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PAGE 20



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Credit: Puzzle Break

A seance is among the activities organized by Puzzle Break, which offers game experiences for corporate teambuilding. **PAGE 20**



Credit: IBM

This Watson-powered robot was popular while engaging with attendees at IBM's InterConnect Security Reception. **PAGE 26**

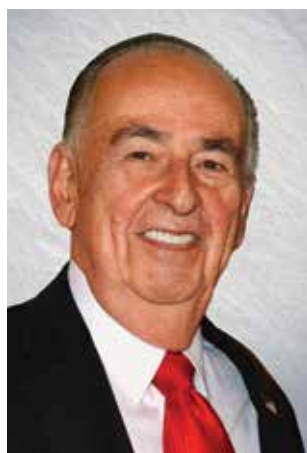


To avoid slip-ups, attorneys say it is critical for meeting planners to assess the implications of the decisions they make. **PAGE 32**

Publisher's Message

Budgeting for the Return on Experience

Teambuilding programs are probably the most obvious way planners can provide engaging experiences for their attendees. These days, teambuilding emphasizes mutual cooperation and collaboration as a means to success rather than individual competition. For example teams in the Pit Crew Challenge pictured on the cover work together to beat the clock while learning some surprising lessons along the way (read about more programs on page 20). Proving the value of such programs to the C suite is something all planners will be thinking about when looking at their 2018 meeting budgets and facing the question: Is this something we can afford to cut? With all



the buzz about "attendee experience" in the industry today, the answer is most likely no — and that now extends beyond teambuilding to all of the program content in meetings and conferences, which are expected to demonstrate a high engagement quotient.

"Every single budget decision we make is about the attendee; will it enhance the attendee experience? If the answer is no, we're not going to do it." That's a defining statement from Colleen Bisconti, vice president, global conferences and events for IBM, who, like other planners, is faced with budgetary challenges due to rising costs. So integral is the "attendee experience" to a meeting's success that many companies are either exempting experiential elements from budget cuts

or, in the case of IBM, even expanding budgets to accommodate them. "We've seen the biggest jump in our budget (due to) the attendee experience," Bisconti says in our story on page 26 "Budgeting by Design: The Art of Scrimping and Saving on Everything — Except the Attendee Experience." The nearly 40,000 people expected to attend IBM's inaugural Think 2018 business and technology event in Las Vegas in March, will find a great number of hands-on opportunities to engage and learn. "We actually immerse attendees inside the technology through what we call 'activations,' and those are much more expensive to build than a typical expo hall," says Bisconti, who gives the example of a photo booth in which attendees can interact with "Watson," IBM's cognitive system (remember Watson's winning performance on "Jeopardy"?). The impact this kind of interaction generates is more valuable than any financial return on investment. And the empirical evidence is mounting. "Maximizing Attendance" is a new industry-wide initiative by The Experience Institute, PCMA, IAEE, MPI and ASAE, examining attendee behaviors behind the recently released, second "Decision to Attend" study. The study reaffirms that "the experience attendees have at the event and throughout the destination matters now more than ever before."

To get the most bang for your buck — and your attendee experience — find some inspired venue and destination choices in our 33rd Annual Awards of Excellence section starting on page 38, featuring award-winning convention and visitors bureaus, and the best-of-the-best hotels and resorts.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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Caesars Palace Completes \$100M Palace Tower Upgrade

LAS VEGAS, NV — The iconic Caesars Palace Las Vegas has completed the renovation of its Palace Tower, the resort's largest tower, featuring 1,181 stylishly designed guest rooms and suites and a price tag topping \$100 million. Considered the crown jewel of the tower, the 29th floor features 10 luxurious new villas ranging in size from 2,750 sf to 4,085 sf and featuring exquisite finishes, bespoke furnishings and a curated art program. The Palace Tower's elegantly designed new guest rooms and suites feature pillowtop king and queen beds, stone bathrooms and LED flat-screen televisions. Centrally located, the Palace Tower is a short walk to the resort's convention center, Appian Way shops and Garden of the Gods Pool Oasis.

Villa guests are entitled to additional perks and amenities, including private elevator entry to the 29th floor of the Palace Tower; around-the-clock access to butler service; limousine transportation to and from McCarran International Airport; and VIP check-in and Total Rewards Diamond queuing at locations throughout all Caesars Entertainment Las Vegas resorts.

The Palace Tower suites and villas, along with Caesars Entertainment's most exclusive collection of luxury accommodations across its portfolio of Las Vegas resorts, are available to view and book at www.CaesarsSuites.com. Pricing for Palace Tower villas begin at \$3,109 per night.

The Palace Tower renovation is the latest in a series of new and/or renovated rooms at Caesars Palace within the past six years, resulting in 90 percent of the resort's room product being new or remodeled. www.caesars.com

Loews' First St. Louis Hotel to Be at Ballpark Village

ST. LOUIS, MO — Loews Hotels has announced plans to build its first-ever St. Louis hotel, which will be part of Ballpark Village's \$260 million expansion project. Ballpark Village, developed by the St. Louis Cardinals and The Cordish Companies, is a mixed-use dining and entertainment district adjacent to Busch Stadium. The hotel will debut as Live! by Loews – St. Louis, MO, a partnership between Loews Hotels & Co., The Cordish Companies and the St. Louis Cardinals.

Located directly across from Busch Stadium, the \$65 million Live! by Loews – St. Louis, MO will feature 216 luxury guest rooms, including 19 suites, and 17,000 sf of meeting and special event space that boasts incredible views of Busch Stadium,



downtown St. Louis and the Gateway Arch. Located on the hotel's second level, these spaces include: a Grand Ballroom that flows out to an outdoor amenity deck; an Executive

Claudia Vecchio Selected to Head Sonoma County Tourism

SANTA ROSA, CA — Sonoma County Tourism has appointed tourism industry veteran Claudia Vecchio to the



VECCHIO

role of president and CEO, effective November 1. Vecchio replaces Ken Fischang, who stepped down in May. Vecchio comes to Sonoma County from Nevada, where she was the director of the state's Tourism and Cultural Affairs Department. During her career, Vecchio has held multiple leadership roles in tourism organizations, serving as the State Tourism Director at the Ohio Department of Development, Division of Travel and Tourism, and Senior Vice President overseeing the tourism group at Edelman PR in Chicago. "Claudia has the energy and excitement to drive Sonoma County Tourism into record-breaking years," said Sonoma County Tourism Board Chair Joe Bartolomei. www.sonomacounty.com

IRF Researches Employee Reward Program Design

WASHINGTON, DC — The Incentive Research Foundation has released Designing for Successes: Effective



VAN DYKE

Design Patterns for Employee and Sales Programs. Based on analysis of several years of relevant research, the report presents noteworthy design elements for effective non-cash recognition and reward programs. "With 84 percent of all U.S. businesses now using non-cash awards, it is critical to understand how to create effective programs," said Melissa Van Dyke, IRF president.

Top trends and strategies employed by successful employee recognition and reward programs include:

- Non-cash rewards are an effective motivator for engaging employees who take on non-core job roles.
- The top objectives of employee programs are improving morale (84 percent), improving productivity (58 percent) and improving customer satisfaction (48 percent).
- The most prevalent types of awards are gift cards (71 percent of businesses), merchandise (38 percent), award points (36 percent), and travel (30 percent).

With 60 percent of all U.S. businesses using non-cash sales rewards, spending conservatively \$23 billion annually on these awards, effective design of sales incentive programs includes:

- Top objectives for sales rewards and incentive programs are increasing overall sales (80 percent), improving morale (76 percent), and improving productivity (58 percent).
- Incentive programs are most successful when they are designed to reflect and enhance the organization's corporate culture. www.theirf.org

Tips & Trends

How to Keep Attendees Engaged Long After the Meeting Ends

Picture this common scenario: After months of planning, your company's event is underway. Guests are happy, excited and reenergized through the meeting. Ideas are flowing and engagement is at an all-time high for your company. At the meeting's conclusion, everyone packs up and travels home. The next day, they are busy catching up on the 500-plus emails in their inbox. By Monday, the company event is a distant memory. Other than an occasional #tbt post on Instagram, the event is rarely mentioned among your team members. In short — no one stayed engaged!

On average, an attendee stays engaged in a meeting's objective for two days after the event concludes. In the meetings industry, engagement is the currency by which we measure our success. If guests keep engaged, then the planners did their job to its fullest extent. The problem is that life gets in the way.

With decades of experience on finding new ways to combat this engagement fatigue, AlliedPRA shares new and exciting ways to keep guests captivated in your meeting's message to help keep the momentum going.

7 WAYS TO KEEP ATTENDEES ENGAGED POST-MEETING

1. **Keep posting long after the meeting is over.** Whether it's on social media or through an internal mechanism, keep your interactions top of mind to keep those meetings and objectives fresh for attendees.
2. **Provide meaningful surveys.** Yes, asking if the attendees enjoyed themselves is important, but make sure there are equally important questions on the quality of the content and how you can improve each year. Give your guests a moment to reflect and they'll be sure to stay engaged.
3. **Bring back a personal touch.** As planners, our attendees are our clients. Write thank-you notes, personalized emails or even mail a few photos from your photo booth to your offices to remind them of all the fun — and education — they had during the program.
4. **Podcasts.** Recordings are a tried-and-true medium to get information out in digestible, truncated bits that can be shared internally. Make it memorable with case studies, side notes and anecdotes from the meetings to keep people interested while they listen on their drive to work.
5. **Show your impact.** If you had a CSR component to your event, have a follow-up piece go out a few months after your event of how your goodwill helped those in need.
6. **Ask for post-communication participation.** Whether it's an attendee writing a blog post or cultivating a few noteworthy quotes for a press release, have your team engage with the audience to make their impact reach a wider audience.
7. **Tailor internal communications to common themes for the meeting.** Was your program Western themed? Maybe your newsletter has a touch of cowhide to the design for a couple of months. Attendees can recall information more readily with visual cues.

Reprinted courtesy of AlliedPRA.

Omni Barton Creek Resort to Undergo Multiphase Evolution

AUSTIN, TX — Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa has unveiled plans for a renovation and expansion in excess of \$150 million that will fully transform the iconic property into a 493-room Austin retreat and further reinforce Omni Barton Creek's position as the No. 1 golf resort in Texas. Construction begins November 13, with a targeted completion date in mid-2019.

Highlights of the renovation include a newly added resort tower, redesigned existing guest rooms, a new conference center and ballroom, a new event Pavilion, six new dining outlets, a brand new Mokara Spa, a new lobby experience, an expanded poolscape, a new golf clubhouse, golf course renovations and a new tennis complex.

The signature feature of the multimil-



Artist's rendering of the new ballroom.

lion-dollar renovation will be the addition of a second hotel tower, which includes 180 luxury appointed guest rooms and suites, each with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the surrounding Hill Country.

The resort will add a new Pavilion and grand ballroom, as well as six new meeting rooms and additional prefunction space in the new conference center.

www.omnihotels.com/bartoncreek

AmEx M&E Predicts Prosperous 2018 for Meetings

NEW YORK, NY — The meetings and events industry can be optimistic about growth prospects next year, driven by increased competition in the supply chain for market share, and robust investments and a desire for consolidation of spend by buyers, according to the 2018 Global Meetings and Events Forecast from American Express Meetings & Events. Across the globe, the continued localization of meetings programs will be a key trend next year, as meeting professionals seek to add flexibility and nuance to offerings that address specific market needs and drive program adoption. The link between compliance and security in today's geopolitical landscape is another area of focus, with a special section on corporate meetings in China. Technology is expected to continue its transformation of meetings and events in 2018, particularly on the end-to-end management of delivery and attendee experience. The potential of emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI), and the ongoing development of mobile-app and hybrid-meeting solutions are creating value-add opportunities for meeting owners and attendees.

"Next year should be more positive...in terms of spend, number of meetings and attendees. Meanwhile, meeting owners are prioritizing attendee experience and engagement over scale," said Issa Jouaneh, S.V.P., GM, AmEx M&E. www.amex-globalbusinesstravel.com/meetings-and-events

Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa Reveals Renovated Guest Rooms

SANTA ANA PUEBLO, NM — Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, a luxury resort located on the Santa Ana Pueblo, near Albuquerque New Mexico, announced the completion of a multimillion-dollar guest room renovation, reflecting the surrounding Southwestern landscape. The renovation included new Hyatt Euro Pillowtop Posturepedic beds, lounge and desk chairs, new carpet, convenience outlets with direct USB charging, light dimmers and more. The renovation also includes authentic Native American art pieces in each room as well as traditional Pueblo blankets draped as art fixtures on the walls.

The property features 29,000 sf of indoor and 25,000 sf of outdoor meeting space including the Tamaya Ballroom, a 12,000-sf space that can be partitioned into eight separate rooms, and the Wolf and Puma rooms, offering floor-to-ceiling windows that open directly to a patio with panoramic views of the Sandia Mountains and cottonwood forest. The property's Cottonwood Pavilion, nestled among the Rio Grande's cottonwood forest, creates a private and exclusive setting surrounded by nature. Outdoor venues include the Sunrise Amphitheatre, which features an unobstructed backdrop of the Sandia Mountains, and the House of the Hummingbird boasting a 7,500-foot lawn enclosed by a replica of Pueblo ruins. <https://tamaya.regency.hyatt.com>

Snapshots



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

1-4 Nearly 400 hospitality industry leaders, as well as Virginia Tech Hospitality and Tourism Management alumni, students and faculty attended a gala honoring Howard Feiertag's lifetime contribution to the hospitality and tourism industry. Feiertag, a CMP, Certified Hospitality Marketing Executive and a Certified Hotel Administrator, is currently on the faculty at Virginia Tech. The event was held November 2 at Hilton McLean Tysons Corner. **1** Bob Gilbert, CEO, Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International; Howard Feiertag; Kim Gilbert. **2** Jonathan T. Howe, senior and founding partner of Howe & Hutton; Rob Abraham; Harvey Grotsky, publisher, *Corporate & Incentive Travel*. **3** Harvey Grotsky; Roger Dow, CEO, U.S. Travel Association and gala master of ceremonies; Dave Nostrand, director of sales and marketing, Hilton McLean Tysons Corner. **4** Jonathan T. Howe and Howard Feiertag. **5 & 6** SITE Nite North America, one of the most popular events of IMEX America week, sold out with more than 1,200 attendees at the Brooklyn Bowl in Las Vegas. **7** C&IT Publisher Harvey Grotsky with Universal Orlando Resort's Kate Lochridge and Vince LaRuffa at IMEX America. **8** The IMEX run attracted more than 450 participants.

Credits: 5&6 Christie's Photographic Solutions, Las Vegas; 8 IMEX America

By Paul Ruby, CMP

The Importance of Celebrating Event Services

Event service professionals wear many hats. We juggle multiple events, find solutions, solve crises, brainstorm ideas and orchestrate multiple services on behalf of our clients every day — and that's all before breakfast. But it's often the little things service professionals do that keep planners returning to our hotels, venues and destinations.

Recognizing our impact on executing successful events and being true partners to meeting planners, we created a week to celebrate all that our colleagues across the U.S. and Canada do to keep the hospitality industry thriving! We are members of the Event Services Professionals Association (ESPA), representing services in convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs), convention centers, hotels, resorts and conference centers.

In 2010, ESPA launched National Celebrate Services Day. By 2013, we expanded to National Celebrate Services Week (NCSW), celebrated each year during the first week of August. We build camaraderie with each other and with our service

partners, educate people about ESPA and give back to our local communities. Some members plan single events, others celebrate all week long. But no matter how long or short the event, we always pull it off with panache — after all, we are experts at executing the best events.

