

WWW.TheMeetingMagazines.com

# INSURANCE & FINANCIAL MEETINGS MANAGEMENT

THE EXECUTIVE SOURCE FOR PLANNING MEETINGS & INCENTIVES



Kim Zielinski, Conference Manager for the Professional Insurance Agents Association of New Jersey and New York says her annual conference will return to Harrah's Resort Atlantic City for the third consecutive year in 2018.

**CLICK HERE TO  
DOWNLOAD/VIEW  
TABLET VERSION**

## Atlantic City

It Just Keeps Getting Better  
Page 44

## The Budget Squeeze

Meeting the Challenge of Rising Costs  
Page 32

**Hot Food Trends** Page 16

**World Class Awards** Page 22

**Teambuilding** Page 38





## We've raised the bar on event venues.

OUR REVOLUTIONARY NEW CELEBRITY EDGE  
WILL REALLY ELEVATE YOUR BRAND.

The most visionary ship we've ever designed creates the most spectacular events you've ever imagined. New Celebrity Edge<sup>SM</sup>—designed and engineered entirely in 3-D—includes the lush Eden, open-air Rooftop Garden, soaring Magic Carpet, and other stunning private venues, plus complimentary audiovisual systems. As always, we'll indulge you in sumptuous staterooms and globally inspired cuisine, delivered with intuitive service.

Learn about our latest offers | [celebritycorporatekit.com](http://celebritycorporatekit.com) | 1-800-722-5934



All images of Celebrity Edge<sup>SM</sup> are artistic renderings based on current development concepts, which are subject to change without notice. Celebrity Edge and Edge are trademarks of Celebrity Cruises. ©2017 Celebrity Cruises. Ships' registry: Malta and Ecuador.

ISSN 1095-9726 ..... USPS 012-991

A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

WWW.**TheMeetingMagazines**.com

# INSURANCE & FINANCIAL MEETINGS MANAGEMENT

THE EXECUTIVE SOURCE FOR PLANNING MEETINGS & INCENTIVES

OCTOBER 2017

Vol. 24 No. 5

## FEATURES

### 16 The Chefs' Choice

Hot Food Trends and Techniques to Turn Any F&B Event Into a Memorable Experience  
*By Shelley Seales*

### 22 2017 World Class Awards

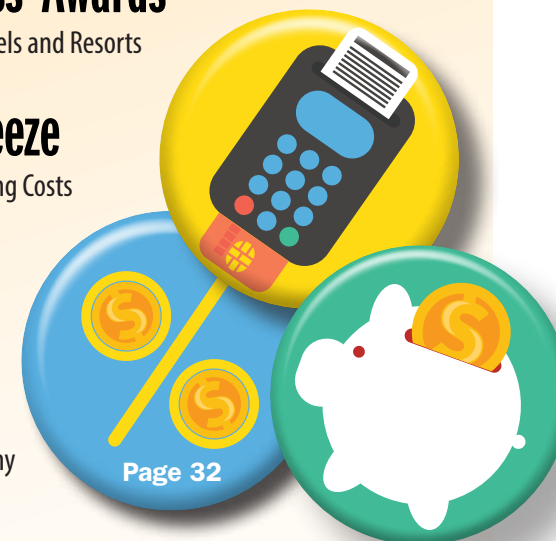
The Best of the Best CVBs, Hotels and Resorts

### 32 The Budget Squeeze

Meeting the Challenge of Rising Costs  
*By John Buchanan*

### 38 Teambuilding at Its Best

Effective Programs Reignite Camaraderie, Support Company Goals — and Give Back  
*By Derek Reveron*



Page 16

Page 32

"Alice in Wonderland" was the inspiration for this F&B event.

## DEPARTMENTS

4 PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

6 INDUSTRY NEWS

9 SNAPSHOTS

10 **BUCKET LIST TRAVEL**  
Reward Incentives Not Just for Individual Travelers Anymore  
*By Nancy Alderman*

14 **ENGAGEMENT**  
Employee Engagement: What's Hospitality Got to Do With It?  
*By Susan Adams*

50 CORPORATE LADDER

## DESTINATION

### 44 Atlantic City

It Just Keeps Getting Better  
*By Christine Loomis*

Harrah's Resort Atlantic City recently added the Veracruz restaurant offering ocean views.



Credit: Tom Briglia



# Publisher's Message

## Easy, Breezy and Budget-Friendly

Sixty-nine percent of respondents to Meeting Professionals International's most recent Meetings Outlook survey believe a seller's market will continue into 2018. That's not a welcome prediction for meeting planners working on next year's budget.

In "The Budget Squeeze" on page 32, Sherri K. Lindenberg, senior V.P. marketing and communications for Crump Life Insurance Services, says, "Because budgets are tighter and costs are rising, we have to be more creative and more aware of alternatives in order to put on high-quality meetings that also meet the company's financial bottom line."



Those struggling with how to deliver more for less might want to take a fresh look at Atlantic City and its ever-improving value proposition and drive-in accessibility — within a few hours of nearly one-third of the nation's population and 20 percent of U.S. business addresses. Dive into our Atlantic City feature on page 44 and learn all about the city's rebuilding efforts and first-tier assets including high-end gaming and non-gaming properties, celebrity chef restaurants and world-class entertainment, not

to mention its iconic beach and Boardwalk. A less well-known bonus: ForbesTraveler.com has ranked Atlantic City as a premier East Coast golfing destination.

Kimberly Zielinski, conference manager for Professional Insurance Agents Association of New Jersey and New York, who graces our cover, offers this testimonial: "Atlantic City is a great place to mix business with pleasure. Every year we enjoy record-breaking attendance," she says of her 2,000-attendee conference held in June that just keeps growing. She keeps returning because Atlantic City's meetings infrastructure is keeping pace. "2018 will be our third consecutive year at Harrah's Resort in Atlantic City," she says. She uses the new Waterfront Conference Center at Harrah's for her conference, noting, "The space is the perfect size for our group, and the meeting rooms are bright and spacious. ... The staff at Harrah's is the best. They are very accommodating to your needs and will do just about anything to help make your event run smoothly." She adds some welcome advice for planners considering the destination: "Don't forget to negotiate everything. These hotels want your business and they will certainly work with you to get you there." That's music to the ears of planners sharpening their pencils for next year's challenging meetings budgets. They may find they can avoid the strong headwinds of hotel negotiations that exist in some other markets by considering Atlantic City, an easier, breezier and budget-friendly choice.

Harvey Grotsky

## www.TheMeetingMagazines.com INSURANCE & FINANCIAL MEETINGS MANAGEMENT THE EXECUTIVE SOURCE FOR PLANNING MEETINGS & INCENTIVES

A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

### PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**Harvey Grotsky**

harvey.grotsky@themeetingmagazines.com

### CREATIVE DIRECTOR

**Mitch D. Miller**

mitch.miller@themeetingmagazines.com

### MANAGING EDITOR

**Susan S. Gregg**

sue.gregg@themeetingmagazines.com

### EDITORIAL COORDINATOR

**Tracy Kolody Fantaccione**

tracy.kolody@themeetingmagazines.com

### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

**Sophia Bennett**

**Ron Bernthal**

**John Buchanan**

**Sara Churchville**

**Cynthia Dial**

**Maura Keller**

**Christine Loomis**

**Derek Reveron**

**Mark Rowh**

**Patrick Simms**

**David Swanson**

### PRESIDENT & CEO

**Harvey Grotsky**

### VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS

**David Middlebrook**

david.middlebrook@themeetingmagazines.com

### ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES

2700 N. Military Trail, Suite 120

Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394

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

advertising@themeetingmagazines.com

### WESTERN STATES/HAWAII

**Marshall Rubin**

818-888-2407 • Fax: 818-888-4907

marshall.rubin@themeetingmagazines.com

Insurance & Financial Meetings Management is published bi-monthly by Coastal Communications Corporation, 2700 N. Military Trail, Ste. 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394; 561-989-0600. Single copies \$10.00 U.S.A.; back copies \$12. Yearly subscription price is \$65.00 in the U.S.A.; \$135.00 in Canada. Distributed without charge to qualified personnel. Periodicals Postage Paid at Boca Raton, FL, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Insurance & Financial Meetings Management, 2700 N. Military Trail, Ste. 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394. Nothing contained in this publication shall constitute an endorsement by Coastal Communications Corporation (Insurance & Financial Meetings Management), and the publication disclaims any liability with respect to the use of reliance on any such information. The information contained in this publication is no way to be construed as a recommendation by I&FMM of any industry standard, or as a recommendation of any kind to be adopted by or binding upon any corporate/incentive travel planner or agent. Reproduction of any portion of this publication by any means is strictly forbidden. Editorial contributions must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care. However, the publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited photographs or manuscripts. Subscriber: Send subscription inquiries and address changes to: Circulation Dept., Insurance & Financial Meetings Management, 2700 N. Military Trail, Ste. 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394. Give old and new addresses including zip codes. Enclose address label from most recent issue and allow five weeks for change to become effective. Printed in U.S.A. © 2017

www.themeetingmagazines.com



## INSPIRATION COMES NATURALLY HERE.

Ideas seem to come easier at Streamsong® Resort. Perhaps it's the wild, untamed wilderness surrounding you, or the openness of the land. Or the towering sand dunes and glistening lakes of the three acclaimed golf courses. Or the extraordinary resort that's at the center of it all. Secluded yet accessible, Streamsong is a one-of-a-kind retreat in Central Florida that inspires creativity. A place for your executives to do their best thinking and your clients to be awed. It's not hyperbole to say Streamsong is where inspiration just seems to come naturally.



STREAMSONG® BLUE   STREAMSONG® RED   STREAMSONG® BLACK



1000 Streamsong Drive • Streamsong, Florida 33834 • 844.735.2020 • streamsongresort.com



## Hilton Adds Iconic Property to DC Portfolio



The Madison Ballroom.

WASHINGTON, DC — Hilton recently announced that the Loews Madison Hotel has joined Hilton Hotels & Resorts' portfolio as The Madison Washington DC, a Hilton Hotel. The 356-room hotel, located in the heart of downtown Washington, DC, has long offered sophisticated accommodations to some of the capital's most esteemed visitors, including nearly every president since John F. Kennedy. A short walk to the White House, Walter E. Washington Convention Center and many key attractions, museums and landmarks, the hotel combines a reverence for history with modern luxuries and amenities, offering 356 guest rooms, including 27 suites. The Madison Washington DC offers more than 12,000 sf of meeting space, including eight stylish meeting rooms equipped with the latest technology and high-speed internet access. Other amenities include a 24-hour business center, lobby bar, restaurant and lounge and fitness center with great views of downtown DC. [www.hilton.com](http://www.hilton.com)

## Sheraton L.A. San Gabriel Hotel to Debut in January

LOS ANGELES, CA — The all-new Sheraton Los Angeles San Gabriel Hotel, a premier 288-room luxury property, is scheduled to open in January. The hotel will debut more than 19,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting and event spaces. Eleven flexible meeting and event spaces include an outdoor garden terrace and an 11,341-sf Imperial Grand Ballroom featuring a 27-foot ceiling and a stunning crystal chandelier. Capacity for the various venues ranges from intimate meetings of 10 people to social gatherings of up to 1,100.

Intricate details have been incorporated throughout the hotel's design, envisioned by Cheng Chung Design (HK), an international award-winning interior design firm.

Planners will appreciate the conveniences of smaller meeting rooms that are divisible, break-outs on the same floor, a dedicated onsite event management team, a professional audio-visual team, digital signage for all meeting rooms, and a creative culinary team that can customize menus.

[www.sheratonlasangabriel.com](http://www.sheratonlasangabriel.com)

## Kona Kai Resort & Spa Unveils Dramatic Expansion

SAN DIEGO, CA — Kona Kai Resort & Spa, a legendary Noble House Resort located on the tip of Shelter Island in San Diego, has announced the unveiling of its latest luxury suites, Outdoor Terrace event space and a revitalized pool area featuring a pool bar inspired by "Coastal Revival" and "Endless Summer" themes. The eight Coastal Revival Suites will be available for booking in November 2017 and the 33 The Endless Summer Suites will be available in January 2018.

Conceptualized by renowned interior design firm Degen & Degen, the new Coastal Revival suites will highlight the resort's natural, oceanic surroundings, and the Endless Summer suites will showcase bright teal hues matching the surrounding Kona Kai Marina.

A new pool bar, which features a fireside lounge, and the new pool area will be lushly landscaped. A new spacious Outdoor Terrace will be open for events, and will offer 2,260 sf of event space overlooking the backdrop of the Kona Kai Marina. The new space will accommodate 350 for a reception.

[www.resortkonakai.com](http://www.resortkonakai.com)



BLOOM

## Largest Ever IMEX America Brings a Positive Outlook

LAS VEGAS, NV — As 12,000-plus exhibitors, hosted buyers and attendees said their farewells at the conclusion of this year's IMEX America, IMEX Group Chairman Ray Bloom reflected upon the achievements of the 2017 IMEX America show and the positive, unifying week it was for the meetings industry.

More than 3,200 hosted buyers and an additional 2,500-plus attendees came to Las Vegas, and Tuesday and Wednesday were the busiest days ever at IMEX America. With more than 3,300 exhibitors representing 150 countries and a major expansion of the Inspiration Hub, the show's education area, the seventh IMEX America was the largest ever. A significant factor in this growth was that 58 booths — 20 percent of returning exhibitors — had booked larger spaces, and the show welcomed 64 new booths.

An RFP gives a strong business focus to appointments at the show. The fact that 72 percent of appointments were based on RFPs, an increase by 4 percent, is a powerful measure of how buyers are ready to discuss real business prospects at IMEX America. As more than 70,000 appointments were made including 60,000 individual appointments and booth presentations, Bloom said, "For exhibitors and buyers this simply means that we've created more opportunities than ever to do business."

IMEX America is widely known for its networking opportunities. More than 6,000 peer-to-peer introductions were made in advance of the show via the Zenvoy connections software, while a wide range of social activities such as SITE Nite North America, the EIC Hall of Leaders Reception, Shamrock Shoot-out Golf Classic and MPI Foundation Rendezvous and the IMEX America Night brought thousands of people together.

Said Bloom at the conclusion of the show, "I'd like to thank all our industry partners for their continuing support and to congratulate them on the many fantastic networking events that they have arranged to take place here at IMEX America. The worldwide industry has been in Las Vegas this week and I look forward to seeing everyone next year." He added, "This has been a week when the positive outlook of everyone has ensured that doing business, planning meetings and events continues to be a powerful way to regenerate and drive economies forward." (See photos on page 9.) [www.imexamerica.com](http://www.imexamerica.com)

## IRF 2018 Outlook Study: Industry Upbeat on Economy

WASHINGTON, DC — The Incentive Research Foundation's 2018 Outlook Study, an analysis of how incentive, rewards and recognition programs are being designed and budgeted for 2018, found that both the incentive travel and rewards segments reported optimism for the economy and its impact on the industry. Insights include:

- The incentive travel industry's Net Optimism Score for the economy is up from 26 percent in the fall

of 2016 to 44 percent in the summer of 2017.

- Incentive travel budgets are up with an average per-person spend of \$3,915, an increase of 4 percent over last year.
- For gift card and merchandise programs, those with budgets from \$251 to \$5,000 per person have risen to 57 percent.
- The top five incentive travel destinations for respondents were the

continental United States, Hawaii, the Caribbean, Mexico and Europe.

- Almost a third of respondents indicated an increase in individual travel packages (31 percent) and experiential rewards (37 percent).
- Regulations continue to be difficult to navigate with almost 75 percent of respondents saying it is difficult to stay informed about the federal, state and local regulations impacting programs. [www.theirf.org](http://www.theirf.org)

## Silversea Cruises Announces Fincantieri to Build New Ship

MONTE CARLO — Silversea Cruises and Fincantieri have announced the signing of a contract worth approximately 310 million euros for the construction of a new ultra-luxury cruise ship. The ship is due to join the Silversea fleet in 2020.

The new ship, tentatively named Silver Moon, will be the sister ship of Silver Muse, which was delivered in April 2017 at the Fincantieri shipyard in Sestri Ponente (Genoa). At 40,700 gross tons and with a capacity to accommodate 596 passengers on board, Silver Moon will maintain the small-ship intimacy and spacious all-suite

accommodation, which is the hallmark of the Silversea experience.

Among the highlights of the new ship, the "Green Star 3 Design" will be a standout feature. It is assigned to ships that are designed, built and equipped to prevent air and water pollution. Furthermore, the "COMF-NOISE A PAX" and "COMF-NOISE B CREW" are assigned on the basis of the noise levels measured on the ship. Results have shown that new-builds assigned these standards offer the very best levels of comfort to guests on board. [www.silversea.com](http://www.silversea.com)



## Hilton Chicago Finalizes \$150 Million Renovation



Grand Waldorf chandeliers and modern pendants adorn the renovated spaces.

