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# CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS



Celebrity Cruises' Celebrity Edge offers a variety of innovative features that have caught the attention of corporate meeting planners.

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Photo by Celebrity Cruises

## Meetings at Sea

How Planners Motivate Top Performers  
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## What's on Planners' Minds Today?

Savvy and Experienced Meeting Pros Share Their Insights and Perspectives PAGE 22

## Healthy Choice

Healthy F&B Options Are Showing Up More Frequently at Events PAGE 28



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Incentive travel destinations ranging from well-established winners to little-known wonders give planners plenty of global options. **PAGE 46**



Colorado is surrounded by towns that echo the Old West, but one of its most famous hotels is the prestigious Broadmoor Resort. **PAGE 52**

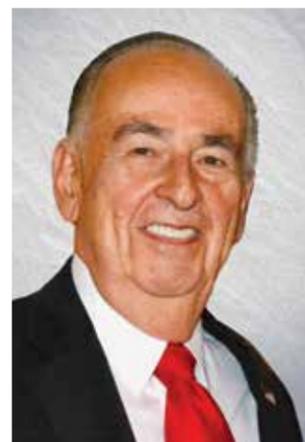


The abundance of luxurious hotels on the Strip with large meeting spaces keep event planners returning year after year. **PAGE 58**

# Publisher's Message

## All Aboard

Whether you are a seasoned meeting planner or novice in the business, searching for the right fit for your next event can be challenging. Do you plan on repeating a previous hotel or resort choice or are you willing to consider a growing alternative with a wide variety of amenities? Cruise ships can be your unique alternative to excite attendees while taking advantage of up-to-date meeting facilities to accommodate your groups of all sizes. "Meetings at Sea," beginning on Page



32, affords a wide variety of choices including the introduction of Celebrity Cruises' "Celebrity Edge" scheduled to begin service in December featuring The Meeting Place, an area designed for corporate groups. The venue offers soundproof dividers, built-in AV, ocean views and other amenities. "One of the most exciting things about Celebrity Edge is all the new revolutionary features she will be providing attendees with," says Ailene Sorice, director, corporate and incentive group sales, Corporate Cruise Consultants.

Whether by land or by sea with plentiful options both domestic and international, you should turn to Page 46 for "Top Incentive Travel Destinations"

from "Down Under" in Australia to the tropical paradise of Hawaii or exploring the Mediterranean climate in Croatia. According to Ina Rodin, director North America, Croatian National Tourist Office, "Each region offers its own unique characteristics, such as natural beauty, history and festivals, from traditional to current. Attendees will be inspired and have memories that will last forever."

Wherever your group may be, when it comes to food and beverage, something important that attendees demand is healthy dining options. "Healthy Choice" on Page 28 attests that these nutritional choices are being offered more often today at meetings and events. "There's scientific proof that when you offer attendees the right options, they feel better, are happier and learn more," says Holly Swanzy, CIS, senior program manager at Brightspot Incentives & Events in Irving, Texas. Whether it's vegan, gluten-free or low-carb, chefs are cooking up something to please everyone.

Finally, our IMEX America 2018 Preview begins on Page 14. This premier annual event in Las Vegas provides educational seminars covering all key issues currently affecting the industry. Hope to see you in Las Vegas!

Harvey Grotsky  
Publisher

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A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
**Harvey Grotsky**  
harvey.grotsky@themeetingmagazines.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
**Mitch D. Miller**  
mitch.miller@themeetingmagazines.com

MANAGING EDITOR  
**Bonnie Schultz**  
bonnie.schultz@themeetingmagazines.com

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR  
**Debbie Ryan**  
debbie.ryan@themeetingmagazines.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS  
**Sophia Bennett  
Ron Bernthal  
John Buchanan  
Sara Churchville  
Cynthia Dial  
Maura Keller  
Christine Loomis  
Derek Reveron  
Mark Rowh  
Patrick Simms  
David Swanson**

PRESIDENT & CEO  
**Harvey Grotsky**

VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS  
**David Middlebrook**  
david.middlebrook@themeetingmagazines.com

ADVERTISING SALES OFFICES  
2700 N. Military Trail, Suite 120  
Boca Raton, FL 33431-6394  
561-989-0600 Fax: 561-989-9509  
advertising@themeetingmagazines.com

MIDWEST STATES  
**Bob Mitchell**  
630-541-3388 • Mobile: 630-235-0126  
bob.mitchell@themeetingmagazines.com

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## ALHI Expands Global Convention Portfolio

ORLANDO — Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI), which serves as the global sales force for hundreds of luxury independent hotels, has increased its domestic and international footprint with the addition of new hotels and brands in destinations with emerging meeting and incentive markets. New properties in the portfolio include: Park Hotel Amsterdam in The Netherlands; The Apurva Kempinski Bali in Indonesia; The Capitol Kempinski Hotel Singapore; Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows in Santa Monica, California; the Paradise Point Resort & Spa in San Diego, California; the Fairmont Dallas Hotel and newly renovated Hotel Crescent Court, both in Dallas, Texas.

These recent additions bring ALHI's current portfolio to more than 250 hotels and resorts worldwide, including four in The Netherlands, two in Singapore, two in Indonesia, 31 in California and 12 in Texas. [www.alhi.com](http://www.alhi.com).

## Visit Spokane President & CEO Resigns

SPOKANE, WA — Visit Spokane announced Cheryl Y. Kilday has resigned as president and CEO. Kilday, who has



KILDAY

served in her role for eight years, will be moving to North Myrtle Beach in South Carolina to serve as CEO of the Chamber of Commerce CVB. SearchWide

Global has been retained to conduct a national search for a new Visit Spokane president and CEO. The hiring process is expected to take 10 to 12 weeks. In the interim, Vice President of Strategic Development & Operations TJ Hake will serve in the position.

Kilday's last day with Visit Spokane will be October 12. [www.visitspokane.com](http://www.visitspokane.com)

## Hilton Announces New Leader for Americas Region

MCLEAN, VA — Hilton has appointed Danny Hughes as executive vice president and president, Americas. Hughes will oversee Hilton's interests across North, Central and South America with a focus on enhancing the managed portfolio.



HUGHES

Since 2014, Hughes has led Hilton's Revenue Management and Sales team as senior vice president and commercial director in the Americas. In this role, he led more than 4,000 team members delivering growth for Hilton's portfolio of 14 industry-leading brands. He was central to strengthening the company's revenue and distribution strategies, while focusing on creating outstanding experiences for guests.

Hughes previously served as senior vice president, Latin America and Caribbean, where in partnership with Hilton's diverse ownership groups, he was responsible for expanding Hilton's portfolio from one brand (Hilton Hotels & Resorts) to nine brands across 25 countries and territories. [www.hilton.com](http://www.hilton.com)

## Visit Philadelphia Names Jeff Guaracino President & CEO

PHILADELPHIA — The Board of Directors of Visit Philadelphia announced that Jeff Guaracino has been selected to lead Visit Philadelphia and its staff as president and CEO. Guaracino has been part of Visit Philadelphia's growth since its early days. He joined the organization in September 2001 and spent more than a decade in leadership roles. In 2012, he left to serve as chief strategy and communications officer for the Atlantic City Alliance (ACA), a New Jersey-based destination marketing organization, and later became that organization's executive director. In 2016, Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney recruited Guaracino to serve as president and CEO of Welcome America, Inc., a nonprofit organization in a public-private partnership with Philadelphia to produce citywide events.



GUARACINO

"We are confident that Jeff's leadership will further elevate Philadelphia's stature for both U.S. and global audiences," says Manuel N. Stamatakis, chair of Visit Philadelphia's Board of Directors. [www.visitphilly.com](http://www.visitphilly.com)

## Nashville Leads Tennessee Tourism in Visitor Spending

NASHVILLE — Nashville's tourism industry once again leads the state of Tennessee with \$6.5 billion in visitor spending in 2017. Nashville's \$6.5 billion represents nearly one-third of domestic visitor spending across Tennessee and is an 8.5 percent increase over the previous year's \$6 billion visitor spending level.

Among the Top Five counties, Davidson County (Nashville) was followed by Shelby (Memphis), \$3.5 billion; Sevier (Great Smoky Mountains, Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge), \$2.3 billion; Hamilton (Chattanooga), \$1.1 billion; and Knox (Knoxville), \$1.1 billion.

For six consecutive years, Nashville has been named by several travel outlets as a top global destination. Nine new hotel properties opened last year, and seven properties with 1,380 rooms have opened so far this year. The Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp has worked to continue the tourism momentum by hosting large events during the year, which bring in hundreds of thousands of attendees and generate significant visitor spending. [www.visitmusiccity.com](http://www.visitmusiccity.com)

## Omni Launches Planner Loyalty Program

DALLAS — Omni Hotels & Resorts has launched its Omni Select Planner program for meeting planners, offering immediately redeem-



SURETTE

able rewards and benefits. Meeting and event planners can now earn free nights, tier status and local experiences with every booking. "We looked at our existing loyalty program, and industry programs overall, and found we had a real opportunity to recognize and thank our clients in a different way," says Dan Surette, senior vice president of sales and marketing for Omni Hotels & Resorts. "Beyond a strong loyalty program that gives back to our valued planners, we know that genuine hospitality and service matters. Our planners can truly book with confidence, as we are in it together."

Select Planner is the newest way to earn in Omni's Select Guest loyalty program. Members can earn award and tier credits immediately upon signing a group or catering booking, allowing the planner to earn free nights faster and offering an accelerated path to elite-level status. In addition to free room nights redeemable at any Omni hotel or resort, benefits include locally inspired welcome amenities and experiences, flexible check-in and checkouts, shoe shines and pressings, complimentary water, Wi-Fi and more. Additionally, members can track their rewards and manage their preferences in one user-friendly Select Guest account.

Planners earn one award credit per \$1,000 and one tier credit per \$10,000 booked. Twenty award credits can be redeemed for a free night at any of Omni's luxury resorts and hotels across North America.

[www.omnihotels.com/selectplanner](http://www.omnihotels.com/selectplanner)

# Tips & Trends

## Five Ways to Be a Better Speaker

Knowledge is different from information: Knowledge is insight, not just an accumulation of facts. Here's how to show what you know without being annoying.

### 1. DO YOUR HOMEWORK

The starting point is knowing what you're talking about. If you comment at a meeting, be sure you're on sound footing. Make certain your facts are correct, your sources are accurate and your insights are grounded in the most current information.

Also prepare for impromptu conversations. Be ready for chance encounters in the corridors, elevators or around the coffee machine.

### 2. BOIL IT DOWN TO ONE MESSAGE

A good way to turn off your listeners is with an information dump. If you want to sound knowledgeable, formulate a single idea from the material you've gathered, and deliver it clearly.

No matter how much you know on a topic, the secret to audience engagement is to boil it down to a single, compelling idea. Say, "Here's what I believe..." or "My point is this..." Be sure to state this idea in one short, sharply focused sentence that will center your audience on a single meaningful thought.

### 3. PROVIDE A CLEAR STRUCTURE

Once you state your idea, make the depth of your knowledge clear by offering proof points that support your thought.

These points can be organized in a variety of ways, including Reasons, Ways, Steps in a Process or a Challenge/Response.

Give your listeners clear signposts as you proceed through your structure. Use tags like "The first reason," "The second reason" or "The challenge we faced..." and "Our response was a collaborative one."

### 4. SIMPLIFY YOUR LANGUAGE

Ironically, the simpler your words and sentences, the more profound you'll sound. Suppose a colleague reporting on a project says: "The satisfaction of all parameters implicates the completion of the project mandate by Q4." Hearing that, you have every right to be puzzled. A truly knowledgeable colleague would simply say: "We expect to complete this project by year end." True wisdom lies in clarity, so choose simple words and short sentences.

### 5. CHOOSE YOUR MOMENTS

Finally, pick the right moments to speak up and share your views.

Someone who is always speaking up to show how smart he (or she) is will sound pompous rather than knowledgeable. Picking your spots means showing respect for the wisdom others bring. Then you can enter the conversation and build upon what others have said. That's a good example of leadership — and knowledge in action.

Today, with so much data available to all of us, there's a premium on being truly knowledgeable. To earn that mark of distinction, check your facts, distill your information into a key message, provide a clear structure and easily accessible language — and deliver your insights at the appropriate moment. Those skills will make you come across as knowledgeable every time you speak.

— Judith Humphrey



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Estancia La Jolla Hotel & Spa  
Fairmont Grand Del Mar  
Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows  
Fashion Island Hotel Newport Beach  
Hard Rock Hotel San Diego  
Hotel Irvine  
Hotel Nikko San Francisco  
InterContinental Mark Hopkins  
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InterContinental San Diego  
Loews Coronado Bay  
Loews Hollywood Hotel  
Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel  
Miramonte Indian Wells Resort & Spa  
Monarch Beach Resort  
Ojai Valley Inn & Spa  
Omni La Costa Resort & Spa  
Paradise Point Resort & Spa

Paséa Hotel & Spa

Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay  
Rancho Bernardo Inn  
Resort at Squaw Creek Surf & Sand Resort  
Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite  
Terranea Resort  
The Inn at Spanish Bay  
The Langham Huntington  
The Lodge at Pebble Beach  
The Meritage Resort and Spa  
The Resort at Pelican Hill

COLORADO

Gateway Canyons Resort & Spa  
The Broadmoor  
The Sebastian-Vail

CONNECTICUT

Foxwoods Resort Casino  
Mohegan Sun

FLORIDA

Fontainebleau  
InterContinental Miami  
Lodge & Club at Ponte Vedra  
Loews Miami Beach Hotel  
Loews Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando®  
Loews Royal Pacific at Universal Orlando®  
Loews Sapphire Falls Resort at Universal Orlando®

Naples Grande Beach Resort

Ocean Reef Club  
Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort  
Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate  
One Ocean Resort & Spa  
PGA National Resort & Spa  
Ponte Vedra Inn & Club  
Rosen Shingle Creek  
Saddlebrook Resort  
Streamsong Resort  
The Biltmore  
The Breakers  
The Don CeSar Hotel  
The Henderson  
The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club  
The Villas of Grand Cypress  
Trump National Doral Miami

GEORGIA

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InterContinental Buckhead Atlanta  
Loews Atlanta Hotel  
Omni Atlanta Hotel at CNN Center  
The Cloister at Sea Island  
The Lodge at Sea Island Golf Club

HAWAII

Halekulani  
Mauna Lani Bay Hotel & Bungalows

The MODERN Honolulu  
Turtle Bay Resort

IDAHO

Sun Valley Resort  
The Coeur d'Alene Resort

ILLINOIS

Fairmont Chicago, Millennium Park  
InterContinental Chicago  
Loews Chicago Hotel  
Loews Chicago O'Hare Hotel  
The Langham Chicago  
The Peninsula Chicago

KENTUCKY

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LOUISIANA

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Loews New Orleans Hotel  
Royal Sonesta New Orleans

MAINE

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Ocean Edge Resort & Golf Club

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The Langham Boston

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MINNESOTA

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MISSISSIPPI

Beau Rivage Resort & Casino

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Royal Sonesta Hotel  
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Delano Las Vegas  
Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino  
MGM Grand Hotel & Casino  
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The Signature at MGM Grand  
Vdara Hotel & Spa

NEW JERSEY

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Montage Palmetto Bluff  
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Stowe Mountain Lodge

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Colonial Williamsburg Hotels  
Lansdowne Resort & Spa  
Salamander Resort & Spa

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Mandarin Oriental,  
Washington D.C.

Omni Shoreham Hotel  
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The Watergate Hotel  
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By Fintan Connolly

# Recognizing Performance and Creating Rewarding Work Experiences Around the Globe

In today's ever-expanding global economy, multinational companies with culturally diverse employee groups need to adopt new and creative ways to engage employees and reward performance across their organizations, says a new white paper from the Incentive & Engagement Solution Providers (IESP).

Before addressing some of the specifics of "Overcoming Challenges to Recognizing Performance in a Multicultural Workforce," it's helpful to look at the dramatic transformation happening in today's workplaces.

Organizations need to win the hearts and minds of employees by providing positive experiences where they feel inspired to do their best work. This "human era" embodies a time when work has the potential to be a more rewarding experience for employees. Seeing firsthand how this battle for their hearts and minds is played out daily through their workplace experiences, organizations are quickly re-examining their employees' experiences at work as a path to improved job performance and sustained competitive advantage.

Well-designed recognition programs can be a significant contributor to a rewarding work experience. Providing reward options that are relevant to specific cultures and geographies helps employees feel more respected and appreciated while also gaining a greater sense of how attuned the organization is to their needs.

Companies should be prepared to address several questions when mapping out an international recognition program.

1. How many languages (and in how many dialects) do the employees speak?
2. How many currencies do they use?
3. How mobile is the staff?
4. Can the organization ensure staff equitable rewards which automatically conform to standard of living indexes?
5. Can the rewards be sourced locally?
6. Is it possible to cost-effectively get rewards to the employees at their locations without issues at border crossings?

The IESP white paper also addressed adherence to government regulations. It's important for global program managers to ask about tax compliance when developing their programs. If the program is audited, proof of compliance will be needed.

## Social Recognition

Another key element of achieving a human workplace, through positive employee experiences lies in social recognition. An important finding outlined in the 2016 Employee Recognition Survey, published by Globoforce and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Foundation, is that social recognition programs tied to organizational values can outperform other programs in terms of delivering a return on investment, reinforcing corporate values and maintaining a strong employer brand. When it comes to achieving a more human workplace through the power of social recognition, it's important for organizations to consider the following.

## Values-based Recognition Programs

The Employee Recognition Survey, which surveyed nearly 800 HR leaders, indicates that organizations that dedicate 1 percent or more of payroll to values-based rewards and recognition are more likely to perceive greater impacts on retention and financial outcomes. Additionally, HR leaders with values-based recognition programs in place are three-and-a-half times more likely to say their program helps HR professionals attract new job candidates, and two times more likely to help retain employees (88 percent vs. 44 percent).

In contrast, companies that do not invest in values-based recognition are five times more likely to rate their recognition program as poor, compared to companies that spend 1 percent or more.

## Company Values and Goals

The challenge many companies face today is how to make core company values practicable. Considering social recognition is designed with awards that specifically map back to each value, it integrates those ideals into employees' everyday thoughts and actions. Ultimately, giving and receiving visible recognition throughout an organization helps establish connections between employees, while also reinforcing behaviors that drive the culture of an organization.

## Empower Employees

While managers play a prominent role in employees' performance and growth, the reality is an employee's colleagues are often more knowledgeable about their co-workers' contribu-

tions, behaviors and achievements than senior leaders. That's why it's important to provide employees with the power to recognize, praise and appreciate one another in meaningful ways. According to the Employee Experience Index, 83 percent of employees report a positive employee experience when they feel recognized through awards and other means for the good work they do.

Fostering co-worker relationships is one way to empower employees to recognize each other. In fact, when those relationships are present in the workplace, employees report a much more positive employee experience than when that support is absent (77 percent compared to 35 percent). Co-worker relationships start with common connections and similarities

all employees, companies can build more connected and fully engaged workforces.

Further guidelines for addressing the needs of a multi-generational workforce include:

**Make it matter** — Help employees see the meaning and purpose in their work by uniting them behind the company vision and inciting passion to achieve company objectives.

**Reward frequently and in a timely manner** — Make sure the recognition moment closely follows the act that is being recognized to ensure the act is top-of-mind.

**Give the reward of choice** — Cater to the demographic of a global, multigenerational workforce and their unique needs by letting them invest in their communities with broad, local choice.

## Well-designed recognition programs can be a significant contributor to a rewarding work experience.

between colleagues, but can be amplified through company outings and social events, and even company-wide celebrations. Years of service anniversaries, for example, offer the opportunity for an entire company to take part in celebrating their colleagues' contributions, creating powerful moments of inspiration, gratitude and recognition.

## Recognize in the Moment

As managers and team members increasingly travel and work remotely, there is often a time gap following a recognition moment. The result is a squandered opportunity to reinforce the desired behaviors and employee performance that enhance and transform a company's culture. By utilizing mobile social recognition solutions, managers and peers can give, receive, approve and redeem recognition awards — anywhere and anytime — thereby ensuring strong performance and desired behaviors never get missed or remembered incorrectly. Through recognition that is timely, values-driven and open to

**Involve everyone** — Move beyond traditional elitist programs that only target the top 10 percent to involve up to 90 percent of employees in a culture of recognition.