This year, my hotel, the Sheraton Dallas, and the Dallas Convention & Visitors Bureau collected donations for people moving into new homes. Donations went to the Bridge Homeless Recovery Center, which helps residents get back on their feet with housing, employment and other services.

The conference services and catering team at the Fairmont Palliser in Calgary last year served a proper British-but-Alberta-inspired afternoon tea for families staying at the Ronald McDonald House.

The Importance of Event Services

Pulling off a successful event takes more than one person or department. It requires an interdisciplinary team that includes, at a minimum, the client, sales people, event service

professionals and service providers. This is a full-circle process and no participant can be successful without the others. Success comes from executing a flawless event.

"As a meeting planner, I can't stress enough the importance of service," said Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM, and manager of meetings and events/exhibits for Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in Kansas City, Missouri. "I depend greatly on convention and visitor bureau services, especially for my big annual convention. Equally important are my hotel services for other meetings/events. They become an extension of my staff."

For Sara Simkin, vice president of destination services for NYC & Company, participating in NCSW serves two purposes. It strengthens the bond between the city's destination marketing organization and its services partners, and offers an opportunity to collect donations, including school supplies and toiletries, for local charities.

“National Celebrate Services Week is...a means to **give back to the communities** we depend on to excel at our professions.”

partners, educate people about ESPA and give back to our local communities. Some members plan single events, others celebrate all week long. But no matter how long or short the event, we always pull it off with panache — after all, we are experts at executing the best events.

Create Memorable Events

The celebrations of ESPA members are limited only by their imagination. And what imaginations they have! There is a focus on community support, but members also plan networking receptions, lunches or outings to partake in their own local tourism.

Last year, the Northern Kentucky Convention and Visitors Bureau partnered with Build-A-Bear Workshop to make teddy bears that were then donated to the Kentucky Firefighters Association, which held its conference nearby. Firefighters con-



NYC & Company hosted its hotel and convention center services teams for an appreciation reception and community service activity. (Inset left) Destination Cleveland prepared meals for hot meal sites and youth centers. (Inset right) Meet Minneapolis and the city's Improvement District helped clean up the downtown.



NYC & Company has hosted NCSW events including an appreciation reception aboard a sailboat overlooking Manhattan, a winery tour that included teambuilding, and a reception at Rockefeller Center.

"A lot of the event accolades tend to go to the sales department with event services often overlooked," Simkin said. "Our goal is to promote all five boroughs of New York City, make the city easy to navigate and ultimately increase visitor attendance at meetings, conventions and trade shows. It's up to our service partners to help make a delegation's experience special. So we use NCSW as a combination of a thank you and appreciation, but it's also a chance for us to network with our partners and better serve them."

Time to Stop and Give Thanks

Suzanne Seder, CMP, director of convention services at the Tampa Convention Center, says NCSW is an opportunity to say thank you to people who serve guests 365 days a year.

"We get so busy with our day-to-day work with events, and

NCSW encourages us to celebrate and acknowledge our convention services managers," Seder said.

Her colleague Una Garvey, community relations director at the Tampa Convention Center, agrees. "Our CSMs are dedicated to the organization and the events we have here. No event is too big or too small for them. They all go above and beyond to provide people with an unforgettable experience."

For the past six years, the convention center and Visit Tampa Bay have partnered to solicit CSM nominations from hotels and service organizations across the city and then honor one winner from each location for outstanding service.

"We reach out to the entire community; we're really big on community involvement," Garvey said. "Tampa's a big city but a small town, and we love that and really don't want to lose that."

For ESPA members, NCSW is both a chance to celebrate our profession and a means to give back to the communities we depend on to excel at our professions. It's all about building community.

C&IT



Paul Ruby, CMP,

is Associate Director of Catering/Convention Services at Sheraton Dallas Hotel and current president of the Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA). ESPA is dedicated to elevating the event and convention services profession and to preparing members, through education and networking, for their pivotal role in innovative and successful event execution. For more information, visit www.espaonline.org.

By Jason Rudoy and Sydney Wolf

Trends in Attendee Communication

With the rise in technology and demand for creating exceptional corporate meetings and events, it's time to think differently about attendee communication. We had an opportunity to share some of our ideas on this subject at the TS Tech Summit and wanted to share some of the key takeaways with readers. Attendee communication needs to be at the core of every decision planners are making about an event. There are so many elements to consider for your event communication efforts — the demographics of your group, their level of tech savviness, the location of the program, your desired outcomes, and of course your budget. It's critical to have a strategic timeline built out for all of your communications pre-, during and post-event. To start — let's

A Word About Communication Technology

Before your event even begins, it's imperative to have your mobile strategy in place. There are so many technology options available, but the most important factor in choosing your tech system is to make sure it can all communicate — the mobile app needs to talk to your registration system, which needs to talk to the production tech used in your general session, and it all needs to talk to your attendees. Our skilled technologists can help connect all these things, and even suggest the technology that will best communicate with what you've already got in place.

During keynotes and breakout sessions, what are some ways you're engaging attendees and making them par-

“There are infinite ways to communicate with your event attendees, help them **evolve into event participants**, and drive the message of your brand or program home.”

try to shift the thinking from “attendee” to “participant.” Let's explore how we can involve and engage our participants at every step of an event:

Preconference Communication

It all starts with your registration page, which sets the tone for your meeting. Making sure you have all your social feeds set up, populated and linked to the registration page is key. Your email invite should easily link to the registration website, which seamlessly links to event information and ideally a portal for other registrants to connect. Once attendees are registered, don't stop communicating to them! For example, send them a message from the CEO thanking them for registering; create a video or email to expand on the conference theme; highlight the location, share more about event programs or optional activities; or send a “before you go” email with reminders about packing, arrivals and more.

ticipants rather than just attendees? Our clients love using Catchbox (the throwable microphone), polling apps built into their mobile apps, and many are starting to Facebook-Live bits of their keynotes rather than livestreaming or webcasting the full message. Others are extending the keynote message with a Facebook Live after the general session, back in the green room with a high-profile speaker or other emcee to get their additional views on the conference.

Onsite Communication During Events

Once attendees are onsite, let your imagination and communications creativity run wild! Capitalize on the various portals of entry related to event travel such as airport arrivals, motor coach transportation, hotel check-in, conference signage, etc. Think about it — if you've got attendees captive on a bus for 20 minutes from the airport to your hotel, are you playing a video loop welcoming them to the conference and reiterat-

ing the event messaging? What about the hotel room when they arrive — is there a package waiting for them on their bed, reinforcing your premier sponsor or inviting them to the welcome reception event? Think about how your event branding and signage has a welcoming and immersive effect on attendees when it's on banners, wrapped posts, escalator, stairs, etc.

Post-event Communication

After the conference or event is over, how do you keep the momentum of your message moving? Be sure to follow up with participants right away with a post-program survey. Maybe the completion of that survey will unlock a special discount for early registration for next year's event. Participants

love to see photos of your event, especially if they're included in the photos somewhere! Consider compiling a video highlight reel of your event — maybe its even crowdsourced photos from a social media contest or hashtag — and share widely on your social channels and in your post-event thank-you email. You also could

offer a photo- and document-sharing space on your mobile app or event website, and run a social media “memories contest” to keep the fun going.

As you can see, there are infinite ways to communicate with your event attendees, help them evolve into event participants, and drive the message of your brand or program home. What is your favorite way to engage your participants at an event?

C&IT



Jason Rudoy and Sydney Wolf

Jason Rudoy is the Director of Sales for metroConnections. He has more than 17 years of experience in the event planning industry, and has been with metroConnections for nearly 12 years. Sydney Wolf is the Event Sales Manager for metroConnections and has nearly 10 years of experience in the event planning industry, most of which she has spent growing her career at metroConnections. Jason and Sydney both speak nationally to groups about engaging event attendees and incorporating event technology into conferences and meetings. You can reach them both at info@metroconnections.com.

Enlighten UP!

New Learning Opportunities for Hot Topics and Meeting Planning Challenges of the Day

By Patrick Simms

With so many areas of meeting planning evolving, and some that remain underexplored, ongoing education is a must in the profession. Certificate programs such as the CMP and CMM provide tactical and strategic foundations, but beyond that, successful planners feel the need to stay current on a variety of topics through industry conferences, trade publications and informal discussions with colleagues.

Perhaps the most obvious example of an ever-evolving area is technology, where planners always can discover new meeting apps, social media tech-

niques, attendee survey tools and more. It's an area of planning that is central to the work of Judy Payne, CMP, director, meetings and travel at Grapevine, Texas-based GameStop.

Hot Topics

Technology is an educational focus for Payne, who tries to stay current on "the latest and greatest (tech tools) that make sense at our event and fit within our budget," she says. "We really focus on gamification, so we try to find apps that have that component. And we also look for something that's very hands on for the planner, so we can get in and

fine-tune it onsite when we want to add last-minute elements."

Also on her list of educational priorities is attendee engagement, which has been a hot topic in recent years. Meeting technology, whether it's a gamification app or a captivating AV setup, can certainly further the goal of keeping attendees immersed in an event. Payne cites Jeff Hurt, E.V.P., education and engagement at Velvet Chainsaw Consulting, as a favorite speaker in these areas. "He's very down-to-earth and welcoming, and very relatable," she says. "He talks about planning in a way that you can apply what he's say-

ing in your own events, with specific ideas and takeaways."

Technology and engagement are also educational priorities for Jennifer C. Squeglia, CMP, owner of Warwick, Rhode Island-based RLC Events Inc., and she adds two more to the list: F&B trends and contract negotiation. Squeglia finds that attending hotel companies' client events is especially helpful in learning about new approaches to F&B and entertainment. As to the latter topic, Squeglia says she "never stops learning" about contracts, despite having

nearly 18 years of experience as a corporate planner. Whether it's new clauses, new subtleties in existing clauses or instructive issues in negotiation, there is always more to learn, and Squeglia has found attorney Jonathan Howe of Howe & Hutton Ltd. to be among the best resources on the topic.

"Another big thing I've been learning about in the last couple years is crisis management," she adds. "It's just crazy what's going on in the world today, and it doesn't only affect international meetings."

"Security is now starting to become a big topic," confirms Shannon Guggenheim, CMP, vice president of meetings and events at Dallas, Texas-based EventLink International, "and I have not been to a lot of educational meetings or events for meeting planners that have even touched on that. I've actually written in the

Attendees consider the education program content offered at PCMA's 2017 Convening Leaders.

"The CMP program itself should ideally be updated to include more of today's experiential marketing requirements."

Ashely King, CMP
Senior Event Marketer, ServiceNow, Cumming, GA

Jennifer Squeglia
CMP, Owner
RLC Events Inc.
Warwick, RI



"I think the most valuable learning experiences we can have are from each other, sharing our experiences."

(post event) comments that we should have sessions on security, because I think the vast majority of meeting planners don't have any sort of plan in place."

This summer, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) introduced a new educational offering that effectively addresses Guggenheim's concern. Collaborating with the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4) at the University of Southern Mississippi, MPI has developed Emergency Preparedness for Meetings and Events, a six-hour certificate course. It promises to take a "deep dive into incident management strategies as needed for the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery from all-hazard emergency incidents," according to the course description. "Learners will be introduced to techniques to prevent and respond to extraordinary crimes, violence, terrorist attacks, natural disasters and ordinary incidents such as fights, or drunkenness to ensure the safety and security of all attendees, limit damage and restore services in the event of emergencies."

SITE + MPI Global Forum

The MPI Academy will present the course next January during the SITE + MPI Global Forum in Rome. The Global Forum itself is significant news for educationally minded planners, as it represents a new opportunity for members of both associations to learn and network together. Announced in March, the Soci-

ety for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) and Meeting Professional International partnership will bring a unique event to the Rome Cavalieri Waldorf Astoria, Rome, Italy, January 12-14. "This collaboration is just one example of our strategic priority to expand MPI educational offerings within Europe, and we

believe our members in the region will welcome the opportunity to learn and network alongside SITE members," said Paul Van Deventer, president and CEO of MPI, in a statement. There is also a certain logistical advantage for planners who are members of both associations. "By combining our otherwise competing events, we are making it easier for members to attend one event versus having to choose between two," added SITE CEO Kevin Hinton, CIS.

MPI + IACC Collaboration

In another new and valuable partnership, MPI and IACC will be collaborating over the next five years on educational and research initiatives. For example, this year MPI's World Education Congress (WEC) was the first of many MPI conferences that will be streamed live to IACC member venues. At WEC 2017, IACC CEO Mark Cooper presented on several timely topics: "Visioneering the Meeting Room of the Future," "Trends in Conference Dining, Breaks and Wellbeing" and "20 Innovations to Look for in a Venue."

"MPI and IACC have a long history of educational partnership," notes Kristi Casey Sanders, CMM, DES, HMCC, director of the MPI Academy. "Mark Cooper has been a speaker at MPI signature events for several years, and MPI has presented education at IACC events. MPI has also contributed content for IACC's Meeting Room of the Future global research and publication. The study was distributed to MPI Members, so their voices and viewpoints are reflected in the data. Some of our staff members also contributed anecdotal evidence. The research

was showcased in the 'Meeting Room of the Future' space at WEC 2017 and during concurrent sessions. The second set of research (was published) for IMEX America, during MPI's Smart Monday."

Sanders overviews the two sides to the partnership: "The education MPI presents at IACC events helps conference venue executives understand the mind of the meeting/event organizer. The sessions focus on best and next practices for how venues can drive better meeting and event ROI by focusing on relationship-building consultative rather than transactional sales approaches. We also help IACC members position themselves as educational resources and true partners for meeting and event organizers," she explains. Conversely, "IACC education at MPI events focuses on sharing best and next practices for how meeting professionals can leverage the relationships they have with conference venue representatives to plan meetings that are better aligned to achieving strategic business objectives." Apart from its recent involvement in WEC, IACC will be participating in the following educational webinars: Internet Considerations, September 14; Meeting Experiences, October 19; and Under the Skin of Small Venue Types, December 7 (each takes place at noon Eastern time).

Remote Learning

Livestreaming and webinars are



Kristi Casey Sanders
CMM, DES, HMCC
Director, MPI Academy
Meeting Professionals
International
Dallas, TX

"The education MPI presents at IACC events helps conference venue executives understand the mind of the meeting/event organizer."



Credits: Orange Photography

2017 MPI-WEC attendees learned about the new Emergency Preparedness for Meetings and Events certificate course.

handy educational mediums for planners who can't attend the face-to-face events. For instance, the WEC unfortunately conflicts with GameStop's annual conference, but Payne has found opportunities to participate in MPI's webinars. "It's easy to listen to them at your desk and also get some work done," she says. "Of course, you miss the networking component and really being able to focus on what's going on, but when I can't attend in person I really like the webinars."

She has been able to physically attend PCMA Convening Leaders, however, and finds value in having her four-planner team at GameStop participate. "That's been something that I've fought for with my company since I've been there, because we all need education in different elements. So if you handle registration, then you normally select the registration meetings or housing sessions, for example. Another person on my team runs our sponsorships, so she always tries to attend the vendor ROI sessions," Payne explains.

Payne personally avoids those sessions where the presenter is likely to be commercially motivated: "I look at who's speaking. For example, if it's a session about the newest and greatest apps, and it's an app company that's presenting, I won't go because normally it's a sales pitch for the things that they offer. So I'm going to get a very one-sided approach." After the team splits up to attend the most relevant sessions individually, "we'll huddle each day and talk about our takeaways and see how we can apply those different elements to our event," she says. "We try to take away



three to five great things from PCMA that we can apply at our events."

