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CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

Michael Cerbelli's 'Hot List'

Take Your Events
to the Next Level
PAGE 36

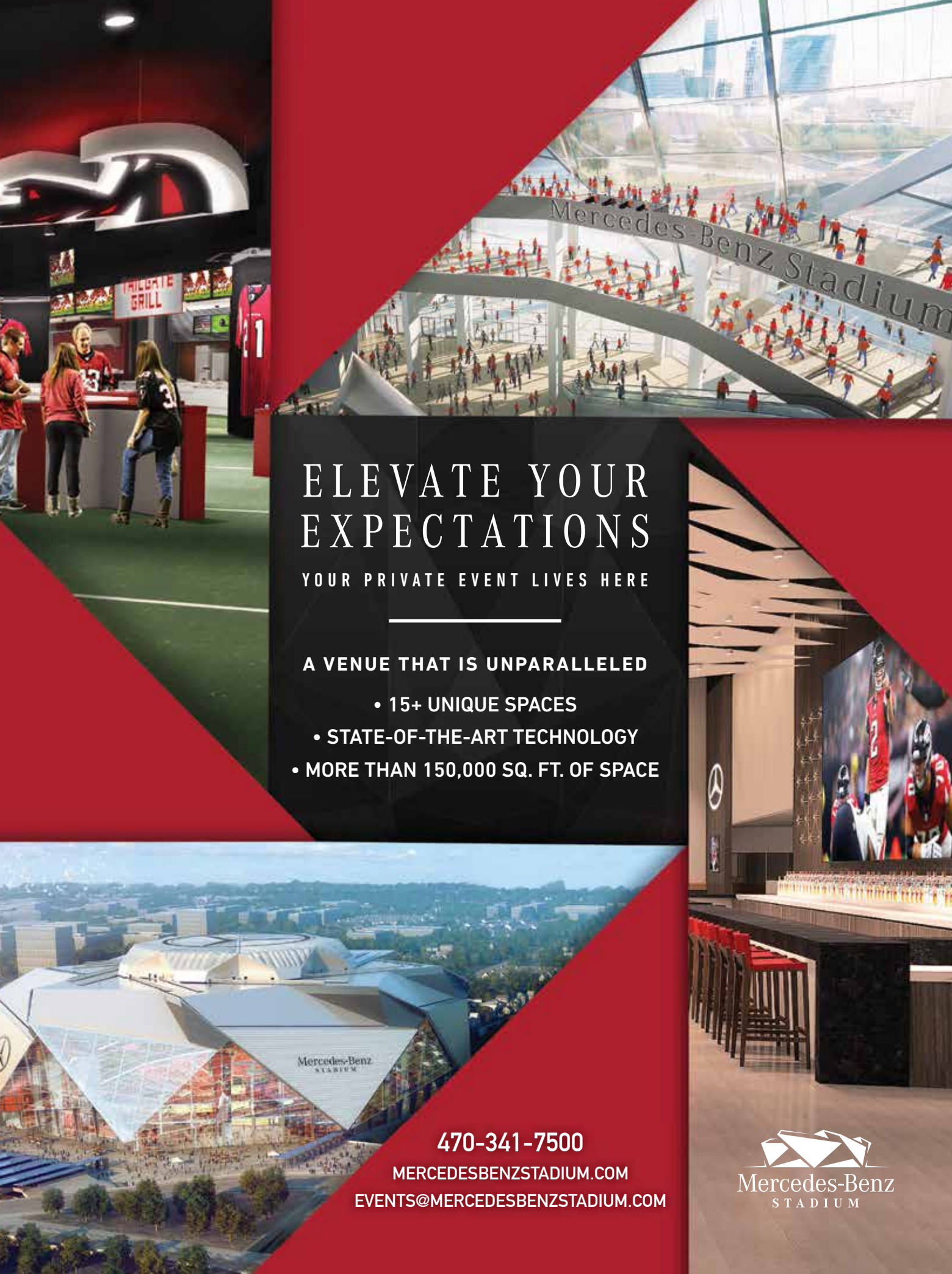
Michael Cerbelli, CEO of
Cerbelli Creative, reveals his
"black book of ideas."

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Understanding the New 'Purposeful Meetings'

The Human-centric Approach
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Academic Janet Sperstad will deliver the keynote on Purposeful Meetings at next month's IMEX America 2017. **PAGE 20**



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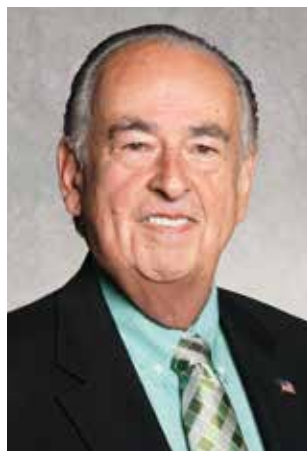


A poolside event planned at Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa is sophisticated with a touch of whimsy. **PAGE 48**

Publisher's Message

Creating Purposeful Meetings

I had the great pleasure of sitting in on Michael Cerbelli's "Hot List" presentation at the HGA Global Forum earlier this summer. I was so taken by his dynamic and entertaining ideas for maximizing attendee engagement that I asked him to share some of his favorites with you. Michael, who is CEO of Cerbelli Creative, and graces our cover, developed his Hot List to "share the wealth" with planners. "It is my way of giving back to the industry that has given me so much the past 40 years."



It's in this spirit of engagement and connection that IMEX America's Talking Point for 2017 is the concept of "purposeful meetings." I'm very much looking forward to attending IMEX America on October 10-12 in Las Vegas, the year's premier, must-attend event for our industry. This worldwide exhibition for incentive travel, meetings and events, is preceded by Smart Monday "Powered by MPI" on October 9, a full day of learning with 30 sessions (see our IMEX Preview on page 12). The day begins with an opening keynote by Janet Sperstad, CMP, program director, meeting and event management at Madison College, who will present fascinating research on "Purposeful Meetings — Driving Deeper Meaning and Insights." Janet, who

also will be honored during a gala at IMEX as one of three inductees in the Events Industry Council's 2017 Hall of Leaders, expands on this topic for us on page 20 "Understanding the New 'Purposeful' Meetings." The concept and goal of purposeful meetings, according to Carina Bauer, CEO of IMEX, "is to stop and think beyond logistical details alone to the overall experience you are creating for people. ...What will touch them or resonate with them long after they return home? What ideas and concepts can they put to work right away? This spirit of experience is what is at the heart of purposeful meetings." Sperstad and her colleague Amanda Cecil, Ph.D., CMP, note that their research "explores the elements of neuroscience and human behavioral research, technology, event design, content programming and community impact to achieve truly purposeful results. We dive into how to optimize the meeting experience to create more moments of creativity, learning and connectivity." Turn to our feature to learn the five key elements of planning a purposeful meeting.

More ideas for creating inspiring, rich experiences abound in this issue, including Meetings at Sea (page 24), Florida (page 48), Colorado (page 42) and ever-changing Las Vegas (page 58).

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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News & Notes

IRF Study Reveals Strategies of Top Performing Companies

WASHINGTON, DC — The Incentive Research Foundation has announced the release of the IRF Incentive



VAN DYKE

Benchmarking Survey and its accompanying white paper “Ten Things Top Performing Companies Do Differently.” The study examines what truly successful companies

are doing differently regarding non-cash rewards and recognition.

“The Incentive Benchmarking Survey

revealed a wealth of best practices for human capital investments from truly exceptional companies,” said Melissa Van Dyke, IRF president. “To be considered a top performer for this study, companies met benchmarks in revenue, growth, customer ratings and employee ratings. Of the 900 companies reviewed, only 300 organizations made the cut.”

“In today’s war for talent, organizations need to embrace incentives and recognition more than ever, both internally and within the channel,” said Christina Zurek, Incentives and Recognition Solution Manager at ITA Group. “These benchmarks help them

ensure their strategies are best in class, making them more relevant to talent and ultimately putting them ahead of the competition.”

The research revealed that top performing companies are more likely than average-performing businesses to use non-cash rewards and recognition programs to reward their salespeople (90 percent), employees (88 percent) and channel partners (81 percent). Top performing companies also think about, design, and support programs differently. <http://theirf.org/research/ten-things-top-performing-companies-do-differently/2229>

Marriott Seattle Tacoma Hotel Breaks Ground



TACOMA, WA — Interstate Hotels & Resorts has been selected by Yareton Investment & Management to operate the Marriott Seattle Tacoma, anticipated to open in spring 2020. Adjacent to the Greater Tacoma Convention Center, the 303-room, 22-story hotel will be a new landmark of luxury as the second tallest building in Tacoma, offering a four-star standard for regional, national and international conventions. The hotel will offer several elegant meeting spaces that will complement the convention center including a 10,000-sf ballroom, divisible into three separate spaces, in addition to 9,000 sf among seven breakout rooms. A Garden Terrace on the sixth floor will be a popular gathering area for both hotel guests and convention center attendees. High-end luxury amenities throughout the hotel will include a ground-floor Marriott Great Room with a sweeping, open-concept layout in a modern design reflecting the vibrancy of the surrounding city, joined by a contemporary restaurant and lounge area. www.marriott.com

GCB’s ‘Future Meeting Space’ Funded by PCMA

NEW YORK, FRANKFURT — The GCB (German Convention Bureau) has announced that the Education Foundation of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) is funding the second phase of the “Future Meeting Space” (FMS) research project, a cooperation between the GCB, the European Association of Event Centres (EVEC) and the Institute for Industrial Engineering of the Fraunhofer Association (IAO) — Europe’s largest application-oriented research organization.

The FMS effort was begun over two years ago to help create a vision for how people will meet in the future, and to in turn deliver practical, hands-on tools for meeting planners and suppliers to help them get ahead of the curve of what’s to come. The “Future Meeting Room” was unveiled in 2016 and by the end of August 2018 the second phase of the project will deliver additional recommendations based on the new participant-centric focus. www.pcmaconvene.org/plenary/how-well-meet

AlliedPRA Acquires NYC DMC Briggs

CHICAGO, IL — AlliedPRA, Inc., which leads the Destination Management sector (DMC) of the business events industry with 26 locations and \$115



NAPOLI

million in system revenue, has acquired Briggs, the DMC sector leader in the New York market. Anthony Napoli, CMP, DMCP, president of Briggs, will continue to lead the award-winning team under the highly respected Briggs brand, now owned and operated as an AlliedPRA Company. Gary Newman and Cosimo Bruzese will continue their leadership of Briggs in the roles of EVP, finance and operations, and V.P. of business development, respectively.

Founded in 1982, the award-winning Briggs team specializes in custom transportation solutions, corporate and incentive events, and offers its clients a wide variety of activities and experiences unique to the New York market. The Briggs team has established strategic relationships with all the major incentive houses, leading hotels, event venues and hundreds of business partners throughout the region supporting the critical business objectives of Briggs’ clients.

“The Briggs team takes enormous pride in the successful business and relationships we have built over the last 35 years in the greatest city in the world, New York City,” Napoli said. “We will continue our dedication to our employees and our partners, with our steady commitment to creating one-of-kind New York experiences for and with our valued clients. Now as a member of the market-leading AlliedPRA family, we are invigorated by what we can do together to redefine the DMC sector of the Business Events industry. We are thrilled about what the future holds for our business with AlliedPRA.” www.alliedpra.com, www.briggsnyc.com

Tips & Trends

Unique Experiences for Small Groups

By Ron Bernthal

Looking for some inspiration in planning your next small corporate or incentive event? Try these adventuresome ideas on for size.

Meeting groups in Lexington, Kentucky, now have the opportunity to meet the city’s championship thoroughbreds. Through the newly created **Horse Country** (www.visitthorsecountry.com), visitors can make group tour reservations at some of the area’s noted horse farms, including Ashford Stud Farm, home to Triple Crown winner American Pharoah, and Taylor Made Farm, where California Chrome resides.

In Key West, meeting planners with groups overnighting at sister properties Casa Marina and The Reach can dine on the grounds of the **Hemingway House**, the former home of legendary writer Ernest Hemingway. This exclusive experience, available for up to 200 people, allows private corporate groups or executive retreat participants to experience the rich literary history of Key West in a landmarked historic site.

On Florida’s Gulf Coast, the **Catch-and-Cook Fishing Experience** at The Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village takes attendees on fishing charters guided by professional boat captains. Then the hotel’s chefs prepare guests’ fresh catches for a complete “sea-to-table” experience.

At New York State’s **Watkins Glen International Racing**, small corporate groups can experience a NASCAR pit crew teambuilding experience. Dressed in pit crew gear, the group will be in charge of an actual race car pit stop, working together to prep the car in under a minute before the driver takes off down the track.

For groups staying at Puerto Rico’s Wyndham Grand Rio Mar Beach Resort & Spa, a new adventure takes attendees body rafting through the **El Yunque National Rainforest** in the resort’s own backyard. The excursion takes advantage of the hilly landscape where body rafting is a favorite teambuilding experience that can be coupled with group hikes, cave exploring and floating through canyons.

The **Orlando Eye** observation wheel, with air-conditioned, private capsules holding up to 15 people each, offers the Champagne Experience, in which attendees enjoy a glass of champagne while viewing the Orlando, Florida, landscape from a height of 400 feet.



Body rafting through El Yunque National Rainforest.

News & Notes

Events Industry Council Features 2017 Hall of Leaders Inductees

WASHINGTON, DC — The Events Industry Council continues the tradition of celebrating the best and brightest in the events industry with their Hall of Leaders awards program with three new inductees in 2017. These inductees will be honored at the 2017 Hall of Leaders and Pacesetters awards celebration on October 10 in Las Vegas, Nevada, during IMEX America 2017. Inductees have demonstrated the forward-thinking and innovation that shaped the events industry into what it is today.

David Peckinpagh, CMP, was nominated by the Events Industry Council Board and is seen throughout the events industry as a passionate leader and tireless advocate. David now serves as president of Maritz Global Events.

Patricia “Patti” Roscoe, CITE, was nominated by the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) and has volunteered her time to SITE and the events industry for many years. In 1981, Patti founded PRA Destination Management Company.



PECKINPAUGH



SPESTAD



ROSCOE

Janet Sperstad, CMP, was nominated by the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE) due to her contributions from over 25 years as a meeting professional and executive leader in the corporate and nonprofit sectors. Janet created the U.S.’s first Associate Degree in Meeting and Event Management at Madison College in Madison, Wisconsin, where she currently serves as Program Director. www.eventscouncil.org

Construction Finally Begins on Hyatt Regency Portland

PORTLAND, OR — Portland dignitaries and officials recently gathered in the city’s Lloyd District to kick off construction of the new \$224 million Hyatt Regency Portland at the Oregon Convention Center. The 600-room hotel is expected to draw dozens of large events and conventions annually.

Located north of the existing Oregon Convention Center, the 14-story Hyatt Regency Portland will include 32,000 sf of meeting venues, as well as a lobby, bar, restaurant, gym and gathering areas for guests to relax, meet, engage and recharge.

According to a Metro survey, 79



percent of national meeting planners said they were more likely to book events at the Oregon Convention Center if there was an amenity-rich hotel next door.

Incentive Marketing Association Announces New Board for 2017-2018

MINNEAPOLIS, MN — John Hornbogen, director, business development, RPG Card Services, is the 2017-



HORNBOGEN

2018 President of the Incentive Marketing Association (IMA) Board of Directors.

Hornbogen brings incentive buying and selling experience, which

provides him with a comprehensive view of the reward and recognition industry and how the IMA can help maintain its credibility and foster continued growth.

