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INSURANCE & FINANCIAL MEETINGS MANAGEMENT

THE EXECUTIVE SOURCE FOR PLANNING MEETINGS & INCENTIVES

Winning Sports Incentives

Maximize Motivation & Score Business Goals

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Meeting Disruptions

Prepare for the Worst, Expect the Best

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Incentives at Sea

'Feeling Good About Meeting Differently'

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Patrick Glass, President of GEM Hospitality, a top facilitator of incentive programs to major sporting events.



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ISSN 1095-9726USPS 012-991

A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

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INSURANCE & FINANCIAL MEETINGS MANAGEMENT

THE EXECUTIVE SOURCE FOR PLANNING MEETINGS & INCENTIVES

JUNE 2018

Vol. 25 No. 3

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Royal Caribbean's Oasis-class Symphony of the Seas, the world's largest cruise vessel, debuted in March. **PAGE 12**



The Baha Mar development in The Bahamas features the Grand Hyatt Baha Mar, which recently opened. **PAGE 28**



Legal pitfalls in meeting planning can extend far beyond contract negotiations. **PAGE 34**



Meeting disruptions range from speaker no-shows and vendor failures to weather events and security issues. **PAGE 44**

Publisher's Message

Filling the Motivation Gap

If you've identified a motivation gap in your top-performer program, or want to cement relationships with key clients, we've got a slam-dunk solution: exclusive access to a bucket-list sporting event.

Patrick Glass (shown on our cover), president of GEM Hospitality, says insurance and financial services companies lead the pack in using high-end incentive programs to major sporting events such as The Masters, the Super Bowl and Kentucky Derby. "And that has become even more true over the last two or three years," he says. It's no wonder, adds Robert Tuchman, V.P. business development with Entertainment Benefits Group Premium Experiences: "Now sports incentives are widely recognized as a legitimate business tool that is used to enhance corporate results." In our feature "Winning Sports Incentives" on page 38, sports incentive program experts offer valuable insider tips and advice that will help planners put one in the win column. Done right, the enthusiasm generated by this high-level reward



not only pays off in memorability but ultimately in the energetic pursuit of the company's bottom-line objectives. "The important thing," says Glass, "is to have a clear goal and a clear way of measuring success. The companies that meet those two requirements are the ones who do it most successfully and keep doing it year after year."

"Incentives at Sea" (page 12) can help turn the tide for sluggish performance, too, as companies realize the benefits of "meeting differently." The cruise industry is booming, with 15 new ships launching in 2018. New megaships — more like floating cities — that debuted this spring include the 5,400-passenger Symphony of the Seas, the largest vessel in the world, and the 4004-passenger Norwegian Bliss. The first of four new 2,900-passenger Celebrity Edge ships, which will feature a new ship design and innovative features, debuts in December. Smaller luxury lines such as Silversea, Crystal, Oceania and Regent Seven Seas are upgrading and innovating, too.

Find motivating land-based incentives from Hawaii to Florida in "Meetings in Paradise: Spectacular Beach Resorts Awash With Rewarding Experiences" on page 28.

Finally, turn to "Motivation Matters" on page 24 and learn how personalized sales training programs can help to "light the internal fire."

Harvey Grotsky

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A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

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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. © 2018

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Bally's Las Vegas Completes Resort Tower Renovation



Two-room Resort Tower Presidential Suite.

LAS VEGAS, NV — Located in the center of the action on The Strip, Bally's Las Vegas has completed a \$125 million redesign of 2,052 guest rooms and suites in the new Resort Tower. Nearly every guest room at Bally's Las Vegas has been renovated within the last four years. The latest redesign features neutral, dark wood tones and striking pops of red throughout decorative accents and fashionable wall coverings, with various geometric patterns that create a contemporary feel. The new rooms include USB charging stations, chic lounge furniture and reimagined bathrooms with spacious glass-enclosed showers. The recent Bally's Las Vegas renovation followed the completion of the Jubilee Tower rooms and suites in early 2014. Caesars Entertainment donated more than 2,000 rooms of furniture from Bally's Las Vegas — more than \$1.1 million in estimated value — to Habitat for Humanity Las Vegas, hurricane relief efforts in Houston, Texas, and other non-profit agencies. www.caesarsmeansbusiness.com

New Orleans CVB Rebrands as New Orleans & Company

NEW ORLEANS, LA — The New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau (NOCVB) has been rebranded and is now officially known as New Orleans & Company. The former CVB led the development of the city's multibillion-dollar convention and meetings business, grew the visitation of leisure visitors to unprecedented levels and played a key role in New Orleans' ascendance as the world's greatest sports championship destination. New Orleans & Company will focus in its new iteration not only on growing the cultural economy and hospitality enterprises, driving dynamic, sustainable business growth and career-oriented job creation, but also will focus on continuing its evolution as a thought leader, collaborative convener and partner to the workforce, local government and all citizens. www.neworleans.com

IMEX America — Powering Up for a 'Cascade of Cool'

LAS VEGAS, NV — Free attendee and hosted buyer registration opened online for IMEX America number eight. The show is set to shine with innovation and ingenuity in its usual setting of the Sands Expo and Convention Center at The Venetian, The Palazzo in Las Vegas from October 16–18, 2018, with Smart Monday, powered by MPI, on October 15.

There will be once again an enormous range of opportunities to do business, to discover new destinations, hotels, services and technologies, to learn about the latest ideas and trends and to make connections with industry contacts.

There also will be some eye-opening and mind-opening innovations to extend and disrupt traditional concepts of meetings and events. In Frankfurt, one observer described the lineup of new formats and experiences as a "cascade of cool." With IMEX America expanding into larger halls for 2018, IMEX partners and exhibitors will have plenty of room to demonstrate their inventiveness and flex their marketing muscles.

With experiential events dominating this year's business landscape, IMEX America will showcase a wealth of new ideas to planners who are constantly under pressure to deliver new thinking and fresh design. One of the outstanding proponents of these radical, challenging and inspiring new experiences will be C2 International, the groundbreaking experts in innovative business conferences. As a result of a new partnership with the IMEX Group, C2 will be bringing its Learning Labs to Las Vegas, providing a further indication of the IMEX commitment to encouraging creativity in the industry.

Waldorf Astoria Las Vegas to Debut in August

LAS VEGAS, NV — Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts has announced plans to convert the Mandarin Oriental on the Las Vegas Strip to the Waldorf Astoria Las Vegas in August 2018. Waldorf Astoria will assume full operation of the property with plans to reimagine and renovate the hotel with brand touches and improvements.

With elevated offerings alongside Las Vegas' most sought-after attractions, the hotel will offer True Waldorf Service with Personal Concierges. Guests also can expect innovative dining concepts, spectacular views of The Strip from the hotel's exclusive 23rd floor bar, helicopter rides, spa retreats and more.

The property's proximity to all of the amenities of Aria Resort & Casino including a state-of-the-art gaming facility, offers guests convenient access to a signature Las Vegas experience while still providing the brand's iconic True Waldorf Service. www.waldorfastoria.com

Sea Island Launches New Classic-Yacht Experience

SEA ISLAND, GA — Sea Island, a Forbes Five Star resort on the coast of Georgia, recently welcomed Sea Island Explorer, a new 71-foot custom-built passenger yacht, reminiscent of classic yachts of the 1930s. The three-level vessel gives guests and club members the opportunity to explore the rivers and salt marshes that abound among Georgia's barrier islands. Accommodating up to 49 passengers, the yacht features a double living room on the main level, a covered top deck, a prep kitchen and additional event space on the bottom level, making it ideal for scenic nature tours, pre-dinner cocktail cruises, customized private events and more. Food and beverage can be customized for each occasion. Clay Fordham, a naturalist and Sea Island captain with more than 10 years of experience in local waters, will lead all operations aboard Sea Island Explorer. Sea Island is currently celebrating its 90th "Emerald" Anniversary. www.seaisland.com

Gaylord Texan Resort Opens \$115M Expansion



The new Vineyard Tower (right) adds 303 guest rooms and 86,000 sf of meeting space to the Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center.

GRAPEVINE, TX — The sprawling Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center has opened the doors of its \$115 million, all-new Vineyard Tower, which adds 303 guest rooms to the resort's current 1,511 room inventory. It also includes 86,000 sf of carpeted meeting space, bringing Gaylord Texan's total meeting space to approximately 490,000 sf.

The tower features 30,000 sf of carpeted breakout space, generous prefunction space that is open to the second floor, and a corridor to the existing portion of the resort.

On the second floor, the tower features expansive prefunction space as well as another large outdoor terrace overlooking the shores of magnificent Lake Grapevine. The second floor also hosts the new 30,000-sf Tate Ballroom, named in honor of Grapevine's current mayor, Mayor William D. Tate. The décor in the Tate Ballroom pays tribute to the Texas Longhorn, which is seen in the glass-blown horns found inside of impressive chandelier and wall lighting. www.marriott.com



The Sea Island Explorer, a new 71-foot custom-built passenger yacht, features three decks for customized private events.

Rosewood Baha Mar Opens on Nassau in The Bahamas



Rendering of the Living Room, residential in style — a luxurious yet intimate space.

BAHA MAR, BAHAMAS — Rosewood Baha Mar opened June 1 along the pristine beaches of Nassau on New Providence Island in The Bahamas. Rosewood Baha Mar offers some of the largest suites on the island, providing guests with a luxurious, yet residential, experience. The resort boasts 237 guest rooms, suites and beachfront villas. Many of the guest rooms and suites connect to adjacent rooms to create a variety of multi-bedroom configurations, ideally suited for multi-generation family travel. Each room features a light and sophisticated color palette of blues, corals and lavenders, creating fresh and modern spaces inspired by the island's waters and sunsets. And, 12 meeting and event spaces provide the perfect setting for corporate meetings, retreats and incentives.

MPI Recaps World Education Congress 2018 in Indy

INDIANAPOLIS, IN — The following are stats from MPI's 2018 World Education Congress (WEC), which concluded June 5th in Indianapolis.

- Approximately 2,200 registered attendees.
- Planner to supplier ratio was split about 50:50 with 49.6 percent planners and 50.4 percent suppliers.
- 39 percent of registrants attended WEC for the first time this year.
- In total, the mix of attendees represented 35 countries.
- 249 chapter leaders attended.
- 158 suppliers exhibited throughout the WEC Villages.
- Delivered more than 80 total education sessions, allowing attendees to earn up to 11 clock hours.
- MPI Foundation raised more than \$450,000.
- The President's Dinner, Rendezvous and the Text To Give Program raised more than \$250,000 for MPI; the funds will support the MPI Academy in developing fresh and innovative educational programs.
- 1,000 unique users registered for the WEC18 Virtual Pass Program, which featured select sessions from each day of the conference.

Caesars Entertainment Commits to Reduce Carbon Emissions by 95 Percent

LAS VEGAS, NV — Caesars Entertainment Corporation announced it has set science-based targets to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the company and throughout its supply chain. The ambitious goals demonstrate Caesars' ongoing commitment to fighting climate change and mitigating long-term risk.

Caesars is one of more than 400 global organizations that has committed to business leadership and policy alignment on climate through the Science Based Target initiative (SBTi) and one of just over 100 companies to have their targets approved.

Caesars Entertainment commits to:

- Reduce absolute scope 1 and 2 emissions 30 percent by 2025, and 95 percent by 2050.
- Have 60 percent of suppliers by spend institute science-based GHG reduction targets for their operations by 2023.

Caesars is the first gaming company to include a scope 3 goal in its verified science-based targets. This level of commitment helps to further accelerate the momentum of reducing environmental impact as it relates to the operations a company doesn't directly control, including supply chain, vendors, etc. This indirect influence also makes it one of the most ambitious goals for a company. Caesars recognized the importance of engaging the full supply chain in order to create meaningful impact.

Additional progress includes:

- Reduced water use by 21 percent per sf since 2008.
- Diverted 41 percent of waste from landfill in 2017.

For more information on Caesars' Corporate Citizenship, please follow @CitizenCaesars on Twitter.

SnapShots



1



2



3



4



5



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7

1-3 Financial & Insurance Conference Planners (FICP) Education Forum took place June 11-13, 2018 at the JW Marriott Parq Vancouver, British Columbia. Attendees heard from an impressive lineup of keynote speakers, participated in breakout sessions centered on leadership, risk management, employee engagement and more. Networking was center stage and attendees participated in a scavenger hunt that took them around Vancouver on foot and by water taxi. **2** Steve Bova, CAE, executive director, FICP **4-7** The Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) hosted its 25th Annual Education Invitational, May 29-June 2, 2018 at The Grand at Moon Place Cancun, in Riviera Maya, Mexico. The milestone event's forward-looking theme "Building a Grand-New Future" offered attendees the chance to combine research trends, insights, creativity and collaboration to envision the future of the industry and the IRF. **4** Melissa Van Dyke, president, IRF. **5** (L) Jeff Broudy, president, United Incentives Inc. and (R) Melissa Van Dyke. **6, 7** Local experiences included ATV tours and spelunking adventures.

GDPR — Get Ready to Transform Data Privacy

You've heard of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which went into effect May 25, 2018. While the GDPR is a European privacy law, it has global reach and impact. This broad reach, increased privacy standards and the potential for large fines and penalties for companies that do not comply, mean that the GDPR has become a key topic of focus for the business travel and meetings and events community.

Data protection laws are a set of laws that govern the way that businesses collect, use and share personal data about individuals. While these laws are nothing new and almost every country has privacy regulations in place, the GDPR is a major overhaul of the current EU data protection law. In fact, it's the biggest change in EU data protection law in over 20 years. The GDPR is a regulation — which means it must be followed in its entirety throughout the EU. In other words,

GDPR has become a key topic of focus for...the meetings and events community.

no further enabling legislation by individual EU countries is needed for the GDPR to become law.

