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CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR CORPORATE MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

What's New in Hotels & Resorts

From Those You Love to
New Developments, Here's
What's Going On (and Up)
PAGE 14

Bring the Whole Family

When Families Feel Welcome,
Attendees Feel Grateful
PAGE 34

The Meeting Room of the Future

Are Planners Willing to
Embrace a New Approach?
PAGE 40

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Michael Dominguez,
Chief Sales Officer,
MGM Resorts
International in
Las Vegas says that
planners just need
the right resources
for change.



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AUGUST 2018

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Plenty of offsite activities, including those along the Boardwalk, are attracting meeting planners to Atlantic City. **PAGE 52**

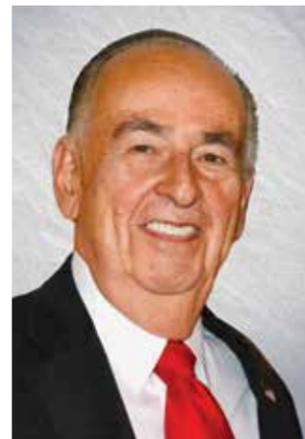


Nassau's Grand Hyatt Baha Mar boasts 200,000 square feet of indoor-outdoor event space. **PAGE 58**

Publisher's Message

Planners Facing Challenging Times

While security of attendees is always a priority with planners, many new hotels and resorts are adding new technology to aid in accomplishing successful meetings. From coast to coast, new construction and renovated properties with varied meeting space are beckoning your business. To learn about what's new and what's right for you, see



"What's New in Hotels & Resorts" on Page 14.

Staying updated with the biggest names in hospitality can also be a challenging task. Hotel chain offerings include increasing wellness programs, updated technology, healthy menus and amenities that matter most to planners. According to Michael Dominguez (on our cover), chief sales officer for MGM Resorts, one of the most thoughtful components of MGM Resorts meeting product — and in the industry overall — is Stay Well Meetings.

Now ongoing breakthroughs in brain science and learning combined with commitment to attendee engagement is beginning to have an impact on what the meeting room of the future will be like. According to Samantha Meigs, Ph.D., "There are certainly some planners who are open to innovation, but a lot of the people were automatically defaulting to what they had always done before." Read her valuable comments in "The Meeting Room of the Future" on Page 40. The question is: Are planners willing to change the way they think and embrace a new approach?

Experienced industry meeting planners talk about their good and bad happenings in this issue's "Meeting Planners Recount Their Best and Worst Experiences" (see Page 46). John C. Maxwell, noted author and speaker, put it this way: "Without failure, there is no achievement." Also, Elon Musk, founder of SpaceX, says, "If things are not failing, you are not innovating enough."

Lastly, the 2018 "Greens of Distinction Winners" can be found on Page 21. This 24th annual list includes The Broadmoor, the only resort to win every year since the inception of this prestigious golf resort award voted by subscribers of *Corporate & Incentive Travel* magazine.

Harvey Grotsky
Publisher

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Visit KC Announces New President and CEO

KANSAS CITY, MO — The Board of Directors of Visit KC has selected industry veteran Jason Fulvi as its new



FULVI

president and CEO. With more than 32 years of experience in the hospitality and tourism industries, Fulvi comes to Kansas City from Visit Pittsburgh, where he served for 16 years, most recently as the organization's executive vice president.

"We achieved our goal of conducting a thorough, nationwide search to find the right person to lead Visit KC forward in promoting our great city and region," says Visit KC Board Chairwoman CiCi Rojas. "We were drawn to Mr. Fulvi because of his extensive background in hospitality, widespread industry knowledge and proven ability to lead and empower."

Fulvi graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a degree in Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management. He worked his way up through the industry serving companies such as Hilton Worldwide and Holiday Inn.

Key to his interest in this position was the city's downtown renaissance and convention momentum, Fulvi says.

"As a destination marketing professional, I am impressed by the commitment the city's leadership has shown to make Kansas City a world-class destination for tourism, meetings and conventions," he says.

Visit KC is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to ignite global passion for Kansas City and its 1,000 hospitality partners. www.VisitKC.com

Park MGM Welcomes First Group in Madison Meeting Center

LAS VEGAS, NV — Madison Meeting Center at Park MGM is the first of its kind in Las Vegas, catering to meetings for groups from 10 to 50 people.