“I am grateful to have this opportunity to serve as president during this exciting time for the IMA. As we continue to grow our membership, we will also look to expand our marketing and promotional efforts. We are in the process of updating our strategic plan and will include input from a diverse selection of IMA members. This valuable input ensures that all our efforts are reflective of member needs,” Hornbogen said.

www.incentivemarketing.org

Snapshots



Credits: 1–4, Burnett Photography; 5, CMITE; 6, Global DMC Partners

1–4 Live events professionals from around the globe converged on Calgary, Alberta, August 10-12 to attend the much-anticipated ILEA Live 2017 conference. Organized by members of the International Live Events Association (ILEA) and boasting an inspiring theme — “Creativity. Innovation. Collaboration.” — ILEA Live boasted record turnout with nearly 500 individuals from all areas of live event production. Programs ranged from the Esprit Awards Gala to several receptions and events, including the Calgary Stampede. **5** The annual Caribbean Meeting and Incentive Travel Exchange, held August 13–16 at the Hyatt Zilara/Hyatt Ziva in Montego Bay, Jamaica, and organized in partnership with the Jamaica Tourist Board, closed another successful event with nearly 1,500 one-to-one appointments between North America-based MICE buyers and Caribbean travel suppliers. **6** Global DMC Partners, the largest global network of Destination Management Companies (DMCs), launched two inaugural client awards — the Rising Star and Global Planner of the Year — and revealed its U.S. Partner of the Year and International Partner of the Year at their annual Connection in Las Vegas on August 26. Linda Pasquale with Allegis Group, was declared 2017 Global Planner of the Year. Pictured (left to right): Shelley Meixell, Global DMC Partners; Linda Pasquale, Allegis Group; Catherine Chalet, Global DMC Partners. Brie Richards from Spear One was given the 2017 Rising Star award and Deana Mitchell owner of Denver-based, Realize Colorado, won the 2017 U.S. Partner of the Year award.

By Melissa Van Dyke

Overcome Event Disruptions With Proper Planning and Trusted Vendor Partners

Meeting and incentive planners spend months — or even years — researching, visioning, planning, scripting, scheduling and choreographing a flawless event. More and more, however, major event disruptions are becoming a very real and unavoidable part of doing business in the meetings and incentives industry. Almost 60 percent of planners estimate that one of their events in the last 12 months has experienced a major disruption.

But what counts as a major disruption to meetings and incentives? For purposes of the recent Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) Event Disruption Study, we looked at major challenges negatively impacting the attendee experience, event finances and company reputation. Disruptive incidents can include weather-related phenomena, public enemy occurrences such as wars and terrorism, business partners' mistakes and even the client's lack of cooperation.

These disruptions were not just an issue for the participants, organizers or company brand either.

Over 40 percent of planners reported that one or more of their recent disruptions caused financial loss with the most frequent financial loss falling between \$10,000 and \$99,999.

So how are meeting planners preparing for the unexpected? The study pointed to proper planning measures such as risk evaluation, contingency planning and legal protection, but even more importantly, working with trusted partners. Planners listed vendor trust — strong relationships and cooperation with vendor partners — as the most needed resource for disruption planning. When evaluating what built trust within the vendor partner relationship, a vendor partner's cooperative behavior had the strongest impact (64 percent), followed by the partner's creativity (57 percent), resources (55 percent), and then financial capability (53 percent).

“Over 40 percent of planners reported that one or more of their recent disruptions caused financial loss.”

The IRF's 2016 Event Disruption Study examined these occurrences and confirmed that disruptions are occurring with greater frequency. The result? Planning for disruption and mitigating risk are now critical parts of the meeting planner's job. Planners estimated they now spend up to 25 percent of their time planning for potential disruptions, and nearly 40 percent of the planners expected their time and effort spent planning for disruptions to increase somewhat in the next two years.

But these disruptions did not always come from the places one might expect. Although weather-related events and acts of God were reported by 38 percent of respondents, vendor failures were the second highest cause, cited by over one-quarter of planners. Of the available partners, airlines presented the most frequent frustrations (61 percent) for planners, through cancellations, delays and overbooking.

With an eye on potential disruptions, building partner trust starts earlier and requires heightened levels of planning, collaboration and negotiation. For example, over 90 percent of planners said their companies require contingency plans — with 54 percent requiring them for all events and 37 percent for some of their events.

The good news is that companies are providing support to planners. Over two-thirds of planners say their companies provide guidelines or assistance with contingency planning. This type of support takes on many forms.

Once the company requires inclusion of contingency plans for disruptions, the majority of them (68 percent) provide guidelines or assistance, although 21 percent of the companies still do not provide any contingency support. This planning takes on a myriad of styles and varies from company to company, as the condensed sample list shows (see box).

Contingency Planning Checklist

1. 24-hour access to call centers, emergency services and corporate travel agency.
2. A list of other vendors available.
3. Additional insurance.
4. Backup plans for no-shows, transportation, suppliers, speakers, Wi-Fi, airlines, etc.
5. Standard operational procedures (SOPs), policies, procedures and crisis management (safety and security) manuals.
6. Classroom training and online workshops.
7. Dedicated resources for contracting, legal review guidance and counseling.
8. Extra staff, employee assistance and fail-safe team.
9. Financials and funding.
10. Security assistance (especially at global level) and security training.
11. Registration with U.S. Embassy and State Department (in case of international events).
12. Risk assessment.
13. Travel advisory information.
14. Negotiation with vendors.

Legal protection is of course key for organizations running modern meetings. While limitation of liabilities is the most frequently included legal protection in contracts, planners often or always required *force majeure* or indemnification in their vendor contracts as well. Roughly 70 percent of planners also requested waivers for attendees and guests.

Beyond vendor trust and legal protection, communication and switching partners are also key strategies. Nearly half (49 percent) of planning companies actively communicated potential disruption situations and suggested actions to their attendees. Organizations requiring vendor contingency plans are more likely to communicate about potential disruptions and suggested actions.

Likewise, almost half the planners (49 percent) said a partner's poor disruption handling has caused them to switch at least one partner. Almost 70 percent of planners have switched the destination due to perceived risks or disruptions. Hotels were the most frequently switched partner (26 percent) for failure and poor disruption handling.

According to the study, previous disruption experiences seem to make planners even more careful in assessing disruption risks associated with the event venue and partners, perhaps because most disruptions were attributable to the venue or partner. Planners who had experienced disruptions

in the past 12 months discussed potential disruptions and contingency plans with their business partners 14 percent more often than planners who had not experienced disruptions during the same time frame.

Before contracting, the planners who have experienced disruption in the past 12 months evaluated destination venue (16 percent greater) and potential program partners (13 percent greater) to a greater extent than planners who had not experienced disruptions. Not surprisingly, as the amount of financial loss an organization has experienced from a disrupted event increases, so does the organization's tendency to readily switch vendor partners for perceived risks.

Most importantly, the 2016 Event Disruption Study revealed a crucial cycle: as disruption becomes more of a constant, the more planners must focus on disruption planning with their partners. When a planner experiences a disruption, those “lessons learned” raise new concerns that must be addressed with partners during the next cycle of contracting and planning. With this heightened awareness of potential disruptions, working with trusted (creative, cooperative and often patient) partners is more critical than ever.

The 2016 Event Disruption Study can be viewed and downloaded here: <http://theirf.org/research/2016-event-disruption-study/2134/>.

C&IT



Melissa Van Dyke

has been President of the Incentive Research Foundation for more than six years, during which time she has helped triple the organization's research and education footprint. The IRF funds and promotes research to advance the science and enhance the awareness and appropriate application of motivation and incentives in business and industry globally.

Innovation, White Space Culture and Purposeful Meetings

These Themes and More Are Featured in IMEX America's 2017 Education Program

New insights into innovation, white space culture and purposeful meetings are among the striking themes featured in the wide-ranging education program at IMEX America 2017, taking place in Las Vegas October 10-12.

The program for four days of free first-class education is now live (portal.imexamerica.com/events). It gives details of the 180-plus engaging education sessions covering 10 very different tracks that will provide outstanding learning opportunities — and valuable clock hours — for the thousands of industry professionals at the show.

The schedule reveals sessions to suit highly experienced senior professionals looking for new ideas and to update their knowledge as well as for those relatively new to the industry.

It is not only wide-ranging but also eye-opening with intriguing session titles such as “Fishbowl: Solutions to What’s Keeping You Up at Night,” “Neuroscaping — Applying Science to Im-

A typical education session at IMEX America.



Credit: IMEX America

prove Event ROI” and “Cyber Safety — Is Your Head in the Cloud?”

Revelations About Purposeful Meetings

It all begins on the Monday before the show opens. Monday, October 9 is Smart Monday, powered by MPI (see *schedule opposite*) and supported by other association partners, and the day starts with fascinating revelations when Janet Sperstad presents industry research on “Purposeful Meetings — Driving Deeper Meaning and Insights” during the Opening Keynote. (See related story starting on page 20.)

This is the first of more than 30 inspiring sessions during a day dedicated to learning that includes a packed program created for everyone in the industry. There are also special education pro-

grams for senior association executives — the new Association Leaders Forum — and the Executive Meeting Forum for meetings strategists working in the corporate sector, as well as the ever popular PCMA Business School.

Wider perspectives on purposeful meetings, the IMEX Talking Point for 2017, emerge from the program throughout the week with “Understand Why You Don’t Understand — and Be Understood,” “Make A Movement — the Hierarchy of Human Gatherings” and many more.

Learn About White Space Culture

The IMEX trade show and business appointments get fully underway on Tuesday after Juliet Funt’s morning keynote “Activity is Not Productivity.” This

dives into the relatively new sphere of white space culture and introduces new thinking on increasing creativity, productivity and engagement.

Recognizing the influence of the economic and political trends in the world, former White House director of economic policy Todd Buchholz will be sharing his knowledge and views in his morning keynote on Wednesday: “Prosperity Ahead — or Not?”

Plenty of Innovation and Technology Education

Innovation and inventive approaches to ongoing challenges are prominent throughout the week, with innovation tours twice a day and sessions such as “Building a Culture of Innovation in Your In-House Team,” and “Innovate or Die — Revitalization Strategies for Your Events” before culminating in Thursday morning’s Keynote by Brent Bushnell, “From Relatable to Down the Rabbit Hole. Win With Surprise and Delight.”

The importance and influence of technology in the industry guarantees it a place in the program. “New Technology for Impactful, Decisive Meetings,” “Using Augmented Reality to Enhance Participants’ Experiences” and “Using Event Tech to Manage Teams Like a Boss” are among more than 40 tech sessions and tours to help buyers gain a better grasp of the latest technology developments.

From technology and business skills to health and well-being and sustainability, the key topics in the industry today all will be illuminated by expert speakers, thought-provoking presentations, workshops and campfires at the Inspiration Hub, now located in Hall G next to the show’s popular Food Court.

C&IT

Smart Monday Powered by MPI

The schedule of Education and Events at IMEX America on Monday October 9, 2017

- 7:00 am - 1:00 pm • Shamrock Shootout
- 8:00 am - 5:00 pm • IAEE CEM Course: Conference and meeting management • IAEE
- 8:00 am - 8:20 am • Mindful morning and guided meditation • Lee Papa
- 8:00 am - 6:00 pm • Executive Meeting Forum • IMEX
- 8:00 am - 9:00 pm • SITE Young Leaders Conference • SITE
- 8:00 am - 12:30 pm • CIS Certified Incentive Specialist • SITE CIS
- 8:30 am - 9:30 am • MPI Keynote: Purposeful Meetings — Driving Deeper Meaning and Insights • Janet Sperstad, CMP
- 9:30 am - 6:00 pm • The CSR and sustainability showcase • IMEX
- 9:40 am - 10:00 am • Guided meditation: the flight of the seagull • Lee Papa
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am • MeetingCentric tour: back-of-the-house lessons • Venetian|Palazzo| Sands Expo
- 10:00 am - 4:30 pm • The Event Design Certificate (EDC) Program Level 1 of Mastery • The Event Design Collective
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am • Setting the pace for sustainable events • EIC Sustainability
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am • What’s really happening in that headset? • ILEA
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am • Cyber safety: Is your head in the cloud? • EIC
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am • Meeting safety and security • Arrive Conference Solutions
- 10:00 am - 5:00 pm • CMP masterclass: preparing for the exam and applying it at work • MPI
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am • Fishbowl: solutions to what’s keeping you up at night • MPI
- 10:00 am - 11:00 am • Visioning the meeting room of the future • IACC
- 11:00 am - 11:15 am • Guided meditation: journey by the river • Lee Papa
- 11:15 am - 12:15 pm • The art of networking and selling at trade shows • MCI Group • Ovation Global DMC
- 11:15 am - 12:15 pm • MeetingCentric tour: back-of-the-house lessons • Venetian|Palazzo| Sands Expo
- 11:15 am - 12:15 pm • SITE Index: the incentive travel industry annual forecast • SITE
- 11:15 am - 12:15 pm • PCO/meeting planner and DMC — what’s happening? • IAPCO
- 11:15 am - 12:15 pm • Catering 101 • Rx for Events — culinary session
- 11:15 am - 12:15 pm • Spectrogram: trends in meeting design, F&B and negotiation • MPI
- 11:15 am - 12:15 pm • Wellness and CSR in events — 30-plus ideas • BC Innovation Council
- 12:30 pm - 5:30 pm • Association Leadership Forum • IMEX and ASAE
- 12:45 pm - 1:00 pm • Guided meditation: the waterfall experience • Lee Papa
- 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm • Women in leadership: executive leadership skills • MPI
- 1:30 pm - 1:45 pm • Guided meditation: the healing tree • Lee Papa
- 1:45 pm - 3:00 pm • Crisis? What crisis? The yin and yang of crisis management • ICCA
- 1:45 pm - 3:00 pm • MeetingCentric tour: back-of-the-house lessons • Venetian|Palazzo| Sands Expo
- 1:45 pm - 4:30 pm • PCMA Business School • PCMA
- 1:45 pm - 3:00 pm • What’s keeping hospitality and meeting planners up at night • HSMIAI
- 1:45 pm - 3:00 pm • Recovering VAT in Europe: what organizers of association and corporate events should know • ECM
- 1:45 pm - 3:00 pm • No one said there’d be math involved • Strategic Meetings and Events
- 1:45 pm - 3:00 pm • Deep Dive part 1. Addressing “uh-oh” situations in your contracts • MPI
- 3:00 pm - 3:20 pm • Guided meditation: the crystal cave • Lee Papa
- 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm • Driving destination sustainability, performance and competitiveness • MCI Group
- 3:30 pm - 4:25 pm • Meeting the challenge of increasing disruption and personalization • ICCA
- 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm • Move over kale — successful tastes and trends • Culinary Concierge
- 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm • Creating a culture of innovation • SongDivision
- 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm • Deep Dive part 2. Addressing “uh-oh” situations in your contracts • MPI
- 4:00 pm - 4:20 pm • Chakra clearing by the river guided meditation • Lee Papa
- 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm • Association Evening • IMEX and industry associations
- 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm • SITE Nite North America • SITE

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Meeting Trends

"We dive into how our minds and bodies work, to understand social drivers and how to optimize the meeting experience to create more moments of creativity, learning and connectivity."

Janet Sperstad, CMP, Program Director
Meeting and Event Management
Madison College, Madison, WI

Janet Sperstad will deliver the keynote address "Purposeful Meetings — Driving Deeper Meaning and Insights" at IMEX America in October.

Understanding the New 'Purposeful' Meetings

The Human-centric Approach That Leads to Deeper Meaning, Innovation, Insight and Positive Outcomes

By Christine Loomis

No one has ever elected to have a "purposeless" meeting. What, after all, would be the point of a meeting with no goals or objectives, one during which participants gather together to work toward nothing, engage in nothing and thus get nothing out of it?

So why is the idea of "purposeful" meetings even a thing?

As Lisa Langford, corporate meeting planner for Finance and Resource Man-

agement Consultants, which works with the petroleum industry, says, "If we're looking to create purposeful meetings now, what were we doing before?"

A definition is a good place to start. The concept of purposeful meetings sounds straightforward: a meeting with purpose. But ask three meeting planners what it means and you'll quickly learn that the term is open to multiple interpretations.

