excited about the event. This is a tall order, but our team is successful at securing hotels in a great area for our attendees.”

Hoteliers can facilitate the exploration of the neighborhood through concierge services or specialized programs. For example, The Ritz-Carlton, Charlotte recently introduced a new option for event planners — Meetings on the Grid, which allows attendees to network while

experiencing the city of Charlotte “like a local,” including the thriving craft beer, recreation, art and entertainment scenes in nearby neighborhoods.

Several offsite meeting venues can be booked through the program, such as Olde Mecklenburg Brewery, the NASCAR Hall of Fame, the North Carolina Music Factory and the U.S. National Whitewater Center.

The Logan Philadelphia, Curio Collection by Hilton, brings local flavor inside the hotel walls with artwork that “connects all guests to the story of Philadelphia’s evolution by making the city the thread that ties the design together,” says Heydt. “Regarding Curio — a Collection by Hilton as a whole, each hotel is a part of the city it calls home — embodying the distinct culture and spirit of its communities.”

Starwood’s Aloft brand also integrates local culture in an artistic way, via a social element. “Social offerings like Aloft’s ‘Live at Aloft Hotels’ intimate acoustic performances enable guests to enjoy the local culture while enjoying a handcrafted cocktail in the WXYZ bars,” Francis notes. “For example, Aloft Liverpool, located in the city that’s home to one of the world’s most famous bands, The Beatles, has built a strong cult-like following through the Live at Aloft Hotels series as a way to showcase the area’s history and emerging artists, as well as pack their WXYZ bar with regulars.”

F&B Services

A more literal “local flavor” comes from destination-inspired F&B offerings, which answers to the foodie trend that is especially strong with millennials. “This is where The Logan Philadelphia truly

shines thanks to our Urban Farmer Restaurant and banquet offerings,” Heydt says. “The farm-to-table/food sustainability movement has become incredibly important to this generation, and it is a huge selling point for us vs. our competition in the Philadelphia market.”

The Ritz-Carlton serves up numerous experiences with local food across its properties. Examples include The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island’s Honey Break, served by the resort’s beekeeper with both honeycomb and honey-infused treats; The Ritz-Carlton, St. Thomas’ “Sea to Sails” experience, where guests greet the fishermen daily and hand-select their fish and lobsters; and The Ritz-Carlton, St. Louis’ themed coffee breaks with pretzels, local Fitz Root Beer and Kaldi’s Coffee served to the sounds of jazz.

“Tailoring custom experiences for attendees has always been a priority for us, and today the localization of those experiences has become extremely popular,” says John Harper, vice president, sales with The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company.

Healthful options also are important to Gen Y, Allen adds. As hors d’oeuvres, “we did these cups with hummus and veggies, so it’s easy for them to walk around and use their other hand for their phone.”

Also well received were trendy items such as liquid nitrogen popcorn and interactive F&B experiences such as a hot chocolate bar where attendees could create their drinks. “They want to create their own experiences and choices in their food,” Allen observes.

Dressing for Success

According to some experts, 93 percent of millennials say they want a job where they can be themselves at work, and that includes dressing in a way that makes them comfortable and stylish. Thus, the trend is for more and more hotels to design staff uniforms (often millennials) that also are appealing to millennial meeting-goers.

The recently debuted Hilton West Palm Beach visited sleek bars in Manhattan to develop looks that would speak to trendy millennials, while channeling the popular “Palm Beach Chic” look. Valet staff wear all black Shell Top Adidas, known as Su-

The Fun Side & The Future

Since the dawn of social media and texting, millennials have been expressing themselves via emoji. Starwood had the clever idea of integrating these icons into the room service menu at the new Aloft Manhattan Downtown — Financial District last fall. Branded as TiGi (Text it. Get it.), “the pilot was so successful that we’re now rolling it out globally starting with Aloft Liverpool and Aloft London Excel and soon in Asia,” says Paige Francis, vice president of global brand management with Starwood’s Specialty Select Brands. “The emoji menu is just another way for us to interact with our guests in a way that they are used to communicating on a daily basis — through text message. And, frankly, emojis are just fun.”