Networking

Yet the most important part of attending Convening Leaders is the networking, Payne asserts, "because nowhere can you find as many different city hosts in one location than at one of

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



"We try to take away three to five great things from PCMA that we can apply at our events."

these annual events." As far as networking with other corporate end users, she focuses on connecting with other retail companies to learn from their challenges and successes in the meetings arena. Well-established professional networks, whether established through association membership or other means, serve as a major touchstone for ongoing learning.

"I tend to seek educational resources via LinkedIn discussion groups, such as event planning and management, and experiential marketing," remarks Ashely King, CMP, senior event marketer with

Santa Clara, California-based ServiceNow. "I also highly value educational associations such as Corporate Event Marketing Association. I believe having access to a network for brainstorming and/or sharing contacts is a necessity for success. CEMA has an 'ask CEMA' email communication where a question can be posed to the community for feedback. The variety of responses received is typically enlightening."

"I think the most valuable learning experiences we can have are from each other, sharing our experiences with technology or a particular hotel or attendee engagement," Squeglia adds. "For me it's really important to be part of a network and engage in that network; don't just contact people when you need something." She is part of an informal group consisting of eight independent meeting planners who "meet two or three times a year to share ideas

and brainstorm, and discuss challenges unique to independent planners. We really do help each other; if somebody has a question they'll put an email out to the group." In addition, Squeglia stays in touch with the study group for her Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) exam, which she took in 2001.

The Value of a CMP

"I definitely knew that having a CMP after my name would set me apart," Squeglia recalls. That career benefit has made many planners advocates of the program. According to Payne, holding the designation "shows that I've done my due diligence and made my commitment to the industry." Guggenheim, who previously served as a lead planner at Apple, observes that "There are several companies out there that will offer you a pay raise or higher title if you have a CMP. In the corporate world, especially an internal meeting planner for a big company, basically you stand out from every other meeting planner that is trying to apply."

As far as the educational benefit of the program, it varies depending on how



Face-to-face networking at industry shows such as IMEX America expands professional relationships and augments ongoing learning.

Credit: IMEX America

planners hold the CMP, the CMM program has been making strides. In January, the certificate was awarded to 37 meeting and travel professionals from the CMM 2016 class in Norfolk, Virginia. There are now 1,185 CMM

holders worldwide. much experience in the field the planner already has. "When I did CMP, I had been in the industry for a while; people that hadn't been in it as long as me would probably gain a little bit more," says Guggenheim, who recertified last year. "At the time in Apple I was not doing trade shows, and there was a whole section on trade shows (in the CMP course) that we had to learn. So that piece was valuable; after Apple I ended up going to a company that does trade shows, and had I not done that CMP, I may not have been as familiar with the terminology. So there were pieces that were valuable to me at the time, and I didn't realize it until later in my career."

Payne found it especially helpful that the course "pulled together all the APEX terminology," among other terminology and formulas. With the evolving nature of many areas in planning, its certificate programs also need updating. One example is the inclusion of the Event Industry Council's APEX terminology, which did not exist when the CMP was founded in 1985. As it stands, "the CMP program itself should ideally be updated to include more of today's experiential marketing requirements," King feels, "given the demands of a meeting planner than exceed basic logistical management."

CMMs and More

The content of the Certificate in Meeting Management (CMM) program, offered by MPI and the GBTA Foundation, is less logistical and more focused on event strategy and executive-level decision-making. Although far more

MPI continues to add specialized certificate programs to its educational offerings, including the aforementioned Emergency Preparedness for Meetings and Events Certificate, Healthcare Meeting Compliance Certificate, Sustainable Meeting Professional Certificate, Meetings & Events at Sea Certificate, and several more. While these courses are surely addressing many planners' educational interests, some believe that their career value should be put in perspective.

"I think you should have your CMP or CMM before you go off and become, for example, green meetings certified," says



Shannon Guggenheim
CMP, Vice President
Meetings and Events
EventLink International
Dallas, TX

"Showing you can do whatever you're certified for ranks higher to me than saying you were able to pass a test."

Payne. "If you're green meeting certified but don't have the knowledge to plan a large-scale event, then it doesn't help you that much." As far as the weight these specific designations have in the job market, Guggenheim is skeptical. "Big companies are looking for a meeting planner and maybe one with a CMP, and that's about it. I think it would take

a specific company and a specific job to really have any of those certifications seem valuable," she explains.

Experience and Mentorship

More valuable than any certificate course, Guggenheim maintains, is "real-life experience. Showing you can do whatever you're certified for ranks higher to me than saying you were able to pass a test. So while I do think certification is important, I don't think that people that only try to go after the certification are as knowledgeable as planners that have worked in the field doing meetings every day."

And that includes learning from those who are planning in real time. An on-the-job mentor, for Guggenheim, was "career changing." Early on she benefited from two planners who allowed her to "shadow" their daily processes, from personal organization to the beginning-to-end planning of particular events.

For Payne, "60 percent of learning has been on the job," and as a young planner for IAEE (International Association of Exhibitions and Events) she benefited from the mentorship of Cathy Breden, CMP, CAE, currently IAEE's executive vice president and chief operating officer. "She knows the industry like nobody else. Just being on that team I learned so much. Being a planner for planners is like cooking for chefs. You have to be at the top of your game," Payne recalls.

Now, as the lead planner at GameStop, Payne is available as a mentor to her team members. In addition to pearls of planning wisdom, she imparts advice on how to gain recognition in the company as an events expert.

"Have a voice and don't be afraid to speak your mind," she says. "We tend to be in all the planning meetings with the executives, and we have to be in the front line to help guide the event to make sure that in the end it is successful. So have confidence in your knowledge: This is what we should do and this is why, and this is how we're going to move forward." Unlike "hot topics" in education that can come and go, it is perennially valuable for planners to learn that assertiveness in the corporate environment. **C&IT**



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Teambuilding



Driver safety company SkillsDriving offers several teambuilding programs, including the NASCAR Pit Crew Challenge shown here and opposite.

Building Better Corporate Teams

Corporations and other organizations have used teambuilding for years. The goal is not always the same but in general the idea has been to bond members of the same department, such as a sales department, in order to increase productivity; to bond employees across departments to strengthen the entire company or to increase cooperation and production between departments; or to bring far-flung members of a national or global organization together so they might work better in the future after developing a relationship face-to-face.

Teambuilding can help break the ice and build trust among employee groups and can create better leadership as well as give managers and C-suite executives

a better working relationship with the employees who report to them.

The one overriding goal is that teambuilding should positively affect a company's bottom line and/or culture when all is said and done.

How best to make that happen is up for debate. There are many options available for organizations to consider. Exercises based solely on competition have long been popular, and given that competitive drive is important for a successful salesforce, that seems like a good way to go.

Today, however, experts have come to understand that it's not competition that produces optimum results; rather, it's a challenge in which team members work together to successfully solve a

problem. Yes, teams can still compete against one another in that challenge, but it's the cooperation and collaboration piece, the working together toward a common goal, that actually produces the desired effects.

Even with cooperative problem-solving as the means, the options for corporations to consider are hugely diverse. Finding the ideal teambuilding product may depend on the makeup of a company, what industry it's in, what the specific goals are, how many people are taking part in the exercise and other factors.

Here are four examples of teambuilding programs that have been successfully used by corporations. Maybe one of them is just right for your organization or client. At the very least,

these creative companies prove that the path to teambuilding success is as varied as the corporate landscape itself — and presents many intriguing twists and turns along the way.

Pit Crew Challenge

Fort Worth Texas-based SkillsDriving provides driver safety courses throughout the United States and around the world. The company also offers several teambuilding programs, including the NASCAR Pit Crew Challenge, which can take place anywhere in the United States — in ballrooms, parking lots or even an office atrium.

In this challenge, corporate teams work on a real NASCAR vehicle. Together, they must effectively communicate and interact to determine the quickest, most efficient way to carry out a pit stop. One critical element: Deciding which team members should be placed in which positions for optimum positive benefit — as important in the workplace as on a pit crew.

"SkillsDriving has been involved with all aspects of motorsports adventures since 2004," says Dawn Stokes, owner/CEO. "We knew there was a direct cor-

Trivia

relation between running an efficient and well-oiled corporate sales team and a race team. Communication is key!"

Stokes says group size is limited only by space and the availability of cars. "Our typical group is 12-50 for an intimate and formalized experience; but

Escape Rooms

we have done groups of up to 1,000 for pure head-to-head competition."

Rock Bands

While all ages and genders do well with the Pit Crew Challenge, Stokes says there are differences in approach. "Women generally listen better (sorry guys) and attack the project with more trepidation — asking a lot of questions. Men typically dig right in. They'll get the job done, no matter what, but they usually pull back and start refining their processes after a few trials."

Race Cars

All Produce Results

By Christine Loomis

The great thing about this challenge is that all participants are equal. "Everyone is terrible at it — at first," says Stokes. "It is

a cerebral challenge, a physical challenge and, the best part, an unknown challenge. Since no one has the experience to perform the challenge, it immediately levels the playing field of rank within the company, age, sex, tenure, etc. Everyone is literally in the same boat, with no advantages."

As a team, they then grow together. "It is usually very surprising to all involved as to how the team successfully navigates through the challenge. The teams progress very quickly in improving their communication and skills and putting the right people with the right task," Stokes notes. "It's fun to see them cut their times in half from the first run to the third run. Just imagine if they could improve their work goals two times by increasing their communication and idea flows?"

Stokes points to another interesting aspect of the challenge: The chosen team leader does not always end up being the actual leader. "We ask that each team select a captain, but very quickly, the team starts to take ownership of the goal together and 'leaders' pop out immediately — not necessarily the one the team originally selected."

In the beginning of the challenge, coaches deliberately give very little direction but do provide tips and tricks along the way. While this seems like the antithesis of promoting good communication, a critical element of the challenge, Stokes says the opposite is true because team members have to interact and ask questions.

"We have become reliant upon email, texting, everything electronic," she says.



The Pit Crew Challenge "forces verbal communication and the ability to ask great questions. In our fast-paced world, we do not do a good job with either of those important skills."

Dawn Stokes
Owner/CEO, SkillsDriving
Fort Worth, TX





Credit: Super Duper Photographic

with immediate results!" skillsdriving.com

TrivWorks

Who doesn't love trivia? It's popular with all ages and generations, as can be seen in the multitude of trivia nights in bars across the country. New York- and California-based TrivWorks has taken this popular experience out of the bars and into boardrooms and corporate meetings, with a goal of fostering communication and bonding among diverse groups of employees.



"This exercise forces verbal communication and the ability to ask great questions. In our fast-paced world, we do not do a good job with either of those important skills."

At the end of the day, the group reviews how the teams began, how they were able to improve and how this behavior parlays into company success. "It is a very cool way to connect the dots by rewarding behavior by changing a tire!" Stokes says.

Not surprising, the list of corporate groups that have participated in team-building with SkillsDriving is impressive, including Amazon, Dell, Walmart, Citibank, Deloitte, American Airlines and small organizations to large universities.

"Pit Crew Challenge has been extremely successful with corporate groups," Stokes says, "because people really do enjoy interacting with other people and teams love seeing growth. This exercise exposes the positives of true teamwork

David Jacobson
Founder
TrivWorks
New York and California



"Trivia teambuilding naturally promotes communication, collaboration and teamwork."

and get to know colleagues, assist in the onboarding of new hires or summer interns or simply to boost morale."

TrivWorks recently partnered with Know Your Crew to extend the experience beyond the one-time event. "Whereas most teambuilding experiences are limited to the event itself, our partnership with Know Your Crew and its app allows teams to extend the engagement before and after events. By employing digital technology to engage our clients prior to and after a highly enjoyable trivia teambuilding event, we can offer a fun and easy way to get colleagues pumped for what's coming as well as to continue getting to know one another after the event has concluded," Jacobson says.

Given how different the employee makeup of each company can be with respect to gender, age and ethnicity, teambuilding experts have to be nimble enough and offer enough customization to create success regardless of the specific audience.

"What I love about using trivia as a teambuilding activity is that there are so many ways to customize the experience," Jacobson notes. "One way we do that is by ensuring the questions are appropriate for everybody in attendance, regardless of age, gender, country or origin, etc. Through a concise customization call developed over years of doing this, we can quickly get all of the information we need to tailor the experience, without asking the client to dedicate significant time or resources. The result is an incredibly inclusive experience, where everybody in the room is highly engaged and participating.

"Customizing the experience means not only personalized/tailored trivia questions, but being thoughtful about how we break the teams down in advance, so that people get the most out of the experience," Jacobson adds. "Most clients who want a teambuilding event seek to mix folks up from the groups they usually associate with. We help them with ongoing counsel about who to put on which team, ensuring there's a good mix of groups/departments and also a perfect balance of age ranges as well. This is particularly important for

pop culture questions — not only so that younger players get the 'younger' questions and older ones get the 'older' questions, but so that these different generations discover how much they actually have in common through shared knowledge of pop culture."

Gender, Jacobson says, plays no real role in how players approach a trivia challenge. "Both men and women have a healthy competitive drive and want to win equally. Where the difference comes in is how we prepare the event. The questions are always customized for the intended audience; we want to make sure we are asking the most appropriate trivia questions for the room. The key is to strike a healthy balance, so that everybody feels like the event is for them, that they have a chance to shine and don't feel left out." www.trivworks.com

Puzzle Break

At the 2017 Meeting Professionals International World Education Congress (MPI-WEC), attendees could sign up to learn more about Seattle-based Puzzle Break and its teambuilding events, which involve an escape room. Participants are "trapped" in the room until they can discover clues, solve the puzzles, decode the locks and escape. They can only do this by working together.

Jessie States, CMM, manger of professional development at MPI, says, "The session included a short introduction to the concept of escape rooms as teambuilding exercises followed by a 50-minute immersive escape room experience — a police department trying to solve a crime. It was very well received. Most dissatisfaction came from the fact that the time frame just wasn't long enough for some of the teams to finish."

Nate Martin, co-founder and CEO of Puzzle Break, was on hand for the MPI experience. He explains how escape-room teambuilding works. "Puzzle Break games task groups of players with finding clues, solving puzzles and unraveling a mystery before time runs out, typically about an hour. Participants face mental challenges of all varieties, specifically designed to appeal to different types of brains and group sizes."

"Puzzle Break games task groups of players with finding clues, solving puzzles and unraveling a mystery before time runs out."

Nate Martin
Co-founder/CEO
Puzzle Break
Seattle, WA



Credit: Puzzle Break

Seattle-based Puzzle Break challenges corporate teams with an escape room activity.

He says small games can work with as few as two players, and large rooms accommodate up to 15. "Additionally, we have created several large-scale experiences that we can bring to offsite events for up to hundreds of simultaneous players."

Martin calls Puzzle Break the ultimate marriage of two supremely important requirements for a successful teambuilding activity: First, it's an experience where groups work together using their brains to overcome an obstacle. Second, it's fun and memorable. "There are tons of popular group activities that check one of those boxes," he says. "We're proud to excel at both."

Interestingly, Martin points to a challenge in Puzzle Break events that has little to do with Puzzle Break itself and much to do with corporate culture. "Perhaps the biggest challenge is one of our greatest value propositions: the boss is just one member of a Puzzle Break team. It can be very difficult for leaders to step back and take an equal role in the adventure, and equally difficult for folks to

treat their boss like any member of the team. Overcoming these challenges is crucial to long-term team success."

Martin says Puzzle Break's large-scale, offsite games are frequently used by international companies when they bring their global distribution teams together, many of whom have never met in person. "The escape room activity is also very popular with large technology companies," he adds.