Angela Baer, CMP, with Caterpillar

Inc., zeros in on a very narrow, core definition. "A purposeful meeting is one that first of all, needs to take place. So many in-person meetings are a giant waste of time that could've been handled with an email. Beyond that, purposeful meetings are those that are engaging — not PowerPoint downloads — and that benefit the attendees."

Preproduction Filters

Melissa Jimenez, global events di-

rector with Reval, a leading technology company, agrees and adds, "For me, the term purposeful meetings also means having targeted filters in preproduction, where experience and production decisions are made based on predetermined criteria. This helps to keep a great idea focused when additional stakeholders are added to the process.

"For conference content, I ask, 'Why does this content need to be presented live and in person? What about the content or the presentation requires this to be in person?' If the answers are not clear and focused, perhaps the content should be presented in a webinar or article. Clients' time is so valuable. To warrant meeting in person, the content should be so compelling and presented in such a manner that it has to be done in a live setting and would not work as a webinar or article. This filter makes presentations much more meaningful and the ROI easily captured.

"For networking events, again, I feel that to have a purposeful meeting requires a preproduction filter. 'How will networking be enabled so that attendees are leaving with meaningful contacts or deepened relationships? How are we actively facilitating that? I focus on an experiential-based production model where we don't use any traditional icebreaker formats. The event itself is experiential, so the conversations that flow out of those experiences occur naturally. Connecting the right people to each other is very methodical and not left to chance."

Langford hits on a definition that varies to some extent based on age range, noting that it may have a more specific and concrete meaning for millennials.

"The standard of measurement

"To plan a purposeful meeting is to go beyond the intellectual and catch an attendee's heartbeat, identifying their individual value as both a singular and collective voice of change in the world."

Lisa Langford, Corporate Meeting Planner
Finance and Resource Management Consultants
Colorado Springs, CO



"For me, the term purposeful meetings also means having targeted filters in preproduction, where experience and production decisions are made based on predetermined criteria."

Melissa Jimenez, Global Events Director
Reval, New York, NY

called 'purposeful' is core to their world view," she notes. "Purposeful implies a positive impact occurring with their emotions, inspiring a change of behavior or perception. It is far and above the primary benchmark in determining the value of something and whether it earns their time, money and perhaps their most valuable commodity — a social-media endorsement. To plan a purposeful meeting is to go beyond the intellectual and catch an attendee's heartbeat, identifying their individual value as both a singular and collective voice of change in the world. The challenge is to create something unique that stands out from the common collective experience yet results in an immediate common collective voice."

IMEX Talking Point

The truth is that the concept of purposeful meetings encompasses all of those definitions and more, and it has evolved out of scientific research in multiple disciplines. Janet Sperstad, CMP, program director, meeting and event management, at Madison College in Madison, Wisconsin, and Amanda Cecil, Ph.D., CMP, associate professor and chair, department of tourism, conventions and event management, at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, have conducted extensive research on this topic.



Sperstad was the keynote speaker at IMEX in Frankfurt this year, where thousands of attendees were introduced to "Purposeful Meetings" as the first of the show's annual talking points. The new yearly talking point, integral to both Frankfurt and IMEX America in Las Vegas next month, will serve as the focused lens for some educational content and industry research.

Carina Bauer, IMEX CEO, says that the annual talking point will give education programs at IMEX and IMEX America a stronger focus and provide a yearly "refresh" for both shows. "We chose purposeful meetings to start off our talking points as we think it's a really rich concept that brings together a lot of core, strategic threads in the industry today."

Bauer says it also gives the industry "a chance to explore a single, emerging or important trend in-depth and from a number of different angles. In this way," she adds, "our talking point will act as a catalyst — one that hopefully truly inspires and also helps our partners, attendees and exhibitors to understand and to achieve more."

So far, the results support that notion. "Purposeful meetings as a discussion point and education umbrella was very well received at IMEX in Frankfurt," Bauer says. "We all want to make our meetings richer experiences, more positive, more impactful for the people that participate in them. Professionally, we all want to have a more strategic seat at the table as well, and purposeful meetings is a great platform for that."

Where, then, do planners begin their quest to create purposeful meetings? Bauer says going beyond logistical details is critical. "Perhaps one of the most powerful things about the con-

“Perhaps one of the most powerful things about the concept and goal of purposeful meetings is to stop and think beyond logistical details alone to the overall experience you are creating for people.”

Carina Bauer, CEO
IMEX, London, UK



cept and goal of purposeful meetings is to stop and think beyond logistical details alone to the overall experience you are creating for people. What will be their takeaways? What will they remember? What will touch them or resonate with them long after they return home? What ideas and concepts can they put to work right away? This spirit of experience is what is at the heart of purposeful meetings.”

Science-based Research

Understanding the research is perhaps one of the best starting points for planners. “Our research on purposeful meetings,” say Sperstad and Cecil, “explores the elements of neuroscience and human behavioral research, technology, event design, content programming and community impact to achieve truly purposeful results. We dive into how our minds and bodies work, to understand social drivers and how to optimize the meeting experience to create more moments of creativity, learning and connectivity.”

By their nature, the two researchers add, “meetings and events often can feel overwhelming, dull or unhealthy. ‘Purposefully’ designed meetings are precisely the opposite — engaging, inspiring and enjoyable with long-lasting, positive outcomes.”

While it’s true that the intent of meetings has always been to be purposeful, as planners point out, it’s important to note that the focus on creating purposeful meetings is different today, in part because of how researchers are approaching it. “This topic has gained interest because of the interdisciplinary approach, as well as the incorporation of science-based research into our field,” says Cecil.

And, she adds, the definition of meeting success itself has also changed. Her view in many ways echoes those of Langford’s millennials. “Event practitioners are looking for more ways to drive value and create meaningful, authentic experiences in a fast-paced, digital world. Defining event success has moved beyond financial return on investment (ROI) measurements and learner outcomes to exploring the elements of a meeting experience that influence human behavior and leverage the experience to influence decision-making, create moments of meaning and insight, and inspire creativity.”

Of course ROI remains important; it’s just that there are additional ways to create and measure positive outcomes for meetings, particularly for the attendees — and that doesn’t mean they have to cost more than other meetings. Cecil says there are no-cost and low-cost ways to bring purposefulness to the meeting experience.

In terms of approach to the subject, one of the biggest changes is that Cecil and Sperstad’s model for purposeful meetings is what they call “human-centric.”

Notes Sperstad, “We all know of (education) sessions painstakingly crafted with smart, measurable outcomes and selected speakers that don’t drive the outcomes we intended. Everything is perfect on paper,” she points out, “until you add humans.”

The human-centric approach by definition helps to mitigate that issue. And though planners need to be aware of how to implement this human-centric approach, it should not be the focus for the humans for whom it’s being implemented — the attendees.

“While creating a purposeful meeting is a human-centric approach to planning a meeting, the attendees are not there to understand or know why it is a good experience for them,” Cecil says.

Planners also must understand that creating a purposeful meeting is not about being prescriptive. “It is not a checklist of to-dos. It’s an approach to use at multiple stages of the event-planning process to ensure that you are designing for the performance of your participants and not designing an experience around the space you have,” Sperstad cautions.

“Don’t feel like you have to approach this as step one, two and three,” she continues. “It’s more about looking at your objectives for the event and focusing on the human element and the human performance, both cognitive and physical, to have a successful event. Being open to shifting your perspective in planning your next meet-

“Purposeful meetings are those that are engaging — not PowerPoint downloads — and that benefit the attendees.”

Angela Baer, CMP, Corporate Meeting Planner
Caterpillar Inc., Peoria, IL

ing with purposeful-meeting elements in mind can help you achieve better results for your meeting.”

5 Key Elements

Which brings us to the five pillars of the concept. According to Sperstad and Cecil, purposeful meetings and events should actively target and manage five key elements of planning: Behavioral Science, Health & Well-being, Meeting & Event Design, CSR/Legacy Building, and Event Technology. Here is how the researchers defined those core elements as part of the launch of purposeful meetings as a talking point at IMEX in Frankfurt.

1 Behavioral Science: *The discipline*

in which the actions of humans are studied. “Our understanding of the human brain and of the workings of our own minds is greater than it has ever been. Neuroscientific breakthroughs have given us new insights into the workings of the conscious and unconscious mind. When combined with knowledge of behavioral science, typical event outcomes such as good communication, genuine connection, improved decision-making, influence, memory and learning can now be directed and, importantly, managed and measured.”

2 Health & Well-being: *The condition of being content and healthy.* “A new focus on well-being is being fostered by science and technology. On the one hand, a move toward well-being tools and practices is a move away from ‘digital dementia’ and device overload. On the other, new technology, especially apps, gives us instant feedback that supports better mental and physical health plus behavioral change. ‘Sitting is the new smoking’ sums up this trend perfectly. For many planners, it’s now common practice to purposefully incorporate healthy nutrition, hydration, relaxation and mindfulness into their meeting programs. Even sleep has become a hot topic, with many planners wising up to the importance of sleep as a nutrient for their delegates.”

3 Meeting & Event Design: *The process of developing effective and efficient meetings with strategic outcomes.* “As humans, we have a multisensory response to the world around us. Understanding how we perceive and interpret the immediate environment and how it affects what we learn and how we collaborate with others is another consideration for the purposeful meeting planner. Therefore, he or she consciously designs learning formats and chooses meeting spaces with experiential outcomes in mind. Light, air, sound, smell and touch all can be managed ‘on pur-

pose.’ Yet another instrument in this important toolbox is ‘white space,’ the intentional creation of free time for reflection, digesting information and gaining perspective.”

4 CSR, Legacy and Positive Impact: *Engaging people to have a positive impact on others and/or the natural world.* “Changes in the way we relate to brands and to our understanding of the positive impact we can all make as consumers are also leading more meeting planners toward community-engagement programs. It’s increasingly rare for a large meeting or event to take place without affiliation to a local nonprofit. Yet this isn’t old-



“Defining event success has moved beyond financial return on investment measurements and learner outcomes to exploring the elements of a meeting experience that influence human behavior.”

Amanda Cecil, Ph.D., CMP, Associate Professor
Indiana University, Indianapolis, IN

fashioned philanthropy. It’s positive action woven into meetings and events to intentionally provide new levels of meaning and connection for participants. The under 35s, hot for experience over ownership, are spearheading this shift. Combine this with a rising passion for conserving natural resources and protecting the environment, and event planners are more likely than ever to rethink, reduce, reuse and recycle — and to measure the results.”

5 Technology: *A tool to communicate with and engage attendees.* “Technology has changed the way we do business, the way we connect and the way we live. It has enabled more accurate and better use of resources, allowing us to be more collaborative (a good example is the sharing economy), to dive deeper into data and to rapidly advance in previously untouched areas. In this context, purposeful meetings — and pur-

poseful meeting planners — become more relevant and valuable than ever. Artificial intelligence (AI), intuitive technology and even robotics are now part of this new technology mix.”

Those are just the basics. Planners attending IMEX America this October at the Sands Expo and the Venetian and Palazzo will have an opportunity to learn more about the concepts and specifics of purposeful meetings. The results of the IMEX “Purposeful Meetings research: creating deeper meaning,” done in partnership with PSAV, will be announced. The study drew respondents from 33 countries. Sperstad will deliver the keynote speech

on Smart Monday, October 9, education day for IMEX attendees. The keynote, “Purposeful Meetings — Driving Deeper Meaning and Insights,” will be focused, as it was in Frankfurt, on how to create truly purposeful meetings, drawing on Sperstad and Cecil’s science-based research.

And as in Frankfurt, attendees are likely to learn a great deal that’s new to them. “The aspects of neuroscience were particularly interesting,” said Amanda Fishburn, vice president of operations for Ignition Design Group, after Sperstad’s keynote speech in Frankfurt. “We need to move away from being too technical, to focusing on the power of the event experience — how we make delegates feel.”

Whether they attend IMEX America or not, planners will soon have an abundance of research and case studies on which to build their own events. Eventually, there should be no need for the term “purposeful meetings.”

There will be no other kind. **C&IT**

Site Selection



Meetings at Sea

By David Swanson

Oceania Cruises' newest ships, including Riviera, offer unique activities ideal for intimate networking.

Credit: Oceania Cruises

Planners Share Why Meeting & Incentive Programs on Cruise Ships Work So Well

Meeting planners who've handled the logistics for an incentive program know how challenging it can be to assemble the disparate pieces for a successful event. Between accommodations, transportation, multiple dining venues, meeting rooms, AV requirements and activities to appeal to a multifaceted group, fitting together the puzzle pieces requires a commitment of time and energy.

But cruise-based incentive programs streamline many elements of planning. And by assembling the disparate functions under one umbrella, logistics can be contained. Meeting planners we've spoken to say that such bundling also

usually leads to cost savings over comparable land-based meeting options.

No wonder a growing number of companies are finding that corporate events at sea sometimes offer an edge over traditional land-based programs. In May, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) announced that the number of cruisers in 2016 reached 24.7 million passengers, up almost 6.5 percent from 2015. CLIA is projecting a 4.5 percent increase for 2017, fueled by a growing supply of new and bigger ships.

Thirteen new ocean cruise ships will debut this year, according to CLIA. But 15 ships are already under construc-

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Celebrity Cruises' new Edge design features unique cabin balconies and plenty of group space in Eden.

Credits: Celebrity Cruises

tion for 2018, while in 2019 we'll see 20 launched, including the first of three 298-passenger ships for The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection. Already, 32 cruisers are on order for 2020 and beyond, including the first vessel from Sir Richard Branson's new line, Virgin Voyages.

Those new ships are a key demand for meeting planners such as Kathy Fitzgibbons, senior travel buyer for Maritz Travel, a Maritz Global Events Company, which oversees about 45 cruise incentive programs annually, in addition to land-based events.

"We like to use the newest products out there. It needs to be an incentive for the guest, and newer ships have a lot more to offer."

Kathy Fitzgibbons, Senior Travel Buyer
Maritz Travel, a Maritz Global Events Company, Fenton, MO



Bucket List Cruise

"We like to use the newest products out there," explains Fitzgibbons. "It needs to be an incentive for the guest, and newer ships have a lot more to offer."

For an incentive program planned by a leading financial company for next summer, Fitzgibbons chose Norwegian Bliss, the newest ship from Norwegian Cruise Line, launching in April 2018. The 4,000-passenger vessel will spend its inaugural season in Alaska, becoming the largest ship to ever cruise the 49th state.

"Norwegian Bliss has more dining options, more entertainment and a lot of great venues for kids, like a race track on the top deck of the ship. And Alaska is on everybody's bucket list. At one time, it was a destination you did when you retired, but Alaska is more affordable now, and the activities and

shore excursions have been structured more for active guests, with kayaking and hiking and mountain-bike riding and rock-climbing."

Maritz Travel's client has booked 100 cabins on each of six consecutive Alaska cruises aboard Norwegian Bliss, with spouses and children invited to share in the incentive. There will be one general session for the groups and two cocktail parties each cruise, but otherwise the trip is pure incentive. Each guest will receive an onboard credit to be applied to drinks, spa treat-

ments or shore excursions, though Fitzgibbons says some of her clients opt for a beverage package to cover drinks from the outset.

"The beverage packages aren't cheap, especially if you're not a big drinker. But having beverages included is definitely a great incentive — it makes the cruise truly all-inclusive."

Fitzgibbons says that Norwegian's "Freestyle Cruising" operation — no fixed dining times or pre-assigned seating — normally would be a problem for groups, except that the line works closely with Maritz to accommodate their clients. "They value our business and work outside their normal policy. We don't necessarily need it to be seven nights of a cruise, but three nights of the cruise they'll dine together."

