

Planners'
Work/Life Balance
PAGE 14

Managing
Incentive Programs
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Conference Centers
Have New Appeal
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Connecting Through
Teambuilding
PAGE 32

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NOVEMBER 2018 VOL. 36 NO. 11 \$12.00

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CORPORATE & INTRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE TRAVEL PLANNERS

Ramp Up Your Skills

The Current Status of
Planner Certification
and Education

PAGE 40

Budgeting For Today's Market

What Planners Need to Know to
Calculate Strategically

PAGE 36

A portrait of Karen Kotowski, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a blue blazer and a black necklace with a large floral pendant. She is smiling and looking directly at the camera.

Karen Kotowski,
CMP, CAE,
CEO of Events
Industry
Council

2018 Awards of Excellence

The Best of the Best CVBs, Hotels,
Resorts & Conference Centers

PAGE 44



*The Magic Carpet,
 soaring high over the sea*

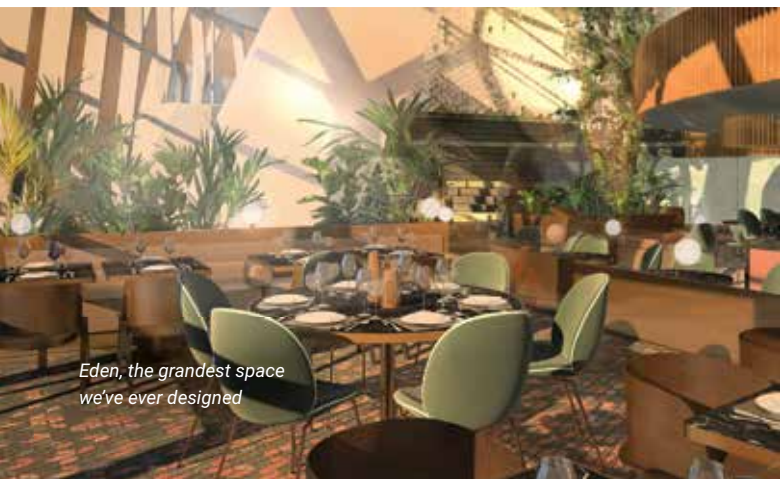
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 we've ever designed*



*Globally inspired dining, crafted by
 our Michelin-starred chef*

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Meeting and event planners often feel the stress of racing against the clock to meet their clients' needs. But that can change. **PAGE 20**



Credit: Emory Conference Center Hotel

Conference centers have stepped away from basic meeting spaces to offering recreational activities and more. **PAGE 26**



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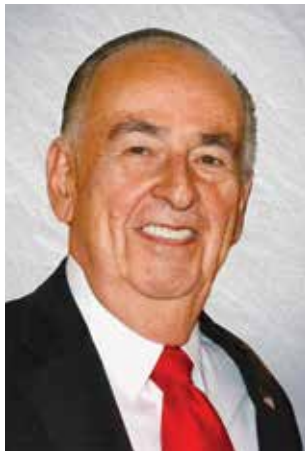


Many new and creative teambuilding experiences help enhance professional relationships. **PAGE 32**

Publisher's Message

The Importance of Education and Certification

As meeting and event planners, you know that in order to stay relevant in the industry, you must understand contracts, budgets, space requirements and much more. You must also be up-to-date on legalities, as well as changing regulations that impact meetings. By continuing education and attaining certification, you are more valuable in the marketplace. In "Ramp Up Your Skills" on Page 40, CEO of Events Industry Council Karen Kotowski, CMP, CAE (on



our cover), explains, "Recruiters and prospective employers recognize CMP Certification as the most prestigious designation in the growing industry. Certification opens the door to better and more opportunities."

Job effectiveness as well as client and attendee satisfaction are paramount to your success. So how do you balance your personal lives with the constant demands of your job? The answer: "Time, Stress and Procrastination Management" (Page 14). According to Event Planner Amy Grace Collins, owner of Amy Grace Events, a meeting planner's life, family and priorities must come first. Will Curran, chief event Einstein of Endless Events, agrees. He suggests planners set boundaries: Let clients know your working hours and stick to them. "It is possible to keep you and your client happy without being at their beck and call 24/7," he adds.

These days, conference centers are offering more than just a place to hold your meeting. The facilities are now immersing destination experiences and recreational activities as incentives. "Conference Centers Have New Appeal" on Page 26 shoots down the "no-frills" stereotype with more conveniences and teambuilding activities. And planners are taking notice of the diversity. "Being in a location that is desirable for attendees to visit is not a bad thing," says Amy Durocher, director, global accounts, with Scottsdale, Arizona-based site sourcing firm Global Cynergies, LLC. "It helps the attendees be more engaged in the program."

And finally, turn to Page 44 to see the list of 2018 Award of Excellence winners, honoring the best CVBs, hotels and resorts as voted by our subscribers. This year, we've included some international destinations worth recognizing.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harvey Grotzky". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Harvey Grotzky
Publisher

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Park MGM Unveils High Tech for Small Meetings



LAS VEGAS — Park MGM recently unveiled its new Ideation Studio, a 7,000-square-foot collaborative meeting space that, along with the 10,000-square-foot Madison Meeting Center, forms Park MGM's executive meeting venue.

MGM has more than 3 million square feet of meeting space and intends to build more. But Michael Dominguez, senior vice president and chief sales officer for MGM Resorts International, says that 80 percent of their meetings in Las Vegas are for groups of 50 attendees or fewer. The Ideation Studio, which officially opens next month, is designed to take those meetings to the next level through the use of new technology and behavioral science.

MGM used research from office-environment designer Steelcase to create the 10 meeting rooms and lounges that make up the Ideation Studio, starting with tables and chairs with adjustable heights so that meeting participants can be at eye level with each presenter. The rooms have a cushioned vinyl flooring instead of carpeting to encourage moving furniture around to accommodate different set-ups.

At the front of each room, there are two large TV screens to show presentations side-by-side with an offsite presenter, and also function as smartboards. Wide-angle cameras show offsite participants what is happening in the room.

Everything that appears on the screens is saved to the cloud and accessible to all the meeting participants whenever they want to refer to it. Attendees can participate using any smartphone, tablet or computer. www.parkmgm.com



DOMINGUEZ

Hilton Reveals Plans for 29,000 New Hotel Rooms

McLEAN, VA — Hilton approved the creation of more than 29,000 new hotel rooms during the third quarter of 2018, increasing its pipeline to more than 371,000 rooms.

A significant portion of the company's room growth is tied to the recent introduction of its latest brand, Motto by Hilton, an urban lifestyle micro-hotel set to launch in 2019.

The new brand will emphasize affordability and appears to be targeting the hostel demographic, while also seeking to improve upon the overall hostel experience.

Flexibility will be another key focus of Motto by Hilton hotels, which will feature cleverly designed spaces, including guest rooms with space-saving features such as wall-beds, lofted beds, segmented showers and multi-functional furniture that can be stowed when not being used.

Motto by Hilton properties will be opened in prime global locations throughout Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region. www.hilton.com



Nashville Set to Open Tri-brand Marriott

NASHVILLE — Music City has become an increasingly popular host of large events. Demand for accommodations has been on the rise. Because of this growth and diverse group of people visiting Nashville, there was a need for a unique property that could serve several demographics under one roof; thus, the nation's first tri-brand Marriott hotel. Set to open in January 2019 in downtown Nashville, the 470-room hotel will be home to three Marriott brands: SpringHill Suites, Residence Inn and AC Hotels.

The tri-brand hotel will have two separate lobbies, one for AC Hotels guests and a shared lobby for SpringHill Suites and Residence Inn guests. They will all share amenities, including six food and beverage outlets, a resort-style indoor/outdoor pool bar and more than 9,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, with a ballroom featuring 16-foot floor-to-ceiling windows. The property will feature five meeting rooms, as well as an outdoor terrace and a 3,200-square-foot prefunction area. The spaces accommodate up to 465 guests for a reception or 355 for a banquet. www.marriott.com

MPI Updates the State of the Events Industry

LAS VEGAS — Meeting Professionals International (MPI), an IMEX strategic partner focused on education



VAN DEVENTER

and networking development, has released the latest developments in the events industry. Among the key topics that Paul Van Deventer, MPI president and CEO, along with Darren

Temple, MPI COO, shared include:

IMEX America: This year's Smart Monday, powered by MPI, was among the most successful at IMEX America, with 825 attendees. MPI featured more than 70 education sessions.

World Education Congress (WEC): WEC19 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, will continue to focus on professional learning and education. MPI already is at a record-breaking registration pace for WEC19 with nearly four times as many attendees signed up to date over last year.

EMEC19: MPI is launching a re-imagined European Meetings and Events Conference February 9-12, 2019, in The Hague, Netherlands. EMEC19 will include cutting-edge event technology and methodologies to provide hands-on, demonstration-based learning and a unique incorporation of the host destination.

MPI Foundation: Kevin Kirby, longtime member and industry veteran, has been hired as the new MPI Foundation executive director. He served as MPI chair from 2014 to 2015 and was on the MPI Foundation Global Board of Trustees from 2016 to 2018.

MPI Academy: The MPI Academy provides education opportunities that bring new thinking and relevant topics to advance professionals at the individual and industry levels. MPI and San Diego State University have joined forces to launch the Meeting and Event Management master's degree, which is the only of its kind in North America. www.mpi.org

Tips & Trends

5 VIP Perks Meeting Attendees Will Appreciate

Attendance at meetings, conferences and trade shows remains strong despite digital communication dominating the day-to-day life of business people across nearly every industry. The value of face-to-face interaction is indisputable, but the fact is, the effort to come together — the travel, the cost, the work that piles up while away — can be taxing. So why not consider doing something extra to show your appreciation to your attendees? In recent years, a variety of services have emerged that provide unique perks for weary business travelers.

- 1. Luxury Car Rental:** Provide a premium travel experience for your guests by offering them a rental car from Silvercar. The company only rents Audi A4s loaded with Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, navigation, satellite radio and leather seats. And the rental process is entirely app-based. Guests receive a special code to book the complimentary rental in the Silvercar app. When they arrive at the airport, they use the app to activate the reservation, unlock the car and start driving. When they are finished, they simply return the car to a designated space at the Silvercar facility. The service is available at 17 airports, including Orlando, Chicago, New York and Las Vegas.
- 2. In-Room Massage:** Zeel is a massage-on-demand company that operates in 70 cities around the U.S. Planners can make the arrangements in advance or offer gift cards so guests can book it themselves using Zeel's website or mobile app. Massages can be booked seven days a week with as little as one hour's notice. Zeel's massage therapists are licensed, insured and go through in-person screening by the company. Zeel can also provide chair and table massages at meeting venues.
- 3. Luggage Service:** Give your guests a completely hands-off luggage service with Bags. Planners can arrange for Bags agents to pick up their guests' luggage from baggage claim at more than 250 airports nationwide for delivery to destinations within 100 miles of those airports. At the end of the event, Bags offers remote airline check-in at your venue so guests can check in for their flights, receive boarding passes and check their luggage without standing in line at the airport. Customers receive notifications about their luggage movement via text or email.
- 4. Personal Concierge:** One Concierge offers a variety of services for guests in 115 countries around the world. Planners can arrange for a concierge to be at the event to assist in person or as a virtual concierge available via phone, email and web-based communication. Guests can use the service to secure restaurant reservations, arrange travel services, book entertainment experiences and more. After the event, planners receive a detailed report, including program usage, request types, cost of requests and more.
- 5. Babysitting:** The Babysitting Company provides individually screened, CPR-certified childcare-givers in a dozen cities around the country, including Miami, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Orlando. The service can be performed as in-room care for one or a few children, or in a ballroom or other space for a large group, and can include arts and crafts activities, character visits and more. Offsite excursions, such as a trip to a local museum, also may be arranged.

— Mitra Sorrells

Indianapolis Marriott Downtown Undergoes \$45 Million Renovation

INDIANAPOLIS — Meeting attendees returning to the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown will be captivated by the property's recent \$45 million renovation. The property added four meeting rooms, bringing the hotel's total event and exhibition area to 45,000 square feet, including 37 meeting rooms, all with upgraded technology. The hotel also added 20 guest rooms and completely renovated its onsite fitness center.

Indianapolis Marriott Downtown's massive renovation couldn't come at a better time, as the meetings destination positions itself to welcome larger groups. "We've become a 12-months-a-year travel destination, topping \$5 billion in visitor economic impact for the first time," says Leonard Hoops, president and CEO of Visit Indy. www.marriott.com

El San Juan Hotel in Puerto Rico Returns After a Full Restoration

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO — El San Juan Hotel, Curio Collection by Hilton, will celebrate its grand reopening on December 14. The extensive restoration of the hotel is reflected in the 388 guest rooms, poolside and oceanfront villas, public spaces, pools, cabanas and landscaping.

"We're thrilled to be a part of this milestone moment in Puerto Rico's recovery, and for the destination's hospitality industry, as El San Juan Hotel marks a premier luxury destination within the Caribbean," says Martin Smith, managing director of El San Juan Hotel, Curio Collection by Hilton.

In line with last year's \$65 million renovation, the hotel's ownership has maintained El San Juan Hotel's original look and feel. This grand reopening has returned the resort to its former sophistication featuring its iconic chandelier, hand-carved Mahogany adorning the ceiling, columns and vaulted arches throughout the lobby and the registration area. With nearly 40,000 square feet of space, including a newly redesigned 11,000-square-foot grand ballroom, the hotel is available for hosting a wide array of meetings, conferences, business events and social celebrations. www.elsanjuanhotel.curiocollection.com

Global DMC Partners' 2018 Global Destination Index

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Global DMC Partners has unveiled its 2018 Global Destination Index, which presents the most popular meeting and incentive destinations around the world for 2018. Top 10 International Cities: Paris, Amsterdam, Munich, Stockholm, Vienna, London, Barcelona, Berlin, Prague and Rome. Top 10 North American Cities: Las Vegas, Orlando, Chicago, Miami, New York, San Francisco, San Diego, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and New Orleans.



CHAULET

President of Global DMC Partners Catherine Chaulet says, "It is important to us to review this data each year because our industry has an enormous impact on the global economy by bringing millions of people around the world every day."

www.globaldmcpartners.com

Caesars Entertainment Recognized With Five Loyalty360 Awards

LAS VEGAS — Caesars Entertainment Corporation was awarded five Loyalty360 Awards during the Association for Customer Loyalty's annual Loyalty360 Customer Expo in Nashville. Recognizing its exceptional accomplishments in building strong customer relationships and inspiring customer loyalty, Caesars' Loyalty360 Customer Awards included two "Best in Class" honors for Partnership and Employee Focus, a Bronze Award in the Awareness & Acquisition category, Bronze Award in the Brand Messaging & Communication category and a Bronze Award in the Customer-Centric Culture category.

Bronze Award: Awareness & Acquisition — Recognizing the company's ability to create interest among prospective customers, this award honors Caesars' "Evel Live" event, which capitalized on the 50th anniversary of Evel Knievel's jump over the Caesars Palace fountains in Las Vegas.

Bronze Award: Brand Messaging & Communication — Recognizing Caesars' video-based branding campaign, "Like a Caesar." Showcasing Caesars' signature experiences, the video highlighted unique dining experiences, marquee nightlife and entertainment and legendary hospitality.

Bronze Award: Customer-Centric Culture — Honoring Caesars' ability to build authentic customer relationships and employ a customer-first approach, the award recognizes the Total Rewards promotion, "Experience the Empire," which gave all Total Rewards members a chance to win exclusive VIP experiences.

Caesars Entertainment has also been recognized with two "Best in Class Awards" for Partnership and Employee Focus, honoring its significant program impact and industry involvement over the past year. The 2018 "Best in Class" Loyalty360 Award winners were selected by a panel of judges who evaluated nominees based on overall program impact, feedback from Loyalty360 Customer Awards judges and business awareness.

www.caesars.com/corporate

Snapshots



1



2



3



4



5



6

Credit: Christie's Photographic Solutions (4-5); ENroute Communications (6)

1-2 Left: Prior to the delivery ceremony for Celebrity Edge, Celebrity Cruises President and CEO Lisa Lutoff-Perlo (left), Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. Chairman and CEO Richard D. Fain (center) and Chantiers de l'Atlantique General Manager Laurent Castaing (right) gathered October 31 to sign over ownership of Celebrity Edge to the brand. Right: Celebrity Cruises' executive team attended the delivery ceremony at the shipyard in Saint-Nazaire, France, along with 1,377 crew members from 72 different countries. **3-4** IMEX America 2018 kicked off in Las Vegas with SITE Nite North America on October 15. It was the largest SITE Nite attendance ever with nearly 1,700 attendees. Top (left to right): Marty MacKay, DMCP, president, Hosts Global Alliance; *Corporate & Incentive Travel* Publisher/Editor Harvey Grotzky; Karen Christensen, CMP, vice president, sales of Hosts Global Alliance. Bottom (left to right): Fay Beauchine, president, Brojure; Roger Tondeur, chairman and president, MCI Group; Cathie Cusin, chief operating officer, MCI Group; IMEX Group Chairman Ray Bloom.