The MPI-WEC experience garnered rave reviews among planners and others, including these:

"Loved this session and didn't want to stop! I want to do this with my employees and at conferences."

"Best experience of the conference. Every group was actively engaging with one another. Fantastic!" www.puzzlebreak.com

Team Rock Stars

At some point, most of us have wanted to be a rock star. We played air guitar. We sang along (loudly) with our favorite rock bands. We were "creative" with

lyrics. Who knew that could become part of a successful teambuilding activity — one that serendipitously also provides that entertainment wow factor for a meeting?

Team Rock Stars has figured it out. Here's how it works. Participants are grouped into "bands," and each band is assigned a celebrity rock star to coach them through the experience. The participants collectively rewrite the lyrics to a hit song — ideally the lyrics relate to relevant issues facing their company or the industry. Like a real band, they choose a name, rehearse and choreograph their upcoming performance, which takes place in front of their colleagues.

The experience can be wholly customized based on the makeup of the group. Team Rock Stars has experience with C-suite and senior leadership, business units or groups, sales recognition and incentive reward events, brand enhancement, customer recognition and engagement and more.

Rocking out, it turns out, can work with any group.

Paul Caine, co-owner of Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy Camp and founder/CEO PC

"Team Rock Stars helps groups reinvent themselves with a passion to innovate together."

Paul Caine

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

Ventures, believes this approach works for a number of reasons. "Most leaders have a high sense of urgency to get things done. An immersive action-oriented style of learning makes the most sense to hold their interest. Additionally, amazing team synergy is created as the celebrity rock coaches engage the team to jam, write, record and perform. And each team member can influence the team's outcomes and champion change to transform the team during the onstage performance. Trust gets



A Team Rock Stars participant rocks an onstage performance with Roger Daltrey, lead singer of The Who.

Credit: Team Rock Stars

built, collaboration increases and innovation is encouraged."

Caine points out that breakthroughs in productivity at the workplace often come from that same kind of motivation among teams with a collective purpose.

"The Team Rock Stars champions authentic and meaningful messages that have a call to action to strengthen the organization," he says. "Team Rock Stars helps groups reinvent themselves with a passion to innovate together. They identify with the team themes, discover new ways to contribute to the team and have cool song lyrics with a real band ready to perform in a few hours. The music mentors' coaching inspires change within the team and gives participants the courage to give a moving performance at the event — and back on the job. Cross-functional teams immediately begin connecting at a whole new level of communication to share information and resources after the Team Rock Stars."

ROI is demonstrated in a number of ways, according to Caine. "First, in the talent of those who participate in the experience and are then highly motivated to collaborate with their peers. There's also the extensive professional and personal videos, photos and social media by participants generated from the Team Rock Stars, which provide the demonstrated results of an organizational shift in a positive direction the stakeholders (corporate leadership) wanted delivered.

The extended life of the organizational messages lives on within the people and culture. This process can unleash a new entrepreneurial spirit throughout the company measured by new products and services developed from these business teams."

Team Rock Stars can integrate with any theme or strategic focus of a conference. Caine notes that establishing a meaningful conference theme can be a challenge for company executives, and Team Rock Stars helps with that as well.

"The Team Rock Stars leader behaviors are an important part of helping clients identify the leader behaviors they want to emphasize most for their conference or meeting. The more leader behaviors they have articulated in front of them, the easier it is for leaders to build their thoughts on what is important to them in their organization. The shaping of a core leadership theme for an annual conference anchors the strategic direction for the company, so it needs to be on target with an engaging message."

Caines says themes have run the gamut from leading change and inspiring business growth to culture shifts and merger integration transitions. Whatever the theme, it seems that music and mentorship together can make it happen. rockcamp.com/corporate-programs **C&IT**

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The Art of Scrimping and Saving on Everything — Except the Attendee Experience

By Patrick Simms

Faced with rising costs due to both seller's market conditions and inflation, many planners have had to ramp up their resourcefulness when it comes to budgeting. But it can take more than financial savvy to handle the challenges, as planners do not make their decisions in a vacuum. They must answer to the stakeholders that ultimately oversee meeting spend.

And when either significant cost cutting or budget increases are needed, planners may be in the position of explaining the situation to upper management. Conveying the budgetary challenges while assuring executives that the company can still manage to put on a cost-effective, quality event calls for strong communication skills. And if disagreements arise over how to meet those challenges, diplomatic skills also come into play.

An IBM conference attendee experiences the cognitive computing power of a Watson-powered robot.



"Every single budget decision we make is about the attendee; will it enhance the attendee experience? If the answer is no, we're not going to do it."

Colleen Bisconti, V.P. Global Conferences and Events, IBM, Costa Mesa, CA



"Costs are going up — costs for rooms, service charges, F&B — and we have to manage to those numbers. We try to build in a 5 percent increase each year, which is always met with resistance," says Sharon L. Schenk, CMP, director of conventions and event management for Manchester, New Hampshire-based CCA Global Partners, a cooperative company.

"The most important factor for us in spending and cutting money is the experience for the participants."

Sharon L. Schenk, CMP, Director of Conventions & Event Management
CCA Global Partners, Manchester, NH



Many of the CCA executives have been with the company for decades and have seen their share of cost increases for the conventions, which are held twice annually for Carpet One Floor & Home and Flooring America, respectively. "So they're pretty sophisticated and they do understand, yet at the same time, they expect us to negotiate and be more frugal," says Schenk. "I can explain that this is what's happening with the seller's market or with airfare, and the answer is, 'Well, we've got to find a way to cut. Come back with some ideas.'"

An Education Process

The dialogue can be similar for third-party planners conveying budgetary challenges to their clients. "It's an education process that we're going through with our clients," says Teri Abram, president of Dallas, Texas-based EventLink International. "We need to make them aware that they not only need to start booking sooner and looking ahead, but that line items, particularly hotel and F&B costs, are going up." The response can be an approval to expand the budget, or a call to "get creative" with the same budget, Abram says.



As Schenk mentions, sometimes a planner may have to explain how seller's market conditions have driven up costs. Beth Becker, global meeting services manager for Downers Grove, Illinois-based MicroTek, sees that

factor as underlying many of the cost escalations. "It's not so much an increase in rates as it is the greater difficulty in negotiating those rates down," she says.

"It's also becoming more difficult to negotiate meeting room rental fees down or out altogether. We used to have a standard where we didn't pay those fees because we were going

to provide F&B and room block, etc., but in key cities it's becoming more difficult (to avoid paying the fee)." Overall, she has found clients "pretty understanding" of cost increases resulting from the negotiating climate. "They know that we're out there working on their behalf and as their experts, if you will. And we try to work with them to provide creative solutions," she explains.

Site Selection

As opposed to trying to whittle down line item costs, the savings strategy can be based on the big picture of when and where the meeting is booked. Perhaps date flexibility can allow the group to achieve lower rates from a hotelier, or perhaps the site can be moved from a first-tier downtown to a suburban location to similar effect. Large meetings in some cases can be broken up and regionalized to reduce travel costs.

"You may not have the budget to...do all the things you might want to do, but sometimes if you just have staff that's greeting them and helping them and making sure that their experience is easy, that goes a long way."

Teri Abram, President
EventLink International, Dallas, TX

"We have a client that was looking to do an enterprise-wide training, so they were bringing in all of their employees in waves in order to train them, and we looked at how can we break that down

and move that training more regionally," Becker describes. "And the end result was several million dollars in savings. So you can see significant savings when you're involved in a program at that beginning phase. Once it's been settled and you have to move these people into this one location, then it becomes a little trickier."

But even in that situation, there are plenty of potential cost-saving measures. For example, ground transportation costs can be pared down by working with the right partner. "We look for companies that will help us to coordinate the pickup (so as to) reduce those costs, when to send buses and how many people we can pick up at once."

Working closely with the hotel also can accrue savings, and for that reason, Becker finds relationships with individual properties especially valuable. "Knowing the (hotel) people on a personal basis certainly helps us. Many times we'll work directly with the AV people or with the chef to talk about recommendations they might have to help us cut costs," she says. Schenk gives a few examples along those lines: "Maybe we don't offer soft drinks on the breaks. Or we try to consolidate our breakout rooms so that we don't have to add more AV."

Don't Scrimp on the Experience

The guiding principle for any cost-saving strategy should be to preserve the quality of the experience for the

attendees, because that is the basis for ROI. It makes little sense to reduce the investment if one is also significantly reducing the return on that investment, i.e., the desired impact on participants.

"The most important factor for us in spending and cutting money is the experience for the participants," Schenk asserts. "Our members are the bread and butter of our organization. If we have unhappy members, our membership drops, our revenue drops and our reputation suffers. They're all entrepreneurs, and they leave their stores for two to four days and spend money to come to the convention. They need to be able to look back and say, 'That was worth my time and money.'"

The importance of the attendee experience is not only observed when making budget cuts; it leads to an expanded meetings budget at many companies, including one of the world's most venerable technology firms.

"We've seen the biggest jump in our budget (due to) the attendee experience," says Colleen Bisconti, vice president, global conferences and events for IBM. A major investment in that experience will certainly be made for IBM's inaugural Think 2018, a global business and technology event expected to draw about 40,000 attendees this March in Las Vegas.

What Would Watson Do?

Immersive experiences in particular will be integral to the show's success. "We actually immerse attendees inside the technology through what we call 'activations,' and those are much more expensive to build than a typical expo hall," Bisconti explains. "In the past, if you were going to showcase any kind of IBM software, it would be a pedestal or some kind of table with either a large screen or a laptop where a subject matter expert would show people a demo. Now, for example, we have a photo booth where you actually go in and engage with Watson (IBM's cognitive system), so you understand the value and the power of Watson, not because somebody's telling you about it."

IBM also has invested in enhancing its conference app, also an important aspect to today's attendee experience. "It used to be that we produced a daily newspaper (on the conference) in addition to the app. We did away with the

newspaper, which was a significant savings, and we put (the savings) toward the app to make sure we are integrating Watson in a meaningful way," says Bisconti. "We've seen an increase in app usage over the years, and the app's gotten so robust that people don't need the newspaper anymore."

Abram has seen a great deal more of her clients expanding their budget for apps. "I would say probably 90 percent of our groups want an app, and this has just been within the last year; before that it was about 60-70 percent," she says. "They want some sort of polling in their general session. The good thing is that there are some tools out there that don't completely blow your budget. I see that area getting bigger, and as technology gets better, oftentimes costs drop."

When Bisconti's team wanted to integrate virtual reality technology to augment the participant experience, a little engagement with procurement was needed. "I didn't think any of our existing vendors could deliver, so we went to procurement, which opens up a bid," she relates.

IBM's Budgeting Process

The overall budgeting process takes her team six to nine months, with weekly "state of the budget" meetings. For Think, the process began with building a business case for the C suite. "We looked at what revenues we expected and what expenses we expected to incur, and came up with what the event's net cost to IBM would be. I first present the case to the CFO, and then to my boss, who is the CMO," Bisconti says. "And then as you go through the planning process, things come up. Maybe a speaker is more expensive than we thought, and we adjust that amount with an internal dialogue with the CMO; I only bring things to her that I think are absolutely necessary. And every single budget decision we make is about the attendee; will it enhance the attendee experience? If the answer to that is no, we're not going to do it."

Naturally, there are occasionally disagreements among Bisconti's team and



IBM is allocating more of its conference budget to immersive, interactive experiences, including opportunities to engage with the "Watson" computer system.

other IBM stakeholders about how to allocate spend, including V.P.s of marketing across the business. "Oftentimes it's because one of my peers is passionate about the part of the business that they own, and so they don't think they're getting enough coverage, or getting enough sessions," she explains.

But the process to resolve these disagreements is a systematic, diplomatic one. "We work it out by having a dialogue. I also have a steering committee with representatives from all different parts of the business, and if there is ever an impasse, it goes to the steering committee meeting, and we talk it out there. And if we as a committee are not able to agree, or even agree to disagree, it would go up to our CMO again, although that has never happened."

What's Everyone Else Doing?

One way to make a case for expanding a certain area of the budget is to bring some data to the table about how similar events are benefiting from that kind of investment. For instance, a planner on the EventLink team recently was trying to convince a medical client to increase their F&B budget, Abram relates:

"We went through the attendee experience with them and what some of their competitive conferences are doing (in terms of F&B). We do that a lot actually, even sometimes with internal meetings if we're fortunate enough to have access to information that might be online about what competitors are doing. We don't want to copy competitors, but we certainly want to make sure attendees are getting the right experience," says Abram.

Ultimately, the client agreed to increase the F&B budget by trimming some of the AV costs. "We talked about what they did and didn't need (as far as AV), and were able to find some budget by going through that piece."

Abram finds that dealing with procurement departments on spend management "can be a little tougher. I think

they're often under very strict guidelines and don't have the ability to change those as much as a C-level executive might. Procurement definitely has their preferred suppliers, although sometimes we can get new ones through."

It also should be noted that improving the attendee experience need not strain the budget, and such cost-effective ideas will certainly appeal to the C suite. "Sometimes it's just the little things," says Abram. "You may not have the budget to give them all great gifts and do all the things you might want to do, but sometimes if you just have staff that's greeting them and helping them and making sure that their experience is easy, that goes a long way."

Bringing on CVB volunteers, for ex-

ample, is a cost-effective way to achieve this goal. Attendees also appreciate networking more than ever, and that usually can be facilitated with minimal investment. "It seems to be very consistent on surveys that what attendees want most is networking time, so we would likely continue to recommend to the client, let's do 30 minutes here; it's not going to cost you much," Abram says.

Becker also sometimes finds herself in the role of a consultant on spend. "There have certainly been times when we've had to advise a client that we didn't feel their directions or the decisions were going to support their objectives as well as some other approach would," she says.

"Knowing the (hotel) people on a personal basis certainly helps us. Many times we'll work directly with the AV people or with the chef to talk about recommendations they might have to help us cut costs."



Beth Becker, Global Meeting Services Manager
MicroTek, Downers Grove, IL

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"Some clients want to do matchmaking, and we might do various receptions that might require different venues, so it can create need for budget."

Consultant to the C Suite

While all planners have some degree of autonomy on fund allocation with respect to the attendee experience, they are sometimes in the role of a consultant to senior management and their ideas. "I've had executives tell me we want to hire this particular speaker or entertainer, and I'm the one that has to tell them we don't have the budget," says Schenk. "This is the approved bud-

get that you've given me to work with; where do you want me to cut? It's kind of a back and forth thing. I have been able to convince them to spend a little more money, and I've tried to convince them to spend less money sometimes." For CCA Global Partners' incentive programs, it's typical for Schenk to be on conference calls with the CEO, CFO and COO. "We all dialogue the potential off-site events and gifts, etc.," she says.

As Schenk puts it, the meeting budget is a "living, breathing thing," even after it is submitted and approved by upper management. Various stakeholders propose new ideas as the event date draws near, and her team must evaluate those ideas and associated expenses in light of the overall budget. Indeed, the art of budgeting is not one that the planner practices in a silo; it is closely tied to the art of collaboration and diplomacy.

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Reducing Event Liability Risk

Experts Weigh in on Critical and New Legal Pitfalls, From Event Security to Marijuana

By John Buchanan

When legal issues impose themselves on meetings and events, rarely do they go to court. Instead, they are resolved by negotiations between the parties. That means that the clarity and due diligence applied to the issues beforehand, especially as they are reflected in contracts, will be the determining factor in who wins and who loses. And in the end, disputes are not remembered as legal issues. They come down to dollars and cents in terms of liability.

That's why it is critical, expert attorneys say, for meeting planners to assess the implications of the decisions they make.