Such flexibility is key to why Maritz

uses Norwegian regularly. "It's one of the first cruise lines we started working with — we've had a relationship with them for 30-something years now," adds Fitzgibbons. "Not every cruise line out there has as dedicated an incentive team. It's so much different than retail, and you really struggle if they don't know the incentive business. We have a lot of special requests, with dining, with cabin locations, and sometimes with meeting space needs. But Norwegian has always been very helpful, and they really seem to want the incentive business, so it's a very easy product to work with."

Norwegian Bliss is just one of the new cruise options available to suit groups of all sizes.

Launching Soon

Earlier this year, Celebrity Cruises unveiled its new "Edge Class" design, with four ships ordered that will debut starting in December 2018. The 2,900-passenger vessels are slightly smaller than Celebrity's groundbreaking "Solstice Class" line, but will have innovative features such as Eden, a multifaceted group space ideal for gatherings, dinners and functions; a movable deck; and cabins with balcony-like spaces that convert from outside to inside.

Seabourn Cruises follows up the well-received launch of Seabourn Encore with Seabourn Ovation, another 604-passenger ship for the luxury line launching next May.

Holland America Line has Nieuw Amsterdam arriving in November 2018, the second ship in the "Pinnacle Class"



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Silversea Cruises' Silver Cloud is being transformed into an "ice-class" luxury ship with a theater for events.

Credit: Silversea Cruises

series, following in the footsteps of Koningsdam, which launched in 2016.

MSC Cruises has two new ships out this year — both of them new designs. The 4,500-passenger MSC Meraviglia arrived in June, while 4,140-passenger MSC Seaside debuts in November. Both are targeted to the U.S. market and will be homeported in Florida.

Other cruise lines are spending millions to refresh their fleets. Silversea Cruises' venerable Silver Cloud is in dry dock now, undergoing transformation into a 254-passenger luxury expedition ship. Primped with balconies and outfitted with 16 Zodiacs, come November Silver Cloud will boast five gourmet restaurants and an ice-class hull for voyages to Antarctica.

As part of its \$170 million fleet-wide refurbishment program, Silver Explorer underwent a stem-to-stern remodel last spring. The all-inclusive luxury ship accommodates 144 guests for sailings to the Arctic, Antarctica and Africa to the Americas, French Polynesia and the Russian Far East. Incentive program participants can take advantage of onboard destination lectures, exploratory Zodiac excursions and interactive walks ashore, led by experts in their

field — marine biologists, ornithologists, geologists, botanists, historians and anthropologists.

High-end Regent Seven Seas is having it both ways, having launched its newest ship, the \$450 million, 750-passenger Seven Seas Explorer last year while spending \$125 million to renovate its three older ships, Navigator, Voyager and Mariner. A new Explorer-class vessel will build on the runaway success of Seven Seas Explorer. Scheduled for delivery in 2020, the new sister ship will retain many of the high-end features and amenities that have led to Seven Seas Explorer being hailed as the most luxurious ship ever built.

And cruise lines are pushing the frontier on interactive wearables that are sure to offer big possibilities for the meetings and incentive sector. In

November, Princess Cruises launches its ambitious Ocean Medallion system aboard Regal Princess. The wearable devices are a technology platform to link guests to reservation systems aboard the ship, delivering a more seamless travel experience. In addition to replacing the traditional room key, waiters in restaurants will be pre-alerted to allergies or to a birthday; reservations for shore excursions and spa appointments will be integrated. By

"Cruise ships definitely have less meeting space than land programs. ...You have to be more creative on a cruise ship to find places for your private events and meetings."

Mark Walker, Senior Global Sales Executive
Morris Meetings & Incentives, Salt Lake City, UT

removing points of "friction," Princess aims to make the cruise experience more personalized.

After debuting on Regal Princess, Ocean Medallion will go live on five additional ships through 2018: Royal Princess, Caribbean Princess, Island Princess, Golden Princess and Crown Princess.

Oceania Cruises continues its focus



Explorer is the newest ship in the Regent Seven Seas fleet; its Voyager Theater (left) is available for group events.

Credit: Regent Seven Seas

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on culinary by adding La Cuisine Bourgeoise by Jacques Pépin to its two newest ships, Marina and Riviera. Limited to 24 guests, making it ideal for intimate networking, the affair is a seven-course meal paired with fine wines and served in La Reserve, a private wine-tasting room. "Cuisine bourgeoise is rooted in tradition and is one that shaped my childhood," explained Jacques Pépin, master chef and executive culinary director for Oceania. "It is a cuisine to savor rather than admire or evaluate, it is simply happiness on a plate, and I am thrilled to share this with our guests."

Pépin's recipes are prepared throughout the ships, even in the excellent main dining rooms, and Marina and Riviera also each feature a state-of-the-art teaching kitchen, where guests can embark on hands-on cooking classes. Limited to 24 students per session, the courses are ideal for group bonding.

In March, Carnival Cruise line will see the arrival of its 26th ship, Carnival Horizon, a sister to Carnival Vista, which started service in 2016.

"We are thrilled about the Carnival Horizon," says Ann Sedgwick, CIS, Carnival's division vice president for charter, corporate and incentive sales. "Like the Carnival Vista, she'll bring new features and more choices for the guests, particularly in the dining and entertainment areas." Sedgwick adds that Carnival will be hosting a variety of industry events during its U.S. inaugural season, and planners interested in learning more should contact CorporateSales@Carnival.com.



Royal Caribbean's "Anthem of the Seas offered new and exciting ship design with state-of-the-art technology, as well as skydive simulators, bumper cars and extraordinary shows with professional set design."

Jeffrey Paul Broudy, President
United Meetings & Incentives, Philadelphia, PA

'Out of the Conference Room' Venues

Although Carnival's fleet does not have the multiple conference and breakout rooms found on some ships, Sedgwick says "all types of companies" have selected Carnival for their incentive programs. "We have found that meeting planners enjoy the 'out of the conference room' venues. Frankly, they are more comfortable for the participants and create a unique and memorable environment that you can't find anywhere else. Our ships are truly multifunctional, and we work with the meeting planner to determine best size fit along with AV requirements for each particular program."

One key segment that Carnival serves better than any other brand: the drive market. Carnival has ships spread across 16 U.S. home ports — more than any other cruise line — meaning regionally focused companies can save on the costs of flights.

"Our team works with decision-makers to match the perfect product and ship to their needs and expectations," adds Sedgwick. "If Carnival isn't a perfect fit for the program, we work closely with our sister brands to find something that is. We feel very confident that among the many diverse brands of Carnival Corporation we have something for every corporate program."

Meanwhile, the ships built by Royal Caribbean over the last decade have been plumped with conference and breakout rooms, along with state-of-the-art AV equipment sufficient to hold meetings of various sizes, including trade shows.

Bigger Can Be Better

A variety of venues was important for an April gathering organized by Mark Walker, senior global sales executive at Morris Incentives, on behalf of a multilevel marketing company in the fashion industry. With 2,682 attendees, the group needed a large ship, and Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the Seas fit the bill. A true game-changer when it arrived in 2009, the 5,400-passenger ship was the largest cruiser at sea until last year, when Harmony of the Seas came on the scene.

"Cruise ships definitely have less meeting space than land programs, which can sometimes make it a little difficult," explains Walker. "You have to be more creative on a cruise ship to find places for your private events and meetings, especially if you don't charter. Royal Caribbean had to be very flexible in giving us their meeting space and general areas for our private events, and they were very good to work with in this regard. Most cruise lines would

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Princess Cruises will launch an interactive wearable system on Regal Princess, which also features the Terrace Pool (right).



Credits: Princess Cruises

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La Cuisine Bourgeoise by Jacques Pépin, a culinary program for small groups, will be offered on two Oceania cruise ships.

Credits: Oceania Cruises

probably not have accommodated us the way they did. We took the entire theater for a couple hours on the sea days, and we took practically all the boardrooms for the week."

The wide range of venues available aboard Oasis of the Seas goes well beyond the 1,394-seat main showroom. The ship's 4,424-sf conference center ac-

"The ship was able to cater our events without a problem," adds Walker, who used Oasis of the Seas for a seven-day Caribbean cruise. "We had a big welcome and farewell party on the boardwalk, and we also had coffee and pastry stations in the theater and in Studio B during the general sessions. The CSM's onsite were amazing — they are the ones that we

"Anthem of the Seas offered new and exciting ship design with state-of-the-art technology, as well as skydive simulators, bumper cars and extraordinary shows with professional set design. The ship was one of the first designed and built to feature high-speed Wi-Fi, a very desirable and competitive benefit considering that it supersedes land-based hotel complimentary Wi-Fi. Even with a small supplement to include Wi-Fi and the deluxe all-inclusive drink package, the program was extremely affordable and valuable to the guests. All combined to provide the optimal mix of onboard entertainment and ample time in Bermuda during the America's Cup."

Broudy noted that the entire conference center was allocated to his group to allow for a "program within a program," to accommodate room gifts, training, meetings, and serve as staff offices. "The CSM along with the total land-sea events team worked together to ensure all of the receptions, events, business sessions and AV were seamlessly executed. We applaud the efforts and success of the entire team led by our onboard coordinator, Cornelia O'Nay, and our account execu-

commodates 330 seated; Studio B, the ship's ice rink, can handle receptions for 1,000, or 775 seated; six indoor bars and clubs can accommodate 100 to 250 guests; outdoor pool decks and bars can be privatized; and the ship's unique "Central Park" offers a lushly landscape garden environment for receptions of up to 300 guests. All of these spaces can be easily researched on Royal Caribbean's recently enhanced, interactive MICE website, RoyalCaribbeanIncentives.com.

work with to execute all our meetings, private events, etc. They were super-patient, organized and nice to work with."

Singing the Praises of Anthem

Jeffrey Paul Broudy, president of United Incentives, used Royal Caribbean's two-year-old Anthem of the Seas for a home furnishings channel incentive in June for 360 attendees. Broudy says that every incentive program has its own "signature."



Princess Cruises' Ocean Medallion system eliminates the need for a cabin key (below); most ships offer free Wi-Fi.



Credit:



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Anthem of the Seas has a conference center for meetings and the North Star POV attraction (right) for fun.



Credit: Royal Caribbean

tive, Danny Fernandez Nasar. However, all aboard were aligned to make the program successful and seamless. Royal Caribbean has come a long way delivering unique incentive experiences in the last several years."

Insiders' Advice for Planners

One advantage of staging an incentive aboard a cruise ship is that meeting room costs are generally waived, and most AV requirements can be handled by the crew, also often at no cost. But Broudy cautioned that it's still important to plan carefully in advance for these events. "AV services tend to be siloed — projectionists and sound technicians are not cross-functionally trained and accountable. Surprisingly, this falls under the jurisdiction of the

companies. This is the weakest link in cruise programs compared to land-based programs, wherein the entire enterprise of CSM, hotel, DMC all work at the same location during the planning process. Accordingly, we tend to only work with cruise lines with whom we have maximum confidence."

Tackling these kinds of logistics early on also is important to Karen Devine, president of 3D Cruise Partners. Devine is in the planning stages for a March 2018 annual sales meeting to be held aboard Celebrity Infinity. She needed exclusive use of the theater on several days for multiple hours. "You may need to be a bit more flexible with your meeting and/or function needs relative to setup — i.e., theater style vs. classroom or

ships — is complimentary. There are no meeting room rentals, no cost to use the sound booth, screens, the ship's bands, staging, etc. — it's all complimentary."

And that adds up to the key advantage planners cited for cruise events compared to traditional land-based meetings and incentives: budget control. "A cruise can be 30 to 40 percent less than a comparable land program," Devine adds.

"It's better bang for the buck, absolutely," says Kathy Fitzgibbons. "Clients ask me what it will cost for a general session on the ship, and they're surprised to hear that the room is included — that's a huge cost savings. If you do the beverage package in advance you'll get a commission on the drinks. It's definitely more of a value, and it's an easier budget to control."

Mark Walker concurs: "Cruise programs usually end up being less expensive than land programs — it is practically an all-inclusive experience. The food is included, there are fewer travel expenses, and lots of costs are included like AV, setup fees, etc. The price point is very good compared to land-based programs."

Meeting facilities, room and board, and transportation under one "roof" and one contract. Combine that with a sleek bow piercing the waves, a never-ending canvas of passing scenery and all the creature comforts of a traditional resort close at hand — what's not to like about meetings and incentives at sea?

C&IT



Karen Devine, President
3D Cruise Partners, Mundelein, IL

"The beauty of the ships is that the space and AV on board — which can be extensive due to the large production shows offered on some of these ships — is complimentary."

cruise director, so it's worth engaging all parties in advance."

He continues, "Ships are provisioned from their shore-side operations centers as mass-market products, while incentives are just the opposite. It is extremely important for planners to be aware of, and manage, the ship-to-shore communication of BEOs and venue utilization. Many times, the cruise line planner hasn't used the ship or worked with an incentive, so they can't easily determine the feasibility of requests from incentive

U-shape, etc. Depending on the ship, you may be using space — such as the main show lounge — that is also utilized for other purposes. But I worked with the ship well in advance to identify space and ensured that it was confirmed in the contract."

Devine noted the cost savings inherent with planning a meeting or incentive at sea.

"The beauty of the ships is that the space and AV on board — which can be extensive due to the large production shows offered on some of these



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The Hot List

MICHAEL CERBELLI'S

A Creative Event Expert's Favorite Ideas to Take Events to the Next Level

By Michael Cerbelli

Editor's Note: Following his trademarked "Michael Cerbelli's: The Hot List" events presentation in June for the HGA Global Forum, we asked Michael, who is CEO and president of Cerbelli Creative, to share some of his favorite ideas with Corporate & Incentive Travel readers. For more than 39 years, Michael has done more than change the paradigm of prestigious happenings — he has become the paradigm. Though a fixture in the New York City events scene, Michael's influence is worldwide, from the Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, to a birthday party for the King of Morocco.

Sixteen years ago, I started Michael Cerbelli's: The Hot List. I've spoken at various conferences and meetings throughout the year to reveal the hottest and most innovative trends in events and entertainment. When I first started this, people thought I was crazy. They thought to themselves, why would you share all this information? Why give away all your ideas? The truth is, it all started when I asked a colleague about an idea. In the late '90s and early 2000s, I, along with many other meeting and event planners, were going to conferences to learn, to find ways to be a more effective event planner and to make our events more exciting.

In 2001, I saw a presentation by a

great event designer and an incredible speaker. He took out a vase, put it on the table, and turned a switch and the vase lit up. He said, "This is an LED light." The entire audience was awed; back then no one knew what an LED was! I went up to him and I asked for more information about this vase, this LED, what in the world was this and how can I get my hands on this? I wanted to bring this from California to New York, to use in my own events. This man (who today I actually have the honor of calling one of my dear friends) would not share the information, and this frustrated me. I thought to myself, why are people NOT sharing their ideas?

Thus, the Hot List was born. I had my

own ideas, and I wanted to share the wealth. At the very first Hot List, they put me in a classroom with 300 seats, and 500 people showed up. The attendees knew I was going to open my black book of ideas. Today, Michael Cerbelli's: The Hot List is now a staple to The Special Event conference, and for the first time ever, we did a second live show in the same year for MPI's World Education Congress. The response was phenomenal. There are people who attend every year because they will be taking away tangible information, content that can be used immediately when they arrive back to their office and share with their teams. It is my way of giving back to the industry that has given me so much the past 40 years.

I have included a few of my personal favorites from this year's Hot List in hopes of that this helps inspire you to think creatively and create memorable experiences, whether it be general session, sales meeting or closing celebration.

Michael Cerbelli, CEO and president of Cerbelli Creative, shares his "black book of ideas."





The mobile Buffet Train integrates platforms for cirque performers.

Credit: Cirque Mechanics

FOOD & BEVERAGE

BUFFET TRAIN: Led by a trike, the Buffet Train is pulled through the event space creating a truly unforgettable mobile buffet and performance platform. The train is comprised of two 8-foot-long wagons for caterers, fashion or anything from desserts to cocktails and platforms to support an array of acrobatic talent. Make an im-

pressive entrance for dessert by driving it to the center of the room with cirque performers!