The 10,000-square-foot, modern-designed meeting space offers 10 flexible rooms able to accommodate varying layouts ideal for classroom-style training, certifications, product seminars, workshops and tailored events. With two self-service lounges, ergonomic moveable furniture with integrated power, along with built-in audio/visual equipment and rolling whiteboards, the Madison Meeting Center inspires interaction and encourages collaboration.

Increasing the center's appeal is the first Day Meeting Package (DMP) offered on the Las Vegas Strip. The all-inclusive pricing allows meeting planners to pay a flat rate per attendee, providing convenience and cost efficiency.

"The Madison Meeting Center was thoughtfully developed using research and science as a guide in designing productive work spaces," says Shelly Cruz, vice president of sales for Park MGM. "We look forward to helping groups maximize their time together by creating environments that lead to greater conversation and creativity." www.ParkMGM.com



Hard Rock International Ranked Among Best Employers for Women

HOLLYWOOD, FL — *Forbes* first-ever ranking of America's best employers for women lists Hard Rock International as a leading employer of women in the Travel & Leisure category.

Forbes and Statista, a market research company, surveyed 40,000 employees of companies with more than 1,000 workers to compile the 2018 list of the 300 Best Employers for Women in America. Of the 40,000 employees surveyed, 25,000 were women. All the surveys were anonymous and analyzed by *Forbes* and Statista based on a combination of criteria to rank the leading employers of women in America.

"All of us at Hard Rock are honored to be named by *Forbes* as one of 2018's Best Employers for Women," says David Carroll, senior vice president of Human Resources for Hard Rock International. "We are working hard to increase management opportunities for women through mentorship and training programs. While this ranking reflects our recent success, we consider it a starting point and we intend to build on it." www.hardrock.com

Joel Paige Appointed Managing Director of Lansdowne Resort and Spa

LEESBURG, VA — Joel Paige has been named Managing Director of



PAIGE

Lansdowne Resort and Spa. Paige has more than 25 years of experience leading iconic Destination golf resorts, including stops at PGA National and Doral Golf Resort & Spa. Lansdowne is located 30 minutes from Washington, D.C., in the heart of Virginia's wine country. The resort has more than 55,000 square feet of meeting space, a luxury spa and 45 holes of championship golf. www.destinationhotels.com/lansdowne-resort

Canyon Ranch Names Jack Breisacher as Managing Director

TUCSON, AZ — Canyon Ranch, the integrative wellness industry leader for nearly 40 years, has appointed Jack



BREISACHER

Breisacher as managing director for Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Arizona. Breisacher joins Canyon Ranch with more than 40 years of experience in the hospitality industry, including the launch of the brand's first international expansion in Kaplankaya, Turkey. He will be responsible for overseeing the resorts' leadership, management, sales, marketing and operations.

Breisacher has spent much of his career managing upscale hotels, including Marriott International, Loews Hotels & Resorts, Stouffer + Renaissance Hotels & Resorts and Swissotel Hotels & Resorts. www.canyonranch.com

Tips & Trends

Venues Investing in More Sophisticated Virtual Site Visits

The tour of the Atlanta Marriott Marquis starts out like a typical site visit. There's the walk past the check-in desk, with a glance skyward to check out the hotel's futuristic atrium. Then there's an elevator ride up to see the Marquis' largest ballroom. But in another flexible meeting space, air walls open and close with the toggle of a button. A map pops up on demand, and info boxes appear with helpful notes for event planners like room square footage and other specs.

That's what it's like to explore the Atlanta Marriott Marquis on a laptop through the hotel's new virtual tour experience. The high-resolution tour covers everything from the front door to the 164,000 square feet of meeting space and everything in between, all captured via a 360-degree camera rig atop a remote-control rover by tech company Artists of the Industry. Marquis sales managers are able to virtually walk planners through the entire hotel just by sharing their computer screens.

"We just had a customer do the site visit two days ago via this virtual tour. Her comment to our sales manager was, 'I feel like I'm in a video game,'" says Meinrad Lang III, director of sales and marketing at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis, who says that the tour helps event planners visualize the flow from floor to floor and meeting room to meeting room.

Making a Virtual Impression

Thanks to virtual-reality technology and 360-degree photography, hotels and convention centers are finding ways to immerse event planners in a space — without them ever setting foot in the building. "They feel like they've actually been there, they know the experience they're about to get," explains Sandy Narvaez, director of sales and marketing at Hilton Waikiki Beach. Her hotel offers a virtual tour app from technology company YouVisit that is available in four languages and can be used on a laptop or a phone.