The Big Risks Today

Joshua Grimes, a Philadelphia attorney who specializes in meeting-related legal issues, cites event security and the minimization of risks as the single most important topic of current discussion.

"What many meeting hosts and planners need to acknowledge is that they need to be more careful in planning for potential risks," Grimes says. "And by that I mean not just hurricanes or somebody

with a gun, but the full range of the things that could happen."

And related to that planning, he adds, is the importance of making sure you have the proper insurance coverage in place for your event and that it covers everyone involved in the meeting. "In addition to that, you need to acknowledge that if something happens, it is very likely that all parties involved in the planning of the meeting will be sued," he says. "That means you also need to be prepared to handle that."

The best current example of such risk is the October 1 Las Vegas shooting from Mandalay Bay into an outdoor crowd.

"The hotel has been sued," Grimes says. "The concert organizer has been sued. And my understanding is that the security company has been sued. So all of those parties are facing major legal liabilities. And meeting plan-

ners need to understand they face the same kind of potential exposure every time they hold a meeting."

Unfortunately, Grimes says, not all meeting planners comprehend the full range of the legal risks they face in planning an event. "In today's world, a meeting host and planner have to plan for every conceivable contingency — and have insurance coverage in place to protect themselves. And you need

more than just general liability insurance. You need alcohol liability coverage, professional liability coverage, auto coverage if anyone will be driving a car during the meeting. And one thing I see often is that meeting planners do not adequately insure their meetings. One example of that is that they do not thoroughly describe to their insurance brokers everything that will be going on at the meeting. They describe it in a way that ascribes less risk than actually exists."

The byproduct of such oversight could be costly. "If someone gets hurt," Grimes says, "and the insurance company finds that you did not properly describe everything that would be going on, so that they were not able to thoroughly assess their risks when they agreed to insure the event, then they might deny coverage if something goes wrong."

Force Majeure

Force majeure clauses remain a major legal is-

sue, especially in light of the three major hurricanes that hit Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico in late summer, says Atlanta-based John Foster, who has represented meeting industry clients for 40 years.

"In all three of those locations, we saw major damage to some hotels," Foster says. "And I've already gotten phone calls from (meeting hosts or planners) who are concerned about meetings scheduled in those destinations in the near future. And some of them have been told, 'We had a little damage, but we expect you to show up.' And others are saying, 'We had some damage, and we don't want you to show up, so we're invoking the force majeure clause in our contract.' And in both those cases, those situations could present problems or legal challenges for the companies holding the meetings."

Resolutions of force majeure disputes are based on one of three basic standards, Foster says. "One is that performance of the contract is impossible," he says. "The second is that it is 'impracticable.' And the word is impracticable,



“In today’s world, a meeting host and planner have to plan for **every** conceivable **contingency** — and have insurance coverage in place.”

Joshua Grimes, Attorney

Grimes Law Offices LLC, Philadelphia, PA

not ‘impractical.’ That means it’s substantially and materially more difficult to perform than originally anticipated. And the key factor there is that the situation could not have been foreseen at the time the contract was executed. The third factor is called ‘frustration of purpose.’ That’s where the purpose of the event has been ‘frustrated’ to the point where it does not make sense to go through with the contract. An example would be a meeting or event where you’re having a big golf tournament as the highlight, but the golf course has been destroyed in a hurricane or earthquake. That means the essence of your meeting has been frustrated.”

The key legal element in a frustration of purpose claim, however, is that the purpose — the golf tournament or whatever it might be — must be clearly spelled out in the contract, Foster explains. “In other words, the contract has to state that the purpose of the meeting is to bring people from all over the U.S., or from around the world, to the hotel in order to host an event that culminates with a major golf tournament on a certain date.”

Force majeure issues “are rarely cut and dried,” says St. Simons Island, Georgia-based Tyra Hilliard, another highly regarded meeting industry attorney who often speaks on behalf of organizations such as MPI or at events such as IMEX. “For example,” Hilliard says, “just as Hurricane Irma was heading to Florida, I had situations where hotels were refusing to let my clients invoke the force majeure until the day the hurricane actually hit. And they were saying

that in spite of the fact that states of emergency had already been called at the federal and state levels. But the hotels were basically saying ‘our convention facilities are hurricane-proof and our airport is open, so come on down tomorrow.’ So those issues are almost never easy to deal with.”

Attrition and Cancellation

Just like force majeure, attrition and cancellation are hotly debated and contested issues that are always on the radar of meeting hosts and planners. And in terms of controversy and enforcement by hotels, they tend to cycle back and forth depending on whether planners are facing a buyer’s market or a seller’s market, Foster says. In the current seller’s market, hotels often act in the belief they have the upper hand when it comes to enforcement.

The essential legal principle is that under the law, a hotel cannot assess a penalty for attrition or cancellation, Foster notes. Their only recourse is the collection of actual damages that can be demonstrated.

“The key thing with regard to both attrition and cancellation is you have to be clear about how damages will be calculated by the hotel,” Foster says. “There are different ways of doing it, and some clearly favor the hotel. There are also ways to make sure that the group gets credit for everything it should in making those calculations, but that the hotel does not want to give credit for because they reduce the damages the group has to pay. The important issue from the group’s perspective is whether

you have a vague clause in the contract that just says you have to pick up 80 percent of your rooms, or you have to pay. That doesn’t really say a whole lot, because there are a number of things that have to be factored in.”

His cancellation and attrition provisions are a page long. “I use a precise formula that uses several steps to do the actual calculation of damages,” he says. “That means that after the meeting, it’s just a matter of plugging in the actual numbers. But both sides have already agreed on what the rules are and how the formula works.”

Hilliard agrees with Foster that attrition and cancellation clauses are being strongly — and expensively — enforced in the current market. “And one reason for that is that I see a lot less of the old ‘relationship-based dealings,’” she says “And because we are in a strong seller’s market for the hotels, they think they get away with strict enforcement. But I also think the hotels that are doing that will regret it when the market turns again (to a buyer’s market), which it eventually will.”

Hilliard also concurs with Foster’s assessment that precise and mutually agreed-to calculation of lost profits by the hotel is the essential metric for negotiation. “And even with that, I try to sit down and see if I can come up with the same dollar figure the hotel did,” Hilliard says. “And nine times out of 10, I can’t, which tells me the hotel has thrown in things like anticipated ancillary spend by the group.”

In order to best represent the interests of her clients, she includes an audit

provision in her contracts so that such fiscal disputes can be resolved based on real financial numbers and not just a negotiating position.

What if the hotel cancels the meeting?

It comes as a surprise to many meeting planners to learn that the hotel can cancel a meeting, even days before the event, if they book a larger or more profitable meeting for the same dates.

Unfortunately, Foster says, many planners are unaware that could happen — and that it’s legal, subject to a fair payment of damages, if any, to the company whose event was cancelled.

“The only issue is what, if any, damages are suffered by the company holding the original booking,” Foster says. For example, if the company can rebook a comparable hotel in the same destination for the same dates, at the same cost, there are no damages and the hotel faces no liability.

“The company is only entitled to the difference between what it would cost them to transfer the meeting from the original hotel to the new hotel,” Foster says. “For example, if there is a difference in the cost per night of the rooms, then the company is entitled to that per-night difference times the number of room nights included in the meeting.”

‘White Label’ Apps and Drones

While old issues such as force majeure and attrition/cancellation persist, new legal issues are beginning to emerge.

“One issue that is just now being talked about is the fact that Apple has

recently started to deny approvals of what they call ‘white label’ apps in their apps store,” Hilliard says. “And it appears that the definition of ‘white label’ apps includes some of the kinds we use in the meeting industry. So that could become a big issue for the industry and the companies that create those apps.”

So-called white label apps are re-branded versions of another company’s product to make it appear to be their own.

Another issue that is now gaining attention and causing discussion is drone photography and videography at events, Hilliard says. “That is essentially a privacy issue,” she says. “So what I’m seeing now is that hotel lawyers are scrambling to figure out what their policy is. And I know of at least one example where a hotel recently put in a contract that drone photography would not be allowed over the resort’s property at a meeting because of issues related to other resort guests. It’s one thing to take pictures of your own attendees. It’s another thing entirely to take pictures of resort guests who are not your attendees. That’s potentially a privacy issue. For example, what if your drone flies by the window of a guest who is not an attendee at your meeting and it happens to take a picture or record video of that guest undressing.” She cites Fox sportscaster Erin Andrews’ case as an example of potential liability.

Another example in the era of scandals related to viral photos or videos, Hilliard says, is a meeting attendee who happens to be caught in a photo or video near a non-attendee guest

doing something illegal or socially unacceptable — thereby causing potential embarrassment or legal liability. And although the legal issues are still somewhat vague and untested, their gravity will only increase as the use of drones for commercial and private purposes expands. As a result, Hilliard says, hotels, other venues and vendors are starting to discuss actions that will protect them. And so far, those discussions are centered on banning drone photography or videography as the only sure protection.

Legalized Marijuana

As more states legalize the recreational use of marijuana, with California doing so effective January 1, its presence at meetings will become a legal issue for some companies, Hilliard says. As a general principle of law, a company cannot punish a meeting attendee for doing something that is legal, meaning that in Colorado and the other states with legal marijuana, smoking a joint is the same as having a drink at the bar. “So the kinds of things I’m starting to see,” Hilliard says, “include companies suspending their drug-testing policy for at least 100 days after a meeting in Colorado or one of the other states.”

Otherwise, an employee fired for a failed drug test after a meeting in a destination where recreational marijuana is legal could sue the company — and win in court. “So then,” Hilliard says, “the question becomes whether some companies stop meeting in those states to avoid the issue.”

“If you do not clearly understand the legalities up front and make them **work in your favor**, then by default they will work against you if anything goes wrong.”

John Foster, Attorney

Foster, Jensen & Gulley, Atlanta, GA



Grimes also raised legalized marijuana as a legal issue that will now gain momentum. "There is a lot of uncertainty, because no one knows yet how legal marijuana use is going to relate to accidents and injuries and damages that result from marijuana use at meetings," Grimes says. "So what I recommend is that meeting planners treat it like alcohol. For example, if you know some people will be using marijuana at your meetings, you need to take measures to prevent someone getting in a car and driving or doing something else that is risky."

The question, of course, is how a planner could anticipate that some attendees will use marijuana in their free time. "And there are now companies in Colorado that will deliver to your hotel," Grimes says. "So my recommendation is to set a rule that will not permit those companies to deliver marijuana to your group event. I would also ask my attendees not to use marijuana at my event. At the least, that means that if something happens, you could say you made the request. Otherwise you could face legal liability."

It's an open question of how all this will play out in court.



"Just as Hurricane Irma was heading to Florida...hotels were refusing to let my clients invoke **force majeure** until the day the hurricane actually hit."

Tyra Hilliard, Attorney & Professor
College of Coastal Georgia, St. Simons Island, GA

Because there are so many old and new legal issues that relate to meetings, Foster recommends that meeting planners engage an expert attorney for guidance rather than relying on in-house counsel who generally are not well-versed in the legal implications of such issues.

"A lot of companies just think that

their own in-house attorneys can handle these things," Foster says. "And the fact is that in most cases, they are not experts on the legal issues that relate to meetings. And when there are disputes after the meeting, you learn quickly that it's going to come down to how clear the language was in your contract. That's what is going to determine how

the settlement negotiations play out. So you better have a good lawyer guiding you when it comes to those provisions. After the fact, it's too late. The thing to understand is that if you do not clearly understand the legalities up front and make them work in your favor, then by default they will work against you if anything goes wrong." **C&IT**



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Newport Beach, CA

Visit Orlando
Orlando, FL

Visit Phoenix
Phoenix, AZ

VisitPITTSBURGH
Pittsburgh, PA

Visit San Antonio
San Antonio, TX

Visit Seattle
Seattle, WA

Visit Tampa Bay
Tampa, FL

Visit Tucson
Tucson, AZ

Visit Winston-Salem
Winston-Salem, NC

Hotels, Resorts & Conference Centers

ARIA Resort & Casino
Las Vegas, NV

Atlantis, Paradise Island, Bahamas
Paradise Island, Bahamas

Beau Rivage Resort & Casino
Biloxi, MS

Beaver Run
Resort and Conference Center
Breckenridge, CO

Bellagio
Las Vegas, NV

Boca Raton Resort & Club
Boca Raton, FL

Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa
Atlantic City, NJ

Boston Park Plaza
Boston, MA

The Broadmoor
Colorado Springs, CO

Caesars Palace Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV

The Diplomat Beach Resort
Hollywood, FL

Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa
Lake Buena Vista, FL

Eaglewood Resort & Spa
Itasca, IL

Fontainebleau Miami Beach
Miami Beach, FL

Foxwoods Resort Casino
Mashantucket, CT

Gaylord National
Resort & Convention Center
National Harbor, MD

Gaylord Opryland
Resort & Convention Center
Nashville, TN

2017 AWARD OF EXCELLENCE WINNERS

Gaylord Palms
Resort & Convention Center
Kissimmee, FL

Gaylord Texan
Resort & Convention Center
Grapevine, TX

Grand Geneva Resort & Spa
Lake Geneva, WI

Grand Hyatt Denver
Denver, CO

Grand Sierra Resort & Casino
Reno, NV

Hilton Austin
Austin, TX

Hilton Hawaiian Village
Waikiki Beach Resort
Honolulu, HI

Hilton New Orleans Riverside
New Orleans, LA

Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa
Destin, FL

Hilton West Palm Beach
West Palm Beach, FL

The Hotel Hershey
Hershey, PA

Hotel Monteleone
New Orleans, LA

The Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa
Houston, TX

Hyatt Regency New Orleans
New Orleans, LA

Hyatt Regency Orlando
Orlando, FL

Innisbrook Golf & Spa Resort
Palm Harbor, FL

Island Hotel Newport Beach
Newport Beach, CA

JW Marriott
San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa
San Antonio, TX

JW Marriott
Scottsdale Camelback Inn Resort & Spa
Scottsdale, AZ

Keystone Resort & Conference Center
Keystone, CO

La Cantera Resort & Spa
San Antonio, TX

La Quinta Resort & Club
La Quinta, CA

The Langham, Boston
Boston, MA

Loews Miami Beach Hotel
Miami Beach, FL

Loews Portofino Bay
Hotel at Universal Orlando
Orlando, FL

Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego
San Diego, CA

Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino
Las Vegas, NV

MGM Grand Detroit
Detroit, MI

MGM Grand Hotel & Casino
Las Vegas, NV

The Mirage
Las Vegas, NV

Mohegan Sun
Uncasville, CT

Moody Gardens
Hotel, Spa & Convention Center
Galveston, TX

The National Conference Center
Lansdowne, VA

New York Hilton-Midtown
New York, NY

Ocean Reef Club
Key Largo, FL

Omni Dallas Hotel
Dallas, TX

Omni Nashville Hotel
Nashville, TN

Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate
ChampionsGate, FL

Orlando World Center Marriott
Orlando, FL

Peppermill Resort Spa Casino
Reno, NV

The Phoenician
Scottsdale, AZ

Ponte Vedra Inn & Club
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

The Resort at Pelican Hill
Newport Coast, CA

The Ritz-Carlton, Dove Mountain
Marana, AZ

The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel
Dana Point, CA

Rosen Centre Hotel
Orlando, FL

Rosen Plaza Hotel
Orlando, FL

Rosen Shingle Creek
Orlando, FL

Salamander Resort & Spa
Middleburg, VA

Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort
Sandestin, FL

Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

The Scottsdale Plaza Resort
Scottsdale, AZ

The Scottsdale Resort at McCormick Ranch
Scottsdale, AZ

Seaport Hotel & World Trade Center
Boston, MA

Seminole Hard Rock
Hotel & Casino Hollywood
Hollywood, FL

Sheraton Boston Hotel
Boston, MA

Sheraton Grand At Wild Horse Pass
Chandler, AZ

Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel
New York, NY

Stoweflake Mountain Resort & Spa
Stowe, VT

Streamsong Resort
Streamsong, FL

Talking Stick Resort
Scottsdale, AZ

Terranea Resort
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA

Tropicana Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV

Trump National Doral Miami
Miami, FL

Turnberry Isle Miami
Aventura, FL

The Venetian Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV

Villas of Grand Cypress
Orlando, FL

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

Washington Marriott Wardman Park
Washington, DC

The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa
Scottsdale, AZ

The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa
Tucson, AZ

The Woodlands
Resort & Conference Center
The Woodlands, TX

Wyndham Grand
Rio Mar Beach Resort & Spa
Rio Grande, PR

Wynn Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

GREATER MIAMI CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Twenty-Two-Time Winner

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

About Miami

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

In Miami, you will discover the diverse offerings of a vibrant international destination that seamlessly blends with the natural beauty of our tropics. Enjoy unique hotel experiences, world-class dining, heritage neighborhoods and a newly reimagined Miami Beach Convention Center coming in September 2018.

