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to **Elevate**  
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## INSURANCE & FINANCIAL MEETINGS MANAGEMENT

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## Keeping up With Technology

Our cover story focuses on using technology to elevate your event engagement. Technology today comes in many forms, and as most professional and seasoned meeting planners agree, the speed of change keeps getting faster and faster. Keeping up with changes in technology is not just important, it is a positive step for planners to incorporate in their day-to-



day planning functions and succeed in delivering a winning program. Consider your objectives, then see if there is a technology tool to reach your goals, and design engagement around what you want your attendees to achieve. The best advice is to integrate, reduce complexity and make your technology deployment as simple as possible.

While food and beverage is always a priority with meeting planners, making wellness a meeting priority now ranks high on the to-do list. Aside from providing nutritious foods, researchers are increasingly saying that sitting for long

periods of time at meetings is compared to smoking when it comes to health outcomes. Recommendations to achieve wellness in meeting programs should include considering spa experiences, age-appropriate activities, stretch breaks and perhaps including a meditation room or guided-meditation sessions.

Also in this issue, there are few places on earth that provide as much variety, entertainment or excitement as Las Vegas. There are always choices for any budget and location preference. Meeting space in Las Vegas continues to expand in hotels, the Las Vegas Convention Center and with CAESARS FORUM scheduled to open next year with 550,000 sf of conference space. While Las Vegas is a favorite locale, Reno has become a popular destination for meetings and events. Area hotels have invested millions of dollars in renovations there to satisfy planners' needs.

Harvey Grotsky

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**INSURANCE & FINANCIAL  
 MEETINGS MANAGEMENT**  
 THE EXECUTIVE SOURCE FOR PLANNING MEETINGS & INCENTIVES

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## MAJESTIC LAS VEGAS RESORT SCHEDULED TO BREAK GROUND

LAS VEGAS, NV — Majestic Las Vegas, the brainchild of Las Vegas native and uber-developer Lorenzo Doumani, is set to break ground following the project's unanimous approval by Clark County commissioners. The revolutionary \$850 million, 620-foot-tall contemporary architectural masterpiece is scheduled to

commence construction next year and is slated for completion in early 2023. The five-star, non-gaming, 720-room, luxury-branded resort will sit on the more than 6-acre site formerly occupied by the Clarion Hotel. This unparalleled location is directly across from the site of the new Las Vegas Convention Center opening in 2021.



## WYNN GOLF CLUB OPENING THIS MONTH

LAS VEGAS, NV — After being closed for nearly two years, the Wynn Golf Club in Las Vegas is scheduled to reopen. The only golf course on the Las Vegas Strip connected to a resort closed in December 2017 after owner, Steve Wynn, announced plans to build Paradise Park, including: a hotel addition, convention space expansion and a 20-acre lagoon. Most of those plans were scrapped after Wynn resigned as chairman and CEO in February 2018, although the 400,000-sf convention

center is under construction and is set to open next year. Legendary course architect, Tom Fazio, and his son, Logan, crafted a new vision for the course; the elder Fazio designed the original Wynn course back in 2005. The design of the new golf course had to accommodate the convention center. Golfers with a room reservation at the Wynn or the Encore can secure tee times 90 days in advance. Others not staying at the properties can reserve tee times 30 days in advance.

## BORGATA HOTEL CASINO & SPA TO ENHANCE HOTEL AND GUEST EXPERIENCE

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, an MGM Resorts Luxury Destination, has recently announced an investment of more than \$14 million into enhancing its hotel experience with the addition of the Lobby Bar and adjacent VIP check-in, as well as a redesign of the 312 Fiore Suites, to be completed early next year. On weekends, the venue will transform into a vibrant piano bar for guests to enjoy live entertainment. Designed by MGM Resorts Design & Development with architecture by Nelson Worldwide, the highly sought-after suites will combine a symphony of distinctive colors and textures to create a seaside getaway. Most recently, Borgata debuted a new sports entertainment venue, Moneyline Bar & Book, and nightlife experience, Level One Cocktail Bar & Lounge, reflecting a \$12 million investment.

## JW MARRIOTT DESERT SPRINGS RESORT & SPA FINALIZES REDESIGN

PALM DESERT, CA — The 450-acre resort is finalizing its largest-scale redesign this fall. Renovations feature: 884 renovated guest rooms, and 234,000 sf of refreshed event space. Included in the reimagined resort are: the grand lobby entrance with all-new, soothing elements that include water displays at the entry and an atrium that boasts floor-to-ceiling views of the surrounding desert landscape; the inspired Sinatra Ballroom; 37 sophisticated meeting rooms with seating for 3,050 attendees; 12 outdoor venues for creative breakout sessions; and a newly resurfaced patio space. Expanding beyond traditional meeting space, Desert Springs executes outdoor dining, poolside group yoga sessions, live entertainment and over-the-top themed events. Grand opening is scheduled for January 2020.



## HOSTS GLOBAL APPOINTS KURT PABEN AS PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL SALES

CHICAGO, IL — Hosts Global (Hosts) has recently appointed seasoned loyalty and events industry leader Kurt Paben as president of global sales and the new-



Paben

est member of the company's executive leadership team. In his new role, Paben will be primarily based out of the Hosts Chicago office, where he will develop and implement the strategic growth of the worldwide enterprise. Recognized for his event expertise and success in the loyalty industry, Paben was instrumental in the growth and eventual sale of Aimia's (formerly Carlson Marketing) events business, where he served as president, to One10. Subsequently, he expanded Aimia's consumer loyalty solutions and commercial operations. A champion for the events industry, Paben has participated in several industry boards, including two terms as the SITE Foundation president.

## REUNION RESORT NEARING COMPLETION OF EXTENSIVE GOLF COURSE

ORLANDO, FL — Reunion Resort & Golf Club is nearing completion of an extensive renovation project encompassing all three of its signature courses. Started earlier this year, the \$800,000 enhancement includes complete upgrades to bunkers and landscaping across all greens and is scheduled to be complete this fall. All courses have remained open throughout the project. The work at Reunion includes a robust landscaping design at The Nicklaus course portion of the project, which is unique due to the nature of the subsoil on which the course was built. Work on the Arnold Palmer course is complete, with only a few bunkers remaining on Jack Nicklaus. Renovations to the Tom Watson course are expected to be completed shortly. Designed by legendary greats, the courses are of championship level with recent enhancements taking them to the next level of experience. In addition to the three signature golf courses, guests at Reunion Resort enjoy an array of amenities.



Superintendents Ron Sharps, left, and Robert Guerra

## DMC NETWORK EXPANDS TO SEATTLE

SEATTLE, WA — The DMC Network has recently announced that Event Experience has joined the DMC Network as an Affiliate Partner. Event Experience is a Seattle-based DMC and event production company with a recording and editing studio, an audio visual department, logistical resources and creative planning teams, covering every experience throughout the Seattle region. On joining the DMC Network, Michelle Couch, president and owner of Event Experience says, "For 20 years now, Event Experience has had a company culture that embodies bold and brave productions and experiences for our clients through the dream team of talent that we have working with us. We create events that will generate excitement for your brand, rededication from your employees and improve the quality of work-life for your people, and we do this while expertly tackling the intricacies of event design and logistics. We are thrilled to be joining this group and look forward to working closer together with partners that hold our same values."

## MEET AC ANNOUNCES PRESIDENT AND CEO TO DEPART ORGANIZATION

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ — Jim Wood, president and CEO of Meet AC, has recently announced he will depart from the organization at the end of 2019. Wood became the first CEO for Meet AC in 2014 when the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA) hired a consulting group to form the new sales and marketing organization, which became Meet AC. During Wood's tenure, Meet AC has seen year-over-year growth in the meetings and conventions industry; booking more than 1.8 million room nights, which has brought in nearly \$1.9 billion in economic impact into Atlantic City. Meet AC was successful in attracting the Meeting Professionals International (MPI) 2016 World Education Congress (WEC), the 2016 TEAMS Conference & Expo as well as other prominent industry shows that helped Atlantic City position itself as a meeting and convention destination. The TEAMS Conference & Expo is set



Wood

to return to Atlantic City in 2021. "Jim has been a driving force in continuing to position Atlantic City as a top destination for the meetings and conventions market," says Matt Doherty, CRDA executive director and Meet AC board chairman. "We wish Jim and his family the best in the future."



## MONTANA'S NEW RESORT, MONTAGE BIG SKY, SET TO OPEN 2021

BIG SKY, MT— Centrally located within Big Sky's 3,530-acre Spanish Peaks enclave, Montana's upcoming resort, Montage Big Sky, will feature a mountain modern design with aesthetics inspired by the natural setting. The resort will feature 150 guest rooms and suites and 39 Montage Residences. Resort amenities include: a restaurant, lobby bar and lounge, market, pub and recreation room with bowling alley, indoor lap pool, family swimming pool, fitness center, the signature Spa Montage, ski lockers and skier services and as much as 12,870 sf of some of the finest meeting and event space in the greater Rocky Mountain region. Additional offerings include: access to Big Sky Resort's 5,800 skiable acres, Spanish Peaks Mountain Club's 18-hole, Tom Weiskopf-designed golf course and three world-renowned fly-fishing rivers and activities in hiking, mountain biking, Nordic skiing and snowshoeing trails. The accommodations of Montage Big Sky will create a mountain paradise.



## HILTON SAN DIEGO RESORT & SPA COMPLETES \$21 MILLION RENOVATION

SAN DIEGO, CA — Noble House Hotels and Resorts, Ltd., a hotel ownership and management group with an upscale portfolio of 20 distinct and visually captivating properties spanning the U.S., has completed a massive, \$21 million renovation of the Hilton San Diego Resort & Spa. The resort overlooks Mission Bay, and offers 357 rooms and suites, an American cuisine restaurant, poolside lounge, waterfront dining, an extensive fitness center and a luxurious full-service spa. Hilton San Diego Resort & Spa's comprehensive renovation encompasses all guest rooms, the hotel's expansive conference center, executive board rooms, all common areas and lobbies.



## BARCELONA WELCOMES NOBU HOTEL

BARCELONA, SPAIN — The Barcelona hotel, which opened recently, consists of 259 spacious and stylish rooms with views of the city and the Mediterranean Sea. Set back from Barcelona's busy streets, guests at Nobu are a short walk away from the Fira de Barcelona conference center and Plaza de España. Nobu offers thoughtfully tailored meeting and event spaces, the world-class Nobu Restaurant and Kozara — a

Nobu offers thoughtfully tailored meeting and event spaces.

Japanese-inspired tapas bar. Guests also have quick access to the Montjuïc Olympic area, the cruise ship terminal and Barcelona – El Prat International airport. Most points of interest in the city can be reached within 10 minutes by car or public transport.

## MARRIOTT VIRGINIA BEACH OCEANFRONT HOTEL BRINGS NEW MEETING AND EVENT SPACES TO THE BEACH

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA — Set to open early next year, Gold Key | PHR's \$125 million Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront Hotel, will feature over 20,000 sf of state-of-the-art meeting and event spaces with sweeping views of the Atlantic Ocean. The Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront will consist of 11 unique event rooms including: four meeting rooms and one boardroom; pre-function rooms; multiple event lawns and breakout rooms; the largest ballroom in Virginia Beach, the Seaside Ballroom, spanning over 10,000 sf, boasting a 1,155-person seating capacity; the 2,700-sf Seaside Terrace; and the 3,750-sf Ocean Lawn. The hotel will also feature the 2,400-sf M Club Lounge, an exclusive space available 24/7 for guests to retreat, recharge and refocus at any time during the day. The completion of this hotel will finish stage two of the three-phase, \$350 million master plan, creating an all-in-one resort experience with incomparable amenities for locals and visitors alike.



## SNAPSHOTS



**Photo 1:** Mark Vaughan (left), EVP and chief sales officer, Atlanta CVB; and Jeff Hewitt, SVP, Visit Savannah. **Photo 2:** Mike Waterman (left), chief sales officer, Visit Orlando and Richard Harper, EVP HelmsBriscoe. **Photo 3:** Ray Bloom (center), chairman, IMEX America. **Photo 4:** Harvey Grotsky (left), *Insurance & Financial Meetings Management* publisher and Janet Zaldua, CEO, Marina del Rey CVB. **Photo 5:** Michele Polci (left), director of citywide catering sales, Caesars Entertainment; Harvey Grotsky; and Kate Patay, president, Patay Consulting. **Photo 6:** Dana Fioravanti (left), PR and promotions manager, and Michael Dominguez, president and CEO, both with Associated Luxury Hotels International. **Photo 7:** Dahlton Bennington (left), director, meetings and incentives, PROfound Planning, Gilbert Villard (center), regional sales executive, Greater Fort Lauderdale CVB and Kaili Moran, meeting coordinator, PROfound Meetings.

## IMEX AMERICA

Las Vegas, September 10-12, 2019

A catalyst for change and industry advancement closed on another high. Exhibitors and buyers alike reported business success, whether it involves deals or getting new ideas to provide inspiration and creativity to help them in their jobs.