5 Attendees at the SITE Young Leaders Conference for young professionals in the incentive travel industry in Las Vegas October 14-15. **6** Rodrigo Diaz de Rivera Vargas, director, Mexico Tourism Board (left) and Javier Aranda Pedrero, director, Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board (right) met up in Vancouver during the 2018 Puerto Vallarta Media Tour last month.

As Seen At IMEX America 2018

IMEX America 2018, held at the Sands Expo and Convention Center in Las Vegas October 16-18, set a series of new records. The largest-ever convention expanded into an additional hall, creating space for more than 3,500 exhibitors representing 150 countries.

A record of more than 13,000 attendees took part in the event. Over 70,000 appointments were made, including 64,000 individual appointments and booth presentations — an increase of 7 percent.

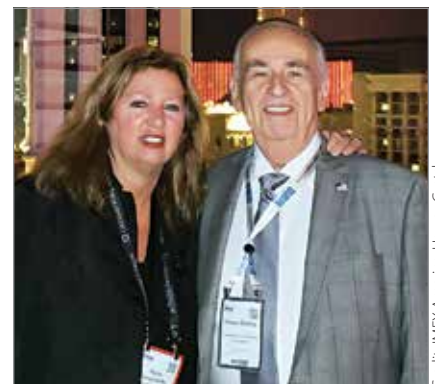
By offering a large and diverse range of experiences — from C2 International's Cloud Lab to the Tech Zone — it met the growing demand for interactive live experiential activities that are redefining the scope of the industry itself.

The week began with Smart Monday, powered by MPI. Smart Monday's carnival theme and the Six Star Innovation & Experience Lab — including Sophia, the life-like robot — added new interactive elements.



More than 30 IMEX and partner events, including Association Evening, SITE Nite North America, MPI Foundation Rendezvous, the EIC Hall of Leaders Reception and

Shamrock Invitational Golf Classic, brought thousands of people together, as well as raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for industry foundations. **C&IT**



Credit: IMEX America; Harvey Grotzky



By Victor Sawi

Is Your Recognition Program Effective?

Clients often ask, "How can we be sure we have a world-class recognition program?" Here are some things to consider if you really want to make your recognition program as effective as it can be:

Know What Success Looks Like

In our business, we work with many different organizations across a wide range of industries. Success is different for every one of them.

Whether you are launching a new program or looking to invigorate your existing one, it is essential to know what the goals are. If you're in the middle of a merger, defining culture and brand values may be the most important component of the program. If engagement survey scores show that enthusiasm just isn't there, concentrate on increasing participation and stressing to managers the importance of their role.

While employee engagement and recognition are long-term strategies, the shorter-term understanding of what the issues are right now will influence where you invest effort and resources in the program.

And with communications, you can change your focus when you need to.

Know what you need to achieve today and be flexible enough to know when it's time for a change. You will build a better program that lives in the real world of your organization.

Make It Easy for People

If your team is always on the road or includes remote workers, the program needs to be mobile-friendly. It used to be challenging to reach scattered workforces since not everyone had access to a computer, but today, 85 percent of people ages 18 to 65 have a smartphone.

Whether they are in the office at a desktop computer or on a repair call, it is important to be sure that every member of the team feels valued and part of the community. What's

more, most of your workers expect a user-friendly, intuitive experience. If you want people to participate in a program, it has to be at least as easy as placing an order on a retail website. That's a baseline expectation of every person in your company.

Never Stop Communicating

A steady stream of communications keeps the program front of mind.

At Next Level, we use our online Applaudit platform as the hub for company news, recognition and rewards of all kinds.

We give our team reasons to keep visiting the site with automated emails and callouts by managers for special recognitions or updates.

Managers are also given a pool of points to amplify the recognition experience with meaningful rewards. The platform is the home of our day-to-day and annual recognition, as well as a place to communicate about our company values and goals. It creates social buzz in the office when colleagues celebrate one another's efforts and achievements and has become an intrinsic part of our award-winning company culture.

Our frequent and engaging communications bring people back to this recognition center over and over, giving us the momentum we need to keep people connected with their colleagues and their goals.

Consider integrating your communications, from internal newsletters to printed mailings to e-statements for the biggest impact.

Commit Time and Effort

It's not enough to just turn on a platform and wait for it to take root in your company. You, and every senior leader and manager, need to be actively committed to the program.

Too often, program owners are frustrated that "it isn't working," only to find out that it hasn't been adopted

Expressing appreciation
for the work people
do is no longer
a nice-to-have.
It's **vital to**
the health of
your company.



by company influencers. If a team isn't engaged, is their manager using the platform? When was the last time they received recognition?

Giving recognition and awarding points isn't something that should be left to the last minute and distributed in haste to meet some kind of deadline.

Recognition should be in the moment, using the tools you provide, keeping everyone on track throughout the year. And that effort starts at the top, with company leaders championing the program day-to-day.

Take It Offline

Your online culture and your in-office culture must align to be authentic. And recognition has to be authentic to be meaningful for program participants.

It's great to have recognition on the platform, but how do employees feel if no one ever says anything about it

person-to-person? Managers and peers alike need to get up, go down the hall and say, "thank you" or "congratulations."

Nothing replaces human interaction and the personal connections that are made as a result.

We know that employee engagement and recognition correlate to important business outcomes, including customer satisfaction, productivity and profitability. They also correlate to employee satisfaction and retention.

Expressing appreciation for the work people do is no longer a nice-to-have. It's vital to the health of your company.

Commit to a program that works for your organization's goals, values, culture and environment.

Consider working with a recognition or engagement company that can help you stay on track. You'll reap the rewards of a workforce that cares about the organization, and about their contributions every day. That's what makes a world-class program.

C&IT



Victor Sawi

As vice president of sales and services, he is responsible for new client acquisition and the integrated efforts of the Client and Customer Services teams at Next Level Performance. Prior to joining the company, he worked in a wide array of industries, including retail, insurance and financial services/banking. His first encounter with Next Level Performance was as a client.

Health & Wellness

Time, Stress and Procrastination Management

Job Effectiveness and Client Satisfaction
Keep Planners Racing Against the Clock

By Maura Keller



Americans are experiencing stress like never before. According to the American Psychological Association, 43 percent of adults are suffering adverse health effects, and a large percentage of visits to doctors' offices are the result of stress-related problems.

In fact, a steady diet of stress is responsible for the majority of illnesses and has been linked to such life-threatening conditions as heart disease, cancer, stroke and immune system disorders. Emotional problems like depression, anxiety and insomnia are often traced back to stress.

Unfortunately, the meetings and events environment is one of the highest stress-inducing industries in which to work. But stress can impede your ability to do your job effectively. And in the meetings and events industry, job effectiveness and client and attendee satisfaction are paramount to a meeting planner's success.

According to Karen Fiorini, meeting planner and founder of Global Planning Source Inc., most planners think time is their biggest stress, but her observation is that managing relationships within a business context is the biggest stress.

"You always want to build toward making new relationships for the future of your business, but it is important to maintain the current relationships you have," Fiorini says. "Another stress is the feeling of having to be 'on' 24/7, and juggling crises back at the office while putting out fires onsite."

Amy Grace Collins, event planner and owner of Amy Grace Events, says that event planners are dealing with a unique set of stressors that many industries just don't face.

"We are, in many cases, managing one of the biggest dreams or wishes our clients have had in their lives," Collins says. "At the end of the day, our clients have the final call, and many times, we may not feel that it's the right one, which can be stressful when your reputation and brand are on the line."

These days, the three bandits that rob us of our productivity are stress, time constraints and procrastination. Americans are more stressed than ever.

Events with very low budgets, including nonprofit events, tend to be some of the most stressful functions that corporate meeting and event planners face.

"There are always a lot of moving parts," Collins says. "Many times, there are a higher number of vendors than we would typically work with because of donating services. And sometimes you have to pull tooth and nail to get some of the basic needs for an event due to limited funding."

Fiorini has found that international

Steps to Take

Changing our mindset about the role stress should play in our lives is an important step to take when managing stress in today's meetings and events environment.

In the extraordinarily stressful meetings and events industry, many skilled professionals somehow still believe that if they experience stress, they just aren't trying hard enough.

Symptoms of stress are not symptoms of weakness. It's unrealistic to believe we can prevent all stress; rather, we need to incorporate healthy stress reduction strategies to maintain physical and emotional balance in everyday life.

and your own is important. Client service means attending to the needs of the client, but not taking on their woes.

"People need to put a priority on the things that keep them healthy and balanced," Fiorini says. "And they need to schedule their priorities. In our industry, that's not going to be possible every single day, but you counteract the busy workdays with time off. There is always time in your calendar to do the things that make you happy that are not always work-related. A work/life balance is the key to my success."

Many factors contribute to stress and the ability to manage a work/life balance, but planners should consider fo-



"Our clients have the final call ... which can be stressful when **your reputation** and brand are **on the line.**"

Amy Grace Collins

Event Planner and Owner, Amy Grace Events, Grover Beach, CA

travel outside of North America is often hardest for people to adjust to because they are out of their comfort zone due to time change, language barrier and difference in cuisine.

"I strive to make sure attendees have the comforts of home, but still embracing what the world has to offer and I want them to enjoy the experience of the destination," Fiorini says.

Will Curran, chief event Einstein at Endless Events, says the key stressors event and meeting planners often face are time management and balancing all their tasks.

"Event planners wear many hats, from scheduling and budgeting to balancing clients and vendors," Curran says. "Sometimes with so much going on and sudden changes, things fall through the cracks, and event planners often feel overwhelmed like they are racing the clock."

"We think the best way to handle event planning stress is to prioritize your tasks and roll with the punches," Curran says. "By creating lists and prioritizing what is really important, event planners can have a clear plan to tackle their never-ending to-do list. Murphy's law is strong in events — there will always be something that goes wrong, whether a caterer is delayed or flowers show up in the wrong color. Learning to roll with the punches at events can really help reduce stress during planning and events."

Taking care of yourself emotionally may involve scheduling relaxation into your day: making sure you take a lunch and coffee break, getting regular massages, going for a walk and spending time deliberately focusing on positive things.

In addition, allowing yourself to distinguish between a client's problems

and focusing on their strengths and outsource the other professionals.

"Don't try and be all things to all people," Fiorini says. "Know your peaks, your genius zone. Are you a morning person? Assign yourself tough, high-concentration tasks in the mornings. Don't leave the tough tasks until it's nighttime or vice versa. And make exercise a must-do, not a should-do."

According to Collins, a meeting planner's life, family and priorities must come first.

"Clients can easily become a dominating force in your day, and if you don't set expectations in the beginning, it can become a constant disrupter in your personal life," Collins says.

"Late-night texts and emails filled with 'panic' of what's a pain point for them, many times are standard industry issues which will easily be fixed. But because you're managing a concerned

When evaluating your current level of stress, ask the following three questions:

- How well are you avoiding unnecessary stress?
- How well are we responding to unavoidable stress?
- How well are we practicing good health, which includes being well-fed, well-rested and well-exercised?

Some remedies to reduce stress include:

- Getting organized
- Doing relaxation exercises, such as deep breathing, stretching or massage
- Getting out of a rut or routine (i.e., try taking a different route home from work)
- Taking walking breaks
- Incorporating music or a favorite song into your day — choose something that will relax you
- Taking up a hobby — be sure to make it significantly different from what you do on your job
- Smile and laugh often

Here are a few quick tips to help you manage your time more effectively:

- Take a few hours to plan the next few months
- Invest in one, easy-to-use time management system, and keep the planner close at hand
- Create and maintain a “to-do” list
- Do first things first — determine what is urgent and what is the most important (these may not be the same thing)
- Delegate responsibility
- Know your biological clock — determine if you are more effective in the morning, afternoon or evening, and schedule tasks accordingly
- Continually ask yourself, “What is the best use of my time right now?”

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Tips to Reduce Stress

client, you feel the need to immediately respond. This creates a dangerous precedence — namely, constant availability.”

Time Management

“I don’t have enough time.” Have you ever said that? It basically means that you want more hours in the day or

same rate — 1,440 minutes a day, 365 days a year. What makes us good or bad time managers is how we use those minutes. Some people view time management as a quick gimmick to cram more activities into their life.

Actually, time management is a systematic process that helps you

your clients know your working hours and stick to them. If a client calls you at 10 p.m. and you have office hours clearly set, don’t pick up.

“If you don’t control stress, it controls you,” Collins says. “We’ve all been there. We have all let it creep into our lives and run us in a way that isn’t good for

“Stress is the feeling of having to be ‘on’ 24/7, and **juggling crises** back at the office while putting out fires onsite.”

Karen Fiorini

Meeting Planner and Founder, Global Planning Source Inc., Aurora, Ontario, Canada



you’re not using your allotted time to your best advantage.

The reality is that most people don’t need more time, they just need to reprioritize the time they’ve got. Time is rationed out to every one of us at the

live your life the way you want to, efficiently and effectively. The result can be a far more satisfying and rewarding existence.

Curran suggests planners set boundaries and allow time for self-care. Let

our health, our happiness or for those around us. The busier you get, the more stressed-out you’re going to get. I find a lot of friends in the industry say, ‘Well, when I make more money, I’ll ...’ but no matter how much money they make,

they don't pause and find out the root cause and start to work on reducing it. You only live your life once. If you don't take a moment to manage stress, your life will pass you by, and you will never feel a part of it."

Meeting planners should take a step back. Practice a moment of gratitude. When you feel that stress creep in, pause for a minute and take a deep breath. Write down your stressors. Usually once written out, you can either accomplish them or feel they hold less validity on paper than in your mind.



“The best way to handle event planning stress is to **prioritize your tasks** and roll with the punches.”

Will Curran

Chief Event Einstein, Endless Events, New York, NY

“As event planners, we want to always do everything for the client. We want to make them happy and the event a success so often that when a client calls you at 9 p.m., you pick up your phone,” Curran says. “But don’t do this. It is possible to keep you and your client happy without being at their beck and call 24/7, which will surely overwhelm you.

“By doing this, you won’t feel like you are constantly on the clock and feel that urge to reply immediately,” he adds.

Another way to create a healthy work/life balance is to unplug.

In today’s world, this is hard, but the rewards are great. As Curran explains, being constantly plugged-in can create a lot of stress in an event/meeting planner’s life with the constant emails and notifications.

“Take a step away and spend time with friends, read a book, meditate or watch your favorite show,” Curran says. “You will feel so much better after a break.”

Embracing Available Tools

There are several apps and tools out that help meeting planners stay focused and eliminate stress and feeling overwhelmed. Below are a few of Curran’s favorites.

Sanebox: Like many professions, an event planner’s inbox can be a huge stressor. It’s a constant battle to make sure you are seeing the emails that are important and filtering through the spam. Sanebox helps by cleaning up and organizing your inbox so you can get your life back. With Sanebox, you

can eliminate distractions, get notifications when someone opens important emails and make sure important emails stay right in your inbox so you can see them!

Todoist: Todoist is an app that allows you to make “to-do” lists and put deadlines on tasks. You can make as many separate lists as you would like to organize. It will send you reminders when tasks need to be completed. This app is very helpful to a busy planner juggling multiple tasks and jobs.

Trello: Curran uses Trello to create assembly lines for streamlined production. But there are so many uses that would benefit event planners. You can share a Trello board with your entire event team and move/assign tasks to the person that needs to handle each portion of your event. This not only makes it clear who is designated for each task, but allows event planners to have a quick glance at what progress is being made and what needs to be done.

Workout Apps/Subscriptions: It’s been proven time and time again that working out can greatly reduce stress. Event and meeting planners are constantly on the run and crunched for time. For this reason, Curran recommends a subscription-based workout program or app. These programs allow you to fit in a good workout anywhere with the click of a button and can accommodate any time restrictions and fitness levels.