The GDPR is an attempt to strengthen, harmonize and modernize EU data protection law and enhance individual rights and freedoms, consistent with the European understanding of privacy as a fundamental human right. The GDPR regulates, among other things, how organizations may obtain, use, store and eliminate personal data of individuals. It will have a significant impact on businesses around the world.

Who Does the GDPR Affect?

The scope of the GDPR is very broad. It will affect 1), organizations established in the EU and 2), all organizations involved in processing personal data of individuals in the EU — regardless of where the organization is established, and regardless of where its processing activities take place. This means the

GDPR could apply to any organization anywhere in the world. The GDPR also applies across all industries and sectors.

What Are the Main Changes?

The overarching changes can be summarized as follows:

♦ **Directive vs. Regulation.** The GDPR will become law without the need for implementing legislation in each EU member state. This means a greater degree of harmonization of data protection law requirements across the EU.

♦ **Broader Definition of Personal Data.** The GDPR defines "personal data" more widely than at present, and includes online identifiers such as IP addresses (unique identifying numbers that allow computers to communicate over the internet).

♦ **Extra-Territorial Effect.** The GDPR applies to entities that: 1), have an establishment in the EU; 2), offer goods and services to individuals in the EU; or 3), monitor the behavior of individuals in the EU. Accordingly, entities without an EU presence may be subject to the GDPR's requirements.

♦ **Substantially Increased Fines.** Failure to comply with the GDPR's requirements can lead to fines of up to 20 million EUR or up to 4 percent of total annual global group revenue in a financial year.

♦ **Stricter Consent Requirements.** The GDPR sets a high standard for consent for processing (collecting, using and storing) personal data. The GDPR is clearer that consent must be unambiguous and involve a clear affirmative action. Silence, pre-ticked boxes or inactivity cannot be used to imply consent. Individuals also must be able to easily revoke consent.

♦ **Breach Notification Obligations.** The GDPR requires a controller to report a data breach to the data protection authority without undue delay and, where feasible, within 72 hours of becoming aware of it, unless the breach is unlikely to result in a risk to the rights and freedoms of the affected individuals. There is also an obligation to notify affected data subjects without undue delay in certain circumstances. The GDPR also requires a processor to notify the controller of any data breach without undue delay.

♦ **Expansion of Data Subjects' (Individuals') Rights.** The GDPR bolsters existing data subject rights and introduces new ones such as the right to be forgotten and the right to data portability (transfer of data to another third party).

♦ **Privacy by Design and Data Protection Impact Assess-**

ments. Data protection must be considered from the outset when new technologies are designed, rather than as an afterthought. Controllers must conduct data privacy impact assessments before processing personal data where the processing is likely to result in a "high risk" for the rights and freedoms of individuals due to the use of new technologies or the nature, scope, context and purposes of the processing.

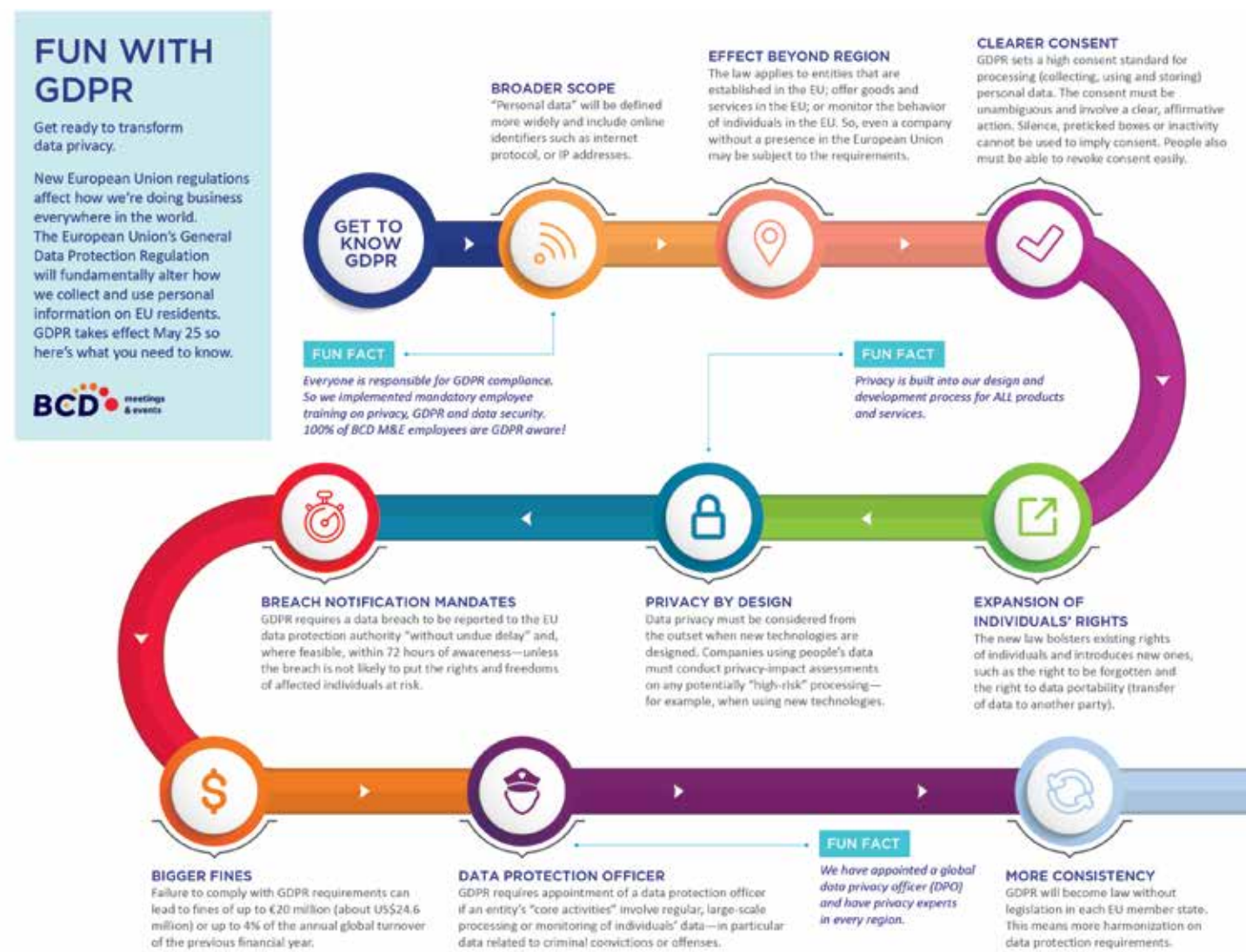
♦ **Appointment of a Data Protection Officer (DPO).** The GDPR requires the appointment of a DPO by all private bodies (whether controllers or processors) whose "core activities" consist of either of the following two processing activities:

1), regular and systematic monitoring of data subjects on a large scale; or 2), processing on a large scale of special categories of data and data relating to criminal convictions or offenses.

Below is BCD Meetings & Events' infographic to help break down all you need to know as the GDPR takes effect.

I&FMM

A world leader in meetings and events, BCD M&E designs and executes meetings, events and incentives through proactive solutions, innovation and the power of imagination. Learn more at www.bcdme.com and follow @bcdme.





Credit: Royal Caribbean International



Incentives at Sea

'Feeling Good About Meeting Differently'

By David Swanson

Meeting planners who've handled the logistics for a meeting or incentive program know how challenging it can be to assemble the disparate pieces for a successful

event. Between room blocks, transportation, dining venues, meeting rooms, AV requirements and activities to appeal to a multifaceted group, fitting together the puzzle pieces requires a commitment of time, energy and money.

But cruise-based programs streamline many elements of planning. And by assembling the disparate functions under one umbrella, logistics can be contained. Meeting planners we've spoken to say that such bundling also usually leads to cost savings over comparable land-based meeting options.

No wonder a growing number of companies are finding that corporate

events at sea sometimes offer an edge over traditional land-based programs.

And the cruise industry is booming. In its annual State of the Industry report, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) announced that the number of passengers projected to cruise in 2018 will reach 28 million, up five percent from last year, fueled by a growing supply of new and bigger ships.

Fifteen ocean cruise ships will debut in 2018, according to CLIA. But even more are already under construction for launches next year, and the first of three 2,860-passenger ships for Virgin Voyages is due in 2020. In all, a record-setting 106

Royal Caribbean's Symphony of the Seas, is the largest cruise vessel in the world. (Above) Royal Caribbean's Oasis-class ships feature Aqua Theater performances, with the deepest pool at sea.



Credit: Royal Caribbean International

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A corporate group event in a Regent Seven Seas show lounge. (Below) Norwegian Bliss is a 4,004-passenger vessel launched this May.

cruisers are on order through 2027, according to *Cruise Industry News* — an order book value of more than \$64 billion.

A Rising Tide

A growing number of cruises are being sold to the corporate and incentive market, according to industry insiders.

“Within our own organization, and in speaking with our friendly competitors, we’re beyond busy,” says Pam Kressley, corporate sales manager for global corporate, incentive and charter sales at Royal Caribbean International. “The economy is good and companies are feeling good about meeting differently. Once companies get in new, perhaps younger leadership they tend to be much more open to trying something different.”

Jerilyn Giacone, director of corporate meetings, incentives and strategic alliances for Crystal Cruises, says the line now has a team to handle leads and RFPs. “We are growing at a great pace and gaining more and more interest in what we are bringing to the luxury marketplace. With the growth of Crystal over four luxury brand experiences — by ocean, river, yacht and customized jet charters and air/cruises — it is vital that we focus our attention on the charter and incentive business.”

And Katina Athanasiou, vice presi-



Credits: Norwegian Cruise Line

dent of charters, meetings and incentives for Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH), asserts business is definitely growing. “We have always had a fantastic team dedicated specifically across all three brands to the corporate market, and over the last 24 months, it’s been growing faster than during the last eight years.”

Exclusive Charter

One planner for a U.S.-based insurance firm who organizes cruise-based events for her company identifies a key factor favoring meetings and incentives at sea as the “contained audience.”

“Everyone has to be onboard the ship to sail each evening and therefore you have all of your attendees available for networking,” she explains.

For an event last September that drew 386 attendees, this insurance company chartered Silversea Cruises’

540-passenger boutique vessel Silver Spirit. The planner said that her company was focused on the destination — the Greek Isles — rather than a specific ship or cruise line.

“It was the ship that was going to be in the area, and the destination was more important to us,” she says. “We hadn’t used Silversea previously but the price point and ship size were an ideal fit for this program. We tend to use smaller luxury cruise lines, as we like to charter the ship for exclusivity. It’s also nice as then we can tailor the ports.”

Silversea had an existing, set itinerary departing from Istanbul, but re-

worked it at the insurance company’s request. “We changed the embarkation port from Istanbul to Athens due to the issues Turkey was facing at the time. We were also able to select which ports we wanted to go to and which ones we wanted to avoid. This allowed us to stay longer in some ports to enjoy the nightlife and also to avoid busier days in port with other ships.

“Santorini is no fun when there are too many ships so we switched dates with another port,” she suggests.

The plans included a short meeting that was held in the ship’s 320-seat Show Lounge. “The meeting is not mandatory, and we never expect the whole group to attend, so while the theater didn’t accommodate the entire group, we were fine. The technology has improved tremendously over the years, so the quality of the presentations and sound are better. It’s a natural setting for



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a meeting with the existing stage and theater-style seating.”

The planner says her company has been doing cruise meetings for a number of years and uses a DMC for all activities and arrangements on shore. They also don’t utilize a third-party, using the cruise line’s liaison for support and guidance.

“We love to charter, as the ship will arrange special onboard events and meals,” she adds. “One night they put together an elaborate buffet on the pool deck with all the décor and lighting; it was fabulous.”

The planner says one downside of scheduling incentives on a ship is that one typically can’t book dates more than a year or two in advance, after deployment schedules have been established. But otherwise, the flexibility of the onboard staff is key to making meetings at sea work.

“If they say no in the preplanning phase before the cruise, you can typically get what you want once you’re onboard. The (cruise) director is your best friend. They run the entire ship and can get you almost anything you need.”

Adapting to Changing Needs

As the industry evolves, so do the ships. The spotlight usually lands on the megaships steaming out of shipyards — Royal Caribbean’s Oasis-class Symphony of the Seas, which debuted in March, is currently not only the largest in the line, holding 5,400 passengers (at double occupancy), but the largest cruise vessel in the world. It will be eclipsed by another Royal Caribbean ship coming in 2021. But the smaller, more upscale end of the industry is growing just as fast, with new builds by Silversea, Ponant, Crystal and Regent cruises coming online in the next two years. In late 2019, the first of three 298-passenger ships comes online for The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection. And now, Royal Caribbean for the first time can offer high-end luxury experiences with their recent acquisition of a two-thirds stake in Silversea Cruises.

Another megaship new to the scene is Norwegian Cruise Line’s Norwegian Bliss, which entered service in April 2018.



Oceania’s dining rooms range in capacity, giving groups the option to buy out one or more restaurants. Shown here: Oceania Marina docked in Nassau, The Bahamas.

A sister ship to Norwegian Escape, Bliss is notable for the largest go-kart track at sea, an open-air laser-tag course, a high-end barbecue venue and water slides that send riders out over the ocean. Following its May 30 christening in Seattle, the 4,004-passenger vessel first heads to Alaska this month, becoming the largest ship ever to sail the West Coast, before beginning service from Miami on November 17.

Existing ships also are being adapted for the changing needs of cruise lines. During its March refurbishments, Silversea’s Silver Spirit didn’t just get new carpet and paint — the 36,000-ton ship was literally sliced in half during dry dock, with a new, 49-foot-long midsection inserted. The lengthening of the ship added more pool deck, additional dining, an expanded fitness center and cabins for 68 additional passengers.