CHICAGO, IL — The historic 1,544-room Hilton Chicago has announced the completion of a \$7 million renovation. The newest revamp enhances the third-floor meeting spaces and Salon C in the Stevens Meeting Center, leading to the finalization of an all-encompassing \$150 million renovation and restoration initiative. The third floor is home to seven separate meeting rooms ideal for small- to medium-sized meetings accommodating up to 850 guests. The interior décor is inspired by Lake Michigan, incorporating shades of purple and blue in bold, geometric patterns, and Grand Waldorf chandeliers and modern pendants adorn the renovated spaces. Spanning more than 28,000 sf, Salon C is one of four meeting rooms in the 119,000-sf Stevens Meeting Center. Conceptualized to be utilized as one large room or six separate spaces, the versatile area has been fully revitalized using a warm red and gold palette. The meeting room incorporates suspended ceilings, graphic column screen accents and new, soundproof HufCor Movable Walls. [www.hiltonchicagohotel.com](http://www.hiltonchicagohotel.com)

## Global Business Travelers Identify Challenges on the Road

ALEXANDRIA, VA — Time spent in transit is the most challenging aspect of business travel, according to a new report released today by the GBTA Foundation. Layovers, changing a flight or train reservation mid-trip, the work environment while traveling and preparing expense reports also topped the list of most challenging aspects for North American business travelers. The study, “Creating a Frictionless Travel Experience – North America,” conducted in partnership with Sabre Corporation, identified the following: Perks or amenities that impact the business travelers’ experience the most are convenient and comfortable hotels followed by nonstop flights, booking flexibility and paid time off for long trips. Optional purchases business travelers make on their own include hotel high-speed internet, airplane/train Wi-Fi, seat upgrades and early boarding. Business travelers indicated a variety of technological amenities would enhance their travel experience with automated destination info, mobile expense reporting, itinerary management apps, safety tracking app and mobile payment topping the list. [www.gbta.org/foundation](http://www.gbta.org/foundation)

## AmEx M&E Predicts Prosperous 2018 for Meetings

NEW YORK, NY — The meetings and events industry can be optimistic about growth prospects next year, driven by increased competition in the supply chain for market share, and robust investments and a desire for consolidation of spend by buyers, according to the 2018 Global Meetings and Events Forecast from American Express Meetings & Events.

Across the globe, the continued localization of meetings programs will be a key trend next year, American Express said, as meeting professionals seek to add flexibility and nuance to offerings that address specific market needs and drive program adoption. The link between compliance and security in today’s geopolitical landscape is another area of focus, with a special section on compliance challenges and risks associated with corporate meetings in China.

Technology is expected to continue its transformation of meetings and events in 2018, particularly on the end-to-end management of delivery and attendee experience. The potential of emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI), and the ongoing development of mobile-app and hybrid-meeting solutions are creating innovation and value-add opportunities for both meeting owners and attendees.

“Following the shifting sentiment in 2017, next year should be more positive around the world in terms of spend, number of meetings and attendees. Meanwhile, meeting owners are prioritizing attendee experience and engagement over scale,” said Issa Jouaneh, senior vice president and general manager, AmEx M&E. [www.amexglobalbusinesstravel.com/meetings-and-events](http://www.amexglobalbusinesstravel.com/meetings-and-events)



1

## SnapShots



2



3



4



5



6



7

**1-8** The seventh IMEX America in Las Vegas was the biggest ever with 12,000-plus exhibitors, hosted buyers and attendees. **2** Corporate & Incentive Travel Publisher Harvey Grotzky (l) with Universal Orlando Resort’s Kate Lochridge, senior manager, marketing, and Vince LaRuffa, S.V.P. resort marketing. **3** Innovative education formats ranged from Research Pods to White Space. **4** The #IMEXrun attracted more than 450 runners **5** More than 70,000 appointments were made. **7** Industry leaders spoke about #VegasStrong, the campaign created following the tragic events of October 1. Ray Bloom, IMEX chairman, was joined on stage by David Peckinpugh, president Maritz Global Events; Jim Murren, chairman/CEO, MGM Resorts International; Roger Dow, president/CEO, US Travel Association; and Rossi Ralenkotter, president/CEO, LVCVA. **8** Ray Bloom at the closing press conference with show partners Chandra Allison, S.V.P. sales, Venetian/Palazzo/Sands Expo; Cathy Tull, S.V.P. marketing, LVCVA; and Paul Van Deventer, president/CEO, MPI.



8





## Reward Incentives Not Just for Individual Travelers Anymore

For many years I have watched my specialty travel advisors help customers who had saved reward points for years to fulfill their dreams with once-in-a-lifetime “bucket list” travel adventures. Trips to Machu Picchu, an Incan citadel set high in the Andes Mountains of Peru, or Antarctica, where you can be surrounded by penguins and watch whales and seals, are just two examples.

Over the last few years we have been seeing an emerging trend: more of these trips include several generations of family members or even extended family. Destinations that at one time were strictly targeted for individual incentive travel now are being chosen as spots for small groups, corporate sales incentive programs and even larger corporate events, which are now being held at top bucket list destinations such as Fiji, Iceland, Paris, Lake Louise in Alberta, Canada, and Australia.

### Sharing Travel Rewards Creates Better Experiences

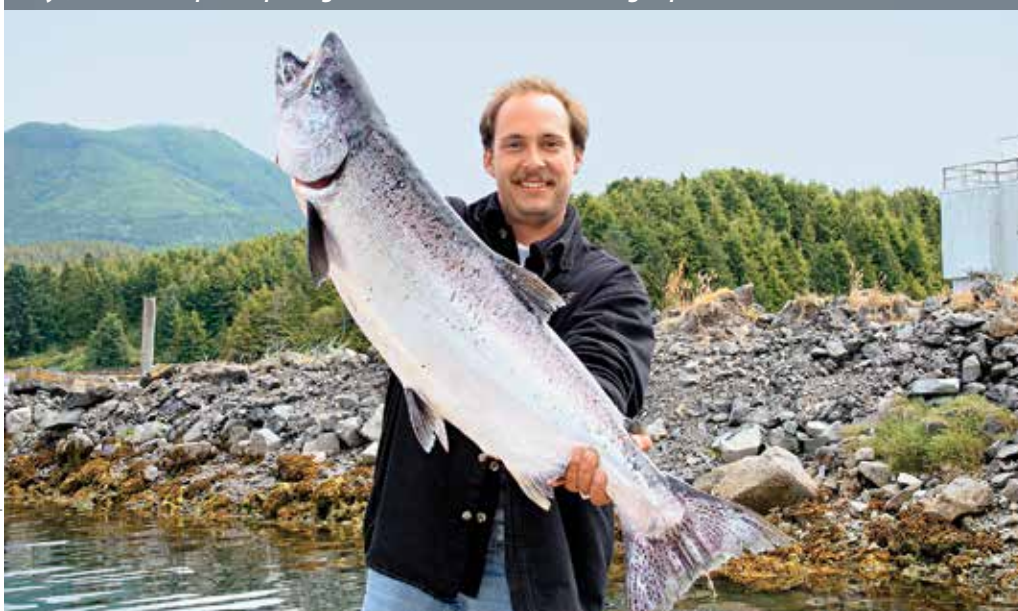
Many loyalty rewards participants are cashing in their points and using them for team outings such as a Montana trout fishing experience. The Big Sky state is the hotbed of Western trout fishing in the U.S., thanks to its endless miles of quick-flowing rivers with freestone beds. Other trips may involve playing a round of golf with far-flung family members at famous Five Star golf resorts. Previously, many of these individuals would only use their reward points to take trips by themselves or with friends and immediate family members; now they are sharing these experiences with others.

I took my specialty travel advisors along to fulfill one of my bucket list items. My team thought it was a familiarization trip for them and their families to ClubMed Sandpiper Bay,

which turned into a lifelong memory when we took part in a teambuilding exercise at the Flying Trapeze School. At the start of the activity I heard a lot of “I’m not going to do that, are you crazy?” But later I heard shouts of jubilation like “I can’t believe I just did that” as we performed daring aerial performances for our families and friends. Having people with you that are a part of your life as you achieve these bucket list goals makes them so much more rewarding and memorable.

Marc Matthews, president of Pulse Experiential Travel and past president of the Incentive Travel Council (ITC), a strategic travel group that’s part of the Incentive Marketing Association, shared his insights on the growth of bucket list travel experiences. “The strength of the U.S. dollar has made it a lot easier and more affordable for individuals to travel abroad to exotic and unique destinations,” he said. “Experiences and destinations once considered too expensive or geographically challenging to be realistic for the individual traveler have now become viable options.

Check it off of your bucket list: Travel incentives today can be used in a variety of ways, such as for participating in a salmon and trout fishing experience in Alaska.



White water rafting can be a once-in-a-lifetime trip that brings family, friends or co-workers together for exciting (and wet) bonding.

“The digital/social media age we now live in also allows consumers to be more connected with each other and to share the excitement associated with planning their upcoming experience. The net result of this emotional engagement is more people traveling together sharing that experience,” Matthews explained.

The push toward travel experiences has continued to grow on a number of fronts. The Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) recently released a study, “The Emerging ‘Next Level’ of Experience: Individualized Experiences and the Importance of Emotion,” that demonstrates how “tapping emotional engagement through a strategic choice of rewards and incentives is a powerful way for businesses to motivate their stakeholders. One of the primary ways to tap emotion is through experiences.” The point is that the type of reward that redemption travel offers to today’s loyalty program participant differs from the basic airfare or hotel options of the past.

### Travel Incentives Can Encourage Employee Performance

According to the IRF study, 42 percent of travel reward programs are increasing the number of “experiential rewards” in their portfolios (e.g. spa days, concert tickets, expensive dinners, sporting events, etc.). The focus of travel now is not just on the destination and hotel; equally important are authentic, unique, individualized experiences delivered during the trip. This has led to the introduction of mini-experiences into trips, such as various types of tastings,

personalized training sessions or behind-the-scenes introductions to chefs.

As new suppliers enter the market and program designers gain comfort and expertise with novel approaches, participants will be treated to a host of innovative and memorable experiences. With at least three generations (baby boomers, Generation X, millennials and soon, Generation Z) being served by incentive programs, it is more important than ever that programs are personalized for participants. As the experiential travel redemption options available to a program participant become more personalized, it seems only natural that they are shared with family and extended family members.

As memorable as these trips may be, Matthews emphasized that it’s not just about jumping on the experience bandwagon; experiential travel can help organizations to grow business performance by offering a chance at rewarding travel experiences. The Incentive Travel Council’s white paper “The Business Case for Incentive Travel” showed “a strong testament to travel as a motivational

Travel reward programs are increasing the number of ‘experiential rewards’ in their portfolios.

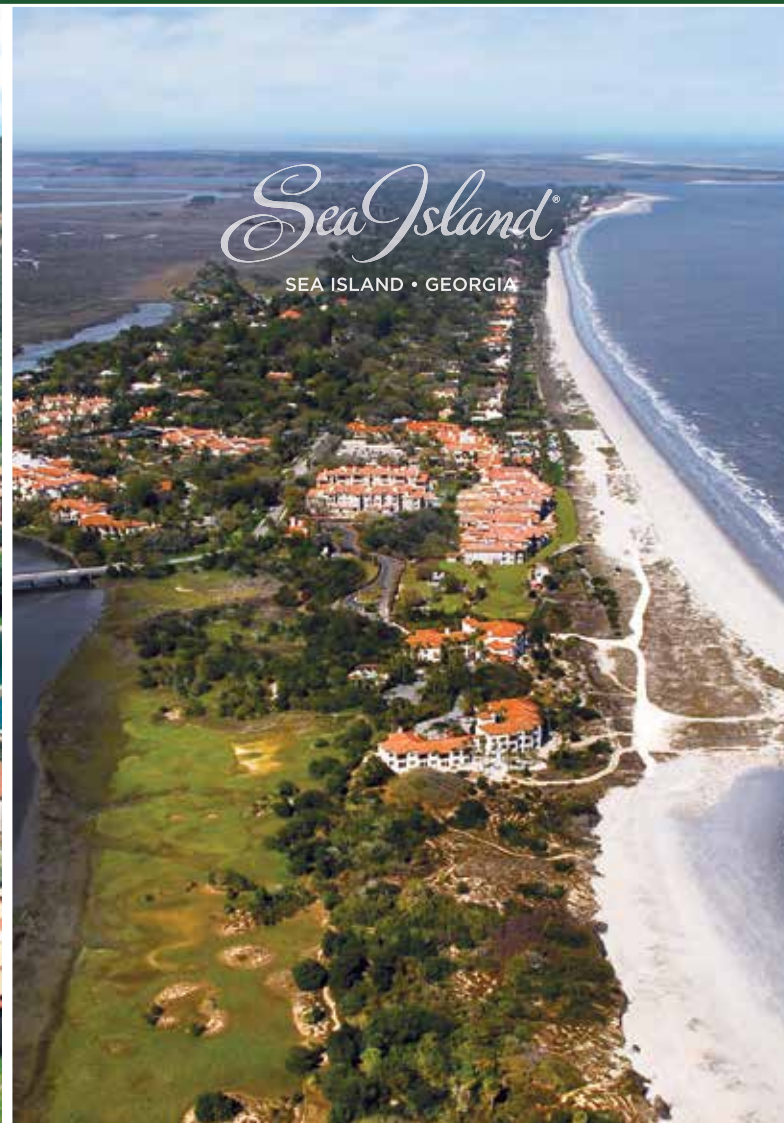
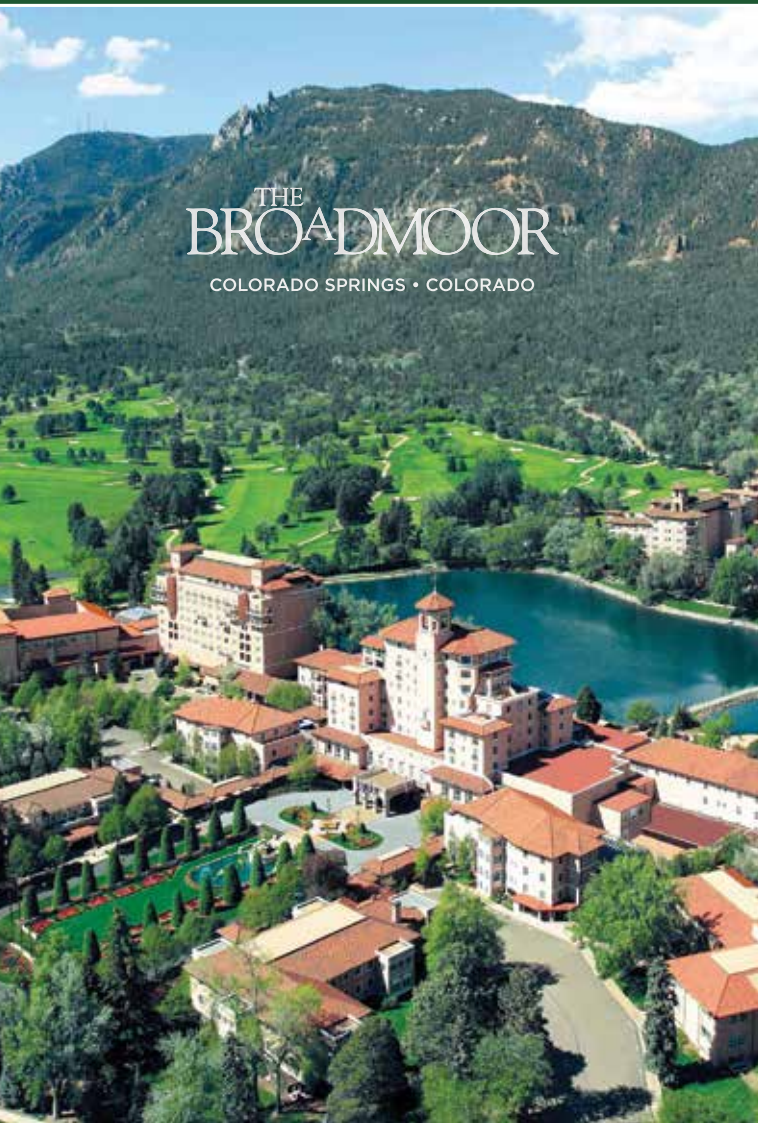
tool,” citing studies showing that all “Best in Class” companies (meaning those with the highest year-over-year sales increases and highest customer retention) said they use travel to recognize and reward annual sales success. **I&FMM**

**Nancy Alderman, IP**, is Associate Director of TSYS Loyalty, Specialty Travel Division ([www.tsys.com](http://www.tsys.com)). She has been with the company for more than 20 years and has been instrumental in its growth and the expansion of travel incentive offerings. TSYS Loyalty is the premier rewards provider inspiring loyalty between financial institutions and their customers. In addition, she serves as Board Secretary of the Incentive Travel Council (<https://ima.site-ym.com/mpage/ITC>).