The New Miami Beach Convention Center

Located in the heart of South Beach, the new Miami Beach Convention Center, an innovative and tech-rich facility, will offer nearly 500,000 sf of exhibition space and more than 180,000 sf of meeting space, including a 60,000-sf ballroom and a 20,000-

sf ballroom. Each space also will feature a terrace where attendees can step out, mingle and soak up the city's signature sunshine and oceanfront beauty.

More options to consider:

Brickell City Centre

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

Brightline

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

Miami Worldcenter

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

Frost Science Museum

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

These are just a few of the memorable highlights awaiting any meeting planner thinking of Miami.

C&IT



WILLIAM D. TALBERT III, CDME
President & CEO

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planners.miamiandbeaches.com

Citywide Facts and Features

Guest Rooms/Suites: 55,394

Hotels/Resorts: 426

Meeting Space: 1.2 million sf

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

CHOOSE MIAMI. THEY'LL LOVE YOU FOR IT.

Contact us to learn more. 800-933-8448 ext. 3071
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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

LONG BEACH CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Thirteen-Time Winner

Long Beach is the only urban downtown waterfront between San Francisco and San Diego. Blending the casual atmosphere of a beach town with the excitement and electric hum of a big city lets visitors enjoy all the amenities and entertainment of a big city alongside the friendly welcome of a beach resort.

Experience everything that makes Long Beach magical: the food, nightlife, scenic pathways, and miles of sandy beachfront and inland waterways. 345 days of sunshine each year means unlimited outdoor activities.

Dine in singular restaurants with panoramic ocean vistas. Stroll well-lit, palm-lined promenades, boardwalks and esplanades. Long Beach is rated one of the "most walkable" cities in America and also is considered to be one of the top bike-friendly cities.

Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center

The Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, with more than 400,000 sf of modern, flexible exhibit and meeting space, is located in the center of the downtown waterfront with sweeping harbor views. The Center is a trail-blazer in creating indoor/outdoor turnkey venues providing planners with creative and cost-saving special events.

The area boasts more than 5,000 rooms citywide. Many hotels offer panoramic ocean and city views at affordable

prices, while others feature notable characteristics from international treasures to world-class restaurants.

Transportation is modern and efficient. Metro trains whisk passengers to Los Angeles with connections to all the Metro rail and bus lines. Long Beach Transit operates a fleet of electric and hybrid buses. Passport buses are free in the downtown area, and water taxis ply the waters of Queensway Bay and Rainbow Harbor.

World-class Attractions

Long Beach offers world-class attractions: the majestic Queen Mary, the Aquarium of the Pacific, whale watching, harbor cruises, and comedy and musical clubs featuring entertainment across all genres.

With multiple museums, Spanish-era ranchos, historic sites and buildings, we're proud of our past and looking forward to a dynamic future. Art and culture is a vital part of our community. Numerous theatrical, music and dance companies call Long Beach home.

Located in the center of Southern California, Long Beach is close to all of the Southland's major attractions via freeway and public transportation. Downtown L.A., Hollywood, Universal Studios and Disneyland are all within 30 minutes of our downtown.

Getting to and from Long Beach is also quick and easy, with three major airports less than 30 minutes away. **C&IT**

STEVE GOODLING
President & CEO

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Citywide Facts and Features

Guest Rooms: 5,000 (3,000 within walking distance of convention center)

Meeting Space: Hotels: 219,000+ sf/Offsite: 500,000+ sf

Convention Center FYI: The Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, with more than 400,000 sf of modern, flexible exhibit and meeting space, is located in the center of the downtown waterfront with sweeping harbor views.



SoCal's Newest Event Space The Cove



Long Beach

California Fresh, Urban Coast

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



800.452.7829 | MeetInLongBeach.com
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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

VISIT DENVER THE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Twenty-Two-Time Winner

Welcome to Denver, a vibrant outdoor city where urban adventure, 300 days of sunshine, a thriving cultural scene and diverse neighborhoods combine to make the world's best meeting destination.

The city abounds in unique, only-in-Denver venues. Taking the train from Denver International Airport costs only \$9 one way and will land you at Denver Union Station, a restored 1914 train station that is now home to a boutique hotel, local shops and chef-owned restaurants.

Hosting an offsite meeting? Try a morning yoga class at the world-famous Red Rocks Amphitheatre or get inspired by a breakout session at Denver Art Museum, the renowned home of one of the greatest American West art collections in the world.

Plan a dinner event at The Source, a restored 1880s iron-works foundry that has been converted into a 21st century market and food hall, offering a bakery, fish market, dairy bodega, pizzeria and more.

The Culinary Scene

For an exceptional dining experience, visit one of Denver's many award-winning, chef-owned restaurants that are gaining national attention. Make a stop at the beloved Il Posto, an authentic scratch Italian kitchen, run by chef Andrea Frizzi, a passionate transplant from Milan. Get a risqué side of history with your meal at Ophelia's Electric

Soapbox, a 19th century brothel that chef Justin Cucci has transformed into an eclectic music hall and "gastrobrothel" featuring a globally inspired menu. Historic Larimer Square also boasts a wide variety of local culinary gems, including Rioja and TAG.

There are more than 2,000 restaurants in the Denver metro area, making innovative chefs and creative cuisine a trademark of The Mile High City. The dining scene is so sizzling that Zagat recently named Denver the No. 3 hottest food city in the country.

Award-winning Staff

VISIT DENVER, The Convention & Visitors Bureau is a helpful and experienced organization ready to assist planners in crafting the perfect meeting. The award-winning staff is available to help you stay on top of all the exciting changes in the city.

"Today more than ever, it's important to creatively partner with our clients to provide unique and memorable experiences that will differentiate a Denver meeting and drive attendance," says Rachel Benedick, vice president of sales and services at VISIT DENVER. "As the destination experts, VISIT DENVER is your one-stop-shop, whether you need help executing logistics or taking full advantage of the intellectual capital of the city. We have our finger on the pulse of what's new, what's hot and what's on the horizon." **C&IT**



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Citywide Facts and Features

Guest Rooms: 10,000+ downtown (2018), 46,000+ metrowide
Hotels: 44 downtown/150+ metrowide (2018)
Meeting Space: 584,000 sf (Colorado Convention Center)
Convention Center FYI: The Colorado Convention Center has 584,000 sf of meeting space, two hotel-quality ballrooms and a 5,000-fixed-seat theater.

HOSTING A GREAT CONVENTION

• A SERIES OF HELPFUL TIPS •

No. 7

Denver, Colorado



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BREWERIES
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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

VISIT TUCSON

Sixteen-Time Winner

Planners can certainly pick one of the ordinary places to have their meeting. A city everyone has seen, another overly familiar hotel; that's one way to do things. Or you can get off the beaten path, make a choice to get a little out there: Tucson.

Unique Experiences

Tucson has incredible resorts with meeting space galore, but here the resorts are tucked into the foothills of the mountains that surround the city, creating backdrops for your events that you won't believe. Plus, there are unique places to have offsite events — from teambuilding at a luxury spa, to an opportunity to experience a little of the Old West at a guest ranch.

Or take a moment to get out and hike the majestic mountains surrounding Tucson and then enjoy a happy hour inside one of America's best aviation museums. Tucson is a city brimming with unique experiences to fit your event style.

The Power of Connection

Why did *USA Today* include Tucson in a list of cities emerging as a "top pick for biz meetings"? It's about the power of connection: the essence of what makes Tucson special. Not just the surprising affordability of holding a meeting in Tucson, but the connection between a planner and the Visit Tucson staff going the extra mile to make your

event spectacular. This connection is evident in the fact that eight of 10 meeting planners choose Tucson after a site visit; the connection between your attendees and the living, breathing desert.

Surprises Abound

Tucson will surprise you. Maybe it'll be the incredible landscapes, with five mountain ranges surrounding the city, plus majestic saguaros and varied plant life that will redefine what you think a desert is like.

Maybe it'll be Tucson's vibrant downtown, full of incredible food by innovative chefs, plus spectacular music and culture.

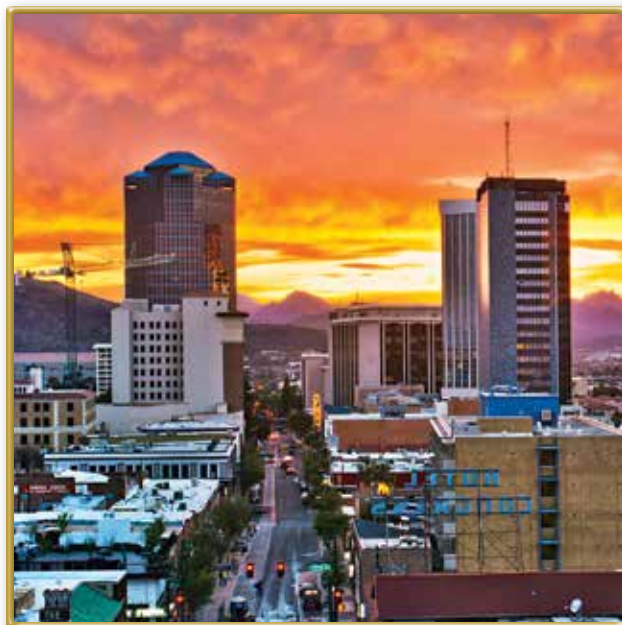
Who knows, it might just be a taco that changes your life or one of our legendary Sonoran hot dogs (admittedly, not for the vegetarians among you).

Or the new AC Hotel Tucson, a hip stop in the downtown cultural hub that is conveniently located near The Tucson Convention Center.

Beyond the Ballroom

When it's time to get beyond the ballroom to find a place that provides an opportunity to relax and re-energize — with at-your-fingertips luxury, CFO-pleasing value and a spectacular variety of properties to choose from — Tucson shouldn't just be among *USA Today's* top picks, but among savvy meeting planners' top picks as well.

C&IT



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Vice President, Sales

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Citywide Facts and Features

Guest Rooms: 15,500
Hotels/Resorts: 145
Meeting Space: 187,564 sf at The Tucson Convention Center
Convention Center FYI: The Tucson Convention Center and Tucson Arena are in the City of Gastronomy's downtown cultural hub near the new AC Hotel Tucson Downtown.

BEYOND THE BALLROOM



See why Tucson's one of a kind culture creates an experience that extends beyond the ballroom.
Book now through 2019 and earn up to **\$15,000 OFF** your Master Account.

Find out more: **TucsonOnUs.com**

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tucson
VISITTUCSON.ORG



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

ATLANTIS, PARADISE ISLAND, BAHAMAS

Seven-Time Winner

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

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

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

rine species in decline. Other resort amenities include the 30,000-sf tranquil Mandara Spa, the award-winning 18-hole Tom Weiskopf-designed golf course, the Marina Village, a Bahamian marketplace, Atlantis Casino as well as 40 restaurants and lounges with celebrity chef culinary masterpieces including Nobu, by Nobu Matsuhisa, and Olives, by Todd English.

Meetings

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

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

In addition, celebrity chef José Andrés has announced that Fish by José Andrés will open in early 2018 at the idyllic The Cove Atlantis.

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

C&IT



WENDY BLANEY

Chief Sales Officer, Group Sales

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www.meetingsatatlantis.com

Facts and Features

Guest Rooms/Suites: 3,400

Meeting Space: 500,000 sf indoor and outdoor

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

ATLANTIS

PARADISE ISLAND BAHAMAS

CONVENTIONS • MEETINGS • INCENTIVES

Bring Your Event To Life With Authentic Bahamian Culture.

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AND EXPERIENCE COMPLIMENTARY
FIRE AND LIMBO DANCERS AND
AN AUTHENTIC JUNKANOO RUSH**



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



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

THE BROADMOOR

Thirty-Three-Time Winner

Nestled in the foothills below Pikes Peak on 5,000 stunning acres, The Broadmoor is widely recognized as "the most unique resort in the world." This legendary property is also the longest-running consecutive winner of both the AAA Five Diamond and *Forbes Travel Guide* Five Star awards. In 2018, The Broadmoor celebrates its Centennial birthday, an impressive milestone for this iconic destination. Here, authentic Western experiences combine with European elegance and a setting that inspires at every turn.

With 185,000 sf of sophisticated event space, The Broadmoor welcomes groups of all sizes and types to experience its unparalleled combination of accommodations, activities, meeting venues, dining options and more. Boasting magnificent scenery, award-winning hospitality and a distinctive service culture, The Broadmoor is a true destination in and of itself. And as host of the 2018 U.S. Senior Open, special ticket options are available for large groups.

Inspiring Meeting Venues

From the 60,000 sf of wide-open, carpeted space in Broadmoor Hall to unique, intimate spaces throughout the resort, The Broadmoor has played host to numerous seminars, conferences and special events since first opening in 1918. As an incentive trip, it offers countless ways to motivate.

For groups needing a large venue with a variety of guest room options and pricing, The Broadmoor has created a

unique alliance with nearby properties to offer a spectacular combination of venue and value. The Broadmoor Connection includes additional hotels located within 10 minutes of the Broadmoor campus, offering up to 3,000 rooms; plus the Broadmoor World Arena, with a capacity of up to 9,000 people.

The Broadmoor boasts convenient technology including wired and wireless internet connectivity for all meeting areas and guest rooms, and onsite AV rental and event production.

Innovative teambuilding programs also can be arranged through Broadmoor Outfitters, bringing your meeting to life, revitalizing existing teams and helping to inspire groups.

Adventure Comes Naturally

No matter the season, a spirit of adventure and the freedom to go out and play are at the heart of any Broadmoor experience. The resort includes three championship golf courses that will challenge players of every skill level. Perfect your swing with our award-winning tennis program. Set off on a nature-infused horseback, hiking or mountain biking adventure. Or simply luxuriate in the Forbes Five Star spa.

Groups also can enjoy a variety of outdoor experiences, from guided fly-fishing to rock climbing instruction to falconry. Soak up the natural wonders of Seven Falls, a series of waterfalls surrounded by lush valleys and striking rock formations. The Broadmoor's Soaring Adventure takes zip-line enthusiasts across "The Grandest Mile of Scenery in Colorado." **C&IT**



PEPPER DOMBROSKI
Director of Sales

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Facts and Features

Guest Rooms/Suites: 784/111
Meeting Rooms: 62
Indoor Meeting Space: 185,000 sf
Largest Meeting Space: 60,000 sf
Max Theater Capacity: 6,500
Max Banquet Capacity: 3,800
Max Classroom Capacity: 4,000



GRAND ENOUGH FOR YOUR
BEST PEOPLE AND THEIR
BIGGEST IDEAS.