Innovation for meetings and incentive planners also is called for. Katina Athanasiou, of Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, recalls one event that demanded creative solutions.

“We had a super high-end client that needed capacity for 1,000 to 1,200 guests and there is not a luxury line in that size,” she explains. “It was a challenge that nobody else could accommodate at the time. But we drilled down into the needs of the program to understand their objectives. We wound up running two ships, Regent’s Voyager

and Navigator, which offered the ability for people to go back and forth between ships. They were able to get everyone together for a reception on Voyager, then did an offsite dinner at a port of call.”

Three Brand Identities

Athanasiou’s position in the industry is unique. She sells not only Norwegian Cruise Line, but also Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas. This puts 26 ships with three distinctly different cruise operations at her disposal, catering to all price sectors of the cruise market, and in all regions of the globe.

“I fought hard to have all three brands,” says Athanasiou. “Someone may come to us and say, ‘I really want Oceania because I’ve heard amazing things about those ships,’ but when we start to dive into what they want out of the program, we might steer them to one of the other two brands. We can really hone in on giving them the right product, and we get to provide consistency with terms and contracts. There are so many positives from the synergies that happen.”

Freestyle Dining is what makes Norwegian Cruise Line unique, says Athanasiou. “Freestyle Dining provides the opportunity for you to dine when you want, where you want and what you want. It’s not easy, operationally, especially for a large line. But by not forcing people into locking down a set time and table, Norwegian was an innovator.

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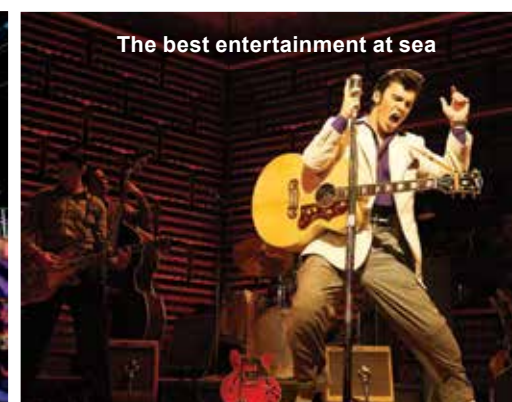
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Theater show on the Seven Seas Navigator and (below) Deck 11 pool on the Seven Seas Explorer.

"Oceania has been a little gem sitting between the big and little guys, and between the premium and luxury side. There are more inclusions, like bottled waters, sodas, Wi-Fi, and specialty dining. And the dining rooms range from 10 to 120 passengers, so groups can do a buyout of one or more restaurants."

"Regent Seven Seas is an amazing value and brand," adds Athanasiou. "What sets it apart is the inclusiveness, with free unlimited tours on every single voyage. If we're in port 12 hours you can do a tour in the morning, come back to the ship for lunch, and do another in the afternoon."

Athanasiou says the financial and insurance sectors remain very strong for NCLH, and points to Europe as being the leading cruise destination for these planners, "by far."

"The Eastern Mediterranean has had a huge resurgence of interest, probably followed by the Western Med and then Northern Europe. After Europe would be the Caribbean, followed by Alaska." Athanasiou also notes that Norwegian is the only cruise line that sails inter-island in Hawaii, aboard the U.S.-built *Pride of America*, year-round.



Credits: Regent Seven Seas Cruises

Royally Big Ships Are Big Sellers

On the destination front, Royal Caribbean's Pam Kressley says that Bermuda has been "exceptionally busy lately," for incentives and charters. "Not many folks have been to Bermuda and it does not, as a rule, have large resorts — you can't have 1,500 guests at a resort here. It's also an expensive destination. So a cruise gives people a chance to get to Bermuda at a great price."

Kressley suggests that a cruise is the

only way to do a large program in Alaska, so those ships are doing well, while the third most popular "destination" she cites is the line's four Oasis-class ships.

"They are the biggest sellers in our fleet," says Kressley. "Simply by being the biggest ships in the world they're a draw, the destination is second. There are so many unique venues to choose from, and no other cruise line has a Boardwalk, a Central Park, a Studio B. These venues are unique to this class

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The Crystal Serenity offers free, unlimited Wi-Fi connectivity to guests across multiple devices.

of ships, and our groups can privatize them, even for a large-scale event.”

Kressley says Royal Caribbean’s team dedicated to supporting MICE channel exclusively numbers 58 people, led by Lori Cassidy.

“It’s a very valuable channel of business at RCCL,” explains Kressley, “and it requires a specially dedicated team. There are a lot of resources we put towards it, working with incentive house partners and cruise brokers that sell exclusively to this channel.”

Crystal Clear Benefits

Not only has Crystal Cruises developed a dedicated charters, meetings and incentives team, but Jerilyn Giacone says the line has added new features on its ocean ships that meeting planners will appreciate. Guest capacity aboard Crystal Symphony, which has been sailing since 1995, was actually downsized during a major renovation completed last October by converting standard veranda staterooms into suites. The ship now accommodates 848 passengers, eight percent fewer guests than before. A similar refurbishment of Crystal Serenity to be completed this November will reduce capacity to 980 passengers. The result for both ships is more elbow room and a higher crew-to-passenger ratio — key for the luxury sector.

“Crystal was the last luxury line to in-



Credits: Crystal Cruises

roduce open dining in our main restaurant and now offers more dining options for both lunch and dinner,” says Giacone. “This is a bonus for groups and incentives that want a luxury experience but also variety and choices that a small luxury ship does not offer. The entertainment lineup also has been updated with new shows and more options early evening for guests who prefer to see a show or hear a single entertainer or comedian before heading to a later dinner. With new technology, we are now able offer free, unlimited Wi-Fi connectivity to guests across multiple devices both in staterooms and throughout the ships. Crystal Symphony and Crystal Serenity are also the only luxury ships with a dedicated movie theater, which works well for corporate presentations, meetings, panel discussions and lecture programs.”

Crystal Cruises occupies a unique

niche in the industry: Carrying just under 1,000 passengers, the line’s two ocean ships are slightly larger than the largest for other luxury operators.

“Our medium-size ships are really in a class by themselves in the luxury cruise space,” explains Giacone. “The ships accommodate fewer guests than other premium lines of similar size, so Crystal has more space per guest, can offer more suites and dining and entertainment options.”

Eden on the Edge

For Celebrity Cruises, all eyes are on Celebrity Edge, a new ship design with four ships ordered that will begin to de-

but this December. The 2,900-passenger vessels are slightly smaller than Celebrity’s groundbreaking “Solstice Class” line, but will have innovative features such as Eden, a multifaceted, three-deck group space ideal for gatherings, dinners, and functions; a movable deck; and cabins with balcony-like spaces that convert from outside to inside. The recently announced Meeting Place will offer 1,970 sf of event space.

Exemplifying how size is everything in this business, in May 2019 the 100-passenger Celebrity Flora will take to the seas. Designed specifically for cruising the Galapagos Islands, Flora also will be ideal for incentives and small group meetings with an emphasis on corporate responsibility. The intimate vessel will utilize cutting-edge technology and ecofriendly practices to make exploration of this precious archipelago more sustainable, accord-



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The Celebrity Edge will feature spaces ideal for group functions. The versatile spaces include the Edge Villa (above) and (below) Eden.

ing to Lisa Vogt, Celebrity's associate vice president for corporate incentives, meetings, and charters.

"A Galapagos cruise not only makes the ultimate bucket-list incentive trip and ideal for small meetings and executive retreats, but they also provide an incredible opportunity to give back to the environment and the local community," says Vogt.

Savings at Sea

A key reason planners like setting meetings and incentives at sea is cost savings. Although it depends on a group's typical spend, Pam Kressley at Royal Caribbean says, on average, savings are about 30 percent.

"They'll save especially on meeting facilities, since our AV is complimentary," Kressley explains. "Our theaters can hold up to 1,400 people — think of the cost if you had to build staging and seating in a ballroom and convert that from scratch! We do charge \$75 per hour per tech person, but only for the main theaters — it's complimentary in our conference centers.

"The other area that offers big, big savings is food," she adds. "There are no F&B minimums on our ships, and that can be a huge challenge on the land side."

The meeting planner from the insurance company cautions that F&B savings depend on the number of offsite events you plan, due to the all-inclusive nature of a ship.

"The ship used to negotiate with you

group, sharing a summer Mediterranean itinerary with independent travelers. Anthony says this was not an issue for her group.

"The shared space worked very well. My group preferred it, as they felt like they could meet other people. And for first-time planners not used to cruises, I would definitely recommend using a third-party."

Voyager received a bow-to-stern refurbishment in November 2016 that gave the ship a fresh, more contempo-



Credits: Celebrity Cruises

if you weren't going to utilize their outlets on the evening of, say, a gala dinner, where 99 percent of your attendees are off the ship. They now are not so apt to do so. If you are spending on offsite meals, you may not be saving money if the ship isn't willing to negotiate."

Stacy Anthony, CMM, vice president of meetings and events for insurance broker NFP, says handling her event with Regent Seven Seas Cruises allowed for a more accurate budget process.

"We usually only do four- or five-night events, so a seven-night makes it more expensive," explains Anthony. "But we found the attendance was high due to the excellent ports and itinerary. The group could see a lot in seven days."

NFP worked with cruise broker Buy the Sea to plan her event, and did not charter the whole 700-passenger Seven Seas Voyager for the 180-person

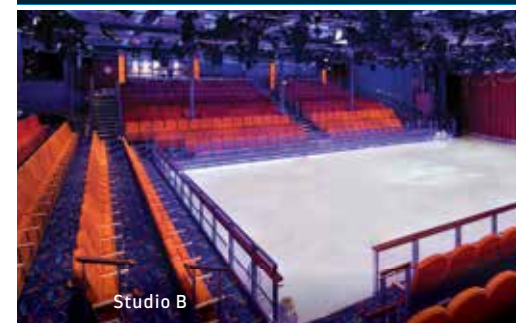
rary look, part of \$125 million in fleet-wide upgrades for Regent's three older ships. The line debuted a fourth ship in 2016, the \$450 million, 750-passenger Seven Seas Explorer — Regent's first new ship in a decade. In early 2020, a sister ship, Seven Seas Splendor, will debut.

Anthony came away with suggestions for planners, starting with getting familiar with the ship layout and operation, and the daily agenda. "There's limited space for groups that are not chartering the ship, so we had to adjust our agenda to be able to use the space when not in public use. Work your event around their agenda for better space and (to make it) easier to manage, but don't deviate too much from what the ship is used to doing — it confuses the staff on the ship. Listen to their recommendations as to what works best."

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Motivation Matters

Personalized Sales Training That ‘Lights the Internal Fire’

By Keith Loria

The year 2018 is all about micro learning and personalization. The implication is that motivational sales training is evolving from an event to a continuous process. While meetings will still happen, they won’t be the only forum or platform for igniting motivation.

“The key to motivational sales training is to make sure that it connects with the learner’s motivation,” says Julie Thomas, president and CEO of ValueSelling Associates, a sales training company based in Rancho Santa Fe, California. “Everyone is motivated — just for their own reasons, not our reason. Motivational sales training is designed to light the internal fire of every individual in the room. For the motivation to last — it has to be personal to the individual. External motivation will only go so far to drive behavioral change.”

Service, Content and Creative Thinking

One of the biggest trends in motivational sales meetings is blending the content of the meeting with relationship and team-building goals.

“Blending a service project element is the no-brainer best way to check all of the boxes, and inspire and motivate your people at the same time,” says Lain Hensley, president of innovation and delivery for motivational teambuilding and leadership training company Odyssey Teams, based in Chico, California. “Not separating them as unrelated, but blending them to model the key elements of your meeting and bring to life the values of your organization and culture.”

Thomas also touts teambuilding activities to include in an agenda. For

instance, a few years ago, she included a cooking challenge where the team was divided into small groups that each prepared a different part of a meal. The event was called “Holy Moly Ravioli” and it was a big success.

Nancy Friedman, president of Telephone Doctor Customer Service Training in St. Louis, regularly gives training and sales sessions to the insurance industry, including being a two-time speaker at The Million Dollar Round Table, a major meeting of insurance brokers and financial advisers. She notes a time-honored tenet that still rings true: Audiences need and want content as much as they want to be motivated.

“Motivation doesn’t last long without content. I have found our programs receive great feedback because I’m providing them with information they can use in their daily work lives and that motivates them to do their jobs better,” she says. “By giving them the information they need to provide better custom-

er service to their clients or shoppers, they become self-motivated. And this makes them better salespeople.”

Sales meeting activities are still popular and buzzworthy but today, presenters need to consider all genders and physical abilities. Activities need to be engag-

ing, but participants can’t feel forced to cross personal or social barriers for fear of being overlooked when it comes to promotions or recognition.

Bryan Mattimore, president of Growth Engine, based in Norwalk, Connecticut, runs a wide variety of sales training and motivational meetings in the world of finance and insurance, as well as other industries.

He recently was hired by a large insurance company to give a keynote to 100+ brokers in New York City on creative thinking techniques to improve sales performance. Mattimore has seen a trend



of clients underwriting creative thinking approaches for their broker network as a way to add value and solidify relationships.

One client, Fiserv, asked Growth Engine to design and facilitate a national sales meeting with eight of their divisions to find cross-selling opportunities. In the day-long session, approximately \$125 million in cross-selling opportunities with 25 different banking clients were identified. Less than a year later, the company had realized \$72 million in new revenue from this one sales meeting.

“This is a trend of using sales meetings to achieve a direct ROI, in this case by identifying new cross-selling opportunities with current clients,” Mattimore says.