**Measure results to ensure success** — When measured appropriately, recognition can reveal patterns of behaviors and understanding of company values and objectives.

## The ROI of Recognition

Feedback and recognition of performance are critical to positive employee experiences, as well as opportunities for professional development and growth. The Employee Experience Index shows that 83 percent of employees who receive recognition for their performance, and 80 percent of those who receive feedback, report a positive employee experience.

Employees' attitudes toward change and optimism for the future correlate with both recognition efforts and efforts to build a more human workplace. Employees trust colleagues most, but it is trust for leaders that most impacts culture. **C&IT**



**Fintan Connolly**

As Global eCommerce Manager for Globoforce, Connolly leads a team of experts distributed across diverse geographies to manage and build the world's most expansive and exciting employee eCommerce network. Connolly is currently Board Secretary for the Incentive Marketing Association (IMA), and he has served on the IMA Europe Chapter Board.

By Richelle Taylor

## Four Meeting Trends That Can Make a Big Impact

People often erroneously think the latest trends are only worth implementing for large, splashy events. Seasoned planners know small meetings require the same attention as a bigger event, just with a slightly different twist. That means there are plenty of opportunities to take advantage of new trends when planning your next event — large or small.



The landscape for events continues to change. What used to be fresh and exciting becomes mainstream and expected, while event audiences continue to clamor for something new and unique. When you're planning your next event, keep these four hot trends in mind:

### Eco-Friendly Everything

Sustainability has been trending upward, especially as negative effects of unsustainable practices — such as single-use plastics like straws — come back to haunt. Did you know every day in the United States we use enough plastic straws to circle the Earth 2.5 times?

It's no surprise 2018 marked the first-ever national Skip the Straw day. Sponsors and brands are now more conscious of sustainability options, and they are extending their social responsibility efforts into the events they hold. Planners concerned about the environmental impact of their events may find the elimination of single-use plastic items an effective way to reduce the mark.

How do you get started? Replace single-use plastic items, such as straws, utensils and coffee pods, with alternative materials or omit them altogether. We're seeing more frequent use of recyclable wooden utensils, and many hotels and restaurants are going strawless, offering paper straws only upon request.

### Rethinking Conference/Meeting Layout

Events have historically focused on creating a good flow for attendees. Rethink your layout and incorporate changes that will cultivate a different experience for meeting attendees. This way, you can leverage an organic layout at events to create a new and engaging attendee experience.

How do you get started? Traditional events often use square or rectangular layouts so consider a different stage layout to shake things up. A "Burning Man"-style layout has less concern about the event flow and more emphasis on demonstrating a creative identity.

### Concept of "Play"

The ability to play is not for children alone. Play is for all ages and has been shown to relieve stress, enhance creativity, improve relationships and keep adults feeling young.

The concept of play is a great way for event planners to



tap into nostalgic and retro themes that are fun, meaningful and engaging for attendees. Play can also be woven into an agenda to enhance networking, teamwork and create a way for attendees to unwind and open up their minds.

How do you get started? The concept of play is very broad so there are many ways to try this at your next event. Recreate escape room puzzles using business challenges. Hold a rock/paper/scissors competition. Play dodge ball. Invite mascots from local sports teams to mingle with attendees. Incorporate amusement rides into outdoor spaces. Dedicate sessions or tracks to play. The opportunities are truly endless!

### Hitting the Road

Take your events on the road to maximize your audience reach. It's getting harder for attendees to take time away from the office to attend events that require travel and overnight stays, especially for C-level decision makers. Research shows "time away from the office" is one of the top reasons people do not register for events.

How do you get started? Consider multiple, smaller, regional events rather than one large national or global event. Take a look at your CRM database to identify concentrations of high-value audiences to see if there is critical mass in a manageable number of locations.

Smaller events can often provide a more effective way to reach your target audiences and to test the content from event to event. Shorter events can also allow attendees to spend more time with you rather than traveling.

### Which Trends Will You Try?

The incorporation of some of the hottest trends can make your events fresh, rewarding and unforgettable. Event trends will continue to drive the industry's future so don't be shy when considering how to incorporate them into your events whenever it pairs with a business reason to do so.

By leveraging the latest trends in meetings and events, you can create exciting, new opportunities for exceptional audience engagement that also inspires action and delivers results, no matter the size of your meeting or event. **C&IT**



### Richelle Taylor

is Vice President, Strategic Marketing for One10 — a leader in performance improvement and marketing services in North America. Taylor oversees One10's go-to-market strategy and its Incentives & Recognition business segment, which includes global rewards as well as technology development for One10's propriety performance improvement platform, PerformX.

# 'What's New and What Matters' Evolves

## IMEX America Education Program

IMEX America, taking place October 16 to 18 at the Sands Expo and Convention Center at The Venetian | The Palazzo in Las Vegas, will live out its mission to "educate, innovate and help all its clients to make powerful connections with the right people" by presenting a comprehensive education program each day of the show.

### SmartMonday

SmartMonday, powered by Meeting Professionals International (MPI), is a full day of free education and networking on October 15 before the show officially opens.

This includes sessions by MPI covering hot topics such as augmented reality, contract litigation, crisis management and women in leadership.

The Event Design Collective is offering attendees the opportunity to gain the highly regarded Event Design Certificate (EDC) Program — Level 1 of Mastery.

A full-day workshop will introduce attendees to the Event Canvas Model, a strategic event management model for customer-centric events.

The Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) and Financial and Insurance Conference Professionals (FICP) will also join together to present their first pan-industry survey into incentive travel.



The programs at IMEX America 2018 in Las Vegas will educate and inspire its clients.

Credit: IMEX America

### Education Sessions

The Inspiration Hub, situated on the show floor, will be the central point of focus for education during the three days of the show. It will cover 10 tracks, including Business Skills, Creative Learning, Personal Development, Technology and Trends & Research.

With more than 180 education sessions to choose from, attendees can tailor their show experience to suit their individual needs.

Many of the key issues currently impacting the industry will be debated, challenged and advised on by experts, with many sessions taking an interactive and collaborative approach.

C2 International, the ground-breaking leader in business conferences, will deliver the show's Thursday morning collaborative session — Emotions and Technology: An Exploration of Audience Connection.

One of C2's stellar speakers will demonstrate how C2 harnesses tech

in new ways, opening up a world of opportunities to engage and delight participants on a whole new level.

Harvard University instructor Susan Robertson from Sharpen Innovation will show attendees how to develop and foster a Culture of Curiosity.

James Morgan from Event Tech Labs and the University of Westminster presents the findings of a two-year research project into creativity in events in Managing a creative environment.

"Learn how to turn imagination into results" is the aim of Blendz Events' session, Fostering a Creative Culture in the Workplace.

### Other Topics

Delivering business success and delegate engagement are the focus of many other sessions, including Event-Mobi's Content: Your Secret Weapon to Inspire, Engage and Inform, and Can a Single Trade Show Inspire an Entire Year of Engaging Content? by Robyn

Davies, a consultant who specializes in trade show strategy.

Attendees can also discover what's on the horizon next year when American Express Meetings & Events reveals its 2019 global meetings and events trends.

### Technology

Technology is always a cornerstone of IMEX America's education, and this year is no exception.

Virtual reality, artificial intelligence, apps, blockchain and cryptocurrency are all explored, showing how these can be applied to events.

The Meeting Pool will deliver a session on apps to boost personal and professional productivity, showcasing the latest and greatest to help planners get connected, stay organized and be collaborative.

Picking up on IMEX's legacy Talking Point, BestCities Global Alliance will discuss impactful legacy stories, guidelines for building strong city collaboration and best practices for implementation and reporting. Their session — What Societal Impact Can Your Meeting Have on a City — is one of the many ways the theme of legacy will come alive at the show.

Alongside the show floor education are inspirational keynote and master-class presentations which begin each day of the show, tapping into what's hot in meetings and events right now — legacy, leadership, experiential formats and storytelling.

Carina Bauer, CEO of the IMEX Group, says, "Our free education program evolves each year to embrace the latest developments, technologies and trends. The world of meetings and events is changing rapidly, and these sessions help attendees to focus in on what's new and what matters, ultimately supporting them in their business needs."

"The goal is for people to walk away with new ideas and inspiration that they can explore, discuss and pursue both at the show and long afterward."

Registration is free.

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

C&IT

## Smart Monday Powered by MPI

The schedule of Education and Events at IMEX America on Monday, October 15, 2018

7:00 am – 3:00 pm • SITE Young Leaders Conference • SITE  
 7:15 am – 8:15 am • Smart Monday Breakfast sponsored by Visit Fort Worth  
 8:00 am – 8:20 am • Mindful Morning • Lee Papa LLC  
 8:00 am – 1:00 pm • CIS Certified Incentive Specialist • SITE CIS  
 8:00 am – 2:00 pm • Shamrock Invitational Golf Classic • Northstar Meetings Group  
 8:00 am – 6:00 pm • Executive Meeting Forum • IMEX Group  
 8:00 am – 6:00 pm • The North American EventsAIR User Conference • EventsAIR  
 8:30 am – 9:30 am • MPI Keynote – Legacy: The Power of Events • MPI  
 8:30 am – 4:30 pm • IAEE CEM Learning Program Selecting Service Contractors • IAEE  
 9:00 am – 5:30 pm • The Best of Meeting Design Technology in a Day • MDI  
 9:30 am – 12:00 pm • Paws For a Break • MPI  
 9:30 am – 5:30 pm • Giving Back Booth • IMEX Group  
 9:40 am – 10:00 am • Roadmap to Living Mindfully: Embracing the Now • Lee Papa LLC  
 10:00 am – 11:00 am • Put the Sizzle in Your Sales • MPI  
 10:00 am – 11:00 am • Leadership 2.0: The Importance of Conflict Management and Accountability MPI  
 10:00 am – 11:00 am • VR/AR Applications You Can Implement Tomorrow • MPI  
 10:00 am – 11:00 am • Cybersecurity: Tackling Industry Vulnerabilities • MPI  
 10:00 am – 11:00 am • Management Solution Group • MPI  
 10:00 am – 11:00 am • Deep Dive Part 1: Meeting and Event Contract Litigation: You be the Jury • MPI  
 10:00 am – 11:00 am • Deep Dive Part 1: Culture of Curiosity • Sharpen Innovation  
 10:00 am – 5:00 pm • Crisis Communications: Anticipate and Communicate • MPI  
 10:00 am – 5:00 pm • Event Design Certificate Program – Level 1 of Mastery • Event Design Collective  
 11:00 am – 11:15 am • Guided Meditation: Journey by the River • Lee Papa LLC  
 11:15 am – 12:15 pm • Heat Maps: How Real-time Traffic Can Change the Future of Meetings • MPI  
 11:15 am – 12:15 pm • Wellness in the Events Industry • MPI  
 11:15 am – 12:15 pm • Teambuilding With the Wild Amazing Chase • MPI  
 11:15 am – 12:15 pm • SITE, IRF and FICP's First Pan-industry Survey of Incentive Travel • MPI  
 11:15 am – 12:15 pm • Make It Or Break It: Communication Techniques • MPI  
 11:15 am – 12:15 pm • MeetingCentric Tour: Back of House Lessons • Venetian/Palazzo/Sands Expo  
 11:15 am – 12:15 pm • Deep Dive Part 2: Meeting and Event Contract Litigation: You Be the Jury • MPI  
 11:15 am – 12:15 pm • Senior Professional Masters Series: Data Driven Event Design • MPI

11:15 am – 12:15 pm • Create Different: Negotiate Like a Pirate • Play With a Purpose  
 11:15 am – 12:15 pm • Deep Dive Part 2: Culture of Curiosity • Sharpen Innovation  
 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm • Smart Monday Lunch sponsored by Marriott International • MPI  
 12:30 pm – 5:40 pm • Association Leadership Forum • IMEX Group and ASAE  
 12:45 pm – 1:00 pm • Guided Meditation: The Waterfall Experience • Lee Papa LLC  
 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm • Women in Leadership: Executive Leadership Skills • MPI  
 1:30 pm – 1:45 pm • Guided Meditation: Mindful Awareness Exercise • Lee Papa LLC  
 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm • Paws For a Break • MPI  
 1:45 pm – 3:00 pm • More Than a Meeting • ICCA  
 1:45 pm – 3:00 pm • RFP Doesn't Stand for Really Frustrating Process • MPI  
 1:45 pm – 3:00 pm • MeetingCentric Tour: Back of House Lessons • Venetian/Palazzo/Sands Expo  
 1:45 pm – 3:00 pm • Redesigning Inclusive and Welcoming Events by Overcoming Unconscious Bias • MPI  
 1:45 pm – 3:00 pm • The Eight Debate: Identifying Solutions to Challenges in Buyer and Hotel Supplier Relationships • MPI  
 1:45 pm – 3:00 pm • The Green White Paper • BCD M&E  
 1:45 pm – 3:00 pm • Placing the Participant at the Center of Events • C2  
 1:45 pm – 3:00 pm • Senior Professional Masters Series Case Study: Applying Data to Event Design • MPI  
 1:45 pm – 3:00 pm • Create Different: The Disruptive, the Playful and Other Irreverent Adventures • Play With a Purpose  
 3:00 pm – 3:20 pm • Guided Meditation: The Yellow Brick Road • Lee Papa LLC  
 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm • What to Expect When Organizing International Meetings • ICCA  
 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm • I Love My Client, But They Have This One Annoying Habit... • MPI  
 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm • How the Past Shapes the Future: Crisis Management in Urban Public Spaces • MPI  
 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm • How to Thrive in the New Era of Data Privacy: A Forensic Insight to GDPR • MPI  
 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm • MeetingCentric Tour: Back of House Lessons • Venetian/Palazzo/Sands Expo  
 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm • Latest Trends in Conference Food and Beverage • MPI  
 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm • Create Different: Who Stole My Audience? • Play With a Purpose  
 4:00 pm – 4:20 pm • Guided Meditation: Journey on a Cloud • Lee Papa LLC  
 5:00 pm – 7:30 pm • IMEX Lip Smacking Foodie Tour (Downtown) • Lip Smacking  
 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm • Association Evening • IMEX Group  
 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm • IMEX Lip Smacking Foodie Tour (The Strip) • Lip Smacking  
 7:00 pm – 10:00 pm • SITE Nite North America • SITE

## AULANI, a Disney Resort in Ko Olina, Hawai'i

92-1185 Ali'inui Drive  
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808-674-6394  
Fax: 808-674-6399  
info@disneymeetings.com  
www.DisneyAulani.com



**A**ULANI, a Disney Resort & Spa, will make powerful connections with your attendees. It's a celebration of Hawaiian culture, history and tradition that's the perfect location for meetings and incentives.

Set on the pristine western coastline of O'ahu on the beautiful beaches of Ko Olina, this 21-acre oceanfront resort offers more than 76,000 square feet of stunning outdoor venues and a 21,000-square-foot conference center. And all of it — the space, the support and the programming — is fully customizable. Explore an array of unparalleled resort amenities and features for your attendees.

AULANI Resort is an island retreat like no other, immersing guests in Hawaiian traditions in a breathtaking setting removed from the crowds of Waikiki. With so many all-inclusive vacation activities and amenities at your disposal, guests can enjoy days of fun without ever having to leave — all at no additional charge.

Add to that the award-winning Laniwai Spa — a full-

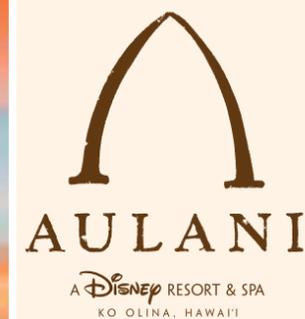
service spa, salon and fitness center, diverse restaurant options including 'AMA'AMA, an elegant oceanfront venue serving classic cuisine, complimentary shuttle service to a variety of shopping options, world-class Disney entertainment, Ko Olina Marina — an 18-hole championship golf course, and the comfort of 832 rooms all inspired by the local artisans and cultural experts of Hawai'i, you've got everything you could want to create an unforgettable experience for your attendees.

In keeping with the rich traditions that inspired AULANI Resort, KA WA'A — A Lū'au offers guests an exhilarating and enchanting journey through Hawaiian history — discovering its deep cultural roots in canoe (wa'a) exploration, which brought the first ancient explorers to the shores of Ko Olina. Join us for an incredible evening of authentic island fare and breathtaking entertainment that brings the legends and lore of ancient Hawai'i to life as only Disney can offer. **C&IT**

Your legend begins at AULANI, a Disney Resort & Spa in Ko Olina, Hawai'i. Set along a tranquil lagoon on the island of O'ahu, the award-winning resort is the ideal location for meetings and incentives, providing your attendees with traditional Hawaiian experiences and a variety of activities including world-class entertainment.

## A whole new world of "Memorable events."

Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa, will make powerful connections with your attendees. It's a celebration of Hawaiian culture, history and tradition that's the perfect location for meetings and incentives. Set on the pristine western coastline of Oahu on the beautiful beaches of Ko Olina, this 21-acre oceanfront resort offers more than 76,000 square feet of stunning outdoor venues and a 21,000 square foot conference center. And all of it — the space, the support and the programming — is fully customizable. Add to that the award-winning Laniwai Spa, fine dining and shopping, world-class Disney entertainment, Ko Olina Marina, an 18-hole championship golf course and the comfort of 832 rooms you've got everything you could want to create an unforgettable experience for your attendees.



AULANI CONFERENCE CENTER	
KAIONA BALLROOM	4,590 SQ FT
KA'ALA BALLROOM	2,885 SQ FT
COVERED PRE-FUNCTION	4,715 SQ FT
KIPUKA LAWN	5,195 SQ FT
KIPUKA COURTYARD	3,633 SQ FT
NA'AUAO ROOM	240 SQ FT

**TOTAL** 21,258 SQ FT

#### OUTDOOR VENUES

WAILANA POOL	9,250 SQ FT
RAINBOW REEF PATIO	1,766 SQ FT
KULA WAI	3,000 SQ FT
KA MAKA LANDING	16,000 SQ FT
HALAWAI LAWN	21,800 SQ FT
AULANI BEACH	20,000+*SQ FT
'AMA'AMA PATIO	4,869 SQ FT
'AMA'AMA VERANDA	
ALOHI POINT	

**TOTAL** 76,685 SQ FT

\* Additional function space may be available, depending on specific event configuration.

For more information contact:

info@disneymeetings.com

Phone  
808-674-6394

Fax  
808-674-6399

Aulani.com

## DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld

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## Grand Hotel Golf Resort & Spa

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# Tropicana Las Vegas — A DoubleTree by Hilton

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Gavin Mealiffe, Vice President of Sales  
gavin.mealiffe@pngaming.com  
tropLV.com



**T**ropicana Las Vegas — a DoubleTree by Hilton continues to surprise meeting planners and their attendees with a convenient location just minutes away from the airport, major convention centers and top entertainment stadiums, and it provides a luxurious yet affordable group experience on the Las Vegas Strip. As part of the Hilton family, we offer Honors points for both guests and meeting planners, making each stay and booking even more rewarding!

Each of the 1,470 guestrooms features luxurious amenities, and guests can stay in the Bungalows, many with balconies overlooking lush landscaping and waterfalls, the casino-adjacent Paradise Tower rooms providing quick access to the Strip or our Club Tower rooms conveniently located near the conference center and our FedEx office business center. For VIPs, the pool and Sky Villas offer a new level of luxury.

Tropicana Las Vegas offers more than 100,000 square feet of meeting space that can be broken into 38 rooms.

The Trinidad Pavilion and meeting rooms provide 55,000 square feet with ground-level access, the Cohiba ballroom offers 25,000 square feet just steps off the foyer of our Club Tower and divides into 11 rooms. Barista Café, just outside of the Cohiba Ballroom, serves coffee, tea, specialty drinks, pastries and sandwiches. The award-winning pool and Tropicana Theater offer spaces for upscale events, along with the Havana Room, a stunning backdrop for galas and receptions, and Sky Beach Club's pool setting can accommodate outdoor events up to 2,000 guests.