Just as fun, attendees can tweet the brand’s robotic butler, Botlr, when they want amenities delivered to guest rooms. “And yes, Botlr tweets back!” Francis adds. — PS



Credit: Starwood Hotels & Resorts



perstars. Bartenders flaunt leather vests and baristas wear trendy flat caps.

In Houston, the JW Marriott Houston Downtown called upon local designer David Peck to create a wardrobe for their associates.

“Traditional uniforms can mask individuality so we wanted the JW Marriott Houston Downtown associates to stand out and feel confident,” said Peck. “The employees have to wear the clothes all day, so they need styles that last, would pop, but not be too cumbersome. Everyone loves that the clothes are made here, and the quality is better than you would typically find in a standard hotel uniform.” The wardrobe includes elongated pencil skirts, jackets with defined shoulders, sheath dresses and blouses with neckties.

“The inspiration for the wardrobe

program came from the building itself and its rich heritage,” said Peck. “I love that it was Houston’s first skyscraper and that it has been brought back to its original splendor. The hotel’s thoughtfully curated art program, its iconic architectural design and décor and its exquisite attention to detail inspired us to create a wardrobe program that the as-

“You can’t do a...meeting for millennials without it being active and interactive. You can’t show them an experience; they have to be a part of that experience.”



Amber Allen
CEO
Double A Events
Austin, TX

sociates could have in their own closets and make personal, but still remain put-together, stylish and appropriate for a luxury hotel.”

Technology

Most hotel guests, and millennials in particular, appreciate the latest technological conveniences. Aloft is Starwood’s frontrunner when it comes to tech innovations. “Many of our team members are testing these innovations at home so that we truly understand how it works and, in turn, can better understand the guest experience,” says Francis.

She discusses some of the brand’s latest developments: “Aloft Hotels became the first hotel brand to ‘employ’ a robotic butler, Botlr. Other high-tech experiences that attract millennials include SPG Keyless, an evolution of Aloft’s Smart Check-in, which allows guests to use their smartphone as their room key. We also are currently testing Smart Carpet, voice-activated technologies (imag-

ine asking your room for a toothbrush!) and other ways to marry technology with the guest experience.

“Our guests are the first in line to buy new smartphones and test new high-tech toys for their home, so why should their hotel stay be any different?”

In the mobile app arena, The Ritz-Carlton App is a particularly robust example. In addition to mobile check-in and check-out, the app includes features such as real-time service requests, food and beverage ordering, The Ritz-Carlton Rewards account review, hotel offers review, concierge tips powered by the brand’s FourSquare “World Concierge,” and Travel Poster memories for attendees to download and share.

In terms of connectivity, hoteliers are increasingly catering to millennials’ desire for free Wi-Fi, but capacity for live streaming is an area that could stand to be improved in many cases, Allen points out. “I really wish more hotels would get this. We have to stream these events, (and we need) an Internet that is strong enough because these millennial tech companies have offices all over the world. They’ll sign on because they’re so used to streaming things in Twitch anyway, so they just stream the conference on a separate monitor at their desk. The Highland Dallas was really good at understanding that I just needed a straight fiber line in, but a lot of (hotels) really don’t get that.”



Austin, Texas-based Double A Events advocates dynamic meetings for millennials that get them out of the ballroom and, for this meeting, up on the roof of The Highland Dallas.

Social Media

Most hoteliers do “get” the social media trend and are continually finding ways to use these media in their outreach to planners and groups. For example, Ritz-Carlton’s Art of Meetings Pinterest page is intended to inspire planners to craft, photograph and share images of memorable events by The Ritz-Carlton.

The company’s social media team curates images of meeting setups, F&B presentations and indoor and outdoor venues.

But it’s not just about hoteliers being active in social media; it’s also about facilitating its use by attendees as part of the event. For instance, The Ritz-Carlton, Charlotte offers as many as four breaks and room turns during a single morning or afternoon session, so that partici-

pants can take a few minutes every hour to audit social media. (The hotel also can set up a customized Spotify playlist for attendees to enjoy while on break.)

