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IN THIS
ISSUE:**



Healthy Habits

Incorporating Wellness
Into the Agenda

**MEETINGS
AT SEA**



**INCENTIVE
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PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE //

Make Wellness a Priority on Your Agenda

Our cover story, "Healthy Habits" reflects a growing initiative as upper management is focused on creating and maintaining a healthy workforce. In recent years, the growing trend for wellness programs at meetings has provided a positive impact on the behavior of attendees after exercising and taking advantage of healthy eating options. While some planners may often overlook including fitness and wellness amenities in their contracts, it's now becoming more of a trend. As a worthwhile investment in your meetings, wellness should result in

an ROI with strong attendee participation and positive feedback.

Also in this issue, "Money Matters" is always a controversial subject when it comes to the gender pay gap. While gender is often blamed for the difference in remuneration, the reality may be a difference in qualifications and experience. Rather than the result of discrimination, wage differences also may very well be due to skill discrepancies. Personally, I believe equal pay for equal work should be the result and gender should not be the determining factor. To resolve any possible existing gender wage gap, conducting a compensation evaluation should be mandatory to fix the problem.



Have you considered a meeting or incentive program at sea? Read how cruise lines are "Making Waves" in this issue and see why this is continuing to be a growing trend. Entire ship charters are available for groups large enough to take advantage of this option. A ship charter gives you the ability to customize the onboard programming, entertainment and décor. Meeting facilities aboard ships have been upgraded to provide the same conveniences as land-based facilities.

If your preference is to meet on terra firma, take a look at the latest happenings in Canada, Las Vegas and Arizona. These popular destinations are continuously reinventing themselves to provide you with first-class facilities and amenities where you can be assured of finding everything to meet your needs.

Harvey Grotsky

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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The Lodge at Sea Island, surrounded by two championship golf courses and twice named the #1 Hotel in the U.S. by *U.S. News and World Report*, has introduced new meeting and event space, six cottages with sleeping rooms, a pool, pool house, and 18-hole putting course. Now with 57 sleeping rooms and more than 11,500 square feet of meeting and event space, The Lodge is the perfect location for your next incentive trip, board of directors, or intimate corporate meeting. An all-new state-of-the-art Golf Performance Center debuted in early 2019, adding even more opportunities for an exceptional experience.

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OPENINGS

The Ritz-Carlton Paradise Valley Set to Open Summer 2020 in Arizona

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company LLC recently announced the expansion of its Arizona presence with the expected summer 2020 opening of The Ritz-Carlton, Paradise Valley. Set in the resort town of Paradise Valley, within the heart of Scottsdale, construction is well underway. Set on 20 acres overlooking Camelback Mountain, The Ritz-Carlton, Paradise Valley offers a luxury experience inspired by its surroundings. Restaurants feature produce sourced from the resort's citrus orchard and garden, the



spa offers desert-inspired treatments and accommodations reflect the style of traditional casitas. With a breathtaking natural setting and 20,000 sf of event space, the resort is ideal for meetings. The stunning grand lobby

will greet guests with a water feature that cascades down through the property to a world-class spa. The resort's 215 guest rooms include spacious suites with superior amenities and design.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Innovation and the Future of Business Travel Highlight GBTA Convention 2019

CHICAGO — The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), the voice of the global business travel industry, recently wrapped up its 51st annual convention in Chicago. GBTA Convention 2019 focused on technology and the future of business travel

management. The five-day gathering brought together travel professionals, along with top industry leaders speaking on business travel's most pressing issues. With more than 170 education sessions, travel professionals of all levels were given educational opportunities to help them advance their careers and improve their travel programs. The event concluded with more than 7,175 attendees, making this the largest GBTA Convention in history and one of the largest gatherings of travel professionals in the world.

OPENINGS

Hard Rock Madrid to Open in 2020

Hard Rock International has recently announced that Hard Rock Hotel Madrid will open in 2020. The 159-room hotel will be conveniently located in the heart of the city, across from the Reina Sofia National Art Center Museum and next to the Atocha railway station. It will offer panoramic views of the city from a rooftop bar and feature an urban garden with an outdoor pool.

APPOINTMENT

Visit Orlando Appoints Industry Leader As New Chief Sales Officer

ORLANDO, FL — George Aguel, Visit Orlando president and CEO, announced that industry veteran Michael D. Waterman has been appointed chief sales officer for Visit Orlando. Waterman has assumed the sales position, reporting directly to Aguel.

With almost 30 years of experience in hospitality sales and marketing, Waterman's background includes, most recently, the position as president and CEO of Visit Houston.

"Mike is a well-respected industry leader with a wealth of experience and is a phenomenal addition to our team," Aguel says. "He could not be joining at a better time, as our destination is undergoing an extraordinary level of growth from the exciting expansion of our world-class convention center, to the most significant addition of hotel rooms in 20 years and most recently, the announcement of our newest major theme park."



Waterman

Says Waterman, "I am thrilled to be joining arguably one of the most respected, dynamic destination organizations in the world. I started my career in Orlando and I know it will feel like coming home."

PROMOTIONS

Norwegian Cruise Line Names Katina Athanasiou Chief Sales Officer

Norwegian Cruise Line appointed Katina Athanasiou as chief sales officer, responsible for driving the cruise line's sales strategy by maximizing opportunities across all third-party booking channels and deepening travel partner relationships. She will report to Andy Stuart, president and



Athanasiou

CEO. This newly created role reaffirms the cruise line's commitment to its Partner's First philosophy, which puts travel partners at the center of business decisions. A cruise industry veteran for more than 20 years, Athanasiou most recently served as senior vice president of the charters, meetings, incentives and events (MICE) market, overseeing the sales efforts for all full-ship charters and corporate and incentive groups across Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings brands.

OPENINGS

'The Celebrity Revolution' Coming to Tampa, Florida

MIAMI — A revolutionary ship is coming to Port Tampa Bay, as Celebrity Cruises unveils a new homeport, expanding the brand's global vacation offerings with the redeployment of Celebrity Constellation. The ship is scheduled to undergo its "revolutionary" modernization in May 2020 as part of The Celebrity Revolution, Celebrity's \$500 million investment in ship-wide upgrades.

Is Your Budget Airline Flight Actually Cheaper?



DepositPhotos.com

Traveling can get expensive, so it makes sense to opt for the cheaper option when possible. However, when choosing a budget airline, you might actually end up paying the same price or even more than a major airline.

Hidden fees such as seat selection, checked baggage and food or refreshments are common when booking a flight on a budget airline and passengers aren't always aware. In fact, a recent survey conducted by AirHelp, found that 75% of all United States travelers think airlines aren't informing them enough when it comes to their passenger rights.

Seat Selection: While some budget airlines like Norwegian have been charging passengers more than \$40 to choose their seats, as of December 2018, major United States carriers like Delta, American and United were charging for seat selection for preferred seats, although costs started at \$9. When booking, passengers should be aware that choosing their seat may mean extra costs, and should factor that into the price of their ticket.

Baggage Fees: Checked baggage fees vary by airline; most airlines allow air passengers one carry-on bag and one personal item at no extra cost, however, guidelines for size and weight vary. Nevertheless, it's always important to check the terms and conditions of the airline. Some airlines are introducing new classes like "basic economy," providing passengers with the option to pay less for a flight ticket if they forgo a carry-on. What was simple has become complicated as travelers have several options to choose from now. The best way to understand baggage fees is to do

your research before booking or arriving at the airport. Almost all airlines charge for checked baggage, however, the cost for checked baggage varies, and can be dependent on the size and weight of your luggage. Also, if you haven't flown recently, review your airline's baggage regulations and fees since airlines like Delta, United Airlines and JetBlue recently bumped checked baggage fees by almost 20% in the last year.

In addition to increasing fees, airlines are constantly changing what is deemed a carry-on or personal item. Many U.S. airlines charge \$30 for a piece of luggage around 62 inches in size and 50 pounds or less for domestic flights. However, on an international flight, travelers can expect fees going up to \$60 for a 50-pound bag. If your bag exceeds the weight limit or size requirements you will pay more. By researching, you may be able to save money. Check out additional packing hacks from the experts at AirHelp to save yourself from baggage issues here.

Food/drinks on board: Some airlines offer free refreshments, but on others, you may have to pay for a coffee or soda. Passengers may consider purchasing a drink after security in the airport if they would like a beverage on the airplane, or should consider these costs, too.

The total cost of extra fees can vary, but travelers should budget an extra \$100 if they would like to check a bag and choose their seat in many situations. It is important to note that costs per airline vary, and AirHelp encourages travelers to review all potential costs in advance of their flights so they can be prepared. — Johnny Quach, Chief Product Officer, AirHelp

EVENTS

IMEX America Returns to Las Vegas

LAS VEGAS — IMEX America returns to Las Vegas September 10-12, at the Sands Expo and Convention Center at The Venetian® |The Palazzo®. The event is ready to welcome 3,500 suppliers from 150 countries, including new exhibitors, 4,000 qualified buyers and 100 booths representing more than 1,000 suppliers from 40 states for planners doing interstate business in North America.

With a focus on Imagination, IMEX's Talking Point for this year, attendees are invited to dive into all things experiential, including: the new Discovery Zone, designed to fuel fresh thinking and encourage creative risk-taking; and the InsideRisk's ses-



sion — a multimedia workshop, taking place on Smart Monday — IMEX's pre-show day of education, designed to help leaders increase their trust-building and critical-thinking abilities. Another immersive activity sure

to bring delight to attendees, will be laughter yoga at the new Laughter Lab, and the opportunity to relax and revive during busy days at the show, with the Be Well Lounge. For early risers, there will be the IMEXrun.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Destinations International Releases the 2019 DestinationNEXT Futures Study

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Destinations International recently announced the release of the 2019 DestinationNEXT Futures Study.

The 2019 DestinationNEXT Futures Study is a global, in-depth report into the major opportunities and trends for destination organization leaders. The study is funded by the Destinations International Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering destinations globally by providing education, research, advocacy and leadership development. The study can be used as the cornerstone for the development of a des-

tinuation's strategy moving forward, whether it be in the form of a strategic plan, board retreat or tourism master plan. More than 520 industry and community leaders in 55 countries participated in the 2019 DestinationNEXT global survey to help identify the top trends and strategies in our industry. The results show a much greater emphasis today on destination management and community advocacy.

OPENINGS

Four Seasons Philadelphia Opens Doors High Atop City

PHILADELPHIA — The Four Seasons Hotel Philadelphia at Comcast Center has opened, bringing with the luxury hotel award-winning chefs and hundreds of jobs to the city. The hotel sits atop Comcast Technology Center. Each room has unobstructed views of the city. "Together, we've redefined not only the skyline, but the hospitality experience in Philadelphia," says Christian Clerc, president of worldwide hotel operations for Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. The 57th floor of the hotel is dedi-

cated to health and wellness, with an indoor pool, fitness center and spa. The hotel has 15,602 sf of event space that can accommodate up to 275 attendees, including two ballrooms, two foyers and a terrace. There are several rooms that can be used for event space as well. Throughout its three decades in operation, the property has contributed to the social fabric of the city through events and its restaurant. Reintroducing Four Seasons to Philadelphia was an "incredible" opportunity, Clerc says.



GRAND OPENINGS

Live! by Loews - Arlington, Texas Holds Ribbon Cutting and Grand Opening Celebration

ARLINGTON, TX — The luxury hotel and resort offers easy access to Texas Rangers' Globe Life Park and the Dallas Cowboys' AT&T Stadium. Ideal for meetings and conventions, Live! by Loews - Arlington features more than 35,000 sf of meeting and event space, including: a 14,000-sf ballroom, seven meeting rooms, banquet menus, on-



site A/V services, outdoor lounge and private rooftop terrace. Pictured: Ron Price, Arlington CVB president and CEO; City Council members Andrew Peele, Ignacio Nunez, Barbara Odom-Wesley and Helen Moise; Reed Cordish; Texas Rang-

ers owner Neil Liebman; Alex Tisch; Texas Rangers owner Ray Davis; Jeff Williams, Arlington mayor; Jonathan Tisch, Loews CEO; Blake Cordish; Andrew Tisch; Scott Nasser, GM of Live! by Loews - Arlington; and Robert Shepherd, mayor pro tem.

RECOGNITIONS

ALHI President and CEO, Michael Dominguez, Named to Hall of Leaders

BOSTON, MA — Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI) has announced that Michael Dominguez, president and CEO, has been named to the Events Industry Council's prestigious Hall of Leaders. The Hall of Leaders is the premier recognition program in the meetings, conventions, exhibitions, hospitality



Dominguez

and travel industry, offering a lifetime achievement award that recognizes outstanding leaders without whom the industry would not be what it is today. Dominguez's understanding of the travel industry and how MICE business affects the economy has allowed him to become an effective leader and educator.

NEW CONSTRUCTION

Hilton Columbus Downtown Breaks Ground

COLUMBUS, OH — Hilton Columbus Downtown broke ground on a 28-story tower to create the first 1,000-room convention hotel in Columbus. Together with the existing Hilton, the hotel will offer 75,000 sf of meeting space and will be the largest hotel in Ohio when it opens in 2022.

"The addition of the tower to the Hilton Columbus Downtown will allow Columbus to attract new meetings and events business," says Don Brown,

executive director, Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority. "With the additional hotel inventory, we'll be able to host high-profile, national events that will continue to highlight Columbus as a top destination."

The tower will include 463 guest rooms and 47,000 sf of meeting space. All meeting rooms will feature natural light, with flexible space and interactive kitchens to create inspiring meetings.

MERGERS

Global DMC Partners Adds Nashville DMC to Network

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Global DMC Partners, the largest global network of destination management companies (DMCs), welcomed Evolution Event Solutions to its exclusive partnership of over 65 independently owned DMCs. Founded and grown in Nashville, Tennessee, Evolution Event Solutions is comprised of a dynamic team of passionate, creative and hands-on professionals who bring a variety of perspectives to the drawing board. Together the team welcomes partnership with companies during the initial steps of event planning so they can help bring visions into reality. The team has worked to book over 11,000 room nights, manage events hosting more than 289,000 attendees and negotiate contracts resulting in more than 77 percent savings for clients. Global DMC Partners assesses each prospective DMC based on a set of strict criteria to ensure the network is comprised of DMCs with the greatest local connections, creative expertise and proven financial stability.

Empowerment: The Tool for Every Successful Company

BY JOHN TSCHOHL



DepositPhotos.com

“As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.” – Bill Gates

A company's success lies in empowered employees. It is important to train employees and make sure they have trust in what empowerment will bring to a company. Satisfying customers will quickly benefit everyone. Moreover, happy, empowered and fulfilled employees are the key to creating “over-happy customers” for your company.

When employees are empowered and given responsibility, they use their talents and skills to maximize the opportunities.

Empowerment means every employee has to make fast decisions in favor of the customer. It's important that we are honest and sincere in our efforts to service our customers. The only way we can do that is by empowering employees to satisfy the customer quickly.

In my book “Empowerment: A Way of Life,”

I illustrate four challenges that all businesses face. They are:

1st: Many executives don't trust the customer. They believe the customer is trying to take advantage of them. Employees feel the same way.

2nd: We don't trust employees. We pay them as little as we can and have even less confidence in their ability to make decisions. We have a belief that our lying, cheating customers are going to take advantage of our incompetent employees.

3rd: With empowerment you don't need as many managers and supervisors. They're not overly excited about losing their perceived power, nor are they thrilled about the potential of losing their jobs.

4th: Very few employees are on their knees at night praying for empowerment. It's just too risky.

“Not My Job”

Three words that can kill an entire organization. Empowerment allows the employee to make a decision on the spot for the customer instead of working their way through a paralyzed system to figure out what to do next. Give employees the authority to take action. No one should have to go “higher up” to get permission to help a customer. Empower everyone to break the rules, thus allowing employees to have input and control over their work. When people with problems call your company, the first employee who answers the phone should be able to solve the problem.