Contact: Chris Lashua, Cirque Mechanics, chris@cirquemechanics.com, 800-770-1694

GASTRO GARAGE: Los Angeles-based catering company Gastro Garage uses blowtorches to cook onsite, creating an interactive and entertaining option

for food. These chefs, called “mechanics,” deconstruct classic dishes and reconstruct them into gastro “tanks”: brioche-style doughnuts that are torched and filled with nitrous foam in a variety of flavors. They are created in front of the guests by the mechanics, who complete the look in full uniform and goggles. The real star is the food — with sweet and savory options ranging from Philly cheese steaks and cuba-



Combustible cuisine anyone? Gastro Garage “mechanics” use blowtorches to add a real flair to interactive cooking demonstrations.

Credit: The Gastro Garage



Body Marbling — for those who take corporate “branding” literally.

Credit: BlackLight Visuals

nos, to s’mores — they will have your guests raving. This team really get the crowds FIRED up and is a treat to both the eyes and tastebuds.

Contact: Adam Manacker, The Gastro Garage, adam@thegastrogarage.com, 310-993-3979

ENTERTAINMENT

BODY MARBLING: Body marbling puts a psychedelic twist on temporary tattoos. Pigments chosen by attendees are manipulated into patterns and designs that transfer directly upon dipping. These funky tattoos are best showcased in the dark under UV light. Best of all, they can be washed off easily with soap and water. BlackLight Visuals, the pioneers of Body Marbling, have become a huge hit at monster music festivals such as Coachella and Electric Daisy

Carnival. Branding opportunities make it a great option for unique attendee engagement at corporate events.

Contact: Brad Lawrence, Black-



The Gentlemen Trio’s unique sound inspires audiences.

Light Visuals, booking@BLVisuals.com, 248-762-9983

CHOCOLATE GENIUS: Paul Joachim, also known as The Chocolate Genius, can speed-sculpt anything out of chocolate. I have personally had him in the past sculpt skylines, logos, busts of honorees and even myself — the best-looking piece of them all. He has sculpted everything from a life-size Leb-

Chocolate Genius sculptures double as entertainment and dessert.

ron James to a giant elephant. He can speed-sculpt a masterpiece in as little as one hour, doubling as both entertainment and dessert!

Contact: Barbara Parham, Artistic Talent Group, barbara@artistic-talent-group.com, 407-876-3729

GENTRI: GENTRI (short for the Gentlemen Trio) combines rich, dynamic vocals with powerful three-part tenor harmony. They bring a spine-tingling sound that’s sure to bring clients to their feet, move them to tears or motivate them to open their pocketbooks. From legendary covers, iconic Broadway show tunes to epic originals, their show is sure to leave your audiences shouting “encore.”

Contact: Stuart Ambrose, About Entertainment, sambrose@about-entertainment.com, 424-201-5428

WELL-STRUNG: These guys are the best of both worlds, fusing classical music with today’s pop in amazing, four-part harmony. Imagine walking into a room with a dashing string quartet playing classical pieces at a reception, blending into the background and setting the mood. Then, surprisingly, they become the main act and catch everyone’s attention with a surprising classical mashup of Mozart and Kelly Clarkson. It is a unique and memorable experience that will certainly have your guests talking (and gawking).



Credit: Allure Ventures



The Well-Strung classical/pop quartet.

Contact: Danny Bergold, About Entertainment, dbergold@about-entertainment.com, 424-201-5428

TECH

AERIAL DRONES: On January 12 at The Special Event, I unveiled aerial drones as being the next big thing in event entertainment. Drones are creating visual spectacles with choreographed movements that create shapes and patterns mid-air. On February 5, Superbowl Sunday, 300 drones flew in formation at the opening of Lady Gaga's *amazing* half-time performance in front of 160 million people! What started out as a sea of bright stars came together by the end to form an American flag. Combining drone technology with Lady Gaga's artistry created a truly memorable experience. I was very impressed, and this was all made possible by the ever-growing interest in drones. Drones hovering above and around performers are creating spectacular new images and camera views that were never possible before. Drones are now even being used to show messages and point guests to event locations, like flying robot valets! Furthermore, aerial drones can be "dressed up" with themed elements and can be coordinated with live performers or other live special effects.

Contact: Jeff Ward, TLC Air & Xylobands USA, tlc@tlciscreative.com, 310-822-6790

VIDEO SPHERE: The KM Custom Video Sphere is a cutting-edge product that gives your guests a true 360-degree view of your message. The video sphere works great as a centerpiece to any type of event and can be programmed to display any image, video or media on its



Messages, logos and more can be projected on the KM Custom Video Sphere.

LED surface. Imagine: Visuals at a party, logos for a corporate gala, messages to patrons at a convention are just some of the possibilities!

Contact: Kevin Mignone, KM Productions, kevin@km-productions.com, 516-531-3015

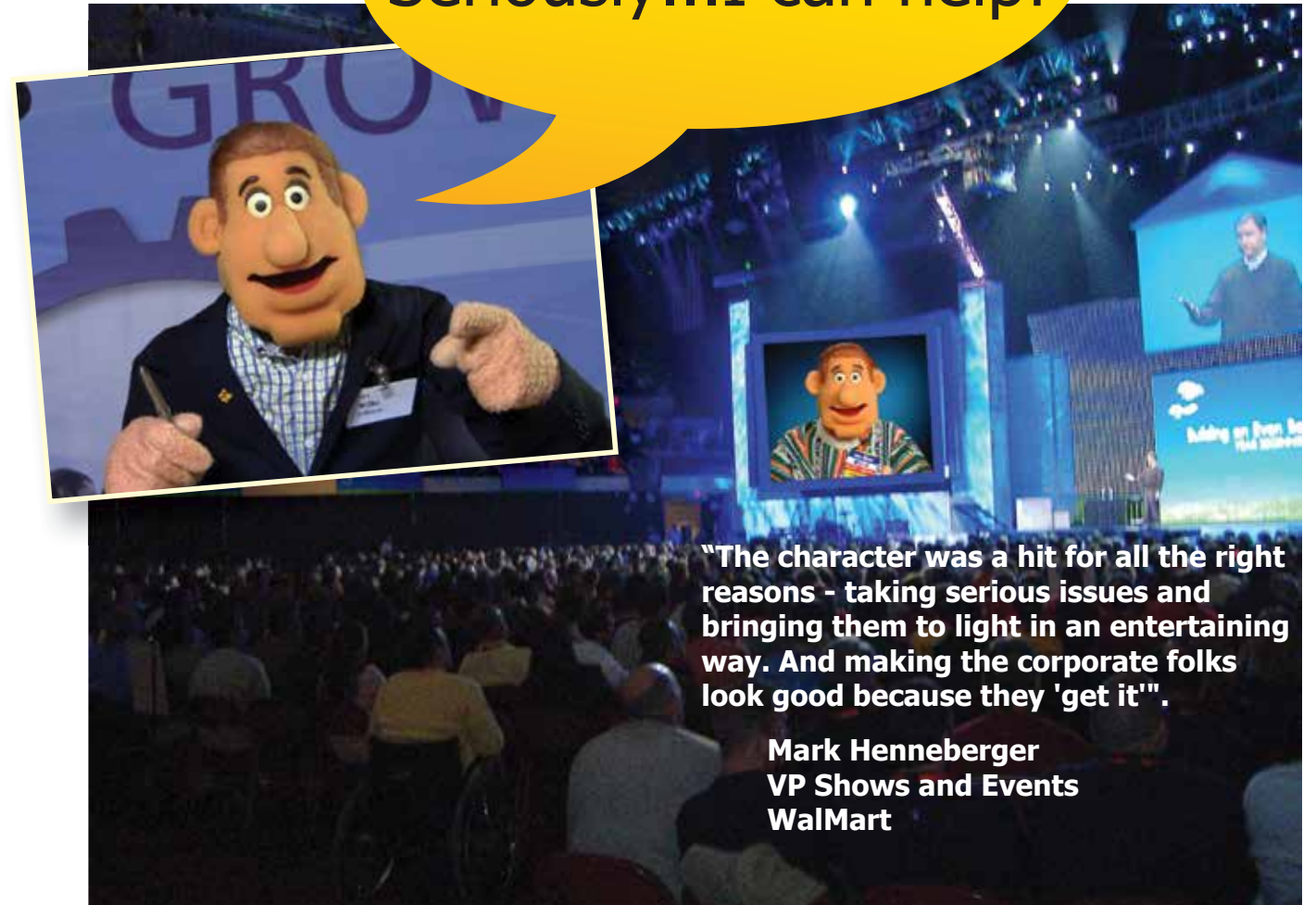
These are just a few ideas from this year's Hot List. I encourage you to take these ideas and your own ideas, and find how to make your own wow. Think outside the box — what have people not seen before? How can I take a classic and put a unique spin on it? Don't shy away from big ideas, even for small events or with small budgets. I always say, "An event doesn't have to be large to be 'big.' It doesn't have to be extravagant to be 'rich' and it doesn't have to be over the top to 'raise the roof.'"

Lastly, I will leave you with this: Many people ask me, "What is the next big thing? What will we be seeing a lot on next year's Hot List?" I predict it is going to be HEAVY on technology, particularly with drones, virtual reality and augmented reality. It will allow us to see things we previously could not see before (think of doing a venue walkthrough with VR in the comfort of your office), and it's going to take our event industry by storm in a very strange way. There are things

we only could have dreamed of that are now within reach, have become very affordable, and are allowing us to take events to a different level.

For speaker inquiries for Michael Cerbelli's: *The Hot List*, please contact edith@cerbellicreative.com. C&IT

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Destination



DSC, an AlliedPRA Company, set up this alfresco dinner on the Skier Bridge at the Ritz Carlton Bachelor Gulch in Beaver Creek.

Credit: DSC, an AlliedPRA Company

Colorado

By Derek Reveron

A meeting in Colorado is guaranteed to rise above the mundane, inspiring attendees whether they experience mile-high Denver's cosmopolitan sophistication, or the breathtaking scenery and outdoor adventure that abounds from Colorado Springs to Rocky Mountain ski meccas.

Colorado Springs

And rising to the top of Colorado's legendary resorts is the 100-year-old Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, which hosted a four-day meeting for Kiewit Corporation that included 700 attendees and guests.

Katie Sullivan, event production director for planit inc., who planned the meeting, says, "We chose The Broadmoor because it was an affordable option to get all employees out of their home towns and truly engaged in the meeting. We wanted Colorado to make a change from the previous location where the meeting had always been held."

Sullivan found The Broadmoor's 185,000 sf of flexible meeting space to be a good fit for the meeting. "The resort provided ample space for general sessions, breakouts, meal rooms, breaks and entertainment all in close proximity," says Sullivan. "The hotel layout and variety of options allowed employees to focus on the meeting elements while their guests had multiple options for entertainment and relaxation."

All of the group's activities were held onsite. Sullivan used a range of The Broadmoor's venues for a variety of functions. Ballroom and banquet spaces hosted general sessions, breakouts and breakfasts as well as several other activities, including cooking and mixology classes, a margarita-making competition and yoga.

Sullivan and her team transformed The Broadmoor International Center throughout the week for a variety of functions. "We used this space and the built-in stage for lunches and dinner, both of which had programs during the meals," says Sullivan. "We then flipped the space for a small group breakfast and meeting. We also used this space for the final-night reception, which included food stations and entertainment. It worked out wonderfully."

Rates for food and beverage were top-notch. "There was great value," says Sullivan. "The chef made custom menus to fit our themes and worked with us on our budget. We received several comments from attendees on how wonderful the food was."

The 784-room Broadmoor is constantly offering more meeting options. Late last year, The Broadmoor opened The Estate House, a lavish 12,000-sf historic mansion designed during the 1920s that is perfect for small private parties and receptions.

The Estate House offers several customizable meeting spaces, including a grand parlor that accommodates up to 120 for cocktail receptions and 60 for a private dinner or meeting. The dining room seats 16 for dinner. Spaces suitable for breakouts

include an outdoor covered veranda overlooking two croquet lawns as well as the library and third-floor meeting room. Some guests can stay in five luxurious bedrooms.

The Broadmoor's amenities include three championship golf courses, a year-round tennis program, a Forbes Five Star spa and fitness center as well as 26 retail boutiques. There are more than 20 restaurants, cafés and lounges, including the Penrose Room, Colorado's only Forbes Five Star, AAA Five Diamond restaurant.

Also last year, The Broadmoor opened The Overlook at Cloud Camp, a dedicated 1,500-sf meeting and event space atop Cheyenne Mountain. Located seven miles from the Broadmoor, Cloud Camp accommodates up to 60 guests. Activities include mule rides, hiking, archery, yoga and crafts.

Other outdoor activities include mountain biking, rock-climbing tours, paintball, fly-fishing and falconry. Teambuilding options include Pikes Peak Cog Railway, The Broadmoor Soaring Adventure zip-line courses and Seven Falls.

Small Property, Great Fit

The variety of outdoor activities in Colorado Springs helped attract Dow Agrosciences LLC to the destination in October. The company's three-day meeting for 53 sales and marketing

employees was held at the 117-room Mining Exchange, a Wyndham Grand Hotel with 17,000 sf of event space including seven meeting rooms and the 3,500-sf Grand Ballroom. It was the group's first meeting at the property.

The size of The Mining Exchange was a big factor in its selection. "With this being a small property, it was a great fit for a group of around 50 people," says Audra Stewart, CMP, event planner for Indianapolis, Indiana-based Dow Agrosciences. "It allowed us to be the only group on the property and provided a small, intimate atmosphere for attendees to connect and network with each other as well as meet their overall meeting objectives."

The layout of The Mining Exchange's meeting spaces matched the meeting's objectives. "This group had a large amount of material to cover in a small amount of time, and with meeting rooms right next to each other, attendees didn't have to spend much time walking around the property looking for the rooms," says Stewart. "The close proximity of meeting rooms allowed the group to have quick turnaround times between sessions."

The size and flexibility of the Mining Exchange's meeting spaces also fit the group's needs. "The rooms were large and conducive to a variety of setups that, on occasion, allowed two of our groups to be in the same room at the same time without being disruptive to each other," says Stewart. "We used a variety of setups through the week including conferences in the breakout rooms. The general session space also held an awards banquet."

Reach Peak Inspiration, From Mile-High Denver to Mountain-top Meccas



Credit: The Broadmoor

The Lakeside Terrace Patio at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs.

Properties such as The Mining Exchange are only part of what attracts groups to Colorado Springs. “We have so many activity options in Colorado Springs that it is easy to continue to give guests a new experience each time, says Danielle McNair, director of sales and business development, Colorado, for DSC (Destination Services Corp.), an AlliedPRA Company. “We have some groups who come back annually and it is a trick to keep things fresh, but we look for inspiration everywhere.”

McNair says, “One of our team members created an amazing ‘Rhinstone Cowboy’ event after seeing a dance-floor ceiling covered in mirrored balls while on vacation in Mexico. This was a new twist on Colorado’s cowboy and Western heritage. The clients and guests loved it. Micro-breweries are popular so we created a microbrewery tour.”

It’s no wonder that Colorado Springs set visitor records in 2016, attracting 7.4 million overnight visitors, representing a 32 percent increase since 2011, according to the Colorado Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Colorado Springs is not alone. More people are discovering Denver’s mix of urban modernity, mountain beauty and frontier history.

Denver

Last year, Denver welcomed a record 31.5 million visitors, including a record 17.3 million who stayed overnight, according to Visit Denver, the city’s CVB. According to Richard Scharf, president and CEO of Visit Denver, “Since voters approved an increase of tourism marketing dollars in 2005, Denver has seen tourism grow 62 percent — nearly three times the 22 percent national average.”