# Behavior Modification

## Nine Ways to Get Attendees to Respond How You Want

BY AMY KELLEY

**M**anaging an event can feel a lot like a herding cats some days. Huge groups of people headed every which way with different things on their minds. An extremely organized event planner can become very frustrated when attendees do not do what we want or what we predicted they would do.

Whether it's ignoring the early bird discount or failing to sign up for VIP experience tickets, you needn't sit by and just watch this. There are things you can do to influence desired behavior. Here are the tricks every event organizer needs in their toolkit:

### 9. MASTER SEGMENTATION TO HELP YOUR AUDIENCE HEAR YOU

If you want to influence how attendees are acting, you need to ensure you are providing them with the resources they need or want in the medium they prefer. You do this through audience segmentation or even better, through personalization.

Have you ever asked someone to do something for you, and they ignore your request? If they don't know you're talking to them, they won't respond. The same is true of your attendees. Personalizing your approach according to their preferences will help you get your message across.

### 8. USE REAL SCARCITY TO DRIVE ACTION

Once you know they hear you — scarcity and fear of missing out (FOMO) are two of the top ways to influence behavior. Whether it's driving ticket sales or enticing them to sign-up for next year's event early,

let attendees know they have a limited time to be a part of your wonderful event because there are only a few tickets left.

Scarcity and fear of missing out are two reasons early bird pricing has a deadline or a limited amount of seats being sold at the discount price. Without that incentive, there would be no reason to sign up early.

Bonus fact: according to research conducted by EventMB, early bird pricing is still the No. 1, most-effective tactic for driving registrations. More than half of event planning professionals (51.3%) claim it sells more tickets than the second most-popular method, discount codes (24.3%).

The key here is 'believable scarcity.' Telling someone to sign up early so they don't miss out won't drive action if your event allows for walk-up registrants. No one wants to pay more, but they will often make an emotional decision based on the desire not to miss out.

### 7. CRAFT YOUR EVENT STORY TO DRIVE EMOTIONAL DECISIONS

All purchases are emotional decisions. Yes, some make more sense than others but they all reflect a desire for something else. Something we become, enjoy, or benefit from — like an event — is best influenced by an emotional driver. Storytelling does this.

Your event story can be woven around your mission, the success of attendees or your guests' fun. But the one thing you need to remember is that you want your potential attendees to hear your story, and be a part of it.

Your storytelling goal is to get them to see themselves at your event in order to drive ticket purchases and influence their buying behavior. Without that

personal draw and enticement to be a part of it, your event story will remain largely ineffective.

### 6. REMOVE FRICTION

This is the simplest of all rules, and it applies to almost everyone: If it's hard, they won't do it.

Sure, there are those people out there with triathlon-type dreams, but that type of hard work and dedication rarely extends to mastering difficult event registration sites.

If you want your attendees to take action, make it extremely easy. For instance, if you want them to share their event experience on social media, provide a lot of photo ops and make sure your hashtag is posted everywhere.

By removing the friction, attendees will go along with it more often. If they can't find your hashtag, or they can't figure it out easily, they won't do what you want, which in this case is increasing the number of their social posts.

### 5. USE CO-CREATION

People tend to support what they help create. Ownership equals support. Not only does audience/attendee co-creation and crowdsourcing make your event more unique, but it also influences those who voted or gave their feedback to feel a certain level of obligation to see it become successful.

That's why many companies are turning to crowdsourcing and voting on new product rollouts such as new flavors or designs.

Cognitive bias convinces people that if it's their idea, they should see it through by supporting it. So ask your audience what they want, deliver on it and then give them the opportunity to support it.

### 4. BE THE ONLY SHOW IN TOWN

While it's difficult to literally be the only show in town, if you can provide your attendees with something they can't get elsewhere, they will not only support you in a loyal way, they will also pay top dollar for the privilege to do so.

However, this requires a unique selling proposition. If you don't currently have one for your event, you can't expect to be the 'only' anything. Work on the details and marketing of differentiation in ways such as selecting a unique venue, host city or time of year to drive more action.



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**Amy Kelley** is the global content editor-in-chief for GES, a leader in face-to-face marketing for Events, Exhibits and Exhibitions. As part of the Digital Marketing team, Kelley spearheads content strategy, development, process and execution worldwide for a B2B audience. With a strong background in content marketing, social media and communications, she is a passionate writer and self-confessed word geek.

### 3. GIVE THE AUDIENCE AN INCENTIVE

If your event sounds good, affordable, beneficial, interesting or any of hundreds of other words, an attendee may be considering it.

However, you need to influence them to make the purchase. Maybe you want them to register early. Perhaps you're more interested in driving session engagement. Whatever your goal, provide the desired incentive.

The key to success here is 'desired' incentive. It has to be something they want for them to act upon it. For instance, the event planner behind a sold-out writer's conference wanted to ride the wave of event excitement from their conference that just ended to increase bookings for next year's event. But who wants to buy an event ticket for next year right now? The event partnered with the hotel to offer a strong discount on rooms that were completely refundable as long as they were canceled two days before next year's event. Attendees were saving as much as \$200 a night for the following year's room by signing up at the end of the conference.

The event planner even allowed for event cancellations up to a month before the event. This deep discount and liberal hotel room cancellation policy drove more sign-ups than previously experienced.

### 2. INTRODUCE GAMIFICATION

Gamification lets event planners create scenarios using public recognition and rewards to drive desired behavior.

For instance, maybe your exhibit hall isn't getting the traffic you'd like or only a few exhibitors in the front land all the traffic. You could use gamification to reward things like 'walking the floor,' 'visiting three exhibitors a day' or collecting code words from exhibitors for bonus rewards.

Gamification is less about gameplay and more about incorporating motivational theory. If you don't like the way

your audience is behaving, one of the most enjoyable ways to redirect them and encourage desired behavior is by implementing this concept.

### 1. STAY IN TOUCH

When it comes to personal relationships, do you respond to strangers or to people you know? Most people will answer the latter. Those closest to us have the most influence over us. If you have taken the time to help attendees know, like and trust you by building a relationship all year, not just at event time, attendees will be more likely to adhere to your requests or take your advice.

If a colleague advises you to buy tickets because an event is selling out quickly, you'll be more likely to act on that advice than that same information on a website. Coming from the latter, it sounds like a sales ploy. Coming from the former, it seems like they are looking out for your interests. If you take the time to build that relationship through a wonderful attendee experience and year-round communication, you can influence action at a greater, more effective rate.

Finally, even with these effective motivational tools, it's important to track what you're doing. Every audience is different and what works for one may leave the other confused. Analyzing your event data before, during and after can help you recognize and understand clear patterns that will help shape your actions as well as theirs.

In conclusion, if there's something you want your attendees to do, don't just wish it would happen. Employ a strategy to ensure it does using basic motivational tactics such as:

- Segmentation
- Scarcity
- Storytelling
- Co-creation
- Uniqueness
- Communication

Then you can begin influencing attendees in measurable ways. **I&FMM**

# Transparency in Communication

## Listening and Understanding Is the Most Important Part

BY MEG D'ANGELO, CIS

**A**s someone who has led event planning organizations for Fortune 200 companies for the last 20+ years, I often get questions such as, "What is the secret to really effective event planning and execution?" Or, "What's that magical skill set or piece of know-how that will give me the edge?"

Often those people looking into our world from the outside will assume it's something like organizational skills, or attention to detail or project management savvy. And those who have dabbled in the events space may even think it's relationship building and having killer networks across the industry to help ensure we always have a number to call and a 'guy' or 'girl' in every market to help us satisfy even the oddest or most extreme requests.

But those who know our space best, including those of us who have the privilege of calling it a career, know differently. All of those things, while important, are just table stakes for what we do. The truth is, we

couldn't do our jobs if we weren't 'people' people who also happen to be pleasers, perfectionists and project management geeks.

So what's my answer? Communication skills and transparency.

I heard it explained like this once, and it has stuck with me ever since:

**Sometimes we think about communication as speaking well, but half the battle, and usually the tougher half, is *listening and understanding.***

Some people are great dancers. They know all of the steps, have great rhythm, appear graceful and never trip or twirl the wrong way. They spend their time focused on counting beats, thinking about their next step and executing flawlessly. They are supreme tacticians, and they are 'in the dance.' It's very important to have great dancers.

Still others are great observers. Think of them as spectators, seated up in the balcony. They can see all of the dancers on the stage and they can observe whether they're in sync. They can see the audience and gauge its reaction to the dance. They can listen to the music, see the orchestra, and sometimes, they can even predict what comes next based on their

broad view and understanding. They can see the big picture, they're strategic and they're 'on the balcony' — we need great balcony people.

But the secret to being a great meetings professional is being able to both be 'in the dance' and 'on the balcony' at the same time. Years of practice, solid processes and excellent attention to detail make us great dancers. We hardly ever miss a step, and we perform our tasks brilliantly. Though we're not always great balcony people, when we have the ability to step back, see the big picture, observe our audience and predict what comes next, nothing can hold us back.

So how do we do that? It takes a few easy steps:

First, take the time to understand what we're trying to accomplish. Second, know what you want your participants or guests to walk away with, and lastly, what does success look like if you do this well? Often this requires sitting

down with our stakeholders, asking lots of questions and listening. Really listening. Sometimes we think about communication as speaking well, but half the battle, and usually the tougher half, is listening and understanding.

Once we understand the goals, it's our job to communicate them simply and understandably to all of our key stakeholders. For me, that includes people like my vendors, venue managers, local suppliers, marketing colleagues, the broader event management team, our executive administrative assistants and communication and creative colleagues. I make time early on in the process for them to ask questions. The goal is to make sure we all share a clear definition of success so we kick off every event focused on the same goal.

Then there's expectation management. You know how this goes: A client asks you to dock a cruise ship three hours earlier than you planned to be in port or you spend the afternoon

entertaining complaints about the temperature in the hotel ballroom — inevitably it's both freezing and sweltering. This is where transparency, diplomacy and empathy come into play. While being honest and taking the time to educate can sometimes feel painful and tedious, my experience is that it's always better to set realistic expectations rather than to commit to doing something that I know is next to impossible. Sometimes that means explaining to the client that getting a ship somewhere three hours sooner than planned may be physically impossible — they only go so fast. And for those who are temperature-sensitive, explaining the need to balance the comfort levels of all attendees might not make them happy, but it may stop them from filing the same complaint every time they attend a ballroom-hosted event.

In short, be curious, ask questions, understand the big picture, bring other critical stakeholders along, check in frequently, manage expectations realistically and don't be afraid to be honest.

Those are all communication skills — and they all take practice. Doing them well can make a positive difference in our effectiveness and our ability to be seen as leaders who are able to dance every dance, while finding opportunities to look down from the balcony, see the big picture, anticipate the next moves and make sure that we take the right steps to ensure the audience always enjoys the show.



DepositPhotos.com



THE AUTHOR

**Meg D'Angelo, CIS**, is assistant vice president of Events and Hospitality for Lincoln Financial Group. In addition to overseeing all hospitality aspects of Lincoln's naming-rights sponsorship of the Philadelphia Eagles, D'Angelo is also responsible for working closely with C-Suite and other senior-level executives to strategize, procure, plan and successfully execute major internal and external corporate meetings, special events and hospitality opportunities, including, but not limited to, internal leadership summits, training and education programs, concerts and sporting events.



# The F&B Experience

## 5 Hotel Food and Beverage Trends That Arose in 2019

BY DAVID KORETZ

Perhaps taking a page from popular narratives like 'Eat, Pray, Love', travel and dining often go hand in hand. For most travelers, food and beverage options play a pivotal role in their experience of a new culture as well as their opinion of the hotel in which they stay. In this respect, a great location, personalized hotel accommodations, attentive service and great, locally inspired food and drink programs are the primary indicators of a trip well spent.

As such, it comes as no surprise that hotel food and beverage has experienced healthy growth over the past few years. Hoteliers are realizing just how much revenue potential this segment boasts, both in terms of ancillary revenue and utilized as a tool to enhance the guest experience. In 2018, U.S. hotel food-and-beverage revenue per occupied room (F&B RevPOR) increased 2.7% in 2018, according to total-year data from STR, while beverage revenue per occupied room grew 4.2%. However, that same report also speaks to the decline of in-room dining (IRD) revenue. While IRD still boasts a great deal of revenue potential, this reinforces the realization that hotels need to re-examine their existing strategies in favor of enhancing that experience with a more modern approach to IRD.

Even further, a trends report from Avendra found the U.S. lodging industry sees \$200 billion dollars in annual revenue, with food and beverage making up 25% of those dollars. More importantly, those expenditures are increasing by 2% to 3% each year. In tandem with this growth, we are witnessing the emergence of several key F&B trends sure to disrupt the traditional picture of hotel F&B programs in favor of a more modern approach.

### 1. LOCAL FARM TO TABLE

2019 shaped up to be an exciting year for foodies, as hoteliers actively seek ways to implement a

farm-to-table approach to their F&B programs. Large hotel chains around the world are steering away from chain restaurants and are instead collaborating with local chefs and talent to create locally influenced dining options. Local, farm-sourced ingredients with unique, cultural flair, paired with specialty beverages, or — in many cases — local wine. In fact, from 2007 to 2017, farmers markets in the U.S. grew by 100%, eclipsing 9,000 in total.