# THE BROADMOOR • *Sea Island* COMPANY

Two exceptional resorts. Now one family.



***Recognized a total of 251 times with Forbes Five-Star and AAA Five-Diamond awards.***

For 188 years, The Broadmoor and Sea Island have provided distinctive, magnificent settings and extraordinary experiences for groups ranging from intimate board meetings to trade shows. Each resort features world-class golf, dining, spa, and outdoor adventures to enhance your event. With both of these iconic properties now owned in a 100-year family trust, our guarantee is that while the setting will vary, the consistent quality of meetings and meticulous attention to detail never will.

We invite you to call to begin planning your next event.

HISTORY • TRADITION • SERVICE • EXCELLENCE

THE  
BROADMOOR  
877.595.9467 • [www.broadmoor.com](http://www.broadmoor.com)

*Sea Island*  
888.857.7519 • [www.seaisland.com](http://www.seaisland.com)

## THE BROADMOOR

*Recipient of the Forbes Five-Star award for 57 consecutive years, The Broadmoor is a strikingly unique destination for memorable meetings and events. The Broadmoor has offered guests an incredible way to experience the unique gateway to the American West for nearly a century.*

### ***Meeting Space— Unique***

With 185,000 square feet of sophisticated event space, The Broadmoor understands the unique needs and attention required to create memorable, successful meetings. From boardrooms and Broadmoor Hall's 60,000 square feet at the main campus to Cloud Camp's Overlook at 9,200-foot elevation, we have the space to make your meeting memorable.

### ***Activities— For Everyone***

Meeting attendees can hike scenic trails, experience horseback riding and mountain biking, or archery. Broadmoor Outfitters offers expert instruction in fly fishing, falconry, zip lining and much more. Championship golf courses, and our Forbes Five-Star Spa provide rest and reward.

### ***Accommodations— Variety***

The 784 guest rooms, suites, cottages, brownstones, and The Broadmoor Estate House feature the elegant touches and amenities at the main campus. Provide adventure at one of the three Broadmoor Wilderness Experiences: Cloud Camp, The Ranch at Emerald Valley, and The Broadmoor Fly Fishing Camp.



## *Sea Island*

*Where extraordinary facilities, activities and Southern hospitality blend to create exceptional meetings. Come see why we are the only resort in the world to receive four Forbes Five Stars for nine consecutive years and the only one in the U.S. chosen to host a G8 Summit.*



### ***Meeting Space— Flexibility***

With more than 35,000 square feet of indoor space and an island full of outdoor gathering options, Sea Island venues range from boardrooms to ballrooms, accommodating 5 to 500 people. From food and décor to technical expertise, our seasoned team brings creativity and attention to detail to every conference, executive retreat, and customized meeting.

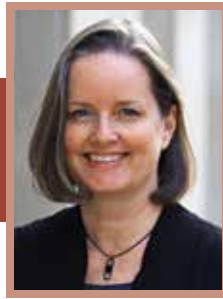
### ***Activities— Variety***

Sea Island provides an extensive array of options for your meeting attendees including customized team building activities, outdoor experiences such as fishing, water sports, shooting school and falconry, a 65,000-square-foot spa and fitness center, three championship golf courses, and the nation's finest Golf Performance Center.

### ***Accommodations— Choice***

Our 390 rooms and suites ensure we have a room type to meet your needs from The Cloister, nestled between the Black Banks River and the Atlantic Ocean to The Lodge, surrounded by two of our golf courses to The Inn, our select-service property. Or for those seeking outdoor adventure, we offer Broadfield, our 5,800-acre sporting club.





## Employee Engagement: What's Hospitality Got to Do With It?

**E**arly in my career, I was a conference and incentive planner. I worked with clients from pharmaceuticals to international financial services, delivering programs that helped organizations meet their goals, stay on budget and reflect the values and culture of each company. It was a tough job, but I loved it. And I particularly loved seeing the results onsite, where guests or attendees experienced the level of service and individual attention that a well-crafted program can provide.

each guest as an individual, remembering the nuances of their needs and concerns, and providing the information and interaction needed to put them at ease.

Employee engagement is much the same. The Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) and the Incentive Marketing Association (IMA) set out to understand recognition and reward preferences, since these are key to motivation. Amazingly, the research showed that out of 452 survey respondents, 99 percent were completely unique. Some employees prefer public recognition, while others are embarrassed by it. Some people are highly motivated by travel while others would rather receive gift cards.

Just as in a group travel program, it is important to keep in mind that no two people are alike in an employee engagement program. Technology tools such as social recognition platforms create the framework and a home for the program, but the interaction is still a human one. Just like hospitality, the experience must be welcoming, personalized and put the participant at ease.

### Senior Leaders Are Important Champions

Because of their visibility in the company "fishbowl," senior leaders' involvement in the program is important. Everyone in the organization keeps an eye on how managers and executives talk about the program, and whether or not they participate in it. Day-to-day actions become symbolic of how important the employees and other stakeholders are — or are not — to the company.

In fact, a recent study revealed something interesting about the importance of leaders. The IRF looked at top performing companies and found that, "Perhaps the strongest differential between top performing and average businesses was the executives' belief in the value of these tools as differentiators. Respondents at top performing companies were 35 percent more likely than those at average companies to agree that their executives believe non-cash rewards and recognition are a critical tool in managing company performance." Most successful companies now use non-

cash recognition and rewards, but the key differentiator was found to be belief in the program.

That's because people look for authenticity. Senior leaders' participation in and support of engagement programs is extremely important. When they champion a program — whether it's sending recognition through an online recognition platform or spending the evening with their high achievers at a cocktail reception during the annual incentive trip — the message senior leaders send is that the program and the employees are important to the organization.

### Communications Are Critical

Engaging communications not only drive that message home, they also extend the life of the program. As incentive travel planners, we know that the travel experience really begins with the announcement of the program rules and the next destination. Participants envision themselves enjoying the rewards of great work, in a desirable location, with the other top performers of their organization. Imagining themselves there engages a "bird-in-the-hand" feeling, so that eligible program participants will actually fight harder not to lose the trip.

Communication is key for all kinds of engagement initiatives from travel to points programs. People need clear information, fair rules, and achievable goals. They want to know what it takes to win, and what it will be like when they do. The milestones in any engagement program are just like the signage at an event — they make the path forward clear. And when they know what to expect, participants can focus on what they need to do to reach their goals.

Just as we do in hospitality, by setting expectations, providing a clear roadmap for what to do next, we free people to put their attention on other things, whether that's truly experiencing a destination or hitting big company goals.

### Adapting Is Inevitable

Finally, as every planner knows, you can put the best possible plan in place and somehow, somewhere, something



doesn't go as expected. As a planner, I had to be able to shift from one venue to another, handle force majeure crises, and jump in to help an injured guest. That's what we do, after all — whether we are conference and incentive planners or engagement program owners. We plan so that we have the ability and capacity to handle whatever comes up. We plan so that we can adjust as market conditions or weather patterns change. And in the words of the inimitable Tim Gunn in "Project Runway," we "make it work."

In every engagement program of every kind, you have to be willing to take an honest look at how things are going and adapt as needed. It's the end results that matter. And if it was that easy to attain them, anyone could do it. **I&FMM**

***Susan Adams** is Vice President of Engagement at Next Level Performance ([www.nxlperformance.com](http://www.nxlperformance.com)), where she is responsible for Marketing and Communications. With over 20 years of experience in incentive travel, she works actively in the industry to promote understanding and adoption of incentives, engagement and recognition. She currently is serving as an Incentive Research Foundation trustee and as chair of the Research Committee. In her spare time, Susan is an avid traveler who recently tried glacier hiking for the first time and lived to tell the tale.*

Senior leaders' participation in and support of engagement programs is extremely important.

These days, my work centers on employee engagement, connecting the hopes and aspirations of individuals with the needs and goals of an organization. Research shows that companies with highly engaged workforces do better across a wide array of metrics, from profitability to customer satisfaction ratings. Business leaders know this and are committed to investing in the human experience to improve performance and inspire great results.

I thought it would be a big career leap to shift my focus to engagement, but it turns out that recognition and incentive programs are built on the same foundations as — you guessed it — hospitality.

Here are four engagement essentials that travel planners know by heart:

### Every Group Is Made Up of Individuals

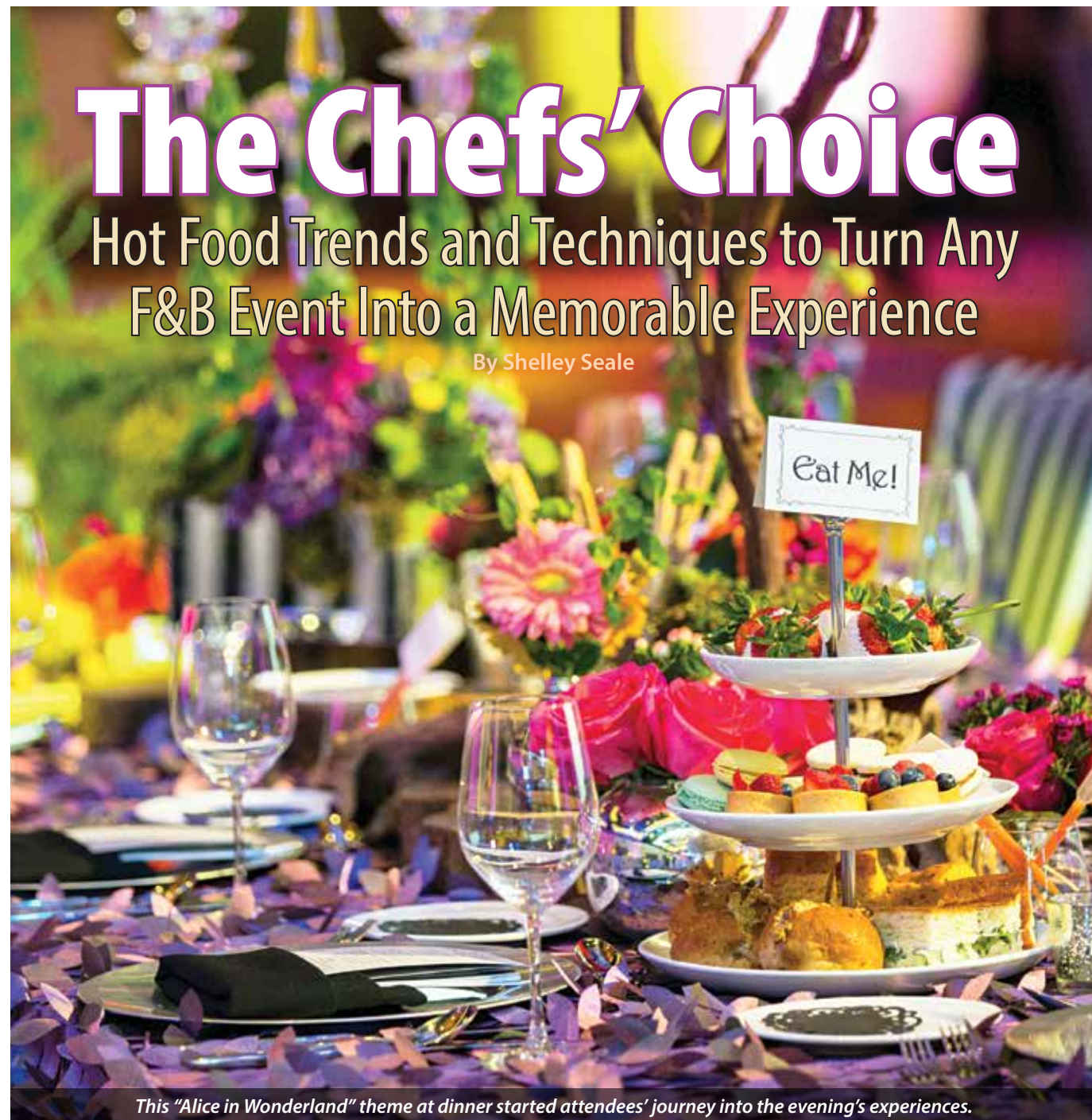
Every arrival to the hotel, every person who steps up to the registration desk, is unique. No matter how many programs you've planned, there's always someone whose story stands out or who asks a question you have never heard before. Providing great service onsite requires addressing



# The Chefs' Choice

## Hot Food Trends and Techniques to Turn Any F&B Event Into a Memorable Experience

By Shelley Seale



This "Alice in Wonderland" theme at dinner started attendees' journey into the evening's experiences.

Credit: Limestone San Antonio

The legendary red carpet is rolled out. Limousines pull up alongside it. When their doors open, flashbulbs pop and cameras zoom in. One by one, hundreds of celebrities walk the carpet into one of the most celebrated events in Hollywood.

This is the Academy Awards — and while it may seem that corporate events for insurance and financial companies operate in a different world, there are many ways in which meeting planners

can make their attendees feel like stars, and make these events extraordinary and memorable.

One surefire way to achieve this is by creating a unique culinary experience — and don't be afraid to be creative. Throwing the rule book out the window, having some fun with the food and incorporating hot new trends can have enormous impact on your event.

"Groups can get turned off by foods that are too overthought or too classic;

they want something that is a bit more refreshing and a bit more whimsical," says executive chef Josh Eden of The Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.

Chef Eden has the benefit and experience of working in a venue that is imbued with history and glamour; his hotel was where the very first Academy Awards were held in 1929.

"We are fortunate here, because The Hollywood Roosevelt is a canvas," Eden says. "The hotel has multiple rooms

with tons of history to them, and so the venues where the event will take place start the experience. The main Blossom Ballroom, which has room for 400 people, is an iconic venue — the very first Oscars were held here, Prince has played that room.

"Iconic parts of our culture, nostalgia and fond memories are all things that work strongly in building a stellar culinary aspect of an event — one that will create an experience, and not simply feed the guests.

"As a trend, I've noticed that people are drawn to flavor profiles and items that remind them of their childhood," Eden shares. "As chefs, we often look back into our childhoods for menu items that got us excited about food to begin with; and use those as inspiration for flavor profiles, shapes and sizes."

He cites an example of using the humble frank-and-beans casserole, and putting a spin on it by highlighting a fantastic pork chop or pork belly, with the beans delicately on the side. When it comes to dessert, Eden's childhood memories really come into his work. "I always play with chocolate and orange. Those flavors remind me of candies that my grandma had in her kitchen when I was a kid."

Eden, 2008 StarChefs.com New York Rising Star and Jean-Georges protégé, is not the only celebrity chef with a strong take on themes and trends in the F&B realm that can make the difference between a boring, ho-hum corporate event, and one that people will be talking about for a long time to come. Here are some of the hottest trends and favorite food techniques from top chefs around the country, and beyond.

### Food as Theater

The culinary side of any event also offers an opportunity for entertainment, and top chefs and meeting planners take full advantage of that.

"One of my favorite things to see at an event is the chef preparing in front of you," says event mastermind Michael Cerbelli, president of Cerbelli Creative

*"We look at the menu as a means of inspiration and build something that will fit into that theme. For example, if we have a rustic-inspired menu we might use cast iron to decorate a food station."*

Jason Adams, Executive Chef  
Omni La Costa Resort & Spa, Carlsbad, CA



and creator of The Hot List, which details the newest and most inspiring event and entertainment insights. Whether it's hitting puff pastry with blowtorches or injecting homemade mozzarella cheese with pesto and sauce using giant syringes, drama is the name of the game in creating a culinary experience.

"Why do a dessert station, when you can do a custom doughnut shop in a classic Jewish bakery?" Cerbelli asks. "The experience should be a journey." Cerbelli has partnered with chefs and caterers to complete the theatrical show with costuming that matches the staff to the experience.

"I can promise you that chefs want to be part of the creative side," he assures. "I have worked with many who are anxious to go off the menu, and work with a theme."

One that stands out for him was a challenge he threw down to executive chef Brian Bailey at the JW Marriott Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. Cerbelli wanted a complete Alice in Wonderland dining theme — and he was not disappointed.

"Giant glass teacups using ground mushrooms as the 'dirt,' with vegetables that looked like they were growing out of it," Cerbelli describes. "Then a server poured a delicious broth from a tea kettle for the appetizer, and there were Shepherd's Pie 'croquet balls' for dinner. Every attendee Instagrammed the event from start to finish, sharing the incredible food journey."

And social media sharing is a major goal for many companies, hotel groups and event planners. Attendees who are wowed enough by something to



The Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, the site of the first Academy Awards ceremony, today hosts glamorous events in its Blossom Ballroom.