Beyond being informative, interactive virtual tours can make a big impression on prospective planners, too. Ashley Forrester, corporate director of communications and marketing for Events DC, uses Samsung Gear VR and Oculus Rift headsets to show the interior and exterior of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center and other venues, along with an up-close-and-personal look into various events held there. "By unveiling a fully immersive virtual reality experience, Events DC is continuing to deliver amazing customer experiences to drive technology throughout all of its venues as well as showcase Washington, D.C., as the innovation capital," she says.

Saving Planners Time

Obviously, for event planners located in another city, interactive virtual tours are incredibly helpful. Melissa Assensoa, director of sales at the New York event venue Helen Mills, invites her prospective clients from all over the world to hop on a virtual tour as soon as possible. "People will have a few questions and then I'll say, 'By any chance are you by a computer?' and likely they'll say yes. Then I'll just send them the virtual tour link and I'll walk them through it. It's so much easier rather than having 18 emails back and forth," she says.

— Adele Chapin

The TWA Hotel at JFK Airport Now Booking Events for 2019

NEW YORK, NY — The TWA Hotel, opening in spring 2019, will be the first on-campus hotel at JFK Airport. In addition to event spaces, the hotel will include 512 rooms, six restaurants, eight bars, a 10,000-square-foot rooftop observation deck with a pool and a museum devoted to the Jet Age and TWA.

The TWA Hotel is now accepting bookings for the 50,000 square feet of event space and outdoor terraces. The hotel's developer, MCR and MORSE Development, is also revealing the designs for the Starstream Ballroom, the Flight Center Ballroom and several event rooms. This fall, the firm will unveil an additional one-of-a-kind event space that exists only at this location.

"We are restoring one of the most



important buildings in America, the TWA Flight Center, and event attendees will be greeted by the vibrant spirit of 1962, the year the Flight Center

opened, along with modern amenities that make this destination unique," says Tyler Morse, CEO of MCR and MORSE Development. www.twahotel.com

Ultimate Ventures Earns Three International Honors

ADDISON, TX — Ultimate Ventures, Dallas-Fort Worth's event and destination management leader offering a full range of services including special events, teambuilding, group excursions and transportation logistics, has been honored with three significant industry achievements.

The company was recently named a Top 25 Destination Management Company (DMC) worldwide. The annual Top 25 DMC list recognizes destination management companies around the world that are leaders in the industry and in the destinations they operate.

Ultimate Ventures also took home the Hosts Honors Global Critic's Choice Award during the 2018 Hosts Global Forum in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Ultimate Ventures was recognized at the Hosts Honors award ceremony and received the coveted 2017-18 Critic's Choice award for achieving the highest levels of client satisfaction.

The company is a 2018 Esprit Awards nominee for "Best Corporate Event under \$75,000." The Esprit Awards honor the International Live Events Association's (ILEA) members' best, most creative and innovative contributions to the industry. Winners will be named at the 2018 Esprit Awards Gala at the ILEA LIVE Conference in Denver. www.ultimateventures.com

AC Hotel National Harbor Offers the Essentials for Meetings

NATIONAL HARBOR, MD — AC Hotel National Harbor, centrally located in the Washington, D.C., waterfront destination of National Harbor, Maryland, offers flexible meeting space for groups of 10 to 120 attendees. With eight event rooms and nearly 9,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting space, the hotel is designed purposefully to allow attendees to focus, be present and connect with others.

One of the hotel's key attributes is that every meeting space offers natural light — an element known to increase creativity, productivity and well-being. Its meeting space also features clean, simple and crisp lines, marrying sophisticated European style with a distinctly modern feel that removes distractions.

The eight-story hotel offers the latest audio-visual technology, a curated beverage program and complimentary Wi-Fi. It boasts 192 guest rooms, six suites, a fitness center and a self-service business center. Attendees can enjoy a European-inspired continental breakfast at AC Kitchen.