“You are blessed to be working in a profession you love,” Collins says.

“Enjoy it. We are truly blessed to help create moments and experiences for people on this planet to enjoy. So take a moment to enjoy what others in your life have planned for you.”

Curran agrees. “When it’s your off-time, really take breaks ... whether that is going for a run outside or getting coffee with your friends,” he says. “You can’t help others if your cup is empty, so self-care is crucial to remain calm and in control as an event planner.”

If a planner does not get a handle on the stress of their job, they will more than likely burn out. On top of that, a meeting or event planner’s personal life and health will also suffer for the abundance of stress, and it could affect their relationships, well-being and so much more.

“By establishing a work/life balance, you have time to spend doing things you love,” Curran says. “Recharging and de-stressing allows you to give it your all when you are back at your office and working events.”

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Managing Incentive Programs

The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful

By Christine Loomis

Managing incentive programs isn't new. Despite the fact that more than 80 percent of businesses now have some type of non-cash rewards and recognition programs, a recent study by the Incentive Research Foundation found that managers in this field do not have the same benchmarks and resources to rely on as managers in other industries.

"... Our guests worked very hard to earn the travel reward; therefore, their onsite experience had to be flawless and extraordinary."

Philip Eidsvold,
CIS, CITP
Senior Director of
Client Services
One10
Minneapolis, MN

Researchers of the study, "Voice of the Market, Part 2: Engaging Program Owners in the Incentive Marketplace," interviewed 50 program managers representing a wide range of non-cash rewards programs who "spent anywhere from \$25,000 to millions of dollars annually on programs that included one or more of the following types of reward: travel, award points, merchandise, gift cards and branded items."

Among the insights gleaned from the study:

- Incentive and recognition program design and management is not universally included in standard business school curricula.
- A career in incentive and recognition program management is not broadly visible or relevant to most people entering the workforce.
- Resources are hard to find on the internet, since new program managers do not know what industry-specific search terms to use.
- Networking is a critical and valued source of learning for program managers.

We asked six industry professionals from across North America for their



insights on how their careers in the incentive industry have progressed, and what they see as important for the future and for those coming into the industry today.

All of our experts agreed on a few things, including the importance of certification, and most relayed that the critical resources they depended on early in their careers to learn the ins and outs of the job were their experienced colleagues and industry partners. Beyond that, our experts had a variety of insights to benefit today's incentive managers.

Philip Eidsvold, CIS, CITP, senior director of client services at Minnesota-based One10, and president-elect of the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE), has spent his entire career in incentives — at the same incentive house.

"I started as a travel director in 1999, overseeing onsite operations for a wide array of award and recognition group travel programs. I landed in the world of incentives by chance, but quickly learned the industry," he says. "It was made clear to us in our training that we were integral to the reward experience and that our guests worked very hard to earn the travel reward; therefore, their onsite experience had to be flawless and extraordinary."

Like other incentive professionals, Eidsvold learned his job within his company, and he feels lucky to have been with a group that provided solid training and support. What has changed today, he says, is the increased importance of research and data related to incentives.

"As our industry has evolved, and especially after the great recession, there has been a major focus on driving the right kind of industry research and advocacy efforts that truly demonstrate the value of incentives," he says. "We now have data-driven case studies and other proof points that clearly articulate that incentives drive better business results."

Eidsvold says challenges often come from lack of education or understanding of the process.

"From an agency perspective, our largest challenges often occur when

our client-stakeholder isn't properly trained in incentives or doesn't understand the value of the program from an ROI perspective. This often happens when a meeting planner is assigned to oversee an incentive travel program," he notes. "Rather than focusing on the winner experience or the work the attendee must do to earn the reward, they tend to focus their time on logistics vs. experience, and thus, aren't optimizing the incentive strategy. We spend a great deal of time educating our clients to clearly understand the mechanics of the incentive so their organization can best benefit from the investment."

Eidsvold traces much of the trajectory of his career to involvement in SITE. "As the only industry association focused on the advancement of incentive travel, SITE offers a wide range of education and networking opportunities through events at a regional, chapter and global level," he says. "These events are full of CMP-certified educational opportunities that keep my incentive travel practice on its toes and allow me to bring that expertise and experience to our clients."

Not surprisingly, Eidsvold recommends industry organizations as a good path for those starting out.

"They provide foundational education opportunities and compelling data-driven research that will allow you to add value to your organization," he says, noting that they also provide multiple opportunities for critical networking and relationship building.

"Listen to fellow planners, listen to your suppliers and listen to your clients. There's always something you don't know or have yet to experience."

Erica White, CMP
Client Onboarding
Specialist, Event Operations
ITA Group
West Des Moines, IA

To those starting out, he says, "Don't be afraid to be assertive and ask questions! Find an industry mentor willing to coach you and offer advice on how you can maximize your career potential in the incentives space ... because to be honest, it's a great industry!"

Changes Over the Years

Gabrielle Spanton, executive vice president of business development for Host Global's alliance of DMCs, says she has seen changes in both programs and award achievers over the 25 years she's been in the business. Two areas in particular are, "No. 1, a higher demand for CSR activities that are unique and authentic to the destination, and No. 2, interest in destinations that were once considered 'off-the-beaten track.'"

Additionally, Spanton says, award achievers have become more sophisticated and well-traveled, and many achieve awards over multiple years.

Like Eidsvold, Spanton points to the company she worked for early in her career as her source of education and training.

"When I started my career, our industry



lacked professional recognition, and we didn't have the benefit of resources available today. I was fortunate to work for a company that provided outstanding training and education coupled with a client that was willing to take risks to go outside the traditional incentive box to create truly outstanding programs," she says. "In short, my main resource has been a combination of practical experience and surrounding myself with highly creative colleagues."

One thing Spanton wishes clients better understood is the timing required for incentive specialists to do their best job.

"Companies are always looking for something unique that has never been done before yet provide very little time for brainstorming," she says. "The most interesting and creative ideas come from collaboration and require more than a few days to cultivate. I think clients would be truly delighted with the outcome if they afforded their partners more time in the process."



As for her best advice for those starting out, she echoes Eidsvold. "Find a mentor who is truly willing to share their knowledge and takes a genuine interest in helping you expand. A great mentor will be with you for years, so choose wisely," she says.

Erica White, CMP, an Iowa-based client onboarding specialist, event operations, with ITA Group, says she got into the incentive industry by "dumb luck." A friend got her a job as an event planner at a local venue.

"While there, I was working with a bride that was employed at ITA Group. She gave me her business card and told me to reach out if I was interested in making a move from wedding planning to corporate event planning. The rest is history," she says.

Like our other experts, White says her colleagues were her educators.

"When I started out in corporate and incentive planning, I was lucky to be surrounded by experienced planners. If I did not have an engaged mentor sitting beside me, I would not have even known where to start," she says. "Now, 12 years in, I have access to many resources to help keep me growing and relevant in our industry."

White believes her biggest stumbling block early on was, "getting into the tactical weeds too early. I wanted to dive in and start choosing

"I learned through trial and error, which was incredibly strong and meaningful — you don't forget those lessons that are hard-earned."

Theresa Link,
CMP, CMM
Senior Buyer, Event
Purchasing &
Industry Relations
ITA Group
Shakopee, MN

entertainment, décor and menus. I didn't take the time to review historical data and truly understand the objectives of the event and the demographics of the attendees. With experience and the evolution of our industry, I've learned to first step back and develop a master plan. From there, I made sure each tactical decision is tied into the overall theme of the event."

Budgets and unrealistic expectations are her most likely challenges today. "Many times, a client goes to an event that another organization did and then asks us to duplicate. Often, their budget won't allow them to do exactly what they saw," White says. "Finding a way to meet their expectations, within their budget, can feel nearly impossible at times. I'm pretty sure there isn't an event planner that doesn't struggle with, 'I want it all, but I also don't want to pay for it.'"

And then there are the questions that White says keep her up at night. "How can I make sure that I'm upping the program year over year? How can I make sure I'm keeping up with technology and experiential trends? How can I incorporate these exciting new ideas and still stay in budget?"

Find a Mentor

White's top suggestion for those new in the field is to find a mentor.

"Not just a point of contact to answer questions," she says, "but someone willing to invest themselves to be part of your professional growth. This is such a great job, despite the stress, and having an advocate for yourself is important."

It's also important to remain humble, White adds. "Listen to fellow planners, listen to your suppliers and listen to your clients. There's always something you don't know or have yet to experience. Allow yourself to continue to learn and evolve in this industry."

Theresa Link, CMP, CMM, a Minnesota-based senior buyer, event purchasing and industry relations, with ITA Group, has been in the industry for 25 years.

"I started as an executive assistant working for the head of a sales division,"

Link says. "When I initially interviewed with that company, they described to me what his role entailed: Administering incentive sales trips, which allowed him to travel to amazing destinations as part of researching each incentive. I jokingly said, 'That's actually the job I want.' Within the year, I had taken on responsibility for incentive trips. Over the years, I've transitioned to third-party incentive houses, as well as managing an in-house corporate meetings department. Currently, I work within the sourcing and purchasing arm for ITA Group, which focuses on creating powerful results by inspiring authentic, lasting emotional connections."

That, in a nutshell, describes what incentive programs are supposed to achieve. But when Link started, there were no formal training programs in place to help her achieve that or plot a career path.

"Intuition plays a strong part in the success of any good planner, and I was fortunate to be able to find my way through my first endeavors," she says. "Resources were far less accessible. You couldn't Google how to do something or look at a hotel property online or connect easily with people around the world. As my career progressed, so did the industry. As I discovered resources, I took full advantage of training that was available, pursued my CMP and CMM, participated in MPI and FICP, attended SITE educational events and subscribed to many industry magazines."

Get Creative

Surprisingly, Link says that the lack of formal training wasn't a stumbling block. "I learned through trial and error, which was incredibly strong and meaningful — you don't forget those lessons that are hard-earned," she says.

Link believes that career progression is often about learning on the job, too.

"This industry is constantly changing and evolving. The world seems to have gotten smaller and our reach to have gotten larger. Through technology, we can accomplish more than we could ever imagine when I began. But

doing 'more' isn't always what's most important; doing 'greater' is the key," she says. "As our clients and their clients become more well-traveled, attend more events and become savvier, we have to raise the bar creating memorable experiences that will resonate for a lifetime. My role continues to evolve along with the industry. I learn more about events and how to create meaningful connections through events each and every day."

There are challenges related to those savvy clients who also have access to technology and can research destinations. It means, Links says, that incentive managers must dig even deeper into options and possibilities and be ever more creative.

"While the greatest challenge today might be that our clients have gotten smarter, that actually creates tremendous opportunity for us to be better and to partner together on amazing and memorable experiences," she adds.

Ever-evolving technology is a proverbial double-edged sword for those new to the industry, as well.

"This is and always has been a relationships industry," Link notes. "It might be easy with current technology to forget this. I encourage anyone starting out to reach out to as many people as possible who are in the industry in whatever capacity. I encourage them to read industry publications, subscribe to industry emails/blogs and to join a local chapter of a relevant association. All of these items will build on each other and help them to make the connections that will likely become lifelong

"Many of our customers have had the same budget for 10 years.... This means the pressure is on to deliver more for less."

Rick Lambert
President and CEO
Destinations, Inc.
South Jordan, UT

mentors. As a more senior planner, I believe it's important to 'turn around and give a hand to the next one in line.' I've been fortunate to have benefited from these types of mentors and know that my colleagues are always eager to help someone start in this industry that we all love so much."

Rick Lambert, president and CEO, Destinations, Inc., in Utah, is the third generation of his family working in the incentive business. "I've always wanted to be in travel and am living my dream," he says.

He believes the resources within the industry have been incredible.

"Talented and knowledgeable vendors have helped me learn about destinations I have not seen personally," he says.

As for a career path, he sees that impacting his personal development and his company.

"I see growing our company to be the leader in Utah and beyond. I will need to be adaptable to grow. I will need to stay on top of technology available to us. I will need to maintain the focus on delivering wow experiences," adds Lambert.

Challenge, he notes, often relates



to budgets. "Many of our customers have had the same budget for 10 years, and costs have increased significantly, especially in the last five years. This means the pressure is on to deliver more for less. Another challenge is avoiding being cookie-cutter and finding creative new enhancements."

Lambert's top advice for planners coming into the field: "Always learn. Recognize you may not have the answers and that saying, 'I don't know, but I will find out' is an OK answer."

Erica Gibbons, DMCP, regional president, Hosts Washington DC, Hosts Baltimore and Hosts Chicago, says

she has relied throughout her career on "an amazing network of passionate planners within our Hosts offices and consortium of Hosts Global DMC members. Catching up with these business owners and experience designers — whether at formal Hosts Global Best Practices meeting, in a casual phone call or seeing what they are up to on Instagram — keeps up the cycle of sharing and encouragement required for continual creativity and professional inspiration."

Gibbons believes the job has changed and will continue to change. "Ten years ago, these programs had a more standard agenda, i.e., three days, welcome reception, offsite, dine-around, a room drop every night," she says. "Now, the sky's the limit, especially for planners who love to get out of their comfort zone. Everything can be tailored for the individual/couple participating in the program. Agendas and itineraries used to need to have 'something for everyone.' Now it's something for you, the individual. Your day doesn't need to look like anyone else's,

yet you have this incredible shared experience, too."

Feelings First, Details Second

There are some things Gibbons wishes she knew when she started. "I wish I knew that just because every logistical element went off without a hitch it doesn't mean it was memorable. When you focus on the feeling first and details second, the details come together to support the emotional engagement ensuring guests are fulfilled and develop incredible memories," she says.

And there are a few things she wishes clients better understood about creating incentive programs. "I wish our clients understood that if you want something truly 'never been done before,' you have to be willing to A) take a risk and B) provide the time needed to develop, vet and present what that program can be," she says echoing Spanton. "When you need a proposal with a 72-hour deadline, the better course is to ask for something that has been done before (with great success) and customize it from there to fit the unique needs of your audience.

"Also," she adds, "that the 'never been done before' experiences often can't come with photographs! You have to be more open to collaborative brainstorming and visual storyboards that ultimately produce the experience you're seeking. Most of our clients find this to be the fun part, and I'm lucky to work with so many awesome clients who are true partners in the process."

To those coming into the industry, she says, "Be engaged. Be there onsite. Watch the guests and their interactions with the experience you designed. There's nothing more satisfying than seeing the fruits of your labor come together and witness the positive impact of your work. Take time to take in the results."

Our experts provided a multitude of insights and suggestions. Most of all, they made one thing very clear: The incentive industry is an amazing, creative and wonderful industry in which to work, learn and grow. **C&IT**



"There's nothing more satisfying than seeing the fruits of your labor come together and witness the positive impact of your work."

Erica Gibbons, DMCP

Regional President, Hosts Washington DC, Hosts Baltimore, Hosts Chicago
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Venue Selection



Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs is an IACC-certified meeting facility with more than 40,000 square feet of function space and offers many engaging experiences.



Credit: Cheyenne Mountain Resort

Conference Centers Have New Appeal

Destination Immersion and Recreational Offerings Deflect the 'No-Frills' Stereotype

By Patrick Simms

Since Wyndham acquired Dolce in 2015, the company has welcomed four properties to the Dolce portfolio, the latest being last fall's addition of Cheyenne Mountain Resort. The Colorado Springs property, distinguished by AAA Four Diamond status, exemplifies the conference center that promises an engaging experience well beyond the conference room. Participants can enjoy an 18-hole championship Pete

Dye-designed golf course, Alluvia Spa and Wellness Retreat, five swimming pools and even a private 35-acre recreation lake. While the property is a sophisticated meeting facility with more than 40,000 square feet of function space and IACC certification, it is also an immersive Rocky Mountain experience across 200 scenic acres.

Indeed, the conference center stereotype is that of a devoted, "no-frills"

training facility. Yet there is no reason why a full-fledged conference center can't be coupled with robust destination appeal and recreational offerings.

Dolce underscores this point with its new "Trails of Discovery" program introduced at five of its European properties. Over four to five hours, the trails lead participants through vineyards, historic landmarks and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Examples include a treasure

hunt-style adventure at the Hotel Dolce Frégate Provence, an equestrian challenge at Dolce Chantilly and a journey through the Torres Vedras region, former summer retreat of the Portuguese royal family, at the Dolce CampoReal Lisboa.