Credit: The Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel





Instagram, Snapchat, Tweet or Facebook Live it become your brand advocates. For financial and insurance firms, hosting such an event (with prominent hashtags and brand message, of course), can pay off big with both event participants and the marketing department.

Chefs “performing” rather than staying in the kitchen is wildly popular due in large part to today’s celebrity chefs, and the huge craze of kitchen-based reality television competitions. Putting on a Chopped or Top Chef-themed challenge at your event — whether it’s spectator only or something your attendees actually participate in — is one of the biggest current trends.

At Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa in Austin, Texas, such contests are often incorporated during the reception part of a meeting or retreat, and used as a teambuilding event. The “contestants” are given a mystery basket of ingredients with which to create their dishes, a head chef and a time limit. At the end of the cooking time, each team presents their dish to the judges, who select a winner based on the food, team organization and creativity.

Brandy Boswell, executive meetings manager at the resort, says, “We have found that this is a great icebreaker, and serving the winning dishes as part of the dinner works well.”



Credit: Hilton Los Cabos



*“I can promise you that chefs want to be part of the creative side. I have worked with many who are anxious to go off the menu, and work with a theme.”*

**Michael Cerbelli**, CEO/President  
Cerbelli Creative, New York, NY

### Create a Cultural Experience

So you’re having a conference in another country, or you’re hosting clients from a different culture? Food is known as the great human equalizer, and can be a fantastic way to bridge these differences and to experience local flavor.

At Hilton Los Cabos in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, the in-house meeting planners recreate a Mexican mercado, offering attendees the chance to “shop” for their food, interact with each other and participate in live cooking stations.

The events team at the Hilton, which consists of Marco Lozano, Gabriela Baeza and Ulises Zamora, aims to create a true Mexican culinary experience. “We want to promote our roots and educate people through authentic, local experiences. We offer a unique selection of Mexican traditions, including a hands-on cooking class that takes guests to a local farm to pick ingredients, then back to the hotel to use during the demo/class.”

Hilton Los Cabos even hosted a “Day of the Dead” theme dinner, showcasing the traditional celebration to remember loved ones who have passed on. The event included



*The events team at the Hilton Los Cabos created a true Mexican culinary experience by building an authentic mercado that allows guests to participate in the preparation of their meals.*

a live show with marionettes, stilt walkers, a fire show, Catrina face painters and Mexican music.

Bringing a local holiday or custom to life in your event offers a wealth of potential “wow” moments, in both the cuisine and spectacle. Ethan McDonald of 1718 Events will never forget an awards dinner he planned at Mardi Gras World.

“All the guests were seated for a plated meal, while the speaker presented on stage, as typically happens at these events. Then, all of a sudden, motorcycle cops burst through the door, sirens blaring! Immediately behind the motorcycles, a 60-person high school marching band followed; and behind them was a mini float parade. All of the top sales executives were riding the mini floats and the parade was circling the guests. That was an experience that the guests will never forget.”

Even without that much drama and elaborate scale, incorporating the culture of any destination can be done. Portland, Oregon, is well-known for its craft beer scene, for example. And while it might not be feasible to take meeting attendees out to experience the local brewpubs, the Duniway Portland Hilton Hotel had a solution: bring the pubs to them.

“One of my personal favorite events was creating a pub crawl inside the hotel, showcasing Portland’s amazing beer by pairing them with fun traditional food,” says Susan Hemberry, director of events at Duniway. “Guests wandered the ballroom tasting a variety of local beers from four of the breweries in town, paired with small bites. We invited representatives from each brewery to the event to engage with guests and share

## Expert Tips for Creating an Unforgettable Culinary Experience

“Preparation is key. You can have the most amazing idea, but if you don’t know the demographics of the group, it will not be successful. It really is key to meet with the meeting planner or host and find out the history and demographics of the group. Food alone does not make a complete experience. You have to be meticulous in the décor, entertainment, and detail.”

—Ethan McDonald, event sales manager, 1718 Events

“Get involved in the sales meetings from the beginning. This way you know the budget a company is working with and can advise, often better than a sales representative, the cost associated with certain levels of creative culinary executions. Make sure chefs are involved beyond the sales team; there has to be a level of confidence on top of everything else.”

—Josh Eden, executive chef, The Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel

“Presentation of the meals definitely adds to the flair and helps make it memorable. Chat with your hotel planner and/or chef on how to present your items. For example, use colorful paper bags rather than traditional white ceramic bowls and overflow with doughnut holes helps make the break more appealing and not as ordinary. Another simple presentation trick is to select a specific color and build the presentation and menu around it.”

—Duniway Portland Hilton

“Know the exact budget. Sharing examples of what they have done in the past with both menus and presentations is a great indicator of what they will want moving forward as it pertains to quality of food and amount of decoration. It also allows for us to not repeat anything they have done recently and ensure we create memories for them that will keep them coming back. We’re creative and we’re here for a reason; trust us, we know what we’re doing.”

—Jason Adams, executive chef, Omni La Costa Resort & Spa



Credit: Omni La Costa Resort & Spa

*Fresh-made pretzels in all shapes and sizes are offered to guests at Omni La Costa Resort & Spa.*

how each beer was made. Our guests left feeling like they had been on a pub crawl without ever leaving the building!”

Hemberry’s advice is to learn about the meeting destination, and what the area offers — then incorporate those local items and themes into your event.

### ‘Build Your Own’ Stations

At any large meeting or event, having a “build your own” option is always popular. Guests love it because they can customize food to their liking, and it has the advantages of catering to the special dietary needs and restrictions that have become a way of life.

It eliminates the concerns over making sure there are vegetarian, gluten-free, kosher and other options on the menu.

There are a lot of types of dishes that lend themselves well to the “build your own” concept, such as breakfast bowls, omelets, ramen soup, sandwich and taco bars, poke bowls and sushi, to name only a few. But this concept also offers plenty of opportunities to get creative, as well. For example, at the Omni La Costa Resort & Spa in Carlsbad, California

guests were treated to an over-the-top pretzel station.

“We get a variety of different types of pretzels and make them in a ton of different styles — with some of them about the size of a steering wheel!” says Jason Adams, executive chef at the re-

sort. “These really wow the guests, many of whom take pictures of them and share this memory with their friends on social media.”

Chef Adams says that in general, Omni La Costa Resort & Spa tries to be playful with the cuisine they present for company and large group events. “A lot of it has to do with comfort and bringing back the classics. The ‘build-your-own’ option is one that allows guests to be in control of what they are putting in their body, so it caters to their needs.”

Adams takes full advantage of the visual aspect of food as well, using presentation displays to create a full experience for his stations.

“We look at the menu as a means of inspiration and build something that will fit into that theme. For example, if we have a rustic-inspired menu we might use cast iron to decorate a food

*“Groups can get turned off by foods that are too overthought or too classic, they want something that is a bit more refreshing and a bit more whimsical.”*

**Josh Eden**, Executive Chef  
Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, Los Angeles, CA





*"All the guests were seated for a plated meal...(then suddenly) top sales executives were riding the mini floats and the parade was circling the guests. That was an experience that the guests will never forget."*

**Ethan McDonald**, Event Sales Manager  
1718 Events, New Orleans, LA

station. If it's a more refined menu, we would use some glass pieces to display a bit more delicate; and for a pizza station we would build a brick wall behind it to mimic a brick oven, with a fireplace to tie into the theme."

The Omni La Costa property gives Adams and his team the ability to forage for fresh herbs and plants onsite, so they use these natural herbs and fruits to decorate the stations. "We have beehives on the property as well," he adds, "so we'll utilize a non-active honeycomb to be on display, as it increases the story behind our dishes as well."

### Don't Overlook the Beverages

There are many new trends that revolve around the "B" in F&B. Millennials, in particular, are the driving force behind such things as the popularity of Prohibition-era cocktails, and new ways to drink such as spoonable spirits — booze-laden jellies, puddings and ice creams.

Executive chef and Culinary Trendologist Christine Couvelier, president of Culinary Concierge and creator of the "Trend Watch Report," says that the new generation of sommeliers that are emerging go far beyond wine. Today's libation experts specialize in sake, bourbon, bootleg alcohol, cider, coffee, tea and more.

Organizing an expert-led tasting class proves to be a big hit with most corporate events. These types of events are usually scalable for groups of different sizes, and can include a wide variety of pairings, from mezcal and tacos to cognac and seafood.

Pastry chef — and self-titled "chocolologist" — Wouter Tjeertes recently introduced a tasting of housemade chocolates paired with select spirits at the Hyatt Ziva Rose Hall and Hyatt

Zilara Rose Hall resorts in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The tasting highlights unexpected flavor combinations using local ingredients (smoked sea-salt and chipotle truffles paired with a Jamaican aged rum, for example), with commentary by chef Tjeertes on his artistic process.

Worried about the attendees having a little too much fun, or dozing off during an important presentation? There are plenty of creative non-alcoholic options as well. Couvelier lists a Mocktail Mixology station as one of her most recent top trends. Cold-pressed juices and flavored teas are natural items, as well as drinks that incorporate interesting



*"Mood cocktails," made with lemongrass or lavender at The Resort at Longboat Key, can help those who imbibe feel relaxed or lively.*

new tastes such as juniper berry, herbs, spices and even peppers.

Other innovations include the Mood Cocktail program that The Resort at Longboat Key Club in Sarasota, Florida recently introduced. The menu of mood-inducing drinks utilizes ingredients such as lemongrass and lavender to impart a choice of effects such as invigorating and relaxing. The cocktails are served over color-changing ice cubes, with a salt or sugar rim.

Whatever culinary theme or experience that a meeting planner goes for, chef Eden says that one of the most important things for a successful event is that they share any and all information that they have about the participants: age range, male to female ratio, etc.

"This allows us to build great menus and a great experience together," Eden says. "Corporate meetings planners should not be afraid to ask the impossible. In some cases that is what you are paying us for."

**I&FMM**

**THE PYRAMID**  
LUXURY AT GRAND OASIS

**GRAND OASIS CANCUN**  
THE ENTERTAINMENT RESORT

# Discover Cancun's best kept secret for MICE groups

**TOP RANKED\***



**EAT**

Our premier meeting resorts, The Pyramid at Grand Oasis and Grand Oasis Cancun, offers up to 26 international restaurants and 24 amazing bars.

\* According to TripAdvisor as of 7/1/17.

**NEW CASINO**



**PLAY**

The brand new multi-level Red Casino at Grand Oasis Cancun, Cancun's first (and only) casino-in-a-resort offering traditional tables and more, is open 24 hours.

**NEW SPACE**



**MEET**

Our new Oasis Arena with over 20,000 sq. ft. is perfect for large scale events, and our ample meeting facilities can accommodate groups from 24 to 2,500.

## EARN 15% COMMISSION ON GROUP BOOKINGS

for travel August 1 – December 22, 2017 and January 3 – December 22, 2018. Restrictions apply. Limited time offer.

FOR EXCLUSIVE OFFERS AND MORE INFORMATION VISIT: **GroupsAtOasis.com**  
email: [groups@oasishotels.com](mailto:groups@oasishotels.com), or call: 1-800-44-OASIS (press option 2) or 770-662-1815





# 2017 World Class Award Winners



**W**e honor the deserving winners of the 2017 World Class Awards with this special section devoted to the hardworking, extraordinary management and staff of the best of the best — the convention and visitors bureaus, and hotels, resorts and conference centers that exceed the high standards of excellence according to these criteria:

## Convention & Visitors Bureaus

- Superior service and support
- Promotional assistance
- High level of supplier, facility and venue information, coordination and liaison
- Comprehensive assistance with accommodations and site inspections
- with local attractions and transportation
- Smooth setups and arrangements for social functions
- Exceptional ambience
- Convenient and accessible location

## Hotels, Resorts & Conference Centers

- Superior staff service
- Excellence in accommodations and meeting facilities
- Trouble-free food and beverage functions
- Smooth setups and arrangements for social functions
- Exceptional ambience
- Convenient and accessible location

Some of the fine winners of the 2017 World Class Award are profiled on the following pages.

### CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAUS

**Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
Austin, TX

**Experience Scottsdale**  
Scottsdale, AZ

**Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
Miami, FL

**Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau**  
Honolulu, HI

**Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
Long Beach, CA

**Meet AC**  
Atlantic City, NJ

**Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.**  
Nashville, TN

**New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau**  
New Orleans, LA

**San Francisco Travel Association**  
San Francisco, CA

**Visit Jacksonville**  
Jacksonville, FL

**Visit Orlando**  
Orlando, FL

## HOTELS, RESORTS & CONFERENCE CENTERS

**ARIA Resort & Casino**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa**  
Phoenix, AZ

**Atlantis, Paradise Island, Bahamas**  
Paradise Island, Bahamas

**Aulani, a Disney Resort & Spa**  
Ko Olina, Hawaii

**Boca Raton Resort & Club**  
Boca Raton, FL

**The Broadmoor**  
Colorado Springs, CO

**Caesars Palace Las Vegas**  
Las Vegas, NV

**The Diplomat Beach Resort**  
Hollywood, FL

**Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center**  
Nashville, TN

**Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista**  
Orlando, FL

**Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando**  
Orlando, FL

**M Resort Spa Casino**  
Las Vegas, NV

**The Mirage**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Omni Nashville Hotel**  
Nashville, TN

**Ponte Vedra Inn & Club**  
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

**Trump National Doral Miami**  
Miami, FL

**The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort**  
Lake Buena Vista, FL

**The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa**  
Scottsdale, AZ

**Wynn Las Vegas**  
Las Vegas, NV



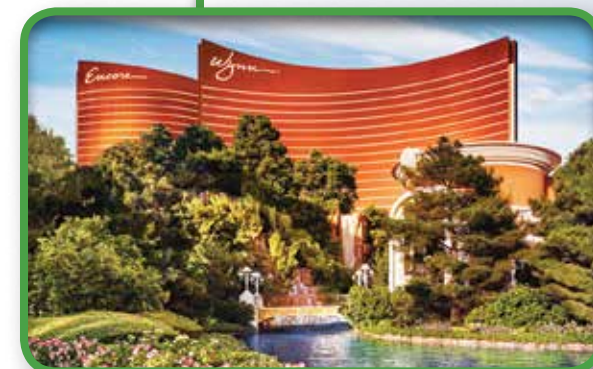
Atlantis,  
Paradise Island, Bahamas



Greater Miami  
Convention & Visitors Bureau



Long Beach  
Convention & Visitors Bureau



Wynn Las Vegas and Encore





**Wendy Blaney**  
Chief Sales Officer, Group Sales

One Casino Drive  
Paradise Island, Nassau, The Bahamas  
800-722-2449  
Fax: 954-809-7906  
groupsales@atlantisparadise.com  
www.meetingsatatlantis.com



#### Facts and Features

**Guest Rooms/Suites:** 3,400

**Meeting Space:** 500,000 sf  
indoor and outdoor

**Special Services & Amenities:**  
Atlantis is your portal to a truly Bahamian experience, featuring five distinct hotels, unparalleled meeting and convention space, an open-air marine habitat, a 141-acre waterscape, five miles of white sand beaches, and so much more.

## Atlantis, Paradise Island, Bahamas

Atlantis, Paradise Island is a lush, oceanside resort located on Paradise Island in The Bahamas. A dynamic destination that launched 20 years ago as a first-of-its-kind modern marvel of nature and engineering, Atlantis has embarked on a new chapter tied to a meaningful connection with the ocean, Bahamian culture and the spirit of the property's 7,500 employees. The resort's new, immersive programming connects guests to the rich history, art, people, food and festivities of The Bahamas.

Atlantis features five distinct properties, from the iconic Royal Towers to the original Beach and The Coral to the newly built luxury properties, The Cove and The Reef. The Coral reopened in July 2017 as a fully redesigned escape with a new lobby, new rooms and new amenities, including the SUN & ICE lobby lounge featuring a new ice cream experience created by Bahamian Chef Wayne Moncur. The new dedicated Coral Pool will open in November.

#### Marine Conservation

The resort is built around Aquaventure, an innovative, 141-acre waterscape of thrilling slides and river rides, pools and white sand beaches. Home to the largest open-air marine habitat in the world, over 50,000 marine animals from 250 species make their home in the ocean-fed environments. Dolphin Cay, a world-class marine habitat dedicated to conservation, rehabilitation and education, is the home to 16 rescued dolphins whose home was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Every visit to Dolphin Cay supports the Atlantis Blue Project Foundation, creating and promoting solutions

for a wide range of marine conservation challenges from coral reef degradation to marine species in decline. Other resort amenities include the 30,000-sf tranquil Mandara Spa, the award-winning 18-hole Tom Weiskopf-designed golf course, the Marina Village, a Bahamian marketplace, Atlantis Casino as well as 40 restaurants and lounges with celebrity chef culinary masterpieces including Nobu, by Nobu Matsuhisa, and Olives, by Todd English.