Guests at the hotel are steps away from more than 40 restaurants, 160 boutique shops and entertainment offerings, including MGM National Harbor, the 180-foot observation wheel, The Capital Wheel and more. www.ACHotelNationalHarbor.com

Scott Hermes, CMP, Appointed President of Irvine Company Resort Properties

NEWPORT BEACH, CA — Irvine Company Resort Properties® recently welcomed its new president, Scott Hermes, CMP, who brings with him more than 30 years of hospitality and meetings industry expertise. He leads operations, marketing and all other aspects of Irvine Company's Resort Properties division, which includes the world-class Coastal Collection — encompassing The Resort at Pelican Hill, Fashion Island Hotel and Hotel Irvine — as well as Irvine's Oak Creek Golf Club and California Recreation Company.



HERMES

He has been a member of Meeting Professionals International (MPI) since 1983, holding various leadership roles. His prior hospitality experience includes 15 years at Starwood Hotels, where he served as area managing director for several hotels under its brands, including St. Regis, Luxury Collection, Westin, Sheraton and W. He also served as senior vice president of sales and field marketing for its North America division.

www.coastalcollection.com

LaKota Oaks Celebrates New Ownership of Former Dolce Norwalk



NORWALK, CT — LaKota Oaks recently hosted its inaugural ribbon-cutting and tree planting ceremony in honor of former Mayor Frank Zullo. More than 50 people attended from Norwalk and the surrounding communities to celebrate the new ownership and management of LaKota Oaks, Southern Connecticut's Event and Conference Center, as well as the long and successful life of Zullo, who passed away earlier this year.

LaKota Oaks offers 120 guest rooms situated on 66 acres, a 10,500-square-foot event and meeting space facility offering executive accommodations, state-of-the-art business amenities and more. www.lakotaaks.com



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Learn more at sheratonseattle.com

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By Scott Steinberg

8 Must-See Ways to Promote Your Event and Organization Online

Great stories are what make memorable movies, books and TV shows stand out from the crowd. Similarly, arresting tales and compelling narratives are what help us remember iconic events — and the businesses and brands behind them.

In the corporate world and event planning business, these yarns are constantly being spun in the form of marketing, advertising and promotional efforts. A brand's story serves as a handy way to convey your company's message, build credibility, establish an organization's vision, motivate buyers and build lasting customer loyalty.

Looking to increase interest in your organization and attendance at your events?

Below are eight ways to help audiences better identify with the ideas and ideals you represent, and generate lasting enthusiasm and empathy for both your event-based programs and enterprise.

1. Offer case studies, insights and real-world examples.

Connecting ideas with end results and demonstrating how challenges were overcome through applied effort and ingenuity can help build credibility and interest for your event business among customers. To this extent, consider presenting problem- and solution-based content, e.g., whitepapers, post-mortems and case studies, which (like client testimonials and behind-the-scenes examinations) can prove powerful ways to narrate tales of how real-life problems were overcome through ingenuity and insight. When paired with video clips, quotes and commentary from actual attendees, testimonial videos and other personal details, the practice helps put a more human face on both your events and your organization and build credibility in viewers' eyes.

2. Take viewers behind the scenes and spotlight key teams or contributors. Another easy way to add a personal element to your online event or organization is to highlight the people and teams that make your programs and business so successful and unique. Consider letting real-life contributors with an authentic tale to which audiences can relate share their story, whether it involves personal insights, humorous anecdotes or accounting of recent professional

exchanges that relate to your event/company's mission or core competencies. Doing so not only helps put a more memorable and human face on your events and organization, it also helps others realize that your business is made up of unique individuals who share in similar interests, trials and triumphs.

3. Be an industry insider and subject matter expert.

Another effective way to tell your event program or organization's story is to reinforce your subject matter expertise and authority by serving as a source for advice, insight and innovation. Providing employees (and event contributors) with a public voice — e.g., by letting them pen industry-related blogs, film Q&A videos with leading experts or author whitepapers that showcase new developments and insights — that creates value for readers, listeners or viewers can help produce a vehicle through which to build a compelling content library and establish thought leadership. Doing so allows you to demonstrate your team's unique perspective and talents, as well as reinforce its position of being on the cutting-edge of your chosen industry. Showcasing key data, research and findings, or providing headline-grabbing articles, video clips and visual assets can help add substance and credibility to your business's event outreach efforts.

4. Find unique ways to recount and share your origins.

Just as Tesla founder Elon Musk and Craigslist creator Craig Newmark are often fond of doing, look for new and novel ways to recount your event or organization's humble beginnings, and show viewers how it all got started. Recounting your organization's salad days and revealing some of the personal and professional struggles you've encountered puts a more personal face on the business. It also helps viewers better empathize with you and boosts likeability. Just be sure to be positive, straightforward and self-aware — the point isn't shameless promotion or self-aggrandizement, but rather spinning a compelling yarn which millions can relate to and learn from.