On-property dining options include indoor or outdoor dining at Savor The Buffet, a classic upscale experience at Oakville Steakhouse; the new Robert Irvine's Public House, offering a range of comfort food options inspired by the chef; and the newest addition is Red Lotus Asian Kitchen, where you can enjoy unexpected Western twists on traditional Asian cuisine. **C&IT**

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Tropicana Las Vegas — a DoubleTree by Hilton continues to surprise meeting planners and their attendees by providing comfort, convenience, connections and 100,000 sf of meeting space for your event.

# What's on Planners' Minds Today?

Our Group of Savvy and Experienced Meeting Pros Share Their Insights and Perspectives

By Christine Loomis



The core elements of meeting planning remain largely the same. But forces impacting them change regularly, requiring planners to make ongoing adjustments to work parameters and processes. Geopolitical, cultural and economic trends and realities evolve and fluctuate. Technology changes so rapidly it's almost impossible to keep up with, while requirements for safety and security have increased dramatically in the wake of world violence.

So, what is top of mind for planners today? We asked a diverse group of professionals from east to west what is front and center for them, and their answers cover a wide range of topics.

Kristi Casey Sanders, CMP, CMM, DES, HMCC, is director of thought leadership for MPI. She's always looking at what is of importance to meeting planners at the moment, as well as what is likely to be of importance down the road.

Flat budgets and rising costs came immedi-

ately to mind. "Budgets are pretty flat but costs continue to escalate, especially projected hotel costs," she says. "That continues to cause anxiety for meeting professionals."

Another kind of emerging issue: the difference between independent and staff planners and how they're viewed. "Independent planners are tired of being seen as second-class citizens. They're a significant part of the meetings industry, and that's why MPI offers specialized education and community support for them," Sanders notes.

Safety and security, the status of women in the industry, technology and attendee experience are also issues that Sanders says are priorities for planners today.

Lindi Wyner, CMP, senior specialist of meetings and events with American Airlines, believes two of the top three issues facing planners today are event security and hotel/venue flexibility. On the venue issue, she says, "It may be entirely due to the current market, but I am finding it harder and harder to get what I need from some venues that previously were much easier to work with. Venues currently seem to be lacking in flexibility, including availability, rate and space."

On the subject of whether issues have changed over time, Wyner says, "I don't think that these would have been the same issues I would have noted five years ago."

There was a lot of agreement about the most pressing issues among the planners we heard from, and a few subjects that weren't on everyone's mind but maybe should be.

## Inclusivity

For Shannon Yeater, CMP, conference services and events manager with a Tennessee law firm, providing information and selections for diverse audiences is top of mind. "Diversity and inclusivity have become hot topics in the world and in the meetings industry," she says. "It is of utmost importance to plan an agenda, food offerings, leisure activities and other accommodations for an attendee base that is more diverse than we've ever seen. This includes more than the obvious of race, gender and sexuality. It goes further to take into account disabilities, dietary restrictions, language barriers and more. A topic of conversation while planning any event is how to be the most inclusive we can be for all attendees."

## Safety and Security

Yeater also sees safety and security as one of

the top things on planners' minds, in all of its forms. "Safety and security doesn't only mean being secure within your meeting space, conference halls and hotel rooms," she says. "It also extends to our data and attendee information. When planning or attending large conferences, retreats and meetings, there's a lot of personal and company information that gets shared with vendors. It's important that we know these vendors and suppliers will keep company and attendee information private and safe."

Yeater says a new addition to her company's large meeting is a phone app for attendees, and its security was as important as its function. "While searching for this product, safety of attendee and company information was our

**"It is of utmost importance to plan an agenda, food offerings, leisure activities and other accommodations for an attendee base that is more diverse than we've ever seen."**



Shannon Yeater, CMP  
Conference Services and  
Events Manager  
Butler Snow LLP  
Nashville, TN

No. 1 concern and discussion. Part of the criteria in our selection process was how confident we were in the safety measures taken by the supplier to protect all of this information."

Susan Piel, CMP, owner of Spiel Planning in San Francisco, offers this take on security. "As an independent planner with clients in different industries, the biggest issues on my mind these days are related to safety and security for my client and their attendees at each event I manage. I want to ensure that we plan for the correct security for each type of event, and that can vary. I need to make sure the hotel/venue has a good plan in place, and then also supplement on my side for each client to make sure it's appropriate for the attendees at that event. This mostly relates to physical security; however, data security and privacy are also a concern. I try to limit my access to attendee data for especially sensitive information, such as credit cards. If I don't need a copy of the data to get my job done, that's fine with me."

Sanders points out that planners may have more responsibilities in this arena than ever before. "Safety and security is on everyone's mind," she says, "although not all event organizers understand their duty of care responsibility

to keep attendees safe. If the courts side with hotels and declare that venues cannot be held liable if there's a shooting or attack of that kind, planners and their organizations have an even bigger fiscal and legal liability than before."

Fortunately, she adds, MPI has resources. "We convened a risk management conclave to discuss best practices. The result is *The Essential Guide to Safety and Security: Best Practices for*



**"We are seeing requests and expectations for vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free options at all meal events, including event breaks."**

**Nicole R. Benner, CMP**  
Client Events Manager  
BLANKROME  
Philadelphia, PA

*Meeting and Event Planning 2018*, with nearly 400 recommendations for event organizers." Copies are available at [www.mpiweb.org/tools/meeting-and-event-safety-and-security](http://www.mpiweb.org/tools/meeting-and-event-safety-and-security).

#### F&B

Accommodating attendee food requests and working with venues to meet them is definitely a challenge these days.

Nicole R. Benner, CMP, client events manager with a Philadelphia law firm, says, "We are seeing requests and expectations for vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free options at all meal events, including event breaks. I'm located in Philadelphia, and we have an amazing vegan/vegetarian food scene. It's distressing that hotels and event venues still think a plate of pasta primavera is acceptable as a vegetarian/vegan entrée. At this point, these requests should not be surprising, and venues should be prepared to address them with tasty and creative menus."

Some of the challenges relate to attendees themselves.

"I find that attendees frequently do not request vegan and vegetarian meals in advance," Benner says. "I've taken to just including five percent of my attendees in this category. All of the vegetarian meals are consumed regardless of special requests."

Piel says that while F&B is-

issues are not her biggest concerns, it's often frustrating to try to capture everyone's preferences and accommodate them. "I understand if an attendee has a specific allergy or religious diet, but when it starts getting into very minute preferences, it can be really hard to manage. And hotels can get annoyed by so many requests. Moreover, I have a hard time when I have specific meals for people, and they don't even identify themselves at the event."

That can translate into not only wasted food but wasted money, Piel notes. "The hotel makes these dishes, or sometimes, as in the case of Kosher, I pay a big premium for them to be brought in, but the attendee never even claims them."

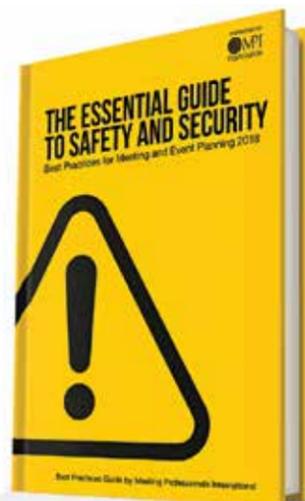
#### The Status of Women in the Events Industry

In the wake of recent events related to how women are treated in offices and industries across the nation, it's no surprise that some planners are thinking about the status of women in the meeting and events industry.

Wyner doesn't see this changing for good or bad. "I think that we're currently staying stagnant, and I don't see any change in the industry for how women are viewed or receiving equal pay. I think our industry has a long way to go to view women in a more professional light and work toward equal pay," she says.

Trina Sharp, CMP, CMM, CED, with Point B Solutions in Portland, Oregon, does see some change. "I've worked with C-level men and women in the corporate industry for more than 20 years. I have also worked with other event planners and suppliers in MPI and locally through my company. For the most part, I have been treated as an equal partner by my colleagues in the event industry and co-workers in my current position. However, there are a lot of event planners who work as an 'assistant' in that field with less responsibility and should not be confused with a planner with more experience and more responsibility," she notes.

"In the last few years, I have seen a change — a change for the positive. The event planner position has become more respected, and people



*The Essential Guide to Safety and Security: Best Practices for Meeting and Event Planning 2018* has nearly 400 recommendations for planners.

are now acknowledging that it isn't just party planning or ordering food. The event planner should have the ability to run and direct a meeting with C-level stakeholders, control and meet a budget that is scrutinized, have a knack for negotiating the bottom line and be able to meet the goals of both internal and external clients," she says. "When you are representing your company and doing the items I've listed above, you really stand out in your company and become an asset. That's when you will be treated as an equal partner."

Yet even when planners take it upon themselves to build skills and be consummate professionals, there can be issues, which has not gone unnoticed by MPI.

"I think our industry is still waiting to have its #MeToo moment," Sanders says. "We know that there's uneven gender representation and pay equity. What we don't know is when abuses of power will be brought to light and bring down prominent players in our industry. We do know a lot of women have stories."

To make it easier for planners to report offenses or receive guidance, MPI has set up a hotline hosted by a third party, EthicsPoint. Planners can learn more at [www.secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/56572/index.html](http://www.secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/56572/index.html).

#### Geopolitics and Economics

Although most planners didn't express concerns about political and economic forces in the world affecting their work, Wyner believes there's reason they should be thinking about them. "This should be a bigger concern to meeting planners. With the trade agreements and agriculture issues now in play, our costs could increase greatly, and there is truly a concern that our budgets will take a big hit as a result."

#### Technology, Digital Events and Attendee Experience

To be sure, technology is advancing at a faster rate than ever before, and its use impacts all areas of life — including meeting and event planning. It's no surprise that Wyner lists "oversaturation of new technology and keeping up with it" as one of the top three issues that challenge her on a regular basis.

But does every event require the latest technology?

Elizabeth Glau, CMP, who works with event tech company Scienso in Portland, Oregon, notes that "the speed of change keeps getting

**"The event planner position has become more respected, and people are now acknowledging that it isn't just party planning or ordering food."**



**Trina Sharp, CMP, CMM, CED**  
Point B Solutions  
Portland, OR

faster and faster," but also points out that the newest technology may or may not be necessary at all conferences.

"There's a theory called 'Jobs to be Done,' and the application here," she says, "is that you need to be very clear about what the job is you are hiring your technology to do. If it is just there for the sake of it, maybe you don't need it."

The best way for planners to know what technology is needed for any given event is to be clear on event objectives. As Sanders notes, "It's not enough just to organize an event. You need to know who you're designing for, what they need and help prepare them to co-create the experience with you. As a result, I conduct a lot of focus groups and meet-ups to better understand for whom I'm creating education and experiences. It helps me accelerate innovation and diversify what we offer in ways that have increasing relevance in the marketplace."

Among the innovations that Glau says planners should think about, and perhaps even request in venue RFPs, are chatbots, "which

**"It's not enough just to organize an event. You need to know who you're designing for, what they need and help prepare them to co-create the experience with you."**



**Kristi Casey Sanders, CMP, CMM, DES, HMCC**  
Director of Thought Leadership  
Meeting Planners International  
Dallas, TX

can be supplemented with the information about an event."

Latest innovations aside, ultimately technology is a powerful tool if planners know how and when to use it. "Access to data and increasingly easy access to insights, as well as the ability to integrate data from one system to another, is a positive change for our industry," Glau says. "This makes organizers much more efficient in proving the value of their events and tying events to business outcomes."

**“I am finding it harder and harder to get what I need from some venues that previously were much easier to work with.”**

**Lindsi Wyner, CMP**  
Senior Specialist, Meetings and Events  
American Airlines  
Fort Worth, TX

### What Young/New Planners Should Be Thinking About

While our professionals readily addressed issues they're confronting these days, they also weighed in on what young or new planners should be focused on that maybe they aren't, simply because they don't yet know every in and out of the job and industry.

“I think young planners have difficulty understanding that everything, including the work done by vendors and venues, is ultimately their responsibility,” Wyner says. “It's easy to tell someone you need something, pay them and assume that what you are asking for will be done the way you want it done. But when there's no follow-up and the ball is dropped, the planner is the one who has to take accountability. As planners, we have a responsibility to our meeting owners to execute their vision and deliver on their needs. We can't blame our partners, venues and vendors if we don't participate in the conversations, set the expectations and do the proper follow-up. I think young planners often take those relationships for granted and make assumptions rather than doing the extra work to ensure the delivery of these needs is precise.”

Sharp says certification and getting involved with professional organizations should be a goal.

“Planners who want this as a career choice need to think about what kind of certification they should get and how to work toward that. There are the following certifications: Certified Meeting Professional (CMP), Certification in Meeting Management (CMM), Certification in Event Design (CED) and others, including an associate degree that some colleges offer in meeting plan-



**Susan Piel, CMP**  
Owner  
Spiel Planning  
San Francisco, CA

**“The biggest issues on my mind these days are related to safety and security for my client and their attendees at each event I manage.”**

ning. Young and new planners should also get a mentor from their local MPI board of directors, who will take the time to meet with them and go through the different options and future planning. Volunteering for your local MPI chapter is also a great way to get your foot in the door. MPI chapters provide continuing education and also offer the best networking you can do to assist you in your job search.”

Benner agrees. “I'd say that ‘kids today’ aren't thinking about the value of membership, participation and eventual leadership in a professional association. It's hard to say what people should be focusing on, but by becoming active as a committee member and then taking on a leadership role in my local MPI chapter, I've learned so much — and not only by attending monthly education programs on new and timely topics in the industry but also by doing tasks that are outside of my usual job functions.”

Benner says volunteering has helped her become well-versed in creating marketing plans, using social media to promote events and boosting events through paid promotion.

“I get to be creative with room set-ups and unconventional layouts to test engagement and excitement for monthly meetings in ways I can't risk with my day job,” she points out. “Honing these new skills in a low-risk volunteer environment allows me to see potential pitfalls and mistakes before they happen in my career, so when I'm able to implement a new idea professionally, I've already tried it out in a volunteer capacity.”

Yeater, too, sees the value of connecting with other professionals — and not just the obvious ones. “One thing I would tell beginning planners and young professionals is to meet everyone, and connect with anyone. We all get caught up in knowing those immediately around us, including our colleagues, shareholders and the vendors we use most frequently,” she says. “However, there is a large network of people in our industry who don't carry the planner title, don't have a product you think you would ever use or don't apparently have the knowledge you think you could learn from.”

Those, in fact, have turned out to be among Yeater's most fruitful contacts.

“The best and most useful relationships in my personal and professional life have grown from those relationships that were not immediately obvious,” she says. “These people can be connections you'll use for future jobs, a referral for a product you thought you may never need for an event or someone who can mentor you when it comes time to earn your CMP, CMM, DMCP or other industry designation.”

“As a new planner and new professional, I suggest you be a sponge and soak up everything you can learn from anyone obviously in the meetings industry, as well as those surprisingly woven into it. You (and your boss) will be pleasantly surprised when some of that seemingly useless or unnecessary information can make you the star of the show!” **C&IT**

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# Healthy Choice

Healthy Food and Beverage Options Are Showing Up More Frequently at Events

By Sophia Bennett

Evidence of the trend toward a healthier lifestyle is everywhere — from magazine headlines to fashion, Fitbits to fitness-focused hotels. In the event industry, the place where it shows up most frequently is the demand for healthier food and beverages.

The need for more nourishing edibles is closely tied to two things: the number of people with food allergies and consumers' growing realization that what they put in their bodies is directly tied to their overall wellness. Rachel Chadderdon, director of catering hospitality for Centerplate/NSBE, the premier catering partner for the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C., believes the growth of allergies or food intolerances is greatly overshadowed by people's desire to make positive lifestyle changes. "The trend to follow such famously followed diets as South Beach, keto and Plant Paradox are driving a significant

"If someone has a question about what's (in the food), we know because we made it. In the kitchen, we're working with knives, not box cutters."

**Christophe Luzeux**  
Executive Chef  
Halifax Convention Centre  
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada



The "Little Pick-Me-Up" is a popular plate with attendees at the Halifax Convention Centre. It has almond and quinoa energy bars, fruit leather and spicy chickpeas.

increase in special meal requests at catered functions," she says.

There's another reason event participants are demanding healthier foods, though. "We're hearing, 'If you're going to take me away from my family for five days and put me in a situation where I'm having to absorb tons of information, I want to be fed properly,'" says Holly Swanzy, CIS, senior program manager at Brightspot Incentives & Events in Irving, Texas. "There's scientific proof that when you feed people the right things, they feel better and are happier and learn more. If you want them to pay attention, you don't want to give them a fatty meal

because after lunch, they're going to fall asleep in the breakout room or go to their room and take a nap. If you're just shoving them full of sweet muffins and croissants, people don't feel good. And we don't want hangry attendees, for sure."

Some people still come to events expecting to splurge, so it's important to strike a balance between offering healthy and more traditional conference foods. Greg Smith, director of food and beverage for the Halifax Convention Centre, perfectly illustrates the paradox of modern menu planning. "Our three most popular items are bacon and chocolate doughnuts, smoked cheddar and apricot sandwiches and poutine. The other one that's popular is what we call a 'Little Pick-Me-Up.' It has almond and quinoa energy bars, fruit leather and spicy chickpeas. People want to be healthy, but they also want to give themselves a little jolt."

As with so many other elements within an event, the decision about how much healthy food to provide is largely dependent on your audience. "I definitely have clients who are much more

concerned with what they put in their bodies," says Swanzy. "Is it organic, is it local, is it non-genetically modified, are the foods they're eating raised ethically? Then you have your other clients that don't really care. They want substantial, hearty food, and it doesn't necessarily need to be healthy."

Chefs can be your best friend when it comes to planning a menu that's full of healthy and exciting dishes. "What I like about this movement to more healthy food is that most of the time, chefs love it," Swanzy says. "That's why they are chefs. They like to be creative. Most of them will work for us and come up with a menu that's something they don't typically get to do."

Christophe Luzeux, executive chef at the Halifax Convention Centre, says he's trying to use more grains such as polenta and rice to give people both variety and an alternative to breads and other starchy foods. "We have the traditional roasted and gratin potatoes, which are not too healthy but so good. When we do that, we try to give another option."

## Popular Diets and Foods

One of the biggest trends today is the move toward high-protein diets

"We use lots of infused water with things like raspberries, pineapple, ginger, rosemary or lemon."



**Greg Smith**  
Director, Food & Beverage  
Halifax Convention Centre  
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

and high-fat meal plans such as the ketogenic or “keto” diet. “That’s changing how we look at food and beverages,” says Mary O’Connor, president of the strategic meetings management firm MOC&CO. “For example, breakfast should really be in its natural state. We are minimizing the sugar carbs and spending more time focusing on the healthy proteins, whether it’s turkey sausage or egg muffins with spinach and cheese that are completely gluten-free. Instead of the old blueberry muffins, we’re moving into egg frittatas, which are still grab and go.”

Carbohydrates — or at least the “bad” carbohydrates that were once staples on conference menus — are on the outs with many healthy eaters. “Cauliflower is super-hot right now because we’re trying to get to healthier, lower carbs,” says O’Connor. “There’s cauliflower rice and buffalo cauliflower bites. A lot more cheese is being eaten because it’s a protein with no carbs. Fruits are becoming

snacks. “The toast craze is really part of breakfast and morning breaks,” says O’Connor. Almond butter on whole-grain bread is a popular breakfast choice, she notes.

Vegetarian, flexitarian, pescatarian and vegan eating have also moved into the mainstream. Swanzy is seeing plant-based proteins such as tofu, beans and quinoa used a lot more. Cauliflower mac and cheese and legume and mushroom meatloaf are just a few examples of vegan dishes that are popping up with some regularity. She’s also eager to try a new product called Impossible Burger, which is a vegetarian hamburger patty that’s supposed to taste exactly like its beef-based counterpart.

When planning a healthy menu, don’t forget about snacks. “For breakfast and breaks, people are requesting hard boiled eggs, nuts, hummus and veggies

to snack on instead of the traditional cookies and brownies,” says Swanzy.