Denver continues to offer planners more of what they need to plan successful meetings. “Because of large citywide conventions and the growth of Denver in the past 10 years, venues have expanded to accommodate larger groups,” says McNair. “Downtown areas like the River North Art District (RiNo) and Lower Highlands are revitalized and trendy.”

In addition, McNair notes, more entrepreneurs are opening farm-to-table restaurants using local ingredients. Despite all the change, she adds, some of the main attractions continue to be things like the Rockies, sports stadiums and museums.

More meeting space and hotel rooms are on the way in Denver.

Denver city officials recently announced plans for a \$233 million expansion of the Colorado Convention Center (CCC), located within walking distance of 10,000 hotel rooms. Plans call for a 50,000-sf outdoor terrace with views of the Rocky Mountains, various multifunction meeting spaces and several modified lobbies. The CCC currently offers 100,000 sf of meeting space on one level and 584,000 sf of exhibit space.

Located just outside Denver, Aurora will be home to the state’s largest combined convention center and hotel, the 1,500-room Gaylord Rockies Resort & Conference Center, when it opens in late 2018. The property will offer 485,000 sf of meeting and convention space including four 8,000- to 59,736-sf ballrooms, up to 81 breakout rooms and a 175,000-sf Exhibit Hall with a 20,000-sf outdoor patio. The property also will offer eight dining experiences, an indoor/outdoor pool complex, Relache Spa and Salon, and state-of-the-art fitness center.

Hyatt’s Denver properties include the 1,100-room Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center with more than 60,000 sf of event space, and the AAA Four Diamond Grand Hyatt Denver, which offers 516 rooms and 52,600 sf of event



“The (Broadmoor) layout and variety of options allowed employees to focus on the meeting elements while their guests had multiple options for entertainment and relaxation.”

Katie Sullivan, Event Production Director
planit inc., Omaha, NE

space, including two ballrooms. Both properties offer scenic views of the Rocky Mountains and downtown.

The 196-room JW Marriott Denver Cherry Creek, in Denver’s iconic shopping and dining district, features 9,400 sf of meeting space, including the newly remodeled 1,400-sf Fireside & Patio indoor and outdoor venue with LED chandeliers. Other spaces include the 2,175-sf Bluebell Ballroom and 1,100-sf The Deck – 3rd Floor outdoor event and reception space.

The 370-room Westin Westminster, located between Denver and Boulder, offers more than 60,000 sf of meeting space encompassing 26 indoor rooms and six outdoor venues. The largest meeting space is the 11,914-sf pillarless Westminster Ballroom with a 60-foot glass wall offering views of the Promenade Lake and Fountain. An adjacent 15,000-sf prefunction space allows access to two outdoor courtyards.

Mountain Resorts

The number and variety of luxury mountain resorts sets Colorado apart from other U.S. destinations. Such properties include the four-diamond Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Col-



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Credit: Visit Denver

Street dining at Larimer Square in downtown Denver.

orado Springs, which offers 316 guest rooms and more than 40,000 sf of IACC-certified meeting and event space including 38 meeting rooms. Amenities include an 18-hole championship golf course, 12 outdoor tennis courts, five indoor tennis courts and a 35-acre private lake.

One large corporation held a meeting for managers and executives at Cheyenne Mountain Resort for the first time in 2003 and has been returning multiple times a year since. "We intend to continue holding programs at Cheyenne Mountain Resort several times a year going forward," says the company's corporate planner. "We use this facility for a number of reasons: location, setting, meeting space and amenities. They treat us like family, and our clients love the resort."

The value that Cheyenne Mountain Resort offers keeps the company coming back. "It has fair and competitive rates for the meeting space, sleeping rooms and food and beverage," says the planner. "I feel like they are trying to give rates at the lowest possible price point while remaining profitable and competitive in this market. They do a great job of showing client appreciation with discounts and special events. They over-deliver on the contract and their promises."

The company made full use of Cheyenne Mountain Resort's meeting space in a variety of ways. "We used the general session room for classroom/conference-style meetings every day," says the planner. "We used breakout rooms in a couple of different configurations — conference style for small group meetings and as an empty space for teambuilding activities. We also used it for a bridge-building activity where attendees are in competition as a leadership skills practice activity."

Colorado is a mountain town mecca, including Breckenridge, Beaver Creek, Keystone and Vail.

Vail Resorts is a key player with 11 world-class mountain resorts and three urban ski areas, including the Colorado properties of Beaver Creek, Breckenridge, Keystone and Hotel Talisa, formerly Vail Cascade Resort & Spa.

Hotel Talisa will be the only luxury ski-in/ski-out property in Vail when it opens in October after a \$50 million renovation. The 285-room property will feature more than 40,000 sf of meeting space including 19 meeting rooms and a 19,000-sf exhibit hall.

Rooms will offer large windows and balconies overlooking the mountains and forest, and freestanding soaker tubs in spacious five-fixture baths. Skiing amenities include a dedicated chairlift as well as ski rentals and ticket office. In addition to skiing, guests can enjoy mountain biking, kayaking, snowmobiling, snowshoeing and a 58,000-sf athletic club as well as three restaurants.

The Keystone Resort and Conference Center is the largest freestanding meeting venue in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. The facility offers planners everything they need for meetings, including a total of 100,000 sf of meeting, event and exhibit space. Two flexible ballrooms, one of which is circular, are on the ground floor. Two ground-level loading areas provide easy access for exhibits and large displays.

Keystone provides attendee lodging in 1,200 units in Keystone Lodge & Spa, West Keystone, River Run Village and Ski Tip Lodge. In addition, Keystone offers two golf courses — Keystone Ranch Golf Course and The River Course at Keystone.

In Breckenridge, attendees enjoy mountain ski town culture at the 208-room Doubletree by Hilton Breckenridge near downtown with scenic views of the Rockies. Hundreds of restaurants, galleries, shops, museums and night sports are nearby. The property offers 9,000 sf of meeting space, including 10 meeting rooms. The Hilton is across the street from Breckenridge Ski Resort's Peak 9, which offers ski equipment rental and a range of outdoor activities.

Whether it's Breckenridge, Denver, Boulder, Colorado Springs or any other mountain town, Colorado offers some of the most unique meeting venues in the nation. "The Colo-



"You can meet on a dude ranch, at a winery, at a mountain-top venue, or cosmopolitan hotel. Corporate groups are seeking experiences that are outside of the standard meeting room environment."

Danielle McNair, Director of Sales and Business Development, DSC, an AlliedPRA Company, Avon, CO

rado meeting experience goes beyond state-of-the-art facilities and world-class accommodations," says McNair. "You can meet on a dude ranch, at a winery, at a mountain-top venue, or cosmopolitan hotel. Corporate groups are seeking experiences that are outside of the standard meeting room environment."

Sometimes, McNair continues, the best place to close a deal or inspire a sales team is on a ski lift, river, trail or even on horseback. Meeting among nature's stunning mountains and peaks stimulates ideas and innovation, she adds.

Indeed, Colorado's spectacular settings are matched by a Western hospitality guaranteed to garner a tip of the Stetson from every attendee. **C&IT**

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Destination

Gulf-front event space at Sundial Beach Resort & Spa on Southwest Florida's Sanibel Island.

Credit: Sundial Beach Resort & Spa

Shine On, Florida

Big, Beautiful and Built for Memorable Meetings

By Christine Loomis

Florida is a big state — 447 miles north to south, 361 miles east to west. While its 663 miles of beaches and 1,197 miles of coastline are huge draws for attendees, it's hardly a "one-size-fits-all" destination. Each coast, city and resort area offers its own distinct vibe. Here are just a few possibilities.

Orlando

Orlando is known for inspired theme parks, but corporate planners know it as a top national and international meeting destination. There's no lack of hotels and resorts to choose from, including chains and independents.

Caribe Royale Orlando is an independent, a plus for Virginia Dodge, CMM, HMCC, president of VA Productions Inc.,

whose client BSN Medical held its national sales conference there in February, with 250 attending.

"This was my third time at the Caribe Royale. I think independently owned properties can make a difference in the area of flexibility. We got a great rate and the sales staff was a pleasure to work with to negotiate the things my client needed and expected."

Orlando itself offers value as well. "Local incentives often exist for bringing meetings to Orlando," Dodge notes. "Airfare is a bit lower on average with the bonus of having so many direct flights per day."

Dodge calls the all-suite Caribe Royale "a beautiful property with real wow factors for attendees." She notes that the ample conference space is all on one level and the property

is nicely laid out. "A covered walkway from one tower to the conference center makes for a short walk, and there's a gorgeous workout facility with early and late hours, which is important to clients these days."

Then there's the staff. "John Murray, director of sales and Kim Bester, senior sales manager, were everything you want in a sales team: professional, pleasant, knew the property inside and out, extremely accommodating, really worked to get what we needed — no games, no empty or incorrect promises. Our associate director of catering and convention services, Yvonne Gollatscheck, was spot on taking care of the details and going with the flow. Requests were handled in a timely manner by all staff. ...It's frustrating when requests are not taken care of and you have to follow back around addressing the same things more than once. When it's done well and right like it was at the Caribe Royale, it makes a huge difference for the planner and ultimately for the attendees, which is most important!"

In terms of meeting space, technology and catering,

"The ambience was beautiful — sun setting, a little Key West-type duo playing music, strung lights crisscrossing the terrace. It was picture perfect. I don't know how we're going to top that for next year."

Liz Baldwin, CMP, Executive Assistant
The Boler Company
Itasca, IL

Dodge says, "It was easy to find the right fit for my numerous specific group needs, and Kim and Yvonne worked with me to make it all come together. My company, VA Productions Inc., is an audio-visual company along with being a meeting-planning and video-production company so we brought our own AV equipment and team. I was concerned there wouldn't be enough bandwidth the way attendees now connect mul-

tiple devices and some sessions involve all attendees being online at once, but there wasn't a single issue."

In addition to the standard suites of nearly 500 sf, there are fully outfitted villas near the conference center. "These can be great for planners, with two bedrooms, two bathrooms and extra workspace areas. They also work for overflow small breakout rooms if needed," Dodge notes.

Also convenient is the range of dining options, including the fine-dining Venetian Chop House, which Dodge highly recommends for executives or small group dinners.

The only hitch came from the same meal room not being available for the entire conference. In the end, Dodge says,

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The Grand Caribe Convention Center at Caribe Royale Orlando includes two ballrooms, 29 breakout rooms and two boardrooms.

Credit: Caribe Royale Orlando

"Yvonne worked hard, got creative and came up with a solution that worked for my client, ultimately keeping them in the same room all week."

She plans to return to Orlando with two groups next year, and hopes the Caribe Royale will work for at least one. "This resort is a hidden gem among the masses of hotels in Orlando. Once you go there, you'll want to go back, which is why I say book early. They have so many clients return year after year that in the busy season it can be tough to find the availability and space you need."

Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate gives planners an option just to the south of Orlando with 36 holes of championship golf. Laurie Sorensen, learning architect with HTG Peer Groups, booked the company's fourth-quarter meeting there starting in November 2016, with subsequent meetings 2017-2019.

"Our largest vendor partner, ConnectWise, does its conference in Orlando right after ours each year, so we try to make it convenient for attendees to get to both," Sorensen says. "Orlando is a hub city with great flight options from almost any airport, and ChampionsGate has a resort feel but is located near the airport. The Omni brand delivers a very high quality of service and we appreciate the Omni Select Guest Program. The team at the property is also one of our favorites," she continues. "Senior Sales Manager Nolan Hart always takes care of our group with individualized attention and his trademark good humor. When I work with Nolan and the team at the ChampionsGate, I feel like we're partners. Nolan truly feels like an extension of my team because he makes our goals his own."

The meeting space is ideal as well. "The Osceola meeting center has breakout space and ballroom space," Sorensen notes, "so it gives the feeling of an intimate event within a much larger property since it is all enclosed and set apart from the hotel meeting space."

It is a bit of a walk from the guest rooms to the meeting rooms, but Sorensen says, "With many of our attendees coming from cold climates, the short walk in Florida weather is welcome." She gives the property her highest recommendation, noting, "I would encourage planners to check out Omni's unrivaled multimeeting and multiyear packages."

Also among Orlando's multitude of resorts is Walt Disney Swan and Dolphin Resort, which recently completed a comprehensive \$5 million renovation of its total 329,000 sf of meeting space at both the Swan and Dolphin properties. The makeover is part of the Swan and Dolphin's multiphase \$140 million redesign, including all 2,267 guest rooms. The Swan's guest rooms were finished in 2015; the Dolphin's rooms will be completed by the end of this year; and the \$12 million lobby redesign will be done by this fall.

Among the highlights: now completed is the new Lake View Room on the Swan side, which is two connected rooms, one accommodating up to 277 and the other up to 119 attendees. The floor-to-ceiling windows provide views of resort's private lake and the Dolphin resort, however, full length shades offer planners the option to darken the room for presentations and privacy.

Guests of the Swan and Dolphin enjoy some valuable extras normally availed only to those staying at a Disney-owned property. They can take advantage of extended theme park hours, as each day one of the four Disney theme parks opens an hour early or stays open up to two hours after regular closing. And Disney's scheduled boat launches and bus transportation throughout the resort are available to Swan and Dolphin guests.

Spread across a lush 28-acre property and located within walking distance to the Orange County Convention Center, the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Orlando at SeaWorld is in the process of completing a renovation that will add the 20,000-sf Majestic Ballroom and 20,000 sf of outdoor

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Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort has undergone a three-year, \$140 million renovation.

Credit: Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort

courtyard space, divisible into five event spaces, slated for completion by the end of the year. The hotel will boast a total of 100,000 sf of indoor/outdoor event space when the project is finished.

Rosen Shingle Creek recently refreshed all 1,501 guest rooms, redesigned the resort's championship golf course and unveiled a swank new open-air covered pavilion, perfect for private functions. Perhaps most important for business travelers are new recharging stations and added power outlets for increased connectivity in public spaces.

Jacksonville

Tucked into the northeast corner of the state, Jacksonville encompasses more than 800 square miles where the St. Johns River meets the Atlantic Ocean, melding an urban riverfront downtown with sweeping coastal beaches. It's largely off the radar of corporate planners — but shouldn't be.

"Visit Jacksonville's sales and services team is increasing investments in our partnership with Meeting Professionals International and other associations that cater to corporate travel and meeting planners. Jacksonville is a destination where you don't have to choose between the beach and the city, nature and culture or the comfort of convention hotels and the high service of all-inclusive resorts," says Monica Smith, V.P. of sales and marketing at Visit Jacksonville. "To ensure a seamless relationship with corporate and incentive meetings coordinators, our team is developing new collateral and brochures highlighting key local businesses and industry segments that can help planners leverage local resources for successful meetings. Plus, we are offering special promotions for short-term meeting opportunities and small meetings through 2018. It's time to consider Jacksonville to host big events."

Miami

With its Latin heart and international vibe, Miami has high appeal for groups. Among the

meeting-friendly hotels is a pair of Trump properties. This year, Trump International Beach Resort Miami offers a Meetings With a View package including ocean or Intra-coastal Waterway views from all meeting rooms, discounts on catering and room rates, free Wi-Fi for meetings and more. It's good through December 2017 and select dates in 2018. Trump National Doral Miami completed a \$250 million renovation that included the addition of Trump Spa suites and reimagined golf courses. Coming this fall: the new Rick Smith Golf Academy.

Palm Beach County

Famous for upscale shopping and high-end resorts, Palm Beach County also offers plenty of nature, outdoor adventures and resorts that meld upscale with beach casual.

Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa is one resort that defines today's elegance — upscale and sophisticated with a touch of whimsy. The resort has received the Mobil Five Star Award for the past two years, and its sensational 42,000-sf spa has received the Mobil Five Star designation for three years running. The resort encompasses 309 guest rooms and suites in three towers on seven pristine oceanfront acres.