What Are You Building?

In a world of mediocrity that relentlessly races to the bottom, you lose if you also race to the bottom. The only way to win is to race to the top, and empowerment is one

“People who always manage to find a way to **MAKE THINGS HAPPEN,** to always find a ‘yes’ and do it, are priceless.”

Never use “No”

The first rule of excellent customer service is to never use “No.” People who always manage to find a way to make things happen, to always find a “yes” and do it, are priceless. Give your employees the tools and the trust to use empowerment for the benefit of the customer and the company. Empowerment is NOT about breaking the rules, but bending them to keep the customer happy. It is making fast decisions on the spot in favor of customers.

Hyatt Hotels treats different customers differently. Since they know who their best customers are, they're working not to charge them more, but to give them more. They're setting out to randomly cover bar tabs, offer free massages and provide other services for which they could otherwise charge. If they do it in a corporate, by-the-book way, it'll feel fake and will fail. But, if they empower their employees to actually be generous, it can't help but work.

of your most valuable tools. My definition of empowerment is getting an employee to make a fast decision, on the spot, in favor of the customer. If the customer wins, your organization wins.

Understand what drives customer value, then figure out where empowerment can improve the quality, speed and cost — with which that value is delivered. Empowering people in the organization to use their best judgment turns out to be faster and cheaper — but only if you hire the right people and reward them for having the right attitude.

I have been passionate about empowerment and continue to preach on the subject. It is a tool for every successful company to use to deliver exemplary service to every person who walks through your doors.

“Your empowered team will drive your business and crush your competition”— John Tschohl **C&IT**



JOHN TSCHOHL

John Tschohl is a professional speaker, trainer and consultant. He is the president and founder of Service Quality Institute (the global leader in customer service) with operations in over 40 countries. Tschohl has written several books on customer service, including Moving Up, A step-by-step Guide to Creating Your Success and has available the 13th edition of AETCS. Both books are available on Amazon. Tschohl is a self-made millionaire, traveling and speaking more than 50 times each year. He is considered to be one of the foremost authorities on service strategy, success, empowerment and customer service in the world. Tschohl's monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

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This Top Corporate Meeting Trend Will Take Your Event to the Next Level

BY DIANE TIGHE

There is a reason wellness is gearing up to be a top meeting trend, with associated expenditures growing double the rate of economic growth at \$4.2 trillion, as reported by The Global Wellness Institute. The popularity and enthusiasm surrounding this theme

cannot be ignored, making it an essential element for meeting planners to incorporate into their meetings. There are a wealth of options to create a well-rounded experience for attendees, but what exactly is wellness and how can planners implement it?

Wellness breaks down into three subsets – physical, mental and social well-being – which must all be considered for a truly well-rounded picture. As personal and professional priorities continue to blend, successful meeting planners need to be aware of the goals of the individual and the goals of the event. First, let's define each of the subsets for a better viewpoint and discuss how to organically incorporate each theme into your next meeting.

Physical

A state of physical well-being is not just the absence of disease. It includes lifestyle behavior choices that ensure health, avoid preventable diseases and conditions, live in a balanced state of body and considers the mind and spirit. This may include eating nutritious foods, getting enough sleep, kicking smoking, staying active and making a point to stretch regularly.

Incorporating physical wellness into a meeting can be

done through integrating both active movement and selecting the catering options wisely. As devices like the Apple Watch continue to encourage standing and movement, attendees are more likely to be aware of sitting too long. Mayo Clinic counsels that sitting for long periods links to health concerns such as obesity, increased blood pressure and high blood sugar. Events can implement chances for attendees to stand during a discussion and kick off the day with golf or an organized morning run or walk.

Make sure to also offer nutritious meals for the health-conscious and options for those with dietary restrictions from allergies or preference, so everyone is nourished and satisfied throughout the day. Common ingredients to be aware of are gluten, peanuts, dairy, shellfish and animal products. Culinary teams

are becoming increasingly creative and flexible, so a good food service team should know how to cater to everyone's needs. Planners can send out a survey ahead of the event to get information to prepare chefs ahead of time.

Mental

Mental well-being is a state in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community.

There is so much information conveyed at meetings, so it's easy for attendees to leave feeling drained. To prevent this, integrate more breaks into the schedule as a way to regroup and refocus, which is ultimately more likely to cap-

ture better engagement and participation. After sessions are complete for the day, planners can also slot in opportunities to meditate through gentle yoga or breathing exercises. A study by the University of Wisconsin-Madison shows that meditation might reduce the chance of getting a cold or the flu, so keep this high on the totem pole. Offer a session focused on how to sustain mental well-being despite stress and have an expert share suggestions on how to work through stress to produce a positive and productive outcome.

Social

Social well-being is the extent to which an individual feels a sense of belonging, social inclusion and a connection as a person within society. Lifestyles, value systems, traditions and beliefs are all important to social well-being and quality of life. Participating in various cultural activities within the community is not only good for health, but can improve life satisfaction and happiness.

Having a sense of connection encourages communication, trust and new ideas, not to mention it makes an event more fun. To round out the spectrum and accomplish social

remain well after the event is over. It may be worth adding a session into the program that hits specifically on how to achieve workplace wellness. According to the American Psychological Association, 89 percent of workers who support well-being initiatives are more likely to recommend their company as a good place to work.

Only half of the U.S. workforce reported being satisfied with the development opportunities offered by their employer, and just 43 percent said their employer provides sufficient opportunity for internal advancement. Lack of opportunity for growth or advancement placed second behind low salaries as a source of job stress. If the goal of the meeting is to grow participants professionally, discussing ways to find fulfillment in the workplace will be particularly enticing to attendees.

Wellness = Balance

These ideas are not mutually exclusive to a single wellness bucket; for example, the camaraderie of social well-being also contributes to a better overall mental state, and proper nutrition also contributes to mental capacity. At

“Incorporating physical wellness into a meeting can be done through integrating both **ACTIVE MOVEMENT** and selecting the catering options wisely.”

well-being, provide forums for your guests to get to know each other better through mixers and group activities, so your meeting can function as both a professional development tool and a networking opportunity. Other important social factors are: creating an inclusive environment for everyone in attendance; fostering a safe space and open environment for people to share their ideas and express themselves, which is vital for productivity and satisfaction; incorporating sessions on diversity to appeal to minority populations; and discussing topics via guest panels, which are becoming increasingly popular. Make sure there are speakers from different backgrounds and think about how attendees can extend the conversation outside the event. This social component can help attendees during and after the meeting — forging new connections in the industry that

Washington Duke Inn and JB Duke Hotel, the team comes to work every day with a plethora of fresh ideas to help meeting planners achieve organizational goals while thinking outside the box. It's important to mention that wellness is all about balance, which can be achieved through dedicating significant attention to each dimension. The role of a planner is not to create this balance, but to create an environment in which individuals can maintain existing healthy lifestyles and thrive. Each wellness component is interconnected and equally as important — implementing these four ideas is a great start to creating an environment that will take your corporate meeting to the next level.

With all things considered, wellness truly is an essential element for meeting planners to incorporate into their plans to make any year a successful one. **C&IT**



ABOUT DIANE TIGHE

Diane Tighe is director of Catering & Conference Services at Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club. She plans up to 75 events per month with her team at the Inn & Golf Club and JB Duke Hotel on the campus of Duke University in Durham, NC. With nearly 20 years of experience at the property, Tighe is a Certified Professional Catering Executive (CPCE) and an active member of NACE since 2001. She handles meetings for organizations such as Fortune 500 companies, nonprofits such as the Duke Children's Gala and global academic powerhouse, Duke University.

Celebrity Flora is designed specifically for cruising the Galapagos Islands — and as a possible incentive for top performers.



MAKING WAVES

BY DAVID SWANSON

Cruise Ships Float to the Top of the List for Planners Who Prefer Meetings at Sea

Five-star service, built-in entertainment, better control of costs and that ever-elusive element of focus that a captive audience provides — these are some of the key reasons meeting planners cite when discussing programs based on cruise ships.

In addition to an ever-changing backdrop of sea and sky and a daily roster of new ports to call upon, the sea can provide a solid alternative to land-based events.

“We love what a cruise-based meeting offers,” says Ashlyn Jones, corporate event planner for Lifeplus, a referral marketing company in the health and wellness sector. A multitude of entertainment, a wide variety of dining options and cost savings that help stretch a budget were among the reasons she cites for setting her incentive programs for top distributors at sea.

“There is no comparison for us,” Jones adds. “Believe me, we have run the numbers and we have participated in many site visits at land-based locations, and you just can’t beat the cost of hosting a meeting at sea.”

The company’s incentive trip earlier this year for 750 Lifeplus distributors was held aboard Norwegian Bliss, the newest ship from Norwegian Cruise Line, launched last year. The 4,004-passenger vessel is spending winter in the tropics and summers in Alaska, making it the largest ship to ever cruise the 49th state. Bliss is also set to get a twin, Norwegian Encore, which debuts this year in November.

“We are a loyal client of Norwegian Cruise Line and have been sailing with them for many years,” explains Jones. “Norwegian Bliss offered everything that we needed to make this event a huge success — freestyle dining, the entire Haven, a private-access enclave for guests staying in suites, and beautiful staterooms throughout. The itinerary was perfect for our group, as well as the entertainment offered onboard.”

For incentives, groups have a choice: charter an entire ship or share the sailing on a cruise with the general public. Lifeplus opted for the latter route.

“We have never had any issues with sharing our sailing with the public,” Jones says. “We take advantage of our days at sea to host meetings and receptions so while everyone else is lounging at the pool, the majority of the Lifeplus group are involved in meetings or breakouts in some of the public spaces that normally don’t open until the evening. Because this was a recognition event, we hosted receptions every evening, as well as two meetings in the Bliss Theater. We really did not encounter any cons with the planning of our receptions or meetings in

comparison to a land option — you just have to be creative.”

She adds, “By working with the Charters, Meetings and Incentives team as well as the ship’s team, we were able to create some really fun environments for this event. We planned for months on the receptions and broke up our group into different evenings they could spend with the



Norwegian Bliss offered many activities — including go carts — for the 750 attendees of the 2019 Lifeplus Diamond incentive cruise.

founders and senior management of Lifeplus. Spice H2O, an open-air bar, was a perfect location for these receptions. The venue allowed for beautiful views and stunning sunsets, and with the tech booth located right above, we were able to take a group photo each night of that reception.”

Jones calls the technology and signage available aboard Norwegian Bliss “top notch,” offering everything the group needed to host receptions and meetings. The ship’s tech team had all the cabling and attachments needed to run presentations and videos for Lifeplus.

The dining on this mega-ship was another plus for the group.

“Norwegian Bliss offered so many dining options — complimentary as well as specialty restaurants,” Jones says. “You can’t get that on land. You would have F&B minimums that need to be met. Sailing



ship might be the right size and level of service, but it might not be positioned where you need it — a ship like Norwegian Bliss that sticks to North American ports can't easily be repositioned to the Mediterranean for a charter.

But the advantages of chartering the entire vessel can be advantageous.

"It becomes your ship, so you have the ability to customize the experience; a lot of flexibility," Landry says. "You pay a price for that, because you have to pay for every cabin. But there are times where it makes total sense — for instance, maybe you want every attendee to have balcony rooms, some ships are predominantly balconies. You could also take one ship and turn it into two groups. We chartered one ship for eight days and did two back-to-back, four-day cruises, one down to San Juan and then back to Miami, carrying 600 people each way."

A back-to-back charter was ideal for Kathy Fitzgibbons, senior travel buyer at Maritz Travel. Her client, a Fortune 500 company, had a group of 300 and wanted a full charter.

"We love to charter whenever possible," Fitzgibbons says. "It gives us the ability to customize the onboard programming, entertainment and décor. The guests can wear logo hats or apparel where and when they want; we can fly the client's flag, hang banners — the list goes on and on. It gives the guests such an amazing opportunity to network with each other, which is what it's all about."

Solution: Windstar Cruises' smallest vessel, the 74-cabin, four-masted sailing ship Wind Star, chartered in February for two seven-day Panama Canal itineraries.

"The Windstar ships are a great fit for an incentive program," Fitzgibbons says. "All the cabins are consistent in accommodations, which means everyone is equal, which is a requirement for my client's incentive program. The price point and ability to work with Windstar to customize the program is



Each stateroom and suite on the Oceania Insignia has been refreshed, and the ship features four open-seating restaurants, a spa and eight lounges.

key. This client charters with Windstar on a pretty regular basis, and when we do an itinerary that may need some tweaking, based on the client's vision, Windstar is so accommodating."

Fitzgibbons adds, "We love the size of the Windstar ships. There are no crowds or lines ever. On this particular itinerary it was primarily about accommodating their general session, awards banquet and multiple cocktail

tional sailing ships accommodating 148 and 300 passengers. In recent years, Windstar purchased the three smallest yachts in the Seabourn Cruise Line fleet, each carrying 212 guests and featuring oversized cabins that start at 277 sf, about double the size of typical cruise cabins.

But change is ahead for these 212-passenger ships, as Windstar is investing \$250 million in the next

year to not only renovate the yachts, but to extend each of them by 84 feet, adding 50 new cabins and two new dining options to each of the three ships. The first to undergo the upgrade and expansion this fall is Star Breeze, which will re-emerge in February next year, carrying 312 passengers — still svelte enough to fit

into the smaller ports in which Windstar specializes.

Fitzgibbons says the all-inclusive nature of cruises provides better budget control and a great value. "Activities are built-in, without extra planning or costs, there's no charge for meeting rooms or the A/V onboard the ship, and no extra costs to guests for health club or entertainment, or dine-arounds." But she adds that it's important to be familiar with the ships you are considering.

"Know which cruise lines want incentive business and are flexible

"We love to charter whenever possible. It gives us the ability to customize the onboard programming, entertainment and décor."

KATHY FITZGIBBONS
Senior Travel Buyer
Maritz Travel



parties. The charter gave the host the ability to easily walk around at dinner to visit with everyone and to use the microphone to address everyone during dinner. The deck barbecue that they do on every cruise, weather permitting, is always such a fun night with exceptional cuisine. Since Windstar is so small the client utilized all of the spaces. The main lounge and dining room work perfectly to accommodate everyone together."

Windstar Cruises encompasses a fleet of six ships, including two addi-

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to work with,” Fitzgibbons says. “Understand the ship’s various function spaces, the capacities; the A/V available. Look at the meeting requirements and see how that works with an itinerary. If the group needs to have a lot of meetings and you have a very port-intensive itinerary, then perhaps look at another itinerary or holding the meeting on land. Your guests are not going to be happy if they are sitting in a meeting while the ship is in port in some beautiful historic city or some exotic destination.”

Landry concurs that not all clients are ideal for a cruise-based meeting or incentive, noting that if a group requires primarily single rooms, it will cost more, because cruise pricing is based on double occupancy. You may even have to pay a premium on double occupancy because cruise lines count on revenue from add-ons like spa packages, beverages and the casino.

“The types of meetings where the room requirement builds up also don’t work,” Landry adds. “If it might be 200 rooms for a couple days, and then goes to 300 rooms — that won’t work, you can’t have people getting on and off. The cabotage laws restrict people from doing this. And there are restrictions and limitations in certain ports, so requirements for a speaker or an executive to come in for just a night and then leave are difficult.”

FOCUSING ON MEETINGS AND INCENTIVE MARKETS

There’s no question the industry overall is booming, and cruise lines are increasingly focused on the meet-

ings and incentive markets, polishing their wares for an exacting audience.

In February 2020, Regent Seven Seas Cruises will debut its second Explorer-class ship, Seven Seas Splendor; an additional sister will join the fleet in 2023. But Regent is only one piece of the trifecta of cruise lines operating under the banner of Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, which include Oceania Cruises and Norwegian Cruise Line — three distinctly

“On a ship, a planner doesn’t need to agonize over what to serve each night because everything is available to you, with a full menu and multiple choices.”