### Strategies for Healthier Meals

No matter what food you serve, one of the best ways to make meals healthier is to encourage attendees to eat appropriate portions. “If you’re serving chicken or salmon, and you have it portioned into your vessel on a buffet, generally people are going to take one of everything because they’re going to try it,” says Brian Stapleton, vice president of food and beverage for Aramark Parks and Destinations in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. “If you cut that salmon into two-ounce portions instead of four-ounce, you’re able to manage the consumption level based on how you manage your product. That may also cut down on food waste and expense for the event.

Along with portion control is balancing heavier meals with lighter ones. “For example, if you are having a heavy three-course dinner, then go lighter during lunch with a salad bar and plenty of protein options,” says Swanzy.

Putting a positive spin on healthy



**Mary O’Connor**  
President  
MOC&CO  
St. Charles, IL

food can make it more appealing to doubters. “Embrace proper adjectives in menu descriptions so that what otherwise may be bland food is not produced, sold or marketed in any way that is bland,” says Chadderdon. “Instead of saying ‘arugula goat cheese salad,’ advertise it as ‘fresh baby arugula with pine nuts, Meyer lemon essence, sea salt and goat cheese snow.’”

It remains important to tell people what’s in their food, both so they can avoid allergens and control their own portions. “Having signage at meals is a good way of ensuring people understand what’s in each dish, what the nutritional value is and what the calorie counts are so they can make informed choices,” says Stapleton.

Doing this is a lot easier if the kitchen cooks from scratch rather than using pre-packaged products. That’s one of the many reasons Luzeux prepares nearly everything in-house. “We know what’s in every piece of pastry. If someone has a question about what’s inside, we know because we made it. In the kitchen, we’re working with knives, not box cutters.”

### Meals on the Move

The type of food that’s served at meetings and conventions makes a big difference in how attendees feel and function. But how the meal is served can also have an impact. Many planners are moving toward offering standing or grazing meals instead of the traditional sit-down ones.

“It’s a health trend, but it’s also attached to millennials’ wish to network,” says O’Connor. “The Europeans have always done standing executive lunches,

“Fruits are becoming almost mandated at all three meals because they’re a good carbohydrate. Beets are becoming very popular, too.”

and it’s just becoming a preference in the U.S. because everyone can stand up, stretch their legs and network.” This model seems especially appealing given new research showing that sitting for long periods of time can be detrimental to your health.

For a grazing lunch to work, both the portion size and presentation of food are important. Meals are often served in grab-and-go cups or jars so they are easy to carry. (This also allows people to sample a lot of different foods, which they appreciate.) Salads such as watermelon salad, ancient grain salads, even build-your-own-salad bars work great for this, O’Connor says. Sandwiches can be cut into smaller pieces so it’s easy to eat them with one hand.

“Part of the equation is not only the food, but having people move,” says Smith. “Planners will need a bigger space for people to stand up and walk around.”

### Healthy Food, But...

Even though healthy food is a must, O’Connor says she would never take cookies or other sweets off the menu entirely. “In the old days, you might do 70 percent traditional food and 30 percent healthy, and I think that’s flipped. I’d take those percentages to the bank because there are so many options that are healthy and still satisfy the need for sweet.”

Her examples include popsicles made with puréed fresh fruit, fruit tarts with nut crusts and chocolate desserts laced with tart cherries. “The trend isn’t there quite yet, but tart cherries are going to start showing up in baked goods because they’re a superfood,” she says.

“Sugary beverages such as soft drinks, bottled juices and artificially flavored beverages are becoming the least attractive options.”

**Rachel Chadderdon**  
Director, Catering Hospitality  
Centerplate/NSBE  
Washington, D.C.

Chadderdon recommends combining fresh fruit with natural sweeteners for healthy dessert options. “An example would be minced Asian pear tossed with macerated blackberry and 100 percent agave nectar drizzle,” she says. “Also, introduce healthier chocolate, which would be at least 90 percent dark cocoa nibs that can be used as a sauce topping, an accoutrement to a dessert dish or simply by itself, such as a dark chocolate truffle.” For the right event, frozen desserts made with almond or coconut milk and sweetened with natural products can be a big hit.

Satisfy traditionalists and fans of healthy eating by keeping the dessert portions small. “Do varied desserts like chocolate tarts or coconut cream pie in bite-sized portions or the tall tasting cups,” says Swanzy. “Some people don’t want a whole piece of pie, but they do want something sweet at the end of a meal.”

### Trends in Beverages

“Water, water everywhere” is the mantra when it comes to healthy beverages. “It’s the single largest segment of the beverage world and the highest-growing segment,” says Stapleton. Although many folks are happy with plain water, there’s a big trend toward water infused with healthy and natural ingredients, including detoxifying spices such as cinnamon and turmeric.

“We use lots of infused water with things like raspberries, pineapple, ginger, rosemary or lemon,” says Smith. “Everyone is pushing away from bottled water, so we’re making that in nice dispensers, and you get that water with our coffee break.”

These infused waters are typically still, but Chadderdon points out that sparkling water with flavors such as cucumber and berry is popular, too. She also makes electrolyte-infused water, like LifeWater, available to health-conscious guests. “Cold-pressed juices are all the rage,” she adds. “Sugary beverages such as soft drinks, bottled juices and artificially flavored beverages are becoming the least attractive options.”

Many groups are still requesting smoothie stations, but O’Connor is seeing attendees put a new twist on them. Instead of being so fruit-focused, people are making them high in protein and fat by adding ingredients such as chocolate, yogurt and almond milk.

“Probiotics and gut health are on people’s minds as scientists are finding more and more correlation to good bacteria and staying healthy and staving off health-related issues,” says Swanzy. “To



**Brian Stapleton**  
Vice President, Food & Beverage  
Aramark Parks and Destinations  
Chapel Hill, NC

“Having signage at meals is a good way of ensuring people understand ... what the nutritional value is and what the calorie counts are.”

that effect, try offering a smoothie station for breakfast with options for fresh fruit, kefir, kombucha or acacia. Bone broth and collagen powders can be incorporated into these shakes as well. Don’t forget the tart cherries in those smoothies either, as they are on the top of the list of fruits which fight free radicals and repair cell damage.”

There are even a few things that can be done to lighten up alcoholic beverages. Although craft beers continue to be quite popular, “it appears that people are starting to drink lighter beers and not so much the IPAs,” says Stapleton. “They’re interested in reducing calories and that heavy feeling you get after having a few beers.”

Mixed drinks can be made with fresh juice (O’Connor recommends trying a beet bloody Mary) or fruit and vegetable-infused alcohol. “We tend to make simple cocktails as signature drinks with infused products,” says Smith. “We’re trying to use fresh juices more than in the past, when you’d get a rum and Coke at the bar. Now we do some different martinis, which makes it more fun.”

C&IT

“If you are having a heavy three-course dinner, then go lighter during lunch with a salad bar and plenty of protein options.”



**Holly Swanzy, CIS**  
Senior Program Manager  
Brightspot Incentives & Events  
Irving, TX

almost mandated at all three meals because they’re a good carbohydrate. Beets are becoming very popular, too. While they do have carbs in them, they’re not considered a traditional carb the way that potatoes would be.”

The gluten-free craze is still going strong and is the most common dietary restriction Swanzy sees on registration forms. “It’s not necessarily because someone has celiac disease but because people are trying to avoid carbs and wheat,” she says.

The one place where carbs are still showing up in droves is in the now-ubiquitous avocado toast and similar



# Meetings at Sea

## How Planners Motivate Top Performers

By Patrick Simms

Every incentive program needs a “selling point” to potential qualifiers, and for most, the prospect of a cruise with a captivating itinerary is a strong enough motivation. But additional intrigue is gained when those potential qualifiers know that the vessel will be a state-of-the-art, new offering from the cruise line. Particularly for those attendees who are veterans of cruise incentives, the reward of experi-

encing a new ship can be as motivating as an itinerary that is new to the market. From the planner’s perspective, new ships may also carry a budgetary advantage. “It’s like the hotels: You get the preopening rates. We get in early and get the best deal,” explains Russ Kembel of Redmond, Washington-based Russ Kembel & Associates, an independent meeting planning company that has done extensive work with Royal

Caribbean. “Once word gets out [about the new vessel], not only do the rates go up, but the availability may not be there for the dates that we need.”

Kembel has an incentive group for a direct-selling company boarding the Symphony of the Seas out of Barcelona this month. The world’s largest passenger ship (6,680 maximum capacity, 2,759 staterooms), Symphony of the Seas launched last summer and makes its stateside debut in November at Royal Caribbean’s new Terminal A in PortMiami. Like any new ship, the vessel will be a “conversation piece” for attendees, especially given its record-breaking size.

An impactful first voyage can effectively make those attendees evangelists of the ship and the cruise line for future groups from the client company, Kembel adds. “The people on that first trip are going to be your best salespeople to [other potential qualifiers] for the next cruise.”

Fortunately, Royal Caribbean is not the only cruise line introducing ships that will make waves in the group market. Celebrity, for instance, will soon



After a day of business meetings aboard the Celebrity Edge, attendees can unwind on the Retreat Sundeck (rendering shown), one of the exclusive amenities of the Edge Class Suites.

Credit: Celebrity Cruises



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launch a ship that may give incentive planners the “edge” in motivating potential qualifiers.

### Celebrity Cruises

Joining the company’s fleet this winter, **Celebrity Edge** offers a variety of trailblazing features that have caught the attention of corporate cruise planners.

According to Ailene Sorice, director, corporate and incentive group sales, Corporate Cruise Consultants, “One of the most exciting things about Celebrity Edge is all the new revolutionary features she will be providing attendees with, from the introduction of the first Infinite Veranda class of staterooms to the Magic Carpet to all the outward-facing venues like the urban playscape Rooftop Garden, and Eden — the grandest environment ever designed on Celebrity — to the most technologically advanced theater, and most importantly, The Meeting Place. I am so looking forward to seeing this beauty in November.”

The ship offers 1,467 staterooms, and the Edge Staterooms with Infinite Verandas allow guests to turn their living space into a veranda with the touch of a button.

Roland Navarro, president of Seven Seas Corporate Cruises & Events, has experienced this feature in one of Celebrity’s model Edge Staterooms in Miami. “You hit the button and the window goes down, and now you have a balcony. That’s genius to me,” he comments. “Everybody’s looking for the newest toy, and I think that’s going to get a lot of media buzz.”

The Magic Carpet is a cantilevered platform that accommodates 100 guests and rises up to 13 stories above sea level, with various functions at different levels (e.g., on Deck 5, it pro-

vides open-air dining). The platform is appointed with a full-service bar and a live music performance area. Eden is a three-story, glass-enclosed, 11,800-square-foot event space with panoramic ocean views. A venue designed for corporate groups specifically, The Meeting Place is a 1,970-square-foot facility with soundproof dividers that allow for two to three concurrent events. It offers built-in AV, a pantry and bar, ocean views, a planner’s office and a central location near the elevators.

**Regarding an impactful first voyage on the Symphony of the Seas, “The people on that first trip are going to be your best salespeople to (other potential qualifiers) for the next cruise.”**

**Russ Kembel**  
Owner

Russ Kembel & Associates  
(Independent Meeting Planning Company)  
Redmond, WA  
Corporate Cruise Consultants  
Miami, FL

Joining Celebrity Edge in 2020 will be **Celebrity Apex**. The 2,900-passenger ship will be the second in the Edge Class and boasts signature features like the Infinite Veranda staterooms, Magic Carpet, two-deck jogging tracks and Rooftop Garden.

In addition to its new ships, Celebrity recently began The Celebrity Revolution, an investment of \$500 million across the entire fleet to introduce a variety of upgrades to staterooms, public venues, culinary service and more.

Many of Celebrity’s enhancement projects are informed by input from its

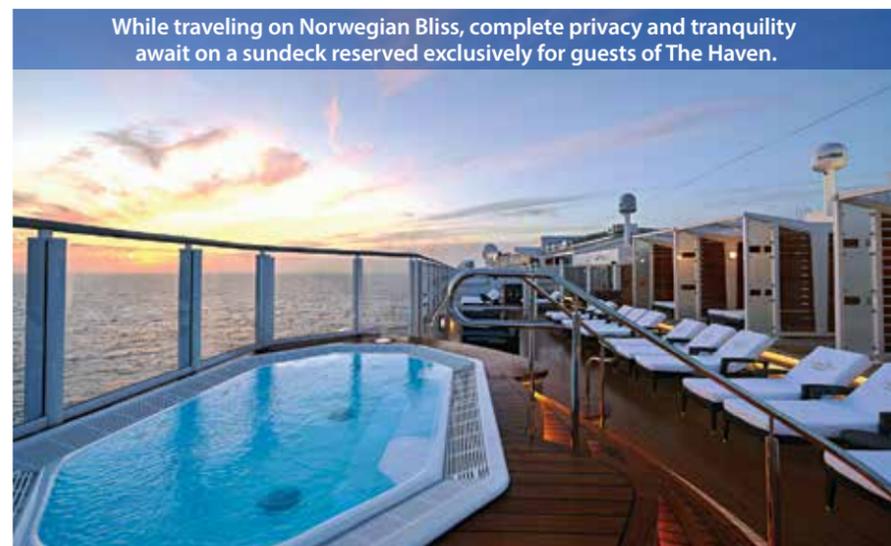
annual MICE Advisory Board, demonstrating a commitment to the group market. Sorice describes the brand as “adult-focused, which is perfect for MICE groups that do not incorporate families into their programs.” And with the cruise line’s “recent re-entry back into the short cruise market (four- and five-night), we have had many more opportunities to partner with Celebrity,” she says.

Among the brand’s standout features, Sorice highlights the onboard culinary experience, featuring “menus that are globally inspired and made with locally sourced ingredients and overseen by Michelin-starred chef Cornelius Gallagher.”

Her team also favors Chef’s Market Discoveries, where Celebrity chefs lead attendees on tastings through local markets and restaurants at ports of call.

“We have presented Chef’s Market Discoveries to a variety of groups sailing in the Caribbean, Alaska, Western Med and Greek Isles,” she relates. “The attendees are brought to local markets to meet farmers and local producers and then create a special meal onboard utilizing market-fresh ingredients.”

In terms of onboard F&B, Celebrity is “up there with the quality of Regent, Oceania and Silversea,” says Navarro, who has partnered with the brand for a type of corporate event that is not typically held aboard a ship — a trade show. “Once I tie down that the RFP they typically use for the land event



While traveling on Norwegian Bliss, complete privacy and tranquility await on a sundeck reserved exclusively for guests of The Haven.

Credit: Norwegian Cruise Line

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Best Ocean Cruise Line 2017  
Best Cruise Ship for Entertainment –  
Carnival Vista 2017



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Best Domestic Cruise Line – 2017 & 2016



Cruise Critic Editors’ Picks Awards  
Best Value for the Money –  
4th Consecutive Year  
Best Service 2017



Cruise Critic Editors’ Picks Awards  
Best New Cruise Ship – Carnival Vista 2016  
Best Cruise Line for Value 2016

can work onboard, then we can proceed on doing it," he explains. "The full ship charter is a little easier because the client can use the entire ship and even leave booths up for the duration of the charter."

Navarro recently staged a trade show aboard the **Celebrity Solstice** for an internet and computer services provider company. Held during a seven-night Alaska cruise out of Seattle, the show drew more than 300 attendees. The registration number surpassed what was expected, thanks in part to the unique venue.

Celebrity made the event a success in various ways. "They gave us access to the conference rooms for meetings and breakouts, and then they gave us a lounge at night, which is usually unheard of in the cruise industry because they use those rooms for entertainment," he says.

Offering 180-degree views of the Alaska environs, the lounge housed 15 trade show booths. The show's vendors sponsored various components of the event, including breakfast breaks, shore excursions, private dinners and nightly room gift deliveries.

Attendees bonded during canoeing adventures and even helicopter tours, but for Navarro, one of the highlights was simply the view from the ship.

"They had a meeting Monday morning up on Deck 14 while the ship did a full 360-degree turn so you can have the greatest views of the glacier," he relates. "My concern was, are these guys ever going to get work done? Because the scenery is awesome. I'm happy to report that they did get their work done, but everyone came out of the meeting with their camera to take pictures of the glacier."

#### Royal Caribbean International

Royal Caribbean's cruises cover



On a voyage with Oceania Cruises, each day offers the rewarding opportunity to experience the history, culture and cuisine of a wondrous new destination.

Credit: Oceania Cruises

more than 260 destinations with 25 ships of all sizes, affording planners plenty of booking options.

And the choices continue to increase, Kembel observes. "My challenge each year is how do I outdo the previous one. And Royal Caribbean started off with the **Allure** and the **Oasis**, so how do you better that? Well, they came out with the **Harmony**. So how do we better that? Well, now we've got the **Symphony of the Seas**. They keep bettering themselves," he explains.

The Oasis-class vessels Kembel refers to are the largest cruise ships ever built, and he offers some advice for planners who

**"One of the most exciting things about Celebrity Edge is all the new revolutionary features she will be providing attendees with."**

**Ailene Sorice**  
Director, Corporate and Incentive Group Sales  
Corporate Cruise Consultants  
Miami, FL

want to optimize the experience for attendees aboard such ships.

"One of the key things on these big ships is [to keep in mind that] only on the first night are there long lines to get into restaurants and shows," he says. "So you either book in advance for a show or take the dine-around plan [to avoid lines on the first night]. After that, it's a piece of cake the rest of the week."

Planners may also be concerned that incentive winners will have to wait excessively on lines to board ships of that size, but that is not the case, Kembel assures. "If I'm taking an incentive group on a cruise, or if they're doing a President's Club, which we have done

at Four Seasons [hotels] around the world, I can't have them stand in these long lines just to get onto this big ship. It doesn't work; they'll be complaining, and then, we have to win them back."

But as Kembel experienced firsthand, the boarding process is "like clockwork, they get them on so quick. They are so well-organized for a big ship."

Royal Caribbean's second-largest class of cruise ships is the Quantum Class, with the latest member **Ovation of the Seas**. The ship, which debuted in 2016, will make its first voyage to Alaska next summer.

A member of the Voyager Class, **Mariner of the Seas** has received more than \$100 million in upgrades, including a bungee trampoline adventure; The Bamboo Room — a tiki-chic lounge with craft cocktails; an immersive Escape Room experience that's ideal for teambuilding; and the Playmakers Sports Bar & Arcade.

Mariner of the Seas offers three- and four-night cruises to The Bahamas, including Royal Caribbean's private island, CocoCay, which will be undergoing \$200 million in renovations through next fall. The island will be the first in the company's new Perfect Day Island Collection, consisting of private islands set in compelling destinations around the world.

#### Norwegian Cruise Line

After its April debut, **Norwegian Bliss** toured ports in New York, Miami and Los Angeles, followed by an inaugural summer cruise to Alaska. The 4,004-capacity vessel's upcoming voy-

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ages include sailing to the Mexican Riviera from Los Angeles in the fall, and to the Caribbean from Miami in the winter. Onboard highlights include musicals *Jersey Boys* and *Happy Hour Prohibition*, the Q Texas Smokehouse, group dining ven-



**Roland Navarro**  
President  
Seven Seas Corporate Cruises  
& Events  
Miami, FL

**“(Celebrity) gave us access to the conference rooms for meetings and breakouts, and then they gave us a lounge at night, which is usually unheard of in the cruise industry.”**

ues such as the 512-capacity Manhattan Room and even a racetrack.

The company has also completed refurbishments of **Norwegian Breakaway**, **Norwegian Sun** and **Norwegian Star** as part of a fleet enhancement initiative called The Norwegian Edge. The ships now feature new designs and venues, including Los Lobos Cantina, an upscale Mexican restaurant; the adults-only enclave, Spice H2O; and Syd Norman’s Pour House — an American rock ‘n’ roll bar and lounge, which makes its debut aboard Norwegian Breakaway.

Recently, Norwegian introduced a new Affinity Group Program, which offers up to \$500 onboard credit and a choice of perks such as the Ultimate Beverage Package, 4-Meal Specialty Dining Package, 250-minute Wi-Fi package, \$50 shore excursion credit per room and more. Groups might take advantage of that program on a cruise to Cuba.

Norwegian recently completed her first season of cruises to Cuba from Port Canaveral, Florida, welcoming more than 30,000 guests on 15 voyages.