#### Meetings

With the largest conference center in the Caribbean, Atlantis boasts 200,000 sf of indoor meeting space highlighted by the 50,000-sf Imperial Ballroom and 25,000-sf Grand Ballroom. The total of 60 meeting rooms allows Atlantis to accommodate groups of 15 to 4,000. More than 20 distinct outdoor venues totaling 300,000 sf entertain parties of up to 5,000.

Iconic Harbour Island restaurant Sip Sip will open its first outpost location at the ultra-exclusive The Cove this November. Bahamian Chef Julie Lightbourn will bring her "Caribbean" menu — "Bahamian but with a twist" — to The Cove's brand new, redesigned pool-cave by Lulu DK.

In addition, celebrity chef José Andrés recently announced that Fish by José Andrés is slated to open in early 2018 at the idyllic The Cove Atlantis. The unique seafood-focused concept from chef José and his team will celebrate the delectable abundance of fish and seafood from the azure waters of The Bahamas and the Caribbean Sea, delivering an unmatched dining experience.

Atlantis plans to announce more renovations and property upgrades in the coming months, including a fully transformed Marina Village as well as redesigned rooms and suites at Royal Towers in 2018.

**I&FMM**

# ATLANTIS

PARADISE ISLAND BAHAMAS

CONVENTIONS • MEETINGS • INCENTIVES

Bring Your Event To Life With Authentic Bahamian Culture.

**BOOK YOUR 2017/2018 EVENT  
AND EXPERIENCE COMPLIMENTARY  
FIRE AND LIMBO DANCERS AND  
AN AUTHENTIC JUNKANOO RUSH**



**800.722.2449 | MeetingsAtAtlantis.com**

Book a new group to arrive before December 31, 2018 and sign contract by December 31, 2017 and group will receive the following local authentic entertainers: 100-249 total consumed room nights receive a complimentary Fire Dancer for opening reception entertainment. 250-499 total consumed room nights receive a complimentary Limbo Dancer and Fire Dancer for opening reception entertainment. 500+ total consumed room nights receive a complimentary Junkanoo Rush consisting of 6 entertainers for opening reception entertainment. Applicable for new group bookings only. Offer subject to change and cannot be combined with other offers. Subject to availability. See full details at [www.meetingsatatlantis.com](http://www.meetingsatatlantis.com).





**William D. Talbert III, CDME**  
President & CEO

701 Brickell Ave. Suite 2700  
Miami, Florida 33131  
Contact: Barry Moskowitz  
Vice President, Sales  
305-539-3042  
Fax: 305-530-4276  
barry@gmcbv.com  
planners.miamianbeaches.com



#### Citywide Facts and Features

**Guest Rooms:** 55,394

**Hotels:** 426

**Meeting Space:** 1.2 million sf of meeting space available citywide.

**Convention Center FYI:** Located in the heart of South Beach, the new Miami Beach Convention Center will open in 2018. This innovative and tech-rich facility will feature 500,000 sf of exhibition space.

## Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau

**M**iami offers a unique and unexpected array of meeting and convention options. And because Miami continues to reinvent itself with new hotels, meeting spaces and enhanced infrastructure, planners are sure to find exactly what they need to host the meetings and events of their dreams.

#### About Miami

Getting here is easy. Miami International Airport (MIA) offers more than 400 daily flights from around the globe and is served by more airlines than any other airport in the U.S., so meeting planners can enjoy peace of mind regarding "getting there." Miami is also the Cruise Capital of the World; a broad range of sailings from PortMiami offer various pre- and post-meeting options.

In Miami, you will discover the diverse offerings of a vibrant international destination that seamlessly blends with the natural beauty of our tropics. Enjoy unique hotel experiences, world-class dining, heritage neighborhoods and a newly reimagined Miami Beach Convention Center.

#### The New Miami Beach Convention Center

Located in the heart of South Beach, the new Miami Beach Convention Center will open in 2018. This innovative and tech-rich facility will offer 500,000 sf of exhibition space and more than 180,000 sf of meeting space, including a 60,000-sf ballroom and a 20,000-sf ballroom. Each space also will feature a terrace where attendees can step out, mingle and soak up the

city's signature sunshine and ocean-front beauty.

**I&FMM**

#### Additional Venues

##### Brickell City Centre

The \$1.05 billion project by Swire Properties opened its doors in November 2016. Spanning 9.1 acres, Brickell City Centre includes a 352-room hotel, an open-air shopping center, two luxury condo towers, two office buildings and an entertainment center.

##### Brightline

The new express train service will provide intercity travel in Florida. By the end of 2017, Brightline will begin service connecting Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. Service between Miami and Orlando will follow in 2018.

##### Miami Worldcenter

The \$2 billion project planned for downtown Miami will include retail, restaurants, entertainment, hotels, and residential and commercial space.

##### Frost Science Museum

The Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science opened its doors to the public in May 2017, at its new home in downtown Miami's Museum Park. The 250,000-sf facility combines a planetarium, aquarium and science museum on one campus.

These are just a few of the memorable highlights awaiting any meeting planner thinking of Miami. For more information, visit [www.MiamiMeetings.com](http://www.MiamiMeetings.com).

**CHOOSE  
MIAMI.  
THEY'LL  
LOVE YOU  
FOR IT.**

Contact us to learn more. 800-933-8448 ext. 3071  
[Meetings@MiamiMeetings.com](mailto:Meetings@MiamiMeetings.com) | [MiamiMeetings.com](http://MiamiMeetings.com)



©Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau – The Official Destination Sales & Marketing Organization for Greater Miami and the Beaches.





**Steve Goodling**  
President & CEO

301 E. Ocean Blvd. Suite 1900  
Long Beach, CA 90802  
562-495-8350  
Fax: 562-435-5653  
steveg@longbeachcvb.org  
www.visitlongbeach.com

## Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau

**N**estled along the Pacific Ocean in the center of Southern California, Long Beach is a water sports paradise. All of the attractions of Los Angeles and Orange County: downtown Los Angeles, Hollywood, Universal Studios and Disneyland are just minutes from Long Beach's scenic downtown waterfront. Long Beach is pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly, ranked as one of the "Most Walkable Neighborhoods in America." Long Beach Transit also offers free Passport shuttle buses throughout the downtown area.

### Attractions & Dining

Long Beach features its own world-class attractions: The Queen

the casual and welcoming atmosphere of a seaside resort.

### Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center

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

A recent \$60 million modernization has created a new model for the contemporary convention center of the future. This dynamic repositioning is designed to give guests a warm, stylish and welcoming social experience. With the needs of today's convention attendees in mind, the Center's lobbies and hallways have been enhanced to create mini meeting spots and networking pods where attendees can sit, talk and socialize. Free Wi-Fi in these public areas allows attendees to go online to work and connect with their offices.

### Pacific Ballroom

The "Pacific Ballroom" at the Long Beach Arena has become one of Southern California's hottest new meeting and special event venues. With 45,000 sf of floor space and built-in professional LEDs, stage lighting and sound system, the Pacific Ballroom provides an intimate, fully customizable environment for dinners, concerts and special events for up to 5,500 people.

### Getting Here

Getting to Long Beach has never been easier, with service from three major airports. LAX and the Orange County Airport are less than 30 minutes away, and Long Beach Airport, which recently underwent a \$140 million renovation, is seven minutes from downtown. **I&FMM**



### Citywide Facts and Features

**Total Guest Rooms:** 4,752

**Total Hotels:** 27

**Meeting Space:** Hotels: 219,000+  
Offsite: 500,000+

#### Convention Center FYI:

3 Exhibit Halls: 224,000 sf  
Meeting Rooms: 34  
Pacific Ballroom: 45,000 sf  
Grand Ballroom: 20,456 sf  
Promenade Ballroom: 13,200 sf  
Seaside Ballroom: 6,317 sf  
Terrace Theater: 3,000 seats  
Center Theater: 800 seats  
Long Beach Arena: 13,000 seats

Mary, Aquarium of the Pacific, Rainbow Harbor, The Pike Outlets & Entertainment Center, Shoreline Village, plus two distinctive museums, two historic ranches and 11 miles of scenic beachfront, inland waterways and bays. Within an eight-block area of the downtown waterfront, visitors discover attractions, shopping, entertainment, nightlife and more than 125 quality restaurants serving cuisines from around the world. Well-lit walkways and promenades provide stunning oceanfront vistas where visitors can enjoy the vibrant blending of big-city urban amenities alongside



**At the forefront of experiential trends**, Long Beach's latest evolution can accommodate anywhere from 100 to 5,500 people within **40,000 sq. ft. of "wow"**. Introducing The Cove, a totally expandable outdoor street enclave that morphs into a high-octane atmosphere and embraces the food truck culture. With conversation hubs, encouraging networking, selfies, **and just plain fun**, it creates a connection that promotes a sense of community. Permanent LED stage lighting, renowned artist street murals, stylish furniture and much more can save you up to \$100,000 in rental costs. There is no limit to your imagination. The Cove allows you to make your next event **unconventionally unforgettable**.



800.452.7829 | MeetInLongBeach.com  
f MeetLBC | MeetInLongBeach





**Steve Blanner**  
Vice President  
Convention Sales and Services  
3131 Las Vegas Boulevard South  
Las Vegas, NV 89109  
702-770-7800  
stephen.blanner@wynnlasvegas.com  
www.wynnmeetings.com



#### Facts and Features

**Guest Rooms/Suites:** 2,716 rooms and suites at Wynn and 2,034 at Encore

**Meeting Space:** 260,000 sf

**Special Services & Amenities:** Wynn and Encore offer high-tech support, a full-service business center, high-speed internet access, spacious sunlit meeting spaces, state-of-the-art audio-visual capabilities and three technically supported stages.

## Wynn Las Vegas and Encore

**W**hy have Wynn Las Vegas and Encore captured more *Forbes Travel Guide* Five Star Awards than any other independent hotel company in the world? The key is the exceptional attention to detail, from the thoughtful amenities guests will discover in their rooms to dining on curated menus in settings that will make you forget you're in Las Vegas. "New" is a word guests will find in regular use at Wynn and Encore, where Steve Wynn famously loves to continuously tweak details in his unending quest for providing luxury hospitality that is unparalleled in both experience and aesthetic.

#### Impressive Meeting Spaces

That personal care likewise extends to all meeting and conference planning, of course. Wynn and his team have crafted 260,000 sf of imaginative meeting spaces, each embellished with sophisticated design and guest-friendly touches sure to delight even the most seasoned attendee, and keep them excited about their next visit.

Many meeting spaces are able to accommodate groups of any size, and are outfitted with dramatic, floor-to-ceiling windows and open-air terraces offering breathtaking views of the expansive pools of Wynn and Encore or the oasis-like serenity of the resort grounds. Wynn's in-house Production Services team is ready to assist with tech needs, from state-of-the-art Wi-Fi and audio-visual capabilities, to customized equipment and effects to maximize any presentation. Mean-

while, Wynn's outstanding Catering Services team is devoted to designing personalized menus that combine restaurant-quality cuisine with guest-friendly attention to gluten-free, vegan or other dietary needs.

#### Notable Amenities to Explore

Once the day's business is complete, attendees are presented with a wealth of options that define Wynn and Encore's "best of the best" lifestyle. The resort features a wide range of upscale cuisine and ambience, from luscious cuts of beef at SW Steakhouse to lobster at Lakeside and modern Asian fare at Andrea's. Wynn's Restaurant Services team also can assist with arranging group reservations and designing private parties in spaces that make the most of truly unforgettable evenings.

Two of the resort's most recent offerings are Jardin and Intrigue Nightclub.

Perfect for a breakfast meeting, breezy lunch or sophisticated dinner, Jardin offers modern takes on classic American fare in a garden-like environment that overlooks the Encore resort pools.

Intrigue nightclub combines the thrill of a pulsating dance floor with an elegant ambience and the drama of a towering waterfall. And like the resort's other world-class nightlife venues — XS, Surrender and Encore Beach Club — Intrigue may be reserved for private events that are sure to leave lasting memories with all attendees.

These are among the latest in Wynn Las Vegas and Encore's never-ending pursuit — not only of perfection, but also of inspiring that smile on each guest's face.

**I&FMM**



**YOUR SUCCESS IS OUR BUSINESS.**

(866) 770-7268 | [wynnmeetings.com](http://wynnmeetings.com)

*Wynn | Encore*  
LAS VEGAS





# The Budget Squeeze

## Meeting the Challenge of Rising Costs

By John Buchanan

In an era of cost consciousness and ever-increasing scrutiny from executive management, the budgeting process for meetings and events is more demanding and daunting than ever before. And rising costs that cannot easily be counteracted by negotiating tactics make the task all the more challenging.

The reality that many planners must deal with today is a simple one, says Joan Orentlicher, CMP, assistant vice president at Atlanta-based LOMA and LIMRA, which hosts educational meetings and training events for insurance companies. "Budgets are getting tighter."

Sherri K. Lindenberg, senior vice president, marketing communications, at Crump Life Insurance Services in Parsippany, New Jersey, agrees. "Budgets are tighter than ever," says Lindenberg, who oversees a team of three planners who plan about 40 meetings each year. "And because budgets are tighter and costs are rising, we have to be more creative and more aware of alternatives in order to put on high-quality meetings that also meet the company's financial bottom line."

Faced with such challenges, Greg Jenkins, partner at Long Beach, Cal-

ifornia-based independent meeting planning organization Bravo Productions, recommends a simple tactic when creating budgets. "Start by reviewing the group's historical patterns," Jenkins says. "If you have a firm grasp of historical patterns, you have an excellent means for avoiding wasteful spending. You need to look at things like what was the actual attendance versus projected? How many room nights and meeting rooms were used? Was the use of meeting space maximized for efficiency? How much food and beverage was actually consumed? Once you know those things, you're in a much better position to make informed, precise judgments."

Jenkins also uses a clear metric for assessing where and how money will be spent. "Review the big picture," he says, "and put your dollars into the things that are really important in building value into your meeting for your particular attendees."

### The Hotel Factor

For most meetings, the costs directly related to a hotel — sleeping rooms, F&B, Wi-Fi, onsite AV services — constitute the lion's share of the budget. But, Jenkins says, the fact that hotel infrastructure is constantly expanding across new brands and different business models, such as limited service hotels, offers planners more leverage when budgeting. It's no longer assumed that your meeting has to go to a full-service, major flag hotel, he says. "There are a lot of smaller, independent properties out there now that are perfect for certain types of meetings, especially smaller ones that don't need a lot of meeting space. And if you look at a hotel like that, you also find you can often do food and beverage much more

economically, too. That means there's more competition now for your meeting. And that means you have more negotiating power."

At the same time, more planners are voicing concerns about how major meeting hotels in top-tier destinations price meetings, with costs across the board steadily rising.

"Our biggest concern at the moment is that when we book a meeting and it's a year or two or three in advance, we see increased fees and hidden costs from the hotel when the meeting is coming (compared to) when we booked it," Orentlicher says. "The hotels are adding fees for things that they had not been charging for in the past."

Adds Kimberly Hull, CMP, senior meeting planner at LOMA and LIMRA, "We've booked programs where we thought we had a good idea of what the per-person cost for the meeting was going to look like. So that's the rough number we had in our budget. But then, when the meeting is actualized a year or two later, all of sudden there are added or increased fees. For example, the service charges have been increased, or there are now additional costs we were not aware of when we first booked the meeting." One recent example: new requirements for security staff during move-in and move-out. "And that wasn't the case when we booked, but now it is," Hull says. "And we're seeing more and more things like that pop up that add to our budget tremendously."

The good news, Hull says, is that pushback often works. The bad news: When it fails, it results in budget-busting costs that were never anticipated.

### F&B Costs

Few planners object to the fact that the ac-



**Sherri K. Lindenberg**  
Senior V.P., Marketing and Communications  
Crump Life Insurance Services

*Because budgets are tighter and costs are rising, we have to be more creative and more aware of alternatives in order to put on high-quality meetings that also meet the company's financial bottom line.*





tual costs of food-and-beverage services are increasing from year to year. Every consumer knows that from visiting the supermarket. However, a growing chorus of planners objects to the fact that the F&B fees charged by hotels have been increasing substantially for the last several years, seemingly without justification.

“Our biggest challenge and frustration today is the service fees on F&B,” Orentlicher says.

Adds Hull, “It seems like F&B fees are going up every year now. It wasn’t that long ago they were between 17 and 20 percent. Then it was 22, then 23, then 24. Now we’re in the 25 to 27 percent range. That means a quarter of your F&B budget, or even more, is now in service fees. That’s a lot of money that the hotel is taking in and for which you, as the planner, are not really getting anything in return.”