While destination immersion may be the focus of an incentive program, it is completely ancillary for most conference center clientele. Still, "one can draw the conclusion that being in a location that is desirable for attendees to visit is not a bad thing. It helps the attendees be more engaged in the program," observes Amy Durocher, director, global accounts, with Scottsdale, Arizona-based site sourcing firm Global Cynergies, LLC. A longtime client of the Dolce brand, Global Cynergies has brought corporate groups to the Dolce CampoReal (30 minutes from Lisbon, Portugal), the Dolce La Hulpe Brussels (La Hulpe, Belgium) and the Dolce Sitges Hotel & Spa (Barcelona, Spain). Durocher has found these properties ideal for executive education programs of 30 to 40 for Fortune 500 companies.

The centers "have really been able to meet the needs of my clients, who need multiple breakouts for small group work and a general session room with typically built-in AV, which is conducive to faculty-led sessions," Durocher explains. "The attendees are in such intensive sessions with programs that are five days long, and they're doing advanced-level classroom work. So, the Dolce properties have the ergonomic chairs, lighting that isn't a strain on people's eyes and features that lend more of a classroom-type environment to the facility. It works well for those types of intensive groups."

Another beneficial feature is classrooms with tiered seating. "That's not something you're going to run across in a standard hotel; it would be more the exception than the norm," says Durocher. "Yet they also have great restaurants and locations that are conducive to getting out into nature and exploring the landscape. My clients also like

that they're close to major airports, but they're not in the city center. For their type of programs, that works well because they are able to keep their attendees focused and not lose them to the distractions of being right on main street in an urban area."

minutes from Lisbon, in view of the Socorro and Archeira Mountains. Property highlights include more than 23,100 square feet of meeting space, an 18-hole golf course, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a Turkish bath, equestrian center and garden terrace with F&B service.



The centers "have really been able to meet the needs of my clients, who need multiple breakouts for small group work and a general session room ... which is conducive to faculty-led sessions."

Amy Durocher, Director, Global Accounts
Global Cynergies, LLC, Scottsdale, AZ

Located on the shores of the Mediterranean, the Dolce Sitges Hotel & Spa is about 35 minutes away from the Barcelona city center. Durocher highlights the Dolce Sitges as "an absolutely beautiful location that has ocean views and the town below. It has a spa and indoor pool, which are elevated features compared to a lot of properties in the conference center space. So if you have a particular client who is looking for meeting space in the conference center style but still wants to give their group a more upscale experience, then that particular property is a great match because it really does lend a sense of luxury." The opulent aspect complements 23,400 square feet of dedicated meeting space.

The Dolce CampoReal is about 30

"They get really high marks on F&B and service levels from attendees," Durocher remarks. "For the coffee breaks, they have hubs where they set up refreshments and make sure there are healthy options. That's always something my clients are looking for."

Durocher has partnered with Dolce since before its acquisition by Wyndham.

"One of the things that's been very attractive since Wyndham came in with Dolce has been the points program. That's something that is a benefit to my client and was not in place when they were their own entity," she says.

In addition, Dolce has "always been extremely collaborative in my dealings with them. If things haven't gone the way my clients wanted them to, they've

California's Monterey Conference Center debuted its \$60 million renovation earlier this year. The new facility is LEED-certified and houses more than 40,000 square feet of flexible meeting space.



Credit: Monterey Conference Center



The National Conference Center in Leesburg, Virginia, renovated its lobby to add a living room for guests.

Credit: National Conference Center

always been willing to jump in there and find a solution to keep the client happy.”

Rhonda Walton, program coordinator for Siemens Corporation, has also

all these white boards, and we use a lot of posters. So, for me, that’s phenomenal because they have white boards with magnets that I use to hang up posters

“A key thing for me is the food because our attendees are there for weeks, and I want to have food that’s high-quality, with a diversity in taste.”

Rhonda Walton, Program Coordinator
Siemens Corporation, Iselin, NJ



partnered with Dolce since before the acquisition. Among the brand’s properties she has successfully utilized for global executive leadership programs is the Q Center, set on 95 acres and featuring 150,000 square feet of IACC-certified meeting space.

“Q Center is a huge campus, but you don’t feel that, you don’t feel like there are 5,000 people at this location,” Walton observes.

Conveniences

And the transportation logistics are streamlined. Located about 45 minutes from downtown Chicago, the Q Center offers its own transportation service.

“So I can just tell my group, ‘Here is this number or here is the registration link — just go in and put in your request,’” says Walton.

The meeting rooms themselves offer many conveniences, she adds. “The Q Center has been a plus for me over other hotels because their meeting space has

that connect to the wall, and it makes life so much easier.”

The size of the facility allows Siemens to run concurrent programs on two separate floors, and facility staff

create company-branded signs with team names for the different breakout rooms. Between sessions, the Q Center offers various teambuilding events. On one occasion, the staff organized margarita- and nacho-making competitions for Siemens participants, Walton relates.

“A key thing for me is the food because our attendees are there for weeks, and I want to have food that’s high-quality, with a diversity in taste because it’s a program where we have a diverse ethnic group of people.” The Q Center meets all those requirements, she notes.

The Summit, A Dolce Hotel, is a new-build hotel and conference center located less than 10 miles from downtown Cincinnati, Ohio. The hotel offers 22,000 square feet of function space, including 16 individual meeting rooms. Groups also have at their disposal an eight-story atrium, a rooftop garden and a health club.

A reopening that is making headlines in the conference center world is the Monterey Conference Center. The California property debuted its \$60 million renovation with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in January. Situated in downtown Monterey since 1977, the new facility is modernized, LEED-certified and houses more than 40,000 square feet of flexible meeting space. It is adjacent to the newly renovated Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay and connected to the Monterey Marriott. In total, the properties



Hilton Chicago/Oak Brook Hills Resort & Conference Center offers a wide range of activities, including a golf simulator to prepare attendees for a teambuilding golf competition.

Credit: Hilton Chicago/Oak Brook Hills Resort & Conference Center

offer 85,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, 19,150 square feet of exhibiting space and 700 hotel rooms.

Just a few years ago, The Woodlands Resort & Conference Center completed a \$75 million expansion and renovation. The project replaced 206 lodge-style rooms with Fairway Pines III, added a new wing of 184 guest rooms and suites and renovated 222 existing guest rooms and suites in the Fairway Pines I and II guest wings.

In addition, the 60,000 square feet of meeting space was revitalized, the lobby was renovated using native Texas stone, and a 156-seat steakhouse and 1,005-foot lazy river were added. All wireless connectivity was upgraded to provide bandwidth internet speeds up to 1Gbps. A fine example of a conference center that is part of a diversion-rich property, the 402-room Woodlands Resort features four onsite restaurants, two golf courses, 21 tennis courts and



The Emory Conference Center Hotel in Georgia has more than 32,000 square feet of conference space with onsite meeting planners ready to assist.

Teambuilding Activities

Located just 12 miles from Dulles International Airport and 35 miles from Washington, D.C., The National Conference Center houses 917 guest rooms and more than 265,000 square feet of function space, including a 16,552-square-foot ballroom. The facil-

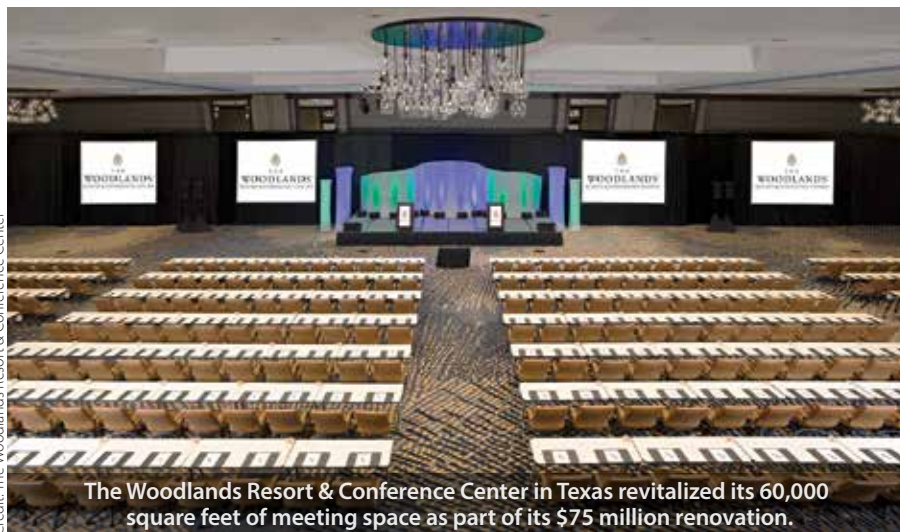
Options include a scavenger hunt, basketball free throw, putting contests and a golf simulator competition. Participants of intensive conference sessions can also benefit from a 15- to 30-minute stretching or light exercise routine, led by a SMART Golf & Fitness Instruction staff member.

The 386-room Hilton Chicago/Oak Brook Hills Resort & Conference Center features more than 42,000 square feet of IACC-certified event space, including a 13,432-square-foot Grand Ballroom and 36 meeting rooms. Other property features of note include the Audubon-certified 18-hole Willow Crest Golf Club and a 145-seat amphitheater and outdoor pavilion.

The Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Emory Conference Center Hotel in Georgia is home to what is billed as the largest amphitheater in the Southeast, seating up to 240 attendees. That facility complements more than 32,000 square feet of conference space, including a 5,376-square-foot ballroom.

During their free time, attendees can explore 26 acres of forest preserve, or stay inside and play at Wisteria Lanes — an onsite bowling alley. Located near downtown Atlanta, the 325-room property is connected to the Houston Mill House via a short walking bridge. The 1920s Georgian fieldstone manor makes a quaint setting for a special event, surrounded by gardens and oak trees.

Conference centers like the Woodlands, Oak Brook Hills and Emory take full advantage of their natural



The Woodlands Resort & Conference Center in Texas revitalized its 60,000 square feet of meeting space as part of its \$75 million renovation.

more than 200 miles of nature trails.

In 2017, The National Conference Center, in Leesburg, Virginia, completed a multimillion-dollar renovation. The project redid the exteriors with a patriotic motif; refurbished the lobby, adding a “living room” for guests; redecorated the guest rooms and renovated the 900-seat dining room. Also last year, The National received the Hotel of the Year award from the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association, and GM Geoff Lawson was named Hotelier of the Year by the VRLTA.

ity prides itself on being at the forefront of teambuilding and leadership development, supported by its partnership with The Browne Center for Innovative Learning. The program “Challenge by Choice,” an experiential teambuilding program designed for participants of all physical abilities, was introduced at the 2017 Reston Herndon Meeting Planners (RHMP) Summer Camp.

A wide selection of teambuilding activities is also available at Hilton Chicago/Oak Brook Hills Resort & Conference Center, set on a 150-acre estate.



Credit: Conference Center of Las Vegas

The Conference Center of Las Vegas can host a variety of events with more than 20,000 square feet of flexible function space suitable for groups of 50 to 720 attendees.

surroundings in order to both foster a sense of seclusion and afford attendees recreational activities. While the South San Francisco Conference Center does not offer acres of nature, it ranks among the most environmentally conscious centers in the nation. Certified LEED

Another conveniently located conference center out west is the IACC-certified Conference Center of Las Vegas (CCLV), rebranded from IPEC Las Vegas in 2016. Located just five minutes from McCarran International Airport and the Las Vegas Strip, this sleek, modern facil-

“We chose the conference center for its location, size, flexibility in space and setup. Vendors and guests can stay at the same location as the event, which is a huge draw for us.”

Kellie Dooley, Owner
Queen Bee Market, San Diego, CA



Gold for Existing Buildings in 2015, the South San Francisco Conference Center is a model of sustainable practices and would appeal to groups who prioritize green meetings.

For example, the facility diverts and recycles high volumes of materials, does not print brochures, maintains a food composting program and green cleaning program and features water stations with reusable water containers.

The South San Francisco Conference Center is located 15 minutes from San Francisco and 20 minutes from Silicon Valley. Featuring complete wireless connectivity, the meeting space spans 20,500 square feet, including a Grand Ballroom divisible into 10 meeting rooms.

ity offers more than 20,000 square feet of flexible function space suitable for groups of 50 to 720 attendees; onsite overnight accommodations are available for up to 190 attendees.

Highlights of the function space include a 10,000-square-foot ballroom and 5,000-square-foot reception foyer with a 29-foot-high ceiling. Events are supported by state-of-the-art AV (including two 22-foot-high LED screens in the reception foyer and south lobby) and a 2,500-square-foot kitchen.

Given resources like these, the CCLV can host a variety of events, and it's worth bearing in mind that a well-equipped conference center may be ideal for corporate events beyond the training or education session.

For example, Queen Bee Market, a San Diego-based artisan market, held two events at the CCLV over three days, says company co-owner Kellie Dooley. The first one was craft night, “a ticketed event for 50 guests that included a catered dinner and dessert, swag bags, raffle items and three crafts done onsite and led by a renowned craft leader. The second one was Queen Bee Market, a handmade and vintage shopping experience that was open to the public. It featured 70 vendors that sold handmade and vintage goods, as well as food trucks and live music. More than a thousand shoppers attended the event.”

While an IACC-certified venue typically does not host events such as these, the CCLV had advantages for the Market. “We chose the conference center for its location, size, flexibility in space and setup,” Dooley explains. “We require a surround-sound system and liked the ability to display our logo in their many AV screens throughout the facility. We

also loved that it serves as a private hotel, as well. Vendors and guests can stay at the same location as the event, which is a huge draw for us.”

From a service perspective, the CCLV went the extra mile: Sales & Operations Director Catherine Price and her staff

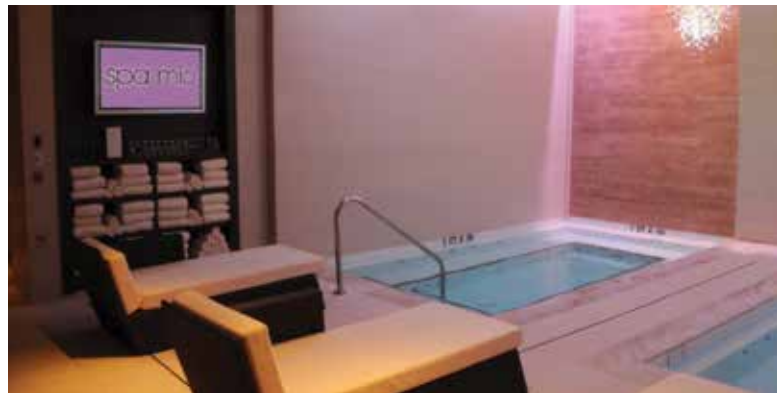
“were there every moment for any request we had.”

In addition, “they provided a free continental breakfast to the guests staying at the hotel, which was very nice,” Dooley notes.

Today's conference center market is so diverse that planners do well to eschew stereotypical ideas about how they can be utilized.

They may be suitable for customer-facing events, or perhaps internal meetings where a recreation and reward aspect is an important complement to learning.

And as Dolce's European properties are demonstrating, destination immersion is within the scope of today's conference center, as well. **C&IT**



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Connecting Through Teambuilding

Interactive Meetings and Events Help Build Professional Relationships

By Maura Keller

These days, teambuilding activities are the “name of the game,” with companies and organizations of all sizes investing time, resources and energy into building better teams with fun, interactive, creative meetings and events.



The popularity of certain types of group participation exercises changes from year to year. Themed meetings are also likely to encourage attendance as prospective attendees anticipate what is to come.

Corporate event planner Beth Lawrence, president and CEO of Beth Lawrence LLC, says, "Teambuilding has actually become increasingly popular, in my opinion, as we become more and more dependent on technology. It's ironic that in our tech-savvy and global society, we are now looking for more real-life connections. Almost every event I have planned has some sort of networking or teambuilding component."

But these connections don't just

happen. Meeting and event planners have to provide opportunities for them to occur.

"Teambuilding has grown up," says Bailey Roth, president of Redstone Agency, a boutique event management company. "These days, it's more than just playing interactive — and, let's be honest, sometimes silly — games. In the corporate world in particular, organizations want to create a culture that's broadly relevant. In practice, that has meant a shift toward using teambuilding to develop longer-term relationships and communities based on a shared culture and mission, rather than short-term relationships based on transient factors. People want to build professional relationships that can last beyond a single conference or event. There's no relay race for that."