Amenities and services include three tennis courts, four restaurants, 24/7 room service and a 24-hour business lounge. The state-of-the-art fitness center includes spinning and yoga studios, Pilates classes and personal trainers, giving hardworking executives and planners a place to rev up and wind down.

The resort features 30,000 sf of meeting and function space, with fabulously stylish indoor and outdoor venues for events. Groups of 10 to 1,000 are easily accommodated. The largest of the three ballrooms is 9,680 sf, divisible by three. Prefer to meet by the beach? Poolside cabanas are available and the spa's "Self Centered" Garden offers water features and a private courtyard. In August, the resort announced the ap-

DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld is completing a renovation that will add a new ballroom and outdoor courtyard event space.



Credit: DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld



"This was my third time at the Caribe Royale. I think independently owned properties can make a difference in the area of flexibility. We got a great rate and the sales staff was a pleasure to work with to negotiate the things my client needed and expected."

Virginia Dodge, CMM, HMCC, Owner
VA Productions Inc.
Reading, PA

pointment of a new chef, David Viviano, who will oversee all culinary operations.

New on the scene is Hilton West Palm Beach, which opened in 2016 and is connected to the Palm Beach County Convention Center by an enclosed walkway.

At the county's north end is Jupiter Beach Resort, where Excel Medical, a specialist in medical software technology, held its national sales meeting in February with 50 attendees. "Jupiter Beach Resort is directly on the beach, which provides a beautiful location for our team," says Joanne Minnaert, manager, corporate meetings and events. "The staff is friendly and the cost for meetings is very competitive with surrounding hotels, but the attention to detail is second to none. It is also a quick 30-minute ride from the Palm Beach airport."

Minnaert likes that the resort is near a variety of local ac-

tivities and that the staff stands out. "The sales team at JBR is without a doubt the best I have ever worked with. They make you feel you are part of the family before and during events. They work as a team and every effort was made to make everyone in our company feel welcome."

Ditto for the entire team, Minnaert says. "Graziella Del Grande, Diana McAllister, Betsy Gonzalez, Amanda Ross, Juan Rodriguez, Diane D'Amico — they are always accessible and friendly. They check in to make certain we are happy and make themselves available for last-minute changes or requests. The doormen and front desk staff are exceptionally friendly."

Minnaert says this level of responsiveness helps with ROI. "Whether it's before or during the meeting, I have never spent any time worrying about things going wrong. There is always someone checking to make certain people are happy



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and that our needs are being met. As an event planner, this is worth valuable time and money."

Originally, the group chose Jupiter Beach Resort because of proximity to the company's corporate office. "Now," Minnaert says, "we keep returning, not just for our national sales meetings but for our smaller company meetings as well. The resort simply makes planning meetings easy."

Meeting space, function venues, Wi-Fi, AV, catering and décor all get high marks. "AV assistance is always available, and Juan Rodriguez makes himself available even if we do not request Wi-Fi in advance."

For those considering Jupiter Beach Resort, Minnaert has one piece of advice: "Just call the sales office, discuss your needs and let them work their magic."

Sanibel Island

Just off the coast of Fort Myers Beach and connected to the mainland by a three-mile causeway, Sanibel Island is compact but offers a charm that still captures a sense of Old Florida.

Liz Baldwin, CMP, executive assistant and corporate event planner for The Boler Company in Itasca, Illinois, says Sanibel originally was chosen for the company's quarterly business and board meeting in February because the chairman spent winters on Sanibel. "Having our executive team go down for our winter board meeting was convenient for him but also a welcome break for those of us who had to spend winters up north."

It still works. This year's meeting took place at Sundial

"Jupiter Beach Resort is directly on the beach, which provides a beautiful location for our team. ...The cost for meetings is very competitive with surrounding hotels, but the attention to detail is second to none."

Joanne Minnaert, Manager
Corporate Meetings and Events
Excel Medical
Marshfield, MA

Beach Resort & Spa, which has a host of amenities including a 12-court pickleball stadium. "These are beach communities where families go to vacation," Baldwin says. "Many of these resorts offer individually owned condos where décor differs from unit to unit. Knowing this was one of my hot buttons, my sales contact, David Irwin, worked diligently to ensure our group would be happy in the rooms. But I now know people who come here want to be out-

side doing things. Sundial has a beach for guests, which all resorts here don't have. It also offers plenty of activities for spouses and attendees, including bikes for exploring."

Baldwin likes that Irwin provides one-stop-shopping for planners. "He books the meeting, handles F&B, arranges AV, and he even took care of my shipment when no one else at the hotel seemed to know how to! He is one of the nicest and calmest people I've ever worked with. Who needs to go to the spa? Just hang around David," she says. "Then there's banquet manager, Joe Knapp, a young man who is helpful, professional, courteous, efficient, on the ball, high energy and great at his job! These two made quite a team."

Baldwin's group used one meeting room over three days. "Our setup is pretty space intensive," she says. "We used one of the Sundial room sections and it was one of the best rooms we've ever had at a hotel. It met the needs of our setup and offered windows and a terrace so that when the group broke, attendees could go outside and enjoy the ocean view and weather. We had a dinner on the terrace one evening. The ambience was beautiful—sun setting, a little Key West type

The largest U.S. city by landmass, Jacksonville's vast 800-square-mile area spreads from the St. Johns River to the Atlantic Ocean.



Credit: Visit Jacksonville

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The oceanfront Eau Palm Beach features fabulously stylish indoor and outdoor venues for events.

Credit: Eau Palm Beach Resort & Spa

duo playing music, strung lights crisscrossing the terrace. It was picture perfect. I don't know how we're going to top that for next year."

This group does work with local vendors for offsite activities as well. "Every year we do a buyout of Il Cielo restaurant," Baldwin says. "The food is delicious, the staff conscientious, and each year the GM and chef create a whole new experience from the year before. We also do a cruise with Captiva Cruises the day after our meetings end. We cruise to a place where we walk around and learn about the area, then get back on the boat and cruise to another location for a lovely dinner."

Sanibel does have seasonal traffic, Baldwin notes. "In high season, the traffic getting on and off the island can be unbearable. But Sundial is near the causeway, so you don't have to travel too far into island traffic to get there."

To planners considering The Sundial on Sanibel, Baldwin advises, "Make sure you work with David Irwin and Joe Knapp!"

Tampa Bay and Environs

This area offers surprising diversity, from inland golf resorts to bay and beachside properties.

Inland from Tampa, Streamsong Resort near Bowling Green is already a phenomenal golf destination. This month its third course, the much-anticipated Streamsong Black, opens, along with a new clubhouse and restaurant, expanding options for groups.

Beachside, Wyndham Grand Clearwater Beach, with 343 rooms and 22,000-plus sf of meeting space, opened in January. Among its features: Dunes Ballroom, accommodating 700 across its 10,632 sf. This summer, the Hilton Clearwater Beach completed a \$20 million, 20-month renovation that included a new restaurant and the new spa that opened last summer, as well as transforming the hotel's 35,000 sf of meeting space.

Innisbrook, a Salamander Resort and prime golf destination, is located north of Clearwater in Palm Harbor, making it ideal for Johnson, Pope, Bokor, Ruppel & Burns' company retreat in April, with 120 attendees.

"We're a regional law firm with locations in Tampa, Clearwater and St. Petersburg," says Suzanne Kinman, director of public relations. "The resort had all of our required elements: Within 45 minutes of all three area offices, ample meeting space with good AV, close to a major airport with shuttle service for out-of-town speakers, an outdoor venue for dinner the first night, a formal indoor venue for a dressy dinner and dance the second night, activities for spouses/significant others, a hospitality suite, and reasonable costs."

Kinman made four site visits to the property pre-meeting, ensuring that every function was customized with a backup plan in case of poor weather. Being assigned a dedicated team member from the start was beneficial. "A one-on-one relationship is huge because I need to count on our decisions being carried out in a made-to-order fashion," she says. "I have spent many years in this industry so I'm aware of my client needs. Attorneys put a huge value on their time and are very detail oriented."

The staff made Kinman's job easier. "It's imperative that I work with on-property planners and managers who understand our needs from day one. I would rate the event planners first class."

Food is a priority for this group and it didn't disappoint. "I would rate the food excellent, service excellent and the restaurant managers as very keen on detail," Kinman says.

But it was stellar AV that boosted the meeting's success. "This was our most expensive area of spending," Kinman says. "We launched a new website at the retreat. This was a huge moment for me personally, as I was responsible for coordinating the design and launch of the website from its inception. It was important that the AV work perfectly. The launch went without a single hitch. As an aside, our website just won a gold dotcom award, an international competition honoring excellence in web creativity and digital communication. My point: you get what you pay for, and this set the tone for the other presenters."

Kinman says planners should understand that the resort is spread out, but that it isn't a deficit. "There's free ample parking everywhere, great for our event because many spouses/significant others drove separately. The shuttle service in on task. And though meeting rooms are spread out, many are within walking distance or shuttle friendly. It should be a non-issue."

Her additional advice to planners: "During the meeting, rent a golf cart for ease in changing locations quickly without getting in and out of a car, parking and waiting on a shuttle. Work with one contact and let that contact guide you on meeting and event locations on property because many I would never have considered." **C&IT**

AN **ALL-NEW** PERSPECTIVE ON MEETINGS AND EVENTS

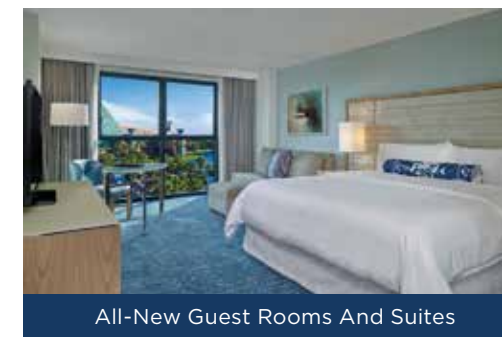


All-New Walt Disney World Dolphin Lobby Concept - Scheduled for completion in September 2017

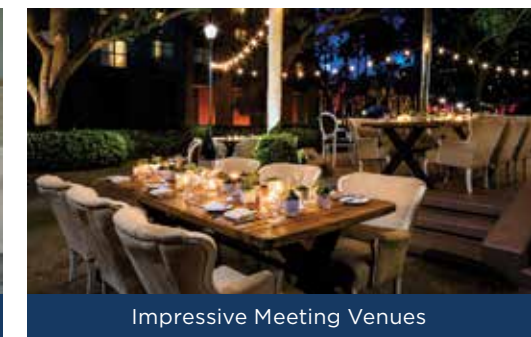
The Walt Disney World Dolphin lobby will undergo a \$12 million re-design, the final stage of a \$140 million renovation project, the largest makeover in the resort's history. It will be completely transformed into a sleek, contemporary space featuring new food and beverage options and offer an inviting area for guests to relax or network. A recipient of the prestigious Meetings & Conventions Hall of Fame Award, the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin is a nationally respected and recognized leader in the convention resort arena. The resort offers more than 329,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, 84 meeting rooms, and 2,267 guest rooms and suites which feature the Westin Heavenly® Bed. Attendees can also relax in the luxurious Mandara Spa, indulge in one of our 17 world-class restaurants and lounges or enjoy our unique Disney Differences.



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Renderings of the new Park MGM and Central Terrace. The main conference space will be completed in October.

Las Vegas' relentless reinvention allows planners to create distinctively unique meeting and convention experiences for attendees no matter how often they visit. "Luckily for planners and DMCs alike, there's no shortage of brand new restaurants, shows, activities and venues, so providing a completely new itinerary for annual clients is never a challenge," says Patty Kindness, national sales manager, AlliedPRA Las Vegas. "Even if planners request the same or similar activities for their participants year after year, we have the versatility to put a new twist on existing offerings."

"For example," Kindness adds, "if the planner requests a tour of the Hoover Dam again, we might propose the tour along with lunch and a craft beer tasting at the Boulder Brewery. Another option would be to add on the canyon rafting tour for a different way of experiencing the dam from the water."

Planners who continuously return to Las Vegas develop valuable relationships with properties which, in turn, encourage even more repeat visits.

Wynn Las Vegas Delivers

Chicago-based IRI Worldwide has held its annual customer conference only at Wynn Las Vegas during each of its visits to the destination over the last 14 years. The three-day conference for 1,500 executives will return to Wynn next year.

IRI Worldwide originally selected Wynn because it identified with the resort's reputation for excellence. "The hotels that we select for this meeting are a reflection of our brand," says John McIndoe, executive vice president, chief marketing officer and planner of the conference. "The quality of the Wynn, attention to detail and customer service reflect our brand and company culture. The Wynn offers so much that other hotels don't."

IRI Worldwide also returns to Wynn because it feels a connection with the resort's staff. "At the end of the day, we fall back on the relationship we have with our partners at the Wynn," says McIndoe. "We developed quite a collaboration with them. The overall end-to-end experience they provide planners, executives, VIPs and clients is second to none."

By Derek Reveron

Value also was a big consideration. "We have evaluated and negotiated with other properties," says McIndoe. "We negotiate very aggressively, and we feel there is solid value at the Wynn."

Wynn's meeting space is a perfect match for IRI Worldwide's needs. "We have very intensive ballroom space requirements," says McIndoe. "We need 1,200-plus sleeping rooms on our peak nights, and we have fairly intensive needs for our Solutions Showcase as well as a number of breakouts. We need several meeting rooms, and we have a significant footprint for our general session as well as theater-style seating for 1,500 people."

Spacious Meeting Rooms

McIndoe made good use of Wynn's 200,000 sf of convention space, which includes two column-free ballrooms and 18 meeting rooms.



"Luckily for planners and DMCs alike, there's no shortage of brand new restaurants, shows, activities and venues, so providing a completely new itinerary for annual clients is never a challenge."

Patty Kindness, National Sales Manager
AlliedPRA, Las Vegas, NV



Credits: David Braun Photography

The Lafite Ballroom at Wynn is a “great space to do large multimedia productions,” says Cindy Black of Five Star Productions, who also held a white party (inset) at Neiman Marcus in the Fashion Show Mall.

ary 2018 and is scheduled for a 2019 completion. The park will include a 1,000–2,000-room hotel tower and 260,000 sf of beachfront meeting and ballroom space overlooking a 20-acre lagoon with water sports activities, a 4,000-foot boardwalk and a white sand beach.

High-end Shopping

Additionally, Wynn will offer more upscale shopping outlets with the construction of Wynn Plaza, a 75,000-sf Strip-front expansion scheduled for completion during the first quarter of 2018. Currently, Wynn Las Vegas and Encore Las Vegas offer shopping options that include the 99,000-sf Wynn Esplanade and the 7,000-sf Wynn Collection boutique. In addition, The Wynn’s Parasol Up, which reopened last year following a new design, refreshed the bar menu and updated technology.

The 2,716-room Wynn Las Vegas’ sister property, the 2,034-

“The quality of the Wynn, attention to detail and customer service reflect our brand and company culture.”

John McIndoe, E.V.P., C.M.O.
IRI Worldwide, Chicago, IL



room Encore, offers 60,000 sf of customizable meeting space including 17 meeting rooms, a 20,650-sf ballroom and three private boardrooms.

Wynn’s improvements will add to its already legendary service. The property is known for catering to the desires of planners and attendees on short notice.

McIndoe cites an example: “We had a senior executive with a major manufacturer who suddenly decided to host



an impromptu day of meetings,” says McIndoe. “The Wynn helped us quickly find the meeting space, helped us with food and beverage, and obtained additional entertainment. Within 36 hours, they had planned a phenomenal meeting for about 25 executives.”

Cindy Black, president of Minneapolis-based Five Star Productions, an event planning company, has planned five corporate meetings either at the Wynn or Encore since 2006. The number of attendees at the meetings ranged from 800 to 3,000.