JOYCE LANDRY
CEO and President
Landry & Kling Global Cruise Events



different operations catering to all price sectors of the cruise market, in all regions of the globe, with 29 ships.

At Oceania, the line’s Regatta-class ships are going through a renovation designed to create a new sophisticated and modern look. Oceania Cruises also announced plans for two new, 1,200-passenger ships, dubbed Allura-class, scheduled to arrive in 2022 and 2025.

Visiting more than 400 destinations and all seven continents annually, Seabourn competes with Regent for the high-end market, starting with its three all-suite, 450-passenger

Ashlyn Jones, corporate event planner for Lifeplus, said Norwegian Bliss offered “everything they needed.”

Odyssey-class ships. Unique among many cruise ships, all guests can be accommodated for a meeting or presentation in The Grand Salon Theater, or in The Restaurant for gala dinners.

Two equally deluxe 600-passenger ships were added to the Seabourn fleet in 2016 and 2018, Encore and Ovation. Meanwhile, Seabourn’s next venture is a pair of ultra-luxury, purpose-built expedition ships that will launch in 2021 and 2022. The 264-passenger ships, a perfect size for charters, will take guests to even more remote places than currently found on the exotic Seabourn schedule.

Silversea Cruises also has a collection of intimate luxury ships, ranging from the 100-passenger Silver Galapagos to the line’s newest ship, the 596-passenger Silver Muse. Several ships are currently on order, includ-

ing Silver Moon, a sister to the popular Silver Muse, and Silver Origin, a purpose-built ship destined for the Galapagos Islands — both arriving in 2020.

Royal Caribbean International acquired a majority stake in Silversea last summer, providing the parent company with a pure luxury play within its family of cruise lines. The Royal Caribbean brand itself represents a fleet of 26 ships, including several of the largest at sea, carrying up to 5,600 passengers. In contrast to vessels, the ships themselves are often the destination.

Royal Caribbean’s main theaters seat up to 1,411 guests, while other ven-

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ues include ice skating rinks, “neighborhoods” like Central Park replete with thousands of plants and trees, and conference centers that accommodate up to 400 seated. Royal Caribbean is the only fleet with dedicated conference centers on every ship. The line also works to accommodate planners desiring shorter programs. Three-, four-, and five-night cruises out of Miami and Port Canaveral visit Perfect Day at CocoCay, Royal Caribbean’s newly revitalized private island in the Bahamas, which came online for cruisers this year.

Royal Caribbean International’s second-largest brand is Celebrity Cruises, which revealed Celebrity Edge last fall, the line’s first new ship in six years. Delivered in May this year, the 100-passenger, purpose-built Celebrity Flora is designed specifically for cruising the Galapagos Islands — and for rewarding top performers. Flora also places an emphasis on corporate responsibility — the ship is built with dynamic positioning to ‘anchor’ without anchors and solar panels to supplement electricity; past Galapagos Celebrity guests have planted over 38,000 trees.

For Suzanne Markarian, director of planning and purchasing at Landmark Incentive Marketing, the 2,170-passenger Celebrity Infinity proved ideal

“The skills and responsiveness and customer service in the operations and pre-cruise phase is just as professional, and make working with Celebrity a breeze.”

SUZANNE MARKARIAN
Director of Planning and Purchasing
Landmark Incentive Marketing



for a 110-person incentive trip earlier this year planned for luggage manufacturer Holiday Group.

“Celebrity Infinity was an upgrade for this group from some of the previous years and it was priced competitively for their budget,” Markarian says. “The dates and schedule matched the client’s promotional schedule for their incentive program. It offered excellent accommodations and entertainment, and the client loved the seven-night itinerary and the Key West and Cozumel ports with two full days at sea.”

“Celebrity’s proposal phase with Donna Chung, corporate sales associate and Patrick Bralick, corporate sales manager, has always been seamless,” Markarian adds. “We have worked together for several years and they know us and our customer expectations. As a team, they are always quick

to respond to any RFPs and contracting questions. The skills and responsiveness and customer service in the operations and pre-cruise phase is just as professional, and makes working with Celebrity a breeze.”

Holiday Group had cabins in a close group block, along with a section of the dining room. A group block at the same dinner seating helped ensure that there were opportunities for group integrity and to allow company executives to visit with their customers.

Markarian continues: “We used the Constellation Lounge for gatherings and cocktails before dinner, which the participants loved since they could regroup with friends and colleagues after a day at port or sea. We also arranged for two private cocktail parties with entertainment.”

Earlier this year, Celebrity Infinity received a full upgrade that updated the ship’s interiors throughout, including: décor lightened in the main dining room, a complete overhaul of the spa and the transformation of Michael’s Club into the Retreat Lounge, an exclusive hideout for guests staying in suites.

“Do your research and work with a cruise line that fits your needs and philosophy,” says Jones, from Lifeplus. “It’s really important to me to research each ship that we plan on sailing with. I will sail on it several times before the actual event so I can look in detail at each space, the flow of how our meetings function, and meet with the onboard staff to discuss F&B, reception setup and meeting spaces. It’s the friendships that you build on the shore side, as well as the ship side, that will really make your event shine.” *C&IT*



Celebrity Edge's Retreat Sundeck is a favorite gathering spot for meeting attendees.



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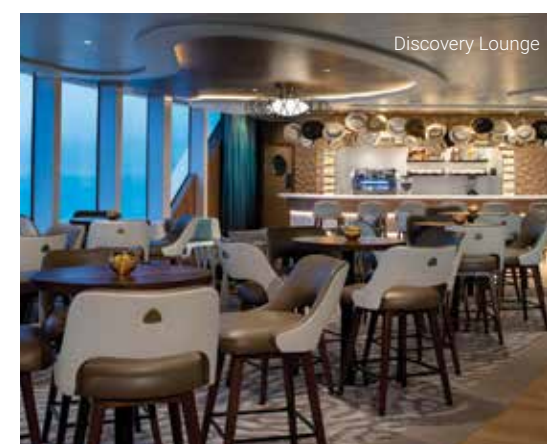
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Even though it's a part of the U.S., a trip to Hawaii can make attendees feel like they've landed in another country.

TRADITIONAL & BEYOND

TRAVEL //

The Right Incentive Travel Destinations Do More Than Motivate Employees, They Create Memories of a Lifetime

BY CYNTHIA DIAL

When a meeting planner is tasked with planning an incentive — a reward that checks all the boxes in fulfilling an attendee's dreams and desires — one prime-time piece of this puzzle is the destination. But what makes a destination desirable, so desirable that participants are over-the-top enthralled by the choice and so energized by its selection that they leave determined to qualify for a repeat performance? Opinions vary, but after visiting with an assortment of experts, cases are made for a variety of places — from the tried and true to those beyond expectations.

ON-TRACK INCENTIVES

"The destination, resort and experience are, of course, the stars of the show as motivators," says Maritz Travel's Ryan Mulholland, account manager responsible for the annual pitch perfect group/destination match of a corporate team from the automotive industry with the Indy 500. "My client's goal in hosting this event is two-fold: to strengthen partner relationships and to create mindshare for their brand," the planner says. The home base for this group is the JW Marriott Indianapolis, and it is a week full of city activities by day and dining experi-

ences each night. However, the main event is race day, when the entire group travels to the track to watch the fast-paced extravaganza.

"As a city, Indianapolis is perfect for meetings. Their ability to host major sporting events makes it appealing for incentives. The dining scene is also solid in Indy and is still developing into something better and better each time I visit," Mulholland says.

Concurring with Mulholland's assessment is Daren Kingi, senior vice president of sales for Visit Indy, who underscores his city's sports orientation. "Indy's reputation is raising the bar on the event experience when we host major sporting events like the Super Bowl, NCAA Final Fours and Big Ten Championships, as well as those in our upcoming calendar, including the NBA All-Star Weekend and 2022 College Football Championship. All have caught the attention of incentive planners."

Among other domestic choices, Mulholland hails Southern California "as good as it gets for an incentive destination" and gives a

The Indy 500 was the perfect incentive trip for a group from the automotive industry. Indianapolis, below, is a growing destination for sports incentives.

special shout out to San Diego, Laguna Beach/Orange County and Santa Barbara. "Many of the attendees we see with our various clients are wealthy and can afford to do almost anything they'd like if they were traveling on their own dime, so our challenge is to create an experience that money can't buy and to leverage our volume to do it. This would be something like a private tour of the Vatican."

From years of experience, Mulholland knows that attendees especially enjoy authentic destination experiences, so things like dine-

arounds and activities that give people a chance to feel like a local always go over well. "And if we can set them up with information and opportunities to know what good 'non-touristy' attractions there are, they love us for it," he explains. "We are the specialists at designing and creating experiences that people want to be a part of, so if anything, millennials have challenged, really nudged, the M&I industry into embracing this concept. I don't think it's influenced the choice of destinations, but I do think it influences how we design the experiences offered, wherever the destination."

With respect to the planner/client relationship, Mulholland says his clients are typically groups of about 100 for a six- or seven-night trip, so accessibility and travel schedules are important. Thus, they need enough lift to get everyone in without issue and without a long ground transfer once they've arrived at the



Walt Kuhn



airport. “A truly world-class destination could make these factors less important, like the Maldives and Bora Bora, but generally these are the first things we think about. It’s certainly not important to all clients, so you just have to know who your clients are,” he says.

BEACHES AND THE BIG TOP

However, planners don’t have to traverse the Pacific to reach stunning beach locations. Sarasota County, Florida features 35 miles of pristine sand on the Gulf of Mexico and its namesake city has the state’s highest concentration of Zagat-rated restaurants. Little known to many planners, however, is Sarasota’s reputation as Circus City. Having once been the winter home of circus owner John

Big Top show and event venue where willing attendees can learn the skills of aerial silks, tightrope and trapeze.

THE VALUE OF CANADA

Like real estate, the guidelines in selecting incentive destinations are ‘location, location, location.’ However, if an international location is the preference, but the priorities are proximity, cost and familiarity, look no further than Vancouver, British Columbia. This Canadian metropolis, that in the category of environment alone, espouses it all — a harbor, the ocean, the mountains and all the activities that come with these geographic blessings. It is home to the mildest temperatures in Canada, a 1.5-hour drive from Whistler Blackcomb ski resort, a 20-minute float plane ride

13,000 rooms in its downtown core and the ability to fly in/out of Vancouver International Airport, officially designated “best airport in North America for 10 consecutive years” by the Skytrax World Airport Awards, and is served by 56 airlines flying to 125 non-stops destinations and the arrival of 78 U.S. flights daily.

FROM ISLANDS TO INTERNATIONAL

“My clients are focused on tropical destinations such as Hawaii, Cabo San Lucas and the Caribbean,” says Deanne Vigil, regional vice president for HelmsBriscoe, a company dedicated to matching the needs of the meeting and incentive planners with the right hotel and destination. When looking domestic, Vigil’s groups typically desire a beach destination, but she’s also seeing a greater interest in international cities such as Dublin, Ireland and Florence, Italy. The goal is simple: “Clients want to offer an experience that their attendees may not have had on their own.” Case in point: An incentive trip to Florence and the Four Seasons Hotel Firenze for 100 top sales performers of a Southern California pharmaceutical company — a group that this year traveled to the Caribbean’s Nevis and is considering Prague or other European cities for 2021.

Vigil’s destination selection guidelines are the following: Travel is typically late April/early May; accessibility translates to no more than one connection and not more than an 8- to 12-hour flight. Authenticity is essential and there must be things to do for a group of 100 with varying interests. She details that award dinners are always unique to the destination — such as private homes or beach venues for Hawaii, Nevis and historic palaces or castles for choices such as Italy and Ireland. And with respect to a new take on accommodations, Vigil adds: “We are starting to see more interest from start-up and tech companies looking at air streams and non-traditional hotel or resort experiences. ‘Glamping’ is also a newer trend for incentives.”

from BC’s quaint capital city of Victoria and is a great value while the U.S. dollar fluctuates. One U.S. dollar buys \$1.30 U.S. of hotel rooms, meeting space and F&B in Canada.

Here, it’s possible to breakfast with bears and sightsee from the top of a wind turbine on Grouse Mountain; join a chef’s tour, shopping excursion and cooking class at Granville Island Public Market; attend a Vancouver Canucks NHL hockey game for high-end dining and a meet-and-greet with players; and visit the Vancouver Aquarium to feed and train the marine mammals.

Sweetening the deal are the city’s

A trip to the Four Seasons Hotel Firenze in Florence, Italy can offer an experience that attendees may not have had on their own.

Ringling, Ellen Thomas, senior meeting sales manager, Visit Sarasota County, says: “Groups love The Ringling (aka Ca’ d’Zan, “House of John”) where events overlooking the bay on the patio of John Ringling’s elaborate home, or in an Italian palazzo can be designed. Tours of the circus museums or of a priceless fine art collection are included in this exclusively Sarasota experience.” Upping the ante is the Circus Arts Conservatory, a 15,000-sf

‘IT’ DESTINATIONS

According to Elizabeth Anderson, event manager, and Ruth Wikoff-Jones, CSEP, senior new business specialist with One10 — a company experienced in travel & events, incentives & recognition and marketing services — Hawaii is an ‘it’ incentive destination for a variety of reasons. “Often incentive groups trend toward places that offer warm weather and sandy beaches, experiences in local culture and history, multicultural and hyper-local culinary experiences and excellent shopping. Hawaii ticks all these boxes.”

The One10 duo explain that it’s approachable, relaxed and though it’s a part of the U.S., a group feels like it’s landed in another country. Additionally, each island has its own feel — metropolitan Oahu, lush Maui and Kauai and volcanic Hawaii — so planners can take the same group multiple times and have different experiences by changing the island. “It has become

“We are starting to see more interest from start-up and tech companies looking at air streams and non-traditional hotel or resort experiences.”

DEANNE VIGIL
Regional Vice President
HelmsBriscoe



a go-to for companies looking for an alternative to Mexico for groups who are sensitive to issues there, as the perception is that Hawaii is a safe destination,” Wikoff-Jones says.

Breaking down planners’ considerations into categories: seasonal travel, cost and the three A’s (accessibility, accommodations and activities), they expound. With respect to seasonal travel, there really isn’t a bad time to go there. Cost-wise, Hawaii is not an inexpensive option, but it is on par with des-

tinations in the Caribbean. And because the destination of Hawaii knows how to work with groups, there are cost-saving measures in place. Hawaii offers good air lift from the continental U.S. and once you get to Honolulu, flights to the other islands are readily accessible. The availability of excellent hotel products is remarkable for such a small geographic location. Luxury options include brands such as Four Seasons and Ritz-Carlton; and for the more price-conscious incentives, major hotel brands and even bou-

GLOBAL //

THINK ACROSS THE POND, OFF THE GRID AND OUT OF THE BOX

AS WITH ANYTHING SPECIAL, sometimes it’s all about the surprise element, so what better way to get the attention of next year’s attendees than to announce an incentive destination so distinctive, it becomes a talking point and lights a year-long fire under attendees to get there.

SPA TOWN SERVES UP GERMANY’S BEST

“Baden-Baden is a small, exclusive city that offers a variety of unique activities found only in this region. It is not the ‘typical’ destination for incentives and that’s what makes it even more interesting, as most people don’t know what to expect,” says Patrick Jonek, senior sales manager at Roomers Baden-Baden, the city’s first lifestyle hotel brand.