Roth stresses that teambuilding remains popular because collaboration and professional relationships will always be important. But the reality is a bit more nuanced: There are different kinds of teams and various types of teambuilding options.

"The first and more typical kind of teambuilding involves enhancing collaboration and relationships within a corporate environment," Roth says.

Another type of teambuilding employs activities at events to make participants experience a connection to a cause or mission.

"As corporate event planners, we are always asking whether participants feel like they belong at our events," Roth says. "Do they share the cause? Are they engaged with other participants? As long as we are asking those questions, there will be a need for effective teambuilding."

Elizabeth Sherry, meeting planner and engagement manager at the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, says teambuilding activities in their once-traditional sense of creating the tallest structure out of spaghetti, tape and newspaper is out.

"But what is becoming more popular is creativity in engagement, such as having a Jenga competition spanning a day, or "forcing" people to have

conversations with each other not about work, which in the end will create better synergy when work conversations begin again," Sherry says.

Now teambuilding has transformed to gather people in order to actually have conversations and get to know each another on a personal level.

"I am sure technology has played a huge factor into why this has become more valuable today," Sherry says. "Think of the last standard meeting you went to. Did everyone show up right at the time of meeting start? If they were there early, were they on their phones not talking with the person next to them? A decade ago, the five minutes of waiting would have been filled with talk about how someone's kids were doing or how their parents' health was. Now it is filled with 'click,' 'tap' and 'swipe.'"

What's Hot/What's Not

There is a reason why so many meetings and events seem to be cookie-cutter productions. There are people to please and placate, funds to be allocated, guest lists to be trimmed and complex rules of etiquette to be followed.

It is no wonder that so many people end up with the same event they have attended a dozen times before. Why not orchestrate a teambuilding event that creates a distinctive atmosphere and helps these meetings stand out from the crowd?

As with any facet of the meetings and events industry, the popularity of certain types of teambuilding activities ebbs and flows from year to year.

Lawrence says two types of programs are gaining in popularity. These include event apps and gamification activities.

"There are branded apps that allow guests to connect prior to conferences and after, as well as Slack, which can be used to build community," Lawrence says. "Onsite, there are gamification options within these apps or supplementary event technologies."

In fact, Roth says technology is absolutely critical and, used effectively, can help foster the type of

relationships and communities within the teambuilding arena.

"Technology allows people to connect pre- and post-event, facilitating connections beyond the breakfast buffet," Roth says. "And it doesn't have to be complicated. A tool as simple and accessible as an Instagram hashtag can go a long way. For those interested in exploring more sophisticated online community apps, I'd recommend looking at Poken by GES."

While Sherry agrees that technology can be a great tool to engage meeting and event attendees, she thinks all planners should ask themselves what the goals are that they would like to get out of the meeting, and also ask, "Can we do it without technology?" "What would it look like?" or "Would technology enhance this vision?"

"For some companies, it does," Sherry says. "If technology is an avenue a planner would like to explore, virtual reality goggles have become more and more popular. Digital art walls are an opportunity for a standard non-creative department to have to think outside the box. And geo-mapping scavenger hunts have been popular for a couple years."

Aside from technology and gamifi-

"Teambuilding has actually become increasingly popular ... as we become more and more dependent on technology."



Beth Lawrence
President and CEO
Beth Lawrence LLC
Collingswood, NJ

cation within apps, companies are often bringing their experiences onsite to conferences, such as ax-throwing venues, board game cafes and even ping-pong clubs. Many companies want a unique event that will not only appeal to those who have 'been-there,

done-that,' but something personalized for their meeting that ties in their theme and brings their message to life.

At the moment, activities that account for work/life blend are popular, especially when they connect people based on a shared objective, such as wellness or mindfulness. Roth says examples include spin classes and other group fitness classes, volunteering as a group and activities that are intellectually stimulating like escape rooms.

"The trend very much favors activities involving a single, united group, so 'color wars' and other competitions involving multiple teams are out of favor," Roth says. "That's a positive development, in my view, because connections based on shared objectives are more likely to foster loyalty and appreciation of culture than those based on assignment to a given team in a competition."

Charitable team activities are also favored. Companies and participants like that their event has a dual purpose — they are growing closer as a team and helping others at the same time. Some meetings and events find teams participating in a treasure hunt to collect items needed by a local charity — offering ways for teams to work together in a different way than a traditional "let's stuff care packages" event.

Some meeting planners are also seeing an emerging teambuilding trend in the area of technology. Today's scavenger hunts are taking a big leap forward by using smartphones and tablets, offering interactive technology that far surpasses

the scavenger hunts of yesteryear whereby participants documented their success with Polaroid cameras.

So what's not popular in teambuilding these days? "Classic" events, such as Wacky Olympics and Cardboard Boat Regattas, are "oh-so passé." Also, planners have seen a long and successful run of reality television shows as teambuilding experiences. However, *Survivor*-type events to *Dancing With the Stars* themes are coming to an end.

"Major corporations have implemented a more positive and fun work culture. ...The future looks bright for more teambuilding within the corporate market."

Elizabeth Sherry
Meeting Planner and
Engagement Manager
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
St. Paul, MN

The exception to that is culinary teambuilding, which remains "hot," bringing teams together through food.

What to Look For

When considering appropriate teambuilding activities, planners should talk to the teambuilding company about the group and what they hope to achieve with the event. The more information that can be shared with the teambuilding facilitator, the better job they can do at customizing the program to make sure it is a really great fit.

Be sure to trust the experts. A meeting or event planner may not know what's best for their group, but a good teambuilding company can work with the planner to help determine what would be the perfect teambuilding opportunity.

In fact, a common mistake meeting professionals make is assuming that each teambuilding company will run programs the same way.

Remember every teambuilding company has different nuances to their programs and facilitators with different levels of experience running them. Be open to new ideas and ask lots of questions about anything that is confusing before the program.

Also, be sure to choose the right event for participants. For instance, just because a company VIP loves adventure sports, it doesn't mean booking a high-risk activity is the way to go. You want to ensure everyone is comfortable

— if it's intimidating, it actually alienates people instead of bringing them closer.

Teambuilding also should never be a surprise, as it really defeats the purpose of bonding the team. If you planned a meeting last year and had dinner on the main night, will they remember what they had to eat? Probably not, but they will remember what they did, how they felt and what they experienced. Teambuilding done right can connect on so many levels.

Down the Road

For cost-conscious corporations, inexpensive teambuilding activities within the meetings and events arena are expected to gain momentum in the near future.

"Having a board game competition or a paper airplane tournament are simple, cheap and fun," Sherry says. "Our company just hosted a potato sack race in the middle of our lobby. We got a lot of looks, but we had so much fun. Winners all got a bag of potatoes to take home."

Lawrence adds that learning new skills together — like ax-throwing — is going to continue to be a trend because it's something you can usually follow up with and do locally, as well. "Also, technology enables us to keep connections going long after the event is over," Lawrence says.

Roth adds that the reality is people are experiencing a strain on their time. That's why teambuilding that acknowledges the value of participants' limited time is very important.

"I predict that teambuilding serves a secondary purpose, such as being active will become increasingly popular in the coming years, as demands on time continue to be a factor," Roth says.

For many planners, teambuilding is the backbone to any organization's culture. "The future of business will be working with companies that are like-minded in their approach with how they treat employees, whether it be direct benefits or culture," Sherry says. "Major corporations have implemented a more positive and fun work culture. They are building their brand

off of working with people who share the same vision. The future looks bright for more teambuilding within the corporate market."

Options to Explore

Successful organizations have capitalized on the strategic value of meetings — they see the imperative of bringing people together to accomplish real business results. Engaging meeting and event attendees via unique teambuilding experiences can positively impact the bottom line. Teambuilding, if properly planned and executed, will inform, educate and inspire those who attend. It sends a loud message to all stakeholders that employees matter, are valued and that building a strong team mentality is vital to the success of an event and organization. Some key teambuilding ideas include:

• One-Day Adventures

For meetings and events that feature teambuilding activities that can last an entire day, considering exploring private teambuilding resorts or a private ranch where teams can enjoy bonding activities, such as paintball, a ropes/challenge course, an eco-adventure race, a leadership challenge and zip line. The ropes/challenge course, for example, could provide a teambuilding program that incorporates communication, trust, problem-solving and fun.

• City-exploring Options

Corporations can offer unique and memorable teambuilding activities and scavenger hunts, utilizing various parts of a city for these programs. An *Amazing Race* program, reminiscent of the popular reality show of the same name, could provide attendees with the opportunity to "race" through different parts of a city completing required tasks. *Survivor*-type games could include a series of physical challenges (for people of all fitness levels) that allow team members to test their mental and physical strengths.

• Tackling Obstacles

Some teambuilding planning companies offer elevated obstacle courses set in the forests or woods. Suspended between the trees off the ground, obstacle courses range from Tarzan-style ropes to wobbly bridges, swinging logs, cargo nets, zip lines and even aerial surfboards.

• Exploring Mental Prowess

Fast, flexible and trusted group activities are the name of the game for many corporations.



"The first and more typical kind of teambuilding involves enhancing collaboration and relationships within a corporate environment."

Bailey Roth

President

Redstone Agency

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

That's why some meeting planners are embracing teambuilding activities that not only stimulate participants' mental prowess but also help establish stronger communication and interactive skills among attendees.

From crime investigation activities to smartphone scavenger hunts to philanthropic activities, attendees can participate in group activities that appeal to their interests.

• Ranch-style Activities

Consider having your group bond while participating in authentic dude ranch activities, while celebrating "all things Old West." Several ranches throughout the West and Southwest areas of the U.S. offer a variety of teambuilding activities that will enhance a group's cooperation, decision-making skills and encourage teamwork.

Some favorite teambuilding offerings include team penning and foot rodeos. In addition, special private group activities, exercises and events can be orchestrated to meet the needs of attendees.

C&IT

Budgeting For Today's Market

What Planners Need to Know to Calculate Strategically

The 2019 Global Meetings and Events Forecast, released by American Express Global Business Travel Meetings & Events in October, gives planners and stakeholders in the meetings industry reason for optimism.

Issa Jouaneh, senior vice president and general manager, American Express Meetings & Events, a division of American Express Global Business Travel, provides some insight into the new report.

"The meetings industry has bounced back after its dramatic slowdown 10 years ago to settle into a new normal of steady and stable growth," he says. "After four consecutive years of growth in both spend and number of attendees, meetings are thriving, and incentives have not just come back, but continue to grow."

Yet even in positive economic times, changes related to client demands, attendee needs and the evolution of tools and the way in which meetings are

constructed put pressures on planners and, ultimately, budgets.

Trends & Changes

One continuing disrupter impacting all facets of meetings is technology.

"The evolution of technology is having a substantial impact on meeting budgets," Jouaneh says, "particularly regarding the end-to-end management of delivery and the attendee experience. Emerging technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence and facial recognition, and the ongoing development of mobile-app and hybrid-meeting solutions, are creating innovation and value-add opportunities for both meeting owners and attendees."

Consolidation and growth, Jouaneh continues, are also changing things up. "Consolidation across the industry and the rise of new players creates an environment where meeting planners have

an eclectic range of choice and capabilities but are under significant pressure to meet growing demands. Meetings activity is expected to grow across all meeting types and regions in 2019. Meetings will be both larger and longer, with attendees increasing as much as 2.4 percent and meeting length growing up to 1.9 percent in some regions."

While economic and geopolitical influences continue to spark uncertainty and affect budgets, Jouaneh says, "The meetings industry remains resilient and focused on creating successful experiences. The localization of meetings programs is a growing trend as planners across the globe look to add flexibility and nuance to offerings that address specific market needs and drive program adoption."

The 2019 Forecast also shows that attention is shifting to the attendee experience. "Planners indicate that if they were to receive [a bigger] budget for a

By Christine Loomis

meeting, they would put it first toward content and other ways to enhance the attendee experience. Planners seem to be increasing focus beyond the logistics to ensuring the meeting achieves its stated purpose," Jouaneh says.

And then there's the increasing gap between meeting budgets and spend, which is anticipated to continue in 2019. "Meetings activity and expenses across all regions, including hotel rates and airfare, are expected to rise faster than the associated increases to budget," Jouaneh says. "For example, the Asia-Pacific region is anticipating a 1.1 percent rise in group hotel rates alongside only a 0.86 percent rise in spend. This dynamic creates a continued need for meeting owners to clearly articulate their desired outcomes for meetings, so budget can be allocated to items that directly support meeting goals — particularly when tough choices need to be made during the planning process."

Despite tightening budgets and an underlying shift in funding, Jouaneh says, "Planners are managing competing demands for strong meetings activity and optimal attendee experiences to establish a healthy and optimistic outlook for the meetings and events industry on both a global and regional level."

The nitty-gritty details often have just as much of an impact as larger global concerns. Alison Milgram, CMP, DES, director of events with PCMA, points to evolving technology, as well, but says that for the newest group of meeting-goers, face-to-face time is also important — and that, too, impacts budgets.

"In just the last few years, Generation Z has begun to enter the workforce, and therefore, has become an attendee for our events. Millennials, we know, are all about the tech; however, Z has come in, and while they're incredibly savvy when it comes to tech, they are also craving the F2F experience," she says. "As planners putting together a budget, we need to shift our focus and ensure that both tech and F2F have the financial support to be outstanding, and that can be costly."

Additionally, Milgram says, "I've seen a significant increase in event cancellation insurance costs. With everything going on in the world, it's not just earthquakes and hurricanes we have to worry about. It used to be a quick calculation of a dollar amount times anticipated attendance. Not so simple anymore, and while this expense is maybe 3 to 4 percent of an overall expense budget, cutting back on the coverage because it wasn't properly budgeted will cost far more in the end."

Emily Thibodeau, CMP, CITP, senior director operations, event management with Maritz Travel Company, says she's seeing increasing client demand for more personalized experiences, as well as high expectations around technology, and both add to the budget.

"[Clients] request events that allow guests to experience things that they couldn't do on their own," she says. "I see that even in meetings. In addition to extra budget for personal experiences, we see increased budgets for technology items such as onsite implementation of RFID, interest in facial recognition check-in or mobile apps, which are now almost standard."

But, she continues, "The most revolutionary thing I've been reading lately is that corporations are a bit more cash rich today. Fortune 500 companies have more in the bank than they've ever had in history, allowing them to continue to support the budget for meetings and incentives. While there's still pressure to



Alison Milgram, CMP, DES
Director of Events
PCMA
Chicago, IL

get more done for less, companies are investing in experiences, rewards and recognition for their teams, perhaps more than in the past."

For Amy Maxey, manager, global conferences and events at Hyland Software, two trends are impacting budget. "Costs and competition are on the rise," she says. "Compression in the marketplace has definitely impacted budget planning. Hotels and meeting venues are being less aggressive with incentives as the demand for meeting space increases."

In terms of competition, she says, "We have a lot of folks tell us that due to budget limitations, they can only attend one conference every year or every other year. Many times, organizations have to alternate employees, as well. We offer alumni and group discounts to help encourage group and multi-year attendance. We also offer added incentives, such as discounts on future training, to help justify the expense."

Competition is coming not just from other meetings but from leisure travelers, too, notes Thibodeau. "Hotels continue to see revenue generation through more transient travel, which makes booking group travel more competitive. I see our budgets affected by this such that clients are feeling they don't have as much room for negotiation as they previously had or where decisions are having to be made earlier than they normally would be."

Challenges Big & Small

Regardless of the economic situation or time period, planners will face challenges and have to find ways to mitigate them.

"Planners seem to be increasing focus beyond the logistics to ensuring the meeting achieves its stated purpose."



Issa Jouaneh
Sr. Vice President and General Manager,
American Express Meetings & Events
New York, NY

“In order to mitigate potential problems, it’s important to understand the client’s priorities and the desired business result.”



Emily Thibodeau, CMP, CITP

Senior Director, Operations (Event Management) Maritz Travel Company
Fenton, MO

“Our 2019 Global Meetings and Events Forecast predicts 2019 will be a busy year for the industry,” says Jouaneh. But, he notes, with global expenses increasing at a faster rate than meetings budgets, planners are being challenged to master this increased volume and maintain an effective ROI despite limited funds. More than half of planners surveyed, including 68 percent of North American planners, say they are working with smaller commission pools from which to fund their meetings.