5. Explore interactive and cutting-edge solutions. To make your event business or brand's story truly stand out, try translating its ideals into more than mere words.

Providing interactive options — e.g., apps, augmented reality tools, 3D maps and programs, video games, customizable visuals or videos, surveys, quizzes, user-generated content programs, etc. — may not only boost audience engagement. It may also enhance learning and retention, provide unique context and help customers better understand what your event or business is about. Giving attendees a way to contribute to the conversation by entering their own submissions (via voice, video, votes, visual contributions or otherwise) and allowing

has someone they look up to — even businesses. Take some time to highlight key community members and fans that have supported you along your journey, and discuss the organizations and leaders who've influenced the way you and your events operate. Make sure to point out why you admire the individuals, companies or leaders in question, and how you've worked hard to adopt some of their thinking, strategies and principles into your operations today.

8. Speak about topics close to your heart. Touch upon

“Another easy way to **add a personal element** to your online event or organization is to **highlight the people and teams** that make your programs and business so successful and unique.”

commenting/sharing on or remixing of official assets can also be a powerful vehicle for heightening interest and uptake in both event programs and organizations.

6. Don't just focus on the past — discuss where you're looking to go. Sometimes, it's not enough to cover where your events or event business has been. How about sharing your vision with attendees/customers on where you want to go and what's next on your business agenda? Likewise, consider soliciting their input and feedback — public opinion is the best focus group money can't buy. All reinforce the point that you're listening to showgoers and customers, value their opinion and create the impression that the best is yet to come.

7. Salute your community and your heroes. Everyone

something that drives or inspires you and use it to explain your event brand and organization's positioning. For example, TOMS shoes was founded around the idea of donating a pair of shoes to a child in need for each pair of shoes purchased. This philanthropic outlook and mission not only drives the business's core values and direction, but the tale behind it also indelibly wound its way into the public vernacular, where it's become one of today's most memorable case studies. Likewise, TED conferences were organized to promote “ideas worth spreading.” By speaking passionately about values and causes that are important to you and your organization, you may gain some new admirers, as well as inspire others to take action and support a cause they believe in, too.

C&IT



Scott Steinberg

is an award-winning professional speaker and one of today's best-known trends experts and futurists. He is the bestselling author of *The Business Etiquette Bible*, *Make Change Work for You: 10 Ways to Future-Proof Yourself*, *Fearlessly Innovate* and *Succeed Despite Uncertainty* (TarcherPerigee, 2016). Among today's leading providers of keynote speeches, workshops and seminars for Fortune 500 firms, his website is www.AKeynoteSpeaker.com.

By Michael McCafferty

Taking Control: Stress Management While on the Go

Whether it's being stuck in traffic, an overwhelming workload or a dispute with a loved one, we all experience varying forms of stress in our everyday lives. Events that cause negative emotional responses are going to happen and are often beyond our control. We can, however, control the way we respond and manage stress to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

Factors that contribute to stress

Workplace stress can be attributed to a number of things, including learning a new skill set, working long hours, dealing with customers and feeling generally overwhelmed. Traveling for business especially can open up a new set of stressors that are taxing on your health. Travel stress can be grouped into three main categories:

Lost time: Even though you're traveling for business, you may be expected to keep up with emails, file reports and monitor office activity through conference calls and video

that is often packed with meetings and networking events. Long days and exhaustion make it difficult to fit in your usual exercise routine. Along with staying in hotel rooms without kitchens, it also makes it challenging to stick to a healthy diet when the ease of room service is just a call away. Accommodating these new routines often forces travelers to sacrifice their health while on the road.

Recognizing signs of stress

Just as every person's reason for stress is different, the way people experience stress also varies. Stress contributes to an estimated \$300 billion in health care costs for employers. With numbers this high, it's essential to recognize signs of stress in yourself and others in order to take healthy steps to managing stress.

Symptoms of stress can be categorized as physical, cognitive, emotional or behavioral.

Physical symptoms include headaches, backaches, chest

“Don't be afraid to **look to others** for help, and make sure you take time to **care for yourself** along the way.”

chats to ensure your co-workers are progressing smoothly during your absence. While keeping up with work when you're away would be ideal, it can be difficult to get things done due to minimal or spotty Wi-Fi, crowded and noisy airports and crammed hotel rooms. This lost time forces you to “catch up” when you return to the office.