Norwegian will be well-positioned to sail to the Caribbean with the new

Norwegian Cruise Line terminal at PortMiami, opening fall 2019. **Norwegian Encore**, the newest ship in the Breakaway Plus class, will debut next year with seasonal cruises from Miami to the Caribbean.

### Oceania Cruises

Oceania offers six luxurious ships calling on more than 450 ports across Europe, Alaska, Asia, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, New England-Canada, Bermuda, the Caribbean, Panama Canal, Tahiti and the South Pacific.

Similar to the Norwegian Edge, Oceania’s new OceaniaNEXT will bring fleet-wide enhancements, beginning with a \$100 million investment into the line’s four 684-capacity ships (**Insignia**, **Regatta**, **Sirena** and **Nautica**). Each will gain 342 completely redesigned suites and staterooms, as well as new décor in the restaurants, lounges and bars. Completion of these projects is scheduled for December 2018, May 2019, September 2019 and June 2020, respectively.

### Regent Seven Seas Cruises

Regent’s upscale four-ship fleet visits more than 450 destinations around the world, and the company has recently invested \$125 million in



At Sette Mari at La Veranda onboard the Regent Seven Seas Mariner, guests can enjoy an extensive menu of authentic antipasti and Italian specialties paired with fine Italian wines.

refurbishing that fleet, concluding with the renovation of **Seven Seas Mariner** this year.

The project redesigned all restaurants, including the flagship Compass Rose, public spaces, pool deck and guest suites.

Planners interested in booking a voyage to Cuba aboard a luxury vessel will note that Regent has also been granted permission to offer voyages to the island.

And the company is adding more visits to Cuba in 2019 and 2020. **Seven Seas Mariner** will offer the line’s first immersive Cuba itinerary on her October 2019 voyage, calling on Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba. In addition, Havana is being added into **Seven Seas Navigator’s** April 2020 voyage.

In early 2020, Regent introduces **Seven Seas Splendor**, a 750-capacity, all-suite ship. The 375 suites range from the 307-square-foot Veranda Suite to the opulent, 4,443-square-foot Regent Suite.

### Crystal Cruises

Crystal makes budgeting easier for planners with its all-inclusive group offers. Packages include staff gratuities and complimentary use of all standard AV equipment for meetings. The fleet now features free, unlimited Wi-Fi connectivity to guests across multiple de-

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vices, both in suites and staterooms and throughout public areas.

The company has also been upgrading 922-capacity **Crystal Symphony** and 1,070-capacity **Crystal Serenity**. The former ship debuted a redesign last November, while the latter vessel's redesign will be completed this November.

Guests will enjoy expanded specialty dining options, an open-seating dining concept, tech upgrades and more of the spacious, butler-serviced Penthouse accommodations.

Also of note aboard **Carnival Horizon** is the fleet's most expansive retail space: The two-level mall showcases top brands like LeVian, Michael Kors, Kate Spade, Breitling and Hublot.

The company has also recently completed a multimillion-dollar refurbishment of **Carnival Paradise**, which resumed its schedule of four- to eight-day cruises out of Tampa in March. The project added a water park, 38 new cabins, 98 balconies to existing staterooms and a variety of new F&B outlets.

Repositioning to Port Tampa Bay

technology and the world's cleanest burning fossil fuel. The use of that fuel significantly reduces air emissions and marine gasoil.

The new ships will also be the largest by capacity in the fleet, accommodating approximately 4,300 guests. In addition to these vessels, the **Sky Princess** is scheduled to debut in October 2019, and two other Royal-class ships are planned for delivery in 2020 and 2022.

Attendees may wish to toast their cruise experience with a signature cocktail from master mixologist Rob Floyd's new line of specialty drinks, introduced to Princess Cruises in August. The cocktails are inspired by the cruise line's various destinations, with examples including Mayan Heat, Italian Sunset, Amaretto Manhattan and Ivory Coast.

### Silversea Cruises

Silversea's relatively small ships, ranging from the 100-capacity **Silver Galapagos** to the 608-capacity **Silver Spirit**, are ideal for charters. Offering spacious oceanview suites with butler service, the vessels are quite a reward for incentive winners, and planners have a variety of voyages and expeditions to choose from, spanning more than 900 destinations.

Some of the expedition destinations are off the beaten path. A fairly new offering is Antarctica, where the 254-capacity **Silver Cloud** recently sailed following a \$40 million refurbishment. From the Tor's Observation Lounge, attendees can enjoy 180-degree views of the White Continent. They can also relax in the Zàgara Spa, or leave their comfort zone with Expedition Team members to achieve a new level of camaraderie through a firsthand experience hiking and kayaking in Antarctica.

New ships, from the Silver Cloud to the immense Symphony of the Seas, tend to make a splash in the group market, but so do offshore excursions that push the envelope. The overarching idea is to offer qualifiers a new experience within the familiar format of the cruise incentive — something that gets them talking and bonding. **C&IT**

in October 2019 is **Carnival Legend**, following a series of departures from Sydney and Melbourne, Australia, in the fall and winter, and a series of seven-day Alaska cruises in summer 2019. Carnival Legend has undergone a variety of F&B additions similar to Carnival Paradise.

### Princess Cruises

Planners often look for hotels with sustainability features (e.g., LEED certification), but the green movement also extends to the cruise industry. A case in point is Princess Cruises, whose new ships scheduled for delivery in 2023 and 2025 will be the line's first ships to be dual-fuel powered.

The primary fuel source will be Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), claimed to be the marine industry's most environmentally friendly advanced fuel



Carnival Cruise Line has 26 ships in the company's fleet, with a plethora of amenities and destinations to choose from, as well as family-friendly activities to keep the kids happy, too.

Crystal Symphony and Crystal Serenity are billed as the only luxury ships in the industry with a dedicated movie theater, which can be used for corporate presentations, meetings, panel discussions and lecture programs.

### Carnival Cruise Line

This month, Carnival Cruise Line's latest vessel, **Carnival Horizon**, begins a series of six- and eight-day Caribbean Cruises out of Miami.

The 26th ship in the company's fleet, the 3,960-passenger Carnival Horizon offers a variety of distinctive features, such as a Dr. Seuss-themed WaterWorks aqua park, ideal for groups cruising with families; Guy's Pig & Anchor Smokehouse|Brewhouse, by Food Network star Guy Fieri; an IMAX Theatre and the bike-ride-in-the-sky aerial attraction SkyRide.



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## Hiring the Right Professional Speaker

Do Your Homework and Find Someone to Keep Your Attendees Wanting More

By Maura Keller

Whether a meeting planner is looking to motivate employees, inspire an audience or educate C-level executives on the latest marketing strategies, hiring a professional speaker is often easier said than done. Mismatched styles, wrong messaging

or unprofessional delivery can easily result in a speaking event that doesn't encourage or engage attendees. Therefore, it's vital that meeting planners do their homework to find a speaker that keeps attendees wanting more.

When Lynne Wellish, CMP, CHSE, CHO,

of Phoenix, Arizona, first began in the meeting and events industry, she only focused her efforts on speaker procurement by looking at the budget and potential speaker rather than what that speaker brought to the proverbial table. Now Wellish recognizes that while those



"Start with goals and objectives of the educational program, then seek to find the subject matter expert that fits the topic."

Lynne Wellish, CMP, CHSE, CHO  
Phoenix, AZ

two pieces are important, the focus needs to be on how attendees experience and interact with the content of the event. When selecting speakers for events these days, Wellish asks additional questions: "What is the profile of your attendee? What is the message you want your participants to walk away with? How will that benefit your organization?"

"Speakers need to fit into the very fabric of the event, and they can help make this happen if they are included earlier in the planning process," Wellish says. "This is because their business is being subject matter experts that can use a wide variety of content delivery formats."

To select the right speaker, match the speaker to the content and objectives. Look for subject matter experts for content delivery. Is the speaker's topic suitable for your audience profile?

"Start with goals and objectives of the educational program, then seek to find the subject matter expert that fits the topic," Wellish says.

For example, at a national sales meeting, Wellish and her client were very confident about the keynote speaker that they had selected.

"The CEO had heard the speaker, and he was stellar. Except he was not — or not for our audience. It was a big lesson learned," Wellish says. "Now I know to ask the right questions with a velvet tongue. Speakers are subject matter experts. A celebrity who wrote a book is on a promotions circuit and may or may not be an appropriate polished speaker."

Sherry A. Marts, Ph.D., president and CEO at S\*Marts Consulting in Washington, D.C., is a frequent speaker and has a clear understanding of how to make the speaker-planner relationship a smooth one.

Her advice for meeting planners hiring speakers? "Get very, very clear

about what you want and what your priorities are," Marts says.

Do you want the speaker to:

- Convey critical or important information? If so, exactly what information?
- Offer useful solutions or action items?
- Be funny and entertaining? If so, are you OK with the content being a bit fluffy and/or forgettable?
- Inspire people to action?

"It's only the rare speaker who can do all of this," Marts says. "So decide what is most important and emphasize that when you talk to prospects or to folks giving you referrals."

### Steps to Take

There are numerous key strategies to follow when selecting someone to speak at a meeting. Nicole Chattin, CMP, senior program manager at Brightspot Incentives & Events in Irving, Texas, explains that it is important to keep the meeting goals and objectives in mind when selecting a speaker for an event.

"If the meeting is a sales kickoff, a motivational speaker would be beneficial, but for something like a human resources conference, an ethics speaker may be more appropriate," Chattin says. "Think about the audience, why they are attending the event and what they want to achieve with this speaker."

Demographics of the audience are also a crucial piece in determining the best presenters. Gender, age range and industry (to name a few) contribute to the demographics of your attendees that you want to consider before selecting speakers.

"If there is a mostly female nurse convention, one may not want to choose a sports-related male speaker," Chattin says. Again, keep in mind who the audience is, their expectation for the event and what will best benefit them.

When selecting a speaker, the first thing meeting and event planners should do is set up an appointment to talk before signing a contract and to review expectations prior to event.

And be sure your major meeting stakeholder fully supports and embraces the speaker's message. If this doesn't happen, the experience, information shared and expense will bring little return, if any.

Former event planner and now a professional speaker, Cara Silletto, president at Crescendo Strategies, says the best speakers have a combination of



Cara Silletto  
President  
Crescendo Strategies  
Jeffersonville, IN

"If they say their keynote is perfect for everyone, they haven't embraced their target market."

## Resources Aplenty

Finding the ideal speaker for a meeting or event can be challenging. Experts agree that personal referrals are a good way to locate a speaker, as the planner knows the referrer and their standards.

"Know the direct benefit of hiring a 'pre-determined, specific-to-your-needs' speaker through a bureau vs. direct," Wellish says. "You have already decided your speaker in advance; however, did you qualify the bureau representing the speaker you want?"

Also, be sure to ask if there are multiple bureaus representing this speaker and if they can book the speaker on the same day or a specific span of dates. It is important

to know if the speaker is double-booked in the same city of your event/meeting.

There are numerous resources that planners may use to locate a speaker. Marts recommends relying less on slick marketing materials and speakers bureaus, and more on who your peers at comparable organizations recommend.

"I've sat through awful keynotes that left me wondering how much that person got paid for, essentially, doing nothing well," Marts says. "And I've heard remarkable speakers who were not on the keynote circuit and who were charming, inspiring and informing. Maybe it's a personal prefer-

ence, but I much prefer deep content over flash."

Meeting Professionals International (MPI) offers a user-friendly website, powered by eSpeakers, which allows searching for speakers by name, topic, keyword, availability, location, budget parameters, customer reviews and language.

Curious about new business models for speakers' bureaus? Check out eSpeakers.com. With a database of more than 10,000 speakers, meeting planners can filter to find a speaker who is an ideal fit for a meeting or event.

Chattin also highly recommends hiring a speaker bureau or partner, as they are

the speaker experts. Speaker bureaus are normally paid on commission, so additional fees may not fit your budget. Dallas-based GDA Speakers has a robust speaker portal with an extensive database and request page to keep events and speakers organized while a meeting planner narrows down the best fit for their program.

"The portal also generates a detailed proposal to review with key stakeholders, as well as an event summary to track speaker details," Chattin says. "Hiring a speaker through a trusted speaker partner and covering all the details mentioned is sure to set you up for success." **C&IT**

Does it say first-class travel or companion to accompany? Ask for references and check on them.

"Speaker agreements should include everything you expect of the speaker. This includes dates, times, additional events participation, due dates, travel, expense reimbursement, etc.," Wellish says. "It seems so simple, but if you don't have it in the contract, it could cause miscommunications and worst case, legal issues. The contract needs to be very specific regarding expectation — expenses covered, arrival and rehearsal time, meet and greet times and numbers, as well as any 'handlers' and their expenses."

Check with the speaker on their setup needs and schedule rehearsal time. Do they like a podium? Do they wear a lavalier microphone or use a handheld? Set up a speaker ready room with refreshments, if necessary.

"Another important part of the planning process is the speaker's presentation and ensuring it is in the correct format for the screens," Chattin says. "Will they also be providing handouts for the guests? Check if the speaker is available to attend the reception or lunch after the presentation to mix and mingle with the attendees or if they need to fly out after they are done."

While contracts are vital, so are the protocols that come when hiring a speaker. To streamline this process, assign someone to act as a "speaker ambassador." This person should meet and greet the speaker on the day of the event, assist him or her with AV, presentation requirements, last-minute requests, etc.

"Also, will you allow the speaker to sell books and products? Will it be from a table in the back of the room or from the stage?" Wellish says. "Clarify in advance — will the books be autographed?"



"The way a speaker shows up as a conversation on a call mirrors how they show up in a room no matter what the size of the audience."

**Holly Dowling**, Global Keynote Speaker  
Scottsdale, AZ

"Think about the audience, why they are attending the event and what they want to achieve with this speaker."

**Nicole Chattin, CMP**, Senior Program Manager  
Brightspot Incentives & Events, Irving, TX



Will the speaker eat before the presentation or after? Will someone keep a meal hot for them?"

Make sure you are communicating clearly with the speaker, and don't be afraid to repeat yourself several times in telling them exactly what they need to do.

"We've all sat through those panel discussions where 'each panelist will speak for five minutes, and then we will have Q&A,' which turns into 'each panelist droned on for 20 minutes, and we had five minutes for Q&A,'" Marts says. "I once sat through a speech that was billed as 'cyber security in the hospitality industry' by a speaker with a pages-long resume of jobs with the FBI, NSA and private security firms, and it turned out to be 'how to keep yourself safe while sleeping in a hotel room' — this, to a room full of meeting planners. You can't control what someone does once they have the microphone, but communicating early and often does reduce the chances of that kind of disaster."

And remember, great speakers don't just fill time slots. Their messages solve problems the audience members are currently facing.

"So planners need to be sure the speaker understands what keeps their audience members up at night — even if it's not what the speaker will be addressing," Silletto says. "Understanding the full picture of attendees' realities means the

speaker will earn credibility on the platform more quickly and can speak to real situations and needs during their program."

### Mistakes to Avoid

On occasion, planners forget to consider diversity in their speaker lineup, and they print the brochure with headshots only to realize they've selected all white male speakers. As Silletto explains, there is a plethora of strong female and minority speakers to choose from, but it often takes intentional, proactive efforts to find and hire a diverse group of speakers.

"For some time slots, event planners also may care more about the celebrity factor than the valuable content delivered on the platform," Silletto says. "As a content-rich speaker who has spoken before or after several big-name speakers, I encourage planners to check in with other clients who used those celebrity speakers before booking them because some are amazing, but several planners I know have been disappointed with the lack of value in their content or the frozen, podium-based delivery."

Holly Dowling, global keynote speaker, inspirational thought leader and creator of the podcast "40 Absolutés for Every Meeting Planner," says one big mistake meeting planners make is putting too much dependence on speaker bureaus and agents.

"Meeting planners need to get on the phone with the speaker — do not base a decision on a bio, reel or resume," Dowling says. "Get on a call and ask the right questions. The way a speaker shows up as a conversation on a call mirrors how they show up in a room no matter what the size of the audience. Are they going to bring their authentic self like they were on the phone? Always reach out to the speaker themselves." **C&IT**

"You can't control what someone does once they have the microphone, but communicating early and often does reduce the chances of that kind of disaster."

**Sherry A. Marts, Ph.D.**, President and CEO  
S\*Marts Consulting, Washington, D.C.



powerful content and dynamic delivery, so it is critical to see current videos of the potential speakers from a live (not staged) event.

"Any speaker can make a nearly perfect three-minute promo video showing only their funniest jokes and best material, but watching an uncut five to 10 minutes gives planners a more realistic sample of the speaker's style and value," Silletto says.

"From a speaker's perspective, I look to make sure the organizers are clear on what they want. If they aren't, I have no way to know if this is a good fit for me," Marts says. "How sure are they that I'm the right fit? Sometimes it's as simple as: Have they even looked at my website? Essentially, they are going to hire me (on a temporary basis), so we both have to decide if the job is a good fit for my skills, knowledge and abilities."

Marts decides whether this is an organization whose mission and values align with hers. She also evaluates who and how big is the audience? What are the expected audience demographics?

"The last thing I want is to be speaking about a topic to an audience who could school me on that topic," Marts says. "I also ask if they are willing to pay me, and how much? At the very least, will my expenses and registration be covered? I get lots of requests from folks who think I'm still willing to work for the 'exposure' to 'potential clients.' I can count on zero fingers the number of clients I got as the direct result of an invited speech or participation in a panel. I will consider speaking for free or for a reduced rate for organizations with small budgets whose work I want to support, but it has to mean little or no out-of-pocket costs for me."

Silletto recommends asking the potential speaker who their best or ideal audience is. Are they a better fit for a primarily female or male audience, or does that matter to them? Is their material better suited for mid-level managers or C-suite executives? Do they get better reactions and engagement from older or younger audiences?

"If they say their keynote is perfect for everyone, they haven't embraced their target market," Silletto says. "And finally, has the speaker worked successfully with other organizations in your industry or ones similar to your group?"

### Make a Contract

Once you have secured the speaker, a contract needs to be created. As Chattin explains, the contract should outline the event date, location, time, speaker's fees, travel arrangements (hotel, flight, transfer), payment terms, inclusions and exclusions. It is important to set up pre-event calls or meetings with the speaker to review the meeting objectives, content and audience, so they are prepared with material that will correlate with the theme.

Wellish also advises that before signing the contract, figure out expenses in total and read the contract in its entirety.

# Top Incentive Travel Destinations



## With So Many Places From Which to Choose, a World of Wonder Awaits

By Monica Compton, CMP

From Australia to Croatia, Nashville to Napa, planners have a plethora of worldwide options when choosing a location for their incentive meeting. Whether looking for an incomparable locale stateside, or a hidden haven abroad, these destinations range from well-established winners to little-known wonders. All present a variety of hotel options, group activities and first-class amenities that can impress even the most jaded executive.

### International Destinations

#### Australia — An Iconic Mystery

Perhaps it's Australia's distance from the U.S. that makes it an intriguing destination for incentive programs. The anticipation of the unknown creates a one-of-a-kind experience. Planners will discover the mystery of Australia is just one element that makes it stand

out among other locations. From the iconic landmarks of Sydney to the eclectic gardens of Melbourne to the seemingly endless days of sunshine in Brisbane, the continent's multi-faceted characteristics will capture attendees from arrival to departure.

"Australia is home to some of the world's most inspirational event destinations and can't-be-bought experiences," says Mary Ann McDonald, Tourism Australia's business events manager.

"Australia's innovative event delivery capabilities, friendly welcoming people and unique landscapes, combined with our exceptional food and wine and high-quality products and experiences, deliver above expectations for incentive events."

To fuel new group business, Tourism Australia created the Boosting Business Events Bid Fund Program (BFP), which gives financial assistance to suppliers

bidding against international competitors to hold the program in Australia.

The BFP is an extension of Australia's Advance Program, which provides delegate-acquisition support for previously confirmed events. With a goal of driving visitation, the program boosts the country's tourism activities and further entices international groups to consider Australia for their meetings.

"Nowhere else in the world can you dine under the stars at Uluru (Ayers Rock), bond with your team as you sail under Sydney's iconic Harbour Bridge, experience the relationship between art and wine at Tasmania's Museum of Old and New Art and snorkel the Great Barrier Reef," McDonald says.