He also was hired by the CEO of a medium-size Midwest insurance company to train its salespeople in creative thinking techniques and ideation session processes in a two-day meeting.

“One technique in particular (the problem redefinition technique) was used to generate ideas for new selling strategies and tactics that in a year’s time generated an increase in sales for the company of 52 percent,” Mat-

“I’ve found that content — giving them key information that they can incorporate into their daily interactions with customers — is king.”

Nancy Friedman, President
Telephone Doctor Customer Service Training, St. Louis, MO

timore says. “The trend here is training salespeople how to be more creative in generating new selling ideas, opportunities and markets.”

Tips for Improving Engagement

When it comes to audience engagement, speaking from a podium and reading from a teleprompter won’t work, but walking among the audience and interacting with the crowd will.

“It’s key to show there are no physical barriers and that you’re comfortable within their group,” Friedman says. “Also, PowerPoint slides are becoming a big turnoff. As a professional speaker and



“Motivational sales training is designed to light the internal fire of every individual in the room. For the motivation to last — it has to be personal to the individual.”

Julie Thomas, President and CEO
ValueSelling Associates, Rancho Santa Fe, CA

management trainer, I am always in the audience — and use no PowerPoint. ‘A relief’ many have told me.”

Joan Cooney, assistant vice president of field development and training at Combined Insurance, a Chubb company, has engaged more than 2,000 insurance agents throughout the U.S., and shares that guest speakers and/or peer trainers are a must when possible, as there is no better way to motivate and learn than from those who are successfully doing it.

“We believe these meetings provide a great opportunity for our agents to come together, share tips with each other, discuss areas of opportunity, learn something new and be motivated and ready to go back into the market and sell when the meeting is complete,” she

Recently, in speaking with a client about the barrier to performance in her sales organization, Thomas’ client identified that the biggest difference between her top performers and everyone else was work ethic. Unfortunately, work ethic is a trait that is very difficult to teach. The first step in executing and adopting any new skill, she says, is the personal decision to change and do something differently.

Creating the Ideal Meeting

Most people have their own opinion about what a successful meeting looks like, and it often depends on the group itself and the key messages that need to be delivered to that specific group.

“As a speaker, I always get that information from my meeting planner in advance, prior to even stepping on an airplane,” Friedman says. “Most people putting the meeting together are quick to share audience needs and wants. I’ve found that content — giving them key information that they can incorporate into their daily interactions with customers — is king. Even the very seasoned agents thank me for providing a tip they had not considered.”

Thomas says the perfect meeting should include everything the sales rep needs to be successful in the future.

“Those creating the agenda and content should put themselves in the shoes of the audience and create agendas and topics that will add value to the participants,” she says. “The best meetings include a mix of product and internal training and updates, messages from executives on the strategic direction of the company, skill boosting and, of course, inspirational and motivational speakers or training. Most successful meetings

also include best practices and peer-to-peer success stories and tips.”

Thomas adds that before every annual sales meeting for ValueSelling Associates, she polls the entire organization and asks them what would be the

“For our agents, a perfect meeting contains time to recognize the great achievements of attendees within the past month and the opportunity to share stories about what works or doesn’t work, which allows for open

“A perfect meeting contains time to recognize the great achievements of attendees within the past month and the opportunity to share stories about what works or doesn’t work.”

Joan Cooney, AVP, Field Development and Training
Combined Insurance, Chicago, IL

best use of their time and what topics they would like to see included. Their insights always shape her agenda.

Cooney’s best tip is to be diligent in developing an agenda that specifically includes time allotted for learning and engagement.

conversation among the group,” she says. “We also always aim to further educate our agents on sales tactics, product information and more at these meetings because we find someone can always learn something new.”

Still, the perfect meeting is the one

that achieves the company’s objectives and satisfies the needs of individual participants.

The Need for Regular Meetings

Meetings are important for a number of reasons. In reviewing the objectives of most sales meetings, there are typically themes such as learning and education, recognition and celebration, teambuilding and collaboration, motivation and inspiration.

“Ultimately, the meeting becomes the format to communicate and create competence and confidence that both the sales reps and sales managers have what it takes to go out and be successful,” Thomas says. “Sales is a communication process, and communication is a basic human experience. I am having more and more conversations with clients about how to humanize their

sales process in an age of artificial intelligence and big data.”

Friedman believes that most sales training attendees are there for self-improvement and motivation. Even those who come in dreading the training session usually leave having learned something new that makes them more productive.

“I also think training sessions are a great opportunity to make people laugh, so laughter is a key part of my presentations,” Friedman says. “Most motivational speakers offer humor even if self-deprecating.”

Hensley says sales training meetings are important because, more than anything, people need to feel a sense of purpose — the spark that ignites the fuel of work and life.

“When people share stories of the good and bad parts of their job, it helps put things into perspective, and they realize that collectively they are part of something important,” he says. “We are all so busy with our own jobs. Without some conscious effort to pause the daily challenges of completing email and fin-



“Blending a service project element is the no-brainer best way to check all of the boxes, and inspire and motivate your people at the same time.”

Lain Hensley, President of Innovation & Delivery
Odyssey Teams, Chico, CA

sentation or not staying after is also a mistake as audience members like to interact with speakers by asking questions, offering feedback and taking photos. This creates a more memorable and satisfying experience overall.

Technology snafus related to webinars, livestreaming, audio-visual aids and the like can trip up a meeting, too, so it’s important to test equipment ahead of time and have a backup plan ready in case something just won’t work properly.

Some of the biggest mistakes Hensley sees are simple to solve. For instance, when creating lanyard name tags, print the person’s name in BIG enough letters to read and put their name on both sides.

“The trend here is training salespeople how to be more creative in generating new selling ideas, opportunities and markets.”

Bryan Mattimore, President
Growth Engine, Norwalk, CT

ishing conference calls, people rarely look to each other for ideas or support unless they are at their absolute last option, and that is too late. We need external pressure to pause in the middle of the game to connect and see each other as resources and share solutions to common problems.”

Everyone Makes Mistakes

There are some basic rules that all motivational sales meetings should follow. The program should always be G-rated; Google should not be used as a training ground for an unfamiliar topic; and speakers should never insult their audience.

Friedman also feels that not mingling with the crowd prior to the pre-

Also, he suggests not letting the same people sit together in the same place throughout the course of the meeting.

“Make it a rule that at the end of each break they must sit at a different table with different people and enforce this rule,” he says. “Also make presentations short and interactive whenever possible. Be creative. You got people together so they could get together. Connect them to each other and to the information whenever possible.”

The biggest mistake Thomas sees is those who prepare too much content for the time frame. “We can only digest so much,” she says. “When every department (in the company) requires the opportunity to get in front of the sales team, the meetings turn into pure one-

way communication and completely lose their effectiveness,” she says. “This can be easily avoided by using the meeting for activities, planning and execution, rather than just knowledge and updates. The key is to keep the participant’s needs in mind when building the agenda rather than the speaker’s needs and desire to be on the stage.”

Above all, Thomas says a meeting must have a call to action. She’s been to too many meetings where everyone’s fired up during the program but that enthusiasm isn’t carried into the field.

“Help the participants create action plans that can be implemented and have the management and coaching support in place after the meeting is over,” she says.

While it may sound obvious, Hensley warns against numbing attendees with lengthy PowerPoints and presentations. For example, if you want to go over the company’s financial numbers for the past quarter, don’t drone on for hours from the stage.

“If this must be part of a meeting, consider at least making it fun and engaging by putting (participants) into teams of five,” he says. “Then give them a pop quiz to guess the numbers on a team answer sheet. Then as you review the financials, get some guesses from the crowd and reward the team with the most correct answers. Have one person from each group of five move to the quiz race area and tell them to ‘Step forward if you get an answer correct.’”

Remember, sales meetings can feature the most engaging and inspiring motivational speakers with great stories to tell, but they won’t be successful without a call to action that inspires performance and yields meaningful results.

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The Value of Venues

Where a sales training meeting is held can be a motivational tool in and of itself. Lain Hensley, president of innovation and delivery for motivational teambuilding and leadership training company Odyssey Teams, advises choosing a location that has natural aesthetic beauty and is centrally located to minimize travel time — such as Arizona and Colorado, two of his favorite destinations.

“However, consider that if you are going to have a meeting in a beautiful location, you may actually need to keep them inside with no windows,” he says. “Great views on the outside can be a huge distraction. At Odyssey Teams, we don’t like outside venues, restaurants and booze/food during the programs. They are all distractors that ultimately take away from the total impact/value that our programs have when framed and planned correctly.”

As a veteran speaker, Nancy Friedman, president of Telephone Doctor Customer Service Training, says she can adapt to any venue whether it’s a huge convention center or a small hotel room. “Venue is important, but the people trump the venue,” she says. “I’ve spoken in Des Moines and Hawaii. Each was great.”

Joan Cooney, assistant vice president of field development and training for Combined Insurance, says her company often holds meetings in large conference rooms at its existing field offices or, when needed, at a local hotel, easing the burden of travel on all attendees.

Julie Thomas, president and CEO of ValueSelling Associates, recommends always going offsite and out of the office. After all, if a meeting is in a desirable destination, people will not dread attending it. “The best meetings that I have attended have been in resort/hotel type settings,” she says. “The reps have the opportunity to relax as well as attend the meeting. When meetings are



To avoid distraction, planners might want to close the curtain on this attractive view from the boardroom at Gaylord National Resort.

held in the office, it is too easy to be distracted, pulled out for a call or side conversation, and there is nothing new or fresh about the experience.”

Some of Thomas’ favorite venues are the Hilton La Jolla Torrey Pines in California and Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in National Harbor near Washington, DC, but she’s also been to fabulous meetings in Florida, Las Vegas, Scottsdale, Hong Kong and San Diego.

Bryan Mattimore, president of Growth Engine, says when choosing a venue, he ensures that he can turn the meeting room into an ideation session room. “This means that we are able to create flipchart ‘ideation stations’ around the room where rotating teams (in a kind of idea volleyball) can contribute new sales ideas (or builds on existing ideas) to grow the business,” he says. Places that have been good for this include the Arizona Biltmore, the Delano South Beach in Miami and the Mandarin Oriental, Miami. — KL

Meetings IN Paradise

Spectacular Beach Resorts — Awash With Rewarding Experiences

By Cynthia Dial



An oceanfront luau and evening setup at the 806-room Hyatt Regency Maui Resort and Spa.

What can be said about a meeting planner's selection of a waterfront location, lengthy stretch of beach, over-the-sea sunsets and teambuilding activities such as surfing and standup paddleboarding? If the reaction borders on envy, keep reading for details from the pros who have treated their teams to events that share the same location: paradise. From Hawaii and Southern California to Florida and beyond, the basics can be perfection and the results are almost always positive.

Aloha Hawaii

As director of contests and recognitions with HealthMarkets Insurance Agency — a health, Medicare, life and supplemental insurance distribution company — two items steered Kelly Moore, CMP, to Hawaii. With the company headquarters in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, she says two main factors led her group to the Hyatt Regency Maui Resort and Spa: 1), brand and 2), location.

With respect to brand, Moore explains, "I've used the Hyatt brand for several events and feel confident using

one of their properties because of how I am treated and the flawless execution of my events. They deliver what they preach." She gives a special shout-out to sales representative Rhett Ferguson for his attentive professionalism — even after the contract was signed. "He stayed in touch throughout the entire planning phase and met with me daily throughout the event. He was also the last person I saw when I left the hotel at the end of my event."

Regarding location, the group's first night underscored its island setting with

Hyatt Regency Maui's luau. Though the hotel has a six-nights-a-week luau for the public, the insurance group's perfectly timed arrival fell on the off night. "The hotel was fully set up for a luau, so I only had to hire the performers and select the menu. Everything else was done, and did I mention it was oceanfront?"

Perfectly pitched on a three-mile stretch of Kaanapali Beach, the 806-room resort features three tennis courts, a half-acre pool, four restaurants, four bar/lounges, an outdoor dinner theater/luau area and more than 100,000 sf of meeting and convention space. The most recent enhancement is the expansion and update of the Monarchy Ballroom, the transformation of a former garden to The Halona Kai event and social space overlooking the beach (complete with state-of-the-art acoustic and audio-visual systems) and a new Regency Club Lounge.

Daytime events for the insurance group included a daily poolside radio show and a day-of-arrival market of local vendors coordinated by Desilva Meeting Consultants, a DMC that arranged a store-like setup of exclusively made-in-Hawaii items from which attendees could select their own welcome gifts.

The top achievers' excursion included 100 of HealthMarkets' top agents and their spouses on five catamarans for a half day of snorkeling. Arranged by a local, family-owned company, Trilogy, at day's end there was a boat race back to the hotel. "I have a very competitive group, so they loved this," says Moore.

Of special appeal to this active group were such pastimes as volcano hikes, bike rides, jeep tours, boat trips to Lanai and a helicopter ride, pursuits for which the DMC set up an early sign-up website, making the process effortless.

From experience, Moore has a few tips for planners vis-



Aulani, a Disney Resort & Spa in Oahu, Hawaii, is a 21-acre resort and offers 21,258 sf of flexible indoor and outdoor meeting and event space as well as 76,685 sf of additional outdoor space.

iting Hawaii. Use local talent and local products, to not only give your attendees authenticity but also to save money by not having to ship everything from home. She also suggests incorporating a give-back program for the community. Example: Instead of investing in a centerpiece for each

"As a planner in the financial and insurance industry, every dollar counts. We are expected to provide a better experience each year at an amazing destination with the same or a lesser budget," says Moore of the resort offering discounts and perks to planners booking a minimum of 15 rooms for three or more nights through 2018.