Unforeseen events: While the experienced traveler may be equipped with extra travel-sized toiletries and an emergency first aid kit, no amount of preparation can ready you for unforeseen events such as delayed flights, lost luggage and missed connections. These nightmarish events set back business travelers during their tight schedules and can cause an immense amount of stress.

New routines: Traveling for business offers a new schedule

tightness, fatigue, stomach cramps, difficulty breathing and insomnia. These symptoms are often overlooked as they can be induced from a variety of other daily and physical activities.

Things such as difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, worrying, thoughts of death, indecisiveness and feeling helpless are categorized as cognitive stress, which should not be ignored. It is important to talk to someone if these feelings begin to consume your thoughts.

Feelings of anger, anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem, moodiness, suspiciousness, guilt and loss of motivation are signs of emotional stress. It's normal and healthy to experience these emotions from time to time, but they should be noted when they are experienced in excess and become more present than positive emotions.

Behavioral stress includes increased alcohol use, cigarette smoking, increased caffeine use, drug use, violence, overeating, weight gain or loss, relationship conflicts and decreased activity. Behavioral changes are often easier to notice in others rather than in yourself. If you see these changes in a loved one or co-worker, step in and help them address their stressors.

Managing stress

We can't always avoid stress, and it's not always harmful. Eustress, defined as a pleasant or curative stress, can be motivating and even give us a competitive edge. On the other hand, negative stress, or distress, occurs when the stressors in our lives exceed the resources available to manage it.

Too much stress, whether good or bad, is not healthy and causes physiological and physical changes in our systems. Persistent stress complicates how we react to normal situations, and we can become stuck exhibiting harmful behaviors. Fortunately, negative responses to stress can be minimized by taking scheduled breaks to relax and refresh your body.

Manage stress by following the AAABCs:

Alter the situation: You have the power to alter the situation. Take action to improve organization, planning and time management. Going into a business trip well organized with a planned agenda helps manage your time and mitigate stressors that may pop up along the way.

Avoid the situation: Don't be afraid to say no or delegate tasks onto others. If you know an upcoming business trip will overflow your workload capacity, take initiative to delegate tasks to others capable of handling the extra assignments. Additionally, feel free to say no, without feeling guilty, to taking on new projects until your workload subsides.

Accept the situation: Some stress is inevitable. You often experience things while traveling that are beyond your control, and the best way to handle the situation is to accept it. Instead of getting mad at a delayed flight, accept that the situation is out of your hands and begin taking steps to solve the problem and move forward.

Build up resistance: It's essential to take good care of yourself and pay attention to what you put into your body. It's easy to skip a workout and reach for the takeout menu,

especially while traveling. Make an effort to squeeze in physical activity, even if it's just a brisk walk between meetings, and get plenty of sleep. We all need to care for ourselves and set aside time to engage with things to keep us happy.

Change expectations: While you can't change the outcome of situations, you can change the way you react to certain circumstances. You have the opportunity to change your state of mind and expectations. Change your attitude so that you reframe negative thoughts.

Seek help from an EAP

Everyone needs help from time to time, and it's OK to ask for it. Friends, family and co-workers are excellent resources for support from stress and to discuss your worries. If your life feels too chaotic to manage and you're constantly worrying, talk with a professional such as your doctor, a psychologist or a counselor recommended by your employer's employee assistance program (EAP) benefit. Services provided by an EAP are confidential and often free of charge. If you're experiencing high levels of stress due to work-related circumstances, or personal concerns like marital or financial challenges that are affecting your ability to work effectively, an EAP counselor can help you navigate these challenges and connect you with helpful services in your local community.

No matter what life throws at you, stress is inevitable. In order to tackle stress head on, it is imperative to recognize the signs and symptoms of stress as well as take action to manage the way you handle it, helping you become more resilient and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Don't be afraid to look to others for help, and make sure you take time to care for yourself along the way.

FEI has a 35-year history in enhancing workforce resiliency by offering a full spectrum of solutions, from EAP and organizational development to workplace violence prevention and crisis management. One of the most successful social enterprises in America, FEI is wholly owned by the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, a national network of social sector organizations working to achieve its vision of a healthy and equitable society.