This trend arrives in synchronized step with the increasing demand for sustainable practices across hotels, enhance authenticity and reduced food waste. Modern travelers are decidedly more eco-conscious and demonstrate a preference for hotels working to minimize their footprint and implement more 'green' processes. A farm-to-table F&B program also helps to support the local economy — an advantage that does not go unnoticed in the eyes of modern travelers eager to travel sustainably and contribute to a positive impact.

### 2. SELF-SERVICE

When we suggest self-service in the same sentence as in-room food and beverage, it's easy to revert back to the traditional model: the hotel mini-bar. However, the self-service model that we anticipate to take over the F&B segment in the coming years is a far cry from the overpriced, under-performing mini-bar. While they do tap into the basic principle of self-service, and while modern guests crave enhanced autonomy over their experience, mini-bars simply aren't equipped to succeed — at a reasonable cost to the guest or a reasonable profit for the hotel.

However, this doesn't mean the end of in-room service entirely; in fact, according to a recent survey of meeting professionals, 43% of guests say in-room service is extremely important when selecting a hotel. Further, 28% of guests even claimed that not offering the service is a deal-breaker. So, the question becomes,

if hotel mini-bars are on their way out, what can we expect to replace them?

A popular movement relating to in-room, self-service can be found in the implementation of high-end, self-service amenities. After all, with the inclusion of Netflix, smart TVs and voice-activated technology becoming popular add-ons, shouldn't food and beverage receive the same convenience-centric treatment? Not only are many hotel rooms including self-service staples such as Nespresso, but they are also taking it a step further with the inclusion of in-room, by-the-glass wine. Guest staying at leading independent hotels and chains, like the Four Seasons, Waldorf Astoria, Conrad, St. Regis, Ritz-Carlton, Westin, Gemstone Collection, Woodside Flags and many more top-rated, upscale properties, can enjoy the convenience of self-serve, in-room wine delivered by the sleek and modern Plum device.

Plum acts as a luxury amenity, allowing guests to choose from a red or white wine to enjoy by the glass, on demand. The appliance is sleek and easy to use, relying on cloud-based tracking which effectively minimizes labor costs and ensures a housekeeper is notified when a bottle needs to be replaced. This provides hoteliers with an opportunity to not only delight their guests with a streamlined, in-room, self-service option, but can also incentivize guests to book directly by including glasses of wine in their room package. Considering over 60% of hospitality executives believe the quality of a guest's experience will significantly improve through enhanced in-room service, innovations like Plum are an important step in the right direction.

### 3. FRESH GRAB AND GO

Recently, an article was published titled, "How 'Grab & Go' Became the

Latest Evolution in Hotel F&B." As we witness the certain demise of traditional hospitality staples such as the mini-bar and breakfast bar, we see the emergence of a trend which gives guests more control to choose their dining experience. Further, it allows hotels to provide food selections

Think fast,  
responsive service  
*that enhances*  
a guest's travel itinerary.

that guests actually want — relying on limited menus, fresh ingredients, options for various diet restrictions and quick preparation.

With 'grab-and-go' style outlets available in modern hotels, guests can grab small, pre-packaged or easy-to-prepare meals on their own schedule and terms. Think fast, responsive service that enhances a guest's travel itinerary.

### 4. TECH-ENABLED ORDERING

Gone are the days of ordering room service from a tattered menu stuffed into the bedside table. Modern guests are craving something more tech-centric, and in that same breath, more visual. Many hotels are now rolling out on-screen menus, some of which may not even be a room-service menu, but allows guests to order from on-property restaurants. Not only does this help to cut down some of the profit-cutting, labor-intensive costs of traditional room service, but it provides guests with a better selection of items to choose from.

Even further, meal delivery service is expected to grow by 15% per year through 2020. In the case of hospitality, this means more hotels will be forging

partnerships with popular services like Uber Eats to allow for app-based, convenient food delivery and specialized programs and offers for guests. Some hotels are even relying on their own, native apps to streamline the food-ordering process, allowing visitors to order room service or poolside drinks, ask for restaurant recommendations and more via a messaging app.

Of course, it doesn't end there. With the adoption of voice-activated devices across various touch-points, ordering food via an AI-powered assistant is predicted to soon be mainstream as well. And as more properties install in-room, tech-enhanced services such as on-demand wine, hoteliers are able to tap into a more innovative model that is appealing, memorable, convenient and share-worthy for guests.

### 5. EVENT CATERING

Recent findings conclude that one of the biggest areas of F&B investment is event catering, with 61% of hoteliers planning net growth in this area. Convenience/market concepts are also expected to proliferate, with a growing emphasis on fresh, as aforementioned when addressing the 'grab-and-go' model. With the growing demand for group travel and small- to large-scale corporate meetings, the subsequent demand for event catering comes as no surprise. As hotels find themselves in a favorable position to attract more conferences, events and meetings, they realize there's an opportunity to drive revenue through group bookings and event catering. Still, tapping into the demand for self-service, event catering programs can also include options such as 'grab and go' and on-demand wine, to ensure the needs of event guests are always addressed.

If one thing is for certain — the hospitality industry is entering an exciting time, enhancing our perception of the ideal guest experience with countless upgrades, technological advancements and program overhauls. Food and beverage is, undoubtedly, no exception, and remains to be an especially promising area of growth for hoteliers around the globe.

*This article originally appeared in Hospitality Trends. Visit [htrends.com](http://htrends.com). *



THE AUTHOR

David Koretz is the founder and CEO of Plum, the company that introduced the first super-automatic wine appliance that lets you enjoy a bottle of wine, one glass at a time. Koretz was previously the founder and CEO of Mykonos Software, which was acquired by Juniper Networks in 2012 for \$80 million. Under his leadership, Mykonos was awarded the Wall Street Journal Innovation Award and won first place in SC Magazine's Innovators Throwdown. The inventor of a dozen technology patents, Koretz was recognized as an innovator by Bloomberg BusinessWeek in 2012. He is a wine fanatic, aspiring nomad and lover of all things street food.



# a new technique

## Using Tech to Elevate Event Engagement

BY CHRISTINE LOOMIS

**T**here are many ways to evaluate and increase attendee engagement, one of the critical metrics for determining the success of a meeting, program or other corporate endeavor. But technology is by far the most comprehensive tool, and it comes in many forms.

These days, it's almost impossible for planners to keep up with technology. Not only is it evolving at breakneck speed, the scale of its evolution is mind-boggling. Who 10 years ago would have thought we'd be talking about widespread use of artificial intelligence (AI) among event technology providers, planners and the general population? But that's exactly what we're talking about — and more. It's important to note, however, that just because new technology exists, doesn't mean it's being used by every planner or that it's right for every planner or group. Just as importantly, the existence of new technology doesn't instantly render older technology useless.

In fact, it's most likely a combination of old and new that planners are working with today — with the help of event technology providers — who are typically on the cutting edge of new developments and products.

### IS KEEPING UP NECESSARY?

Elizabeth Glau, CMP, director of strategy for EGX Group, points out that keeping up with all the changes may or may not be necessary for planners. "The speed of change keeps getting faster and faster. The need to keep up depends on whether being an early adopter is expected of you in your current role. Some people can get away with not learning about emerging technology until it's widely adopted. For others, it is critical to be one of the first and lead their peers. If you are the latter, then you already know you have to draw from a wider circle of influence

and be able to make connections where the connection isn't apparent."

For the most part, she says, changes in technology are very positive for planners. "Access to data and increasingly easy access to insights as well as the ability to integrate data from one system to another are all positive changes for our industry. This makes organizers much more efficient in proving the value of their events and tying events to business outcomes."

In terms of the most important aspect of technology for planners, Glau points to a theory known as "Jobs to be Done." The application for planners, she says, "is that you need to be very clear about the job you are hiring your technology to do. If it is just there for the sake of it, maybe you don't need it."

The same question is applicable when using technology to elevate engagement at an event. "We've made the mistake of thinking just because attendees' mobile devices are 'attached to them' we have to create an experience through that device. Rather," Glau suggests, "take advantage of the ability to communicate with your attendees directly but use human-centered design when you're thinking through the attendee experience. Consider the 'Jobs to be Done' theory and design engagement around what you want your participants to achieve, then figure out if there's a tool to get that job done."

Artificial intelligence will help us be much more efficient as event organizers. As we continue to automate decisions based on data, we'll be able to use



COURTESY TIM GROOT

Tim Groot, co-founder and CEO of GRIP, says planners need to focus on the solution as opposed to the individual features of a tech product.

our mental energy and time for creative problem solving."

Mary Ann Pierce, founder and CEO of MAP Digital Inc., has brought the digital space to financial industry conferences for clients such as Deutsche Bank, Lehman Brothers and Morgan Stanley. She has been a speaker for PCMA and MPI and taught digital event design at New York University. Today, one of the top three worldwide banks is among her clients, and she has provided technology, networks, webcasts and event software for them for more than 20 years.

"The most important aspect for conferences and events is to make technology serve-up a curated experience for our client's customer, the attendee, by using any application that enhances their experience."

Pierce says the path forward must include stakeholders in the meetings and events industry working together to "embrace the API economy" — the application programming interface economy — described as a set of business models and channels based on secure access of functionality and exchange of data.

In short, she says, "The events industry must have standards in which to interconnect technology so that our clients can build the tech stack that serves their conferences and event objectives. The current situation is a





COURTESY OF MARY ANN PIERCE

Mary Ann Pierce, founder and CEO of MAP Digital Inc., says events have to be designed “with the attendee at the center ... to execute the intended attendee experience.”

“Tower of Babel’ that does not serve the planner or the technology provider. Our industry is missing out on the rich opportunities of utilizing analyzed data and content as a digital asset to fuel new relevance and new revenue streams.

After over 20 years of event tech operating in silos, we need to integrate, reduce complexity and make event tech deployment simple.”

Just as Glau points to the need for human-centered design, Pierce says events have to be designed “with the attendee at the center, and then technology is found, fused or fashioned to execute the intended attendee experience.”

As an example of how Pierce and her colleagues have boosted engagement and more at a meeting, Pierce points to work for a major financial services client. “We were tasked with building MetaMeetings, an integrated, compliant and interactive event content and webcast management platform with one login so that attendees, speakers and staff could access, upload and share the conference content. The bank also wanted to serve up personalized content and 1x1 schedules to its attendees, thus differentiating its conferences from other banks. Because MetaMeetings is one integrated content-management platform, the bank has access to all the in-depth metadata on each attendee’s journey through-

out the conference, whether they were on-site or on the web. And our clients continue to challenge us to build better software so they can do better business. Our MetaMeetings platform pushes and pulls data within their internal platforms, prints name badges and enables dynamic agenda signage. We are also working on integrating a cost-efficient IOT capability for future conferences.”

Pierce also utilized a MetaMeetings platform at an international Masters &

“After over 20 years of event tech operating in silos, we need to integrate, reduce complexity and make event tech deployment simple.”

**MARY ANN PIERCE**  
Founder and CEO  
MAP Digital Inc.



Robots Conference, and partnered with two other top technology providers to create an experience for attendees and enhance and track engagement. “We fired up a MetaMeetings platform, brought live shells on-site so that our team in New York could capture video webcasts using AWS (Amazon Web Services), and partnered with two of the best-of-service technology providers: GRIP, which uses AI to match attendees, and Vivastream to analyze the event data to map the attendee’s journey.”

Attendees were shown how to use the platform to make connections, review matches, schedule meetings with fellow attendees and so on. They could also view and share video sessions posted from the previous day.

What was learned? A lot, says Pierce, not the least of which was that the attendees were “hungry for meaningful connections and content, especially the how-to session videos and slides. We analyzed the GRIP, MetaMeetings, registration and evaluations data within the Vivastream platform. We could then show the organizer, sponsors and exhibitors the metadata generated in digital space around the event, including who was meeting, what their interests were, what themes were trending and where there were opportunities for a sponsor to invite specific attendees to a special event, meeting or workshop based on their behavioral data and interests.”

Tim Groot, co-founder and CEO of GRIP, says technology comes into play in different ways for different meeting organizers, but that in every case it should be about,

“An increased value offering through cutting-edge technologies that drive a better Return on Time (ROT) for visitors and a higher Return on Investment (ROI) for exhibitors.”

#### KEEP IT SIMPLE

Like Glau and Pierce, he says planners need to focus on the solution as opposed to the individual features of a tech product. “Talk about the goal you would like to achieve by using your technology and the overall experience that you want to provide.”

Perhaps most importantly, he says, keep it simple. “Many events overcomplicate the setup of their event technology, which often results in a more cumbersome user experience and less

Sophia, the AI Robot, interacts with attendees at Smart Monday in the Six Star Innovation and Experience Lab at IMEX America last year.

engagement. Less is more when it comes to meeting technology. Try and keep the setup simple; both the digital part and the on-site meetings are best kept in a dedicated meeting area where you can maximize the impact and engagement and directly act on no-shows and/or any other issues.”

Groot believes that virtual reality and artificial intelligence will increasingly impact meetings. “AI dramatically impacts the quality of the interactions that take place at events by facilitating quality meetings and meaningful interactions. This results in an increased ROT for visitors and a higher ROI for exhibitors. The time of serendipitous meets is over.”