Kelly Moore, CMP, Directors of Contests and Recognitions
HealthMarkets Insurance Agency, North Richland Hills, TX

"(The Hyatt Regency Maui) received higher service marks than all other past properties. That says a lot. My attendees felt well taken care of and that's what matters the most to me."

morning, the company donated to a different area charity with table signage describing the charity of the day. Inclusions were Hawaii Wildlife Fund, Maui Food Bank, Pūnana Leo o Maui and Boys & Girls Clubs of Maui.

"Maui is one of my favorite destinations," she elaborates. "This property received higher service marks than all other past properties. That says a lot. My attendees felt well taken care of and that's what matters the most to me."

Oahu's Aulani, a Disney Resort & Spa, prides itself in treating attendees to the Hawaiian culture with a bit of Disney magic. Home to the islands' only floating stage (perfect for award ceremonies, live performances and product displays), the 21-acre resort offers 21,258 sf of flexible indoor and outdoor meeting and event space at its state-of-the-art conference center, as well as 76,685 sf of additional outdoor space (includes a private beach and secluded lawns).



Montage Laguna Beach's activities include kayaking, beach volleyball, onsite culinary classes and more (above: lobby/lounge).

Wellness Meetings Perk

Recognizing the continued wellness trend — at work, as well as home — San Diego's Paradise Point resort has paired with Road Runner Sports to offer meeting attendees a healthful, customized group fitness activity.

It begins with a minimum of four custom-fit running shoe options from Road Runner Sports (made from a 3-D foot/arch image and measurement, along with a running/walking analysis and paired with custom insoles). After selecting the perfect pair, there's a 5k teambuilding run/walk around nearby Mission Bay. The finale is a healthful breakfast, with options such as build-your-own acai bowl bar, a smoothie bar and more. — CD



Credit: Paradise Point Resort & Spa



Credit: Monarch Beach Resort

Monarch Beach Resort, on the coast of Dana Point, California, recently completed a \$40 million renovation, including 400 guest rooms.

California Dreamin'

Montage Laguna Beach and the Annual Key Producers Meeting are the perfect match, states Janice E. Quals (10-year FICP member), divisional assistant vice president of facilities and IT customer support, Great American Insurance Group. "My main objective is to ensure that our guests — most of whom are top executives of brokerage

"The guests absolutely love Montage Laguna Beach, and if I could have the event there every year, the attendees would go out of their way to attend."

Janice E. Quals, Divisional A.V.P. Facilities and IT Customer Support Great American Insurance Group Los Angeles, CA

companies — have something different and unique to look forward to," she says.

Situated in the renowned artists' colony of Southern California's Laguna Beach, this 250-room, turn-of-the-century craftsman-style luxury resort is perched on 30 lush acres atop a cliff overlooking the Pacific and a collection of marine tidepools.

Held every year in late February or early March, this three-night incentive includes a host of activities offered to all attendees and their significant others. Choices — many of which are exclusive to an on-the-beach location — include kayaking, beach volleyball, electric bike tours, offsite culinary classes, onsite culinary classes in Studio (the resort's signature fine-dining restaurant) and surfing lessons, as well as resort marine docents (to introduce guests to its tidepools) and beach butlers (to adhere to its guests' on-the-sand needs).

Of additional appeal is more than 22,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space, including a 7,500-sf Grand Ballroom (divisible by three), 3,200-sf Gallery Ballroom (divisible by two), three additional meeting rooms and outdoor meeting space featuring four event lawns.

It is the service, however, that particularly pleases this planner. "I rate all aspects of a property from the towel hanging in the bathroom to the carpet." She continues that what especially differentiates this property from others is the overall service — everyone from the

bell staff to housekeeping to registration to the conference service manager.

"The guests absolutely love Montage Laguna Beach, and if I could have the event there every year, the attendees would go out of their way to attend. Most attendees are top executives from large organizations who go to numerous events each year, but they make it a point to attend our event when it is held at Montage. I've already booked for 2019," she concludes.

Monarch Beach Resort, another premier Orange County property, is a AAA Five Diamond beachfront resort along the coast of Dana Point. Having completed a \$40 million transformation in 2016 — a refresh of its 400 guest rooms and an exclusive spa partnership with Miraval — the resort offers more than 30,000 sf of indoor event space, 60,000 sf of expansive outdoor space and such activities as standup paddleboard and surf lessons with the resort's Surf Hosts and exclusive marine adventures



Movie producer Jack Skirball built Paradise Point, a Destination Hotel, in San Diego for Hollywood execs looking for a fantasy escape.

through the Ocean Institute. In spring 2018, James Beard award-winning chef Michael Mina opened his internationally recognized steakhouse, Bourbon Steak, replacing Stonehill Tavern.

Jeremy Vannatta, managing director, marketing and communications, PayneWest Insurance, also selected Southern California for his company's annual March or April get-together. He explains the choice of San Diego's Paradise Point Resort & Spa as the site of his company's three-day sales incentive, Network Builder, for the company's top sales producers, managers and insurance carrier partners.

"Our marketing team conducts an extensive site selection process to determine the best location," says Vannatta. The criterion: a comfortable and relaxing venue for colleagues and carrier partners that also meets the needs of the annual event's unique space requirements. They additionally look for a warm weather lo-



Credit: The Diplomat Beach Resort

The 1,000-room Diplomat Beach Resort offers more than 209,000 sf of interior function and meeting space as well as a private marina.

cale — giving attendees a reprieve from the Pacific Northwest's cooler months — says the planner of his group representing 30-plus locations in Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.

It was after sharing the group's needs and receiving subsequent proposals that Paradise Point quickly rose to the top of the list of potential sites. "Located on San Diego's Mission Bay, it felt like a great cross between Hawaii and California," explains Vannatta. Activities such as beach parties, golf and SeaWorld (conveniently located across from the resort on Mission Bay) helped seal the deal.

Originally developed in 1962 by mov-



Credit: Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa

Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa, in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida sits on 65 acres of Audubon-rated grounds and recently underwent a \$25 million renovation.

ie producer Jack Skirball, who wearied of constructing film sets only to witness their demolition at the movie's completion, built Paradise Point to be "a permanent fantasy-island setting as an escape for families and Hollywood executives."

This 44-acre island hotel, located mere minutes from downtown San Diego and the airport, serves up 462 California bungalow-style guest rooms, more than 80,000 sf of indoor/outdoor event space (making it the largest conference hotel on Mission Bay) and one mile of beach — all complemented by a lagoon, gardens and the bay. Additional beach-style amenities include the Paradise Surf Academy, beach cruiser, quadricycle surrey and longboard skateboard rentals; 14 beach bonfire pits; four championship tennis courts; and an NBA-size basketball court.

The final evaluation says it all. "As event planners, you usually have a strong feeling if the event will be a success during its planning and execution — but the proof is always with the comments you hear afterward. And boy did we hear amazing feedback," exclaims Vannatta. Bottom line: "We're already in planning stages to make sure Paradise Point is back in our rotation of exclusive properties that meet our high standards."

Florida Favorites

Another beach venue, a different coast, describes Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa, set in Ponte Vedra Beach on Northeast Florida's Atlantic coast. Its recent \$25 million refresh is noticeable throughout the resort — the hotel

façade, the Cascades Event Lawn, Surf-Stream wave simulator and the hotel's 514 rooms (each room has an additional 30 sf), as well as new bedding, linens, carpet, lighting and bathrooms. There are 65 acres of Audubon-rated grounds, more than 61,000 sf of indoor and out-

"We're already in planning stages to make sure Paradise Point is back in our rotation of exclusive properties that meet our high standards."

Jeremy Vannatta, Managing Director, Marketing and Communications PayneWest Insurance, Billings, MT

door social event space, a full-service spa, privileged access to TPC Sawgrass (home of PGA Tour's Stadium Course) and teambuilding opportunities such as Amazing Taste (akin to TV's "Amazing Race," this is a culinary scavenger hunt) and Boardroom (think "Apprentice").



Wyndham Grand Clearwater Beach, a 343-room resort, provides planners 22,000 sf of event space and a luxury spa at 5,700 sf.

Credit: Wyndham Grand Clearwater Beach



Credit: Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa

Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa features al fresco dining at the oceanfront Breeze Ocean Kitchen.

Jay Marsella, director of sales and marketing for Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa says, "Outdoor venues continue to be a trend at a resort. However, customers are looking for the 'wow' factor when it comes to not only their receptions and dinners, but also their meeting sets, staging and production."

Continuing along both Florida coasts are numerous beach resorts that beckon planners and attendees alike.

Located on the sunshine state's Gulf Coast in the city of Hollywood is The Diplomat Beach Resort. With more than 200,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting and event space, it is Florida's largest convention hotel south of Orlando. The Diplomat's \$100 million restoration and transformation, includes 1,000-rooms and offers more than 209,000 sf of interior function and meeting space, 10 new culinary concepts (including chef Michael Schulson's Japanese-inspired Monkita and Geoffrey Zakarian's coastal American eatery, Point Royal), a kosher kitchen and catering menu, a Blue Wave-certi-



Credit: Atlantis, Paradise Island, Bahamas

A uniquely cozy beachside meeting setup at Atlantis, Paradise Island, Bahamas.

fied beach and a private marina located on its Intracoastal waterway.

Representing one of the industry's newest luxury beach properties, Wyndham Grand Clearwater Beach celebrates the location's surf, sand and sunsets. Located between the Gulf of Mexico and Clearwater Bay, this 343-room resort gives the meetings world more than 22,000 sf of event space and a luxurious 5,700-sf spa, The Pallavi Luxury Spa. With a guiding principle derived from its name Pallavi, meaning "new leaf," treatments include a selection of pamperests such as poultice



Credit: Grand Hyatt Baha Mar

The Jack Nicklaus Signature golf course Royal Blue at the 1,800-room Grand Hyatt Baha Mar, Bahamas.

massage — a massage therapy based on healing practices of India and tailor-made for those suffering from jet lag and muscle pain.

Self-described as "an intimate ocean retreat offering a new-fashioned luxury Palm Beach experience that invokes the relaxed glamour of America's original resort destination," Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa represents everything luxury. Its exclusive perks include 309 Jonathan Adler-designed guest rooms, the Forbes Five Star Eau Spa, two oceanfront swimming pools (including an adults-only tranquility pool), aquatic sports such as boating and fishing and more than 30,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting and event space (accommodating groups from 10 to 1,000).

Tony Fitzjohn, director of group sales at Ponte Vedra Inn & Club in Ponte Vedra Beach, says groups typically lean toward beach destinations for incentives. His best tip for planners booking a beachfront property is to research

the destination's high and low seasons to find the best time to book the venue. Planners also should plan for alternative outdoor group activities in the case of not-so-optimum weather. His backup suggestions: yoga workshops, cooking classes and spa visits.

Ponte Vedra Inn & Club's meeting break activities — structured to encourage team fraternization and designed to showcase its setting — include Beach Olympics and Amazing Race. Among its meeting break culinary treats are golf ball cupcake pops, Arnold Palmer popsicles, chocolate-covered orange wheels and key lime square tarts.

Better in The Bahamas

The recent opening of the Bahamas' 1,800-room Grand Hyatt Baha Mar provides a luxury island option. Perks include direct beach access to the resort's Beach Sanctuary, a variety of water sports, seven pools, more than 20 food and dining outlets from a conch shack to a Flamingo Deck overlooking the pink flamingo habitat; a 30,000-sf ESPA spa (the Caribbean's first and only); the Caribbean's largest casino (100,000 sf); a Jack Nicklaus Signature golf course Royal Blue; and a 200,000-sf convention center — all accented with a Bahamian flair.

The 600-room Coral at Atlantis, Paradise Island, Bahamas, is the product of a \$20 million transformation of the former Coral Towers and represents the most centrally located of the five Atlantis hotels, with proximity to the Atlantis Conference Center, casino and Marina Village. As the region's culinary capital, the Atlantis Collection includes such notables as chefs Nobu Matsuhisa and Todd English.

Fitzjohn offers practical advice: "If you are conducting a meeting at a beach venue, be sure to give your guests the time to enjoy the spectacular amenity. A simple early morning walk on the beach is a perfect way for your attendees to clear their minds to be ready for a day of meetings." **I&FMM**

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Get the Legal Advice You Need

Avoiding Planning Pitfalls in Today's Litigious Environment

By Christine Loomis

The state of the world has impacted meetings, travel and hospitality. From politics, terrorism, unprecedented weather volatility and catastrophic natural disasters to wildly fluctuating global economies, planners work in an increasingly unpredictable environment, forced to consider a multiple of "what ifs?" as they organize events and programs.

And given the litigious environment these days, they must understand how legal issues come into play, in contracts and elsewhere.

The Planner Perspective

Wayne Robinson, CMP, CMM, assistant vice president with Rhode Island-based FM Global, sums it up this way.

"We are in the midst of a prolonged seller's market favoring the supplier side with high demand in popular destinations and markets typically used by insurance and financial firms. Flexibility in contract negotiations is not as easy as it used to be. There was more wiggle room in big-ticket items such as slippage and cancellation. Now we have to be prepared to negotiate knowing we may not get the attrition percentages, lower deposits further out, concessions or favorable cancellation clauses once offered in a negotiation."

He says planners have to deal with these things on a case-by-case basis and attorney review is always the best practice. "Most planners use specific clauses to protect their companies, but the biggest challenge is navigating the changing landscape affecting negotiations right now. For example, more emphasis is placed on how world events can affect meetings such as se-

curity, medical risk, change of flag, destination infrastructure and political climate. Many of the challenges that were not key determining factors a short while ago are front and center now. We have a lot more questions to answer before we can green-light a meeting."

For Kip Lambert, chief culture officer at Utah-based Destinations Inc., vague language in contracts is an issue. "What's come up lately have been

portance of "due diligence in selecting meeting sites as well as comprehensive review of vendor contracts," and offers an interesting Canadian perspective.