“Mitigating this problem requires a commitment to creating strategic meetings that prioritize the attendee experience and embrace technology to meet an explicitly defined goal,” Jouaneh says. “This trend is growing across all regions, with 52 percent of planners in Europe implementing an explicitly defined meeting policy, and 42 percent in both North America and Central/South America following suit. The Asia-Pacific region has been slower to adopt this change, with only 27 percent claiming to have dedicated meeting plans. Even as funding for meetings undergoes a significant shift, planners and hoteliers are adjusting appropriately to establish a bright future for the industry.”

For Milgram, short-term bookings and meetings are present major challenges. “If you don’t know where the event will be, it’s hard to budget properly,” she says. “An East Coast meeting is more than likely going to be more expensive than a Midwest one, although that’s not always the case, either. Chicago in the fall, for example, can be expensive.”

Maxey points to big-ticket items

coming up late in the game, including increased attendance. “When you’re paying \$60 for a meal and \$200 for an evening event ticket, 100 additional attendees can be a huge impact on a non-revenue-generating event,” she says. “For larger budget items, I suggest signing multi-year agreements, as long as you build in service clauses.

“Working with Experient, we’ve found that signing multi-year contracts gives the venue more flexibility to offer higher incentives since the revenue impact on a multi-year deal is so much more lucrative to them.”

Her company went through a comprehensive RFP process this year for some of its biggest line items, such as AV, hardware rental and exhibitor services. “That helped to contain costs,” Maxey notes. “We were able to successfully negotiate five-year deals with each of those vendors and saved more than \$1 million over a five-year period. Not only did we see more negotiating power due to multiple years and competing vendors but locking in rates now gives us peace of mind and allows us to better plan long term. It was a lot of work, but it’s nice to know that we’re locked and loaded for the next five years, and we don’t have to go back to the drawing board each year to renegotiate these agreements.”

Thibodeau emphasizes that even if companies have more cash on hand, planners are still expected to get more for less. “I think the biggest challenge our event managers face today with regard to budget is that even though the perception may be that companies are in a healthy place financially, there’s still that pressure to get more for less — to do it ‘better than last year’ for the same or less budget,” she says. “In order to mitigate potential problems, it’s important to understand the client’s priorities and the desired business results. By doing so, we can help allocate funds appropriately from the beginning.”

Budget-Busters

What’s most likely to throw a budget off? The most prevalent answer is the unforeseen and unexpected.

“Whether it’s something coming up during a site inspection that someone wasn’t aware of, a technology issue or even surprises on a program operation, it seems that unexpected costs that pop up are what most affect a budget,” Thibodeau says. “I think as these things happen it’s important to understand the why and be able to come to the table with solutions for resolution. In order to do this, we have to be communicative and transparent with clients and partners and work to negotiate a fair balance. Doing so enables us to re-allocate funds in the appropriate manner.”

For Milgram, “The No. 1 challenge that can throw off a budget is other people, specifically, those in a decision-making position. They get to a destination and just start ordering — equipment, food, additional signage, etc. — and because of their place in an organization, the venue and/or supplier may not come back and ask the planner before they go ahead and order. This can be a tough challenge to manage; however, making it clear with suppliers/vendors/venues that all requests must go through you first will at least help you track any onsite or additional expenses or perhaps find a better, more cost-efficient solution.”

Maxey points to last-minute items added by venues. “Sometimes you have to stand your ground, and you always have to reference what’s in the contract.



“I budget for nonessential items separately and try to hold off contracting those items as long as I can.”

Amy Maxey

Manager, Global Conferences and Events
Hyland Software
Westlake, OH

What Do Planners Wish Their Clients/Companies Better Understood About Budgets?

Alison Milgram: “A budget is a big-picture item and often based on location. Your vacation to Florida this year is costing more than last year’s vacation in Ohio; why should the event budget be any different? However, when it comes to our business budgets, we almost take it more personally than our individual budgets.”

Emily Thibodeau: “Our event management team enjoys designing fantastic experiences for our guests. We continuously try to maximize funds to achieve the desired outcomes while providing

the best experiences. If there could be more understanding of how timeline dates and decisions affect budget, it would be helpful in maximizing funds and getting clients their desired outcomes.”

Amy Maxey: “Actual costs. Not only on F&B and AV but also labor costs. In some cities where union labor is required, you may have to pay a four-hour minimum call just to move a few boxes. And, when labor charges continue to rise, especially for overtime, it can make a big dent.”

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We negotiated a flat rate for our Internet needs with one of our venues. While they were honoring the agreement, I noticed they tried to tack on a \$10,000 facility fee last minute. Since it was not outlined in the contract, we fought the charge and won. Meeting planners have to be vigilant and look for all of the hidden fees. Doing a proforma invoice before you get onsite is a great way to tell if you and the venue are matching up on estimated charges and how they calculate costs.”

But the devil isn’t just in the details. Sometimes it’s in the big picture, too. “What’s most likely to throw off a budget isn’t a line item,” Jouaneh says, “but rather a lack of agreement among meeting owners and stakeholders about what is the desired outcome of the event.”

Drilling Down on Increases

Calculating the greatest increases impacting budgets today is no simple matter according to Jouaneh, who says increases vary depending on such things as meeting priorities and location.

“The 2019 Forecast discovered that budget line items prioritized by planners varies greatly by location,” he says. “For example, North American and European planners value ‘Property Type’ and ‘Air Lift & Access’ the most. Meanwhile, Asia-Pacific and Central/South America meetings and events industries both place a larger emphasis on ‘Economic/Political’ stability.”

Milgram has been watching room rates rise over time. “Then, one day, you’re reviewing a proposal in a second-tier city and realize it’s costing more than the first-tier city you used a year ago,” she says.

That rise in cost may be worth it if a

hotel has had a substantial renovation, she notes. “But that’s something a planner should investigate before committing.”

Echoing the 2019 Global Meetings and Events Forecast, Thibodeau sees overall costs outpacing inflation in all general program areas. “The most noticeable two increases I’ve seen in recent years, however, are related to hotels and airlines. Hotel prices, be it room rates, meeting space rentals or rising food and beverage minimums, have contributed to increased spend. But I’ve also consistently seen that clients are now willing to budget more for ancillary airline charges, such as seat assignments and baggage fees,” she says.

F&B is often a cost culprit. “Food and beverage seems to keep going up and up,” says Maxey. “I’ve been in this business for over 15 years, and it still crushes my soul to spend \$7 or more on a can of Coke or bottled water or over \$130 for a gallon of coffee. Attendees don’t see this side of things and would never expect these items to cost so much, so they can’t understand why we’re unable to offer free-flowing drinks and snacks throughout the day. Balancing attendee expectations with rising costs is not easy.”

Best Practices for Planners

So how do planners create accurate budgets in the face of changes and increases?

“Before creating a budget,” Jouaneh says, “planners must first identify their ultimate goal. Strategic meetings built around explicitly defined results will help better prioritize budgets to satisfy the continued need for improved attendee experiences and integration of innovative technology. This commitment

indicates meetings and events are being purposefully designed and executed — cementing their place as drivers of business outcomes.”

Thibodeau agrees. “My best advice is from the beginning to understand your client’s business objectives and what impressions attendees should walk away with. By defining expected outcomes first, it’s easier to take a consultative approach to designing a program. Understanding what kind of experiences you want to create to achieve those outcomes allows you to identify priorities and begin to budget an event.”

And for those unexpected challenges, take a proactive approach.

“Always have money set aside for additions or unforeseen circumstances,” says Maxey. “I budget for nonessential items separately and try to hold off contracting those items as long as I can. If costs for necessities are more than anticipated, I can escalate to management to see if the nonessential items can be cut or scaled back or if the company wants to increase the budget to offset the higher costs.”

Milgram advises taking detailed notes on what you were thinking or projecting when you put a budget into place. “Don’t just say the staff travel budget is ‘for 10 people.’ Who are those people? What’s the assumption for airfare? Taxis? Checked luggage? Of course, staff changes as do airline fees, but a baseline of what went into that figure to begin with will help down the line. If your budget system doesn’t allow for notes, make an Excel spreadsheet. If your budget is an Excel spreadsheet, be sure to add a note column and don’t be afraid to wrap that text a few times if necessary! You’ll be glad you did.”

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Ramp Up Your Skills

The Current Status of Planner Certification and Education

The U.S. meetings industry is an economic powerhouse, with 1.9 million meetings in 2016 contributing \$845 billion in economic impact, according to the Event Industry Council's 2018 Economic Significance of Meetings to the U.S. Economy Report.

Meetings require qualified, educated, knowledgeable planners who understand budgets, contracts, ROI and value, not to mention design, F&B, space re-

CMP recognizes industry professionals who meet the established prerequisite education and experience requirements and pass a rigorously comprehensive exam designed to assure baselines competencies and to differentiate professionals. CMPs continue to demonstrate their professional competency through continuing education and experience every five years in order to maintain the credential."

By Christine Loomis

are higher than ever, and recruiters and prospective employers recognize CMP Certification as the most prestigious designation in the growing industry."

Yet the CMP's value to the industry is even greater, raising the bar on professionalism in all areas.

"The CMP program aims to increase the professionalism of meeting management professionals in all sectors of the industry by identifying a comprehensive body of knowledge in the profession," says Zibby Aman, senior manager, education, with PCMA. "The certification also works to promote industry standards, practices and ethics, which are designed to advance the art and science of meeting management. The certification helps to increase the value of Certified Meeting Professionals to their employers by maximizing the value received from the products and services provided by CMPs."

PCMA is a preferred education provider for the CMP exam and offers an online CMP prep course. "The course is designed with pre-test/post-test handouts, as well as a full-length, timed practice exam to help learners prepare to take the exam, all while earning 68 clock hours to sit for the exam," Aman says. "The EIC requires that 25 hours of continuing education credit is earned prior to registering for the exam.



"Recruiters and prospective employers recognize CMP Certification as the most prestigious designation in the growing industry."

Karen Kotowski, CMP, CAE, CEO
Events Industry Council, Washington, DC

quirements and transportation issues. Many planners must also understand legal and other intricacies of particular industries, as well as changing regulations that impact meetings.

Staying current with relevant continuing education and attaining certification makes planners more valuable in the meetings marketplace and arguably better at performing their jobs. Whether new to the industry or experienced, planners have many ways to ramp up their skills.

Certified Meeting Professional (CMP)

The most recognized industry certification is the CMP. Karen Kotowski, CMP, CAE, chief executive officer of the Events Industry Council (EIC), says, "Events Industry Council has delivered the CMP program since its inception in 1985. The

Candidates must have three years of event planning experience and a full-time job in the industry in order to apply.

The value of the CMP program is in part monetary for planners — those with CMP certification earn about \$10,000 more per year in salary than planners without it. Additionally, it may help with jobs.

"Certification opens the door to better and more opportunities," Kotowski says. "Clients' expectations for meetings

"The CMM is structured to complement the CMP and focuses on strategic initiatives and executive decision-making."

Jessie States, CMM
Manager of Professional Development
MPI, Dallas, TX





Meeting Professionals International (MPI) offers an assessment-based CMM certificate program taught by Indiana University faculty.

Our prep course enables learners to earn those credits while studying for the exam.”

Certified Special Events Professional (CSEP)

For planners interested in focusing on special events, there’s CSEP certification. “The CSEP is the only other openly recognized certification in the event planning industry,” Aman says, “and focuses more on special events than meeting planning. Just like with the CMP, candidates are required to have three years of experience in the industry and must be currently employed, or have been employed, in the special events industry in the last 12 months.”

Certified Meeting Management (CMM)

The CMM is different than the CMP. To start, it’s a certificate program, not a certification. “It’s important to note the distinction between certifications and certificates,” Aman says. “Certification is an accredited designation that demonstrates event planning expertise and

“We’re seeing a rise in use of digital learning solutions and increased demand for online courses, virtual events, online social learning, curated content and AI-powered experiences that predict your interests...”

**Melissa Majors, Director
MPI Academy, Dallas, TX**



experience. It’s a title that a planner earns after passing an exam after a set number of years of experience in planning events. A certificate is a document that proves you’ve taken a course for the purpose of learning about event planning; and that you’ve passed that particular program’s requirements for showing that you understand the material.”

The assessment-based CMM certificate is offered through MPI. “Our CMM certificate program prepares meeting professionals for leadership roles in the industry,” says Jessie States, CMM, manager of professional development at MPI. “It’s an intensive, three-phased executive

education program that packs the highlights of a world-class graduate degree program into four days, followed by eight hours of advanced-level online coursework and a final project focused on solving a real-world, work-based problem.

Taught by Indiana University faculty, the entire program takes 15 weeks to complete. Upon successful completion of the coursework, attendees earn 48 clock hours and 4.8 university CEUs. They also have the opportunity to earn three graduate credit hours, which can be applied to the Indiana University Kelley School’s Executive Degree Program (EDP) Business Management Certificate.”

Credit: Jessie States

University Courses Coast to Coast

Universities offer new and experienced planners options to learn new skills, focus on specialties, attain certificates and meet coursework requirements for certification.

San Diego State University (SDSU) Meeting & Event Planning Certificate Program

Annette Gregg, CMM, MBA, has been the program's advisor since 2006 and an instructor since 1993. About the program she says, "The No. 1 difference — and its biggest strength — is that classes are taught by professionals currently working in the meetings and events industry. We teach from a practical point of view. Our stories are current and from our actual experience, so we can give students the most relevant and real picture possible. We also have powerful local networks that we leverage for the students to help them find internships, mentors and jobs."

She says the leadership team reviews course offerings every year to ensure they're addressing the evolving needs of the industry. "SDSU's Meeting and Event Planning Certificate offers students the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills within this growing industry. The range of courses also gives people a chance to investigate parts of the meetings and events industry they may not have considered."

Gregg says the school is also expanding on its Event Design and Technology Tools courses. Her advice to planners is to embrace change and variety in job tasks. "Grow your professional curiosity. By asking questions, taking chances, pushing yourself, you will stave off boredom and becoming stale in your work."

The International School of Hospitality (TISOH), Las Vegas

TISOH offers a 90-hour Conference Management & Event Planning certificate, with both onsite and online courses available. Timothy Lam, CHT, CGSP, executive director, says the program is taught by "credentialed industry professionals and combines practical and theoretical content in an accredited academic program." The school also offers 45-hour programs in catering, trade show and event design that allow planners to deepen their knowledge base.

Lam sees education itself changing. "Education is not one size fits all," he says. "What has more and more taken the place of traditional academic degrees is targeted education in specific topics that teach immediately applicable, in-demand skills."



Credit: Timothy Lam

The International School of Hospitality in Las Vegas offers onsite or online courses to earn a Conference Management & Event Planning certificate.

Because the industry is fast-changing, Lam says, evolving skill levels are required. He advises planners to look for education providers who are accredited and have connections in the industry.

While change is inevitable, Lam says one area remains fundamentally the same. "That is the professionalism exhibited day in and day out by planners of all types. Professionalism is a skill — how to interact, how to present oneself, how to interview. I believe it's a learnable skill ... TISOH will soon offer it as a stand-alone, 45-hour course titled, "Professional Presence in Hospitality."

University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Office of Continuing Education

"UNC Charlotte has offered a Meeting and Event Planning Certificate program since 1999," says Margaret Rozzi, program director. "It's an instructor-led, face-to-face program delivered each fall. It encompasses 60 hours of developmental education focusing on real-life application of tactical skills, strategic-planning techniques and mastery of the fundamentals of meeting and event planning."

Instructors here work in the industry, "which contributes to the power of the courses," Rozzi says.

The program encompasses interactive and experiential learning, including going offsite to venues. In addition, students are required to volunteer for 10 hours in the hospitality industry, which provides networking opportunities among other things.

Her best advice for planners: "Get engaged in the industry and network! Join professional industry associations, volunteer for events, keep relevant by continually updating your skills, get certified and make an effort to know the local CVB staff in your area — they're a valuable resource."

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The CMM, States adds, "is structured to complement the CMP and focuses on strategic initiatives and executive decision-making."

According to Aman, "The CMM is an MBA-level executive education program for meeting professionals with more than seven years of experience, including a minimum of three years in management positions."