C&IT



Michael McCafferty, MSW, PHR

FEI Senior Account Manager and a skilled coach and consultant who partners with leaders, teams and individuals, motivating them to move from disengaged to engaged, and from problem to solution. With a diverse background including experience in health care, human resources and construction, he has a long track record and personal commitment to helping organizations create the conditions for success. He has provided consultation, training, counseling and EAP services to organizations of all sizes in industries as varied as manufacturing, financial services, state and municipal government and higher education.

Up and Coming

A beautiful spot to hold an event will be on the outdoor patio of the Omni Boston Hotel at the Seaport when it opens in 2021.



Credit: Elkus-Manfredt Architects

What's New in Hotels & Resorts

From Those You Love to New Developments, Here's What's Going On (and Up)

By Patrick Simms

It's challenging to stay abreast of the numerous hotel openings and renovations across the country and abroad, but certain projects are truly game-changers and invariably end up on a planner's radar. For planners who do business in the Pacific Northwest, the Hyatt Regency Seattle is one of

those properties creating major new opportunities. Opening this fall, the site will be the Emerald City's largest meeting hotel with 1,260 guest rooms and 103,000 square feet of meeting space, topping the Sheraton Seattle Hotel's 1,236 guest rooms and 75,000 square feet of meeting space. In fact, the

Hyatt will be the largest hotel in the Pacific Northwest. What is more, the new property will be located adjacent to the Washington State Convention Center's planned expansion and is thus primed to serve as the headquarters hotel for the WSCC's clientele.

Mallory Rabinowitz, Seattle-based sourcing manager for Experient, has toured the Hyatt, which will be a boon for the citywide tech conferences she plans in the city. "Seattle is very popular right now, so with this hotel being added to the downtown core, it's going to help a lot of the citywides," says Rabinowitz, who has booked the hotel for a spring 2019 meeting. On her tour, she noted the optimal design

"Yates-Astro feels fortunate to be located close enough to one of the finest resorts in the country. It is because of this that we have held our Annual Managers meeting at Sea Island for the past 26 years."

Anita Garris, Office Manager
Yates-Astro, Savannah, GA



Credit: Sheraton Seattle Hotel

The Grand Ballroom of the Sheraton Seattle Hotel is extremely spacious and allows natural light to flow in.

of the meeting space, comprised of 46 rooms of various sizes. "The meeting space is all laid out so well. You can have multiple groups in-house at the same time, and you don't necessarily feel like you are walking through the other group. You really feel like you're in your own self-contained space," she describes. "And for those smaller corporate groups, they have those 1,500- to 2,000-square-foot rooms so they can be in a corner by themselves and not feel swallowed." The property will be seeking LEED Gold certification, and the design certainly incorporates natural light. "When I went on the tour, I don't think I saw a meeting room that didn't have natural light," Rabinowitz comments. "In the Pacific Northwest, people think it's gray and dreary all the time, but our sunny days are gorgeous, and you definitely want to take advantage of that."



"In the Pacific Northwest, people think it's gray and dreary all the time, but our sunny days are gorgeous, and you definitely want to take advantage of that."

Mallory Rabinowitz, Sourcing Manager
Experient, Seattle, WA

WEST

Especially known for sunny days is San Diego, California, where the 400-room InterContinental San Diego opens in September. The property will offer 95,000 square feet of meeting space. The 35,000 square feet of indoor space includes the 12,000-square-foot Pacific Ballroom, accommodating up to 1,500 guests. Outdoor space includes bay-view terraces overlooking Lane Field Park. The flagship restaurant will be Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steakhouse.

Colorado's meetings industry is celebrating the centennial of a long-

standing icon of the luxury resort market. The Broadmoor turned 100 years old this year and has been commemorating a different era in the hotel's history each month this year (e.g., the focus in August is "Designing the Broadmoor Gardens"). The occasion is also being marked with several upgrades to the property, including a refresh of Broad-

moor Main's guest rooms and the golf facility. The original lobby of Broadmoor Main has been expanded and now includes a fireplace. A new eatery is Café Julie's, which evokes a fine Parisian patisserie. In addition, the former Golf Club Dining Room has been reimaged into The Grille, with its own classic bar and mountain views.

On the more metropolitan side of Colorado, December saw the debut of the Hilton Denver City Center following a \$27 million renovation. The 613-room hotel is housed in a 20-story tower and offers groups more than 50,000 square feet of function space, including 32,000 square feet of indoor space. The property is conveniently located

just three blocks from the Colorado Convention Center.