Meetings and events take on a special energy at The Broadmoor. The magnificent Rocky Mountain setting will inspire your people. World-class golf, spa, dining and more will refresh them. The unique venues and activities of our new Broadmoor Wilderness Experience properties will challenge them and change their perspectives. The 185,000 square feet of meeting space is flexible enough to meet your most demanding requirements. And amidst it all, The Broadmoor's legendary tradition of quality and service will ensure your event is a success. Contact us today and start planning your meeting now at broadmoor.com.

THE
BROADMOOR





AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

LOEWS PORTOFINO BAY HOTEL

Eighteen-Time Winner

Universal Orlando Resort is the premier destination for meetings and events, offering incredible product, remarkable experiences and a passionate group of people committed to collaborating with you every step of the way.

With 295,000 sf of meeting space and 6,200 guest rooms across six hotels by 2018, three different theme parks, and the Universal CityWalk dining and entertainment complex, Universal Orlando Resort offers everything you could want in a meetings destination.

Meetings With Italian Charm

This Italian-inspired hotel offers majestic meeting and function spaces. Loews Portofino Bay Hotel's meeting space is the epitome of warmth and elegance, from the inviting meeting rooms to the ambience of the impressive pre-function areas.

Planners also will find a variety of beautiful outdoor venues, including the scenic Harbor Piazza and dazzling Villa Pool, where events can be enhanced by the hotel's lush landscaping and distinctive Italian architecture. Adorned with handcrafted details such as Venetian glass chandeliers, the hotel offers a breathtaking setting for both business and social events.

Loews Portofino Bay Hotel boasts a total of 42,000 sf of meeting and function space, including 15,000-sf and

7,600-sf ballrooms, eight meeting rooms and an impressive 47,000 sf of outdoor meeting space.

Mediterranean-inspired Accommodations

All 750 rooms and suites at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel have been completely renovated with a fresh, new Mediterranean-inspired design that enhances the attendee experience. Designers took their inspiration for the new rooms from the upscale, sun-drenched resort of Portofino, Italy and its historic harbor along the Italian Riviera. Attendees can enjoy three themed swimming pools, seven restaurants and lounges, a world-class spa and complimentary Wi-Fi in guest rooms and public areas.

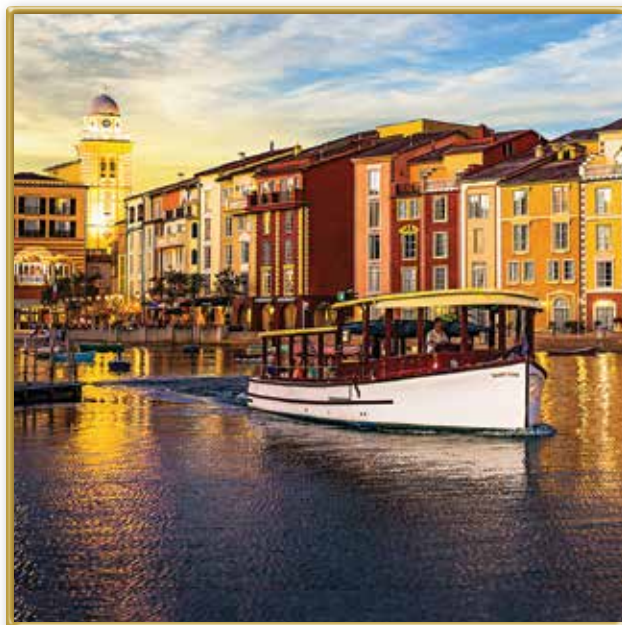
Incredible Event Options

Three amazing theme parks, Universal Studios Florida, Universal's Islands of Adventure and Universal's Volcano Bay provide unparalleled entertainment and a variety of breathtaking and immersive backdrops for your events.

There's also outstanding dining, shopping and nightlife at the Universal CityWalk entertainment complex. Here you'll find an array of restaurants and nightclubs, many of which can be reserved for special events.

Best of all, Universal Orlando's hotels, theme parks and entertainment complex are all in close proximity, making getting around the resort easy and convenient for meeting groups.

C&IT



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Vice President, Resort Sales

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meetingsandevents@universalorlando.com
www.uomeetingsandevents.com

Facts and Features

Guest Rooms/Suites: 750

Meeting Space: 42,000 sf

Special Services & Amenities: Book your 2018 meeting at Loews Portofino Bay Hotel and receive guest room rates starting at \$159. Select dates only. Visit our website for more information.

WHERE ONE DESTINATION HOLDS
A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES.

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LOEWS
HOTELS

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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

OMNI DALLAS HOTEL

Four-Time Winner

Explore a new side of Dallas at Omni Dallas Hotel. With modern, Southern charm, Omni Dallas delivers elevated experiences, from revitalizing Mokara Spa facials to state-of-the-art technology throughout every meeting and event space. Indulge your taste buds at seven dining destinations and take in the panoramic views from every corner.

An Unconventional Convention

Discover the many sides of Dallas without stepping foot outside. Local artists' work adorns the 142,000 sf of meeting and event space. Photos, oils, acrylics and sculptures reflecting the region's history and landmarks give attendees and guests a peek into Dallas' legacy.

Three levels of indoor space feature two ballrooms ranging from 15,400 sf to 31,704 sf. At approximately 12,000 sf, an outdoor event space is home to the iconic flying red horse, Pegasus, which is the oldest piece of artwork at Omni Dallas, dating back to 1934. The Pegasus Lawn features an elevated stage with built-in electrical for live music and entertainment overlooking downtown Dallas. Monthly yoga and weekly boot camp classes are open to guests and locals.

Technology Expertise

With Encore onsite, our team can help plan a spectacular, seamless occasion that showcases the impressive audio-

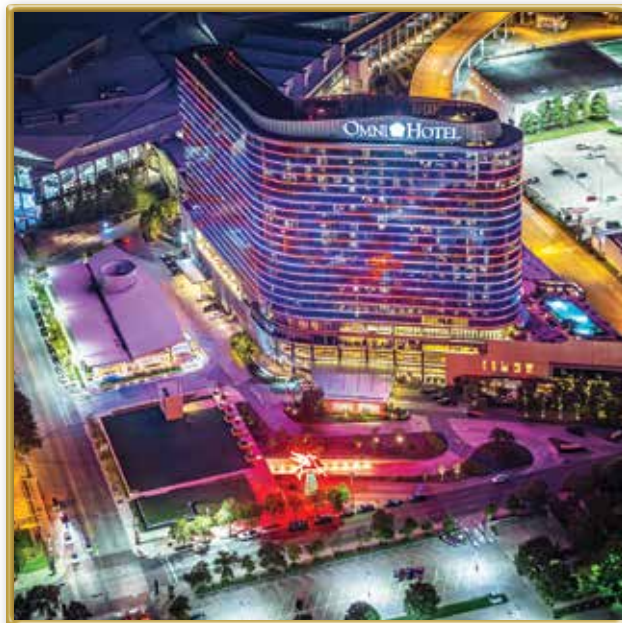
visual technology. Attendees can connect via the OmniLink app to get all the latest updates and meeting information so planners save on cost.

The most memorable feature of Omni Dallas is the 23-story canvas of LED lights that can showcase client logos and messaging. The hotel has been instrumental in garnering Dallas the award for Best International Skyline, as voted by *USA Today* readers in 2016. Clients booking meetings and events at the Omni Dallas Hotel have the opportunity to put their name in lights!

Seven Dining Experiences, One Destination

Restaurants on Lamar is the dynamic dining destination at Omni Dallas. Every palate is satisfied, curing cravings from Japanese sushi to upscale Mexican and Texas-sized steaks. All restaurants have private event spaces available and can be booked as a group, convenient for dine-arounds and block parties. Restaurants on Lamar includes Biergarten, Black Ship Little Katana, Bob's Steak and Chop House, Café Herrera, Coal Vines (pizza and Italian cuisine), Texas Spice (farm-to-table) and The Owners Box Sports Bar and Grill, the only place to watch the game!

Centrally located with countless non-stop flights to and from U.S. and international cities, Dallas is a destination worth discovering. The Omni Dallas Hotel gives you an exceptional view of the city's culture, dining and excitement. **C&IT**



HAROLD 'Q' QUEISSER
Director of Sales & Marketing

555 South Lamar Street
Dallas, TX 75202
Contact: Chad Enloe, Director of Sales
214-979-2506 • Fax: 214-979-4595
www.omnihotels.com/hotels/dallas/meetings

Facts and Features

Guest Rooms/Suites: 1,001/67 suites including 3 presidential

Meeting Space: Approximately 142,000 sf

Special Services & Amenities: Seven onsite restaurants, heated pool, full-service spa, more than 1,000 parking spaces, valet, 24-hour in-room dining, onsite UPS store and business center, 24-hour fitness center.

HOST AN EVENT

THAT PUTS YOUR BRAND'S

NAME IN **LIGHTS.**

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

**OMNI HOTELS
& RESORTS**
dallas

OMNIHOTELS.COM/DALLAS



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

SALAMANDER RESORT & SPA

Second-Time Winner

Nestled within the heart of Virginia's picturesque horse and wine country, Salamander Resort & Spa manifests the historic charm of its timeless home — Middleburg, Virginia. Here, only minutes away from the nation's capital and 40 minutes from Dulles International Airport, sprawling vineyards and wineries surround a delightful village of boutique shops, restaurants and fascinating antiquities. Inspiring activities bring unique options for guests to explore, from treetop zip lining and championship golf, to equestrian activities at the resort stables.

Meetings and Events

A beautiful setting for gatherings of all kinds — events at Salamander Resort & Spa are crafted, groomed and polished to an elegant perfection. Inviting rooms from the intimate to the majestic provide space for multiple group sizes. From the 4,500-sf Middleburg Ballroom to the intimate setting of the Marshall Boardroom, Salamander Resort & Spa has spacious indoor event and meetings facilities, much of which opens to outdoor terraces. Unique indoor settings include the resort's Equestrian Center, the Grand Lawn, the Culinary Garden and the Cooking Studio, which may be reserved by groups for private events.

At Salamander Resort & Spa, our talented chefs perfect their delicacies in the locally inspired Piedmont regional cuisine tradition. From this, our catering team creates a dining experience

to remember. The three dining options at the resort include Harrimans Grill, featuring a local bounty of bold, fresh and flavorful dishes sourced with the highest quality ingredients; Gold Cup Wine Bar, serving small plates of Piedmont-inspired cuisine paired with Virginia and international wines; and Market Salamander, our working chef's market located in the village.

In keeping with the country estate design, all 168 rooms and suites are spacious at a minimum size of 545 sf and include a separate casual relaxation corner, dining table, full-size desk, and outdoor patio or balcony with dining options. The luxurious bathroom includes a marble shower with body jets, pedestal tub, dual sinks and enclosed water closet.

Salamander Spa is a luxurious 23,000-sf spa and wellness center with 14 treatment rooms. The largest destination spa in the DC area boasts private stone treatment terraces, aromatic steam rooms, luxurious changing rooms, infinity-edge spa pool with cabanas and a full-service salon.

Salamander Hotels & Resorts

With seven one-of-a-kind destinations to choose from, your next meeting just went from interesting to extraordinary: Salamander Resort & Spa, Middleburg, Virginia; The Henderson Resort, Destin, Florida; NOPSI Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana; Hotel Bennett, Charleston, South Carolina; Innisbrook Resort, Tampa Bay, Florida; Reunion Resort, Orlando, Florida; and Hammock Beach Resort, Palm Coast, Florida.

C&IT



HEATHER BUSS
Director of Global Sales

Salamander Hotels & Resorts
500 North Pendleton Street, Middleburg, VA 20117
540-687-3710 • meetings@salamanderhotels.com
www.salamanderhotels.com

Salamander Resort & Spa Facts and Features

Guest Rooms: 168

Meeting Space: 30,000 sf

Special Services & Amenities: The equestrian center is set on 25 acres and features a stable with paddocks, outdoor riding arena with ThorTurf footing and a classroom/dining venue, as well as the ability to introduce you to the fascinating world of polo.



SALAMANDER®
HOTELS & RESORTS

— “ —
SUCCESSFUL
meetings
start when
the walls
DISAPPEAR.

— ” —
—Sheila

Inspiration abounds. And for good reason. Salamander Hotels and Resorts Founder and CEO Sheila C. Johnson has infused her passion, perseverance and creative sensibilities into a collection of meeting venues designed to ignite new ideas and unify your group like never before.

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Salamander Hotels & Resorts – Now this is luxury.

SalamanderHotels.com



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

SANDESTIN GOLF AND BEACH RESORT

Nine-Time Winner

Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort is the premier resort destination for meetings and retreats in Northwest Florida capturing the industry's highest awards. The 2,400-acre resort features the most beautiful beaches with crystal clear emerald green waters, 1,300 deluxe accommodations, four championship golf courses, 15 tennis courts, 19 swimming pools, 113-slip marina, fitness center, spa and The Village of Baytowne Wharf.

Sandestin's meeting and event facilities offering 65,000 sf of flexible meeting space accommodate groups from 10 to 1,600 attendees and feature more than 25 breakout rooms, a 13,500-sf ballroom, a 12,600-sf exhibit hall and four handsome boardrooms.

Outdoor Venues and Activities

Meeting planners can utilize creative and unique landscape options, including outdoor gathering spots such as lawns, marina, pool decks, terraces and beach, to host a sunset luau on the beach, a night of entertainment aboard a luxury yacht, teambuilding and much more. Options for mixers and private dining are just steps away in the 26-acre pedestrian Village of Baytowne Wharf, offering several entertainment and dining options.

Sandestin's impressive list of activities for groups also includes four championship golf courses perfect for hosting company tourneys featuring tee prizes and 19th hole

cocktails and catering. There also are charter boat fishing trips from Baytowne Marina and beach bonfires with live entertainment.

Teambuilding activities include: fun runs, beach Olympics, scavenger hunts, relay races, bay fishing, Baytowne Adventure Zone, stand-up paddleboard relays on Choctawhatchee Bay, interactive games such as spider-web challenge and Minute to Win It Challenges and much more. Baytowne Adventure Zone challenges groups with everything from a ropes course and zip line to a rock-climbing wall in the Village.

Proven professionals in the conference industry, Sandestin delivers seamless service, flawless programs and impressive corporate retreat facilities. A meeting resort like Sandestin is the perfect way to make your next business function a fun, productive and memorable one.

Conference Center Renovation

As one of the most comprehensive meeting resorts in the Southeast, Sandestin is continuing its excellence with a multimillion dollar renovation in 2017. The 16,000-sf Linkside Conference Center is undergoing a complete renovation. This project signifies the resort's commitment to providing the highest quality meeting experience for attendees and resort guests. The meeting professionals of Sandestin look forward to presenting the exterior and interior transformation in January 2018.

C&IT



DAN KEYSER

Executive Director of Resort Sales

9300 Emerald Coast Parkway West
Miramar Beach, FL 32550
844-611-4162 • Fax: 850-267-8097
dankeyser@sandestin.com
www.sandestin.com/CIT

Facts and Features

Guest Rooms: 1,300

Meeting Space: 65,000 sf

Special Services & Amenities: Sandestin has so many amenities to choose from that a group can return to the resort and experience a completely different meeting experience.