It’s important for planners to know what the experts are doing and where to look in terms of staying current with emerging technology. But at present, AI and other leading-edge tech may be out of the wheelhouse and/or budgets of many planners, or simply not yet needed. Wayne Robinson, CMP, CMM, assistant vice president with FM Global and chair of Financial & Insurance Conference Professionals (FICP), has witnessed the rise of technology at recent events. He noted that Klik wristbands were a hit at a meeting attended by one third of the company’s employees.

Klik is an event engagement platform that enhances an attendee’s overall event experience via, in this case, wristbands. The platform includes a host of features to streamline event engagement including registration, event programming, networking, location services, attendee tracking, gamification and an app for attendees to manage their profile and access important information



COURTESY OF IMEX

relating to an event in real-time.

“Everyone gets a band upon arrival,” Robinson says. “Two attendees then press their programmed bands together and each immediately has the other’s contact info, etc. It also was a great conversation starter.”

As the Klik developers suggest, the FM Global planning team upped the ante on engagement by offering prizes for the most clicks. The prize was tied to the keynote speaker. “Our keynote, Erik Wahl, painted a famous athlete or historical figure upside down during his presentation. We auctioned the paintings off among attendees who had the most clicks.”

Robinson says that via Klik they were able to incorporate technology, notifications and information. “For example, we could send out a message to let attendees know where their colleagues were in order to meet up and network. It was fun and useful. It benefitted the company in that it gave attendees a way to instantly meet people and interact. The biggest takeaway was that you have someone who’s been in the company six weeks, and he or she can walk up to the CEO and say, ‘Hey

can I click with you?’ That wouldn’t have happen without the wristband.”

#### HELPS WITH ENGAGEMENT

Technology, Robinson notes, is helping with engagement whether attendees are employees or clients. FM Global uses augmented reality to simulate disasters and catastrophic events when clients can’t come to its state-of-the-art research campus to experience a fire or other natural hazard. It’s also used in the booth at an annual convention related to risk management. “We use augmented reality for prospective and current clients to show them how we can help to mitigate risk,” Robinson says. “Using AI goggles and video they see what it’s actually like to be in a fire in a warehouse or other facility. It’s gives them a better understanding of the value of our approach to risk mitigation.”

Creating engagement at meetings isn’t just about registration and attendee-to-attendee interaction. Education and presentations still matter, but not necessarily in the same old way.

“The things you can put into a presentation now have totally changed, such as motion graphics,” Robinson says. “PowerPoint is no longer the only viable option. The Adobe Suite of options are commonplace now, such as After Effects. You can drop in anything you want in order to generate enthusiasm — videos, graphics, etc. — but you need to add more to create engagement, no matter your content or your audience. You don’t normally see audience engagement with PowerPoint alone anymore. Video and motion graphics have become an integral part of presentations.”

#### What Should Planners Ask of Venues Related to Technology?

*Our Experts Provide a Detailed List*

- Who owns the bandwidth?
- Who is accountable?
- Insist on receiving a detailed list of circuits and a network floorplan.
- Ask about communications, price and service.
- Ask if the venue has chatbots that can

be supplemented with information about the event.

- If using the venue’s technology, negotiate the Internet connectivity, technology services and deployment schedule for an event before signing the event contract.



## PODCASTS ARE POPULAR

Podcasts, however, are still very much a valuable engagement tool, even though they've been around for years and planners should consider using them. Mike McAllen, executive director, Podcasting4Associations, who has long offered production services for planners and their groups, and whose past clients include Forbes and Wells Fargo, is now concentrating almost exclusively on creating podcasts for clients. "If you have content," he says, "it's a great way to get it to your audience."

Podcasts can be used before, during and after meetings to boost and continue engagement. "If you create a podcast during an event, the audience can participate right then and listen to it later."

He says podcasts can extend sponsorships and the revenue associated with them, as well. "A lot of groups are doing live podcast recordings and then releasing them after the fact, meaning you can mention sponsors during the live event, and then again when the podcast goes out later. That helps to increase sponsorship as well as engagement."

McAllen says that a call to action can be included on any podcast that a company or group is sending out, giving organizers a way to measure engagement and the effectiveness of the podcasts themselves.

Booths come down after an event, he says, "But podcasts live on. You can republish them in different ways and send them out again, for example to let attendees experience sessions they couldn't get to or to make those sessions available to people you want to attract but who couldn't be at the event."

You can transcribe your podcast shows and turn them into multiple blog posts. Before a meeting, McAllen says planners can interview people who were at the event last year who can talk enthusiastically about it. They can also interview speakers who will be at the event in order to drive excitement.

Once a podcast of a speaker's session at an event is wrapped up, organizers can interview him or her again, cutting back

and forth between the live session and the speaker providing new insights, extending interest in the podcast and the event.

"When you release a new podcast, it can be set up to go to your targeted audience's phone automatically," McAllen says. "It's a way to whisper in your attendees' ears all year long. Time is your attendees' No. 1 asset. Podcasting is a way attendees can consume your educating, entertaining and compelling messages while doing something

"The new metric of success for many of our F1000 corporate customers is attendee and customer insights."

**NICK FUGARO**  
CEO  
Vivastream



else — driving, sitting on a bus, working out, gardening, doing dishes or waiting in line at the Post Office."

Podcasts are available to everyone with an iPhone now, they simply have to subscribe. And Google is coming out with an Android version, meaning your podcasts can soon be part of a Google search, which extends the audience engagement and audience reach. Bottom line: Podcasts are the engagement tool that keeps on giving — in multiple ways.

Whichever technology planners currently use, one thing is clear: The ways of measuring success have changed. Nick Fugaro, CEO of Vivastream, puts it this way:

"Our first recommendation for plan-

Podcasts are a valuable engagement tool and can be used before, during, and after meetings to boost and continue engagement.

ners is to revise and evolve their metric of event success. Traditionally, event metrics of success were based on number of attendees, anecdotal information and the small percentage of survey responders. The new metric of success for many of our F1000 corporate customers is attendee and customer insights.

This answers questions: What content are our attendees consuming and how can we as event planners become more effective with delivering relevant content based on their behavior?"

He says technology that best captures engagement include session scanning, lead retrieval, mobile, surveys and ibeacons. "Technologies like Vivastream exist to help event organizers understand engagement before, during and after the event by leveraging behaviors and data from the multiple technology implemented from events — not simply a single data source."

Additionally, he says, post-event "trip reports" are now prevalent. "Trip Reports are a personal URL embedded within the "Thank you for attending" email commonly sent to each attendee following an event. When attendees click the link within the email, they're presented with their unique personal webpage that highlights their personal journey, interests, and engagement during the event and recommended relevant resources based on the content they consumed."

Plus, Fugaro adds, the Trip Report link can easily be shared with managers, team members and social followers. "We've seen as high as 300% increase in thank you email responses and engagement when Trip Reports are included."

It may seem overwhelming for planners, but the positive outcomes with new technology are many. Noting that he's one of the world's top-10 technophobes, Robinson says, "I do realize the importance of technology and the far-reaching shelf life it provides to our meetings."

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# MAKING IT PERSONAL

## Attendees Want Events to Meet Their Specific Needs

BY MAURA KELLER

**T**here is a reason why so many financial and insurance meetings and events have been cookie-cutter productions. There are people to please and placate, funds to be allocated, and complex agendas to be developed. It is no wonder that so many people end up at the same event they have attended a dozen times before. But as the world is enveloped in communication tools such as social media, blogs and 280-character Twitter posts, the overall meeting content and design is evolving to meet attendees' event content and design preferences.

Lee Gimpel, founder of Better Meetings, a meeting design, facilitation and training company in Washington, D.C., says a new generation of meetings is co-creative. For years there has been a typical model of one person running a meeting with attendees sitting around the table; either everyone is listening or one person talks at a time. Or for larger events, facilitators and presenters 'talk to' meeting attendees with little to no interaction.

"This is usually pretty top-down and hierarchical. And frankly, it's also pretty boring and you tend not to get a lot of engagement, participation, buy-in or quality ideas," Gimpel says. "While co-creative meetings may have a facilitator, they tend to authentically be asking for participation and giving attendees equal weight, and more of a chance to speak and shape the decisions. I'm seeing smaller groups that form within a larger meeting — where people discuss and report

back, and then the group decides."

Consider this: Today, we can sit in front of a screen and access nearly all the world's information without going anywhere. That begs the question: Why do we still organize conferences and conventions? Why do we attend them?

Gimpel says the answer is fairly clear: We organize and attend conferences to get new information and learn new things. We go through all this trouble to connect with people in a human way that we can't by reading books, scanning web pages, watching videos or listening to webinars. We go for the informal 'water cooler' moments that happen at big meetings; we go for the networking, connecting and reconnecting that happens face to face; we go for the energy and excitement of being among hundreds or thousands of people who share a common interest or industry.

"And, to come full circle: This is at the heart of what attendees want," Gimpel says. "Many conferences focus heavily on sharing knowledge, but they seem to miss a focus on connecting people and their experiences, ideas and challenges. Attendees don't want to be bored. They don't want to be lectured to for hours on end. Rather, they want to be able to connect, to learn from others, to share their knowledge and feel like their time was well spent."

Beth Lawrence, CMP, chief event officer of Beth Lawrence Meetings & Events, an event production and experiential strategy company, says as more people are invited to more events, the format

"Attendees want to be able to connect, to learn from others, to share their knowledge and feel like their time was well spent."

**LEE GIMPEL**  
Founder  
Better Meetings



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becomes tired and the expense can be pretty high. Furthermore, it's not as easy to stay away from the office and justify the expense in time and money as it used to be. So meeting facilitators need to work that much harder to entice people to attend meetings, conferences and other industry events, especially if they feel they are going to attend the 'same old, same old' event they've been to a dozen times before.

"While attendees are always looking for more information, they are also looking for opportunities to expand their network at the same time," Lawrence says. "Events need to truly be a one-stop shop, and provide ROI to the companies who have paid to attend just as much as the sponsors."

## EVOLVING CONTENT & DESIGN

Differences in learning styles and retaining information are being recognized at today's meetings, so Lawrence experiences a lot of dynamic breakout sessions that invite audience participation, require participants to follow along and implement what they are learning in real time, and workshop-style sessions versus straight keynote speakers.

"I also like to change it up with panel discussions, fireside chats, and 'fast chats,' TED-style talks that are less than 15 minutes in length," Lawrence says. "I find that this is a great way to tease breakout sessions on the main stage, that are happening at a later time."

Meeting and event planners who are eager to revitalize their content format and design for meetings should use attendee feedback in surveys to better gauge what today's attendees want. "Don't be afraid to ask the questions of your attendees and sponsors, to maximize the time and impact that you have," Lawrence says. "Also, change it up from year to year if you have an annual event. 'Expected' and 'routine' are not words you want associated with

your events and meetings."

Jumi Aluko, a Los Angeles-based event planner and strategic marketing communications consultant of Jumi Aluko Events, says the format of meeting content has changed to include more dialogue and conversation, less

"As the workforce is seeing more young people, they are demanding more engaging meetings that hold their attention."

### JUMI ALUKO

Event Planner + Strategic Marketing  
Communications Consultant  
Jumi Aluko Events



lecturing and more engaging the audience, and getting together in small groups and brainstorming ideas. "It's less of a sit-and-listen and more of a converse, collaborate, engage and learn," Aluko says, who has seen this being done by inserting the latest technology into meetings — from the way messages are conveyed, to having livestreams, to offering presentations from people in other countries to an

audience in one room.

"As the workforce is seeing more young people, they are demanding more engaging meetings that hold their attention," Aluko says. "You'll see more and more meetings that are super specific and personalized to the individual.

Why is that? Well, because no one wants to sit through something that serves no purpose or is not relevant to them."

Aluko says meeting attendees want meeting content to be:

- Engaging. Gone are the days of just sitting and listening. Attendees want the opportunity to talk with other attendees and learn from them. Most people come to meetings and conferences to network, so they want as many opportunities to do that while also learning. "It's moments when people can truly connect, that they remember and keep them engaged with a business or brand," Aluko says.
- Timely, yet valuable. People want to engage in discussions about things that are hot topics, but they also want the information to be something impactful — to



Meetings being run with sticky notes or note cards that can be moved, shuffled and re-categorized do more to help attendees pay attention than traditional lecture formats.



know that there is a reason you're sharing certain content and how they can get involved with your message.

- Flexible. When most people think about meetings, they think about conference rooms where everyone sits around a table. But people prefer attending meetings where they are free to roam the space and change their position throughout the day to remain comfortable.

"Some of the meetings I attend that are most captivating are the ones in co-working spaces where there are various rooms to have conversations, take a private call or even meditate," Aluko says.

For meeting planners to revitalize any type of meeting or event, they have to know what attendees want, and without that information, they can't change anything that will benefit them.

"Meeting planners should avoid assuming they know what's best, or worse, jumping on the latest trends and throwing them all in their next meeting and hoping for the best," Aluko says. "It's all about truly knowing your audience, hearing them and then implementing ideas that make sense."