“The very sad fact,” Orentlicher says, “is that it forces us to reduce the amount and/or quality of food and beverage that we offer in return for

“We’re finding you can get a lot of savings by doing that, while you also often get better food in a more attractive venue. That’s actually something we’ve been doing for seven or eight years now, but it has been increasing now that hotel F&B costs are going up like they are. And we’re also finding that attendees prefer standalone restaurants to hotel restaurants, partly because they feel like they’re experiencing the destination more than if everything is done in the hotel.”

Practical F&B Tips

Because rising F&B costs are causing concerns for more and more planners, Jenkins offers a menu of practical suggestions he says have resulted in significant savings for his clients.

“I like to offer working lunches, in the meeting room, in order to avoid having to rent a separate room for the meal,” he says. “I often eliminate the carving station for prime rib and

The Wi-Fi Conundrum

Despite tough negotiating from hotels in general, and rising F&B costs in particular, perhaps no topic is more sensitive today than the cost of Wi-Fi.

“When it comes to Wi-Fi, it’s the wild, wild west,” Orentlicher says. “Whatever the hotels think they can get is what they are going to charge. And it’s shameful, because we know, pretty much, what their real costs are. And we do realize that if it’s an older hotel and they need to put in a lot of new equipment, they want to pass that cost on. But even saying that, Wi-Fi is still a very contentious issue, and it does cause a lot of friction during the budgeting and negotiation process.”

Orentlicher’s specific objection is that there is so little, if any consistency, in how Wi-Fi is packaged, delivered and priced. “Every hotel is different,” she says. “And again, they are just going to try to get the most they can for it.”

Lindenberg also characterizes the budgeting of Wi-Fi as frustrating. “It’s frustrating because there is now an expectation from the general public, including meeting attendees, that when you walk into a hotel you’ll have Wi-Fi, just like you have electricity and running water,” she says. “So for me as a planner, it’s also something I have to think about when I select a destination or a hotel. We also have to understand what our needs are for a par-

ticular meeting, such as a training program where people will be using their laptops or tablets extensively. So in that case, we might select a conference center as the venue because we know the Wi-Fi will be included, rather than the hotel hitting us up with several thousand dollars in Wi-Fi fees. And on the other hand, if it’s a meeting where people will mostly be listening to speakers and presentations, and not having to be interactive on their devices, we might be OK with a hotel if we know we don’t have to pay for Wi-Fi services we don’t need.”

If hotels stay on their current path, Orentlicher predicts, the situation eventually will lead to a fresh and innovative solution. “I would call this a ‘word of warning,’” she says, “but if some (meeting host) company can come up with a way of providing its own Wi-Fi in a way that completely cuts out the hotel and the third-party AV provider, then the hotel and the AV company will find they lose that business. That’s the thing I hope people are thinking about and considering. And I would use the example of taxicabs to make the point. If taxi companies had done a good job and not kept increasing their costs, and people had been happy with the service, Uber never would have happened. That’s the message. That’s the topic the hotels need to be concerned about.”

Her frustration about the costs of Wi-Fi has



Joan Orentlicher, CMP  
Assistant V.P., Meetings,  
Conventions and Travel  
LOMA and LIMRA  
Atlanta, GA



BUDGET PLANNING

the registration fee. That is the biggest shame of all, because the food is one of the things they remember about a meeting.”

As a result, Orentlicher says, negative comments from attendees about perceptions of declining F&B quality — or quantity — are starting to show up on post-event surveys.

In response, Orentlicher and Hull have begun using offsite restaurants for dinners. For a recent meeting for 700 attendees, they used a standalone local restaurant instead of the hotel for a dinner — and saved \$50,000. In addition, Orentlicher says, attendees enjoyed a better meal and a better experience.

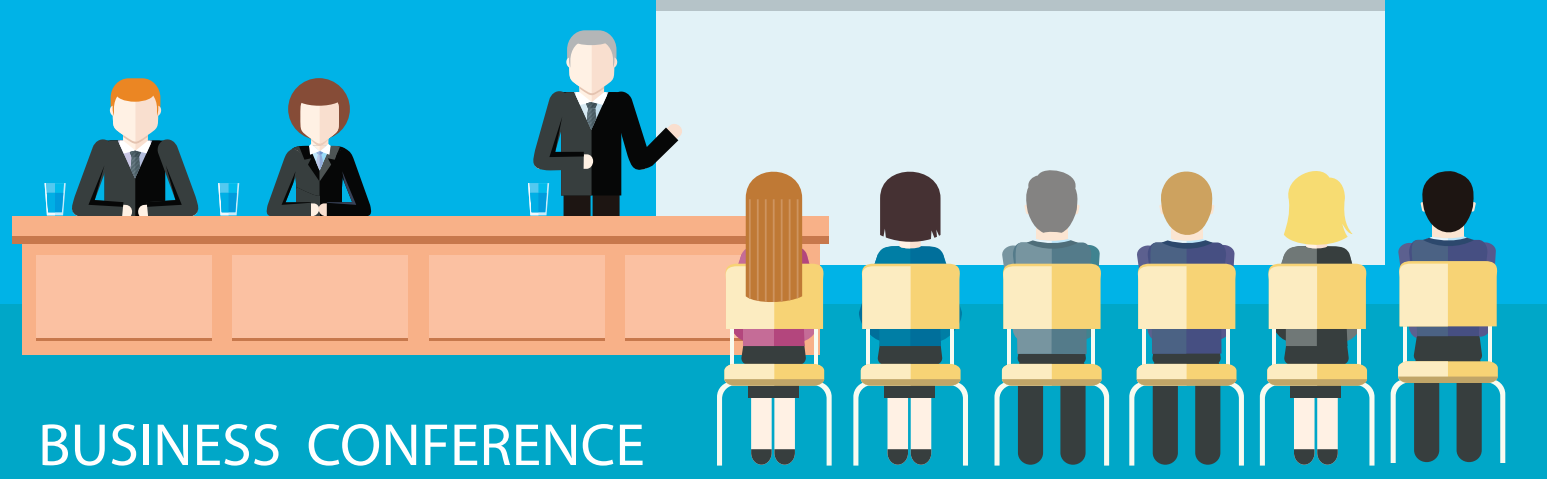
Because Lindenberg agrees that spiking F&B fees are a growing concern, she, too, is now much more open to using an offsite restaurant.

the jumbo shrimp as appetizers, and opt for more inexpensive food such as chicken or fish or mini-appetizers. Another effective tactic is asking the hotel to provide local, seasonable vegetables instead of more expensive items like asparagus, artichokes, or expensive fruits like mangoes or papayas. You can also ask for pitchers of water instead of bottled water. You can control consumption and waste by using seven-inch plates rather than 10-inch plates for receptions and networking functions. And you can substitute a less expensive dessert like cake for the chocolate mousse. The truth is, the average attendee is really not going to notice any of those things, as long as the food you are serving is good. But you can save a lot of money as the planner.”

U.S. Postal Service Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation			
1. Publication Title: Insurance & Financial Meetings Management			
2. Publication Number: 012-991			
3. Filing Date: September 18, 2017			
4. Issue Frequency: Bi-Monthly			
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 6			
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$65.00			
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 2700 North Military Trail, Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394			
Contact Person: Harvey Grotzky			
Telephone: 561-989-0600 ext. 106			
8. Complete Mailing Address or General Business Office of Publisher: 2700 North Military Trail, Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394			
9. Full Names and Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor and Managing Editor:			
Publisher: Harvey Grotzky, Coastal Communications Corporation, 2700 North Military Trail, Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394			
Managing Editor: Harvey Grotzky, 2700 North Military Trail, Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394			
Managing Editor: Susan Gregg, 2700 North Military Trail, Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394			
10. Owner: Coastal Communications Corporation, 2700 North Military Trail, Suite 120, Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394 — Harvey Grotzky 100%			
11. Bondholders: None			
12. Tax Status: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months			
13. Publication Title: Insurance & Financial Meetings Management			
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: July/August 2017			
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation: Controlled			
Legitimate Business Required Distribution	a. Total Number of Copies (net press run)	6,000	6,000
	b1. Outside County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541	3,749	3,760
	b2. In-County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541	0	0
	b3. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid or Requested Distribution Outside USPS*	0	0
Non-requested Distribution	b4. Requested Copies Distributed by Other Mail Classes Through the USPS	0	0
	c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))	3,749	3,760
	d1. Outside County Nonrequested Copies Stated on PS Form 3541	2,129	2,119
	d2. In-County Nonrequested Copies Stated on PS Form 3541	0	0
	d3. Nonrequested Copies Distributed Through the USPS by Other Classes of Mail	0	0
	d4. Nonrequested Copies Distributed Outside the Mail	0	0
	e. Total Nonrequested Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3), and (4))	2,129	2,119
	f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and e)	5,878	5,879
	g. Copies not Distributed	122	121
	h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)	6,000	6,000
i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c divided by f times 100)		63.8%	64%
16. Electronic Copy Circulation N/A			
17. Publication of Statement of Ownership for a Requester Publication is required and will be printed in the September/October 2017 issue			
18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or owner (Signed): Harvey Grotzky, Publisher/Owner Date: 9/18/2017			

“Our biggest challenge and frustration today is the service fees on F&B. ...It forces us to reduce the amount and/or quality of food and beverage that we offer in return for the registration fee.”





## BUSINESS CONFERENCE



**Greg Jenkins**  
Partner  
Bravo Productions  
Long Beach, CA

*Review the big picture and put your dollars into the things that are really important in building value into your meeting for your particular attendees.*

led Orentlicher to a broader perspective about the current dynamics of the marketplace as they relate to the needs of meeting planners.

### Tail Wagging the Dog

"The thing that really frustrates us the most is that we feel that now, the hotel is like the tail wagging the dog," Orentlicher says. "In other words, their restrictions or rising costs, or them not understanding the value of allowing us to do something different, without a big price tag on it, are really making us as planners start to think, 'Maybe we need to start looking at a different way to do this. Maybe we don't need the hotel. Maybe we can find a better alternative.'"

For example, Orentlicher and Hull now consider Airbnb, or a limited service hotel, or a suburb of a destination rather than the downtown area, as potential providers of accommodations for some meetings. "And as a result of all that, I think we are headed for a big disruption that could happen sooner rather than later," she says. "And it's all being driven by rising costs at hotels."

Meanwhile, Lindenberg also has identified two new ways to counter the ever-increasing costs related to hotels.

She recently learned of a company in a different industry that would be hosting a meeting at a hotel during the same dates she would. "I found out about them because we were both in the midst of planning the final details for our meetings, like F&B and meeting space," Lindenberg says. "So, I called the planner for the other meeting and said maybe we can look at sharing some F&B and AV planning. And by sharing resources, maybe we can also find efficiencies that help both our companies in terms of costs. The details of doing that, in terms of things like scheduling meals or breaks, can be complicated, but it's worth the effort if you can save money. The impor-

tant thing is for the two companies to be comparable in the levels of quality and overall experience they want to offer their attendees."

For another recent meeting for 150 attendees at the Wynn Las Vegas hotel, Lindenberg was informed of a significant innovation by the Wynn — "menus of the day," which could be used by any group in the hotel, at a reduced per-person cost.

"For example, during our meeting they offered options like a 'Thai Tuesday,'" Lindenberg says. "And by picking that option, you still get all of the options you need in terms of things like dietary restrictions that you'd have to plan for otherwise. But you get better pricing, and it's also easier for me as a planner. And the larger the group, the more you save on a per-person basis. So I think that is the kind of innovation we'll see more of going forward, now that the Wynn has introduced it."

Regardless of such cost-cutting innovations, Lindenberg says, another important principle of effective budgeting is to include a "placeholder" contingency in every budget. She generally adds five percent. "Doing that," she says, "means that when something happens you didn't expect to have to pay for, like extra transfers from the airport, you have some money in the budget."

Orentlicher offers a more philosophical tenet to the challenges of budgeting. "In the end, it's about the relationship you have with the hotel or other vendor," she says. "If they understand your needs and they're not pushing things you don't need, then you can do business in a way that works for both sides. But if they don't understand your needs, or they're just trying to get you to the total dollar amount they need to show their leadership, then you have to look for a better alternative. And the important question you have to ask yourself is, 'Is this hotel going to work with us or not?'"

**I&FMM**

## WE'RE EXPANDING MORE THAN JUST HORIZONS.



Opening late spring 2017 through fall 2017, the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate will add new meeting space, a spectacular wedding venue, outdoor event space, room accommodations, a market-style restaurant and expanded pool areas—including Orlando's only resort wave pool. With the completed expansion, there will be more ways to defy convention and even more reasons to celebrate.

GUEST ROOMS: 862  
SUITES: 71  
INDOOR MEETING SPACE: 248,111  
LARGEST MEETING SPACE: 28,800  
MEETING ROOMS: 48  
THEATER CAP: 3,200  
BANQUET CAP: 2,400  
CLASSROOM CAP: 2,000  
EXHIBIT SPACE: 72,000



### MEETING SPACE

An additional 100,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting space will be added, scheduled to open this fall. The Osceola Conference Center will feature six new flexible breakout rooms, with a fresh, sleek design. Also included, a 6,500-square-foot Great Room, designed for special events and weddings, and the Great Room Terrace and Patio offers the option of a grand lawn, fireplace and promenade, ideal for outdoor events.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

In addition to the 769 guest rooms and luxury two and three bedroom villas, additional accommodations will be added this fall. A new three-story building will consist of 93 spacious, upscale guest rooms. This will bring the resort's total guest room count to 862.

### DINING AND F&B

Eight on-site restaurants are available, including our new Market-Style restaurant.

### SPECIAL AMENITIES/INCENTIVES

In early summer 2017, expanding the already impressive 15-acre recreation area, Omni Orlando Resort will unveil 24,000 square feet of additional deck space, Orlando's only resort wave pool, 16 additional private cabanas and an expansion of the kid's pool area and water slides. ChampionsGate is also home to the Greg Norman designed National and rejuvenated International Course, and the David Leadbetter Golf Academy World Headquarters.

OMNI RESORTS  
championsgate | orlando

OMNIHOTELS.COM/MEETINGS • GROUP SALES: 407-238-6526





# Teambuilding at Its Best

Effective Programs Reignite Camaraderie, Support Company Goals — and Give Back

**T**eambuilding is often one of the first items on the chopping block when corporate budgets tighten. However, companies that make such a move may miss out on a key opportunity to improve employee performance.

According to experts, teambuilding can improve employee productivity, morale and engagement, and foster collaboration and problem-solving skills while strengthening bonds among coworkers. Ideally, it also serves to reinforce an organization's culture

and mission statement.

And, teambuilding can do all this in the spirit of a fun, energizing and memorable experience.

Having fun, creating memories and enhancing camaraderie were the goals of a five-hour teambuilding event that one financial company held recently at an Orlando hotel for its annual meeting.

Team Rock Stars provided an impactful and engaging program for the company, in which professional rock musicians helped attendees write

**By Derek Reveron**

and perform songs about their company.

The 31 participants came from the company's eight offices in Alabama, Georgia and Florida, so many of them had either never met or had only talked on the phone. "Even people in the five Florida offices had never met," says the company's CEO. "This was an opportunity for all of them to get together and actually interact with each other in person. I expected this event to increase the desire to work with people

who you actually have an interaction with at this event as opposed to being a faceless voice on the phone."

Attendees were not informed of the teambuilding event until they arrived onsite. "Everyone came into a large room for dinner and drinks, and was surprised to find a band playing," says the CEO. "A lot of them weren't sure what was going on. A master of ceremonies took the stage and explained everything. I could see the excitement building as he talked."

After dinner, attendees separated into four groups in four different conference rooms. Each group had a "rock mentor." The mentors, who have performed with groups such as Guns N' Roses, Carole King and Quiet Riot, helped attendees rewrite popular songs such as "Takin' Care of Business" and "Fight for Your Right to Party," changing lyrics to reflect company-related themes and experiences. Each mentor had a different approach, but each had a way to help bring a

group together and agree on the lyrics, says the CEO.

After the writing sessions, each group took the stage in a ballroom to sing their songs, backed up by a band that consisted of the rock mentors.

After each attendee group performed, the band of rock mentors began

and beyond, and it added to the experience. People still talk about it."

The results of the teambuilding event have been long-lasting. "It made them feel good about their work and strengthened relationships that are important to the company," says the CEO. "Before the event, there was the usual professionalism. Afterward, there was a real warmth and connection



**Paul Caine**, Founder/CEO, PC Ventures  
Co-owner, Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy Camp, New York, NY

*"It's all about the people who work for you... and their belief in your mission. ...These kinds of experiences are invaluable in creating a productive environment."*

performing a surprise concert. Soon after the musicians started playing, the power in the hotel went out due to a rainstorm.