#### The Bahamas — Paradise of the Caribbean

U.S.-based planners have long chosen The Bahamas as a destination

for their incentive meetings. Located less than an hour off the coast of South Florida, The Bahamas is an easy flight away from most major U.S. cities. Yet in the oasis of The Bahamas, attendees can feel like they are a million miles away from home.

Indeed, the country's capital, Nassau, is connected to paradise. A short drive over the bridges of Nassau Harbour, and visitors are transported to Paradise Island, where the only choice is whether to stay at a quiet, secluded beachfront property or at an opulent oceanside resort.

Atlantis Paradise Island is a resort that offers both. With five distinct properties, planners can choose the location that best fits their incentive's size and content.

Family-inclusive programs will thrive at The Coral, while an agenda allowing for plenty of leisure time is ideal for The Beach. The architecturally stunning and centrally located The Royal dances with the Junkanoo street parades, a carnival of music and masquerade of costumes. An intimate, high-level incentive will bask in the ultra-luxury of The Cove, while a lengthier trip is perfect for The Reef's spacious rooms equipped with kitchens and private balconies.

"There are many reasons planners should choose The Bahamas and Nassau Paradise Island for their incentive meetings," says George Brice, vice president of the Nassau Paradise Island Promotion Board. "The proximity to

the U.S. and the array of resorts and hotels suitable for accommodating groups of any size are two compelling reasons. In addition, we have sophisticated entertainment and nightlife options, including a casino, as well as world-class gourmet dining options. Last but not least, our islands have some of the most beautiful turquoise waters and white sandy beaches in the world."

#### Croatia — Undiscovered Eastern Europe

Touting the longest coastline of the Eastern European countries, Croatia is bordered by five countries and located across the Adriatic Sea from Italy. Its weather is a combination of a Mediterranean climate along the western coast and a continental climate in its interior — warm, humid summers and cold, snowy winters. You'll find the Mediterranean climate in the city of Dubrovnik, considered to be one of the most popular tourist destinations around the Adriatic Sea.

"Dubbed the 'Pearl of the Adriatic' by George Bernard Shaw, Dubrovnik has the feeling of an old town with incomparable views and relaxing mountain wineries," says Beau Ballin, senior director, business development, CWT Meetings & Events. "Additionally, its proximity to Italy provides an easy and cost-efficient opportunity to include Italy for a dual-destination program."



Dubrovnik, Croatia, is an up-and-coming unique destination in Eastern Europe.



**Beau Ballin**

Senior Director, Business Development  
CWT Meetings & Events  
Minneapolis, MN

"Croatia's proximity to Italy provides an easy and cost-efficient opportunity to include Italy for a dual-destination program."

While Croatia's coast is an excellent location for incentive meetings, the interior should be evaluated as a distinctive alternative. Consider a January trip to a professional ski tournament in Croatia's capital of Zagreb. Then, visit the ice park in King Tomislav Square, where attendees have the opportunity to take a whirl around the ice skating arena. After that, warm up with hot drinks and local sweets served from charming wooden houses. Zagreb won the European Best Destinations' award — "Best Christmas Markets" — as selected by travelers.

"With its diverse offerings and a combination of nature, tradition and cultural heritage, Croatia is a real treasure that is bound to surprise and delight all visitors," says Ina Rodin, director North America, Croatian National Tourist Office.

"Each region offers its own unique characteristics, such as natural beauty, history and festivals, from traditional to current. One will be inspired and have memories that will last forever."

As an emerging incentive travel destination, Croatia is a unique choice for high-level executives who have traveled the world and lack enthusiasm to visit the long-popular destinations in Western Europe.

"For those groups who have been to Europe many times, attendees are looking for newer destinations that are more up-and-coming such as Croatia," says Rhea Stagner, CIS, CITP, vice president, supplier relations, Maritz Travel, who is also past president of SITE Foundation.

## New Zealand — Home of Hospitality

Hospitality in New Zealand began 1,000 years ago. The country's indigenous people, Māori, practice *manaakitanga*, a warm style of hospitality where the importance is to care for visitors and make sure they are treated well.

"The New Zealand hospitality industry is great at collaborating to create memorable events for incentive groups," says Lisa Gardiner, global manager, business events, Tourism New Zealand. "From the moment guests step off the plane, they will receive a warm New Zealand welcome, superb service and support. International visitors arrive as strangers and leave as family."

Auckland is the country's largest, most diverse and probably best-known city to U.S. planners. Here, attendees can enjoy the energy of a sophisticated city, and in only a 30-minute drive, can be on the beach, hiking or visiting an award-winning winery.

"There is an amazing array of activities offered here, as well as stunning landscapes and scenery waiting to be explored," Gardiner says. "A 90-minute flight can take visitors from Auckland's cosmopolitan nightlife and beaches to the snow-capped mountain and adventure experiences of Queenstown."

Billed as the "Southern Hemisphere's premier, four season, lake and alpine resort," Queenstown is set on a lake and surrounded by mountains. Here, adventure abounds. For thrill-seeking



New Zealand is known for its superb hospitality and an array of thrill-seeking activities.

attendees who think they've done it all, Queenstown challenges you with everything from jumping off a mountain ledge to swinging over a canyon. And then, there's heli-biking. A helicopter drops bikers on the top of a mountain. From there, they start a downhill ride on hidden trails through sheep paths and around gold-prospecting tracks from the 1800s.

"New Zealand is unique in being able to offer itineraries where groups can hold a business function in the morning, go jet boating, bungee jumping, boutique shopping or play a game of golf in the afternoon, then dine at a vineyard or atop a mountain at night," Gardiner says. "This is really appealing to organizations that want to provide their employees with a varied and fulfilling travel experience."

## Portugal — Classic Contemporary Europe

Dive into history in its crystal waters. Race like a Formula One driver in its sunny south. Snowboard down hills as high as the Austrian Alps. This is Portugal.

A seven-hour flight from the U.S. East Coast, Portugal is the closest European country to the States. Lisbon, its capital and largest city, offers an eclectic mix of historic charm and modern conveniences with

a classic European feel. Groups will be awarded an upscale sensory experience, from globally inspired cuisine to world-renowned wines. The only European capital situated on the beaches of the Atlantic Ocean, Lisbon is a great walking city with a pleasant climate throughout the year and an abundance of sunshine.

"Portugal is a country with diverse scenarios, heritage and culture in a very short distance from the U.S.," says Celina Tavares, U.S. director at the Portuguese National Tourist Office. "We have rich and distinctive gastronomy and great wines in the Douro Valley wine region."

Located in northern Portugal, Porto lies on the Douro River and is a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Lisbon. Port wine gets its name from the city, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the oldest cities in Europe. A coastal transport from Lisbon to Porto is ideal for a longer incentive trip. In order to attract international groups, Portugal's National Tourism Authority — Turismo de Portugal — created the Meetings and Incentive program (M&I) which provides financial assistance to companies wanting to hold events in Portugal.

"Portugal has a proven ability to receive international events," Tavares says. "We have modern facilities, advanced and efficient communications and great transport links. Portugal is a

friendly and welcoming country that, for centuries, has linked and discovered different, new worlds."

## U.S. Destinations

### Austin — World-renowned Events

There was a time when Austin wasn't top of mind for planners considering Texas as an incentive destination. Austin, the state's capital and fourth-largest city, has emerged as a unique alternative to its Texan counterparts. From its vibrant music scene — Austin boasts more than 250 live music venues and entertainment districts — to its comprehensive art collection at the Blanton Museum of Art — one of the oldest and largest collections of Latin American art in the country — Austin surprises groups with its free-and-easy culture and state-of-the-art technology.

"J.D. Power and Associates ranked

Limits Music Festival are world-renowned and exclusive options for smaller incentives. SXSW celebrates the merging of interactive digital media, art, film, music and comedy. The festival showcases these industries — and the gaming culture — through screenings, exhibitions, educational sessions, hands-on play, industry leader awards and parties. The festival's lounges are an opportunity to create a VIP experience and make one-on-one connections with people from these industries.

On a smaller scale, Sixth Street and the Warehouse District are two of six vibrant areas of Austin that thrive with live music, entertainment, restaurants, bars and shops. These walkable neighborhoods give visitors a taste of the local character of the city.



"Hawaii offers the feel and appeal of an international destination with the familiar comforts and conveniences of working in the United States."

### Mary Neister, CMP

Vice President, MCI  
Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau  
Honolulu, HI

### Hawaii — No Passport Required

When U.S. planners think of creating an incentive in paradise, Hawaii is often the destination that comes to mind. With its exotic landscape, intriguing culture and captivating people, the Islands are a faraway retreat that do not require a passport.

"Beyond Hawaii's year-round warm weather and breathtaking scenery, the rich cultural heritage of the Islands provides attendees with authentic and engaging experiences demonstrating its famed aloha spirit," says Mary Neister, CMP, vice president, MCI, Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau. "Unlike any other state, Hawaii offers the feel and appeal of an international destination (exotic, tropical, culturally diverse), with the familiar comforts and conveniences of working in the United States."

Group activities in Hawaii are very ordinary. The varied experiences are meant to share the local flavor of the islands, humanizing their indigenous people and sharing the Polynesian roots of the native residents. Harvesting kalo is one such activity meant to immerse attendees in the Hawaiian cultural experience. Kalo is an ancestral plant, sacred to the native Hawaiians. It dates back to 500 BC, when the first voyagers arrived on the shores of the islands. Helping restore a centuries-old *loko ia* (fishpond) built by early Hawaiian settlers is another example of this personal history.

Last year, Jenn Artura, senior director, global strategic events and executive briefing programs, Veritas,



Hawaii's tropical paradise, a mix of warm weather and exotic experiences, entices visitors.

Austin No. 2 for the Destination Experience Satisfaction Award and No. 1 in the Southwest," says Katherine Wise, communications manager for Visit Austin. "U.S. Travel + Leisure named Austin one of the Top 15 Cities in the U.S., while the World Economic Forum lauds the Texas capital as the No. 1 city for tech in the world."

Austin's festivals such as South by Southwest (SXSW) and the Austin City

"Austin is centrally located in the U.S. and has more than 300 days of sunshine on average," Ballin says. "Weather makes it ideal for a sunset cruise on Lady Bird Lake to check out their legendary bats, or walks, hikes and bike rides on one of Austin's many trails. Finally, a quick transfer away is 14,000 square miles of Hill Country with quaint, historic towns and more than two dozen vineyards to provide a relaxing respite."

"New Zealand is really appealing to organizations that want to provide their employees with a varied and fulfilling travel experience."



### Lisa Gardiner

Global Manager, Business Events  
Tourism New Zealand  
New Zealand



A dinner party on the private island of Lana'i was a one-of-a-kind experience for attendees.

planned a high-level incentive on the island of Lana'i. The event was to take place in Bali, however, after a volcano eruption, she was forced to select another destination.

"We felt like we were on our own private island," Artura says of Lana'i. "The people, culture and beauty all came together to create a one-of-a-kind experience."

Thais Toro, MBA, event manager, Cox Automotive also recommends Hawaii for incentive meetings. "Each of the Hawaiian Islands are rich with beautiful beaches, mountains and waterfalls — perfect scenarios for group activities. Hawaii has a unique culture that brings magic to any event. Anywhere you go or whatever you do, there is always something spectacular that only Hawaii can offer."

### California Wine Region — Personalized Programs

It's difficult to imagine an incentive trip without wine. No matter the destination, whether in the U.S. or abroad, fine wines and an epicurean desire for culinary creativity are important elements of any incentive. California's Napa Valley and Sonoma County deliver this — and more.

For Napa, it began in 1976 with a wine competition that became known as "the judgment of Paris." A local Napa chardonnay beat out nine Parisian varieties in a blind taste test. After this, global connoisseurs viewed Napa differently. California wines were not only contenders, they were winners.

"California Wine Country gives guests quite a unique experience as a small group vs. what one might do on their own," says Stagner. "This area works

wonderfully for couples. You'll find unique, high-end hotels with fine dining experiences, biking and picnics at the vineyards. And flying in and out of San Francisco Airport to reach wine country is relatively easy."

**"The Palm Beaches deliver a luxury experience more than 100 years in the making, one that has long attracted the world's elite..."**

**Ashley Svarney**

Senior Director, Public Relations & Social Media

Discover the Palm Beaches  
West Palm Beach, FL

If your attendees have experienced the California wine region in the past, Visit Napa Valley — the tourism marketing organization for the area — has created a program that might entice even the most jaded attendee. "True Taste of the Napa Valley" is available for groups



Visit Napa Valley has created the "True Taste of the Napa Valley" program, including personalized demonstrations and an educational tasting, to tantalize guests' tastebuds.

through May 2019. Your selected hotel will provide a complimentary culinary or wine expert to curate a full-sensory experience tailored to your attendees.

"Your expert will be available to co-create a variety of activities, including a guest showcase, personalized demonstrations and an educational tasting or seminar," says Teresa Savage, vice president, sales, Visit Napa Valley. "This memorable epicurean experience will elevate your meeting or event and ensure your guests are engaged and inspired."

### Nashville — A Bit of Greece in America

It's no longer a place where you can hear only country music. Now, Nashville delivers diverse musical genres that attract a wider demographic. But don't let a more mainstream ambience deter you from selecting the "Music City."

"Planners should choose Nashville because of its state-of-the-art facilities, surge of new hotel supply and world-class music and entertainment offerings, including more than 180 live music venues offering music of all genres 365 days a year," says Adrienne Siemers, senior vice president, sales, Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp. "Also, we have a diverse offering of attractions, including the Belle Meade Plantation Culinary Tour, Historic RCA Studio B, Hatch Show Print (a letterpress print shop dating back to the 19th Century), President Andrew Jackson's Hermitage, the Frist Art Museum and several others."

Further showing the growth of the city as a strong location for incentive meetings, Nashville came in second for North America in the American Express Meetings and Events list of 2018 Hotel Openings. Currently, Nashville has more than 15,000 hotel rooms in all phases of construction. Also, Ballin attributes Nashville's success for meetings to "great airlift with 46 nonstop flights from U.S. cities."

A quirky, yet one-of-a-kind experience for the well-traveled attendee, Nashville was known as the "Athens of the South," long before it became the "Music City." A replica of the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, stands majestically in Nashville's Centennial Park. Built in 1897 for Tennessee's Centennial Exposition, the building and an Athena statue are full-scale replicas of the originals in Greece. The Parthenon is an art museum, as well. The permanent collection is a group of 63 paintings by 19th- and 20th-Century American artists. Additional gallery spaces provide a venue for a variety of temporary shows and exhibits.

"Music can be heard 24/7, 365 days a year, from the legendary honky tonks and world-famous Bluebird Café to the Ryman Auditorium and the Schermerhorn Symphony," Ballin says. "Nashville's creative spirit extends beyond the music, however. The city has numerous art galleries, museums, chef-driven restaurants and historic museums."

### The Palm Beaches — The First Resort

It might seem a little odd that the town of Wellington in Palm Beach is known as the "Winter Equestrian Capital of the World." Winter? In Palm Beach County, Florida? Perhaps that's why an incentive belongs in this location. It's more than just an oceanic adventure where you can snorkel through 160 man-made reefs — including sunken ships and a sunken Rolls-Royce — it's a luxurious haven for the famous and those who just want a vacation in paradise.

"The Palm Beaches deliver a luxury experience more than 100 years in the



Nashville may be known as "Music City," but there's a variety of other arts and entertainment around the town to attract plenty of groups.

making, one that has long attracted the world's elite, from the Vanderbilt family to today's titans of industry," says Ashley Svarney, senior director, public relations & social media, Discover the Palm Beaches. "There's a reason why business moguls like Martha Stewart visit often, A-list celebs like Sofia Vergara and Joe Manganiello get married here, and global athletic icons like Serena Williams call America's First Resort Destination home — it's overflowing with some of the country's most ultra-lux hotels, spas, private yachts and dining experiences."

Why is Palm Beach known as the "first resort?" At the turn of the century, oil, railway and real estate tycoon Henry Flagler built two lavish hotels to provide Northerners a much-needed escape from the harsh winters. And to make it accessible to the vacationers, he built the Florida East Coast Railway. In 1894, the six-story, Georgian Hotel went through two phases of expansion to make it, at that time, the largest wooden structure in the world — it accommodated 2,000 guests.

And this opulence continues today. Eau Palm Beach is a haven of grandeur, one of only two *Forbes* Five-Star resorts in Palm Beach and one of eight in

Florida. Attendees are welcomed with champagne before relaxing on the hotel's private beach stretching seven acres along the oceanfront. Or they can take a respite in the award-winning Eau Spa — also rated five-star by *Forbes*.

What better way to incentivize your attendees than having access to Palm Beach's tennis courts where Venus and Serena Williams practice? Or your



**"Planners should choose Nashville because of its state-of-the-art facilities, surge of new hotel supply and world-class music and entertainment offerings."**

**Adrienne Siemers**

Senior Vice President, Sales  
Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp  
Nashville, TN

guests can shop on luxurious Worth Avenue or peruse the eclectic vintage finds at Antique Row, a premier antique shopping district in West Palm Beach. Oh, and don't forget to tell your attendees they might bump into a famous Palm Beach resident.

Continue to surprise your attendees with these untypical destinations. They are sure to remember the event for years to come.

**C&IT**

# Colorado Contrasts

## The Old West Meets the New West in This Hybrid of Culture

By Thomas Rynne

Colorado's blessed with some of the most vivid contrasts of any state in America — even within the same towns. Denver, for example, combines the best of the Old West with the exciting skyline of the New West. Here, you can see beautifully restored buildings from the early-1900s or even the late-1800s, only a block away from sleek, modern cultural and meeting facilities. And, while plenty of Denver residents still wear cowboy boots, their boots are probably a lot shinier than the cowboys earning their livings just a few miles away.

Colorado Springs, just 70 miles south, is surrounded by towns that still echo the Old West, such as Old Colorado City and Cripple Creek. Yet, its most famous building is The Broadmoor Resort, in the style of a 15th-Century Italian Renaissance palace, complete with its peach-colored exterior and its towers and turrets.

Boulder is home to the University of Colorado, whose placid halls of learning aren't far from the 50-foot-high "CU" written

on a very steep, very high rock-face by some intrepid young climbers. Boulder also has a hotel that's a model of sleek/modern architecture and design, the St. Julien, only a few blocks from another hotel that's an extraordinary combination of Old West and Victorian architecture, the legendary Boulderado, dating back to 1909.



**“(The Broadmoor) is a Five-Star property, with so much to see and do that attendees never have to leave ... which enhances networking and idea-generation.”**

**Ida Pennymon**, Senior Manager of Global Events  
Cherwell, Colorado Springs, CO

Then, there's Vail Valley, within the popular resort (and meeting) towns of Vail and Beaver Creek. Each has busy, European-style town squares and continental villages with elegant shops and restaurants (Vail even has a clock tower). And each is surrounded by some of the most rugged — and most beautiful — mountain panoramas in America.

Here are some of Colorado's best meeting cities and resorts, and some of the colorful contrasts that make them so special.

### Boulder

Boulder started out as a supply town for miners. Now, however, with a major university, great shopping and dining and excellent meeting hotels, its current-day contrasts are everywhere you look. Throw in a ton of outdoor recreational (and teambuilding) opportunities, and it's become a great town for meetings.

Boulder's main street, called Pearl Street, is closed to traffic but still lined with historic buildings now housing trendy shops, the city's best restaurants and innovative breweries.

The Queen of Boulder is still the majestic, red-brick **Hotel Boulderado** (160 guest rooms, 8,400 square feet), as it has been since New Year's Day 1909. The Boulderado received a major upgrade last year. And its contrasting cousin with the striking contemporary design, the **St. Julien Hotel & Spa**, offers 201 guest rooms and 9,708 square feet.

Many of the folks who followed the miners here in the late-1800s did not come for precious metals, but to recover from tuberculosis at the Boulder-Colorado Sanitarium started by Dr. Kellogg (yes, the cereal Kellogg). Others came for the Colorado Chautauqua learning institution, started by Texas school teachers so they could teach summer school without the hot weather. And many meeting planners cite Boulder as a place where attendees can relax in the fresh air and re-energize in the natural beauty.