She believes planners should require certificates of insurance from all vendor partners and in certain cases should request to be co-named. "From a legal viewpoint," she adds, "we must be certain that we conduct a risk assessment in conjunction with our clients

regarding any destination under consideration. This is immensely important if something untoward occurs during the program."

As a Canadian, MacPherson also brings up an interesting legal issue that has come to the forefront today as a result of the immigration debate in the United States, which could potentially have a gravely negative affect on future U.S. meetings — and their considerable contribution to the U.S. economy — even if companies have little recourse to make changes today.

"Canada is culturally diverse and our groups can include attendees with a myriad of birth origins," she says. "Currently, our clients have not cancelled meetings or incentives into the United States as a result of the immigration bans, and they continue to book into the future as well. There are a few reasons for this. Our clients have

many programs that will be actualizing in the near term, thus cancelling these now would incur significant cancellation charges. At the other end of the spectrum, clients are booking far into the future, as far as 2023, and are utilizing U.S. destinations in the hope that some of the immigration bans and travel restrictions will be resolved."

That said, she adds, "Certainly, some U.S. cities have lost programs and high-profile events due to laws or attitudes toward the LGBT community."

Robinson and MacPherson are lucky to be in companies with expert staff available. "We have in-house counsel conversant with aspects of law affecting meetings and incentives," MacPherson notes.

Robinson says he's lucky to have the right help but there's a downside. "We have a legal department that's very adept at hotel and venue contracting. The challenge is that our attorneys are so risk adverse because of the nature of our industry that we have to negotiate quite a bit."

Which brings us to what attorneys have to say.

The Attorney Perspective

Good attorneys are risk averse. That, after all, is the nature of their work. And when you're talking meetings, there are many risks to consider, which is why you want an attorney with expertise in the issues, laws and rulings that impact the meetings industry.

Lisa Sommer Devlin, of Phoenix-based Devlin Law Firm, specializes in hospitality law and is a member of the Academy of Hospitality Industry Attorneys (AHIA). She puts it this way: "Having a relationship with a lawyer that focuses on representing groups in the meeting industry is important. Lawyers practice in many different areas, and just like you wouldn't ask your dermatologist to deliver your baby, you should not assume that any lawyer can evaluate event contracts. No planner likes to incur the cost of having a lawyer involved, but in the legal arena, the adage that 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure' is very accurate."

Tyra Hilliard, Esq., Ph.D., CMP, attorney and professor at College of Coastal Georgia, another AHIA member, advises planners to use AHIA as a resource to find attorneys who specialize in the

legal needs of those in the meetings and hospitality industries.

Devlin addresses a variety of issues that planners should consider as they go about the business of creating successful meetings and incentive programs, however likely or unlikely they are to happen.

"Many of the challenges that were not key determining factors a short while ago are front and center now. We have a lot more questions to answer before we can green-light a meeting." Wayne Robinson, CMP, CMM



Assistant Vice President
FM Global
Johnston, RI

Having alcohol at an event, for example, should not create liability exposure for planners as long as it's served by employees at a venue with the necessary permits and insurance. Where a planner could get into trouble, Devlin notes, "is if the planner engages in conduct encouraging drinking by attendees that leads to an injury, or arranges an event at which attendees serve themselves and there's no bartender or other server monitoring consumption."

Personal injury or illness could arise related to alcohol, as well as in other areas. "Any issues relating to personal injury or illness should be high on a planner's list of things to keep front of mind," says Hilliard. "As my friend Jim Goldberg, Esq. (a DC meetings-industry attorney) likes to say, 'If someone gets hurt, someone's got to pay.' This includes anything from alcohol-related injuries (or worse) to someone getting mugged in the area of the hotel to a sudden cardiac arrest or allergic reaction to food...and more. That planners are choosing hotels that don't have automated external defibrillators, for example, boggles my mind."

Planner negligence could be an issue though it's not a common one. "I

have not seen many claims of planner negligence," Devlin says. "A simple explanation of negligence is that a party responsible for taking an action either did not act reasonably or failed to act, which causes an injury. For a planner, a claim could arise out of the planner not taking reasonable steps to make sure the venue booked was safe or that it met the requirements of the meeting. Or if a planner was responsible for negotiating a contract and failed to include protections for the end-user that lead to a loss."

Hilliard reminds planners to think beyond contracts. "I think planners often hear 'legal' and think only contracts. But it's not just that, especially when talking about negligence. Negligence can be present in any part of the planning process." Hilliard offers a non-exclusive list of possibilities:

- Planner doesn't do due diligence and chooses a venue that is known to be unsafe.
- Planner doesn't ask the venue about its food safety training or history and should have.
- Planner hires a security company that's not bonded and doesn't background check its employees, and something adverse happens related to that.
- Planner doesn't inform facility security about known risks with specific people or aspects of the program and something adverse happens.

"In reality, it's about all actions (or omissions) the planner undertakes," Hilliard says. "Negligence stems from a breach of duty of care, and a planner's duty of care doesn't end with contract negotiation. The duty carries through every step of planning and management."

Planners also must be aware of less obvious issues, including copyrights and trademarks. "Any time you're considering using anything created by another party, whether photos, music, logos, artwork, written material or anything else, you need to make sure that you have the proper licenses and permissions to use it," Devlin says. "If in



doubt, consult an attorney who practices in the area of intellectual property.”

How many of us are well-versed in antitrust laws, and how exactly do they impact the meetings industry? “Antitrust laws are complex,” Devlin says, “but are generally designed to protect customers from sellers that collude to fix contract prices or terms. For example, laws prevent hotels bidding on a citywide event from sharing with each other the room rates they intend to offer in order to reach agreement on a minimum bid, as that’s anti-competitive. On the other hand, the planner can share information in an effort to get the best deal, such as saying, ‘Hotel A offered rooms at \$200; your offer is \$250. Can you match \$200?’ It’s unlikely the planner would run into antitrust problems, as the law would focus on the conduct of the hotels and whether it was anti-competitive.”

One of the most challenging areas for planners these days is safety and security and how to handle them contractually. The organizers of the concert in Las Vegas where the horrific mass shooting took place this year are currently being sued. Are planners at

risk if something goes horribly wrong at their event?

“You can never prevent someone from filing a lawsuit,” Devlin reasons. “Whether the party filing the suit will win is a different issue. The party making the claim has to show that the planner did not act as a reasonable planner would in choosing the venue and making arrangements for security and safety of attendees. Since every event is different, there’s no easy checklist to use to ensure that you’ll minimize claims.”

Some “minimizing” is fairly mundane. “For example, if you’re providing transportation for attendees, you should make sure the transportation company has all required licenses, can provide information about the condition and maintenance of its vehicles and know whether it checks the driving records of its drivers. When you’re choosing a hotel, you might want to verify its star or diamond rating or ask for the results of its most recent safety inspections. The important thing for planners to do is think about what potential safety risks might be involved in an event or activity, take steps to address the risks or ensure that other responsible parties are handling

them, and then document what was done so if a claim is made a planner can show that he or she did act reasonably.

Hilliard points out that safety isn’t just about the attendee. In addition to considering risks to attendees, she says, “planners also have to ensure that their businesses can survive the bad press that might surround a crisis or disaster.”

Contracts are just one piece of the legal puzzle, Hilliard says. “Of course, I’m a proponent of strong contract language: indemnification, service and staffing standards, cancellation and force majeure clauses. However, contracts alone aren’t sufficient. Planners need to consider the types and limits of insurance they might need to cover their business ‘temporarily off premises,’ such as at a meeting. They need to explore event cancellation insurance and be clear on what it does and does not cover. They need to consider additional measures, such as hiring outside security and assigning staff to monitor potential threats. They need to have the conversations with hotels and other venues about safety and security and what the plan is — short term and long term — if the worst happens.”

Delta says there was similar scrutiny in the insurance industry about 15 years ago and this will likely be the same. “Insurance companies figured out what worked and what didn’t and began running incentive programs more carefully. They learned they could run these programs without being accused of offering kickbacks or bribes.”

Meanwhile, if large financial companies continue to comply with the voided rule, incentive planners could potentially lose business as financial clients try to figure it all out.

The **Foreign Corrupt Practices Act** is related to money or gifts offered to foreign government officials to gain more favorable contracts or business opportunities. While it wouldn’t typically apply to meetings, Delta says there are circumstances when it might.

In China and some other countries, for example, it’s well known that you often need a fixer on the ground to get a meeting approved and prevent government “roadblocks.”

“Gift cards in China are a way of bribing officials that’s currently a gray area,” Delta says. “Nudge, nudge, wink, wink. If amounts are large, it can be a problem. If you give someone cash and knowing it’s going to be given to a government official, it’s a bribe. While there are no criminal cases at this point, planners should think carefully in such situations.

— CL

Contracts

Contracts aren’t the only worry but they are a substantial worry. Jonathan Howe, president, Howe & Hutton Ltd., in Chicago, puts contract issues among the top legal worries planners face.

One major issue: The failure on both sides of negotiations to fully understand what’s being put down on paper. “Make sure you understand the terms of the contract,” Howe says. “Make sure to get a mutual agreement on what the terms mean, even if you think you know how the other side is reading it. Don’t use form contracts. Every meeting and event is different. You can have a checklist and model language, of course. But create contracts specific to each meeting and then come to an agreement on what exactly the terms mean.”

Perhaps no clause is more misunderstood than force majeure. “Force majeure has a very specific legal meaning: something that makes performance impossible and is beyond the control of the parties — acts of God, for example,” Howe says. “But other things are often put under this in order to avoid liability to pay for something or do something (that one party) doesn’t want to do although the meeting is not actually ‘impossible.’”

Howe advises going with a strict force majeure clause, then adding other clauses. “For example, if management changes, it doesn’t make the meeting impossible but a planner may want to escape liability in cancelling by adding, ‘If there’s a change in flag or management we reserve the right to cancel or change without liability.’”

Weather is another issue. Not all storms fall under force majeure. “If 40 of the 160 people registered can’t get to the meeting because their plane is cancelled or they’re snowed in, that’s not force majeure,” Howe says. “It may prevent those people from attending but it doesn’t prevent the other 120 people from attending. Negotiate attrition in a different clause.”

The same holds true for terrorism. “An act of terrorism in a destination does not preclude your meeting there from going forward. Because an incident

happened two weeks ago doesn’t mean it will happen again. Hotels might work with planners to reduce the numbers,” Howe says, “but they won’t give a pass and why should they? It doesn’t matter if attendees are now frightened to go to that destination. It’s not force majeure.”

Riders are another tricky element — and Howe says planners can end up paying a hefty price for misunderstanding them, liter-



Jonathan Howe
President
Howe & Hutton Ltd.
Chicago, IL

ally. “One planner was able to reduce the attrition block by 50 percent in a rider. But she didn’t take into consideration what would happen if she canceled the meeting. The rider only related to attrition, not to the entire contract. When she cancelled the meeting, the hotel came back and rightly said we expect to be paid for 100 percent of the room block, not 50 percent. That was just a rider and didn’t impact the entire contract.”

Additionally, Howe says planners should consider what appropriate damages are if a hotel cancels or relocates a group. “Planners should have a liquidated damages clause. The parties may not know what the exact damages will be but they can agree on a specific amount. The clause should state exactly what happens in the event of relocation. There’s a whole litany of things planners can put into the contract to cover themselves. The goal is to make it economically unattractive for a hotel to breach the contract, relocate a conference or walk attendees to another property if they happen to get a better piece of

business. It happens more often than you’d think. It happens all the time.”

Attorneys can put all the right protections into a contract, but if planners don’t manage the contract properly, someone will pay the price. “In one case, a group could cancel 365 days out without penalty. At 400 days out, the planner cancelled by phone. However, the contract required cancellation in the form of a written notice, sent by certified mail, return receipt requested. The hotel was in its rights to demand compensation. A settlement was reached, but the planner made an unexpected ‘career adjustment.’”

Howe says contracts are continually evolving and planners should not rely on form contracts or traditional boilerplate language, which has changed. “For example, contracts typically allow for the addition of rooms,” he says. “While contracts used to state that groups could add rooms if available, most now state that both the room and the rate have to be available, which almost never happens.”

Privacy issues are another area planners must watch, especially when contracts state that hotels have the right to use attendee information in other ways, say to give to other properties within the same company.

“No one can give away someone else’s rights and privacy,” Howe says. “Planners have to watch for that clause giving hotels permission to use attendee information and it’s often tricky. Bottom line: If hotels want the attendee information to use, they have to get it themselves.”

In the end, attorneys agree that a meetings-savvy lawyer is one step; however, planners must take responsibility, too. Be knowledgeable. Do your homework. Do your due diligence. Do your research, they say.

Planners would be wise to listen.

I&FMM

“The goal is to make it economically unattractive for a hotel to breach the contract, relocate a conference or walk attendees to another property if they happen to get a better piece of business. It happens more often than you’d think.”

Federal Rulings & Acts

The **Department of Labor’s Fiduciary Rule** had the potential to impact incentive programs at financial companies and the travel that is typically part of them. Then, on March 15, 2018, the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit struck down the rule. The Trump administration chose not to appeal the ruling, so the rule appears to be void at this time.

DC-based attorney George Delta, counsel for the Incentive Federation, says it’s a non-issue for many of the largest financial companies because they’re already complying with the ruling. “The problem arises if I’m an investment advisor and I offer funds to clients for which I receive a bonus or non-cash award,” Delta says. “Naturally, large mutual fund companies that deal in retirement accounts, IRAs etc., want to incentivize advisors to sell their funds. As a reward, they send those advisors to Hawaii. Pension plan investment managers are a big part of incentives as well. A trip to Hawaii isn’t prohibited,” Delta emphasizes. “But under the fiduciary rule would have needed to be disclosed.”