In addition, hotels are facilitating live social media feeds at meetings and special events. “During our Live At Aloft Hotels concerts, there was a real-time screen on display during each performance that showed live social media updates from guests and attendees,” notes Francis. “We are always looking for fun new ways to make an experience more interactive with social media.”

While millennials are keen on interactivity, Allen stresses that a certain balance must be maintained during sessions. “It’s still a job, and you’re still teaching them; otherwise, you’re not running the meeting, the millennials are. So you’ve got to keep your sessions to where you’re still respecting your speakers,” she explains. “The easy way to do that is you give them a private Facebook page as a forum — because ‘I don’t want my boss to see my page’ is their attitude. And then as they’re in the sessions they can go in and ask their questions. And then after the presentation we go into that forum, and we can read off the questions and provide the answers, so they’re still getting their say.”

Hoteliers’ initiatives to cater to Gen Y can have a lighter side, but overall it’s serious business. Developing brand loyalty in younger clientele is critical in any industry, and every hotelier wants to ensure they engage the guest — and meeting attendee — of the future. **C&IT**

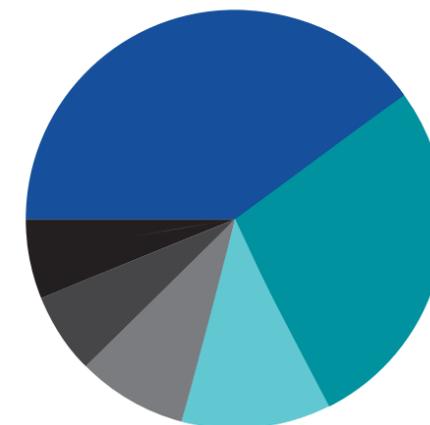


Christian Burghart performing at Aloft Minneapolis as part of the Live At Aloft Hotels 2015 Tour.

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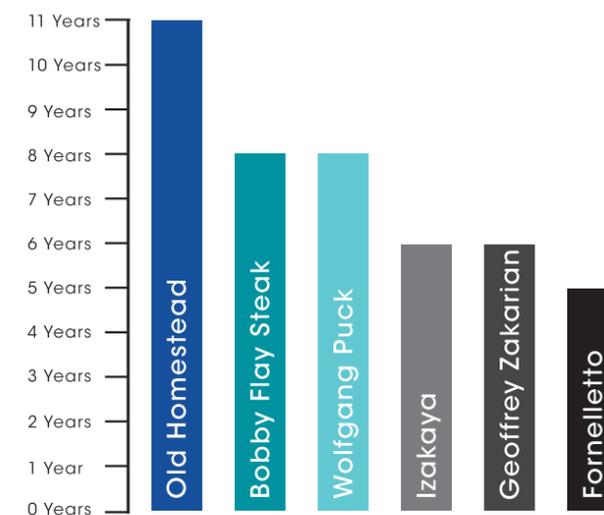


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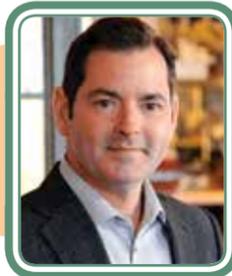
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On The Move



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MACDONALD

Sharon Siskie was promoted to senior vice president of sales for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, U.S. She most recently served as vice president, marketing and sales, international.

Loews New Orleans Hotel has named **Barry Rodriguez** as director of sales and marketing. He formerly was the director of sales at The Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans.

Stacey Purcell was promoted to assistant director of sales for Caesars Entertainment, overseeing the

Nevada market and Caesars Direct. She most recently served as national sales manager.

Jodi Graham was named senior sales manager for Miramonte Resort & Spa in Indian Wells, California. She most recently was senior sales manager with Saguaro in Palm Springs, California.

Julie Tainter was named director of sales and marketing for The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa in Tucson, Arizona. Her most recent position was director of sales and marketing

for Tucson-based Westward Look Wyndham Grand Resort & Spa.

Dionne D. Williams was promoted to executive director of group sales for The National Conference Center in Leesburg, Virginia. She most recently served as director of national sales.

Rosewood Hotel Group has appointed **Caroline MacDonald** as vice president of sales and marketing, Americas and Europe. She formerly served as chief marketing officer for Auberge Resorts. **C&IT**

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