An elite German spa oasis, this is a destination choice that serves up off-the-beaten-path activities such as driving outings in the nearby Black Forest; behind-the-wheel training at the Driving Center Baden-Baden; guided mountain bike, e-bike, Segway and Scooter tours; excursions to Strasbourg, France, (a 25-minute train ride away); private corporate horse races at Iffezheim racecourse; even shoe care courses with a bespoke shoemaker; praline- and chocolate-making workshops and, of course, a day of relaxation at the



Kristin Björnsen

world-famous thermal spas for which the city is best known.

So different, so exceptional is this longtime European capital of quiet luxury, it is said that after his visit President Clinton remarked: “Baden-Baden is so nice, they had to name it twice.”

OUT OF THE COUNTRY AND INTO AFRICA

Dream or actuality? Traveling on a five-star train, waking in a high-end luxury safari camp to go on safari in an open Land Rover tracking the Big Five (lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant and Cape buffalo), enjoying a night safari or better yet, a walking safari in the open

and near the big game (so near, it’s close enough to hear the rumble of an elephant’s stomach) — this is incentive reality in Africa.

“Contrary to some perceptions, Africa is far from a backwater, third-world offering with third-world standards, but rather a very workable, very manageable, very exciting destination, fast becoming a ‘must’ rather than a consideration,” says Victoria Weinstein, director and COO of Salute Africa LLC, a DMC for Southern and East Africa, known for bespoke planning assistance from its MICE department that is constantly looking for fresh ways to motivate employees.

“Southern Africa is fast becoming the industry’s most desired destination for the incentive market,” Weinstein says, and the proof is in its extraordinary team building and group opportunities — from a Harley-Davidson convoy ride from the airport to the hotel and Indiana Jones challenges to gala dinners on the beach and in the bush under the stars.

While cost is typically a perceived obstacle, Weinstein explains that it is a big variable and the range depends on many factors — number of days, types of activities included and level of luxury. The reward, however, is priceless.

In summation, the authenticity scale weighs its value, and Africa tips it! **C&I**



Iceland offers mesmerizing views of the Northern Lights, something attendees will likely never forget.

tique resorts are in the mix. Hawaii is a great destination because of its authentic offerings and its ‘Aloha’ ways, with locals always friendly, welcoming and eager to share their culture and a cuisine that reflects the melting pot of ethnicities who have inhabited these islands — Polynesian, Japanese, Maori and even the U.S. mainland.

Having planned several sales incentive trips last year for leaders in the automotive industry to a variety of resorts on two islands, participants were greeted with an endless list of made-in-Hawaii options. Two days of activities entertained a group last year of 45 couples at the Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua on Maui. Among these enticements were a catamaran cruise, zip lining, golfing, spa going, a kayaking adventure, an afternoon of leisure with the option of shopping in Whalers Village and Lahaina Town and a farewell finale on Ritz-Carlton’s Beach House Lawn, complete with traditional hula dancers, a fire dancer and a lively band.

In July last year the Four Seasons Resort Lanai at Manele Bay hosted and entertained One10’s group of 35 families (150 participants) with water-oriented activities, horseback riding, shooting, archery and a family friendly outing called the “Animal Lovers’ Experience.” Custom designed for the group, it included a stop at the Lanai Cat Sanctuary where attendees were able to interact with all sizes and ages of felines, an outing to the Stables at Koele to learn about and work with the horses and a visit with resort “ambassador” Uncle Bruno and his on-property assortment of birds.

This resort was so hands-on that when one of the younger guests lost her stuffed Snoopy, the onsite team and hotel partners whipped into action to find the treasured friend. However, as it was after the girl’s departure, the hotel made Snoopy an honorary manager and returned him with a great adventure photo booklet detailing his journey.

“Know you audience and demographics,” Anderson urges. The demographics of last year’s incentive trip

“Attendees are demanding more opportunities to customize their experiences, even within group travel, more exclusivity and unique happenings ...”

ELIZABETH ANDERSON
Event Manager
One10



for 70 couples to Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea was on the younger side and as a result, they were offered a “day your way” with a rental car option and two free evenings to explore the area. “It was a hit!” With respect to millennials, “It’s important to capture luxury experience — high quality and refined — without the pretentiousness and ‘stuffiness’ of what would be considered traditional, and that includes the destination, hotels, venues and overall experience,” Anderson says. She elaborates that while they value luxury, they want it delivered in an uncomplicated and more relaxed

manner. They have also redefined luxury as the ability to “choose” rather than gravitate to high-end brands.

Set on another island in another ocean was the intimate incentive for 30 of LegalShield’s top earners — destination Iceland. Having learned from planning this annual event last year that the close-knit group of colleagues enjoys adventure and discovering new places together, the One10 team ensured every experience was extraordinary — exploring Reykjavik via tuk-tuks (six-person buggies), driving off-road jeeps over the Mars-like terrain, dining on lobster in a quaint village by the sea, a dip in the Blue Lagoon, climbing a glacier in Mercedes 4x4 vehicles for snowmobiling and ending with a meal called “a dinner in the skies,” complete with mesmerizing views of the Northern Lights. The planner says of the trip and its accolades: “We never tire of hearing the sentiment ‘best trip ever.’”

Bottom line for One10’s meeting professionals regarding destinations and what they offer: “Attendees are demanding more opportunities to customize their experiences, even within group travel, more exclusivity and unique happenings, far beyond what they could do on their own or have done in the past,” Anderson says. She additionally sees an increase in the desire for more ‘active’ options and the inclusion of learning opportunities such as cooking, mixology, fashion and art. “They want the bragging rights to share with colleagues and friends,” Wikoff-Jones concludes. **C&T**



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Healthy Habits

Incorporating Wellness Into the Agenda Helps Attendees Maintain Health Lifestyles

BY PATRICK SIMMS

The motivation for extending the wellness initiative into a company's meetings is typically twofold: On one hand, people are increasingly conscious of their physical and mental well-being — so many attendees will expect meetings to enable them to continue their healthy lifestyles. On the other hand, upper management wants a healthy workforce, which motivates wellness initiatives during internal meetings.

Atlanta, Georgia-based Cox Automotive's meetings show both motivations at play. "We have seen an increase in the attendee's interest in wellness in the last 10 years," says Thais Toro, MBA in International Business and Marketing and event planner. At the company's client-hosted programs and incentives, "demand for more creative wellness activities is increasing, due to people seeking outdoor and adventure activities in their personal lives."

At the same time, Cox's planners also want their attendees to reap the rewards of healthy practices at these events. "The positive impact on people's behavior after exercising or having healthy eating options is evident," she adds. "All these different alternatives boost energy, morale, improve concentration and reduce stress. If our attendees are happy, planners will be happy too." And the company itself prioritizes wellness, so it's natural that meetings will reflect that aspect of the corporate culture. "Our company provides a very solid platform to support Cox wellness culture through 'Know Your Numbers' — where employees get a free health screening and earn credit to pay for our health-care costs," Toro notes. "Other exam-

ples include: the farm-to-table plan, where we support community agriculture programs; standing desks; flexible work hours; remote working day; health fairs; campaigns to get flu shots; etc."

While incorporating wellness into meetings makes sense from different perspectives, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution. Planners will need to customize the offerings to the wellness interests of their attendees and to their demographics. For example, Grapevine, Texas-based GameStop's attendee demographic is largely millennial, male gamers, and physical fitness isn't necessarily a big part of their culture, observes Samantha Vogel, CMP, senior manager, meetings and travel. Over the years, there has been some trial and error in determining which exercise offerings will resonate with most of the attendees. Boot camp and yoga sessions turn out to be less popular than the company's Fun Run event.

Vogel has also found it effective to simply ask attendees what they're looking for in this area. "We've incorporated the wellness piece into our attendee registration process as well as the attendee feedback process," she explains. "So we're asking on the front end: 'Will you participate in this?' Because if we're not getting a lot of interest, maybe we can restructure the activity to make it more appealing. And of course, on the back end we always ask: 'Was this worth it? Would you do it again? If you didn't like it, what could we replace it with that would provide the opportunity for you to decompress and focus on yourself while you're at these meetings?'"

As a result of the feedback, a certain activ-

ity may be redesigned, eliminated or simply scaled back if the contingent of interested attendees is relatively small. Often, “it’s about scaling the options to meet the needs of most of your attendees,” Vogel says. “So even though exercise isn’t as big of a passion point for our attendee base, we still have people that are very into exercise and we don’t want to pull all those pieces out.”

MENTAL FITNESS

Meetings can be mentally taxing on attendees. Even if the event isn’t an intense training session or highly interactive, fairly constant focus on the presenters is required. During those moments of inattention to session content, attendees often tend to work-related matters on their devices. As such, most meetings benefit from built-in options for mental recovery. Toward this end, the Cox Automotive planning team has incorporated meditation breaks and spa activities. As to the former, Toro notes that “We like to use outdoor areas, as being in contact with nature is another stimulating option that we use to support well-being.” Spa sessions are becoming more popular, and she observes that “Guests want to go beyond the standard massage or facial choice; they want specific selections, upgraded selections and a longer duration.”

GameStop has specially designed a mental wellness venue for its attendees. Dubbed the Rest & Recovery Lounge, the space includes complimentary massages, couches for attendees who want to lie down, soothing custom lighting, spa music and even an on-site EMT ready to service any attendee’s physical issues.

“We’ve incorporated the wellness piece into our attendee registration process as well as the attendee feedback process.”

SAMANTHA VOGEL, CMP
Senior Manager, Meetings and Travel
GameStop



GameStop offers a \$50 gift card to attendees to participate in its Wellness Fair.

“Our annual meeting is very stimulating. It’s gaming, so we have a lot of realistic combat, pyrotechnics and laser shows. And we have a lot of attendees that have medical conditions or they just get over-stimulated,” Vogel says. “So it’s also a very popular place throughout the week. And it’s especially popular at the beginning of our annual meeting when everybody wants a free massage after being on a plane for however many hours.”

Feedback from attendees has played a role in developing the lounge. “The first year we did the room, people said, ‘Thank you for finally doing this.’” However, when Vogel’s team was considering adding aromatherapy to the lounge this year to round out the multisensory experience, a GameStop resource group discouraged the idea. Comprised of those who identify with or have a disability, the group “said that people with disabilities often have sensitivities to different smells, so can you not have any aromatherapy in there? We said, ‘absolutely.’”

As popular as any wellness element may be, attendees’ preferences and needs always come first in designing the experience.

Veterans with PTSD, who form part of the attendee base, found the Rest & Recovery Lounge especially valuable in helping them decompress. Managing everyday stress is also an important aspect of mental wellness, and there is much research supporting the theory that petting animals lowers stress levels. With that in mind, GameStop also added a Puppy Lounge to its annual conference.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Runs, hikes, cycling tours and other group exercise activities can’t be accommodated in every meeting schedule, but a planner can at least try to facilitate personal gym time for attendees. “Some fitness centers open and close at certain times, and we go in and negotiate with the property to extend those hours on the front end and back end,” says Karen Zunkowski, director of global event marketing for South Jordan, Utah-based Ivanti. According to Vogel, who often speaks with planner colleagues on customer advisory boards, “people aren’t always including fitness and wellness amenities in their standard contracts. And I think that’s becoming more of a trend. It’s something we’ve been doing for a long time. We always contract a concession for all of our attendees to have full access to any wellness facilities on the property.”

The Fun Run is the most popular of the physically oriented wellness activities offered at GameStop’s annual meeting. “On a good year, out of 4,500 attendees, we get maybe 300-400 people” participating, Vogel says. “But there’s definitely been years where we’ve had 150 people.” Group yoga has had even lower participation, sometimes a turnout of only about 30 attendees, and boot camp was discontinued after two years. “We found that a lot of the people that were really hardcore into working out were just doing it on their own time and not necessarily going to the boot camp,” she notes. Unlike specialized forms of exercise, the Fun Run has a general appeal. “You’re not going to go to a yoga class if you don’t practice yoga; you don’t want to look like the one person that’s never done yoga before,” Vogel says. “But with the fun run, they don’t have that pressure of having to be the most in-shape person; you can even walk it. They’re doing it at their own pace and with their friends. It’s a social experience.”

However, basic yoga can certainly be an inclusive activity, one that has both physical and mental fitness components. For some of Ivanti’s smaller meetings, Zunkowski has brought in a yoga instructor “to do a stretch break in the afternoon, just some minimal stretching that anyone of any age or capability can participate in,” she says.



“We know how more and more studies are being done on the effects of food on people’s attention spans and ability to focus, and how the blood-sugar level can be affected.”

KAREN ZUNKOWSKI
Director of Global Event Marketing
Ivanti



NUTRITION

Healthy cuisine at meetings is nothing new, however, what is considered optimally healthy is subject to an increasing variety of interpretations depending on the diet, whether its vegan, keto, paleo, pescatarian and so forth. Accommodating these diets is incumbent upon planners and chefs today, more than ever before. There is also an elevated call for locally sourced foods and indigenous dishes. A sign of the times is the popularity of agro-tourism tours. “Our Portuguese winery tour, including olive oil tasting, bread making, etc., was our highest selected tour,” Toro says.

The low-carb trend can benefit the meeting at hand, not just attendees’ overall health. “We know how more and more studies are being done on the effects of food on people’s attention spans and ability to focus, and how the blood-sugar level can be

affected,” Zunkowski says. “And much of what we talk about is pretty technical and intensive. So we offer a little variety: You get your Red Bulls, but we’re also going to give you healthier food options and make sure there is always a protein available to you and not everything has carbs.”

Proteins tend to be more expensive, however, and in general healthier options, e.g., organic, can present budgetary hurdles. “One of the challenges we do feel we have is that healthy breaks are oftentimes so much more expensive than just a regular F&B break,” Vogel says. “So it’s cheaper to feed people cookies than to feed them smoothies. We’re trying to work with hotels and

GameStop also offers a Fun Run at its annual meetings that can get as many as 300-400 people to participate.



Ivanti used this fresh produce as part of the decor an event's welcome reception, then made it available to the hotel for meals the next day.

convention centers to find more economical options to provide healthier breaks." But apart from generic options like trail mix, it can be hard to avoid a higher price tag for healthy cuisine. So the context provided by the meeting and the attendees is key: Are many attendees calling for organic options, or specialty smoothies and nutrition bars? Is the meeting an intense training session where participants would benefit from low-carb, high-protein meals? Such questions help planners determine whether the investment in healthier options is justified.

TRACKING AND MOTIVATING WELLNESS

Despite the ongoing popularity of healthy lifestyles, with new diets, fitness routines and products continually flooding the market, not all health-minded individuals are created equal in terms of motivation and commitment. Planners can encourage attendees to stick to the lifestyle during the meeting with various 'carrots.' "We look for gifting options that help motivate people to reach their well-being goals, such as fitness watches, sport apparel and branded water bottles," Toro says. Similarly, GameStop offers a \$50 gift card to motivate attendees to participate in the company's Wellness Fair, where they can have their vitals measured and various other 'checkup' routines. "In addition to getting feedback on where they are in their personal health, they're getting a

cash incentive," Vogel explains. "And for us it's a way to track our associates' wellness from year to year and lower the overall benefit cost that GameStop is paying purely by providing this activity at our meetings and providing that incentive around it as well."

Competition is a great motivator for some people, and that element can easily be added to physical exercises, i.e., the 'fitness challenge.' Both Cox Automotive and Ivanti coordinate 'step challenges' at some of their meetings, where attendees compete for the most steps during the event. "We've incorporated that into our mobile app game: Whoever puts in the most steps gets a prize for that day, usually some sort of tech gadget such as an Amazon Echo," Zunkowski says. "They'll be rewarded for having their hotel room be so far away from the conference room," she quips. "If it's a long walk, let's have some fun with it."