Perception compounds the problem. From the outside, it can look like incentive awards are bribes although they’re not, and plenty of documentation demonstrates their positive impact on business.



“For both the AT&T and U.S. Open tournaments, about 30 percent of the companies that use hospitality programs at the event are insurance and financial services companies.”

Tim Ryan, V.P. Sales and Global Business Development
Pebble Beach Resorts, Pebble Beach, CA



Winning Sports Incentives

Bucket-list Games and Events Maximize Motivation and Score Business Goals

The U.S. Open Championship at Pebble Beach Resort.

Over the past few years, sports-related incentive programs to major events such as the Super Bowl, The Masters or the Indianapolis 500 have evolved from being rare and adventurous to mainstream and increasingly common. And that's because if they're done right, they deliver unique and readily demonstrable bottom-line business benefits.

By John Buchanan

event are insurance and financial services companies,” says Ryan, who also currently serves as chairman, corporate sales, for the U.S. Open. “And for financial services companies, the programs are often used for their customers, such as wealth management clients or brokerage customers. And the goal is to get the company's best customers face-to-face with their salespeople in a hospitality environment where the relationships can be furthered.”

Patrick Glass, president of Knoxville, Tennessee-based GEM Hospitality, which is now celebrating its 10th anniversary as a top facilitator of incentive programs to major sporting events such as The Masters, the Super Bowl and the Kentucky Derby, agrees with Ryan that insurance and financial services companies are among the top practitioners of high-end sports incentive programs. “And that has become even more true over the last two or three years,” he says.

Insurance and financial services companies are among the most enthusiastic and successful participants in major events at California's fabled Pebble Beach Resort, says Tim Ryan, vice president of sales and global business development. Pebble Beach hosts the PGA's annual AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am Tournament and has also hosted the U.S. Open Golf Championship four times and will host it again next year.

“For both the AT&T and U.S. Open tournaments, about 30 percent of the companies that use hospitality programs at the

Because of the allure of iconic sporting events, the sports incentive business has matured over the last five years into a respected enterprise, says Robert Tuchman, an industry veteran who recently sold his former company GoVIVA! to global entertainment and event giant Creative Artists Agency (CAA). It has now been integrated into CAA's New York-based Entertainment Benefits Group (EBG).

“When I first started in the business in the 1990s, it was kind of like the Wild West,” says Tuchman, who is EBG's vice president of business development, premium experiences. “And companies were just happy to get tickets to the event and find hotel rooms. Now it's a very professional and sophisticated business that is growing every year. Now sports incentives are widely recognized as a legitimate business tool that is used to enhance corporate results.”

Corporate clients are also now much more well-versed

in asking for better tickets and accommodations, as well as ancillary activities that add to the excitement of the sports event, he says. “Clients are just much more educated now and much more aware of the kinds of things they can do at these sports events.”

The Business Goal as No. 1 Consideration

When it comes to sports incentive programs, none is more prestigious, or more in demand, than the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am. Corporate participation typically includes a private chalet along the course for entertaining and networking. “And with that, you get a great view of the course and also a great view of the Pacific Ocean,” Ryan says.

But, he adds, the experience is typically about much more than the golf. Because the experience is so exclusive and so extraordinary — especially for participants who truly revere



The Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs in Louisville.

the game of golf — such high-end programs, Ryan says, are usually limited to a company's most important salespeople, customers or prospects. In effect, if done properly, the experience provides a unique and powerful networking opportunity. "What the companies are really trying to do is build relationships with, or enhance existing relationships, with their most important salespeople or customers," Ryan says. "And in fully taking advantage of the opportunity, the companies provide their people with the chance to actually walk the course and see the golf close-up."

The companies that get the most from the experience, in terms of business results, are those that use it to get their top customers face-to-face with their best prospects, he says. "That's because what they really want is for their existing customers to sell their prospects on doing business with the company. And a top sports incentive is a great way to accomplish that."

That level of sophistication in planning the program now holds true for a majority of companies that come to Pebble Beach each year, he says. It's also true to those that go to the U.S. Open.



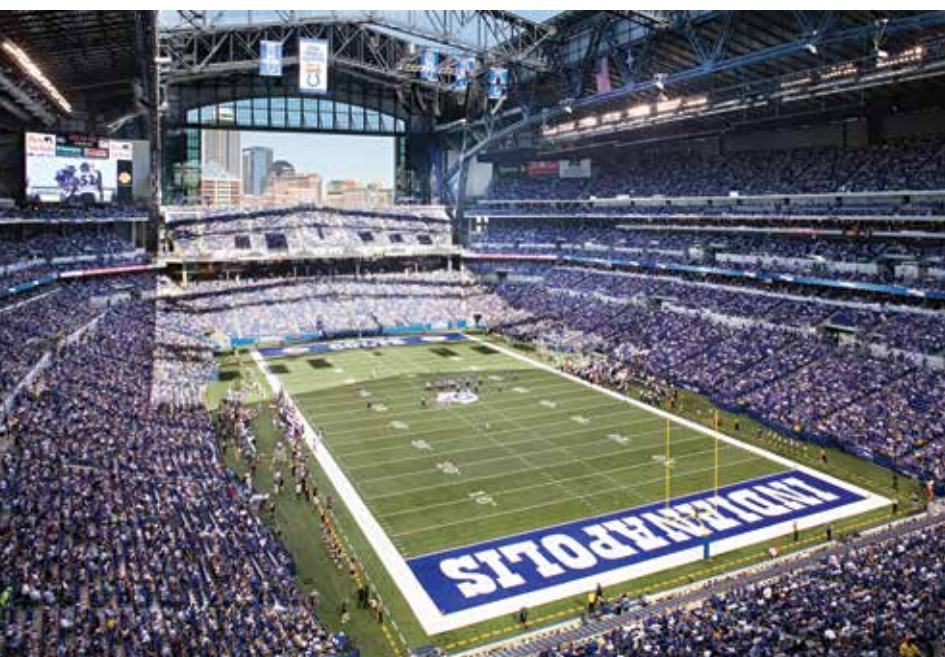
Keys to Success

In a slightly broader sense, Ryan says, the companies that get the most out of doing a major sports incentive are "the ones that have a really good handle on where the people they are inviting to the event are in the pipeline of buying something from them or having bought something from them. In other words, it's about bottom-line business goals and actual results. I had one corporate client express it to me very well. He said, 'I can tell you at any point in time where every one of my guests is in terms of buying from me or having bought from me. So when I have to go back and justify this expense to my bosses, I just push a button and print out where we are business-wise with the people I brought to the event and explain exactly how the event paid off for the company.'"

Like Ryan and Glass, Tuchman stresses that virtually all successful and enduring sports incentive programs are now very closely linked to clearly defined business goals and not just a luxurious, memorable experience. "That has been the biggest change in the business over the last 10 years," he says. "So there is now much more accountability, when it comes to demonstrable business results, than there ever was before."

A key to success for the AT&T or U.S. Open tournament is how effectively the company incorporates attendees into the entire event, meaning the days preceding the actual tournament, so that it becomes an enduring and multifaceted experience and not just attendance at a golf tournament. For example, some companies host dinners or other events on the days preceding the tournament and bring in golfers or other celebrities as speakers or as hosts for a recreational round of golf. "But there are also typically business-related sessions involved, too," Tuchman adds.

For companies newly considering an inaugural sports incentive program, Ryan,



Credit: Visit Indy

Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the Indianapolis Colts.

"At The Masters, on the night before the tournament, they might host a private dinner with a golfer to give them a more up-close-and-personal sense of the event."

Patrick Glass, President
GEM Hospitality, Knoxville, TN



The Masters is just one of the hot-ticket events arranged for incentive groups by sports and entertainment company GEM Hospitality.

Glass and Tuchman all stress that sufficient advance planning is critical, simply because demand for premium tickets to major events typically outweighs availability.

The key conflict, in terms of being able to participate in a major PGA golf event such as the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am or U.S. Open, Ryan says, is between the event's selling cycle and the participating company's budget cycle. For example, the PGA began selling access to next year's U.S. Open in Pebble Beach in 2016. That means that such events require attention to the need for planning well in advance of the event. "Otherwise, by the time they can fund it, it's too late," Ryan says. As a general guideline, planners should plan to finalize participation at least a year in advance, he notes. However, many companies commit two or three years in advance.

By far, the No. 1 factor in pursuing a particular opportunity, such as The Masters or the Super Bowl, is committing to participation far enough in advance, Glass agrees. The ability to acquire tickets and hotel rooms requires at least one year of advance notice of serious intent to go. "And depending on the demand for the event, you're better off getting involved two or three years in advance," he says.

To further complicate matters, Glass says, companies that have traditionally gone to the Super Bowl or The Masters or the NCAA men's basketball Final Four every year are now starting to rotate events each year, so that means even more volatility in the availability of a limited number of tickets for each event. "So committing to an event far enough advance is critical," he says.



Going Above and Beyond

Yet another trend that Glass and Tuchman agree has evolved over the last couple of years is the notion of expanding the overall experience beyond just the sporting event itself.

"What I have noticed is that in doing sports incentive programs, companies are increasingly focused on doing something beyond just coming to the event," Glass says. "They're looking for ways to make it an even more incredible experience that is customized for their people. For example, at The Masters, on the night before the tournament, they might host a private dinner with a golfer to give them a more up-close-and-personal sense of the event. Or at the Super Bowl, they'll bring in a current or former NFL coach to talk about teambuilding and how to prepare for the big game, or a Hall of Fame player to talk about a winning attitude. And the reason they do those kinds of things is to go a step further in motivating their best salespeople or customers to be even more loyal to and excited about their relationships with the company."

A VIP trip to the Super Bowl is undeniably a phenomenal experience, Glass says. "But it's made even better if you can add personal touches to the experience that are unique to your people. So companies now realize they need to put in the extra effort to integrate other elements into the program that motivate their people even further than just having a ticket to the game."

Companies now have the budgets to go the extra mile to make the experience truly spectacular, Glass says. "And that's what they're doing."

“Now sports incentives are widely recognized as a legitimate business tool that is used to enhance corporate results.”

Robert Tuchman, V.P. Business Development
Entertainment Benefits Group Premium Experiences



Tuchman agrees that most companies now want to tie in other activities that are not directly related to the sports event in order to expand and diversify the experience. “For example, if the sports event is in New York,” he says, “we often now tie in a culinary event, like a dinner with a celebrity chef, that takes advantage of the destination. Or we’ll take the group to a Broadway show. Adding dimensions like that makes the overall experience more appealing, especially for people that are not really enthusiasts for the sport at the event, or spouses.”

Glass often counsels clients to consider what he calls “value added” experiences that can be incorporated into a program based on the time of year and the destination. For

Bowl is in Miami, we’ll recommend an afternoon of deep-sea fishing. That just adds another dimension to the overall experience.”

Advice for First-time Practitioners

For companies that are now considering their initial sports incentive program, no other single consideration is as important as a clear business goal, Glass says.

“When I sit down to talk to a new client, the first thing I want to know is what their business goal is, what they want to accomplish,” he says. “And once I know that, then we will present two or three options that we believe will help them accomplish that goal. Then the client and I make the decision together on what we think will work best — and why. But the important thing is to have a clear goal and a clear way of measuring success. The companies that meet those two requirements are the ones who do it most successfully and keep doing it year after year.”

Another important challenge, Tuchman says, “is to really know your audience, what they really like and what they don’t like; what they truly value and what they really don’t care so much about. You have to do everything possible to personalize the experience, but for a group and not a single individual.

And that requires a lot of knowledge and a lot of thought. It comes down to knowing exactly what gets your group excited and what they expect from the experience.”

The second most important thing, he says, is to then “look at the overall experience the sports event offers, and then customize it in every way you can to maximize the motivation of your group. And that also requires a lot of thought. It involves a lot more than just going to the sports event. The way to think about it is to think in terms of creating an overall experience that your people could never possibly arrange on their own.”

Finally, Ryan says another critically important piece of advice is to rely on sports incentive experts to help plan the program. These opportunities carry unique risks and require precise, insightful execution based on specific expertise and access to resources.

Glass adds that careful consideration of every potential eventuality is another key to

success. “I always worry about the things I can’t control, like the weather,” he says. “So depending on the event you’re going to, it’s very important to consider every possibility and to have a backup plan and then a backup plan for your backup plan. You have to be prepared for anything and everything that could possibly happen. And everything people are going to do from the time they get there until the time they leave has to be double- and triple-checked. You can’t leave anything to chance.”

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The Indianapolis 500 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

example, for one of its corporate clients who attended this year’s Super Bowl in Minneapolis, Glass suggested a snowmobile excursion in the beautiful, snow-covered suburbs on a day leading up to the game. “That turned out to be a phenomenal experience that had to do with the location and time of year, but nothing to do with football,” he says. “We try to always include some kind of a unique local option like that in order to add to the experience of the sports event, but do something completely different. For example, if the Super

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Mitigating Meeting Disruptions

Prepare for the Worst, Expect the Best

By Maura Keller



In this day and age, it seems as though the prospect of a meeting disruption is more a matter of “when” than “if.” And because most disruptions are unpredictable and uncontrollable, it’s of paramount importance that planners evaluate risk for each and every offsite meeting or event.

According to a 2016 Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) study undertaken to determine what was disrupting events and how planners were coping,

found that in the previous 12 months nearly 60 percent of planners had experienced a disruption of at least one event that affected the event’s overall outcome or success.

According to IRF President Melissa Van Dyke, “The two most frequently occurring disruptions are weather-related events (38 percent) and vendor failures (28 percent).” These are also the top two categories of most concern for planners when organizing events.