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Dining & Shopping



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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

STREAMSONG RESORT

Second-Time Winner

Situated amid stunning scenery and hushed seclusion in Central Florida, Streamsong is a new luxury meeting and incentive destination intentionally designed in harmony with its natural surroundings and intensely committed to the highest aspirations of today's corporate elite. Streamsong combines golf at its purest and a resort experience at its finest. It's rare that one resort can offer so many authentic experiences, but that's the beauty of Streamsong. It's a meeting and incentive destination like no other.

Award-winning Golf

Opened in January 2013, Streamsong Red, designed by Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw, and Streamsong Blue, designed by Tom Doak, have ranked on some of golf's most prestigious lists including *Golf* magazine's "Top 100 Courses in the U.S." and *Golfweek's* "Best Resort Courses." In 2017, the resort's highly anticipated third course, Streamsong Black, designed by acclaimed architect Gil Hanse debuted to the world. Streamsong Black is a par-73 championship layout offering breathtaking views of the vast landscape featuring flowing elevation, rolls, tumbles and sand ridges akin to the Sand Belt Region of Melbourne, Australia. This exciting new addition features The Gauntlet, a two-acre putting course; The Roundabout, a free-flowing practice area; a new clubhouse; and Bone Valley Tavern restaurant.

Already home to two nationally ranked courses, guests now

have the opportunity to experience three must-play courses that rival the best golf venues in the world.

But Streamsong is about much more than golf. From an intimate executive retreat to a grand international gathering, Streamsong is a place to accomplish things of value and return renewed. The resort offers an inspirational, distraction-free environment with 25,000 sf of dedicated meeting space. Thirteen large and small meeting rooms can accommodate 10 to 500 in complete comfort and privacy. General session and breakout rooms are conveniently clustered for effective program flow.

Set on 16,000 acres, Streamsong invites groups to explore the outdoors via guided bass-fishing expeditions, sporting clays, archery and a nature trail. Guest favorites for relaxation and rejuvenation include the grotto-style AcquaPietra Spa and a lakeside infinity-edge pool. Five distinct dining options include P2O5, Restaurant Fifty-Nine, Fragmentary Blue, SottoTerra and the new Bone Valley Tavern. The resort boasts 60,000 sf of breathtaking outdoor venues from an intimate rooftop terrace, covered patios and pavilions to expansive lawns — all taking advantage of the lush lakeside location.

Modern, sophisticated and meticulous in detail, Streamsong offers 228 spacious guest rooms and suites on five levels of the lakeside Lodge featuring floor-to-ceiling glass with custom louvers and striking sunrise or sunset lake views that extend to the natural Florida horizon. Rich linens, plush robes and boutique amenities throughout ensure no element is overlooked. **C&IT**



JIM BULLOCK

Director of Sales and Marketing

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www.streamsongresort.com

Facts and Features

Guest Rooms/Suites: 228

Meeting Space: 25,000 sf indoor; 60,000 sf outdoor; 13 meeting rooms

Special Services & Amenities: Three golf courses, two clubhouses, caddie services, retail shopping, AcquaPietra Spa, guided bass fishing, sporting clays, archery, tennis, fitness center, lakeside pool, hiking trails and more.



INSPIRATION COMES NATURALLY HERE.

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



STREAMSONG® BLUE STREAMSONG® RED STREAMSONG® BLACK



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



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

TRUMP NATIONAL DORAL MIAMI

Six-Time Winner

Following a \$250 million resort transformation, including 643 re-imagined guest rooms and world-class amenities, Miami's premier resort is poised to make your next group event unforgettable. The iconic 800-acre resort features more than 175,000 sf of modern meeting space, accommodating groups and events of any size and occasion. Our elegantly designed ballrooms, prefunction space and one-of-a-kind outdoor venues have set a new standard for meeting planners.

The Next Chapter of a Storied Legacy

Throughout its 55-year history, this exclusive enclave has hosted high-profile meetings and events. Guest lists have included golf legends, celebrities and dignitaries, drawn to the property not only for its privileged location and championship golf courses but also for its world-class meeting facilities.

The newly transformed Trump National Doral Miami accommodates groups and events of any size and occasion in its 100,000 sf of elegantly designed indoor space. The iconic resort's impressive portfolio of venues is comprised of six magnificent ballrooms including the 24,000-sf Grand Ballroom, with a maximum capacity of 3,500. The 75,000 sf of outdoor space showcases the resort's idyllic setting of lush, verdant gardens and sweeping golf course views. Options are plenty, from 35 meeting rooms, to 15 breakout rooms and five executive boardrooms.

Beyond its grand spaces, the award-winning Doral resort is

renowned for its unwavering commitment to "Never Settle." As veterans of the meetings industry — some for 10, 15 and even 20 years at Doral — the resort's expert event professionals anticipate clients' needs, offering innovative, custom solutions at every stage, from creative concept development and logistics to day-of execution. The culinary team matches this commitment to go above and beyond. Only the finest ingredients, freshest produce and sustainable options from trusted farms, artisans and purveyors are allowed through the kitchen's doors and onto guests' plates. Should the curated collection of banquet menus not meet a client's particular needs, Chef and his team are always up to the challenge to customize a memorable menu.

A Storybook Setting

A true resort destination, Trump Doral's wealth of on-property offerings include the re-imagined, 48,000-sf Trump Spa & Salon; the Royal Palm Pool Oasis with private cabanas and butler service, multiple pools and a 125-foot slide; four Har-Tru tennis courts; and four championship golf courses, including the legendary Blue Monster. The state-of-the-art golf academy and practice range are equipped with LED lighting for nighttime play. A day out on the greens is sure to work up an appetite. Champions Bar & Grill and the Palm Grill serve up casual favorites, while signature fine-dining restaurant BLT Prime sets the standard for today's modern steakhouse.

C&IT

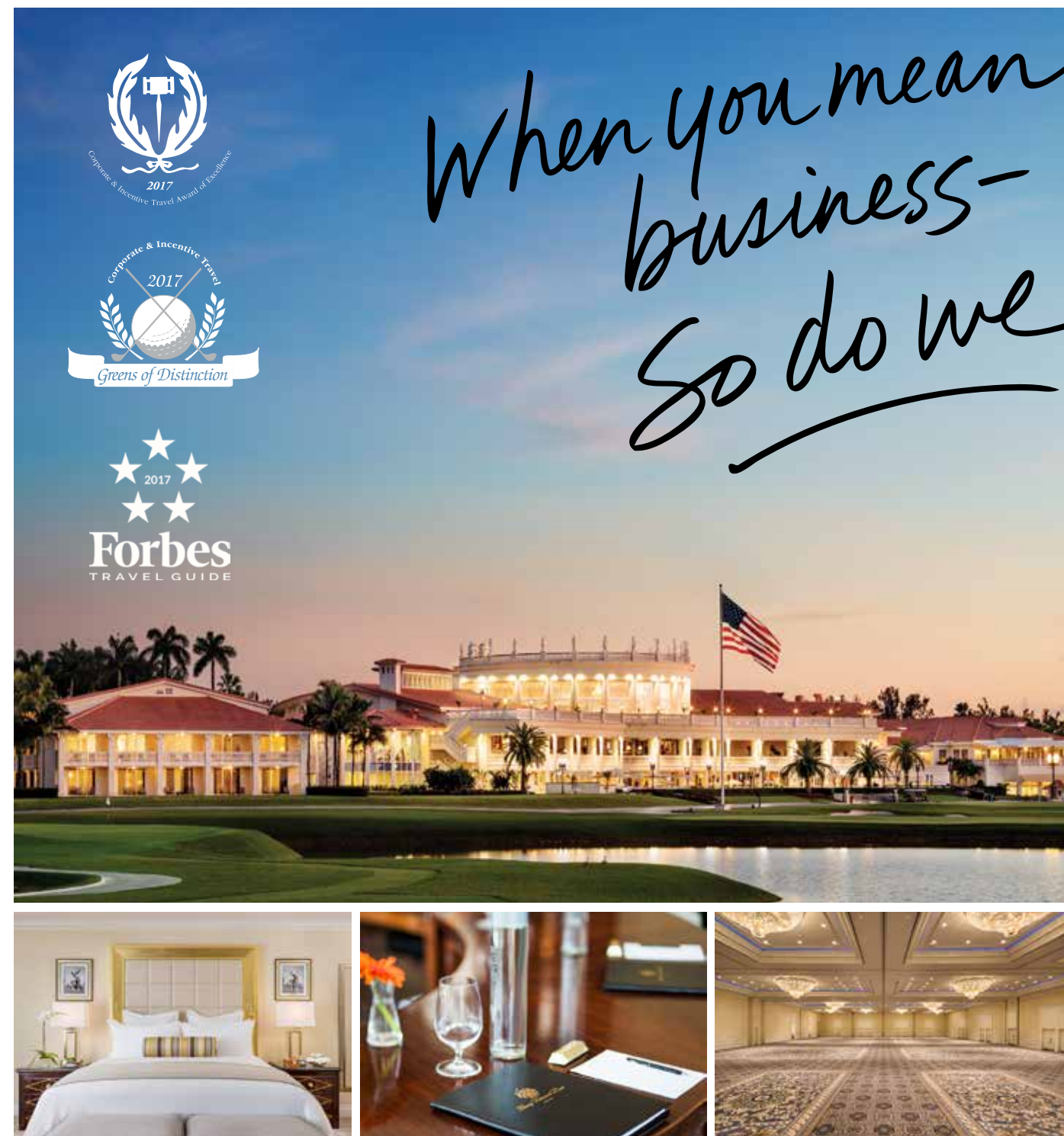


DAVID FEDER
Vice President & Managing Director

4400 N.W. 87th Avenue
Doral, FL 33178
800-936-7259
www.trumpnationaldoral.com/meetings

Facts and Features

Guest Rooms: 643
Meeting Space: 100,000 sf indoor/75,000 sf outdoor.
The 24,079-sf Grand Ballroom accommodates 3,500.
Special Services & Amenities: In-house audio-visual services, onsite FedEx Office Print & Ship Business Center, breakout rooms with built-in screens.



Of all our awards, the one we want most comes from you.

A \$250 million complete transformation garnered us some of the world's most enviable accolades, but we continue to work tirelessly toward the most important honor — your 100% perfect score. Our exceptional service and unique setting with 175,000 sq. ft. of meetings and event space, 643 re-imagined guestrooms, four iconic golf courses, a world class spa, signature dining at BLT Prime and unparalleled amenities, have set a new standard of excellence for conferences and events.

TO PLAN YOUR NEXT EVENT 800.936.7259 | TRUMPNATIONALDORAL.COM



Trump National Doral
MIAMI



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

WYNN LAS VEGAS AND ENCORE

Twelve-Time Winner

'Convention' is a word that evokes thoughts of harsh fluorescent lighting and endless hours in a cavernous, cement-floored space. At Wynn Las Vegas and Encore, that notion couldn't be further from the truth. Award-winning accommodations, tantalizing amenities and thoughtful meeting services all combine to create events your attendees won't soon forget. Meeting rooms have been designed with warmth and comfort in mind, employing natural light and open-air terraces wherever possible.

Masterful Meetings: It's All in the Details

Three column-free ballrooms, 35 meeting rooms and five private boardrooms combine to create more than 260,000 sf of totally customizable meeting space. Many spaces are outfitted with dramatic, floor-to-ceiling windows that offer views of the sparkling waters and manicured gardens of Wynn and Encore's pools. From start to finish, planning will be overseen by your personal Meetings Concierge. The in-house Production Services team is also ready to assist with tech questions to make the most of your presentations. Meanwhile, Wynn's outstanding Catering Services team is devoted to designing personalized menus that combine restaurant-quality cuisine with guest-friendly attention to any dietary needs.

Outstanding Restaurants, Dazzling Entertainment

When business hours end, convention-floor conversations

turn social at nearby lounges, such as Encore's Tower Suite Bar and Parasol Up and Parasol Down, light and airy spaces where you're sure to run into someone you know. For dinner, choices abound courtesy of Wynn and Encore's extraordinary team of award-winning chefs. For artful sushi and savory tepanyaki or robatayaki, Mizumi offers exceptional Japanese cuisine. Prime cuts of beef at SW Steakhouse and modern takes on a classic menu at the flower-filled Jardin are among the other choices that await.

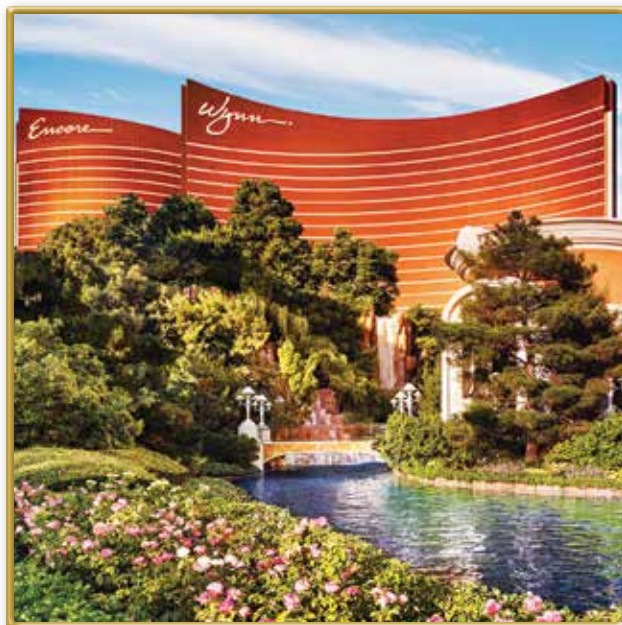
Of course, in Las Vegas, an outstanding dinner rarely means the night has come to an end. Get ready to be utterly dazzled at Le Rêve – The Dream, Wynn's award-winning aquatic production show. Encore Theater also features a lineup of legendary headliners playing their iconic hits live on select dates.

Retreat to Perfectly Appointed Rooms & Suites

The sanctuary-like guest rooms feature soft textures and relaxing, neutral colors, from your luxurious Wynn robe to the plush duvet on your aptly named Wynn Dream bed. Sink into this heavenly haven to enjoy a blissful night's rest.

Is it any wonder Wynn Las Vegas and Encore have captured more *Forbes Travel Guide* Five Star Awards than any other independent hotel company in the world? At Wynn and Encore, excellence in comfort, design and service is always top of mind.

C&IT



STEVE BLANNER
Vice President of Sales

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Las Vegas, NV 89109
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stephen.blanner@wynnlasvegas.com
www.wynnmeetings.com

Facts and Features

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

Meeting Space: 260,000 sf

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



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LAS VEGAS



On The Move



ROBERTS



STOCK



KORIN



KELLEHER



PARKHILL

The Bently Reserve in San Francisco, California, has appointed **Kelly Roberts** as event sales manager. She previously served as assistant sales manager for AEG Presents.

Kimpton Taconic in Manchester, Vermont, has appointed **Parley Stock** as director of sales and marketing. He was director of sales and marketing at FOUND:RE Phoenix.

Teneo Hospitality Group, Eden Prairie, Minnesota, has named **Bob Korin** as director of sales for the Northeast region, based in Connecticut. He was director of national accounts for Hilton Hawaii. **Meghan Kelleher** was named as director of sales North-east. She was director of national accounts for Chatham Bars Inn in Chatham, Massachusetts.

Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, has promoted **Lynnette Parkhill** to director of group sales. She most recently served as a senior sales executive. **C&IT**



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A man in a dark suit and a white hat with 'LAGN' on it is playing a large brass tuba. He is sitting on a wooden stool in a bar with red walls and dark wood paneling. The tuba is positioned around his neck and shoulders. The background shows a bar counter with various items and a mirror.

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