"They could have packed it up, but instead, they decided to play an acoustic set in the dark," says the CEO. "It was magical. They played until the power came back on and then continued their concert. They definitely went above

among everyone. People in each office became closer and more willing to help each other."

## Surprises and Learning

Some teambuilding projects are so challenging that they require attendees to learn entirely new skills. Others provide participants with a huge surprise.

Paul Caine, founder/CEO of PC Ven-



*A corporate group performs with Judas Priest lead singer Rob Halford in a Team Rock Stars program.*



tures, and co-owner of Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy Camp, which runs Team Rock Stars, describes an activity that contained both elements — along with a legendary rock star.

"There were about 100 people, and we broke them up into eight or nine bands," says Caine. "They each had a counselor who was a professional touring musician. Each group rehearsed three songs they would perform — two of their choice and one by the rock group The Who. Many of them never played an instrument before, and we taught them how to do it (well enough to accompany the songs). Those who knew how to play did so."

Participants rehearsed for two mornings. They learned on the second day of rehearsals that they would be performing their Who songs with Who lead singer Roger Daltrey. The teambuild-

ing participants kept it a secret so that people who didn't participate would be surprised by Daltrey's appearance when they saw the bands perform.

The event had several goals. "It was designed to be a fun activity and something interesting," says Caine. "The teambuilding involved working as a band, learning to problem solve, and presenting as a team in front of peers. People still remember the experience. I still get emails and notes from people reminiscing, saying it was one of the best experiences we've ever had."

Caine offers the following advice to businesses that either don't do teambuilding or are considering cutting it from their budgets. "At the end of the day, whether you produce a product or provide a service, it's all about the people who work for you, the quality of the talent and their happiness in the or-

ganization, and their belief in your mission and their ability to carry it forward," says Caine. "These kinds of experiences are invaluable in creating a productive environment."

### Giving Back

Increasingly, companies seeking to bond employees with one another and with the destinations hosting their meetings are finding that CVBs can help connect them to local charitable organizations offering Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, from environmental projects to humanitarian aid to the homeless, immigrants, disadvantaged children and others. Attendees, especially the millennial generation, are increasingly motivated by such programs, which have a long-term, positive impact on a community and its people.

In recent years, Norwalk, California-

based Automotive Finance Corp. (AFC) has held several CSR programs in Indianapolis. In one, 240 attendees built wagons for Damar Services Inc., an Indianapolis-based organization that provides services for people with behavioral and developmental disabilities. Attendees competed in quizzes and other fun challenges, which earned them points to buy supplies for the wagons that they later assembled.

At another meeting, 30 AFC attendees played a jeopardy-type game to earn points to spend at a nonperishable food store. Attendees used the food items to build and decorate miniature golf-style "holes." The group then played all of the holes. After the event, attendees donated 125 pounds of nonperishable food to Second Helpings, an Indianapolis-based nonprofit that "rescues" perishable food from restaurants, retailers and wholesalers to create and distribute hot meals to those in need.

Yet another group of 180 AFC attendees built wheelchairs for veterans. The group raced in the wheelchairs for fun and to make sure they functioned before donating them to the veterans.

### Off-the-shelf CSR

Many companies specializing in teambuilding programs are now offering relatively inexpensive "prepackaged" CSR programs that make meaningful contributions to communities.

Los Angeles-based Wise Guys Events offers one such program

## Getting Feedback

Conduct a formal or informal survey after the program to learn what employees liked and disliked, and how the experience can be improved.

### Key questions to ask participants:

- How do you rate the effectiveness of the teambuilding event?
- Which part of the teambuilding did you enjoy most? *People tend to like teambuilding for different reasons (bonding with coworkers, challenges, learning new skills, etc.) and it's important to know what they like best in order to tailor future events.*
- What did you dislike about the experience?
- Would you like to see more or fewer teambuilding events?
- What is your favorite teambuilding activity?

— DR

— Superhero Academy — which has attracted financial firms such as KPMG, PwC and Sameday Insurance.

The experience takes place at an outdoor park and allows attendees to dress up as superheroes. "They rotate between several stations playing 15-minute mini-games with each other that test their teamwork and thinking ability," says Myles Nye, co-founder of Wise Guys Events. "During the event, participants

create videos of the event which they deliver along with gifts to hospitalized children or the charity of their choice."

Nye says that the financial firms taking part in the program typically bring participants who rarely see one another in person as they are from different states and different countries. "Companies say the program brings everyone together and makes them feel like a part of a cohesive team," says Nye. "As far as

## Teambuilding Tips

**Define the objective and purpose** of the teambuilding event, and put it in writing, especially if there are certain behaviors and skills required. For example, "After this activity we want our attendees to..." The best teambuilding experiences involve creativity, collaboration and competition.

**Know your attendees.** Creating a memorable experience is a primary goal, and one of the best ways to do that is to know what will engage and challenge attendees. What are their interests and demographics? Are they adventurous or laidback? Do they like the outdoors, technology?"

**Evaluate the budget.** Is the company paying for what needs to be done, or simply what it can afford? If the budget can't cover what the company needs to meet its goals, then reconsider the purpose and objective.

**Teambuilding shouldn't feel forced and awkward.** The most successful teambuilding activities are those that make participants feel proud during and after the experience.

**Take attendees out of their comfort zone,** providing them with a challenging experience they have never faced. Don't always choose similar activities. And don't pick an activity just because the CEO likes it. Such a move can make the activity feel like an obligation.

**Create teambuilding that requires attendees to set goals,** and develop and clarify roles and procedures to meet those goals.

**Document the experience,** because it reinforces memories. Take photos, videos and share them on the company's website.

**Develop and communicate goals before the experience starts.** Make sure that those who conduct and participate in the teambuilding understand its goals. Ensure that participants understand how the goals connect to their daily duties as well as the company's broader objectives. Determine whether goals include assessing the sustained impact of the teambuilding event on factors such as relationships and productivity.

— DR



Wise Guys Events' Superhero Academy participants engage in playful activities that test teamwork skills, then produce videos that they donate to charity along with other gifts.







Stowe Mountain Lodge in Vermont offers a range of unique teambuilding programs, including this cow-milking competition.

Credit: Destination Hotels

the teambuilding goal, the mini-games get everyone involved, regardless of ability, and combine sophisticated game mechanics with a light-hearted spirit of play, which breaks down barriers and keeps people engaged.”

Prepackaged programs are proving popular because many companies can’t afford customized, offsite teambuilding

ation when choosing a venue and destination for meetings.

According to Destination Hotels’ 2017 State of the Meeting Industry survey, about 60 percent of planners are highly interested in adventure and active teambuilding experiences. Nearly 37 percent of re-



**Myles Nye**, Co-founder  
Wise Guys Events, Los Angeles, CA

*“The mini-games...combine sophisticated game mechanics with a light-hearted spirit of play, which breaks down barriers and keeps people engaged.”*

programs that last several hours to a few days. Planners, DMCs and third-party teambuilding providers such as hotels are offering shorter (some just a few hours or less) teambuilding programs and holding them at local properties or corporate facilities to save on venue and transportation costs.

#### Hotel Programs

Many hotels and resorts provide a growing variety of ready-made teambuilding programs, partly because teambuilding is an important consider-

spondents rated activities such as beach cleanups and school refurbishment projects as highly desirable. Several Destination Hotels properties offer a range of unique teambuilding programs: At Stowe Mountain Lodge in Stowe, Vermont, attendees can help save Vermont’s bat population by building bat houses under a guide’s supervision, or test their farming skills in a cow-milking competition. There’s also a “corporate survivor” activity based on the popular “Survivor” TV show: Teams rotate through five challenging and thought-provoking activi-

ties. A boat-building project at Sun River Resort in Sun River, Oregon, emphasizes teamwork and communication among participants who construct a workable craft from scratch with supplied materials. Wild Dunes Resort in Isle of Palms, South Carolina, offers authentic low-country experiences including oystering and clamming clinics.

Teambuilding has come a long way since programs such as ropes courses and bike building were all the rage. Planners and attendees are now looking for one-of-a-kind teambuilding experiences.

“The current trends we see flourishing are a desire for immersive activities, as opposed to passively watching something, and for CSR,” says Nye. “Workers in general, but especially millennials, are motivated to work someplace if they feel they are doing good beyond simply helping the company grow and thrive.”

Teambuilding programs, whether they are created with large or small budgets, can help unite, motivate and inspire employees. They develop attitudes and relationships that reinforce organizational goals — and provide unforgettable fun.

**I&FMM**

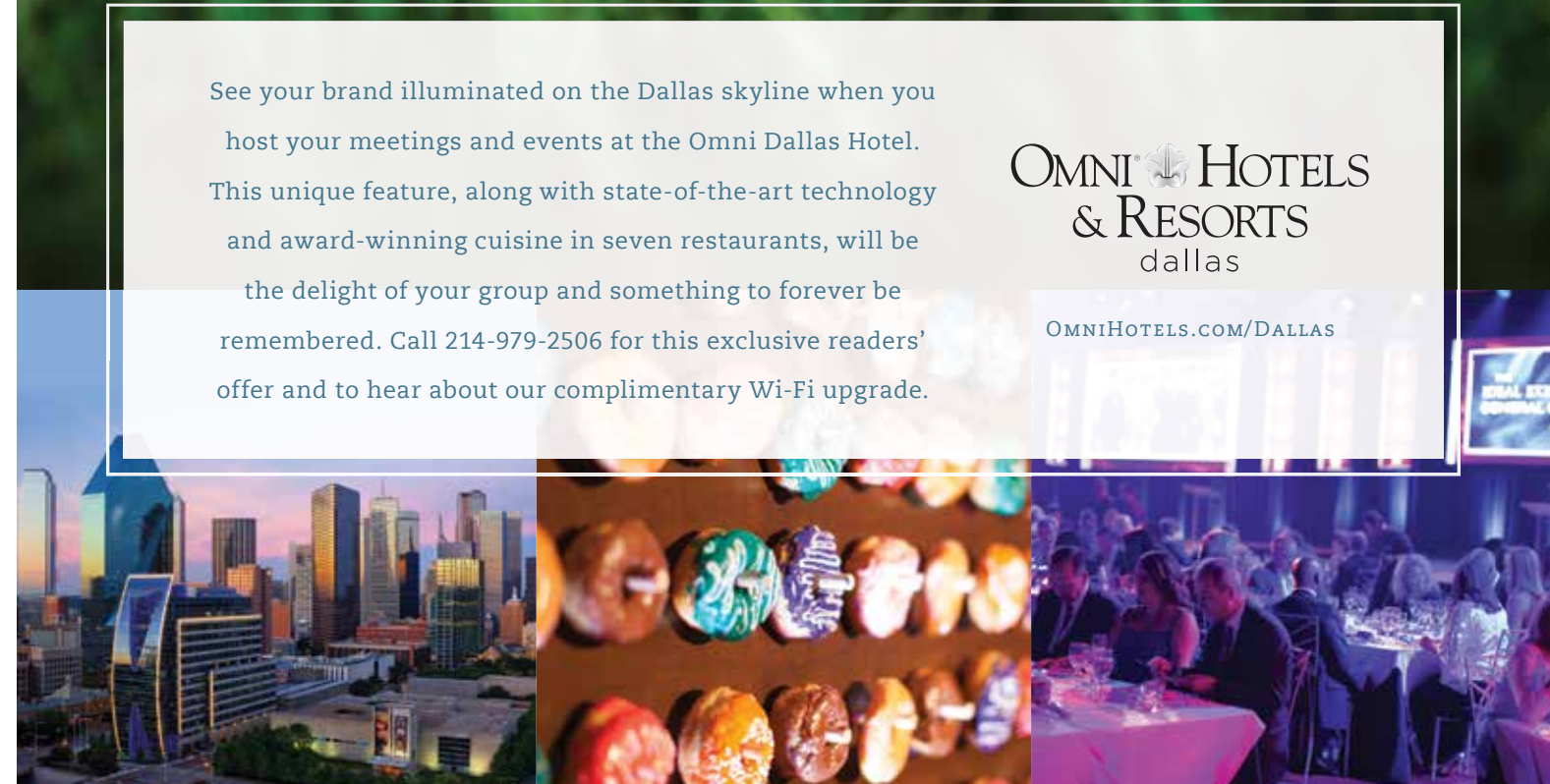
# HOST AN EVENT THAT PUTS YOUR BRAND’S NAME IN LIGHTS.



See your brand illuminated on the Dallas skyline when you host your meetings and events at the Omni Dallas Hotel. This unique feature, along with state-of-the-art technology and award-winning cuisine in seven restaurants, will be the delight of your group and something to forever be remembered. Call 214-979-2506 for this exclusive readers’ offer and to hear about our complimentary Wi-Fi upgrade.

**OMNI HOTELS  
& RESORTS**  
dallas

[OMNIHOTELS.COM/DALLAS](http://OMNIHOTELS.COM/DALLAS)





There are hundreds, even thousands, of reasons to meet in Atlantic City, including all 600,000 sf of meeting, function and exhibit space available in the Atlantic City Convention Center, the largest convention center in the state of New Jersey.

The Atlantic City Convention Center can accommodate large meetings, exhibits and trade shows, and it also offers special deals for small meetings of 50 to 100 attendees. Moreover, it's dedicated to green initiatives and has successfully reduced energy consumption every year since it opened in 1997.

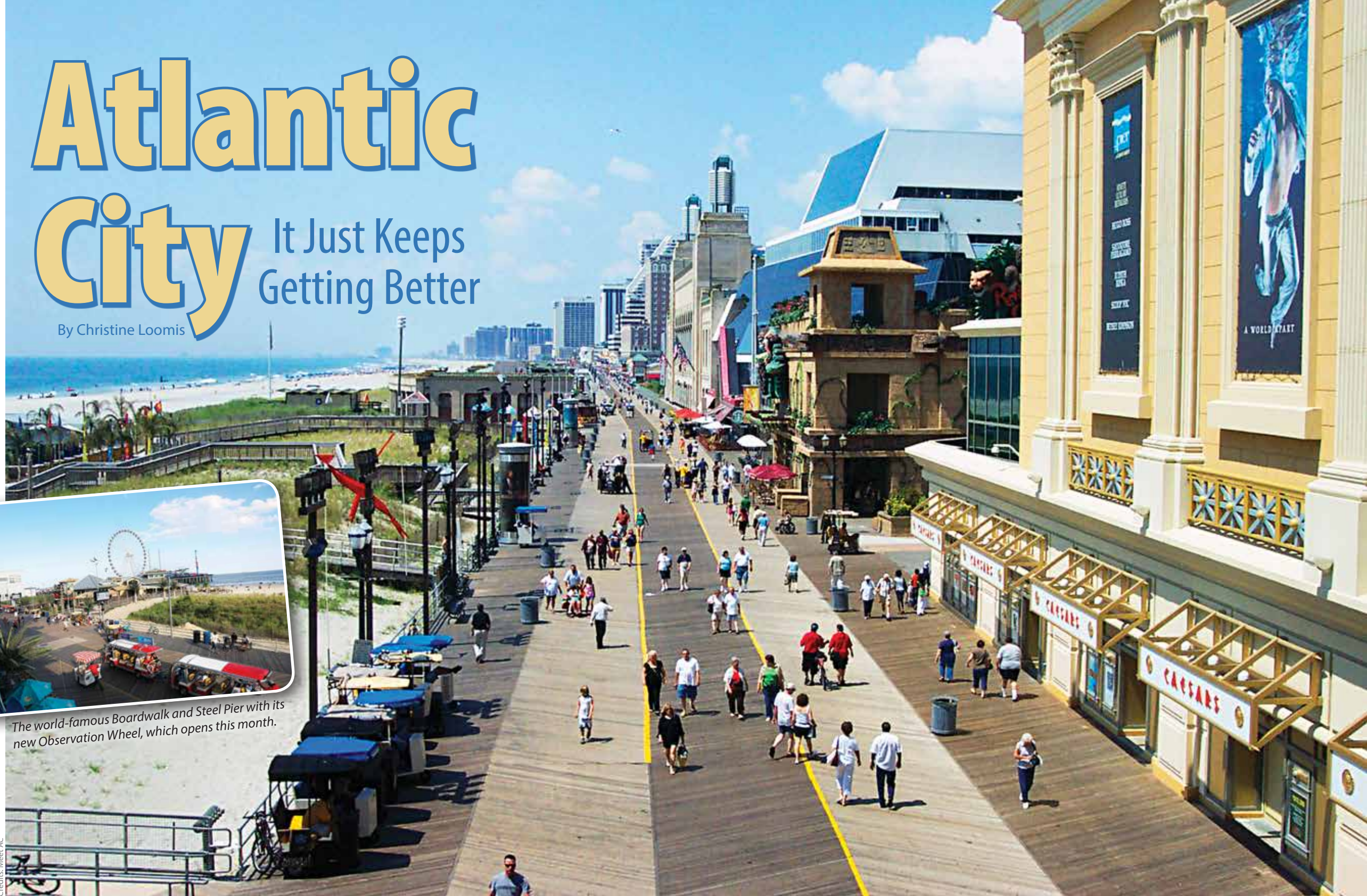
Green-focused planners can learn about energy efficiency, recycling, water usage and more through Meet AC, the sales and marketing arm of the Atlantic City Convention Center and also the first stop for any planners needing information and resources for meetings in Atlantic City.