Planners wishing to pursue a CMM have several options. "Many planners work toward their CMM by attending

local colleges that have disciplines or curriculums designed to focus on the business events industry," Aman says. "Other planners use the MPI program to complete the required course work and hours needed to gain the certification. In any program that prepares you for the CMM, courses are designed to develop the event professional's ability to analyze business data, explore the skills necessary to succeed in managing teams and to gain exposure to finance, risk analysis and other components of managing a

business. Any program that offers these types of higher business programs will be effective in preparing the event professional for the certification.

"For planners looking to build a career path that includes management and positions requiring thought leadership and c-suite positions, the CMM may be a great path toward building the core competencies required for these positions," Aman adds. "It also demonstrates to potential employers your seriousness in becoming an industry leader."

“We teach from a practical point of view. Our stories are current and from our actual experience, so we can give students the most relevant and real picture possible.”

Annette Gregg, CMM, MBA

**Advisor, Meeting & Event Planning Certificate Program
San Diego State University, San Diego, CA**



CMP — Healthcare (CMP-HC)

Planners in the medical and pharma industries need additional skills and knowledge. These meetings are highly regulated by the government and medical industry, here and internationally. There are regulations related to where these meetings can take place, who can sponsor them, who can lead education sessions, what kinds of giveaways are permitted to attendees and more.

The CMP-HC tests planners on the specifics of planning meetings in the healthcare space. “Events Industry Council launched the CMP-HC subspecialty in 2013 to respond to the need for event professionals in healthcare meeting management to have a way to distinguish themselves in the marketplace,” Kotowski says. “Since all CMP-HC holders must also hold a valid CMP certification, clients can see the CMP-HC as the badge of excellence in healthcare meetings management.”

To be eligible to take the CMP-HC exam, she says, “An individual must hold a valid and current CMP, have three years (36 months) of experience in healthcare meeting management and complete five hours of professional development specifically related to healthcare meeting management.”

Digital Event Strategist (DES)

“The DES credential,” Aman says, “is designed for event and meeting planners who want continuing education and training on the management and product of digital events. The DES certification course covers planning, producing and measuring results of live stream and digital engagement events.”

The desire for that credential may grow as technology continues to disrupt and influence how meetings are designed and experienced.

Today’s Trends Drive New Learning Options

“Current education trends for meeting planners align with those of the education industry in general,” says Melissa Majors, director, MPI Academy. “Technology is disrupting everything we do and is significantly influencing the way learners prefer to learn. They desire modernized experiences that provide immediate access to information needed to solve problems and delivered in a personalized way.

“As a result, we’re seeing a rise in use of digital learning solutions and increased demand for online courses, virtual events, online social learning, curated content and AI-powered experiences that predict your interests and make relevant recommendations.”

Aman agrees. “As we approach the digitalization of almost every industry, PCMA is always looking forward to how



“Professionalism is a skill — how to interact, how to present oneself, how to interview. I believe it’s a learnable skill ... TISOH will soon offer it as a stand-alone course titled, ‘Professional Presence in Hospitality.’”

**Timothy Lam, CHT, CGSP, Executive Director
The International School of Hospitality, Las Vegas, NV**

technology and digitization can inform the way we build education content. Specifically, how digital education and face-to-face education can inform each other to build greater participant engagement and interest through an open feedback loop that is constantly providing data and information to the types of content most relevant to participants.”

But it’s not just about tech. “While this past year was an innovative one for the events industry with technological

trends taking center stage, the most frequent education request for content and resources I received this year were topics tied to event safety and security planning,” Aman adds. “And while risk and crisis management is not new, recent high-profile crises and headlines have led event planners to re-evaluate how they manage their event security. I believe many are coming to the realization they are not as prepared or comfortable as they would want to be. The EIC documented last year that the topic leading trend shaping event industry education is around safety and security.”

Risk management, Kotowski notes, has been a CMP domain for quite a while. “However, what that means has expanded as we deal with issues such as physical security, cybersecurity and the General Data Protection Regulation, for example. EIC’s Industry Insights Committee (formerly APEX), has taken on many of those issues and offers education and resources.”

EIC is exploring other areas, as well. “We’re tackling all the challenges that clients are asking CMPs to address in their events — micro-learning opportunities, virtual meetings, on-demand training and game-based learning,” Kotowski says. “That uniquely positions Events Industry Council to tackle these challenges

head-on and try innovative approaches through education, especially at this year’s CMP Conclave, where we give our CMP participants an environment (to) test and experience these learning trends.

EIC is also looking at new specialty designations. “We already offer the CMP-HC for healthcare meeting professionals,” Kotowski notes. “But we’re exploring other specialty certifications that would be valuable for our CMP community.”

Planners, stay tuned.

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Las Vegas, NV

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 Las Vegas, NV
Trump National Doral Miami
 Miami, FL
The Venetian Las Vegas
 Las Vegas, NV
Villas of Grand Cypress
 Orlando, FL
Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort
 Lake Buena Vista, FL
The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa
 Tucson, AZ
The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa
 Scottsdale, AZ
Wynn Las Vegas
 Las Vegas, NV
Wyndham Grand
Rio Mar Puerto Rico Golf & Beach Resort
 Río Grande, Puerto Rico



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

GREATER MIAMI CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

23-Time Winner

Avibrant and dynamic global hub, Miami offers a stunning array of creative venue options for even the largest meeting needs, including the new Miami Beach Convention Center, now open.

Located in the heart of South Beach, the new Miami Beach Convention Center is a bright, glass-encased facility as innovative and tech-rich as it is beautiful. In addition to the nearly 500,000 square feet of versatile exhibition space and more than 180,000 square feet of meeting space, the new Miami Beach Convention Center includes a 60,000-square-foot grand ballroom, a 20,000-square-foot junior ballroom and 84 breakout rooms.

The space will feature a terrace where attendees can step out, mingle and soak up the city's signature sunshine and ocean breeze. The new Miami Beach Convention Center is also environmentally friendly and LEED Silver-certified.

DOWNTOWN MIAMI HIGHLIGHTS

Along with the new Miami Beach Convention Center, Miami has continued to reinvent itself with incredible hotels, meeting spaces and enhanced infrastructure. Some highlights that shouldn't be missed when visiting the city include:

- **Brickell City Centre**

Spanning 9.1 acres, Brickell City Centre includes a 352-room hotel, an open-air shopping center, two luxury condo towers, two office buildings and an entertainment center.

- **Brightline**

This stylish, best-in-class express train service provides intercity travel, connecting Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. And service between Miami and Orlando is coming soon.

- **Frost Science Museum**

The Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science, located in Downtown Miami's Museum Park, is a state-of-the-art 250,000-square-foot facility that combines a planetarium, aquarium and science museum on one campus.

ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

Along with its world-famous weather and beaches, the city also offers nearly endless possibilities for entertainment and exploration. From unique hotel and dining experiences to culturally diverse neighborhoods and a thriving arts scene, Miami seamlessly blends the benefits of a sophisticated international destination with the natural beauty of the tropics.

And it's easy to get to, with Miami International Airport (MIA) offering more than 400 flights from around the globe daily and serving more airlines than any other airport in the U.S.

These are just a few of the memorable and magical highlights awaiting any meeting planner thinking of Miami. Visit MiamiMeetings.com to learn more.

C&IT



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Citywide Facts and Features

Guest Rooms: 55,394
Hotels/Resorts: 426
Special Services: In addition to the nearly 500,000 square feet of exhibition space and more than 180,000 square feet of meeting space, the new Miami Beach Convention Center includes a 60,000-square-foot grand ballroom, a 20,000-square-foot junior ballroom and 84 breakout rooms.



INSPIRATION
BEGINS

WITH
A CHANGE
OF SCENERY.

Set beneath stunning blue skies, Miami is a vibrant and dynamic global hub that offers a myriad of creative and versatile conference spaces for all meeting needs, including the newly reimagined Miami Beach Convention Center. **New space. New possibilities. Now open.**

Learn more at MiamiMeetings.com
Meetings@MiamiMeetings.com | 800-933-8448 ext. 3071





AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

HILTON SAN DIEGO BAYFRONT

First-Time Winner

Rising 30 stories above the edge of the San Diego Bay, the AAA Four Diamond Hilton San Diego Bayfront is the West Coast's premier waterfront hotel where business meets pleasure.

This alluring retreat, surrounded by city and coast, features 1,190 guest rooms and 30 luxury suites, with upscale amenities and state-of-the-art technology.

Spacious guest rooms and suites offer breathtaking views of the city, across the San Diego Bay, Coronado Island and beyond the Pacific Ocean.

With an upcoming \$25 million renovation of all guest rooms and suites, guests will find comfort in the refreshed room design inspired by maritime culture and modern ease.

Luxury Amenities

Hilton San Diego Bayfront offers a variety of amenities to provide guests with a comfortable and memorable experience.

Guests can indulge in a relaxing spa day at the recently renovated eforea spa or soak up the sun by the heated saltwater pool overlooking the San Diego Bay.

Additional convenient amenities include six onsite dining venues plus room service, a business center with internet access, The UPS Store, a fitness center, valet parking, award-winning concierge services and more.

Versatile Meeting & Event Space

The award-winning hotel boasts more than 165,000 square feet of elegant indoor and gorgeous outdoor event and meeting spaces. Hilton San Diego Bayfront offers the perfect venue and location for banquets, meetings and conferences, and the excellent flow of space allows for seamless events.

A variety of inspired outdoor options includes the lush 4.3-acre Bayfront Park, 10,000-square-foot waterfront Promenade Plaza and 7,000-square-foot terrace overlooking San Diego Bay. The Sapphire Ballroom features 34,000 square feet of pillar-free space. Meeting and event services include in-house A/V services, first-class catering facilities and dedicated, experienced personnel to ensure each event is a success.

Premier Downtown Location

The hotel is adjacent to the San Diego Convention Center, across a pedestrian bridge from PETCO Park and minutes from the San Diego International Airport (SAN).

It is a short walk from downtown San Diego's historic Gaslamp Quarter, where guests can immerse themselves in the rich Victorian architecture, dance the night away at nationally recognized nightlife venues and dine at world-class restaurants.

Additionally, the nearby trolley stop provides convenient transportation to nearly all of San Diego's popular destinations, including Old Town, Little Italy and more. **C&IT**



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Citywide Facts and Features

Guest Rooms/Suites: 1,190/30 suites

Meeting Space: 165,000 square feet

Special Services & Amenities: Six onsite dining venues, bayside pool, eforea spa, fitness center, UPS Store, business center, onsite PSAV team, high-speed internet

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CITY AND COAST



Hilton

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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

MARINA DEL REY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

First-Time Winner

Located in the heart of the beautiful Los Angeles coastline and only four miles from LAX Airport, Marina del Rey is making waves as the premier meetings destination in Southern California.

Views of golden sunsets alighting the tranquil harbor can be enjoyed from waterfront event space and restaurants in every corner of this quaint seaside community.

"Marina del Rey is a great option for meeting planners looking for value, quality, convenience and a prime location," says Janet Zaldua, CEO of the MdR CVB. "Our hotels have all recently undergone renovations and offer rates that are very competitive with other destinations on L.A.'s Westside."

Waterside Meetings

With more than 100,000 square feet of waterfront meeting space and 1,100 hotel rooms, the marina is equally appealing to high-end corporate business programs as it is to tech industry powerhouses that want a laid-back but trendy meeting destination.

Traditional meeting space takes a back seat to creative waterside options, such as outdoor reception lawns with 360-degree harbor views or a rooftop ballroom with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the coast.

No visit to the marina is complete without some time on a boat, and having your opening reception, client party or

seminar at sea on a private luxury yacht is the perfect way to make a splash with your next corporate function.

Recreation

Marina del Rey's plentiful recreation options make for exciting teambuilding and pre/post-function entertainment. Treat your delegates to a parasailing or sportfishing excursion, group kayaking or stand-up paddleboarding, a dining or cocktail harbor cruise, beachside biking, water yoga or a sailing regatta.

Tourist Attractions

With Marina del Rey as a home base for your group event, you're within a short drive to L.A.'s popular tourist attractions — the world-famous Venice Beach and Santa Monica are right next door.

And after a busy day, there's no better place to come back to than any of the marina's six waterfront hotels, all of which offer sparkling harbor views.

Special Incentive

Meeting planners can save up to \$2,000 by booking a program or event in the marina.

The Marina del Rey CVB offers a special incentive for groups with more than 25 rooms.

For details, go to visitmarinadelrey.com/groups. **C&IT**



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www.visitmarinadelrey.com/groups

Citywide Facts and Features

Guest Rooms: 1,100 guest rooms throughout the marina

Meeting Space: More than 100,000 square feet of event space throughout the marina

Special Services & Amenities: Pre/post-function entertainment includes yacht cruises, waterfront dining, beachside biking, kayaking and other fun in the sun.



DISCOVER

L.A.'S COASTAL POINT OF VIEW

FOR YOUR
NEXT
MEETING



Contemporary Hotels. Yacht Receptions. Poolside Networking. Waterfront Views.

Make Marina del Rey your next Southern California meetings destination. Experience 100,000 square feet of total meeting space and an abundance of waterfront dining – just 4 miles north of LAX and minutes from world-famous Venice Beach and Santa Monica.

Marina del Rey is home to six hotels

Marriott | The Ritz-Carlton | Marina del Rey Hotel | Hilton Garden Inn | Jamaica Bay Inn | Foghorn Inn

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MARINA DEL REY[®]
convention and visitors bureau



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

NEW ORLEANS & COMPANY

18-Time Winner

New Orleans is a truly authentic destination and an ideal backdrop for any meeting. With live music filling the air, world-class cuisine in more than 1,500 restaurants and a unique culture that offers a feast for the senses, there is never a dull moment in the Big Easy. Take a stroll through one of the world's most walkable cities and enjoy the southern charm and rich history.

New Orleans boasts more than 22,000 hotel rooms within walking distance of the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, with its 1.1 million square feet of contiguous exhibit space, as well as many award-winning attractions, unique venues, outstanding restaurants and the historic French Quarter. The Crescent City is a hub of innovation making it the perfect place to bring great minds together to inspire creativity, network and collaborate.

Celebrating the Tricentennial

As New Orleans commemorates the past and looks toward the future, the city is buzzing with progress and new developments to celebrate the city's Tricentennial. The Eliza Jane hotel opened its doors this year, offering 1,729 square feet of event space, including an open-air courtyard. The Ernest N. Morial Convention Center has begun the first phases of its 47-acre district development project with the revitalization of Convention Center Boulevard. The project will include more than \$60 million of improvements that will

establish an urban public park and serve as the gateway to the development of a tree-lined pedestrian plaza, fountains, green walls and gathering places. The National World War II Museum continues its expansion, adding the Higgins Hotel and Conference Center, opening in the fall of 2019.

To accommodate the millions of passengers to New Orleans, new airlines and additional domestic and international flights being added, the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport is in the process of building a \$1 billion world-class terminal. The 972,000-square-foot terminal will feature three concourses, 35 gates, improved passenger experience with a consolidated checkpoint for ease and efficiency going through security and an in-line baggage system where passengers will drop off their checked baggage at the ticket counters. There will also be a 2,190-space parking garage with surface parking, built with the new terminal. The airport is expected to open in May 2019.

The Crescent City

Thanks to its strong entrepreneurial ecosystem, New Orleans is a top city for businesses big and small, technology and innovation. The inspiring nature of the city along with the incredible talent that calls the city home, New Orleans has been named a top city for creatives and among the top tech cities in the country. Whether for business or pleasure, the Crescent City is a one-of-a-kind destination. With a vibrant restaurant scene, countless cultural and family-friendly attractions and rich history and mystery around every corner, there's something in New Orleans to appeal to everyone.

C&IT



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Convention Sales Vice President

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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 millions 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**.

NewOrleans.com/meetings





AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

VISIT DENVER, THE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

23-Time Winner

An outdoor city filled with urban adventure, Denver pulses with an entrepreneurial vibe that makes it an emerging business hub. Then there's the majesty of those ever-present mountain views! Add more than 11,000 downtown hotel rooms, 300 days of annual sunshine, a thriving chef-driven dining scene and unique venues, and you've got the combination for the perfect meeting destination.

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

"Meeting planners are looking to meet in a unique destination," says Rachel Benedick, vice president of sales and services for VISIT DENVER. "Denver is a four-season, outdoor city. Winters are milder than you would expect, and the rest of the year mostly enjoys warm days and cool nights. The arts and cultural scene is thriving, and the dining scene has really reached its breakthrough moment."