PARTNERING WITH PROPERTIES

Hoteliers, through their facilities, fitness programs and referrals to local wellness providers, are invaluable partners in the wellness effort. While a hotel's lack of robust wellness features is seldom a 'deal breaker' in site selection, it can certainly hamper a hotel's bid when it comes to certain groups. "We love to partner with hotels that care about their guest's health and provide a supportive lifestyle," Toro says. "We really pay attention to proper-

ties that have nice gym facilities and/or offer fitness classes, hiking or bicycling activities. Food is also important, and we focus on hotels that provide a healthy menu. Providing fitness services outside just the gym environment and extended F&B programs is a key indicator that the hotel's overall mindset on wellness is as important as ours. We also like to partner with properties that have outdoor areas to host activities such as meals and team building, providing another way to bring wellness to meetings." She adds, "Hotel spas that offer expanded services as steam, sauna or hammam [Turkish bath], where guests stay at the spa, is double the duration and experience, providing a higher value on our wellness spend."

Among the many hotel brands offering creative wellness breaks and wellness features in their meeting and guest rooms, is MGM Resorts International's Stay Well program. The Corporate Event Marketing Association (CEMA) Summit 2019 was held at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Zunkowski, who attended, was able to experience Stay Well guest rooms. "They actually designated all of the participants to be in the Stay Well rooms. We could check in at the Stay Well registration desk, which was also a nice perk," she says. "I appreciated that smoke-free environment and the separate check-in. Each guest room has a humidifier in it, which is good for people that are not used to the dry air. There is a water filter on the shower head and they have a different room service menu that offers mostly healthy options." Zunkowski concludes that "a good percentage" of Ivanti attendees "would really appreciate" the Stay Well product.

Paying close attention to attendees' interests and demographics as they relate to wellness is the best way to ensure one's planning efforts in this area aren't for naught. Some attendees may not take interest in yoga or organic food options and such elements should never be incorporated simply because they are trendy. As an investment into your meetings, wellness should demonstrate some ROI in terms of strong attendee participation and positive feedback. **C&IT**



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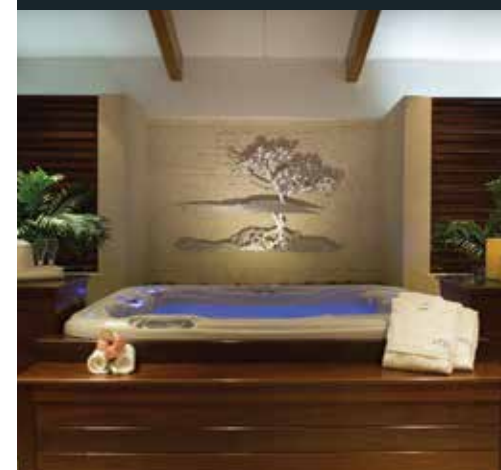
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Experts say the gender pay gap, while real, is difficult to quantify because it is caused by so many different factors.



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Money Matters

Discussing Equal Pay in the Meetings and Events Industry

BY MAURA KELLER

The concept of the gender pay gap has long been a point of contention across all industries and within businesses of all sizes. And the meetings and events industry is no exception. While the gender pay gap is certainly real, it is also a much more complex situation than most recognize. Certainly some of the gender pay gap can be attributed to outright discrimination, while other aspects of the pay gap are simply the result of the tangible differences between men and women and their individual work ethic. Just ask Elizabeth Sherry, a meeting and event planner and program coordinator for Twin Cities Wedding and Event Professionals. Sherry has been paid partly by commission her entire career and thinks people make as much

money as the work they decide to put in.

“In my experience meeting and event planners are predominantly women,” Sherry says. “If there are differences in wages, it comes from individuals who choose to ask for raises on their base salary and those that don’t. If there is a sales or commission structure to one’s wage, it is based on how great they are at selling their product.”

Olivia Jaras, founder of Salary Coaching for Women and bestselling author of “Know Your Worth, Get Your Worth: Salary Negotiation for Women,” agrees. Jaras thinks the biggest issue being faced by the gender pay gap within the meeting and events industry and other industries is one that is not often talked about: “Too often we think that the only reason we have a gap

is because we lack government regulations and company transparency, but we ignore that women hold some of the responsibility in the equation as well; mainly knowing what they’re worth and knowing how to advocate for it,” Jaras says. “So often we blame the difference on gender, when the reality is that there are no two candidates that will ever be equal in terms of qualifications and background and what they bring to the table.”

Javier Delgado, founder of People-Too, says, generally speaking, the top issues facing the gender pay gap in the United States, which stands at about 80 cents to the dollar, has been creeping up since the Equal Pay Act of 1963, when the pay gap was at 59 cents to the dollar. “Issues like male-dominated industries, population percent at work, biases and inherent past habits also have caused this difference,” Delgado says. “And various other factors like region, industry, discrimination, type of jobs, physical requirements and education are all factors that are involved in the pay gap.”

When talking about pay gap differences, it’s also important to understand the difference between wage discrimination and wage difference. Quite simply, discrimination is implying that there’s deliberate unfair action being taken, while wage differences might be naturally occurring due to skill discrepancies.

Wage differences have several sources including training, education, experience and job availability. Kathleen Caminiti, partner at the national labor and employment law firm Fisher Phillips and co-chair of the firm’s Pay Equity Practice Group, says some wage differences are the result of



Olivia Jaras, rear, founder of Salary Coaching for Women, at an orphanage in the Dominican Republic. She says women must “know their self worth.”

personal choice.

Wage discrimination can be intentional discrimination — when a manager decides to pay a man more than a woman on the belief that a man has a family to support. According to Caminiti, wage discrimination does not necessarily require intent to discriminate; the equal pay statutes make it unlawful to pay a woman performing the same job as a man less compensation in the absence of legitimate, bona fide factors that justify the pay disparity.

It is important to note that the wage gap evaluates all aspects of compensation, not just salary. “Not all wage inequality is unlawful,” Caminiti says. “Some wage disparities are the result of personal choice, such as the course of study in college or the decision to work part-time to care for children or aging parents — roles more typically assumed by women.” While it is

lawful to pay better performers more money, the key is to document the reason or decision and to be sure that the employees are on a level playing field.

“In the meeting and events industry, it also is important to review not just salary, but also incentives and other perks — even including travel perks such as access to clubs, expense accounts and first class accommodations,” Caminiti says.

KEY ISSUES FACING THE INDUSTRY

The top gender pay gap issues facing the meeting and events industry and others are three-fold, and include:

- Identifying whether a company has a gender pay gap.
- Determining the root cause for the pay gap.
- Compliance with the legal requirements for equal pay that have been enacted in states and cities throughout the country.

As Caminiti explains, identifying whether there is a pay gap can be tricky and, if possible, a company should work with legal counsel to conduct a privileged pay equity audit in an effort to maximize confidentiality.

“This can help identify jobs that are substantially similar and also evaluate whether there are legitimate business factors that justify any pay dispari-

“If there are differences in wages, it comes from individuals who choose to ask for raises on their base salary and those that don’t.”

ELIZABETH SHERRY

Meeting and Event Planner and Program Coordinator
Twin Cities Wedding and Event Professionals





Elizabeth Sherry, a planner at a Twin Cities Wedding and Event Professionals, thinks people make as much money as the time they put in.

ties identified,” Caminiti says. Next, determining the root cause for the pay gap is essential.

Caminiti says there are key questions employers need to ask, including:

- Are there barriers to opportunity, such that men have superior opportunities to earn more, including access to high profile clients and events?
- How are opportunities distributed — is it a merit-based system?
- Is there an unconscious bias at work, such as a belief that women with children do not want to travel?

“It is not enough for base compensation to be equal; rather total compensation, including bonuses and incentives are included,” Caminiti says. Finally, compliance with the extensive legal requirements is daunting because the most significant developments in the area of pay equity involve legislation at the state and sometimes city level. For example, New York City and the State of New York have very robust pay equity laws designed to close the pay gap. These laws impact not just the rate of pay, but also govern the interview process, salary setting and performance appraisals.

Speaking from Sherry’s personal sales experience, she stresses that if a meeting planner puts in the time, it

reflects in their wage. “A strategy that happens often in this industry is job hopping for better wages and promotions. In order to do this successfully, I believe growing your network of ‘Who you know’ is so important to one’s success,” Sherry says. “I have worked at four places in the last five years and have finally landed in my dream job. I was only able to achieve this by leaning on my connections.”

“Any company that decides to conduct a compensation evaluation must be prepared to fix the problem if a gender wage gap is found.”

KATHLEEN CAMINITI

Partner, Fisher Phillips
Co-Chair of the firm’s Pay Equity Practice Group



worth and how to persuade others to give it to them, we wouldn’t have a gap — other than standardly occurring deviations.”

Emily Howe, corporate gender strategist at Portola Advisors, says the problem of measuring gender pay gaps is both fact and perception — the fact that accurate adjustments for apples-to-apples work is very difficult, and people perceive it as imprecise.

“The reality is that pay gap metrics do get people’s attention, and so leaders may say ‘Well, even if it’s imprecise, let’s go ahead and do the measurement and see what it says,’” Howe says. “But as a result, even if the metric generates an initial splash, people are quietly saying to themselves ‘Yeah, but ...’ — so it doesn’t actually help the organization make hard choices and behave differently.”

Howe says the problem in pay gap analysis is in trying to “level” or “normalize” white-collar work. As Howe explains, in most corporate, managerial and creative professions, including the meetings and events industry, you can’t create clear apples-to-apples comparisons

between work. Therefore you can’t tell if there’s a meaningful gap.

“Many firms that do pay gap measurements are frankly selling snake oil,” Howe says. “Although they claim to normalize on a lot of factors, most organizations don’t have the data that documents enough of the skill differences, lateral moves or scope of responsibility differences to enable accurate normalization.” Adjusting for individual differences in project load, client load, the complexity of responsibilities, etc., requires far more intensive analysis

than most firms, or internal teams, are going to do.

Caminiti says the key is to level set opportunities and pay. She recommends that employers: first, review basic human resource practices and companies should eliminate salary history inquiries because setting salary based on prior salary history tends to perpetuate the gender gap; second, conduct a privileged pay equity audit to evaluate on a job-by-job basis whether employees in substantially similar jobs are paid the same, and periodically review positions every few years. “Third, if you find a gender wage gap, correct the gap, perhaps with pay adjustments, perhaps starting with bonuses,” Caminiti says. “Finally, take steps to identify and correct the root cause for the differential. For example, in the meeting and events industry establish a neutral means of distributing opportunities.”

ON THE HORIZON

Some of the biggest challenges facing those within the meetings and events industry as it relates to eliminating the gender pay gap are commitment and vigilance. As Caminiti explains, the first fundamental challenge in narrowing the wage gap is determining whether an organization is committed to the issue. As a threshold matter, it requires commitment from top management, including finance, legal and human resources to evaluate whether the organization has troublesome wage disparities.

“Any company that decides to conduct a compensation evaluation must be prepared to fix the problem if a gender wage gap is found,” Caminiti says. “Narrowing the wage gap will not be easy because it could disrupt compensation practices that may have been standard practice for a company for years. Significantly, most laws provide that a company cannot reduce a man’s salary to remedy a wage gap.”

Delgado recommends companies improve their compensation philosophies, update wage scales and restruc-



Emily Howe, corporate gender strategist at Portola Advisors, says the problem of measuring the gender pay gap is both fact and perception.

ture broadband grades and percentiles in compensation strategies.

“Incorporate fairness in the culture of the company and in writing by senior management,” Delgado says.

For Howe, pay gaps are the result — not the cause — of workplace gender issues. They indicate deeper issues that have accumulated to produce pay

“Incorporate fairness in the culture of the company and in writing by senior management.”

JAVIER DELGADO

Founder
PeopleToo



disparities. “In fact, while pay equalization efforts come from a good place, they shortly leave companies with the same wage gap again. Because the underlying issues that lead to a pay disparity — like under-promoting qualified women or overlooking talented women for high-prestige projects — will still be there if left unaddressed,” Howe says.

To reduce workplace gender bias — including resulting pay gaps — Howe says companies must identify, address and measure the behaviors, norms, attitudes and policies that disadvan-

tage working women. Howe adds that these underlying issues are not only the root causes of the pay gap, but they also create a cultural foundation where disrespect, mistreatment, harassment and even more severe abuses are likely.

So what does the future hold for the pay gap discrepancy? Experts agree that the gender pay gap will be an issue that organizations and employers will face for the next decade. And while state and federal laws will continue to impose obligations to force employers to address and minimize the gender pay gaps, Caminiti predicts a substantial uptick in litigation, which will be costly both in terms of legal defense costs and exposure to damages. As Caminiti explains, over time, the gender pay gap will narrow and may disappear, but that will take a long time and substantial litigation likely will be the catalyst for change.

“To truly combat the gender issues that lead to a pay gap, and to create a place where ambitious, talented women thrive, a multipronged approach is necessary,” Howe says. “Organizations that take gender equity seriously need to engage several groups to play crucial and intertwined roles to reshape corporate policy, company and team culture and managerial and individual biases.”

C&IT

Where Functions Meet Fun

From The Mob Museum to Exotic Cars, Las Vegas and Reno Offer Everything

BY SARA CHURCHVILLE

Everywhere in Las Vegas are tongue-in-cheek exhortations for attendees to “speak easy.” There’s The Mob Museum, which functions upstairs exactly as its name suggests — an exhibit space for the emblems of 1920s crime — and downstairs as an immersive exhibit coupled with a distillery and hidden bar, The Underground. There’s Park MGM’s On the Record, a drinking establishment “hidden” in and inspired by an old record store. Finally, there’s The Barbershop Cuts and Cocktails, located behind what appears to be a janitor’s door at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas and winking at the Prohibition era while offering a vast selection of top-flight whiskeys that have never come near a bathtub drain.

It was something of this vibe that attracted one recent attendee group. For a pharmaceutical company’s annual sales meeting earlier this year for 1,200 attendees who required a lot of breakout rooms and ballroom space, “We were kind of torn between Las Vegas and Orlando,” says Laura Loebbaka, account manager, Creative Group Inc. Orlando seemed to make sense given an attendee list that heavily skews East Coast, but the call of Las Vegas won out. “With Las Vegas, there’s still a little bit of excitement: the opportunity to have fun in a work-hard, play-hard location. The weather never fails, either. Even a cool Las Vegas day is a nice day,” Loebbaka says.

She chose ARIA Resort & Casino from among Las Vegas’ contenders, appreciating the meeting space’s abundance of windows and natural lighting. “When people are in sessions all day long, to have that Vitamin D at breaks is always a plus.” Another big plus: “You can access the meeting space without going through the casino; being a pharma company, having to deal with cigarette smoke is an especially negative thing.”



The \$375 million CAESARS FORUM conference center is scheduled to open in 2020. It will offer 550,000 sf of event space.

This year, the client wanted to try something a little different, something Loebbaka in her nearly 18 years in logistics planning hadn’t yet encountered: four separate black-tie awards dinners for the four different production divisions. Each event would have its own metallic color scheme: silver, platinum, gold and rose-gold, with the only common elements being simplicity and elegance in linens, flowers, candles: “clean yet beautiful.” The real kicker? All four dinners

tic evening for our VIPs because they didn’t quite get to sit down and enjoy any one room: salad in one room, dinner in another, dessert in another.” And while this would have been a hat trick even with the most tightly controlled schedule, it was impossible to dictate the amount of time attendees would spend chatting with the VIPs, taking pictures or asking questions, all of which inevitably threw off the evening’s already precarious flow. “We had to be flexible and make it all work,” she says. “It was a delicate dance.”

Before the dinners, a cocktail hour in a ballroom that opened out onto balconies allowed attendees to mingle, and after dinner, they attended a Las Vegas-style blowout with a DJ and confetti cannons. “People really loved the after-party at Jewel. Median age for attendees

“The hotel doesn’t seem as overwhelming as some; you can easily avoid the casino to and from the room to the meeting space.”