While the city offers many of the top brands among gaming hotels, it also offers non-gaming hotels for those planners who prefer that their groups meet away from the distraction of gaming action.

Gaming hotels include Bally's Atlantic City, Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, The Water Club (Borgata), Caesars Atlantic City, Harrah's Atlantic City, Golden Nugget Atlantic City, Resorts Casino Hotel and Tropicana Hotel & Casino. Those properties provide a total of 14,253 guest rooms, 207 meeting rooms and a combined 663,594 sf of meeting space.

Non-gaming properties include Showboat Atlantic City, The Claridge Hotel, Sheraton Atlantic City, Stockton Seaview Resort and Courtyard by Marriott, which together offer 2,522 guest rooms, 57 meeting rooms and 397,253 sf of total meeting space.

Even a little research will reveal that Atlantic City has a lot more going for it than the Miss America pageant and its famed Boardwalk — though the beach and the Boardwalk are among the top reasons attendees want to register for meetings in AC to begin with. In addition, the city offers excellent dining and



# Atlantic City

## It Just Keeps Getting Better

By Christine Loomis



The world-famous Boardwalk and Steel Pier with its new Observation Wheel, which opens this month.

Credits: Meet AC

a culinary scene populated by some of the restaurant industry's brightest stars including Bobby Flay, Guy Fieri and Gordon Ramsay. Like its kindred-spirit Nevada gaming city, Atlantic City also gives shoppers much to love, with outlets and high-end boutiques alike, in-

cluding shops at Caesars and Tropicana. Then there's the gaming and nightlife — a big draw for many attendees when meetings wrap up for the day.

What many planners may not know is that *ForbesTraveler.com* ranks Atlantic City as one of the East Coast's premier

golfing destinations, with more than 25 golf courses in the surrounding area. If golf is an essential component of a meeting, Atlantic City is an excellent destination to consider. And, of course, there are spas galore, including the revered Elizabeth Arden Red Door Spa.

But most of all Atlantic City means business. It's a destination that clearly understands the needs of meeting planners and business groups, including those from the financial and insurance industries. It offers all of the elements necessary for successful

meetings — perhaps especially those elements that drive registration, thus contributing positively to ROI for planners and companies.

### A Harrah's Experience

Kimberly Zielinski, conference man-





Harrah's Atlantic City hosted the Professional Insurance Agents Association of New Jersey, which held a reception at the domed pool.

ager with the Professional Insurance Agents Association of New Jersey and New York, says, "Atlantic City is, and always has been, a fantastic destination for our joint annual conference of insurance agents. Atlantic City is a great place to mix business with pleasure. Every year we enjoy record-breaking attendance!"

The association's conference in June of this year drew 2,000 attendees. It was based at Harrah's Atlantic City, where the resort's conference venues provided all of the meeting space necessary. The group did not go off-property for any scheduled functions or events.

"Atlantic City offers a ton of options for large and small meetings, at competitive rates," Zielinski says, "but our conference has grown over the past few years, so we need a larger facility that can hold our group."

Harrah's has worked well. "2018 will be our third consecutive year at Harrah's Resort in Atlantic City. The staff was very professional, friendly and easy to work with throughout the entire process of planning our event," Zielinski says. "We hold a reception at the pool at Harrah's, which is the highlight of our conference. Our attendees love the atmosphere — so much fun!"

"We utilize the new Waterfront Conference Center at Harrah's for our annual conference," Zielinski says. "The space is the perfect size for our group, and the meeting rooms are bright and spacious. We also used Encore Technologies for

all of our AV needs, and they were awesome. If we needed something, they were there at the drop of a hat to assist us in any way."

The majority of the group's sleeping-room block was in the Waterfront Tower, which is the closest tower to the conference center. "This was very convenient for our attendees," Zielinski notes, adding, "the hotel décor is current and pleasing to the eye, and the staff at Harrah's is the best. They are very accommodating to your needs and will do



**"Atlantic City offers a ton of options for large and small meetings, at competitive rates."**

**Kim Zielinski**

Conference Manager  
Professional Insurance Agents Association  
Glenmont, NY

just about anything to help make your event run smoothly."

In terms of location, Harrah's is in the Marina district of Atlantic City, which is off the Boardwalk. "This could be a positive or a negative, depending on what your group is looking for," Zielinski says.

There was a glitch for the group this year but there was a workable solution. "The one challenge we had was that

there happened to be a bicycle race going on in Atlantic City on the first day of our conference. Therefore, the main route to Harrah's was closed. Our attendees were re-routed to go through the city to get to Harrah's. It was a minor glitch," Zielinski says, "but everyone made it to the facility without a problem."

When it comes to advice for other planners considering Atlantic City as a meeting destination, Zielinski says, "If you want to mix fun with business, Atlantic City is the place to have your meeting. There are so many options and there's so much to do."

That said, she adds, "Don't forget to negotiate everything. These hotels want your business and they will certainly work with you to get you there."

#### Cost-effective for CPAs

The New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants also met in Atlantic City in June for its annual convention and expo, with about 1,000 attendees registered. The convention was based at Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, another of the city's properties with gaming.

"As a New Jersey-based membership organization dedicated to serving the needs of the Garden State CPAs and aspiring CPAs, it's imperative that we hold our annual convention in a convenient, cost-effective and enjoyable local location for our members," says Ralph Albert Thomas, CGMA, CEO and executive director of the organization. "Atlantic City checks all the boxes. The

city is just a two-hour drive (or less) for the majority of our attendees and it offers an ideal combination of affordable accommodations and entertainment."

The group used Borgata's Event Center, The Water Club, the new Central Conference Center and the Music Box, the resort's concert venue with 1,000 seats. "Our members truly enjoy visiting the Borgata for our annual convention," Thomas says. "The hotel offers wonderful accommodations, attentive staff and an excellent meeting experience. All of our technology needs were met and the catering was excellent."

Technology is particularly important. "All of our keynotes speak at the Music Box," Thomas says. "These speakers set the themes and the tone for the rest of the convention. The tech staff members go above and beyond to ensure that all our audio-visual needs are met, ensuring that these critical talks go off without a hitch."

The CPA group did not experience any challenges in planning or executing this meeting, but Thomas does offer a couple of pieces of advice to those who might be considering booking a meeting in Atlantic City or at Borgata specifically. "Quality conference space is at a premium in Atlantic City as the city goes through its rebuilding phase," he points out. "Book early and consider a multiyear agreement with a venue."

Additionally, he says, using staff to direct attendees should be considered in addition to signage. "While directional signage is always helpful, it's best to



Credit: Meet AC

position staff on the hotel floor to help attendees navigate their way between functions and conference spaces."

In the end, however, Thomas believes that building relationships in the city is one critical element for a meeting's success. "One of the best ways to organize and execute a great event is by developing strong relationships with the hotel staff. Our event staff members have developed an excellent rapport with the Borgata staff, and it shows in the level of attention and responsiveness that we receive during our event."

#### Rebuilding Phase

It's almost an understatement to say that Atlantic City is a dynamic destination and its "rebuilding phase" extensive. Much has already been done but there is so much more to come, which ultimately will give planners and groups even more choices.

A lot happened in 2016. The historic Claridge was rebranded as a Radisson, and the hotel added 15,000 sf of meeting space for a total of 100,000 sf. In summer 2016 it also opened the city's first and only rooftop bar, Vue, making it an ideal choice for an outdoor function. Showboat Hotel also reopened with 872 guest rooms, and plans are in



In 2016 the historic Claridge was rebranded a Radisson Hotel, adding meeting space and the new rooftop bar Vue.

the works to add meeting space and restaurants. Additionally, Tropicana Casino & Resort Atlantic City finalized a \$50 million renovation project that included room upgrades, expansion and renovations in its Havana Tower and South Tower, as well as a face-lift for Jade Palace, the hotel's Asian gambling room.

Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa spent \$50 million on projects in 2016, including an outdoor pool, beer garden and eatery. A new nightclub also debuted in 2016, and this year the hotel's new 18,000-sf Central Conference Center opened, giving the resort a total of more than 106,000 sf of meeting and event space.

Also happening this year is the highly anticipated 200-foot-high Observation Wheel at Steel Pier, which will give attendees panoramic views of the Atlantic City skyline and ocean from inside climate-controlled gondolas when it opens this month. And Revel, now named TEN, is expected to open later this year.

Hard Rock International purchased the Trump Taj Mahal and expects to open the newly renovated and upgraded property over Memorial Day weekend in 2018. Guest rooms and suites will be completely renovated, along with the indoor pool, exterior, meeting and convention spaces and performance venues. New will be a Hard Rock Casino, Hard Rock Cafe, check-in experience and lobby lounge and new and upgraded dining venues throughout the property.

Also expected for completion in 2018 is Tropicana's skyway bridge con-



The pool at Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa.

Credit: Meet AC





Resorts Casino Hotel recently completed a Jimmy Buffett-themed Margaritaville entertainment complex.

Credit: Resorts Casino Hotel

necting its recently purchased Chelsea Hotel to the main hotel. With the addition of what will be called The Chelsea Tower at Tropicana Atlantic City, the resort will have 2,730 guest rooms.

In 2019, a 350-foot-high vertical Polercoaster will debut in Atlantic City. The state agreed to pay 27.8 percent of the total projected project cost of \$138 million, voting to provide a \$38.4 million state grant. The Polercoaster will rise on the site of the former Sands Casino, which was imploded in 2007. Future plans for other attractions near the coaster site include a zip line, extreme ninja course, an XD Theatre, a skydiving simulator, a bar and retail space. The coaster is expected to open in time for the summer season in 2019.

Caesars is fully engaged in an ongoing reimagining of its properties in Atlantic City. The \$125 million Waterfront Conference Center at Harrah's already opened, as did the Wild Wild West bar at Bally's. Also part of the master plan for Harrah's and open as of this summer are the upgraded 450 guest rooms and suites in the hotel's Bayview Tower, new dining venues and the completion of the multimillion-dollar overhaul of the

hotel's nightclub, The Pool After Dark. About the enhancements management said, "Atlantic City, with its iconic beach and world-famous Boardwalk, has been a mainstay summer destination for decades and our resorts — Bally's, Caesars and Harrah's — are committed to offering guests first-class, Vegas-style experiences without the flight." That's definitely great news for those within driving distance of all that Atlantic City offers.

At Mohegan Sun's Resorts Casino Hotel, all 480 rooms in the Ocean Tower have been renovated. The recently completed update is part of approximately \$100 million that was earmarked for expansion and renovation of the hotel, which included the \$35 million spent on the Jimmy Buffett-themed Margaritaville entertainment complex and a state-of-the-art conference center, which opened in 2015.

The hotel also announced its All-inclusive Meeting Package, which is priced per person, per night and provides morning and afternoon breaks, Wi-Fi in meeting rooms and guest rooms, audio-visual, parking, all taxes, gratuities, resort fees, meeting room rentals and three meals a day. Among the restaurants available for attendee meals is Capriccio, which was hon-

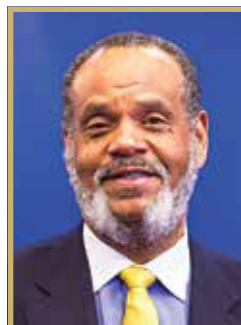
ored for its outstanding wine program in *Wine Spectator's* 2017 Restaurant Awards, announced in August.

"Resorts' all-inclusive package makes the meeting planner's job much easier. One price per person keeps the expenses within a budget and at the same time, provides tremendous value for their investment," says Mark Giannantonio, president and CEO of Resorts Casino Hotel. "Meeting attendees appreciate having a variety of dining venues during their stay, with all meals included in the all-inclusive meeting package."

### Embracing Change

Atlantic City is a destination committed to evolving, upgrading and embracing changes that will make it a go-to meeting destination for planners and groups all along the East Coast. It's already perfectly located, within a few hours' drive of nearly one-third of the nation's population and 20 percent of U.S. business addresses. The convention center offers enough space and easily meets the technology needs of today's conferences, plus it offers an emphasis on

*"Atlantic City checks all the boxes. The city...offers an ideal combination of affordable accommodations and entertainment."*



Ralph Albert Thomas, CGMA  
CEO & Executive Director  
New Jersey Society of  
Certified Public Accountants  
Roseland, NJ

maintaining and improving its green status, an important factor for many planners these days.

The question is not why meet in Atlantic City. It's why not meet in this modern city that is becoming more business- and conference-friendly every day, with improvements already in place and more upgrades in the pipeline that will further elevate the city. **I&FMM**



## THE BEST ON THE WATERFRONT FEATURES REDEFINED ROOMS

Book your next meeting at [CaesarsMeansBusiness.com](http://CaesarsMeansBusiness.com)

CAESARS ENTERTAINMENT

**Harrah's**  
RESORT  
ATLANTIC CITY







**ONG**



**BLANEY**



**ALLOR**



**CONCHING**



**GOODSPEED**

**Gabriela Ong** was named V.P. sales for Meet Puerto Rico. She was brand sales manager, Northeast for Meet Puerto Rico.

**Wendy Blaney** was named chief sales officer, group sales, for Atlantis, Paradise Island in The Bahamas. She formerly served as director, in-market East and Atlantic City for Caesars Entertainment Corporation.

**Shane Allor** was as named director of sales and marketing for Turnberry Isle Miami. He most recently was director of sales and marketing for JW Marriott Camelback Inn Resort & Spa in Scottsdale, Arizona.

**Lee Conching** was named V.P. of Meet Hawaii citywide sales. He was the Hawaii Convention Center's director of sales.

The Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau has named **Sharon Goodspeed** as national sales manager, Northeast region. She formerly served as national sales manager for Caesars Entertainment Corporation.

*I&FMM*



The perfect meeting has a name.

Terry



*Terry, Assistant Banquet Manager, takes care of everything, from setting up your meeting room to ensuring that the coffee is plentiful and hot. He handles the details. You handle the accolades.*

See how we help you get a standing ovation by visiting [CaribeRoyale.com](http://CaribeRoyale.com)

  
**CARIBE ROYALE**  
ORLANDO  
we're all yours

1,335 Suites + 150,000 Sq Ft Meeting Space + 5 Restaurants + 1 Terry  
ph: 1-800-979-3958 | [cariberoyale.com](http://cariberoyale.com)

# REDEFINING BUSINESS



## Make your meeting count. Make your meeting here.

A conference in a private board room, a seminar in the 1,000-seat theater, a cocktail hour by the pool, a celebratory dinner in the ballroom and your own party at Premier Nightclub. Over 106,000 square feet of flexible meeting space. Use as much or as little as you need. Every minute of your meeting can take place at Borgata.

Not only can we cater to your every professional need, but we can also exceed your expectations for dining, entertainment and accommodations. When you meet at Borgata, you can expect more from your meeting.

For more information, visit [theborgata.com/meetings](http://theborgata.com/meetings) or call 609.400.3894.

**Borgata**  
HOTEL CASINO & SPA  
An MGM Resorts Luxury Destination

©2017 Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa. All rights reserved.



# FEEL FREE TO SHOW THEM THE LEI OF THE LAND.

Tropical rainforests. Aquamarine coves. Black-sand beaches. Hawai'i is as colorful and soul-stirring a destination as it gets. And there's no better cruise line to help your attendees experience an incentive program of volcanic proportions than Norwegian Cruise Line®.

- Only Norwegian sails round-trip from Honolulu year-round
- Only Norwegian visits 4 of Hawai'i's most popular islands in 7 days with overnights in Maui and Kaua'i
- Only Norwegian offers an optional 4-day pre-cruise land based tour in O'ahu
- Only Norwegian's Pride of America cruises along the stunning Nā Pali Coast

Want to learn more? Call us at 866.NCL.MEET  
or visit [EVENTS.NCL.COM](http://EVENTS.NCL.COM) Today!

**NCL** NORWEGIAN *Feel Free*™  
CRUISE LINE®

©2016 NCL Corporation Ships' Registry: BAHAMAS and USA 9/16

Porthole  
READERS  
CHOICE  
AWARDS  
2015

PRIDE OF AMERICA