Black says that The Wynn’s service sets it apart from competitors. “It’s clear that Mr. (Steve) Wynn invests in the development of his people to create superior customer service throughout the hotel, and this focus is reflected in the glowing feedback we’ve received from past attendee surveys,” says Black.

“From arrival to departure (bell service, front desk personnel, housekeeping, banquets and conference services, concierge service) they are truly the best in the industry at delivering unique luxury meeting services,” says Black. “For these reasons the Wynn jumps to the top of my list every time I consider a property for a large event.”

Elsewhere on The Strip

The 390-room M Resort Spa & Casino offers 92,000 sf of flexible meeting space including a conference center with



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Hard Rock Hotel & Casino now boasts a total of nearly 110,000 sf of contiguous meeting and convention space.

Credit: Hard Rock Hotel & Casino

scenic views of Las Vegas and the 25,000-sf pillarless M Pavilion with a capacity of 1,300 for general sessions and 1,800 for receptions. M Pavilion is ideal for customizable catered events, expositions and other large meetings. Other meeting spaces include the Lux special event venue, a 17,400-sf ballroom, several reception areas and a business center, each with latest internet connectivity technology.

The Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas recently completed an expansion of its meeting and convention space with the reopening of the 28,000-sf Artist Ballroom. The newly expanded Artist Ballroom can be divided into eight separate and flexible configurations. Ceiling heights in the new space reach up to 22 feet for optimal exhibition use. The property has added nearly 18,000 sf of meeting and convention space, new exterior signage along Paradise Road and the relocation of the fully functional Business Center. Hard Rock Hotel now boasts a total of nearly 110,000 sf of contiguous meeting and convention space.

The Hard Rock Hotel's capital expenditure campaign, which began in 2015 and was completed last spring, featured the expansion of the Convention Center, a complete makeover

Rendering of MGM Grand Hotel & Casino's new 250,000-sf Conference Center expansion.



Credit: MGM Resorts International

"They are truly the best in the industry at delivering unique luxury meeting services. For these reasons the Wynn jumps to the top of my list every time I consider a property for a large event."

**Cindy Black, Owner and Event Planner
Five Star Productions, Minneapolis, MN**

of the 11-story, 640-room Casino Tower; a complete redesign of the famed Center Bar; the additions of Hudson Group retail concepts, Dunkin' Donuts, Goose Island Pub, a fresh Seafood and Raw Oyster Bar, and the acclaimed MB Steak, a wholly owned dining experience created by recognized restaurateurs, Mr. Michael and David Morton.

Other Hard Rock venues include the upscale 14,000-sf Vanity Nightclub, which can be reserved for private events and can accommodate 5 to 5,000 depending on the seating requirements. In addition, Hard Rock has partnered with Hudson Group, the largest travel retailer in North America, to introduce six new retail shops totaling 14,500 sf.

Aria Resort & Casino also is expanding. The resort is adding 200,000 sf of meeting space and updated technology to its convention center. Upon completion of the project scheduled for February 2018, Aria will have more than 500,000 sf of meeting and convention space that can accommodate 10 to 5,000 attendees. The \$154 million project also includes outdoor and indoor spaces, and a venue offering scenic views of the new T-Mobile Arena and The Park.

A Perfect Fit

The AAA Five Diamond Aria, an MGM Resorts International resort, is just the right property for McAfee Inc., which held its three-day customer user conference at the property for the first time in 2015, and plans to return later this year.

Elizabeth McNair, event program manager for McAfee, says

company executives decided to return because attendees enjoyed the resort's experience, among other reasons.

"We have all of the space we needed and did not compete with other clients," says McNair. "Space was also very conveniently located. We did not have a long walk to get anywhere. And we were able to set up security, where if you did not have a badge, you could not get into our area. That was a huge benefit for us as a technology company."

Value and convenience also played roles. "Overall value for room rates and food and beverage were good," says McNair. "It's more cost effective than other major destinations that would be of interest to us. Everyone wants to go to Las Vegas, and flights are not that expensive."

McNair made full use of the Aria's meeting space. The group held a reception in the exhibit hall; a general session and breakout sessions in the conference center; an executive VIP dinner at CraftSteak restaurant, a AAA Four Diamond steakhouse at the MGM Grand; a concert in one of Aria's four ballrooms featuring the Goo Goo Dolls; and several hospital-ity dinners at restaurants on The Strip.

Other MGM Properties

Aria is one of several MGM International properties on The Strip that include Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, MGM Grand Hotel & Casino, Bellagio, Delano Las Vegas, The Mirage Hotel & Casino, Circus Circus Las Vegas, Excalibur Hotel & Casino, Monte Carlo Resort and Casino, Vdara Hotel & Spa and Luxor Hotel & Casino.

MGM Grand is constructing a 250,000-sf, \$130 million expansion of its Conference Center that is scheduled for completion in fall 2018. The new facility will connect to the existing conference center on all three levels and will include two large ballrooms encompassing 49,000 sf and 32,000 sf, three smaller ballrooms and an outdoor event space.

Upon completion, the expansion will give MGM Grand a total of 850,000 sf of meeting and convention space. The expansion includes an additional 22,000 sf covering the conference center's entire second floor for Stay Well Meetings, the industry's first wellness meeting experience, first introduced at the MGM Grand in 2014.

As part of Monte Carlo Resort and Casino's transformation into the highly anticipated Park MGM, MGM Resorts International and Sydel Group will debut 77,000 sf of conference and event spaces this fall designed to host up to 5,000 attendees. The modern conference space will feature expansive ballrooms, flex-

"It's more cost effective than other major destinations that would be of interest to us. Everyone wants to go to Las Vegas."

**Elizabeth McNair, Event Program Manager
McAfee Inc., Plano, TX**

ible meeting places and an outdoor terrace. The space will be highlighted by the city's first Executive Meeting Center (EMC) and Ideation Labs — two meeting areas designed to maximize productivity for small groups. Additionally, Park MGM will include an installation of the Stay Well program, the industry's first and most comprehensive wellness meetings experience. Meeting planners also will be able to take advantage of Park MGM's other amenities — including the 30,000-sf Park Theater, restaurants by celebrated chefs, a luxurious pool environment and more. The main conference space will be completed in October, with the introduction of the Executive Meeting Center and Ideation Labs in the first quarter of 2018.

Mandalay Bay is attracting larger groups due to its \$70 million expansion last year of the Mandalay Bay Convention Center. The facility added 350,000 sf of meeting, ballroom and exhibit space, bringing the total to 2.1 million sf. Following the improvements, Microsoft signed a multiyear contract

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to hold its annual event of 30,000 attendees at Mandalay Bay and other MGM properties.

Mandalay Bay offers three different hotel experiences, including the all-suite luxury Delano Las Vegas with 20,000 sf of indoor meeting space spread over 31 meeting rooms. Dining options include the South Beach-inspired Delano Beach Club, which groups can reserve for receptions. The Delano's Sage Living Room with overstuffed couches allows guest networking in comfort.

Home to Blue Man

Luxor Hotel houses the 830-seat Blue Man Theater and one of the nation's five permanent productions of the Blue Man Group, which offers an innovative mix of comedy, music and technology that is continuously refreshed to attract repeat visitors. Cirque du Soleil recently purchased Blue Man Group owner Blue Man Productions, and announced that it will be part of a new strategy to diversify beyond circus-style presentations.

Groups can rent the Luxor's Blue Man Theater for a private meeting followed by a Blue Man Group performance ranging from a few minutes to 90 minutes. Other options include a full-show buyout for groups of 500–820 attendees, pre-show receptions for up to 75 people, show-and-dinner packages, and meet-and-greet experiences.

Caesars Leads

Caesars Entertainment Corporation is among the leaders in improving its Las Vegas properties.

The Strip's most storied property, the Flamingo Las Vegas, has completed a \$6.5 million meeting space renovation, which began in April 2017. A \$90 million renovation of 1,270 guest rooms began last month, with completion scheduled for the second quarter of 2018. Caesars describes the new



The Flamingo Las Vegas has begun a \$90 million guest room renovation.

look as "unique, contemporary and retro-chic designs with accents that celebrate Flamingo's rich history." The 70-year-old hotel offers more than 3,500 guest rooms and a 73,000-sf Corporate Convention Center and Executive Conference Center.

The Flamingo project comes after Caesars Entertainment's upgrades in 2016 of more than 4,800 guest rooms and suites at four of its Las Vegas properties — Hollywood Resort & Casino, Caesars Palace, Paris Las Vegas and Harrah's Las Vegas. By 2018, over half of the rooms at Caesars Las Vegas properties will have been upgraded since 2014.

In addition, Caesars Palace plans to develop 90 acres of land that Caesars Entertainment owns in front of the property. Ongoing renovations at Caesars Palace include suites in the Julius Tower and Augustus Tower, and 11 mini-villas.

World-famous Caesars Palace offers 300,000 sf of luxurious meeting space, including the Octavius Ballroom, Forum Ballroom, Augustus Ballroom and Palace Ballroom. Other venues include the 4,100-sf Colosseum at Caesars Palace, a theater with one of the world's largest LED screens, and the 4.5-acre Garden of the Gods Pool Oasis.

Continual improvements at Las Vegas properties add to the destination's considerable advantages over its competitors.

"Planners have the ability to leverage large hotel chains for rooms, meeting space, and food and beverage," says Kindness. "They can maximize budgets, take advantage of multitiered price points, and benefit from the consistency of service delivery. They have quality of services and experience from tenured professionals in the hospitality industry. They have the ability to provide offsite events for up to 20,000 guests at several arenas and outdoor festival venues."

Combine ever-improving Las Vegas properties with the destination's ever-expanding offsite options and you have a practically irresistible meeting destination. As one planner once said tongue-in-cheek, "If a group doesn't have a good time and successful meeting in Las Vegas, it's their own fault."

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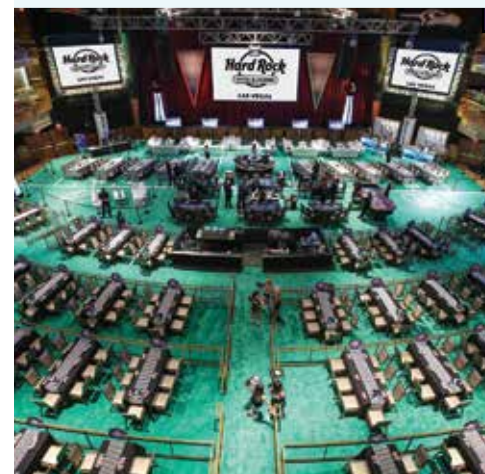
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Groups can rent the Luxor's Blue Man Theater for a private meeting followed by a Blue Man Group performance.

Credit: Blue Man Group

On The Move



MARSELLA



CAMPION



LAPOINTE



GRIMLEY



WHITE

Jay Marsella was named director of sales and marketing for Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. Previously, he served as the opening director of sales and marketing at the Houston Marriott Marquis in Houston, Texas.

The Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, has named Beth Campion group account director for the Northeast and mid-Atlantic regions. She was director of national accounts at The Diplomat Beach Resort in Hollywood, Florida.

AMResorts has promoted Jan LaPointe to vice president of strategic sales planning, North America. She recently celebrated her 15th anniversary with AMResorts and has more than 30 years of experience in the tourism industry.

VisitDallas has promoted Mary Grimley to vice president of sales. She most recently served as director of group sales for the bureau.

Teton Mountain Lodge & Spa and Hotel Terra Jackson Hole in Wyoming has appointed Matt White as director of sales. He most recently was director of sales at The Wort Hotel in Jackson, Wyoming.

Laura Jung was promoted to director of sales and marketing for the San Francisco Marriott Marquis in San Francisco, California. She most recently served as director of group sales for the hotel.

Daniel Surette was named vice president of sales for Omni Hotels & Resorts. He was the vice president of North America sales and field marketing for Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide.

Team San Jose has named Ken Slattery as vice president of sales and destination services. He was global sales director at Omni Hotels and Resorts.

Gabriela Ong was appointed as vice president of sales for Meet Puerto Rico. She most recently served as brand sales manager, Northeast for Meet Puerto Rico.

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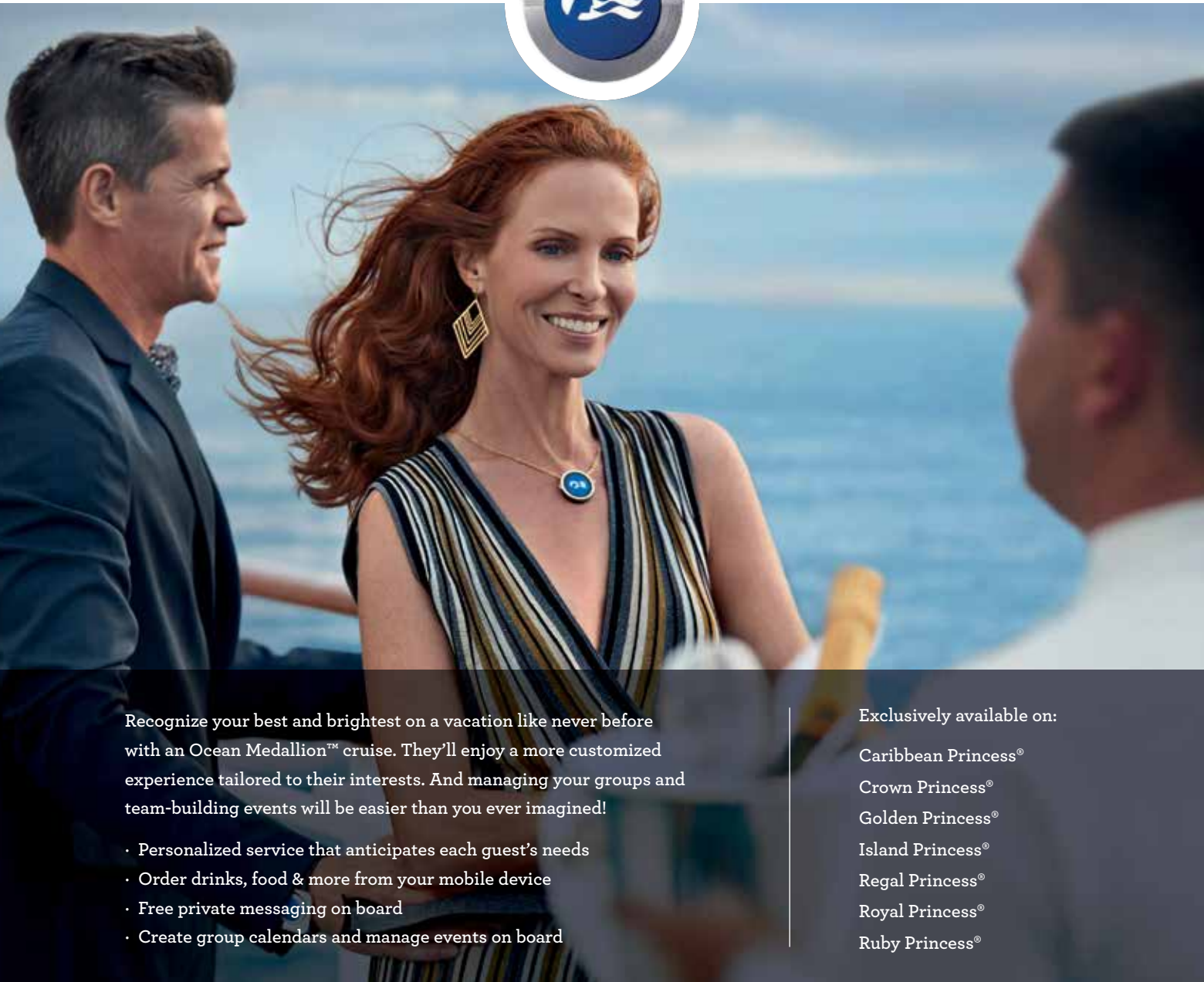
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