LISA BURTON, CMP
Senior Vice President
Meeting Expectations



would happen simultaneously in different spaces within the hotel. Timing was crucial, since the day’s meetings needed to wrap up on time so the rooms could be quickly repurposed for an evening event in a space that would be unrecognizable from a few hours before: “We wanted them to walk in and say ‘Wow.’”

Not only that, but a few high-profile executives needed to be clearly visible at all four events. “It was a hec-

ees is around 40, so a private venue to have that Las Vegas fun, but an easy exit when you’re ready to turn in for the night, was great. I would book again in a heartbeat.”

Attendee response was “a little bit split” on the notion of the multiple-venue awards dinner: they liked being with the company leadership, hearing the same message and meeting colleagues they wouldn’t otherwise encounter, but some attendees

who'd been meeting as a significantly smaller group for years missed that exclusivity and focus. For leadership, the program was "a success in that they got what they wanted out of it." On a practical level, it was travel efficient for attendees who supported several product divisions to get all the information they needed in one place. The company is still mulling over whether to repeat this experience, but if they do: "I would choose ARIA



ARIA's Sky Pool offers personalized services, a private guest entrance, luxurious amenities and more.

seem as overwhelming as some; you can easily avoid the casino to and from the room to the meeting space," she says. The 900 attendees from a technology company she convened for a four-day annual sales meeting earlier this year were enjoying their fifth year at ARIA, with a few more years already booked.

again," Loebbaka says. "As a logistics person, I really need a great partner, someone who thinks, 'How can we do this together?' It's going to be stressful, it's going to be a lot of work, but let's have a little fun — ARIA was definitely that great partner."

She continues, "Make sure that your vision is something the hotel can do well. If there are things a client wants that we can't do, I want to come back with another solution, and ARIA is very solution focused: 'Listen, we don't suggest that, we suggest this instead and here's why.' I really appreciate that," she says. When planning meeting breaks, for example, the F&B director was able to suggest ways to avoid bottlenecks that wouldn't be obvious to anyone who didn't intimately know the space and its movement patterns.

To pull together an event with so many moving parts, Loebbaka relied not only on the teams at ARIA and JEWEL, but also local DMCs for entertainment and decor, and the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, which offered attendees a discount code for shows as well as

printed materials with ideas, such as a foodie tour, for enjoying Las Vegas during attendee downtime.

Loebbaka says the experience helped her grow as a planner, and the feel of Las Vegas is part of that process. "Our clients are always looking for something new and different, and Las Vegas is a location with always-forward momentum and unique opportunities. They don't just rest on their laurels."

Like Loebbaka, Lisa Burton, CMP, senior vice president, Meeting Expectations was also taken with ARIA's natural light. "The hotel doesn't

Bardot Brasserie, Carbone and the newly opened seafood restaurant CATCH Las Vegas were a few of the on-site restaurants where one department or team chose to have smaller dinners. The main event, a ballroom dinner themed by geographic region — Americas; Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) and Asia Pacific (APAC) — was held at three different off-site locations. A local DMC selected the locations and the tech company's leadership team visited each: APEX Rooftop Social Club, with its terraced view of the city from the newly renovated Palms Casino Resort;



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and House of Blues Restaurant & Bar and Libertine Social, both inside the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino.

The event ended on a high-energy note with a buyout of ARIA's JEWEL nightclub for a closing party complete with a talent show, a favorite with attendees. "It's an international group, and they enjoy having fun for a night after being in meetings for three days, showing a fun side or a talented side. It's just a fun event,

interacting with people they may not see through the year."

Attendees are happy to return year after year to the hotel because it always feels a little different. "With any program, you're always tweaking, and at the same venue, you want a new experience each year; making the same, different," Burton says. "We're very fortunate to have great industry partners here that really work well with our clients." To planners consid-

ering Las Vegas for the first time, she advises: "Make sure you're developing the relationships with the people on the property. Las Vegas tends to have fees or price structures that other cities don't."

HIGH RETURN ON INVESTMENT

For networking and celebrating the achievements of more than 1,000 West Coast restaurant franchise managers, Mark Genis, vice president and CFO of Eventmakers, settled on The Palazzo Tower at The Venetian Resort Las Vegas for his meeting this year. "There's no question that The Palazzo offers the highest return on investment, meaning from room rates to group catering to audiovisual and meeting space coupled by the over-and-above amenities the hotel offers, from restaurants to gaming to shopping and spa and pool. There's no other venue in Las Vegas that can offer great meeting space and group experience and value along with an all-hotel-suite option," he says. "The best part about the event was everyone was friendly and helpful and engaged. The Palazzo is about the people first, service and results. This is why we are coming back."

There is one thing Genis will do differently next time: "Eat more desserts at Grand Lux Café!" The Palazzo's cafe bakes signature desserts on demand, so even attendees who don't subscribe to the adage "life is short, eat dessert first" must choose dessert with their entrees. House treats include: a sundae constructed from house-made doughnuts topped with vanilla ice cream, banana, coffee sauce and sugared peanuts; fresh apple pie with vanilla ice cream and caramel; and a box of a dozen warm chocolate chip pecan cookies.

After 2020, attendees at this property will likely get a first look at the MSG Sphere at The Venetian, a giant dome-shaped affair that promises a high-resolution, high-tech, completely immersive experience that can accommodate nearly 18,000.



M Resort offers more than 92,000 sf of flexible meeting space, including the 25,000-sf M Pavilion and a 17,400-sf ballroom.

that include games, food and drinks for up to 250 attendees. The Rooftop Terrace, which features sofas, small tables, fire pits, a private bar and a stage along with its views, can accommodate 175. Planners can also buy out the entire space, which offers various potential configurations. At M Resort Spa Casino Las Vegas, the Topgolf Swing Suite lets attendees pretend-play at Torrey Pines and Pebble Beach, among other notables courses. Those who don't fancy golf can play virtual hockey, baseball or dodge ball.

TEAM BUILDING THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY

Sports of every stripe are taking Las Vegas by storm — and not just in the form of sports betting. The city has marshaled its forces in recent years to welcome sports teams and create top-of-the line properties to house them. The newly named Allegiant Stadium, future home of the NFL's Oakland (soon to be named Las Vegas) Raiders, is expected to open in fall 2020; the Las Vegas Ballpark, with a capacity of 10,000, is home to the Las Vegas Aviators triple-A baseball team; and the T-Mobile Arena is what the NHL's Las Vegas Golden Knights now calls

IT'S LIKE COMING HOME

For the annual Mercedes-Benz dealer meeting earlier this year, 700 attendees turned up for a two-night stay at Wynn Las Vegas and Encore, organized by Hans Lupold, department manager, special events for Mercedes-Benz USA. "We are repeat customers and never forget how special Wynn and Encore are. It's like coming home with so many familiar staff members who have such pride and take such care with us," he says, citing the "incredible staff and iconic luxury design giving guests a true five-star experience at very competitive pricing. Both the sales team as well as the event management team made the planning and execution of the event effortless," he says.

The event entailed one full day of meetings, some small private dinners at different restaurants, two large catered dinners, a luncheon and two breakfasts. "The Wynn team knows us, so we shared what meals we needed and then let Wynn's culinary team create a fantastic welcome dinner buffet befitting the futuristic setting in the ballroom, which our decor team transformed," Lupold says. "The second night we had a pool party by the Wynn pool with the best barbecue ever, the steaks were so

tender. During both dinners we had a fantastic DJ who kept the energy up and our guests entertained. Everybody was raving about the service at Wynn as well as the food. I have never received as many positive comments on the hotel staff, service and accommodations."

Mercedes-Benz is planning a large golf event at the Wynn Golf Club this fall, he says. "An extra day or night to add a fun activity or an entertainment element would be great." Once known as the Desert Inn Golf Club, the club will debut a new, 18-hole championship Tom Fazio course in October, featuring dramatic changes in elevation, desert trees and oases of water.

Elsewhere on the golf front, Topgolf Las Vegas at MGM Grand Las Vegas offers all-inclusive packages



Las Vegas scenes: Guy Fieri pours tequila on a charcoal fire at Vegas Uncork'd earlier this year



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The LINQ Hotel + Experience provides exciting pool activities and the FLY LINQ Zipline, which launches daring riders from the top of The LINQ Hotel.

home. Attending a home game is now on the list of possibilities for meeting attendees, but not all their sporting activity has to be passive.

Those mesmerized by the vertiginous shenanigans of Cirque du Soleil — whose live-action, tech and multimedia-laden thriller, R.U.N, begins this fall at Luxor Las Vegas — can now try to safely mimic some of those stunts themselves. The Strip's first zip line, FLY LINQ Zipline, launches the intrepid from the top of The LINQ Hotel + Experience, sending them swooping 12 stories over the open-air mall LINQ Promenade and landing close to the bottom of the High Roller. Attendees can choose to fly seated, backward or superhero style alongside nine of their closest colleagues. They can buy pictures of themselves taken in flight and, with a 1 a.m. closing time, can even opt for night flying. Once the 550,000-sf CAESARS FORUM conference center opens in 2020, it will be steps away from this action. Also happening at the Promenade is lifetime gig for comedian and hometown hero, Jimmy Kimmel, who recently opened his Jimmy Kimmel's Comedy Club at The LINQ Promenade. The opening celebration drew

not only other celebrity comedians, but a cross-section of representatives of what makes Las Vegas, Las Vegas: sports analyst, Bill Simmons; celebrity chef, Gordon Ramsay; and Oakland Raiders owner, Mark Davis. Planners with groups of 450 or less can buy out the bi-level, 8,000-sf space, where food is casual and drinks are named after people Kimmel especially likes.

For those who prefer their zip lining off the Strip, SlotZilla Zipline's 'view to a thrill' is over downtown Las Vegas. And at SkyJump Las Vegas, the coasting happens over Las Vegas Boulevard as part of the offerings at The STRAT Hotel, Casino and SkyPod, a rebranding of the Stratosphere hotel with a fuller emphasis on all things elevated. To get up high without quite so much nausea, their Top of



the World steakhouse offers attendees a gently rotating dining experience of a full turn every 80 minutes, and the possibility to enjoy drinks later at 107 SKYLounge, named for the number of stories one ascends to the top. Also on the road to rebranding is Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Las Vegas, which reportedly plans to close in spring 2020 and re-emerge as Virgin Hotels Las Vegas that fall.

WHAT'S NEW IS WHAT WAS OLD

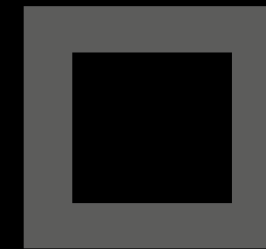
From the ashes of the former Las Vegas Club and Mermaid Casino on what is now the Fremont Street Experience open-air mall downtown — the 777-room Circa Resort & Casino will rise sometime in late 2020 at current estimation. Also still under construction at the 87-acre site that was once the Stardust is Resorts World Las Vegas, a China-themed resort that will include two towers and provide sleeping quarters for more than 3,000 attendees. Several regions of China will be represented among its dining offerings when it's expected to open in late 2020. In the meantime, meeting groups can partake in authentic Chinese food at the recently opened Red Plate in The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. The menu focuses on traditional techniques given a modern flair, and includes hot pot, dim sum, Peking duck and fresh seafood.

MEET IN 2021

Next up for the massive Las Vegas Convention Center District project is to add 1.4 million sf that will include outdoor space and an atrium, projected to be ready "in time to welcome CES in 2021," according to the LVCVA website. Later, the existing 3.2 million sf will be quietly overhauled, with an expected completion date in 2023. The LVCVA site estimates that

Grand Sierra Resort and Casino offers 200,000 sf of meeting space.

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the finished project will eventually bring in “more than 600,000 new visitors each year.”

As part of MGM Grand Conference Center’s expansion to 850,000 sf, completed earlier this year, the entire second floor, 40,000 sf, is devoted to Stay Well Meetings, a concept named after Deepak Chopra. The concept involves offering attendees a space with purified air, natural or natural-seeming lighting, nutritious food and aromatherapy to help them feel motivated. The Mirage will also provide the Stay Well treatment in seven of its meeting rooms. At the newly opened Park MGM, the 7,000-sf Ideation Studio was designed to spark innovation among very small teams of up to 24, with much thought given to each of the four distinctive layouts. For small seminars, the Madison Meeting Center could also fit the bill.

SUMMER NIGHTS IN RENO

What began in 1986 as a way to boost tourism in a notoriously slow month has become an annual celebration of all things classic car and rock ‘n’ roll: the weeklong extravaganza known as Hot August Nights in Reno, nearly 500 miles away from the Las Vegas action. Most major venues in Reno and Sparks participate in the annual event.

For NAPA Auto & Truck Parts, based in Sparks, spending time among the classic cars and the people who keep them running was a no-brainer. Katie Finley, marketing manager for the company, assembled a group of 200 attendees to mingle and enjoy, including hosting a dinner at Atlantis Casino Resort Spa. She says of the hotel that it

was “one of the best experiences I have had in Reno. They offer a wonderful spa and pool for guests not having to be in meetings the whole time. I got a chance this time to go to the pool and the arcade with my kids.”

The other attendees seemed to enjoy it, too. “The night we had the dinner, we had rave reviews from everyone about how good the food was; how well the Atlantis attended to everyone. Everyone said they had a

“The night we had the dinner, we had rave reviews from everyone about how good the food was; how well the Atlantis attended to everyone.”

KATIE FINLEY
Marketing Manager
NAPA Auto & Truck Parts



fabulous time.” While at Atlantis, her group was included in hula hoop contests, tricycle races, and, on different days, a pie-eating contest and a jelly doughnut-eating contest. Because the spaces are linked by a transparent enclosed walkway, attendees can walk from one of the resort’s 824 rooms across to the 600,000-sf Reno-Sparks

Convention Center. The convention center is a 15-minute drive from the Reno-Tahoe International Airport, which offers free shuttle service to many of the area hotels. The 1,900-room Grand Sierra Resort and Casino, Reno-Sparks’ largest property, with 200,000 sf of meeting space, was one of the sponsor hotels for Hot August Nights. The resort’s Grand Theatre can accommodate up to 4,000 attendees. The Eldorado Resort Casino is part of The Row complex that connects through indoor walkways with Silver Legacy Resort Casino and Circus Circus Reno. Together, The Row properties offer: more than 60 restaurants, bars, lounges and nightclubs, more than 4,000 rooms and more than 180,000 sf of meeting space.

Eco-friendly Peppermill Resort Spa Casino also got in on the fun, showing classic music videos on an outdoor screen and offering plenty of space for the daily “show and shine” car displays.

When Hot August Nights are over, the resort, with its more than 1,600 guest rooms, including the 600-room, all-suite Tuscany Tower, is entirely powered by two geothermal wells — 4,000 feet beneath the resort. All its heat, including the hot water for the three-story, 33,000-sf Spa & Salon Toscana, emanates from this source.

Hot August Nights’ partner hotel, the Whitney Peak Hotel, features a Base Camp Climbing Gym with a 7,000-sf bouldering park, 11 meeting rooms, including the 5,125-sf Whitney Peak Ballroom, and more than 20,000 sf of event space that can host groups up to 400. **C&IT**



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DESTINATION //

The Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré Sanctuary is a stunning basilica set along the Saint Lawrence River in Québec City.



François-Marie Héroult

Oh, Canada!

History and Culture Abound in Its Venues and Destinations

BY MAURA KELLER

Our neighbors in Canada have long been associated with ‘all things nature.’ While pristine landscapes, mountains and wilderness aplenty grace Canada’s expansive environs, the country is home to several large metropolitan areas that offer ideal venues and accommodations for meetings and events of all sizes.

MONTRÉAL

For decades, Montréal has been synonymous with ‘all things Canada’ and rightfully so. A cutting-edge urban experience, Montréal is teeming with a ‘European chic’ all of its own. From year-round festivals to an award-winning culinary scene to cultural experiences aplenty — Montréal offers something for everyone.