Gimpel says meeting content is increasingly seen as modular or nodal. This is where we see so many meetings being run with sticky notes or note cards that can be moved or shuffled.

"Some of this creeps in from project management and more visual projects that draw from storyboards and designing an experience, be it using a claims app or buying insurance," Gimpel

says. There's also more attention being paid to the meeting environment that comes as part of a larger awareness of human-centered design. "We may not say conclusively that meeting in a beige, windowless room with bulky, uncomfortable furniture won't produce great results, but organizations increasingly have some awareness of how the feel of their space dictates the results that

"Events need to truly be a one-stop-shop, and provide ROI to the companies who have paid to attend just as much as the sponsors."

### BETH LAWRENCE, CMP

Chief Event Officer  
Beth Lawrence Meetings & Events



come from that space," Gimpel says.

It sounds really basic, but a meeting professional should start planning by asking: "Why are we doing this event? Why are people coming?"

"It's easy to get consumed by mastering the logistics — the right projector in the right room at the right time or the proper number of gluten-free meals at lunch — but start by thinking about the people, not the stuff," Gimpel says.

One of Gimpel's favorite sessions he ever saw was at a conference for financial professionals with a speaker who was an expert on financial coaching. Rather than talk about the topic abstractly, she asked for a volunteer and then walked through an actual financial coaching session in front of a live audience. "It was so much more interesting and informative than simply talking

In today's information age, attendees go to meetings to connect with people in a human way they can't by reading books, scanning web pages, watching videos or listening to webinars.

about the concepts," Gimpel says.

Meeting planners also shouldn't be afraid to take an active role as the organizer. "There's a philosophy that attendees don't want direction, don't want to be led and don't want to be told what to do. You need not be a dictator, but you can nudge people into behaviors that make the event more enjoyable and valuable," Gimpel says.

One thing meeting planners should avoid is doing the same event year after year and not varying the format. After a few years, organizers see that attendance often falls off. "Yes, the decorations might be different and the theme might be different, but it still looks and feels like the same event, just on repeat," Gimpel says.

Gimpel also recommends planners allow for more audience participation — be it giving the audience more time for questions — or breaking up a large room into small groups to discuss a topic or presentation so attendees can learn from each other. Often a room is full of experts on a topic, and it just so happens that one person is standing in front of the room.

In addition, get people to meet each other. As Gimpel explains, it's stunning how often people who work in the same field walk into a room and isolate themselves in the rows of chairs without meeting the people sitting right next to them, because that's not the culture of the event. "There are lots of ways to do this, but a simple one is just an invitation to talk to your neighbor for a minute," Gimpel says.

Often events try to cram in so much content — plenaries, breakout talks, poster sessions, etc. — while shortening downtime. But in many cases, the most valuable parts of an event comes in the discussions that follow such sessions; when the speaker connects with an attendee or when one attendee remarks on the question that someone else asked. Of course communication is key when orchestrating the event's



design. So meeting planners need be thorough in communications with staff members to ensure all service and support is provided in a cohesive, effective manner. Finally, know your audience and their expectations. What special touches will surprise them, make them feel pampered or steal them away from their everyday world, and surprise and delight at every turn?

## FUTURE MEETING DESIGN

Of course, no discussion of content meeting and design would be complete without paying some attention to the role social media and apps play in today's meeting environments. Meeting planners agree that 'under 35s' want a mix of traditional and digital content delivery because they grew up in the technology age. Thus, they want more content delivered via social media and event apps. They want free Wi-Fi access anywhere they go and a good phone connection at all times.

For large events and trade shows, the 'under-35' crowd expects the traditional signage and hoopla, but they also want the app that tells them where to go in five minutes. And because the majority of those within the 'under-35' crowd have smart



DREAMPLAY MEDIA

Meeting formats are moving away from long lectures to shorter meetings with more attendee participation and frequent breaks.

phones and tablets, meeting and event planners need to utilize platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest to their fullest potential.

As technology continues to evolve, the future of meeting content and design will evolve. There will be more opportunities for personalization during meetings — people truly being able to engage during an event the way they want. “There will also be more focus on self-care and well-being at events as

it's something that everyone is talking about now, and is sure to be intentional as individuals demand more of those opportunities," Aluko says.

Vanessa Keating, owner of Evolve Creative, with more than 20 years of experience in producing events nationwide, says as meetings content and design continues to evolve, everything is becoming more fast paced – attendee attention spans are getting shorter all the time – so creative ways to keep attendees focused while still conveying the important information is key.

“Technology will keep changing and developing, which will make some things easier or more impactful, and in other ways may make things more complex and difficult from the perspective of a meeting planner,” Keating says.

That said, Gimpel thinks we will inevitably see meetings that use more technology that's both functional and gimmicky — be it voting on our phones or bringing in participants via video. But he also thinks we'll eventually realize that very, very few successful conferences are built on one person lecturing to a room for 50 minutes, followed by five minutes of questions.

"I think conferences will see that the value they create is largely tied to the connections they make and the problems they solve, and those tend not to happen in mammoth meeting rooms filled with people passively watching and listening," Gimpel says. "Indeed, I hope the future of meetings is more co-creative, more participatory, more engaging and taps into more of the human knowledge and potential gathered in the room."



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# Making Wellness A Meeting Priority

**A**s meeting and event attendees become more health conscious, crave nutritious foods and request meetings that don't require sitting for hours at a time, meeting venues and planners alike are working hard to incorporate health and wellness components into their offerings. In fact, researchers are increasingly saying that "sitting is the new smoking" when it comes to health outcomes.

FLEX, the Financial Leadership Exchange, is hosted annually in Sun Valley, Idaho. Attendees are CFOs and financial leaders in the food service industry. In addition to inspiring and educational presentations, FLEX includes engagement opportunities in non-traditional settings and takes wellness seriously.

"We encourage collaboration and growth through community and wellness," says Luke Kircher, vice president of Exchanges for Revelry Group, a Certified B Corporation that hosts FLEX annually and creates shared value for its partners in the food, beverage and hospitality sectors. "Studies show that

spending time outdoors is one of the fastest ways to improve your health and happiness. It's been shown to lower stress, blood pressure and heart rate, while encouraging physical activity and lifting your mood and mental health. We see the results during each Exchange."

According to Ashlee Mueller, business development manager at Min-

"Studies show that spending time outdoors is one of the fastest ways to improve your health and happiness."

**LUKE KIRCHER**

Vice President of Exchanges  
Revelry Group



neapolis Northwest Tourism, companies are making overall wellness a focus throughout meeting and conference culture.

"Work/life balance has become a necessity to people as they choose their positions and the companies they want to work for," Mueller says. "Things

have shifted and it's easy to see why when most of the large Fortune 500 companies now have gyms on-site for their employees to utilize. This attitude has been spilling into conferences for awhile now with healthier meal options, mindfulness or 'stretching' breaks and energy-boosting teas and shakes."

These days professionals will likely select events that include a wellness program not only because it can be replenishing and help reduce stress, but because that event is sending a strong secondary message to the attendee that their well-being matters to that company.

"When companies invest in professional wellness, employee productivity, work satisfaction and retention increase, burn-out decreases and employees generally feel they have new tools to manage stress and work/life balance," says Megan Gunnell, LMSW, founder and director of the Thriving Well Institute, who is also a psychotherapist of 23 years and international retreat leader.

## STRATEGIES TO TAKE

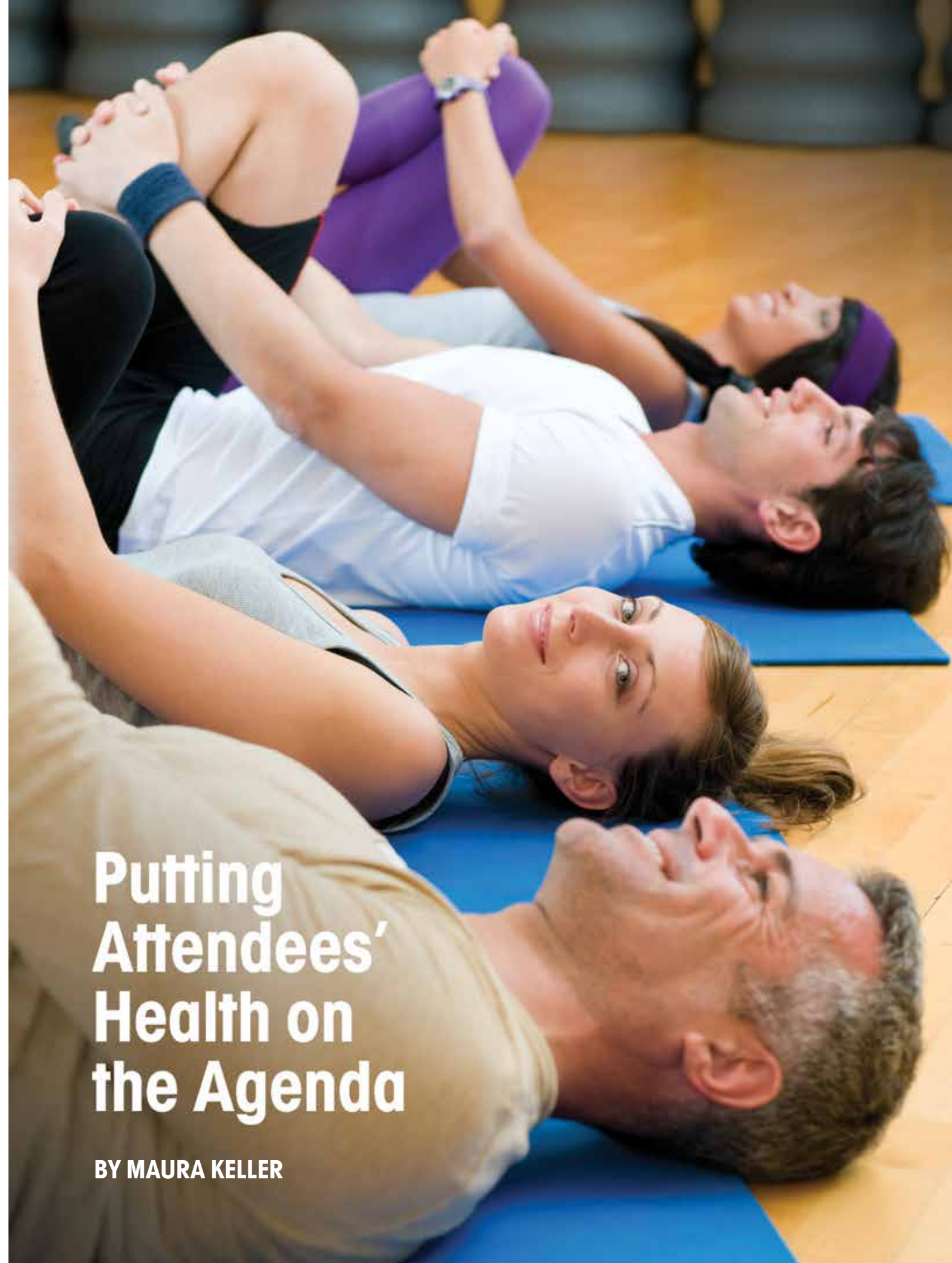
Kerry Wekelo, chief operating officer at Actualize Consulting, a financial services firm, is an expert on integrating wellness into her company's meetings. The company's off-site Intentional Leadership meetings often include breathing for stress management and clarity. "We start our financial meetings by putting the focus on our people first, and how they have helped us to be successful and meet our goals," Wekelo says. "When we first started the firm back in 2003, we would spend over one hour discussing

Kerry Wekelo, chief operating officer at Actualize Consulting, says her company changed its meeting culture and employees, left, have benefitted from the new approach.



## Putting Attendees' Health on the Agenda

BY MAURA KELLER







COURTESY OF WILL TAYLOR

Abby Phon, a certified, holistic health and wellness coach, has done wellness programs at large companies such as Google and WeWork.

our financials while putting people to sleep. Now we send out the financial data ahead of time and make it available in-person. We discuss successes centered around our team's achievements. People care about each other and how well we are doing, not the actual numbers. It's wellness through our people's successes."

For more complex wellness programming, Wekelo uses daily principles of wellness at Actualize Consulting, focusing on an entire meeting/event around wellness.

The principles are:

- **Breathing.** Use breathing techniques when you change topics in your meetings to help the listener transition with a clear mind.
- **Movement.** Incorporate movement into team-building activities such as hiking, bowling, yoga, table tennis, etc.
- **Nourishment.** Offer healthy food options throughout the event to support nourishment.
- **Daily routine.** Have a session on the importance of personal care during their daily routines. When Wekelo's team is stressed, the first question asked is, "What are you doing that you love or inspires you daily?"
- **Challenges/Communication.** Discuss protocols to handle conflict directly,

Julie Marie Palumbo, CEO and founder of Best Whole Self LLC, often speaks about living with Crohn's disease and reaching remission all through a healthy lifestyle.

openly and immediately.

Healthy meetings have been a growing trend for years — from 15-minute nature hikes to meditation sessions and geocaching — and there are several key ways to incorporate both simple and more elaborate wellness aspects into meetings.

Gunnell says there are a few key elements every wellness event should have.