In addition to being “cool,” Boulder's also just plain fun, especially on Saturday afternoons in the fall, when the University of Colorado Buffaloes charge onto the Folsom Field turf to the roars of 65,000 people. In Boulder, planners can provide attendees with experiences such as hot-air ballooning, mountain biking, hiking and beautiful nature walks, all within minutes of their hotels.



During their stay in Boulder, attendees can watch the University of Colorado Buffaloes charge onto Folsom Field.

Boulder's also easily accessible, as it's only a short ride from Denver International Airport. In fact, planners considering Boulder have never had it so good — the city's opened three new hotels and renovated three others recently.

**Embassy Suites by Hilton Boulder** and the **Hilton Garden Inn Boulder** opened in January, as a dual-managed property with a combined 376 guest rooms and 7,809 square feet, along with a shared rooftop pool. **The Residence Inn Boulder** followed in March, with 155 guest rooms and 2,500 square feet.

The Boulderado recently completed a \$2.5 million renovation of its lobby and reconfigured its second-floor mezzanine into a meeting space for 250 — which you can access on the original Otis Elevator. The **St. Julien** has completed upgrades on its guest rooms and lobby, and the **Boulder Marriott** completed renovations on its guest rooms in June.

### Colorado Springs

Colorado Springs is a study in contrasts, ranging from natural wonders such as Pikes Peak to picturesque “Old West” towns.

Upon its founding in 1871, the town drew visitors as varied as “Pikes Peak or Bust” gold-miners, European travelers coming for the natural beauty and Americans who wanted to see the “Old West” before it disappeared. Native Americans, however, had lived here for centuries, drawn by the soothing hot springs in the area (hence, the town's name).

The Gold Rush still exists in historic towns like Victor and Cripple Creek. Artistic treasures, on the other hand, can still be discovered among the artists and craftspeople in the colorful old town of Manitou Springs. Here, you can also experience those mineral springs that drew the native peoples.

Groups can tour the U.S. Air Force Academy, experience the charm of historic Old Colorado City, visit the U.S. Olympic Committee's Training Center or ogle natural wonders such as the Garden of the Gods or the swinging bridge over the Royal Gorge.

This city also boasts one of the most prestigious resorts in America. **The Broadmoor Resort** is now celebrating its 100th birthday. Its builder and original owner, Spencer Pentose, was an aficionado of Medieval Italian architecture. So, in the middle of the Old West, he built a peach-colored Italianate palace, which, interestingly, now houses one of America's finest Western Art collections. The Broadmoor has 783 guest rooms and 185,000 square feet, along with 16 restaurants, 26 shops, a full-service spa, a beautiful lake on which you can row or pedal, two championship golf courses — and Cheyenne Mountain right outside your window.



Guests enjoy jaw-dropping views while dining al fresco at the Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs.

# Around-the-state Adventures

Colorado, of course, has some of the best skiing resorts in America. These sites also happen to have some of the best hiking, climbing, kayaking, canoeing, horseback riding and mountain biking in America. Which — no surprise here — makes them great meeting spots, as well.

## Aspen

Aspen's international cache belies its origins as a rough-and-ready mining town with its fair share of quarrels — some probably violent — over who discovered what. Today, it still retains



The Aspen Meadows Resort has floor-to-ceiling windows offering magnificent views from its Barksdale Lobby.

the aura of a quaint mining town, but in a different way. It's set amidst a stunning mountain backdrop, with outdoor adventure, world-class dining, shopping and cultural amenities.

The town adopted a theme of "mind, body and soul" when it was formed in the 1940s, and it still lives by that mantra today. As a result, it's a town with some unique lodging/meeting venues and an unforgettable place to retreat, reconnect and refresh — all of which make it a great place to hold very productive meetings.

But that mantra also includes moving forward. A new **W Aspen** is scheduled to debut next spring with 88 guest rooms, 1,600 square feet for meetings and a rooftop pool and bar.

Local resorts have also been upgrading. **Hotel Jerome** just renovated its public spaces and added three new guest rooms, to go with its 10,000 square feet. **Aspen Meadows Resort**, spread over 40 beautiful acres and home to the Aspen Institute, has 40,000 square feet. And the **St. Regis** renovated its lobby and restaurant last fall.

In addition, more upgrades are coming. **The Little Nell**, perhaps Aspen's most renowned resort, is planning renovations on its restaurant and lobby, as well as its Aspen Mountain Club atop Aspen Mountain.

In all, Aspen boasts some 1,600 guest rooms and 100,000 square feet.

## Keystone Resort

Keystone Resort is a 3,000-acre community of rustic-luxurious villages and beautiful shops, with a lake and paths filled with rowers, hikers, cyclists and trekkers in the summer, and excellent ski runs atop scenic peaks, with skiers and snow-boarders enjoying them in the winter. This is a comprehensive resort town, and your attendees will probably not be interested in leaving the resort, because there's so much to do here and so many great spaces in which to meet.

**Keystone Conference Center** is the largest facility of its kind in the Colorado Rockies. With more than 100,000 square feet of exhibit, function and meeting space, it's designed to accommodate a wide variety of meeting needs — from in-house AV



The Keystone Conference Center has more than 100,000 square feet of meeting space.

experts and state-of-the-art technology to meeting rooms with unobstructed mountain views that roll on forever — and an experienced event-planning team.

With three ballrooms and 50 flexible meeting rooms, Keystone can accommodate groups as large as 2,000. The resort also offers planners mountaintop venues, giving attendees memorable dining experiences.

Lodging possibilities at Keystone Resort include **Hyatt Place Keystone**, with cool extras, such as the Coffee to Cocktails Bar, featuring international coffees, premium- and craft-beers, signature cocktails and 4,400 square feet of indoor/outdoor space with dramatic views of Dercum Mountain.

After the meetings, some planners take their attendees up to Der Fondue Chessel for a fun group experience atop North Peak Mountain. Transportation up and down the mountain is provided by gondola. And the fondue treats are presented so each guest gets to do his/her own thing.

## Vail/Beaver Creek

Vail Valley, a world-renowned, international ski resort, had been foreseen — and built by a World War II veteran who had trained in the area. It has two main villages, Vail and Beaver Creek. Each town is like a Currier & Ives painting — rustic and green, like a European village filled with flowered walking paths, charming little shops, eateries, galleries and streets with the aroma of a plethora of goodies. Vail is so European-like, it even has an old clock tower. Both villages are overlooked by some of the most towering mountains in America, and people come from all over the world to ski in the majestic beauty.

Even with its glowing international reputation, Vail Valley remains focused on always improving its facilities.

**Hotel Talisa** recently completed a \$50-million, resort-wide renovation

that included its 40,000 square feet of indoor/outdoor meeting spaces. **Doubletree by Hilton Vail** also completed a similar renovation, including its 5,755 square feet of meeting space. **Lion Square Lodge at the Gondola** renovated its meeting and public spaces. And, the **Vail Marriott Mountain Resort** is in the middle of a comprehensive upgrade that includes its meeting space.

More Vail Valley upgrades are on the way. The stately **Charter at Beaver Creek** and longtime favorite **Antlers at Vail** are both undergoing extensive renovations that will include their meeting spaces, to be completed late next year.

C&IT



Kayaking is just one of many outdoor adventures to experience during spring and summer in Colorado.

**Cheyenne Mountain Resort** is also a longtime Colorado Springs landmark. Offering 316 guest rooms and 40,000 square feet, it's a woodsy, classic mountain lodge with a Pete Dye golf course, spa, three restaurants, general store and jaw-dropping views almost everywhere you look.

**Great Wolf Lodge**, which opened last year, is a fantastic family and meeting resort, with 311 guest rooms and 20,000 square feet. **The Lodge at Flying Horse** opened only a few months ago, and attendees can use all the facilities at the adjoining Flying Horse Country Club.

Existing meeting hotels aren't standing pat, either. Last year, **Embassy Suites by Hilton** renovated its 204 guest rooms and expanded its meeting space to 7,000 square feet. And **DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Colorado Springs** just added a new restaurant and bar.

Ida Pennymon, senior manager of global events at international software company Cherwell, brought more than 700 people from all over the world to The Broadmoor (and four other nearby properties) last October. It was the fifth



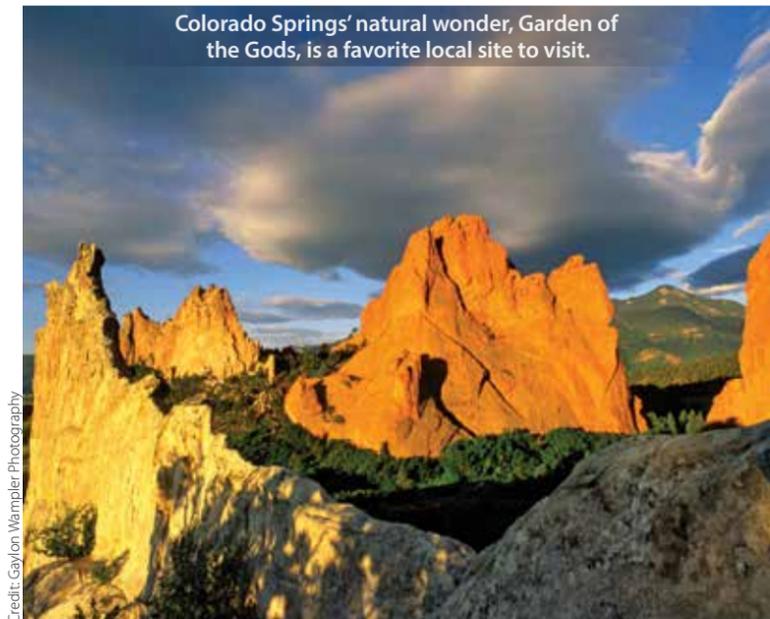
Attendees at the Cherwell Annual Global Conference return year after year to The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs for its ambience and spectacular surroundings.

straight year she's used that resort for the Cherwell Annual Global Conference.

"We like having our conference at The Broadmoor," Pennymon says, "because both our Colorado Springs and Denver-based staffs can come. It's a Five-Star property, with so much to see and do that attendees never have to leave ... which enhances networking and idea-generation. Colorado Springs — with its colorful old towns and natural wonders like Pikes Peak and Garden of the Gods — is a place where attendees like to come. And, we always try to have a social-responsibility component, so we donated to the Special Olympics — and we even had one of their athletes address our meeting."

## Denver

Contrasts? Denver's hip yet old-fashioned. It's constructing glass towers that pierce the sky, yet it treasures its older buildings. It's transforming once-blighted neighborhoods into attractive new places to live, work and be entertained. And, it has transformed its beloved landmark, Union Station, into a brand-



Colorado Springs' natural wonder, Garden of the Gods, is a favorite local site to visit.



Credit: Stevie Crecellius

Futuristic structures like the Denver Art Museum reside in the heart of Denver.

new transportation hub ... and a place where Denver residents go to experience cool restaurants and shops.

Inside the city are futuristic structures like the Denver Art Museum. Yet, just outside the city are rustic cattle ranches. Inside the city are world-class restaurants and shops. Yet, just outside the city — and easily visible to everyone inside the city — is the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, providing breathtaking natural beauty and myriad recreational opportunities in which to enjoy it.

Small wonder that Denver attracted more than 32 million visitors last year, many of them meeting attendees. In many ways, Denver is a model city for the rest of America — and it's got the media awards to prove it.

For a big city whose profile is shooting skyward, the downtown still remains compact, walkable and filled with great places for attendees to eat, watch sports, shop or meet.

The Colorado Convention Center is a striking structure. Its downtown location hums with an urban vibe, while its 4.5 acres of windows bring the mountainous outside in. The Center is starting a project to add 80,000 square feet of meeting space, 60,000 square feet of pre-function space and 50,000 square feet of outdoor event space, giving it nearly one million square feet. The work will be finished in 2022. And these additions will be atop the roof, offering dramatic views of the city and the Front Range.



The Colorado Convention Center is expanding to nearly one million square feet of meeting space. The project is expected to be finished in 2022.

The Center's within walking distance of some 10,000 hotel rooms — and that number is about to increase.

**Hilton Garden Inn Union Station** will open this winter, with 233 guest rooms, 5,000 square feet and a restaurant in the born-again Union Station. Scheduled to open this month is **Jacquard, Autograph Collection**, with 201 guest rooms, 6,900 square feet and a rooftop pool and bar.

A former Marriott property after a \$27-million upgrade, recently opened as **Hilton Denver City Center**, and the trendy LoDo (Lower Downtown) neighborhood saw the opening of **Kimpton Hotel** last August.

One of Denver's coolest hotels — and perhaps one of America's — is actually an art museum within a hotel. **The ART Hotel** has 165 sleek, stylish guest rooms with huge windows and 5,000 square feet of meeting space. It also has one of the most impressive contemporary art collections of any hotel in America. The guest rooms, public spaces and meet-



Credit: Visit Denver

Stop for a photo op with the 40-foot-high Blue Bear that welcomes visitors into the Colorado Convention Center in Denver.

ing hallways are filled with provocative art that will have your attendees talking — especially the 7-foot, steel-wire horse in the lobby.

Jessica Rife is senior events manager for ESource, and brought more than 600 attendees from across the country to Denver last September for the annual ESource Forum. They stayed and met at the **Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel**, Denver's largest, which offers 1,231 guest rooms and 133,000 square feet.

"Denver has proven a great site for us," Rife says. "It's an exciting city, going through a genuine rebirth. It's a city that's very walkable, with a vibrant downtown filled with restaurants, breweries, attractions and museums. The airlift is great from anywhere in the country. It's also a city that's very involved in 'Green' practices, which are important to us. And, the Sheraton is perfect for us, because it's big enough to handle both our room- and meeting-space requirements, which is one of the reasons we're booked there through 2023." **C&IT**



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# Destination



# WINNING BIG

## Las Vegas Hits the Jackpot for Business and Pleasure

By John Buchanan

It's no accident that Las Vegas has finally claimed the undisputed title of No. 1 meeting and convention destination in the U.S. Its unparalleled meeting infrastructure and wow factor have propelled it into the stratosphere since the depths of the Great Recession a decade ago.

And a large part of its success can be attributed to planners who use it for meeting after meeting, year after year, with enormous enthusiasm and loyalty.

Gayle Strawn, conference director at Minneapolis-based Franchise Times Corporation, which hosts annual educational conferences in the restaurant and franchise industries, has been using Las Vegas every year for the last 17 years for two of the company's most important events. One is a two-and-a-half-day November conference for 2,800 attendees from the restaurant industry. The other is a two-and-a-half-day

conference each spring for the franchise industry. Attendees include bankers and investors.

Why has Strawn been so loyal to Las Vegas?

"The main reason is the ease of getting into Las Vegas



**"We actually tried holding one of the meetings at another destination several years ago, and we lost half of our attendance."**

**Gayle Strawn**, Conference Director  
Franchise Times Corp., Minneapolis, MN

**"What makes it great for us is that we just get people there, and then everything they want, including entertainment, is just there for them."**

**Judy Adams**, Event Specialist  
Gensco, Tacoma, WA

for our attendees," she says. "It is centrally located, as far as flying in and out are concerned. Another reason for our loyalty is that we have also seen our attendance go up each year since we've been in Las Vegas. We actually tried holding one of the meetings at another destination several years ago, and we lost half of our attendance. And when we went back to Las Vegas, attendance went back up — and grew."

The convenience of McCarran International Airport, which is just minutes from Strip hotels, also makes the destination extremely popular with attendees, Strawn says.

Another reason they return annually is its unmatched hotel inventory. "Las Vegas has an excellent range of meeting hotels," Strawn says. "We tend to mix up our choices each year." Because both of her meetings attract well-heeled attendees, she adds, she uses only the best and most well-known properties.

The hotels for this year's November meeting are two of the city's most exclusive and luxurious resorts: Wynn Las Vegas and its adjacent sister property Encore at Wynn Las Vegas. Both hold AAA Four Diamond ratings for 2018. "We've used both hotels before," Strawn says, "but we've never used all of the meeting space at both hotels before. This fall will be the first time."

Last fall's hotel was The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. In 2016, it was Bellagio.

Strawn is taking the meeting back to Wynn this year because of its unparalleled prestige. "The Wynn is perceived as a very high-end hotel," she says. "It's the kind of hotel where people walk down the hall and say, 'I just love being here.'"

Her hotel for next year is Bellagio.

### Another Longtime Loyalist

Gigi Gleason, CMP, senior manager, global strategic meetings, at major software manufacturer Autodesk, Inc. in San Rafael, California, is another meeting planner who is a die-hard enthusiast for Las Vegas as a destination. Autodesk hosts two major annual meetings there — a 10,000-attendee, four-day user conference in November and a 3,000-attendee, four-day global sales meeting in spring. Both meetings have been held in Las Vegas for the last 20 years.

"The big reason we've been so loyal to Las Vegas is that everybody loves going to Las Vegas," Gleason says. "It's also



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Credit: Wynn Las Vegas

Meeting planners return to Wynn Las Vegas — the highest-rated resort company in the world — because of its unparalleled prestige.

easy to get to, with great airlift. And you can house meetings the size we do under one roof, which is very difficult to do anywhere else. And then the final reason is we, and our attendees, have such great familiarity with Las Vegas from going there every year for so long."

Gleason's rotation of go-to hotels has always included marquee properties such as Mandalay Bay, The Venetian and Caesars Palace. "And we're getting ready to go to ARIA

Resort & Casino, which is another fantastic hotel, for our sales conference next spring," she says. ARIA holds a AAA Four Star rating for 2018. Earlier this year, the property completed a \$170 million expansion that nearly doubled its meeting and convention space to 500,000 square feet. The expansion, which totaled 200,000 square feet, converted a theater built to host Cirque du Soleil shows into three ballrooms, more than a dozen new meeting rooms and an executive lounge.

What key factors account for Gleason's hotel choices? "We use the cream of the crop properties," she says. "Mandalay Bay, The Venetian, Caesars Palace and ARIA are all well-known 'brand names.' But what they also have in common is the number of people you can get under one roof and the amount of meeting space they have. But the 'brand' issue is also very important to us, because we want to be associated with top-notch sleeping rooms and meeting space, as well as the overall experience our attendees have."

Gleason also observes that Las Vegas is constantly reinventing itself, always raising the bar for meeting infrastructure and amenities. "That is very appealing to me as a meeting planner," she says. "The great thing about Las Vegas is you never have to do the same thing twice. There is always something new and exciting. For example, CAESARS FORUM

## Take Time Out in Reno

Nevada boasts another popular meeting destination, Reno, which is markedly different from Las Vegas. While Las Vegas is large and frenetic, Reno is small, intimate and laid-back.

The Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority has become more aggressive in the corporate marketing, stressing that the destination offers excellent meeting infrastructure, including a variety of hotel products that range from gaming to non-gaming hotels and resorts large and small.

Judy Adams, event specialist at Gensco, a Tacoma, Washington-based wholesale distributor that serves heating contractors, has used Reno for four incentive travel programs over the last eight years for 60 customer qualifiers and guests.

### Why Reno?

The company has successfully tied its incentive program to Reno's annual "Hot August Nights" car and entertainment festival, which has been held for more than three decades and is the largest outdoor car show in the

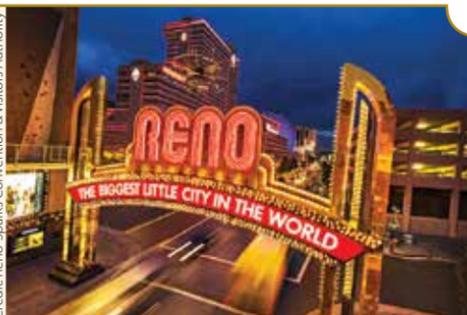
country. Owners bring in cars from all over the U.S. and Canada.

"A lot of our customers are very interested in muscle cars, as well as show cars and vintage cars," Adams says. "And the customers that go on the trip are typically repeaters, so it's just a perfect match for us."

Adams and her attendees like Reno for its relaxed atmosphere and ease of navigation. "Reno is a great city to bring people into, because once they fly in, they rent a car and the festival is held all over the city, including at all the major resorts," Adams says. "There are food booths and bands playing and car parades. It's just five days of fun. And it's packed. What makes it great for us is that we just get people there, and then everything they want, including entertainment, is just there for them. So it's very easy for me as the planner."