Perhaps the epicenter for meetings and events is the city’s convention center, Palais des congrès de Montréal. Located in the heart of downtown Montréal and close to a wealth of historic sites, world-class shopping and dining, and the Old Port and the Entertainment District, the convention center features more than 551,000 sf of event space. In addition, approximately 16,000 hotel rooms are within a 10-minute walk of the convention center, including approximately 4,000 rooms that are directly accessible via an underground pedestrian network. These days, state-of-the-art technology is a “must have” for any meeting or event, and the Palais des congrès de Montréal offers the most hi-tech

meeting facility in all of Canada, including webcasting, videoconferencing, teleconferencing and leading-edge audio-visual equipment.

Some of the city’s venues will surprise and delight event attendees of smaller gatherings. For example, the University Club features a historic building consisting of 14 rooms of various styles that can accommodate from three to 300 attendees.

Being in the heart of a city’s business district is often appealing to corporate meeting and event planners. The Saint James Club, in Montréal’s business district, is ideal for planners looking for a quieter atmosphere. The facility boasts 11 rooms and can host up to 250 guests.

Old Montréal is a favorite destination for business and leisure travelers alike, so the Rooftop Terrace of the Phi Centre is an ideal venue, offering unbeatable views of the river. The Phi Centre also offers various interior spaces of its historic building for rent as well.

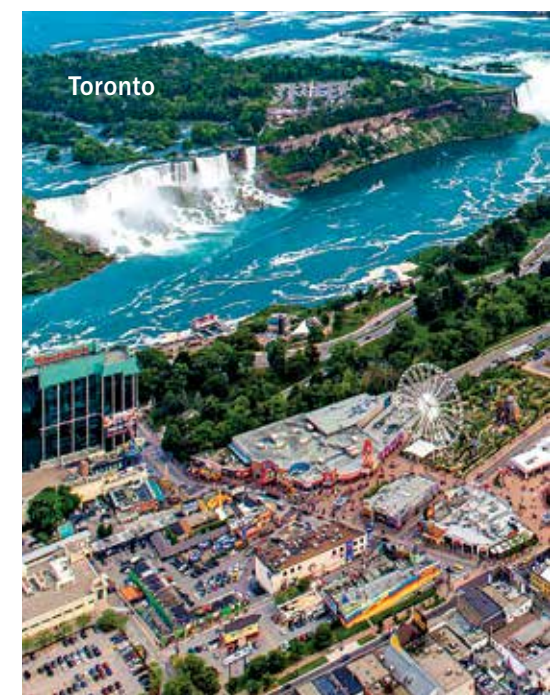
According to Tourisme Montréal, a recent survey indicated that 95% of business travelers who stayed in Montréal last year were either satisfied or very satisfied with their experience, with 84% of business travelers saying they’d like to come back to Montréal on a leisure trip.

That’s because Montréal offers meeting and event attendees a robust events scene, safe streets, an array of dining options and a European ambience without having the jet lag or the price tag of traveling to Europe.

Gatineau Park,
Ottawa



Toronto



Vancouver





Palais des
Congrès de
Montréal



Queens Quay in Toronto



Calgary
Chuckwagons

QUÉBEC CITY

The heart of French culture in North America, Québec City is an ideal locale for meetings and incentives that exude a European flair. From its cobblestone streets to heritage venues to storied walls, Québec City is like a French getaway without the expense.

Old Québec is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, filled with French-style historic landmarks, and is a walkable gem for meeting and event attendees who want to revel in its shops, attractions, hotels and restaurants. The city embraces arts and culture with several major events and festivals each year. What's more, the Centre des congrès de Québec is conveniently located in the heart of Québec City.

The Centre and the ExpoCité Exhibition Centre are ideal choices to play host to major events. Québec City is rich with history, culture and more than 3,000 hotel rooms, and Centre des congrès de Québec offers 300,000 sf of exhibition, convention and meeting space. By attracting and supporting crowd-pleasing events, ExpoCité actively contributes to Québec City's economic, social and tourism development while raising the city's profile.

An ideal event venue, the ExpoCité site also boasts numerous multipurpose buildings and ample space for major gatherings. Because of its versatility, the venue attracts more than 2 million visitors a year for concerts, consumer shows, trade fairs, sports events and business meetings.

For meeting planners looking for alternative options in Québec City, less traditional settings such as the Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec and the Musée de la Civilisation offer idyllic museum settings for meetings, events and soirees of all types. In addition, Manoir Montmorency offers beautiful views of Montmorency Falls in its spectacular banquet venue.

To learn about resources and incentive programs throughout Québec City, the Québec City Business Destination team can assist corporate and incentive meeting planners to help make their event a success, including helping coordinate accom-

modations, meeting rooms, activities and other excursions.

TORONTO

Toronto is considered to be Canada's top meeting destination, and consistently ranks in North America's top-five destinations for meetings and conventions. As Canada's largest and most-visited destination, Toronto is brimming with iconic events, attractions, restaurants, culture and festivals galore.

Home to Canada's largest combined life-sciences sector, Toronto provides access to industry thought leaders and businesses, making the city an attractive destination for meetings and events focused on these sectors.

During the past 10 years, Toronto has undergone a transformation of sorts with new attractions, restaurants and entertainment dotting the city. An ideal four-season destination, Toronto features a multitude of cultural and community events as well as a wealth of nearby natural wonders, including Niagara Falls, the Great Lakes and various Ontarian vineyards. What might surprise you is that Toronto is the 4th-largest city in North America and the most-visited destination in Canada.

"In a city where half of the population was born outside of Canada, we like to think this deepens the sense of belonging for those who are meeting here," says Tara Gordon, vice president of sales at Tourism Toronto. "Playing host to so many international meetings and individuals from around the world, people will feel welcome and safe here. We are all about bringing people together to share experiences, ideas and knowledge, as well as peak their curiosity in a setting where people feel comfortable and safe. I think that is something that resonates to meeting attendees and planners who choose Toronto."

Cultural progressiveness and rich diversity abound throughout Toronto's Chinatown, Little Italy, Little Portugal, Kensington Market and Greektown's The Danforth — all of which provide a unique backdrop for meetings and events.

For larger meetings and conventions, the Metro Toronto Convention



Calgary is a
hidden gem in the
middle of Canada.



Fairmont Le Château Frontenac
in Old Québec recently underwent a
multimillion-dollar refresh.

Centre (MTCC), which has a capacity of 10,000 people, is the country's No. 1 convention and trade-show facility, boasting over 700,000 sf of exhibit and meeting space, including 77 flexible meeting rooms ranging in size from 500 sf to 50,000 sf. Last year, as a part of a \$23 million modification project, eight new contemporary meeting rooms with more than 11,000 sf of additional space in the MTCC's South Building debuted. The new space offers contemporary finishes inspired by representations of natural elements, a new refreshed registration area and balconies that overlook Level 700. The new meeting rooms, designed by leaders in convention center design, also provide a state-of-the-art digital experience and include LED lighting, consistent with the facility's commitment to sustainable meeting solutions.

Toronto's Enercare & Beanfield Centres are Canada's largest trade and consumer show facilities with over 1 million sf of exhibition space. Enercare Centre, adjacent to Beanfield Centre, is Canada's first LEED Silver conference center and features Toronto's largest ballroom with state-of-the-art meeting rooms that are all multifunctional and have the capacity to host 10,000+ people.

For a unique venue, The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) reopened last year in a 55,000-sf, former industrial space at the heart of Toronto's Junction Triangle neighborhood. It functions as an inclusive cultural catalyst where artists and audiences can

step into the world of contemporary art and be part of a global movement defined by new ideas and new forms.

Another unique space is The Bentway, an innovative public space that transforms 1.75 km underneath Toronto's raised Gardiner Expressway into a new gathering place. The Bentway offers year-round activities and events, including gardens, a skating rink, recreational amenities, public markets, public art, special exhibitions, festivals, theater and musical

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coming they will provide
you incentives to help
welcome your attendees.
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JAY LIGHTFOOT
Executive Officer
Conference Management Services Inc.



performances and more.

CALGARY

Jay Lightfoot, executive officer, Conference Management Services Inc., which organized the IEEE International Conference on Acoustics, Speech and Signal Processing (ICASSP), recently helped orchestrate a meeting in Calgary in support of the IEEE Signal Processing Society. Of the 2,500 attendees, the majority included engineers in the area of electronics and computer science from around the world.

Held in the Calgary TELUS Convention Centre (CTCC), most of the meetings for the IEEE International

Conference began in the morning and also included various evening activities, including banquets and receptions. Located at the center of downtown Calgary, the CTCC is directly connected to the Calgary Marriott Downtown Hotel, Fairmont Palliser and Hyatt Regency Calgary, bringing

people together from Calgary and around the world for events, meetings, special occasions and conferences. The CTCC has 122,000 sf of flexible convention space, 47,000 sf of exhibit space, five pre-function areas and 36 meeting rooms for a variety of configurations.

"We moved the conference to Calgary from a city in Asia due to security and other concerns," Lightfoot says. "Calgary was chosen because of the ability to handle a conference of our size; the flexibility of the space offered, the accommodations available in the city and the general willingness of Calgary Conventions to support our needs. We made this change about six months before the conference, which was quite a task."

"Calgary was a great draw," Lightfoot says. "Many attendees had been to Canada although never to Calgary. All of the attendees I spoke to were very impressed with the city, the ame-



Quartier Petit Champlain | Photo: Jeff Frenette

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facility (2019)

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- TedCity2.0

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- Leading Culture Destinations
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of its own.



Québec, accessible via major U.S. cities
Photo: Québec City Business Destination

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Ottawa, Canada's capital city, has hosted myriad national and international events and meetings.

OTTAWA

As Canada's capital, Ottawa truly reflects Canada's beauty while celebrating its spirit and diversity. Located at the foot of the rugged Canadian Shield geographical area, Ottawa is home to 1 million residents who revel in the urban landscape filled with historic and national sites, monuments and cultural institutions.

With annual festivals celebrating everything from the arts to diverse cultural nuances to food and music, Ottawa is the ideal location for meeting planners looking for an international feel, yet a location that is relatively close to home. A vibrant city hugging the edge of nature, Ottawa offers a wealth of adventure and outdoor activities for meeting and event attendees, while also offering a pristine backdrop for meetings and events of all types.

Having played host to myriad national and international events and meetings, Ottawa is a highly experienced and accomplished host destination accessible from major U.S. hubs. Its international airport is a mere 15-minute drive from downtown.

As far as venues, Ottawa is home to Shaw Centre, the city's premier, state-of-the-art convention venue located in the heart of downtown next to the Rideau Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site and within easy walking distance of more than 6,000 hotel rooms. And while the city's downtown is very compact and walkable, the city's light rail transit system links hotels to the Shaw Centre and other meeting facilities and venues in the city.

For more unique meeting locales, the city's national museums and National Arts Centre offer ideal public spaces for off-site receptions, galas and events. Ottawa also features a wealth of diverse accommodations that include major international hotel brands and unique boutique and local properties to meet every need and budget. Many of the city's larger properties offer signifi-

cant meeting space and smaller rooms for executive and breakout sessions.

The diverse culinary scene in Ottawa offers unique urban experiences, excellent craft beers and nightlife that range from the performing arts to live music venues, casinos and relaxed patios and pubs. And while summer is a great time to visit, there are an array of outdoor activities that meeting and event attendees can enjoy throughout the year, including: ice skating on the world's largest outdoor rink, the Rideau Canal Skateway; cross-country skiing downtown and downhill skiing minutes away in the Gatineau Hills; more than 800 km of cycling trails and mountain biking; canoeing; white water rafting; zip lining; and Canada's highest bungee jump.

Reflecting the dynamism of the capital's region, recent hotel openings have added a significant choice for business travelers and meeting planners to consider, and Ottawa Tourism is offering Winter Meeting ICEntives to meetings held in Ottawa between December 1 and March 31 to entice meeting planners to host an event in Ottawa and experience a true winter wonderland.

VANCOUVER

When Melinda Bernstein, global events director with Radius Travel was planning her company's annual global meeting, she selected Vancouver because it is a convenient destination for a global audience. This annual global meeting rotates around the

world and this year it was slated to be in North America with 150 attendees. Held at the DOUGLAS, Autograph Collection in Vancouver, the annual global meeting welcomed a mix of travel agency owners and senior management along with preferred supplier partners, and included 2 1/2 days of meetings and meals.

"Vancouver is definitely more affordable than the US," Bernstein says. "It's great value for the dollar."

MELINDA BERNSTEIN

Global Events Director
Radius Travel



While Québec City may exude a French flair at every turn, Vancouver celebrates a tapestry of mountains and sea with memorable natural attractions and cultural experiences.

Located on Vancouver's waterfront with a dramatic mountain backdrop, the award-winning Vancouver Convention Centre offers convenient access to all of the major visitor amenities in downtown. The facility is recognized as one of the leading convention centers in the world, hosting more than 550 events and welcoming hundreds of thousands of attendees each year. Consisting of two uniquely designed

buildings, the iconic East Building and connected West Building, the Centre can host up to 16,000 attendees in its 466,500 sf of pre-function, meeting, exhibition and ballroom space.

For a truly unique venue, the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden is situated at the edge of downtown Vancouver, offering a quiet retreat in the midst of the bustling city. Pavilions and rooms throughout the venue offer a distinct cultural flair to any event. Courtyards and pathways offer attendees ample space for more informal affairs.

Located in picturesque False Creek, the Rocky Mountaineer Station boasts over 20,000 sf of conference and event space. Exposed timber and brick, 35-foot vaulted ceilings, and full-length glass walls grace this building that was remodelled for use as the Rocky Mountaineer train station.

Being situated on the sea means that many of Vancouver's meeting and event spaces celebrate the beauty of the adjacent waters. The Vancouver Aquarium provides a stunning backdrop for events, both large and small. Accommodating up to 2,400 guests, the Vancouver Aquarium provides live backdrops featuring some of its 55,000 marine animals and several indoor and outdoor spaces.

Of course, Vancouver's plethora of downtown convention hotels offer many options for alternative meeting spaces, and most of the downtown hotel rooms are within walking distance of the Centre.

C&IT



The Vancouver Convention Centre can handle 16,000 attendees in its 466,500 sf of pre-function, meeting, exhibition and ballroom space.

Arizona offers countless beautiful scenes, such as this winter sunset in the Chiricahua National Monument, located 120 miles southeast of Tucson.

RAISING ARIZONA

Planners Are Finding the Grand Canyon State Ideal for Meetings

BY KEITH LORIA

Adrienne McLeod / Visit Tucson

While best known for the picturesque Grand Canyon, Arizona has plenty of amazing sites to see, including Saguaro National Park and Sedona and Antelope Canyon, and that's a big draw for attendance at meetings and conventions in Arizona.

"For our clients, it's an 'exotic' and different location, and you can also rely on the weather to be nice and sunny," says Bryan Mattimore, co-founder for Growth Engine, a 20-year-old innovation agency based in Westport, Connecticut, which designs and facilitates nearly 50 meetings a year. "The attendees like being able to enjoy the outdoors. For example, we facilitated several meetings for the United States Tennis Association, so it was key that the attendees could get out and play some tennis in nice weather."

Scottsdale is one of the top destinations for corporate and incentive travel in America due to its natural beauty and unique ecosystem, abundant opportunity for adventure and destination experiences and superb quality of resorts with fresh, newly renovated rooms and event space.

But it's not just Scottsdale. Spending time outdoors is a lifestyle that is enjoyed all year in cities such as Phoenix, Tucson, Mesa, Tempe and more. Thanks to more than 300 days of sunshine in Arizona each year, meeting professionals can also take advantage of the wide variety of outdoor meeting and event spaces available.