**Take a holistic approach.** "It's imperative to cover mind, body and soul. It's also a must to have experiential components for people to have a chance to experience what well-being feels like," Gunnell says. Typically Gunnell's one-day wellness programs begin with an invitation for participants to let go of what happened yesterday and what they're worried about tomorrow and allow themselves to be in the moment of the event. Sometimes Gunnell opens with a simple yoga practice or if they're hosting a wellness retreat on location, they'll walk the beach or hike in the mountains.



**Taking the time.** The hardest part in adding a wellness activity to a meeting or event is finding the time. But part of getting everyone to meet out of the office environment is to 'hit the reset button' and recharge. Allowing time in the morning or afternoon for their attendees to relax at a group yoga/meditation class or a group bike ride helps everyone bond, collaborate and come into the next meeting with their blood pumping and ideas flowing. An easy way to incorporate wellness into your event is taking brain breaks to recharge both mind and body. Offer attendees a five-minute meditation break and encourage them to unplug and rest their eyes.

"One of our biggest challenges in pulling together the agenda for FLEX is ensuring the right balance of workshops, activities, presentations and down time," Kircher says. "We are committed to at least two hours of group outdoor activities every day." This could be hiking, fly fishing, pool parties in the summer and fall or skiing, snowshoeing, or cross-country skiing in the winter. When planning the meeting, Revelry Group also has made adjustments over the years to bring together work and play in their activities — for example, attendees bike from one session to another.

**Location, location, location.** "We've also found that choosing a location that supports your meeting wellness goals is important," Kircher says. "We've carefully chosen Sun Valley because it is a magical place, off-the-beaten-path and surrounded by nature, but if you don't give your attendees the opportunity to immerse themselves in the experience, we think that is a mistake."

**Age-appropriate activities.** Meeting planners need to consider who the majority of attendees are and together with the wellness professional, decide what offering would be most beneficial for those participants. "For a varied audience, meeting planners could consider offering breakout session choices where some attendees could select a more strenuous offering like hiking or zip lining and others could select more restorative sessions of massage or body work," Gunnell says.

Julie Marie Palumbo, CEO and founder of Best Whole Self LLC, often works with conference and meeting planners to incorporate wellness components into each day. "Different age groups have different needs when it comes to their health so it is important to offer programs that address those of the audience," Palumbo says.

For example, young professionals often suffer from burnout and keeping late hours, so it is important to address not only their physical health, but mental health, as well. "Those who have been in the workforce for 25+ years often ask me to coach them on maintaining higher energy as well as the physical stamina to keep up with work and social demands," Palumbo says. "They also have needs more specific to chronic illnesses and internal health as opposed to their physical appearance."

Mueller also says it's important to select an active-centric location from which to host a meeting. "Find an event space that offers outdoor activities and amenities for groups," Mueller says. "You can even get in the water and do an activity like kayaking, canoeing, stand-up paddleboarding and SUP Squatch, a unique, six- to 10-person paddleboard. Or gather your group on the green at a golf course."

**Healthy food options.** Meeting planners also are always looking for new ways to offer sweet treats to attendees, while making sure they also have healthy items. Offering a 'superfoods break' provides items such as fresh smoothies, super grains and anti-oxidant shooters. One simple wellness technique is to offer healthy snacks and then nutritious options at every meal. Consider swapping out high-carb, sug-



COURTESY OF KSENIJA SAVIC

ary foods for energy-boosting options that prevent fatigue and increase focus. Also have water on hand to stay hydrated. Offering 'spa water' can make hydration more appealing. This can be as easy as just adding cucumber slices or another fruit such as berries, melon or citrus in the water dispensers.

**Spa experiences aplenty.** One key way that many meeting planners incorporate healthy options into an event is by offering spa treatments to attendees. Spas come in all shapes and sizes — just like those who visit them. Spas also come with different kinds of strengths, such as fitness or pampering, and their styles run the gamut from low-key and inexpensive to luxurious and high-priced. And as more companies rec-

At a Women's Wellness Retreat at Anamaya Resort in Costa Rica, attendees relax by doing yoga on the deck at the center.

women and yes, even children. This 'healing power of touch' can dramatically rejuvenate an individual's mind, body and spirit by reducing muscle tension, improving joint flexibility, and promoting faster healing, in young and old alike.

Nowhere is the spa phenomenon more evident than in the cruise industry. According to Leysi Sabates, global business development manager, corporate incentives, meetings and charters with Celebrity Cruises, the company strives to create a holistic wellness journey like no other on land or at sea.

Examples include: The Spa on Celebrity Edge, a 22,000-sf refuge for participants to renew, restore and reinvigorate. Featured aboard their Solstice and Millennium class ships is the Canyon Ranch Spa, where attendees can simply unwind in the tranquil Persian Garden and where they'll enjoy a variety of new fitness classes, seminars, exhilarating spa treatments and salon services.

They also offer Spa café — which offers a creative take on healthy cuisine such as salads, soups, proteins, and juices.

**Holistic exercise programs.** Of course, it was only a matter of time before overworked and overstressed workers discovered the power of holistic approaches to reducing stress. As a result, meeting planners are integrating the mind and body into exercise programs to restore equilibrium to their body and eliminate the negative affects of stress.

"Work/life balance has become a necessity to people as they choose their positions and the companies they want to work for."

**ASHLEE MUELLER**

Business Development Manager  
Minneapolis Northwest Tourism



ognize the need for their employees to embrace health and well being, they are incorporating spa treatments as part of their meeting and event agendas.

Perhaps the most popular of spa treatments being used to help relax and refresh attendees is massage therapy. It may have started as a seemingly fleeting trend for those looking for a periodic escape into the world of pure relaxation, but massage has proven to have serious medicinal power for millions of men,



Yoga is popular for people in search of something new. In addition to increasing concentration and flexibility, yoga offers a sense of well being, while stretching, toning and increasing muscle endurance. Some of the more interesting ways to bring wellness to the forefront is to promote a ‘steps contest’ for the meeting, rent exercise balls in lieu of chairs, and teach desk exercises that attendees can incorporate when back to the office. Mini yoga breaks can focus on stretching, breathing and mindfulness.

#### **Meditation room or guided meditation sessions.**

Teaching attendees how to breathe and meditate is a great way to manage stress, anger and anxiety. Whether it’s personal or work related, this could make a huge overall impact on everyone. Abby Phon, a certified holistic health and wellness coach who has done wellness programs at large companies like Google and WeWork, says benefits include greater ability to focus on the day’s sessions and increased emotional intelligence during networking opportunities during and after scheduled events.

“If an all-day meditation room isn’t an option, scheduling 10 to 15 minutes at the start of the day to help attendees center and focus themselves is a great option as well,” Phon says. “Many conference venues have local wellness centers they partner with, but there are iPhone/Android meditation apps that work great too.”

**Stretch breaks.** Having stretch breaks is especially important for people sitting at a computer all day and staring at a screen, or sitting in an auditorium or conference center listening to lectures. “Opportunities to move your body keeps you focused and engaged on the task at hand,” Phon says. “Your creativity is also enhanced when your body as well as your mind is engaged. Aim for no more than 50 minutes of passive content with five to 10 minutes of stretching, movement or yoga in between.”

**Giving back feels good.** Business volunteerism, often referred to as corporate social responsibility (CSR), can take many forms and it can be a quadruple win. Everyone involved — the organizations that provide the employee volunteers, those where employee volunteers help out, the wider community and the employees themselves — has something to gain. Such efforts offer a low-cost, low-risk, high-impact way of making the

“Many conference venues have local wellness centers they partner with, but there are iPhone/Android meditation apps that work great too.”

**ABBY PHON, CHHC, AADP, IAHC**  
Integrative Holistic Health and Wellness Coach



knowledge, skills and experiences of the business sector accessible to the nonprofit sector while building understanding, employee skill and community goodwill. And experts agree that business professionals who volunteer during meetings and events find their experiences inspiring, empowering and sometimes life changing — all key wellness components. They are giving the opportunity to practice service and compassion for those who need it most.

an aspect of it once they return home,” Gunnell says. “I’ve seen conference organizers really miss the mark on this by hiring a mediocre comedian or an entertainer instead of a wellness professional who is trained to know how to facilitate an offering that feels safe and meaningful to explore. Attendees should have a clear understanding of what the wellness component goals are both from the conference organizers as well as the facilitator.”

Whether it’s an activity they participated in on the property, a seminar they attended about stress relief through meditation or a fresh and healthy meal they ate, attendees can leave feeling energized and take those healthy ideas home or back to the office.

“The main purpose of a conference is often to enhance the performance of employees, increase their excitement and dedication, and teach them skills to become more valuable assets to the company. But without incorporating a wellness component, many of the skills they learn will not be implemented if they are not feeling their best,” Palumbo says. “Physical and mental health is just as important to companies’ bottom lines as the skill sets required to perform tasks, so it is critical that more wellness programs are components of conferences going forward.”

Companies are making overall wellness a focus throughout meeting and conference culture.

#### **EMBRACING A FUTURE OF WELLNESS**

If a meeting planner wants to offer a wellness avenue to a meeting or event, experts agree they need to thoroughly research facilitators. Do they have experience? Are they a legitimate, licensed professional? “Meeting attendees want to receive high-value information and are searching for an experiential wellness component that will help them imprint the significance and therefore the likelihood of continuing this technique or

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## Customer Experience is the New Competitive Advantage

BY MAURA KELLER

In the meetings and events industry, it's all about getting people to remember your business, your service and your brand. For many meeting and event planners, customer service is the arena that puts the 'big picture' perspective into focus and determines where a planner can make a significant impression. With that said, more and more planners recognize the important role customer service plays in making immediate and lasting impressions on clients and attendees alike.

### EVOLUTION OF SORTS

Whether you're part of an independent meeting and event planning firm, or if you work within a financial or insurance meeting or event planning department, the bottom line is the same: People's perceptions of your business or personal brand will be shaped by the experience they have with you.

According to Jon Picoult, founder and principal of Watermark Consulting, a customer experience advisory firm, those perceptions have consequences. "If positive, they help fuel repurchase and referral behavior, or for internal corporate planners, career advancement," Picoult says. "If negative, they drive people away and create unfavorable word-of-mouth."

Experts agree that customer service has evolved tremendously over the last 10 years to become the focal point of event planning businesses to ensure that customers are satisfied and engaged, will recommend and will return. As Picoult explains, because products and services — including events and conferences — have become so commoditized, customer experience is the only true differentiator. Deliver

a better experience for your audience than the next guy, and you win. Customers will return again and again.

In recent years, the concept of customer experience has emerged and for many professionals, customer experience is where the focus ought to be, not just customer service. Annette Franz, founder and CEO of CX Journey Inc., a customer experience strategy consulting firm, is a coach, speaker and an author with more than 25 years of experience in the customer experience discipline.

As Franz explains, customer experience is the sum of all the interactions

"Customer service is what happens when the experience breaks down."

**ANNETTE FRANZ**  
Founder and CEO  
CX Journey Inc.



that a customer has with a brand over the life of the 'relationship' with that brand, and importantly, the feelings, emotions and perceptions the customer has about those interactions.

"Customer service is just one of those interactions," Franz says. "Customer service is what happens when the experience breaks down. When you focus on improving the overall experience — of which customer service is just a part — it leads to a simple and seamless rela-

Julie Austin is an award-winning inventor, futurist and an internationally known thought leader on the topics of innovation and competitive advantage. She is also CEO of consulting firm, Creative Innovation Group.

tionship for, and with, your customers and constituents."

Picoult says two key factors underscore the importance of a great customer experience in the meeting and event planning industry. First, there's a lot riding on these events.

"They are usually big, high-profile engagements that are closely watched by top executives," Picoult says. "If the event doesn't go well, the downside ramifications, including the reputational impact to all involved, are significant."

Furthermore, event planning is a service that many business sponsors could potentially view as a commodity. "And if sponsors believe there's little differentiation between planning providers, it creates an environment where attention is focused on the price quoted instead of the value delivered; an environment where sponsors develop no allegiance to planners; an environment so devoid of client loyalty that it all but assures business or career failure," Picoult says.

What's more, meeting and event planners have several customers that they need to keep happy, including: the audience/attendees, the speakers, the sponsors, the media partners, the host



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At Cvent CONNECT, the company provided the 4,500 attendees with the opportunity to give feedback before, during and after the event via the mobile event app to boost customer appreciation.

site, the A/V tech companies, the shipping companies and more.

So what does a good experience mean to the financial and insurance meetings and events industry? It's the difference between a great event that is well attended versus one that is mediocre and doesn't get a repeat audience year after year. While this means different things to different customers, in general, if it's a bad experience, the sponsors won't return, nor will the speakers or the attendees.

"The only way to know what good customer service means — and to deliver the ideal experience to each constituent — is to take the time to listen to them, get their feedback, understand who they are and what their needs are, and design an experience to meet those needs," Franz says.

With technology at our fingertips, event professionals need to be responsive, but quality is still very important. Samantha Flowers, meeting and event manager at Special D Events Inc., says having an event planner on staff, whether that is internal or an agency, is a huge advantage to companies.