Getting There

Getting to Denver has never been easier. Denver International Airport (DEN) has one of the top three largest domestic networks in the U.S. with 1,600 daily flights and nonstop service to 25 international destinations. Plus, DEN airfares are 20 percent lower than the national average. Once you've landed, take the

affordable and convenient A Line from DEN directly to Denver Union Station in the heart of downtown.

A short walk or free shuttle ride away from Union Station is the Colorado Convention Center (CCC), designed by meeting planners for meetings planners. Big changes are on the way — an upcoming expansion will bring up to 80,000 square feet of new flexible meeting and ballroom space, as well as 50,000 square feet of prefunction space and a 50,000-square-foot rooftop terrace. The expansion will also provide best-in-class technology improvements.

Around Town

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

For an exceptional dining experience, visit one of the many award-winning, chef-owned restaurants. Recent James Beard Award winners are Rioja, located in historic Larimer Square, and Mercantile dining & provision, housed inside the renovated Union Station. Check out one of the city's innovative food halls, such as The Source, Avanti F&B or the brand-new Milk Market, where you can get everything from poke bowls and pasta to crêpes and charcuterie. Zagat recently listed Denver in its top five most exciting food cities. **C&IT**



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Citywide Facts and Features

Guest Rooms: 1,000 downtown (2018),
nearly 50,000 metro-wide

Hotels/Resorts: 44 downtown/150-plus metro-wide (2018)

Convention Center FYI: The Colorado Convention Center has 584,000 square feet of meeting space, two hotel-quality ballrooms and a 5,000 fixed-seat theater.

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No. 7

Denver, Colorado



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AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

ATLANTIS, PARADISE ISLAND

Eight-Time Winner

Atlantis, Paradise Island, the lush, oceanside resort in The Bahamas, recently embarked on a new chapter ("Bahamas at Heart") tied to a meaningful connection with the property's 7,300-plus employees and the rich history, art, people, food, marine life and festivities of the country.

Atlantis features five distinct properties at which to stay, from the iconic The Royal to The Beach and The Coral to the newly built luxury properties, The Cove and The Reef. The Coral, newly renovated, has reopened as a fully redesigned escape, while The Cove recently celebrated a series of new design collaborations, restaurants and guest experiences, each paying homage to Bahamian culture.

Marine Conservation

The ocean-themed resort is built around Aquaventure, an innovative 141-acre waterscape of thrilling slides and river rides, pools and white-sand beaches, and features one of the largest open-air marine habitats in the world, with more than 50,000 marine animals from 250 species.

In addition to various habitats across the property, guests are able to visit Dolphin Cay, the 14-acre marine mammal habitat and education center, whose first residents were rescue dolphins and sea lions from Hurricane Katrina. A portion of the cost of each of the on-property marine interactions goes back to the Atlantis Blue Project Foundation, the resort's nonprofit organization dedicated to saving sea species and their extraordinary habitats.

Meetings & Events

With the largest conference center in the Caribbean, Atlantis boasts 200,000 square feet of indoor meeting space highlighted by the 50,000-square-foot Imperial Ballroom and 25,000-square-foot Grand Ballroom.

The 60 meeting rooms on-property allows Atlantis to accommodate groups of 15 to 4,000 and more than 20 distinct outdoor venues totaling 300,000 square feet to entertain parties of up to 5,000.

Experiences

Atlantis is known as one of the ultimate culinary and night-life destinations in the Caribbean, housing a collection of more than 40 restaurants and lounges from world-renowned chefs including Nobu Matsuhisa, José Andrés and Todd English. The resort also has one of the Caribbean's most renowned casinos, with more than 47,000 square feet of gaming options spread across the property.

Other amenities include the Atlantis Marina, Marina Village marketplace, Mandara Spa, Kids and Teen Clubs, award-winning 18-hole Tom Weiskopf-designed golf course, tennis courts and duty-free shopping complemented by some of the biggest names in the industry.

Atlantis plans to announce more renovations and property upgrades in the coming months, including news of redesigned rooms and suites at The Royal & The Reef in 2019. **C&IT**



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Facts and Features

Guest Rooms/Suites: 3,400

Meeting Space: 500,000 square feet, indoor and outdoor

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

ATLANTIS

PARADISE ISLAND BAHAMAS

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Group Bridge Suite Offer Terms and Conditions:

Book a new group at Atlantis, Paradise Island, with a minimum of 1,500 room nights for arrival between now and December 31, 2019 and group will receive one complimentary upgrade to the iconic Bridge Suite including 24 hour Butler Service available throughout the stay. Contract must be signed by December 31, 2018. Applicable to new groups only. Offer is subject to availability and blackout dates and can be pulled at any time. Offer is not combinable with any other offers. See full details at www.meetingsatatlantis.com.



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

THE BROADMOOR

34-Time Winner

Nestled in the foothills below Pikes Peak on 5,000 stunning acres, The Broadmoor is the longest-running consecutive winner of the Forbes Five-Star and AAA Five Diamond awards. Here, authentic Western experiences combine with European elegance and a setting that inspires at every turn.

Legendary Golf

Ranked among the best in the world, The Broadmoor's championship courses were designed by some of golf's most notable names — Donald Ross and Robert Trent Jones Sr. Over the past 100 years, The Broadmoor has played host to 28 national and international tournaments, including eight USGA tournaments, two U.S. Senior Open championships, three U.S. Amateur events and two U.S. Women's Open championships.

Honoring The Broadmoor's rich past, a new Golf Heritage Hallway was created to chronicle the traditions, the tournaments and the champions who helped write the pages of The Broadmoor's golfing legacy. The Broadmoor also proudly partners with Callaway Golf, with custom club fitting onsite for those wanting the latest technological advancements. Callaway rental clubs are also available for play.

Dynamic Meeting Venues

The Broadmoor understands the unique needs and attention required to create successful meetings. With 185,000 square feet of flexible space, unparalleled accommodations

and activities, The Broadmoor wows even from the start. From the 60,000-square-foot Broadmoor Hall to intimate spaces, it has played host to countless conferences and special events since 1918. The Broadmoor boasts convenient technology, including wired and wireless internet for all meeting areas and guest rooms, onsite audiovisual equipment rentals and event production. For a unique experience, groups of up to 60 can stay and meet at Cloud Camp, where 15 well-appointed lodge rooms and cabins with spectacular 360-degree vistas are complemented by the 1,500-square-foot Overlook, a fully equipped, A/V-ready meeting space.

Tastefully Yours

With 20 restaurants, cafes and lounges, you'll find a wide variety of distinctive, award-winning dining options. Group dining has myriad, fully customizable menus for special breakfasts and lunches, breaks and buffets to uniquely themed dinners, all carefully crafted for every occasion, discerning taste and dietary request.

Getting Here

Located in Colorado Springs, Colorado, The Broadmoor is only 15 minutes from the Colorado Springs Airport (COS), and Denver International Airport (DEN) is only 75 minutes away. Door-to-door regularly scheduled transportation is available from both airports through a partnership with Gray Line. **C&IT**



PEPPER DOMBROSKI

Director of Sales

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Facts and Features

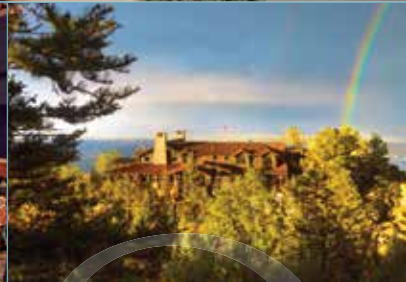
Guest Rooms/Suites: 784

Meeting Space: 185,000 square feet

Special Services & Amenities: More than 60 indoor and outdoor event venues and audio/visual services; three mountain Wilderness Experience properties; 20 restaurants, cafes and lounges; award-winning spa, golf, tennis, zip line adventure, falconry



SO MANY WAYS TO MEET, ALL IN ONE MAGNIFICENT PLACE.



Only The Broadmoor offers so many distinct venues and experiences of all sizes and types. From impressive trade shows to executive dinners. From grand reception halls to eclectic lakeside cocktails at sunset. From state-of-the-art meeting rooms to secluded brainstorming sessions at Cloud Camp 3,000 feet above the main campus. You'll find all of it and more within our 185,000 square feet of meeting space, connected by a thread of quality, service and meticulous attention to detail. And in 2018, The Broadmoor celebrates its Centennial year, an impressive milestone for this iconic destination. Visit broadmoor.com and contact us today to explore the wonderful possibilities.

THE BROADMOOR





AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

SEA ISLAND

First-Time Winner

Steeped in golf tradition, Sea Island is home to three championship golf courses, including Seaside and Plantation, site of the PGA TOUR's RSM Classic, hosted each fall by Davis Love III, Sea Island touring professional, two-time Ryder Cup Captain and 2017 inductee into the World Golf Hall of Fame.

Created in 1928 by Walter Travis, Plantation was redesigned in 1998 by Rees Jones and features ocean views and plentiful lakes. Created in 1929 by Colt & Alison, Seaside was redesigned in 1999 by Tom Fazio. With 15 holes flanked by views of the ocean, sound and marsh, Seaside is Sea Island's signature course. Retreat Course, originally designed by Joe Lee, was renovated in 2001 by Davis and Mark Love and features a unique, dramatic layout.

Golf and Lodge Enhancements

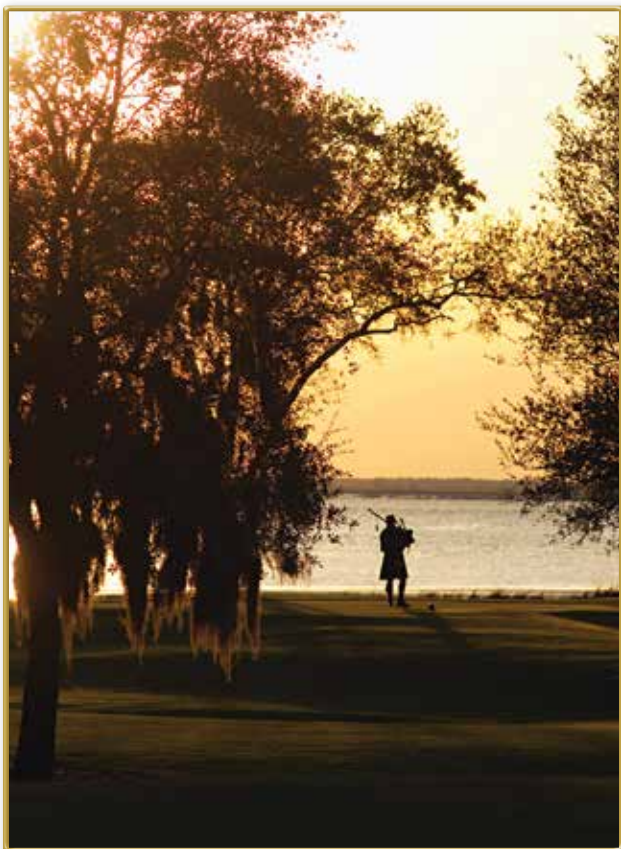
Located between Seaside and Plantation, The Lodge at Sea Island is in the midst of a \$25 million enhancement program, which includes the addition of The Driftwood Course, an 18-hole putting course, opened this past summer.

Six new cottages with a total of 14 new sleeping rooms, an oceanfront pool and pool house debut ahead of the 2018 RSM Classic in November.

In early 2019, a new, 17,000-square-foot Golf Performance Center will open with six instruction and club fitting bays, cutting-edge putting studio, full-service golf club workshop, gym with locker rooms, retail area and indoor and outdoor meeting and event spaces.

Phil Kenyon, director of putting instruction and one of the most sought-after putting instructors in the world, has designed the new putting studio for teaching and putter fitting. The existing Center continues to serve as one of the finest instructional centers in the





country, teaching every aspect of the game to all skill levels, from juniors to Open and Masters Champions.

An Overview

Since 1928, Sea Island has been known as an exceptional destination appealing to those who appreciate gracious service and heartfelt hospitality. With four Forbes Five-Star experiences — The Cloister at Sea Island, The Lodge at Sea Island, The Spa at Sea Island and the Georgian Room restaurant — it is the only resort in the world to have received four Forbes Five-Star Awards for 10 consecutive years.

The only U.S. resort to host a G-8 Summit of world leaders, Sea Island provides exceptional settings and service for conferences and executive retreats. Guest accommodations are available at The Cloister, a Mediterranean masterpiece; The Lodge, reminiscent of an English country manor or The Inn at Sea Island. A cottage option is also available.

Located on the Georgia coast midway between Jacksonville, Florida (JAX, 60 minutes) and Savannah, Georgia (SAV, 75 minutes), Sea Island is served by two additional airports, including Brunswick (BQK, 20 minutes) and the private McKinnon St. Simons Airport (SSI, 10 minutes).

C&IT



DAVID FURNISH

Director of Sales and Marketing

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Resort Facts and Features

Guest Rooms/Suites: 390

Meeting Space: 40,000 square feet (interior)

Special Services & Amenities: Sea Island's rooms and suites offer views from oceanfront and river view to golf course. In addition to 40,000 square feet of interior meeting and event space, Sea Island's setting as a barrier island provides myriad outdoor event options as well, from casual, overlooking the river and marsh to oceanfront, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. When it comes to dining, the culinary team ensures that cuisine is customized to meet the theme, style, budget and goals of every event. Nine restaurants offer dining experiences ranging from casual, oceanfront to Forbes Five-Star. As a semitropical island, Sea Island enjoys an average year-round high temperature of 75° and an average low of 60°.

Sea Island

1-866-616-3341

SEASLAND.COM





Notes FROM THE COAST

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Mary.

A place that makes
the work worth it.

-Joshua

Notes FROM THE COAST



(Who do you want to tell?)



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

LOEWS PORTOFINO BAY HOTEL

19-Time Winner

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

With 295,000 square feet of meeting space and 9,000 guest rooms across eight hotels by 2020, three different theme parks and the Universal CityWalk dining and entertainment complex, Universal Orlando Resort offers everything you could want in a meetings destination.

Meetings With Italian Charm

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

Planners also will find a variety of beautiful outdoor venues, including the scenic Harbor Piazza and dazzling Villa Pool, where events can be enhanced by the hotel's lush landscaping and distinctive Italian architecture.

Adorned with handcrafted details such as Venetian glass chandeliers, the hotel offers a breathtaking setting for both business and social events.

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

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

Mediterranean-inspired Accommodations

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

Incredible Event Options

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

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KATHY CATTOOR

Vice President, Resort Sales

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Todd Zint has joined ACCESS Austin & San Antonio as general manager. Zint has more than two decades of executive-level meetings and events experience. He most recently held the role of director, Corporate Travel, Meetings and Events for Mutual of Omaha.

Louis Gonzalez has been promoted to director of group sales of Fontainebleau Miami Beach. Prior to this, Gonzalez held sales and convention operation positions at several Florida resorts.

David Schwartz has joined Haven Riviera Cancun Resort & Spa as director of group and incentive sales. Schwartz has spent more than 30 years in the incentive travel industry and has represented some of the finest hotel brands in the Caribbean and Southern U.S.

Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI) announced three new additions to its global sales team: **Daniel Agüero-Duplá**, director of global sales; **Divya Saighal**, director of sales, south GSO region and **Christine Squitieri**, director of sales, northeast GSO region. Most recently, Agüero-Duplá served as associate director of sales at Hotel Café Royal in London, and Saighal served as director of housing at EM2 Sports. Prior to joining ALHI, Squitieri was the national sales manager for the Ocean Edge Resort & Conference Center in Brewster, Massachusetts.

Vanessa Wilson has been named director of sales and marketing at Hilton Washington DC National Mall. Previously, Wilson served as the director of sales and marketing at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center and the Hilton Washington DC North/Gaithersburg hotel.

Grand Hyatt Baha Mar has promoted **Braedan Quigley** to director of sales and marketing. His prior director and manager-level positions include: Hyatt Regency O'Hare/Rosemont, Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Resort, Spa and Marina, Grand Hyatt Denver, Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort in New Mexico, Grand Hyatt San Diego and Atlantis Paradise Island.

Devin Gleason has been named director of sales and marketing at Lake Arrowhead Resort and Spa in Lake Arrowhead, California. Gleason was previously director of sales and marketing for Topnotch Resort in Stowe, Vermont.

Conrad New York has appointed **Trevor Brune** to director of events and catering. He has more than 12 years of hospitality experience. **C&IT**



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