TUCSON HAS EVERYTHING

Robin Wilczynski, director of events at El Conquistador Tucson, A Hilton Resort, the only resort in Arizona to achieve the AAA Four Diamond designation for 35 years straight, says the resort understands how to engage people and embrace the local culture.

"Here you will find a thoughtfully blended atmosphere of local and indigenous offerings paired with an evolving portfolio of touches," she says. "Our highly trained and welcoming team can help eventgoers discover the magic of Oro Valley and the legends of gold hidden behind the Lost Iron Door Mine in the nearby Catalina Mountains."

El Conquistador's location at the base of Pusch Ridge — part of the Catalina Mountains — makes it highly in demand for meetings.

"With more than 100,000 sf of exceptional and versatile indoor and outdoor function space, we offer more meeting and event options than anywhere else in southern Arizona," Wilczynski says. "We boast two 12,000-sf ballrooms for maximum flexibility and an IACC Conference facility with amazing views."

"We had our first meeting there and it's become a standard request because it was such a great venue."

DANIEL G. SHARP

Chief of Police, Oro Valley, Arizona
Chair, Highway Safety Committee for the
International Association
of Chiefs of Police



way for attendees to experience the Sonoran Desert and all its beauty and wonder," Wilczynski says. "Catalina State Park nearby is the perfect way to get acquainted with the different types of flora and fauna — and maybe even spot a deer or roadrunner. Horseback trail riding is another distinctive way to see and experience the setting, and allows you to unleash your inner cowboy."

Daniel G. Sharp, police chief of Oro Valley, 6 miles south

El Conquistador Tucson, a Hilton Resort, offers more than 100,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space.

There's also the Last Territory Western venue — an on-site location that provides a taste of the Old West.

"This is the answer to any meeting planner's dream, an indoor and outdoor venue with picnic tables, string lighting, fire pits, built-in outdoor barbecue, space for a band and/or dancing, indoor bar, etc.," Wilczynski says. "Guests feel like they've gone off property, but without the hassle and expense of transportation."

Meetings and events at El Conquistador Tucson span far beyond the ballroom. Wilczynski notes attendees can engage in impromptu networking sessions around a fire pit or recap a conference while sitting next to the chef's herb garden.

Come dusk, a Native American flute player delights meeting attendees with the soothing sounds of indigenous music, which has been described as one of the greatest expressions of 'spirit, heart and healing.'

Outside of the meeting rooms, guests can enjoy the Linda Vista Loop Trail accessible from the property, tennis, golf, the resort's five pools, as well as bird watching, photography, biking, guided hikes and fitness classes. Catalina State Park is just a quick 5 minutes from the door, and horseback trail riding is accessible nearby.

"Hiking is the best



of Tucson, chairman of the Highway Safety Committee for the International Association of Chiefs of Police, says for the past three years, their mid-year meeting has been held at the El Conquistador Tucson.

“The reason we choose it, is because our committee members — who are from all over — request it,” he says. “We had our first meeting there and it’s become a standard request because it was such a great venue. We had representatives from the U.K., Canada, Brazil, Spain, Italy and people from all over the U.S., so it’s a group that travels a lot and has stayed in many different venues, but they always want to come back.”

The committee has a lot to accomplish at these meetings, and Sharp notes they are meeting all day long, with little time for breaks. But what people enjoy is, once the evening comes, there is so much to do at the resort — including luaus at the pool and amenities aplenty.

SCOTTSDALE IS ALWAYS A POPULAR CHOICE

Another planner favorite is the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, rooted in the blooming Sonoran Desert. The resort provides attendees an inspiring setting to play outdoors and enjoy the No. 1 reason why so many planners and attendees favor Scottsdale’s beautiful climate.

Beyond the picturesque Spanish Mission design and lushly landscaped desert grounds, the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess has been able to maintain its AAA Five Diamond rating for 28 consecutive years. The resort boasts 65 acres, with 106,000 sf of indoor event space and 200,000 sf of outdoor venues.

For planners requiring early setup, the summer months and the period from Thanksgiving through New Year’s are where you’ll find the most flexibility. A favorite recommendation is for groups to explore the unique eco-

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum features 2 miles of walking paths over 21 acres of desert landscape.

system of the Sonoran Desert by land, air and water. Within minutes of the resort, you can: hike mountain trails, take flight over the Sonoran Desert in hot air balloons, ride horseback or kayak down a waterway. There are wonderful historic sites to visit such as: Taliesin West, the Frank Lloyd Wright House and Museum of Musical Instruments, which is less than five minutes from the resort, with options for groups to host events and private exhibit showings.

The resort has incentive and executive meetings that return each year, with many occurring annually, for as many as 20 years. Each year more than half of its meetings are repeat clients and groups.

Planners are encouraged to include some ‘play time’ to really experience the Sonoran Desert and give attendees an opportunity to gain new perspective on their lives and their work. Attendees can take advantage of a full portfolio of wellness, team building and fitness classes designed for groups that take place on its lawns, verandas and pools. Options include: Float Fit, Silent Savasana, 5K runs, laughing yoga, aromatherapy blending bars and nature walks.

Another favorite is Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort and Spa in Scottsdale. If Mother Nature is a source of inspiration for meetings and events, then meeting planners should look no further than Sanctuary.

Terraced high on one of Arizona’s best-known landmarks, Camelback Mountain, the resort features compelling views of Paradise Valley and surrounding mountains from every vantage point. The resort offers 9,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting and catering space, and provides the ideal venue for small groups, business professionals and associations who seek

Tucson offers indoor and outdoor activities to suit any preference for attendees and planners alike.

BEYOND THE BALLROOM



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Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort and Spa in Scottsdale offers 9,000 sf of indoor and outdoor meeting space.

an exceptional attention to detail to ensure a productive, focused and well-orchestrated meeting.

Sanctuary's signature restaurant, elements, offers a host of unique group options. The private dining room, XII, appropriately seats 12 for dinner. The room opens to Sanctuary's state-of-the-art kitchen, run by celebrity chef Beau MacMillan, giving guests a private peek into the workings of a world-class restaurant. Adjacent to elements, Praying Monk features stunning views of Camelback Mountain, offering indoor/outdoor space for up to 60 guests.

Each of the eight Villas at Sanctuary are available to VIPs and executives who crave privacy or want to host smaller events and meetings. These multimillion-dollar villas feature exclusive amenities, exceptional décor, extensive patios, swimming pools and sweeping views of the lush desert landscape.

The resort's intimate size reinforces privacy for each meeting group and close proximity to guest casitas and facilities, including the acclaimed Sanctuary Spa, which offers group wellness programs designed to rejuvenate and inspire. For active groups, a vast infinity-edge pool, tennis and pickle ball compound, hiking and biking trails and fitness center are available along with golf privileges at Phoenix/Scottsdale's most

renowned courses.

Meeting planners can build a customized event from an extensive menu of activities. An Iron Chef America-inspired culinary competition, aura reading and photography workshop are among the activities designed to fuel attendees' creativity, while team-building hikes, corporate yoga and Pilates, and a Be Kind to Your Spine workout help them keep fit on the road. And then there's the motivational Corporate Power-Up — a choice of cardio beats/drumming, boot camp, ZUMBA class or tennis match

"Arizona is a great mid-ground for attendees, providing shorter airlifts for them coming from all over the country."

AMANDA HOUSTON
Director of Corporate Events and Marketing
INNOVATX Events



designed to increase strength, endurance and corporate fun. Mini-breaks range from a 15-minute Breathe and Rejuvenate session to a Take 10 Office Retreat featuring chair exercises.

Additionally, Sanctuary provides a welcome respite for attendees to unwind and shift gears into a restorative Sonoran escape when their meetings are over. Attendees are welcomed to an oasis in the middle of the desert with famed sunsets each night, where they can enjoy a world-class

spa, top-notch dining in elements restaurant and recently renovated guest rooms featuring soaking tubs, fireplaces and chic décor.

Along with the inviting weather, the greater Scottsdale area is home to world-class shopping, art galleries, museums and professional sports venues all just a short, 20-minute drive from Sanctuary.

TOP SPOTS FOR PLANNERS

Chane Steiner, CEO of Scottsdale-based Crediful, has been involved in several meetings in his home state and recommends the downtown Phoenix Convention Center.

"It's an amazing venue for business events and at 900,000 sf, it can handle just about any large event," he says. "If you are planning a smaller meeting, I'd recommend the 24th Street Conference Center. This venue has five meeting rooms with 3,000 sf of space. It's an excellent spot for more intimate occasions with a smaller budget."

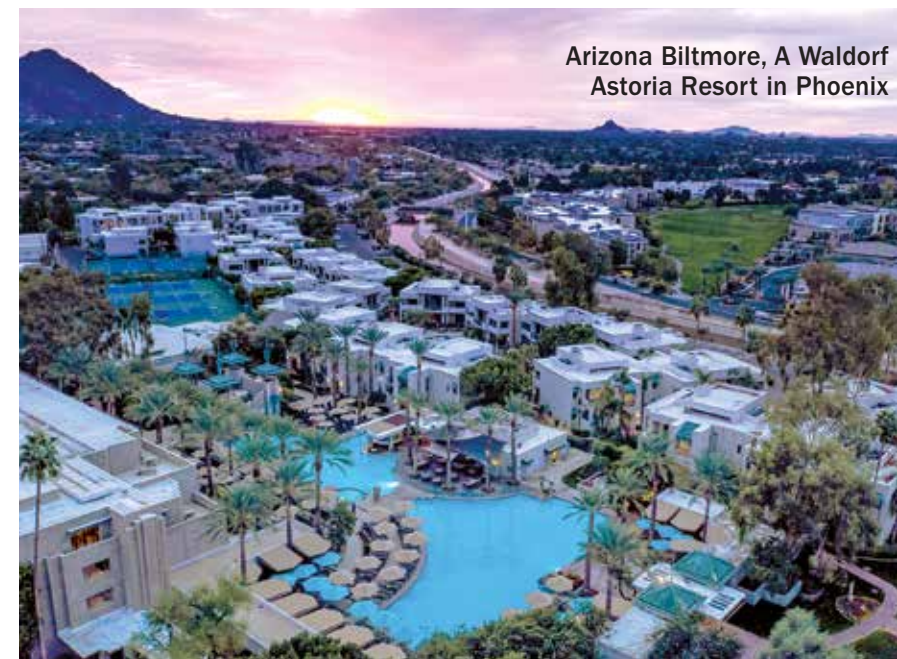
Amanda Houston, director of corporate events and marketing for INNOVATX Events, a planning company based in Austin, Texas, says Arizona is a treasure to the United States thanks to its dry and warm weather providing ample opportunities for groups to get out and explore the amazing scenery and natural aspects

of the state, which is why the company plans many corporate meetings there.

"For meetings and incentives, Arizona provides flavor-infused southwestern dishes and some of the best team-building and outdoor excursions that give groups a needed mental break from the day-in-day out hotel conference room vibe," she says. "What could be more fun after a long day of meetings than an evening event or a team building excursion that includes a hot air balloon ride over the picturesque Sonoran Desert?"

The company has planned a number of annual meetings and incentive trips for groups over the years there and has found planning in Arizona to be straightforward, with staff at most locations accustomed to facilitating group planning and able to flex to help accommodate unique and individualized event requests. One recent annual meeting was for a group of 500, and a recent incentive trip was for a group of 100.

"Historically, we've had larger meeting groups at The Phoenician and Omni Montelucia Resort & Spa, and our incentive groups utilizing resorts like the Arizona Biltmore and the Boulders Resort & Spa," Houston says. "Most recently we've just had a group hold a smaller annual meeting at the Mountain Shadows Resort. A lot of these groups do a rotation for their



Arizona Biltmore, A Waldorf Astoria Resort in Phoenix



Phoenix Convention Center offers 900,000 sf of flexible meeting and event space, including a 312,500-sf main exhibit hall and a 46,000-sf ballroom.

meetings traveling East Coast, Central Southwest, and West Coast in rotating years. Arizona is a great mid-ground for attendees, providing shorter airlifts for them coming from all over the country." When she surveys attendees at the end of Arizona-based meetings, they are often raving about amazing spa and wellness packages, golf courses and unique culture and art.

Growth Engine's Mattimore generally works with the client, not as much with the hotel meeting planners. However, what he likes about the hotels in Arizona is that when he works with them directly — doing meeting set-up, creating ideation stations, putting flip chart paper on the walls, etc. — they are flexible enough to accommodate

the unique needs for workshops. The Arizona Biltmore, A Waldorf Astoria Resort's large conference/meeting hall allowed the company to facilitate an ideation session with the 150 meeting attendees.

"We created 30 ideation stations in the meeting hall by taping flip chart paper to the walls," Mattimore says. "Often, such a high-profile, four-star venue will be less than flexible in allowing us to transform the space into an appropriate environment for creating new ideas. But the Biltmore management was great, including setting up the room with 25 round tables to facilitate small team creative exercises." He held another meeting at the Enchantment Resort in Sedona for 150 people from Christian Dior and the staff was flexible and accommodating and wonderful to work with in setting up and allowing them to facilitate an all-day ideation session.

"One of the more successful meetings we designed and facilitated in Arizona was for 150 regional and store managers for the LVMH owned company, Benefits Cosmetics," he says. "The multiday ideation and sales training session was held at the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix. It was a fantastic venue for the meeting. The atmosphere is relaxed and comfortable, and the Frank Lloyd Wright design-inspired building was aligned with the creative theme of the meeting."

Arizona certainly offers plenty to do. *C&IT*

ON THE MOVE //



BERGIN



GOMEZ



RAMESH



ROBISON



TURVEY

Park Hyatt Beaver Creek Resort and Spa, in the heart of Colorado's Rocky Mountains, welcomed **Michael Bergin** as director of sales. In his role, Bergin will oversee the coordination of Park Hyatt Beaver Creek's extensive events offerings.

Pendry West Hollywood appointed **Karen Dailey** as director of sales and marketing of Pendry West Hollywood, debuting on the iconic Sunset Strip in Spring 2020. In her new role, Dailey will oversee the entire sales team.

The Westin South Coast Plaza, Costa Mesa named **Dario Gomez** as director of sales and marketing. Gomez will be responsible for all sales and marketing initiatives. He brings more than 30 years of experience with Marriott International to his new post.

Hotel Colonnade Coral Gables named **Javier Marquis** as new director of sales and marketing. With a demonstrated history of working in the leisure, travel and tourism industry, Marquis is highly skilled in catering, food & beverage, sales, hotel management and sales management.

Hilton Hotels San Francisco Union Square appointed **Cindy Ramesh** as complex director of sales and marketing. For the past 10 years, she has been at Hilton San Francisco Union Square as the director of sales, and since 2015 also responsible for the complex, which includes the addition of the Parc 55 San Francisco – a Hilton Hotel.

Cadillac Hotel & Beach Club, a Miami Beach oceanfront luxury property owned by Hersha Hospitality Trust, welcomed **Craig Richesin** as director of sales and marketing. Richesin will spearhead the oceanfront luxury hotel's sales, marketing and revenue strategies.

The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs named **Curtis Robison** to fill a new role at the resort: director of national sales – trade shows and exhibits. The position was created due to the resort's new 125,000+ sf of exhibition space and associated breakout rooms, which is slated to debut in spring of 2020.

The St. Regis San Francisco appointed **Kurtis Sylvester** as account director. Sylvester will oversee all group sales west of the Mississippi, in addition to managing all international, automotive, incentive house, education and travel accounts.

Hard Rock International appointed **Mathew Turvey** as regional director of global sales, Europe for Hard Rock Hotels & Casinos. Turvey will build brand awareness and develop relationships with key MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) agencies and organizations in Europe.

Nemacolin Woodlands Resort, in southwestern Pennsylvania, appointed **Carrie Yauch** as new director of sales. In her new role, Yauch will lead revenue-driving efforts utilizing her 13 years of experience in the hospitality industry. *C&IT*



DAILEY



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