"Being an event planner comes with a special set of skills and experience that can elevate events. Planners consider details that others may not," Flowers says. "It is important to utilize

these assets to their full potential and provide ideal customer service, because it will show in the quality of the events."

Rachel Andrews, meeting planner and director of global meetings and events at Cvent, says no matter how big or small an event planning job, great event planners know that to their client, their event means everything. If planners don't give each client their undivided attention during planning sessions or don't proactively offer out-of-the-box solutions to their unique needs and requests, they'll find someone else to plan their event the next time.

"Not only is exceptional customer service important for a successful career in the event planning business, it is vital to help showcase the importance of the meeting and event planner role on a larger scale," Andrews says. "In the past, organizations wrote off events as something that they could handle and

"It's simple — but not always obvious — good customer service keeps clients coming back and also helps define your professional reputation."

#### RACHEL ANDREWS

Meeting Planner and Director of  
Global Meetings and Events  
Cvent



plan internally. However, as companies hosted more events and realized the business impact these events had on the bottom line, the meetings and events manager role as a career really came to the forefront. Delivering exceptional customer service ensures we stay there."

At its core, good customer service in the meeting and events industry means delivering an incredible experience for attendees, ensuring the event supports and helps drive overall business goals, and delivers it all within budget.

As Andrews stresses, it's not an easy task. In fact, it's probably why event planning has been named one of the most stressful jobs in the world. "But beyond this, I'd say that at the end of the day, happy attendees mean a happy client," Andrews says. "If you focus on what the attendees want and what the business needs, that's the epitome of great customer service."

### TECHNOLOGY & CUSTOMER SERVICE

Social media has impacted customer service by giving customers a bullhorn of sorts. If they have an issue, clients as well as meeting and event attendees can and will amplify it through their followers and their followers' followers.

"And if you're not active on social media, if you're social media team isn't equipped to swiftly respond to and address concerns from your customers, then the whole world is going to hear about it — multiple times," Franz says "The key here is to be where customers are, to communicate with them in their preferred channels or methods. Know and understand those preferences and use them to your advantage."

Andrews says the customer service landscape completely shifted when smartphones came into the picture in

the last decade or so. Customer service used to mean that there was one phone number to call from your landline when you needed help.

"Now, there are so many ways for customers to reach out via phone, web, live chat and social media," Andrews says. "People have the ability to connect 24/7, in real time, so there is a need to provide greater accessibility, deliver faster response times and even be more transparent in order to create better experiences that result in more satisfied customers. It's simple — but not always obvious — good customer service keeps clients coming back and also helps define your professional reputation."

Today social media and customer service has had a significant impact on customer support. While social media used to be a space for people to connect and chat with friends and family in a casual, fun way — in recent years, it has become an important space for customers to share their experiences, work through issues and challenges and learn best practices.

"It's essentially another customer service channel that organizations need to be monitoring and engaging with," Andrews says. "Because of social media's around-the-clock nature, it's important to build up and nurture your social media support strategy, so that customers' unsatisfactory experiences don't go unnoticed and are responded to quickly, while the positive ones are captured and shared with your followers. This especially holds true for live events and how much attendees share to their networks."

### STEPS TO TAKE

Improving customer service to clients is vital for any industry, but particularly within the meetings and events industry.

To do this, a meeting planner needs to put themselves in their client's shoes, understand who they're answering to and do whatever they can to ensure they have the insights and support they need to answer any questions — no matter who is asking them.

"Know how to speak with each stakeholder and ensure you're armed with the information you need to have intelligent conversations on progress updates, potential issues, overall event results and impact on the bottom line,"



CVENT

Andrews says. "CEOs want to know very different information than a CFO does. It's important that you speak in their language."

Andrews has personally found that delivering comprehensive FAQ sheets to the various event stakeholders is a fantastic customer-service tactic. By proactively answering the most frequently asked questions surrounding a specific event positions the meeting planner as the expert and also shows that they care about the needs and the interests of each stakeholder.

Other important customer service skills meeting planners need to incorporate are flexibility and patience. Event managers should be able to modify and tailor their event, both in the planning stages and even on-site, to accommodate changing client preferences.

"A happy attendee will want to return; will speak highly of the event with their peers; and will, in turn, help your client grow and scale their events year after year," Andrews says.

In addition to listening to a client and following an event countdown, it is important to be consultative as well. As Flowers explains, they learn as they grow from experiences and continuing education, so we need to recall that knowledge and transfer it to our clients on a regular basis.

"Instead of simply contracting a hotel, we can first negotiate discounts or free Wi-Fi to help our client's budget. We can suggest tactics for the event to be more sustainable," Flowers says.

At its core, good customer service in the meetings and events industry means delivering an incredible experience for attendees and ensuring the event supports and helps drive overall business goals.

"This includes transitioning to a mobile app instead of printing materials. When selecting the food and beverage, we can switch to water dispensers instead of plastic bottles. These cost savings and sustainability movements can set you apart, and make your clients feel good about more than just your event-planning services."

One of the best ways to improve the customer experience is to gather feedback and put it into action. For Cvent CONNECT, the company's annual user conference, they hosted more than 4,500 attendees, and provided them with the opportunity to give feedback before, during and after the event via the mobile event app. This feedback offers a deeper level of insight into how attendees perceive and engage with the event. One thing to remember: Gathering feedback is the first step and is useless, unless you analyze it and put it into action so you can make your event better each year.

Indeed, as Franz explains, meeting and event planners must look at each individual customer persona — attendees, speakers, sponsors, etc. and gather feedback from them.

"The event organizer who does this — asks for feedback from every con-





BRETT MOUNTAIN PHOTOGRAPHY

stituent and then does something with it — will be the premier event organizer that everyone will want to work with,” Franz says. “If you want to stand out in the hearts and minds of your clients, you have to understand your clients and understand what would cause you to stand out for them. The customer experience is defined by the customer.”

Picoult adds that one way to reduce customer effort is to obviate the need for clients to think of — and ask — questions. Make it easy by preempting their inquiries by, for example, using a detailed pre-planning event questionnaire, or simply by being two steps ahead of the client and always thinking about the next question they’re likely to pose.

Picoult also suggests event professionals who are eager to provide exceptional service do the following:

- Be very responsive to calls, texts and emails. If your client has to follow-up with you due to poor responsiveness, you’re essentially creating more effort in their life, which will cultivate negative impressions about the experience.
- Provide information in a clear, easy-to-read format.
- Create the perception of control. It’s human nature that we like to be ‘in control’ of what’s going on around us. When we don’t have that feeling of control — if, instead, we feel confused, uninformed or helpless in some

way — then the experience we’re going through feels worse as a result. The good news is, meeting/event planners can combat that sentiment by giving their sponsors the perception of control by doing such things as providing options throughout the planning experience.



“If the event doesn’t go well, the downside ramifications, including the reputational impact to all involved, are significant.”

**JON PICOULT**  
Founder and Principal  
Watermark Consulting

“Whether it’s options regarding location, venue, food or entertainment, when a client feels that the design of the meeting or event is something they have control over, they’ll tend to feel better about the experience as a result,” Picoult says.

#### FULL SPEED AHEAD

Julie Austin is an award-winning inventor, futurist and an internationally known thought leader on the topics of innovation and competitive advantage, and CEO of the consulting firm, Creative Innovation Group. Austin says that customer service is indeed becoming the new competitive advantage for meeting and event planners. One way

More planners recognize the important role customer service plays in making immediate and lasting impressions on clients and attendees alike.

to achieve that is by giving customers something they can’t get anywhere else.

In addition, Austin has learned one important thing about customer service. “You don’t have to be perfect, but you do have to respond and respond quickly to their issues. Ignoring a customer or taking too long to get back to them is seen as a sign of disrespect by them,” Austin says. “What they want to know is that you care about them and that you try your best. They don’t want to be forgotten.”

Indeed, poor communication is a major pitfall for event managers and will ultimately lead to unhappy clients and likely, an unsuccessful event. As Andrews explains, clients like to know what is going on, so agree on a communication cadence with your client and stick to it. Deliver daily or weekly progress and budget updates, registration counts, and other key data to the people who need it. Make the information easy to find and digest.

Customer service also extends to attendees, so utilize a mobile event app, which can play a key role in ensuring attendees are aware of event updates, session location changes and more.

“Don’t forget about the little things,” Andrews says. “Genuine customer service can be as simple as having staff on the floor at all times to help attendees find their session or make sure attendees have access to allergy-friendly food options.”

At the end of the day, the ‘customer is always right’ mantra holds true in nearly every industry across the board. And with the increased impact of social media and online review sites, delivering exceptional customer service, quickly and efficiently, will be key in the years to come.

“It’s important to remember that people believe other people — their friends, peers, professional networks,” Andrews says. “So, one bad review — one disgruntled client — can really hurt your credibility as an event professional no matter how many marketing dollars you spend to put yourself at the top of the Google search page.”

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# A MECCA FOR MEETINGS

**Las Vegas and Reno  
Continue to Attract  
Top Events**

**BY MAURA KELLER**

DEPOSITPHOTOS.COM



For decades, Las Vegas has been the epicenter for meetings, conventions and events of all sizes. Jill Leimbach, director of meetings for the National Association of Credit Management (NACM), understands the draw of Las Vegas as the world's leading meeting, convention and trade show destination. In fact, the NACM will hold its 124th Annual Credit Congress & Expo at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas June 14-17, 2020.

"Our gathering of credit and financial professionals comes just once a year," Leimbach says. Featured at the conference will be a host of educational opportunities, exhibitors and unique events. The expo hall will host dozens of exhibitors, showcasing products and solutions ranging from credit reporting and credit insurance to software and payment solutions. Educational sessions related to financial analysis, technology, legal issues in credit, soft skills and much more are included. In total, the overall expected attendance for the NACM event is approximately 1,500 people.

"Las Vegas has been a popular des-

ination for NACM's delegates," Leimbach says. "Our conference attendance numbers are typically strong when Las Vegas is the convention destination, therefore we try to keep it in our rotation every couple of years."

"If you can visit the site in-person, it makes that planning process much easier."

**ANNA DURST**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Nevada Society of Certified  
Public Accountants



NACM is a prime example of financial and insurance companies and organizations finding exactly what they are looking for in meeting and convention options in Las Vegas.

For Karla Singson, corporate events director at SNAP Events, the biggest draw that Las Vegas has for her is the numerous options available as it relates to her clients' needs, budget and preferences. "There's something for everyone. You can work with any budget, any cuisine and any location preference, and there's always something to your liking," Singson says. "It's important to drum up excitement for your participants and showcase Las Vegas as more than just a gambling or drinking capital. It is so much more and there really is something for everyone."



## TIPS OF THE TRADE

With Leimbach's extensive experience hosting meetings and events in the Las Vegas area, she recommends meeting planners recognize that the area is an expensive city in which to hold an event.

"Most hotels include a resort fee on top of the negotiated room rate, so try to negotiate that resort fee down as well," Leimbach says. "Also, be sure to spell out in writing in the contract exactly what is covered in the resort fee."

Singson recommends meeting planners considering Las Vegas as a destination for a meeting or event check out at least five options before signing a deal or finalizing a contract. "Don't be afraid to negotiate," Singson says.

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

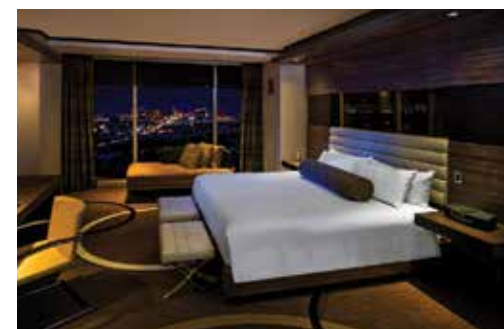
Few places on earth provide as much variety, entertainment or excitement as Las Vegas, which is rich with hotels, resorts and venues that offer a 'wow' factor at every turn.

Treasure Island Las Vegas recently completed a full remodel and expansion to its meetings and event space as well as several luxury and premier guest suites. Also, all of the hotel's 2,664 deluxe rooms as well as numerous suites are undergoing a multimillion-dollar renovation project to be completed over the next several months.

What's more, Treasure Island has also experienced a menu revival at several restaurants, including the recent grand openings of the new Corner Market Buffet restaurant as well as the new Golden Circle Sports Bar. The new sports bar features a panoramic LED video wall, which can be made available for select meeting group events.

For those who host or attend a meeting or convention at Treasure Island, customized banquet menus are available, including regionally sourced options. If it's preferred to set up a gathering outside of the usual banquet space, groups also have the option of a variety of alternative venues within the hotel and overlooking the Las Vegas Strip. These unique venues at Treasure Island feature

M Resort offers 92,000 sf of open and flexible meeting space, and Topgolf Swing Suite, which offers virtual golfing for attendees who play and for attendees who don't.



# THE DIFFERENCE IS IN THE *Details*

Positioned at the south end of the The Strip is M Resort Spa Casino, a boutique **Forbes Four-Star** retreat, perfect to host your next meeting or conference. With over **92,000 square feet** of open and dynamic conference space, state-of-the-art technology, impeccable service and breathtaking views, M Resort delivers a unique experience sure to impress your guests.