From an attendee perspective, these disruptions can have a wide and varied impact.

Van Dyke says the biggest impact to a company is the damage it does to its brand in the eyes of the attendee.

“This is especially sensitive when you are bringing together top performers,” Van Dyke says. “In our study, we also found that 43 percent of planners or their companies have experienced one or more disruptions causing a fi-

nancial loss. The amount of the most frequent financial loss fell between \$10,000 and \$99,999.”

Weather and Whether

For Jeffrey P. Broudy, president, United Incentives in Philadelphia, weather and whether have become his organization’s top meeting disruptors for travel programs lately.

As Broudy explains, weather has been a universal disruptor requiring high levels of coordination and communication between United Incentives’ in-house transportation teams and managers to help guests get to their destination with a minimum of friction.

“This disruptor, like all others, requires both advanced planning, active event monitoring, clear client management guidelines and a two-way, multichannel guest communications protocol in place before every program,” Broudy says.

What does Broudy mean by “whether?” Thanks to ubiquitous breaking news alerts, attendees are typically well aware of what’s happening in their meeting destination well in advance — from strikes and civil disturbances, to viral outbreaks and weather events, to spikes in crime and terror attacks.

“The urgency of the breaking news cycle coupled with the perceived threat means guests begin questioning whether they should even attend the event long before the actual program departure dates,” Broudy says. “This can lead to attrition penalties for participa-

tion shortfalls, a decline in anticipatory enthusiasm prior to qualification completion of the incentive program, or (leads attendees to question) the wisdom of management’s selection of the destination.”

For example, two months into the qualification period to earn an incentive trip to Istanbul, the political situation in Turkey deteriorated and was a top story in the U.S. newsfeeds.

“This created uncertainty among the program participants leading to a drop in interest by more than 65 percent, which would cause a huge drop in contracted hotel space,” Broudy says. “Since anticipatory uncertainty is not considered a contractual force majeure event, we negotiated with the hotel’s global marketing arm to move the program location in Monte Carlo for a modest penalty. The penalty was partially offset by the hotel’s global brand marketing support funds and far less than the expenses of attrition penalties and increased operating costs.”

In another situation, the news about an uptick of drug-related violence in Jamaica’s and Mexico’s resort areas alarmed many potential participants of a scheduled incentive program who then wished to cancel.

To mitigate guest fears, United Incentives’ operations team proactively explained the facts via phone calls and



Jeff Broudy
President
United Incentives
Philadelphia, PA

“We can’t plan what’s coming, but we can plan to be prepared with tools in place to safely handle our guests and staff when it arrives.”

written communication regarding the steps taken by the government, hotels and DMCs to address the situation. In addition, United Incentives informed participants that they would be contacted via their smartphones about real-time incidents, location and coordination in the event of a disruption during their program.

“This proactive communication strategy made the guests more confident, and we experienced less than 1 percent reduction due to the concerns that were alarming them,” Broudy says. “While disruptions from any area can seriously impact safety and have high costs, it can most likely be managed with a good consequence management plan.”

Safety and Security

Since 9/11, terrorism has become part of lives at home and abroad. That’s why for Jodi Brill, chief event officer at BRILLiant Events, the safety of her attendees is paramount and key to choosing a location for a meeting or event.

“Whether in another country or in the U.S., it is important to remind attendees of simple ways to be safe and remain aware of their surroundings,” Brill says. Some helpful tips include: Know where the local police station, hospital or hotel is located; have a cellphone charged at all times; and avoid high-risk areas.

“Health-related situations are always on my mind,” Brill says. “When I first started in the business, I was working a weekend meeting with 350 doctors plus guests, when one of the attendees had



“Onsite visits, pre-planning and research help to ensure things will go smoothly. Having an onsite meeting planner gives your attendees a point person to make them more comfortable.”



Jodi Brill
Chief Event Officer
BRILLiant
Purchase, NY

they required legal protection with vendors only ‘sometimes’ (3.5).”

Broudy says it’s standard practice to establish clear attrition policies, force majeure language, insurance coverages, data security and supplier responsibility, and to have sponsor management contact chains identified, contracted and incorporated as part of the program.

Contacts and Communications

And while there may be hundreds of situations that are disruptive, there are risk management basics that apply to all.

“Having a destination plan identifying the names and contacts of hospitals, clinics, emergency services, supplier emergency leadership and contacts is paramount,” Broudy says. Also he says the creation of a guest status check-in process during a disruption event creates the ability to take a census of status and location of each guest.

guests to reply to the communication with an “OK” or “need assistance.”

“Depending on the situation, instructions are filtered through our team with the support of local authorities to the guests needing help,” Broudy says. A management dashboard within the app is available on our management smartphones and onsite laptops and at our headquarters to quickly identify a library of potential alert scripts and the status of communications with our guests for further action. In this way we’re not starting from scratch, wasting valuable time.”

The United Incentives team also prefers the multichannel communication approach because each channel has its own benefits.

“Texts are perfect for quick, short advice and census messages, especially in the event of cell-tower crowding, which can happen during fast-moving incidents like power failures or catastrophe,” Broudy says. “The ability to email works once we’ve narrowed down the guests



United Incentives uses a guest contact app which allows for two-way communication.

To achieve this, United Incentives uses a guest contact app, which allows for two-way communication using multichannel contact choices: text, email, live one-push conference call or an Application Programming Interface (API) pushing through their event app to communicate a risk or disruption immediately. It also provides a function for

that need additional help; one-touch push conference calls for unique situations requiring dialogue; and an event app redundancy through API.”

Of course, to anticipate and plan for the combinations and permutations of possible disruptions that can be prevented and managed every single day is virtually impossible.

“Since we don’t have a crystal ball, we focus on having tools in place to handle the consequences of a possible event which include: an internal handbook of emergency resources and strategies; understanding of a client’s management hierarchy for decision-making for financial, operational and PR decisions so we know who to reach out to for what; and a communications tool to dialogue with guests for status and locations via their smartphones in real time,” Broudy says. “We can’t plan what’s coming, but we can plan to be prepared

with tools in place to safely handle our guests and staff when it arrives.”

Disruptions and Incentive Travel

Many companies motivate and recognize employee achievements with incentive travel rewards. Incentive trips center on desirable destinations and may include tours and leisure activities. Disruptions such as weather, political unrest or terrorism can ruin the entire program.

“That’s why it is important to review the seasonal changes in any location as

“Having a plan B ready for all major...elements...and knowing how to create VIP experiences out of delays or frustrations is the best way to turn around those pesky disruptions.”

Jennifer Lutz
Independent Event Manager
JLCRO
Decatur, GA

Disruptive Behavior

As a meeting and event planner with more than 25 years of professional industry experience, Greg Jenkins, partner at Bravo Events, has witnessed many meeting disruptions involving rude or inconsiderate attendees. One example he notes was an attendee who hijacked a seminar by talking extensively to the audience about his own experience — leaving the lecturer wondering why the attendee didn’t conduct his own workshop.

“There are other examples to include those individuals who dominate the Q&A, those who arrive extremely late and those who converse with a fellow attendee during the meeting,” Jenkins says. “While we want to believe everyone can demonstrate some degree of etiquette and appropriate behavior in meetings, that may not always be the case.”

Following are some techniques Jenkins has found effective in avoiding or minimizing behavior disruptions.

- Before starting the meeting, announce some ground rules, including silencing mobile devices, refraining from asking questions until all of the information has been presented and requesting that attendees be considerate of others attending the session by refraining from chatting or doing anything that would create a distraction.
- For those attendees inclined to dominate the Q&A, Jenkins suggests that they stay after the session for an extended conversation with the presenter. This allows more time for others to ask questions.
- Starting the session on time demonstrates respect for those attendees who arrive on time. Ask those who arrive late to quietly take a seat in the rear of the room to avoid disrupting the audience.
- For those who talk during the session, depending on the circumstances, Jenkins will politely ask them to take their conversation out of the room as a courtesy for the other attendees.



Greg Jenkins
Partner
Bravo Events
Long Beach, CA

— MK



“While we want to believe everyone can demonstrate some degree of etiquette and appropriate behavior in meetings, that may not always be the case.”

“We heard over two-thirds of our planner respondents say they had switched a destination at least once because of the perceived risk or disruption and over a quarter had switched properties for the same reason.”

Melissa Van Dyke
President
The Incentive Research Foundation
McLean, VA



well as the current political climate and incidence of crime,” Brill says. “Resort areas in Mexico have been hit hard this year with violent crimes, making some think twice before booking. In most cases, incentive travel budgets do not have a lot of wiggle room.”

Brill advises financial and insurance meeting professionals to always have a backup plan. If weather threatens to impact the program, bring attendees in a day early. If the hotel cannot accommodate, find nearby properties to house guests until meeting day.

“Having a good lay of the land for the local area is vital to ensure the success of any program,” Brill says. “Onsite visits, pre-planning and research help to ensure things will go smoothly. Having an onsite meeting planner gives your attendees a point person to make them more comfortable, answer questions, make recommendations and to run the show.”

Unfortunately, some companies looking to cut costs will eliminate the preplanning site inspection and onsite meeting planner. Though it may seem like a cost savings, it actually may end up costing them more.

“Planners can leverage relationships, negotiate for better pricing and terms, and expertly handle logistics,” Brill says. “A good planner will be prepared

for anything. Whether it’s a hotel issue, weather-related or anything else, be ready to think on your feet. Lean on hotel contacts, travel agents and the ground transportation company. They have all had situations in the past that they have learned from, too.”

Independent event manager, Jennifer Lutz, has a wealth of experience planning conferences in the financial services, technology and association sectors. As part of her event planning she puts together a risk management assessment for each event — detailing plans of action for high-risk scenarios related to safety and security, as well as preparing for disruptive scenarios such as speakers not showing up or overselling an event.

“These disruptions definitely impact incentive travel programs — while content preparation is not always a significant factor, weather onsite and impacting travel delays certainly becomes one,” Lutz says.



Plan for the Worst and Expect the Best

Lutz says that while planners cannot prepare for travel delays, they can ease delay frustration by keeping in contact with the arrivals.

“By maintaining a manifest of flight arrivals, for all guests of incentive trips, or VIP guests and speakers for conferences, and tracking their check-ins, a planner can be on top of who may need some extra white-glove service when they arrive,” Lutz says.

For instance, at a recent event, a VIP guest was delayed over 24 hours at an airport. As soon as they arrived onsite Lutz arranged for laundry service to be available to them, along with a complimentary meal and bottle of wine brought to their room. This extra touch made all the difference in smoothing over a delay they experienced in getting to the program.

“Weather is also out of the event planner’s hands, and making sure to have a plan B is key,” Lutz says. “Always, always ask your venue for the alternative plan if weather disrupts an outdoor activity. They should be ready and willing to work with you on one. If weather impacts a meal, be sure to let the hotel restaurant and bar know they can expect a high volume of patronage. They always appreciate a heads-up and can sometimes bring in extra staff to support the unplanned guests.”

Lutz adds that a great planner will always ask “what could go wrong and how can we prepare now?”

“Having a plan B ready for all major programmatic elements, working hand-in-hand with your hotel and venue to consider alternative options, and knowing how to create VIP experiences out of delays or frustrations is the best way to turn around those pesky disruptions,” Lutz says. “My planner motto is ‘Plan for the worst, expect the best.’” **I&FMM**



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LEVY

Rachel Levy, CMP, was named director of national accounts, Northeast market, for The Diplomat Beach Resort in Hollywood, Florida. She was complex senior sales manager at Waldorf Astoria Chicago and Conrad Chicago.

Julie Berry was named director of sales and marketing for the Chicago Marriott Lincolnshire Resort. She most recently



BERRY

served as director of sales and marketing at Eaglewood Resort and Spa in Itasca, Illinois.

Sean P. Reardon was named director of sales and marketing for the new Omni Boston Hotel at the Seaport, which will open in 2021. Most recently, Reardon headed his own hospitality sales and marketing consulting business.



REARDON



CURRY

Lindsay Curry was promoted to vice president of sales for Enchantment Group properties. She most recently served as corporate director of sales.

Fontainebleau Miami Beach has appointed **Kevin Bryant** as executive director of sales. He was corporate director of revenue management at Turnberry Associates in Aventura, Florida. *I&FMM*



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LUXURY AT GRAND OASIS

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OASIS CANCUN
THE ENTERTAINMENT RESORT

Our Premier All Inclusive Resorts In Cancun



EAT: Our premier meeting resorts, The Pyramid at Grand Oasis and Grand Oasis Cancun, offer up to 24 international restaurants and 28 amazing bars.



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



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.

Limited Time Offer:

Earn **15% commission on group bookings*** plus more perks for your group

Groups and incentive events also available at Grand Oasis Sens, Grand Oasis Tulum and Grand Oasis Palm

GroupsAtOasis.com

Email: groups@oasishotels.com or Call: 770-662-1815

*Restrictions and blackouts may apply. Limited time offer.

Oasis Hotels & Resorts is exclusively represented in North America by TravAmerica, Inc.,

Hilton

MEET WITH PURPOSE



Your Meeting

**HAS A PURPOSE.
YOUR BREAKS
SHOULD TOO.**

WowMakers like you understand how every minute counts, every moment matters.

Which is why having a partner helping you create more WOW during the meeting day is a refreshing way to do business.

With Meet with Purpose by Hilton, you choose from a collection of thoughtfully packaged menus that pair healthy, creative meals with fitness, wellness and philanthropic activities. All designed to elevate the meeting experience to leave attendees feeling good about themselves and the day.

meetwithpurpose.com

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ASTORIA
HOTELS & RESORTS

CONRAD
HOTELS & RESORTS

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