For two of her three past programs, Adams has used the 1,990-room Grand Sierra Resort & Casino, a Reno landmark located in the heart of the city. The resort features elegant and comfortable rooms and suites in a

Credit: Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority



Reno is more laid-back and casual compared to vibrant Las Vegas.

resort setting. Grand Sierra offers myriad food-and-beverage options, from a fine dining steakhouse to casual eateries, including Round Table Pizza offering gourmet pizzas. LEX nightclub is the premier nightlife venue in northern Nevada.

Grand Sierra has more than 200,000 square feet of meeting and event space, including 45 meeting rooms and three ballrooms. The Grand Theatre, an ideal venue for general sessions, can accommodate up to 3,000 attendees. A self-contained Nevada Conference and Exhibition Center features 44,000 square feet of meeting and exhibit space, including 12 breakout rooms. The resort complex also

*Continued on page 62*



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is going to add a whole new dimension and new amenities to the destination.”

Breaking ground last July and making its debut in 2020, CAESARS FORUM is a \$375 million, 550,000-square-foot conference center that will be adjacent to the wildly popular LINQ Promenade re-

tail district and within walking distance of more than 20,000 Caesars Entertainment-operated hotel rooms in its portfolio of blue chip properties, such as Caesars Palace and the LINQ Hotel & Casino.

The CAESARS FORUM complex will dramatically raise the profile of what is possible within an ultra-modern conference facility. The LEED Silver-rated center will feature 300,000 square feet of meeting and event space, including two 110,000-square-foot, pillar-free ballrooms, two 40,000-square-foot ballrooms and six state-of-the-art boardrooms, as well as more than 100 breakout rooms. Able to accommodate more than 10,000 attendees, the entire complex will be built on one floor for maximum convenience and ease



Park MGM's new Madison Meeting Center is designed to host meetings for 10 to 50 attendees.

Credit: MGM Resorts International

of move-in. There will also be a 100,000-square-foot Forum Plaza outdoor venue for opening receptions, other events, wellness breaks and al fresco meals.

A skybridge will link CAESARS FORUM directly to The LINQ Hotel & Casino and Harrah's Las Vegas.

Meanwhile, MGM Resorts International has already set a new standard for 21st-Century meeting space at its new \$550 million Park MGM, formerly the Monte Carlo, which debuted in April.

Park MGM's new Madison Meeting Center is specifically designed to host meetings for 10 to 50 attendees. The 10,000-square-foot complex features 10 flexible rooms that have been created to reflect the most innovative breakthroughs in learning when it comes to classroom-style training, certifications, product seminars and workshops. It also offers moveable ergonomic furniture, built-in audiovisual equipment and rolling whiteboards.

Furthermore, it incorporates the DELOS Stay Well Meetings



## MGM RESORTS MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS SPACE

With convention center expansions designed to accommodate client growth and attract new business, collaborative, innovative meeting spaces to inspire the mind and the company's first all-inclusive, incentive group packages, MGM Resorts continues to lead the way in “meeting” expectations for groups of all sizes.

ARIA's major project began in May of 2016. In an effort to enhance its LEED Gold-certified convention center, they will deliver an additional 200,000 square feet of technologically advanced, flexible meeting space across four stories, for a total of over 500,000 square feet. Highlighted by stunning indoor/open-air verandas, dramatic views of The Park and T-Mobile® Arena, and the one-of-a-kind Cypress Executive Lounge with private suites, stocked pantry, conference room and library, the expanded space will put the “wow” in any event.

After breaking ground in June 2017 on an expansion of its award-winning conference center, MGM Grand is ready to top it off on January 30, 2018. The \$130 million project is adding 250,000 square feet for a total of more than 850,000 square feet when complete. Stay Well Meetings, the industry's first-ever wellness meetings experience (which launched at MGM Grand), also is expanding its footprint. Demonstrating the demand for a new way to conduct business, Stay Well Meetings feature amenities and programs that offer the kinds of healthy, productive and creative work environments that many clients are actively seeking. The expansion is scheduled for completion by the end of 2018.

Park MGM has introduced Phase I of its new 77,000-square-foot conference space and welcomed its

first major client during CES, the city's largest annual show. Combining innovative, non-traditional spaces and an outdoor terrace and flexible design, Park MGM will fill an unmet need in Las Vegas for small groups, while also offering the ability to host up to 5,000 attendees in the customizable Park Theater. In Phase II, opening later in 2018, Park MGM will introduce Las Vegas' first Executive Meeting Center (EMC) and Idea Studio – high-touch, high-tech meeting venues designed to maximize productivity for small groups. Additionally, Park MGM will include an installation of Stay Well Rooms and Meetings, the most comprehensive wellness room and meeting experiences.

Finally, set on 120 acres and home to three distinctive resort brands, this destination offers guests nearly anything their hearts desire at tropically indulgent Mandalay Bay. While listening to the waves, groups can relax and enjoy floor-to-ceiling views of Mandalay Bay Beach during their breakfast, lunch, dinner or reception. Available any time of day year-round, planners can book a seated dinner for 80, a reception for 150 or a prime viewing area for a summer concert on the beach within the 2,425-foot elevated and air-conditioned space. For an added wow factor, planners also can book The Beach and the exclusive Villas Soleil, atop the Beachside Ballroom, for a larger soiree.

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For more information, please contact Michael Dominguez at [mdominguez@mgmresorts.com](mailto:mdominguez@mgmresorts.com).

### Continued from page 60

features a state-of-the-art spa, as well as a bowling complex, cinema, indoor golf and driving range.

“Grand Sierra is centrally located in relation to the hub of the city,” Adams says. “It's one of the top two resorts in Reno, with the other being Peppermill. Grand Sierra is very nice and very clean. It also offers excellent customer service.”

For this year's program, Adams opted for Peppermill Resort Spa Casino, which features 106,000 square feet of meeting space, including a 62,000-square-foot Tuscany Ballroom, as well as four other ballrooms. Among Peppermill's most unique amenities are an intimate White Orchid private dining room and a 17th-floor, two-story executive boardroom. Peppermill features 11 dining/snack options, with a trio of fine dining restaurants, including a steakhouse and four more casual restaurants.

“Since we had been to Grand Sierra twice already, I wanted to do something different this year, so we went to Peppermill,” Adams says. “I went on a site visit and saw that the layout of the resort was great. They have three different towers, and we booked rooms in the Tuscany Tower. The rooms are very nice, and the furnishings are incredible. The resort is very clean, and there is a lot to do. They also have a very friendly staff, and they deliver great customer service.”

Reno's largest property is the 4,100-room complex that includes a trio of hotels — the El Dorado, Silver Legacy



Credit: Peppermill Resort Spa Casino

One of Peppermill's most unique amenities is the 17th-floor, two-story executive boardroom.

and Circus-Circus Reno, formerly owned by MGM Resorts.

Reno's public convention facility is the 500,000-square-foot Reno-Sparks Convention Center, which features 380,000 square feet of exhibit space and 120,000 square feet of meeting space. Plans are now underway, subject to approval by the Nevada state legislature, to add another 300,000 square feet of space.

Adams and her attendees like Reno because it is more laid-back and casual than Las Vegas, but still offers the excitement of gaming and a robust entertainment scene. “The difference is that Reno is winding down at night when Las Vegas is winding up,” Adams says. “And our people like that.” **C&IT**



Credit: Grand Sierra Resort & Casino

LEX Nightclub at Grand Sierra is the premier nightlife venue in northern Nevada.

protocol, developed in cooperation with health-and-wellness guru and DELOS board member Deepak Chopra, and previously introduced at the MGM Grand and Mirage properties. The Stay Well program features state-of-the-art air purification, energizing lighting, science-based menu options, soothing aromatherapy and other wellness features designed to enhance the productivity and overall wellness of attendees.



**“The great thing about Las Vegas is you never have to do the same thing twice. There is always something new and exciting.”**

**Gigi Gleason**, Senior Manager, Global Strategic Meetings  
Autodesk, Inc., San Rafael, CA

The other new facility at Park MGM is its Ideation Studio, opening this fall, which is aimed at corporate retreats and brainstorming sessions, with eight unique environments and four distinctive room types that each can accommodate groups of six to 25 attendees. Each space has been intentionally planned with options for a wide array of workspaces to spur collaboration, productivity, creativity and innovation.

### Many Hotel Options

Yet another reason why Las Vegas is so popular with meeting planners, across a wide spectrum of types and sizes of events, is its one-of-a-kind hotel inventory. A trio of properties illustrate the point.

M Resort Spa Casino, a 390-room off-Strip hotel located in the peaceful seclusion of nearby Henderson, offers



Hard Rock Hotel & Casino is enormously popular with the younger attendees or planners who are seeking a “hip and cool” factor.

Credit: Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas

more than 92,000 square feet of meeting space, including a 17,400-square-foot ballroom, as well as the 25,000-square-foot M Pavilion and LUX special event venues and a full-service business center. The resort also features a TopGolf swing suite, with a unique training simulation that is popular with corporate groups. It includes a spacious temperature-controlled lounge area that offers food-and-beverage service as well as a variety of interactive games.



Credit: M Resort Spa Casino

Impeccable service combined with thoughtfully designed facilities at M Resort are ideal for small to mid-size meetings and events.

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas, which is enormously popular with younger attendees or planners seeking a “hip and cool” factor, has invested more than \$20 million in expanding and updating its meeting infrastructure. The hotel now features more than 110,000 square feet of eco-friendly, multipurpose space, which includes new ballrooms. The

Hard Rock can accommodate events for up to 5,000 attendees. An additional \$40 million investment has upgraded the hotel’s guest rooms, as well as its dining and retail shopping venues.

At the other end of the spectrum, in terms of history and local culture, is the landmark and time-honored Tropicana Las Vegas, which has been among the destination’s most beloved properties for

decades. It, too, touts a brand name that is synonymous with a fun, exhilarating experience that is Caribbean-themed. The Tropicana’s conference center has been expanded and can be configured into as many as 38 breakout rooms. Facilities also include an elegant 25,000-square-foot Cohiba Ballroom that can accommodate up to 2,700 attendees or be divided into as many as 11 breakout rooms. The Trinidad Pavilion is a 24,000-square-foot, pillar-free ground-level venue that often houses general sessions and large food-and-beverage functions.

Such ongoing expansion and evolution of what is already an extraordinary meeting infrastructure is what keeps Las Vegas atop the heap of major meeting destinations.

“It’s an exciting time in Las Vegas,” Strawn says. “There’s a lot going on that’s new, and I’m hearing that there are a lot of new things coming along in 2020. More and more properties are adding more meeting space. New hotels, like the Drew, are coming.”

The under-development luxury hotel Drew Las Vegas is the former \$2.5 billion Fontainebleau Las Vegas, and its opening is highly anticipated.

“So, as a meeting planner,” Strawn says, “I’m thrilled to know there will be new hotels and new meeting space available. And for attendees, Las Vegas is always exciting.” **C&IT**



# BREAKOUT

## MEETINGS AT HARD ROCK HOTEL LAS VEGAS

Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas isn't in the business of status quo.

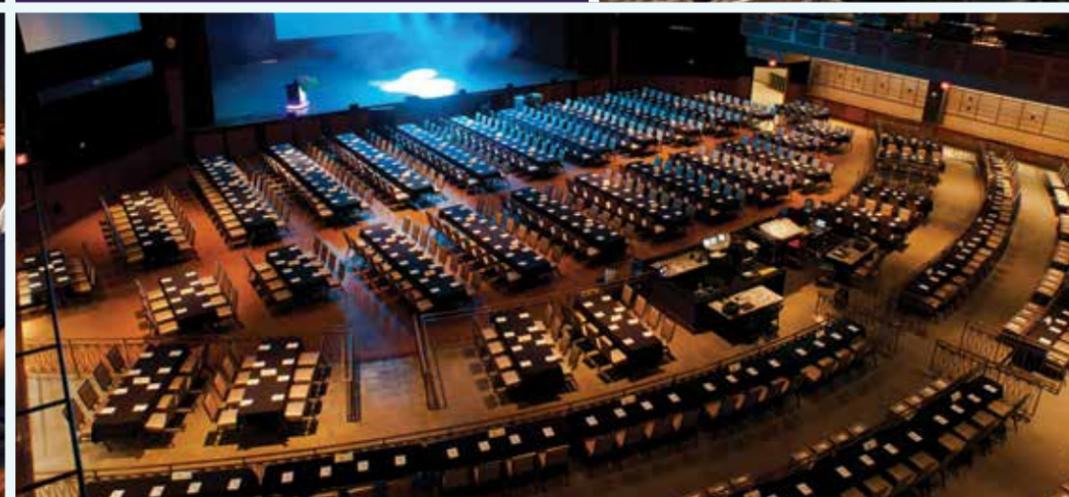
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## On The Move



HINFEY



VOSS



CHOI



PHILIPPS



PASSANANTE

Teneo Hospitality Group, the premier global representation firm, has appointed **Susan Hinfe** as director of sales, western United States. Hinfe has more than 20 years of sales experience with luxury hotels.

Bellagio has appointed **Amanda Voss** as the resort's new vice president of sales. Voss most recently served as vice president of sales for Park MGM.

**Jamie Choi** is the new director of sales and marketing at Hilton Waikiki Beach on Kuhio. Prior to this, she served as director of sales and marketing at Embassy Suites by Hilton Waikiki Beach Walk.

**Johanna Philipps** has been named director of sales and marketing at Rosewood Sand Hill in Menlo Park,

California. She has more than 10 years of experience in hospitality sales.

**Frank Passanante** will become senior vice president of Hilton Worldwide Sales, Americas, bringing all Hilton's sales efforts in the Americas under one role. He is currently senior vice president of Group Sales and Industry Relations.

The Resort at Pelican Hill in Newport Beach, California, recently welcomed **Lisa Ray** as director, financial and insurance sales. In her previous position, she was global account director for Trump Hotels. She is an active member of Financial & Insurance Conference Professionals.

Fontainebleau Miami Beach announced the promotion of **Kevin Bryant** as vice president of sales. Bryant formerly

served as corporate director of revenue management at Fontainebleau's parent company, Turnberry Associates.

Fontainebleau Miami Beach appointed **Farzanah Johnson** as director of national accounts. Prior to this, Johnson held the position of senior sales manager and business development manager at Fairmont Washington, D.C., Georgetown.

Gateway Canyons Resort & Spa in Colorado announced **Mark Shine** as director of sales and marketing. Previously, Shine was the multi-property director of sales and marketing for Quorum Hotels' portfolio.

BENCHMARK has appointed **Keith McManis** director of sales and marketing for The Essex — Vermont's Culinary Resort & Spa. **C&IT**



RAY



BRYANT



JOHNSON



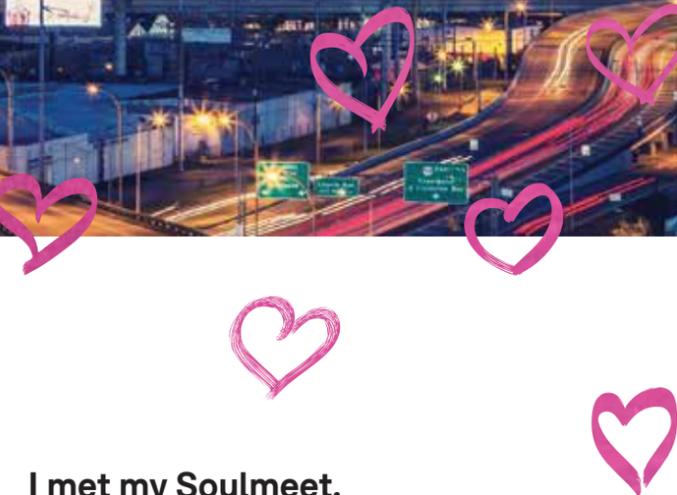
SHINE



MCMANIS



# One Time, in New Orleans



### I met my Soulmeet.

When the French landed on our shores three centuries ago, they were driven by the promise of new opportunities. New Orleans' foundation was built on meeting new people, blending cultures, testing new ideas, breaking boundaries and collaborating to build a better future. As it was in the beginning, the heart of our unique culture is still rooted in partnerships and community.

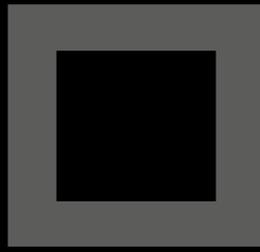
Today, we host thousands at exclusive executive functions, major annual meetings, vibrant corporate initiatives, creative festivals and world-class special events. In the tradition and spirit of our history, New Orleans is a place of new partnerships, collaboration, reinvention and creative inspiration necessary for today's tomorrow.

Bring your meeting to New Orleans and start your own story with **#OneTimeInNOLA**.

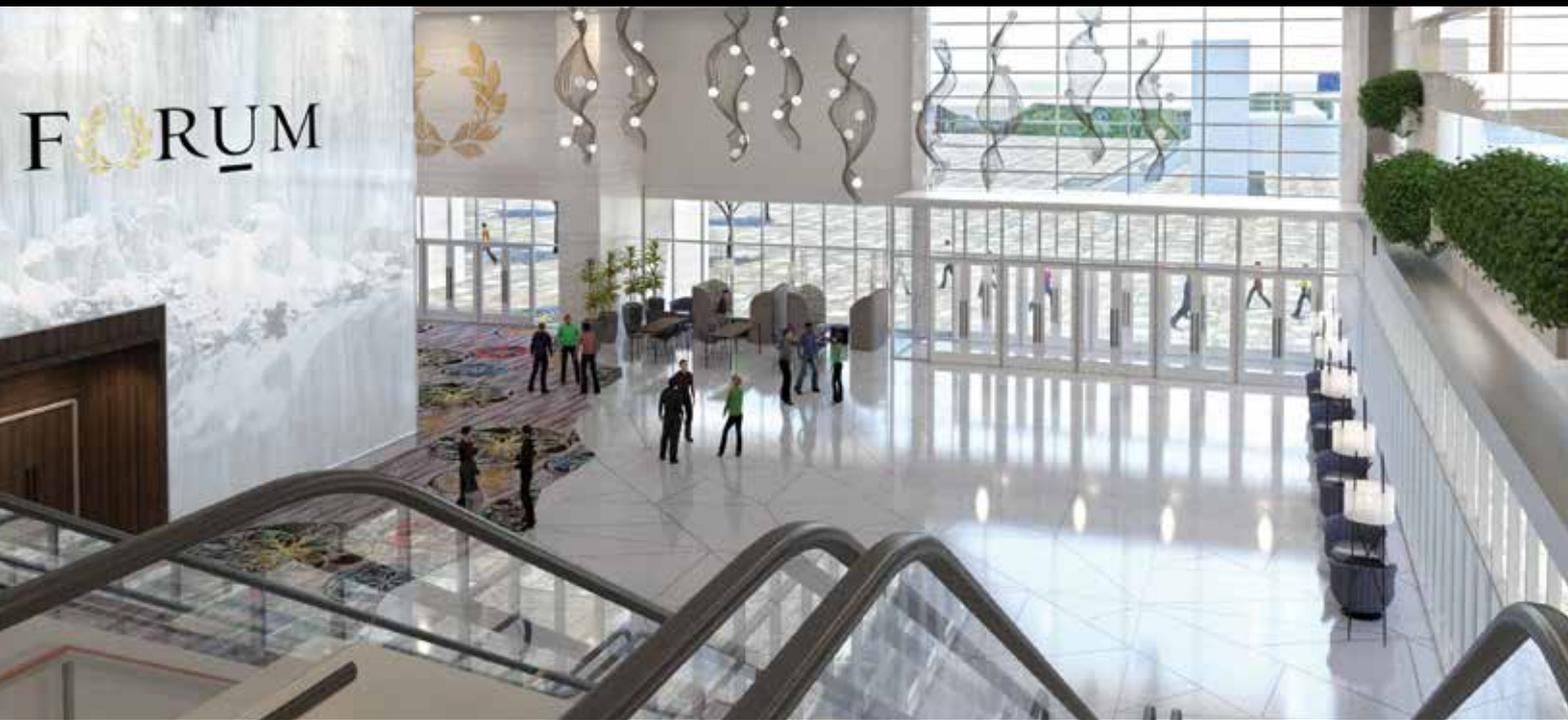
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