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atmospheres ranging from formal and elegant to casual and outrageous.

Anna Durst, chief executive officer at Nevada Society of Certified Public Accountants, recently planned the Nevada Society of CPAs 41st Annual Gaming Conference at Treasure Island. Approximately 200 people attended a two-day event focusing on gaming and hospitality issues as it relates to the accounting/finance field. Attendees included CPAs from: public accounting firms and gaming/hospitality industries, bankers, internal auditors, external auditors, gaming technology company staff and Gaming Control Board staff.

“Treasure Island’s meeting space is well appointed, private and a perfect spot for large or small events,” Durst says. “The staff worked as a team with us to make sure our two-day event was perfect. Their service was exceptional and we will be returning to the venue for our 2020 conference.”

One of the reasons Durst selected Las Vegas for this event is that the city knows how to facilitate events, large or small.

“Venue staff are experienced and you can rely on them for great ideas to make your event successful. Since it is such a popular event destination, it is best to start planning as early as possible,” Durst says. “Work with the event team at the venue and stay in contact with them during the planning process. If possible, choose off-peak times for the best rates and most flexible meeting dates. Finally, if this is your first time hosting an event in Las Vegas, try to schedule a site visit. Some venues are quite large,

and you want to plan time to move from hotel rooms to other hotels to meeting rooms and from within meeting rooms if applicable. If you can visit the site in-person, it makes that planning process much easier.”

Tropicana Las Vegas — a DoubleTree by Hilton property — continues to delight meeting planners and attendees. Tropicana’s conference center now offers more than 100,000 sf of flexible meeting space, while the Trinidad Pavilion and other rooms provide meeting and exhibition space with ground-level access. The Cohiba ballroom offers 25,000 sf of space,

“You can work with any budget, any cuisine, and any location preference and there’s always something to your liking.”

**KARLA SINGSON**  
Event Planner  
SNAP Events



and the Sky Beach Club’s pool setting can accommodate outdoor events for up to 2,000 attendees.

Featuring more than 92,000 sf of open and flexible meeting space, M Resort is an ideal venue for planners looking for multiple reception areas, state-of-the-art technology and connectivity, unique spaces, such as M Resort’s 25,000-sf M Pavilion and LUX special event venues as well as a 17,400-sf ballroom.

To take in the sights of Las Vegas, more than 70 percent of the rooms and suites at the M Resort offer views of the Las Vegas Strip through floor-to-ceiling windows and the majority of the resort’s

CAESARS FORUM, a new, state-of-the-art 550,000-sf conference facility, is expected to open at the end of March 2020.

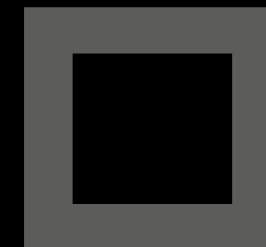
restaurants feature outdoor dining on terraces that overlook the 100,000-sf pool and events piazza. Outside of the designated meeting and conference area at M Resort, meeting planners can utilize any of the resort’s seven restaurants and five bars as alternative event space.

Long considered the preeminent casino resort in the world, Caesars Palace features a wealth of awe-inspiring venue options for meetings and events of all sizes. For example, the 51,000-sf Octavius and Forum Ballrooms can each accommodate as many as 5,555 guests. In addition, the 36,260-sf Augustus Ballroom and the 28,592-sf Palace Ballroom feature configurations to meet the needs of any group. Perhaps two of the most unique venues available are Caesars Palace’s 4,100-seat Colosseum, which boasts one

of the world’s largest LED screens, and the Gods Pool Oasis, with seven unique pools. Recently, the Colosseum has undergone enhancements, including: the creation of new seating configurations, VIP section transformation, interior design refreshments and upgrades of A/V equipment packages.

Construction also continues on CAESARS FORUM, a new state-of-the-art 550,000-sf conference facility expected to open at the end of March 2020. The \$375 million conference center will include the world’s two largest pillarless ballrooms. It will also feature the Forum Plaza, a 100,000-sf dedicated

M E E T T H E F U T U R E



# CAESARS FORUM



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outdoor meeting and event space. The entire facility will accommodate more than 10,000 attendees.

The Venetian also offers a plethora of event spaces, most notably the immense Sands Expo halls, as well as ballrooms, meeting rooms and a wealth of non-traditional spaces including theaters, pools and night-clubs and lounges. In total, the Venetian boasts over 2.25 million sf of meeting space.

To capture the attention of meeting and event planners, Hard Rock Hotel Casino Las Vegas recently spent \$60 million to improve and enhance the facility's meeting and convention center complex, which now boasts more than 110,000 sf of space. Eco-friendly and flexible, the space can now hold up to 8,000 guests.

The hotel will close in February and will open as a Virgin hotel in late 2020. The total cost of the operation now exceeds \$200 million, up from previous estimates of \$150 million. It will also be a partner in the worldwide Curio Collection by Hilton customer-service program.

Updates will include an overhaul and expansion of its 5-acre pool deck, and all of its 1,500 guest rooms will be renovated. There will be a redesign of the VIP suites at the hotel's major entertainment venue, The Joint, and officials plan to bring in a major booking partner to attract superstar residencies popular in Las Vegas.

### UNIQUE VENUE OPTIONS

In addition to the myriad of awe-inspiring venues at every turn, Las Vegas offers a host of unique venues. Topgolf Las Vegas features some of the most spectacular views of the Las Vegas strip in a more relaxed, non-corporate setting. Teeming with competitive fun, Topgolf's event spaces within the Las Vegas facility includes the Signature Room, which can host up to 350 attendees and features a private bar and A/V capabilities and two private event spaces that can be used individually or together. The facility's rooftop terrace offers stunning views for up to 178 guests, and includes a variety of couches, tables, fire features and a stage. No visit to Topgolf would be complete without attendees enjoying one of the 120, climate-controlled hitting bays, VIP cabanas or



From top: Wynn Las Vegas meeting space; MGM Grand Ballroom; and one of ARIA Resort & Casino's three pools. Las Vegas remains unmatched in its number of hotel and resort offerings.



two pools. They can also get lessons from PGA teaching pros. The venue's 900-person concert venue is also a crowd pleaser.

MEET Las Vegas is a unique option for planners looking for a unique event center and exhibition space. This three-story venue, with over 40,000 sf of space is in the heart of historic downtown Las Vegas. Fully adaptive to any event needs with indoor and outdoor secured spaces, it is the ultimate space for fully customized branding opportunities.

For those planners looking to offer some extracurricular activities beyond gaming and nightlife, Wynn Las Vegas recently resurrected the Wynn Golf Club and its new Tom Fazio golf course. The 18-hole championship course includes reimagined topography throughout.

### GOING GREEN

For many financial and insurance entities, going green in their meeting and conventions is not only good for the environment, but financially smart. For planners looking for venues that have embraced the environmental movement, last year Wynn Las Vegas announced it will power its new multiuse development with 100% renewable energy sourced from a new, 160-acre solar energy facility, making it one of the most environmentally conscious, planned developments in Las Vegas. Recently, Wynn Las Vegas earned Four Green Globes, the highest sustainable building certification from the Green Building Initiative. In addition, Wynn Resorts was named a top corporate user of solar energy by the Solar Energy Industries Association after opening the Wynn Solar Field last year, which offsets up to 75% of the resort's peak energy needs. The solar facility will eventually be used to power the resort's new meetings and conventions space expansion, set to open in March 2020, with 100% renewable energy.

The Venetian also has made significant strides in embracing



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eco-friendly operations throughout its Las Vegas venue. Some of these initiatives include waste reduction, resource conservation and the use of sustainable materials. In fact, the Venetian's rooftop solar-thermal systems is one of the largest in the U.S. and provides hot water for all swimming pools, spas and a portion of the Palazzo tower.

ARIA Resort & Casino is also noted for its eco-friendly amenities. The resort has incorporated technology in its exterior and interior design aimed at reducing energy consumption. When completed in 2009, it was the largest hotel in the world — with 4,004 guest rooms and suites — to have earned LEED Gold certification. It has smart rooms that automatically adjust curtains, turn off unused lights and electronics, and regulate the temperature depending on whether a guest is entering or leaving the room. ARIA was described in Popular Mechanics as possibly “the most technologically advanced hotel ever built.”

#### NEIGHBORING RENO

While Las Vegas has long been the favorite locale for meetings and events, gambling and entertainment — a mere six hour drive away sits Reno — which has also made a name for itself as a top destination for meetings and events. In fact, the area recently saw a \$10 million renovation to the Reno-Sparks Convention

Peppermill Resort Spa Casino offers the 62,000-sf Tuscan Ballroom, which seats 5,400 theater-style and 3,120 classroom-style.



Tropicana Las Vegas offers the new, 12,000-sf Havana Room, which can accommodate 300 guests seated and 800 guests reception style.

Center and many of the area resorts and hotels have invested millions of dollars in renovating and updating their facilities.

Atlantis Casino Resort Spa is adding wireless technology to all of its LCD projects to provide 4K quality and access. The spacious amenities also bode well for planners designing an event at Atlantis — with its two ballrooms, 22 meeting rooms, a high-tech executive boardroom and an expansive business center. Within the last few years, Atlantis spent over \$1 million redesigning their Toucan Charlie's Buffet menu and décor to bring a touch of Las Vegas to Reno.

Also a popular Reno destination, Peppermill Resort Spa Casino recently

underwent a significant renovation, including: the Florence and Pisa hospitality suites for versatile reception and lounge areas; the guest rooms and lobbies of Peppermill North and West wings; a new, private dining room accommodating up to 50 guests at Café Milano. The two-story, 17th-floor suites were remodeled to include luxurious amenities, custom décor and exceptional views.

Sprawling over 45 acres, Peppermill boasts: 82,000 sf of gaming action, 106,000 sf of meeting and entertainment space, two resort pools, 10 award-winning restaurants, 15 themed bars and lounges, a world-class spa and fitness center and brings in headliner entertainment from around the world.

The resort's meetings and conventions space underwent a massive renovation in recent years, including installation of marble floors as well as updated chandeliers and furniture.

A mere five minutes from the airport, Grand Sierra Resort and Casino features more than 200,000 sf of meeting space, including 45 breakout rooms, and spaces that can accommodate groups from 10 to 4,000 attendees. And to make the venue more enjoyable for guests, the Grand Sierra recently installed bipolar ionization technology to address tobacco smoke and odor throughout the resort. The new system features 120 ionizers that will help neutralize the air on the resort's gaming floor and throughout the facility.

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AUSTIN

Hilton Cleveland Downtown has promoted **Julia Austin** to director of sales and marketing. Austin will oversee the sales and marketing efforts for the award-winning hotel, which is connected to the Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland and offers 50,000 sf of meeting space.

Hyatt Centric Las Olas Fort Lauderdale has appointed **Katherine Beja-McLennan** as director of sales and marketing. Beja-McLennan will develop and implement sales and marketing plans to achieve a variety of strategic objectives for the hotel, scheduled to open next year.

Orange County's highly anticipated luxury travel destination, the JW Marriott, Anaheim Resort, scheduled to open next year, has named **Maribel Denner** as director of sales and marketing. Denner brings more than 30 years of hospitality experience to her new role.

The 240-room Sonesta Fort Lauderdale Beach, slated to reopen in November after a multiyear renovation, has named **Michael Dutton** director of sales and marketing. Dutton has more than 20 years of hospitality sales and marketing experience.

Canopy by Hilton West Palm Beach Downtown has appointed **Jen Garrett** as lead sales enthusiast. In her new role, Garrett will manage the group sales and marketing efforts. Previously, Garrett served as director of sales and marketing for a hotel in Palm Beach Gardens.

Virgin Hotels Dallas has welcomed **Edward Hahn III** as director of sales. Hahn will be responsible for overseeing the sales and catering teams as well as the development of group packages and experiences for the hotel's 14,000 sf of flexible indoor and outdoor meeting and event space. He brings more than 20 years of transient and group sales experience to his new role.

Garden of the Gods Resort and Club, Colorado Springs' luxury resort and private club, has named **Denise Perkins** as director of marketing. With more than 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Perkins brings innovation and continued growth to the AAA Four-Diamond Garden of the Gods Resort and Club.

The O'ahu Visitors Bureau has welcomed **Mathew 'Manako' Kenichi Tanaka** as sales manager. In his new role, Tanaka will oversee sales activities to improve processes and garner results in both leisure and meetings, conventions and incentives markets, implement travel trade sales tactics and collaborate with industry partners on sales-related initiatives.

Prince Waikiki of Prince Resorts Hawaii Inc. has welcomed **Joy Tomita Anderson** as director of sales and marketing. Tomita Anderson will oversee all sales, marketing and public relations initiatives for the 563-room Honolulu hotel, including its expansive meeting and events space and the 27-hole championship golf course, Hawaii Prince Golf Club.

Hilton has appointed **Alvaro Valeriani** as senior director of regional sales and marketing in the Caribbean and Latin America. Valeriani will lead the global hospitality company's sales and marketing activities across the region, developing business strategies that driving market share, delivering revenue and exceeding business goals.

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BEJA-McLENNAN



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