In Texas, a major upgrade is taking place at the Omni Houston Hotel, which reopens in November following a \$30 million renovation. The hotel offers 40,000 square feet of meeting space, including the 10,000-square-foot Regency Ballroom. The project is redesigning the first- and second-floor space and expanding it by 2,500 square feet. Goodman Manufacturing has held dealer meetings at the 378-room Omni Houston Hotel for eight years, bringing in groups of up to 150 attendees. Mary Alice Kahanek, CMP, senior manager, events and trade shows, describes some of the logistical features of the event space that have made the property ideal: "It has a large meeting space that has its own prefunction space. It's great that I can go down the hallway and know that everybody's going to be mine —



Credit: Omni Houston Hotel

The Omni Houston Hotel is expanding its bar area to include a wine bar and whiskey room.

reception and then invite them up to the ballroom for dinner." The additional meeting space "is going to be an advantage to us to have pop-up meetings during our meeting. They're locating [the new rooms] in other areas so you don't have to be contained just to the meeting space. There are going to be rooms down by the welcome desk and near the bar and restaurant." In addition, the Omni is redesigning its lobby and bar with a historic Houston theme. The bar is being expanded to include both a wine bar and whiskey room. Goodman Manufacturing's attendees will return to the hotel to enjoy these new features in November and December.



Part of the \$35 million renovation to the Boston Marriott Long Wharf included transforming 19 event rooms.

Credit: Boston Marriott Long Wharf

mately 100,000 square feet of function space, including the largest hotel ballroom in the Seaport District, along with direct access to the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center. Property highlights include LEED Silver certification, a Mokara Spa, a 7,500-square-foot outdoor pool deck, a 4,500-square-foot pool bar and grill and a French brasserie.

Boston's hospitality industry also welcomes the renovation of the Boston Marriott Long Wharf. Completed this summer, the \$35 million project has redesigned the hotel's 398 guest rooms to reflect the waterfront locale and transformed the hotel's 20,099 square feet of meeting space, which includes 19 event rooms. A new addition is the two-story M Club Lounge, which offers a breakfast buffet and automatic access for Marriott Rewards Gold and Platinum Elite members plus one guest.

On the gaming front, a standout in the Northeast meetings market is Mohegan Sun. The riverside property has made a quantum leap in its meetings infrastructure with the introduction of the \$80 million Earth Expo & Convention Center this spring. The expansion includes the 125,000-square-foot, column-free Earth Expo Center, the 20,000-square-foot Earth Ballroom — divisible in two and featuring more than 3,000 square feet of prefunction space, 15 meeting rooms ranging from 360 square feet to 675 square feet, a high-tech, 1,263-square-



The introduction of the \$80 million Earth Expo & Convention Center took the meeting space at the Mohegan Sun to a whole new level.

Credit: Mohegan Sun Earth Expo & Convention Center



Credit: Hyatt Regency Seattle

The Hyatt Regency Seattle will be the largest meeting hotel in the Pacific Northwest when it opens this fall.

foot Executive Boardroom with a private outdoor terrace, 3,500 square feet of outdoor space and a 5,630-square-foot kitchen. On the entertainment side, Mohegan Sun is debuting GAME ON! this winter. Located inside the Expo Center, the 23,000-square-foot restaurant and bar will offer diversions such as bowling, Ping-Pong and karaoke.

A new entrant to the Northeast gaming market is MGM Springfield, opening August 24 in Springfield, Massachusetts. The 250-room property will be home to a 125,000-square-foot casino and upscale eateries including Cal Mare, by Michael Mina and The Chandler Steakhouse. The property offers 34,000 square feet of

meeting space, as well as an open-air plaza in view of the historic Springfield Armory. Other property highlights include Topgolf Swing Suites, retail outlets, a collection of New England art, a spa, fitness center and pool.

In western New York, The Chautauqua Harbor Hotel, a 135-room, AAA Four Diamond property, is located on the southeastern shores of Chautauqua Lake in the village of Celoron, near attractions such as the new National Comedy Center and the Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Museum. The hotel houses the Lakeview Ballroom and Conference Center, accommodating up to 300 attendees, and a patio overlooking the lake. The hotel also has its own small island with a gazebo, ideal for small gatherings.



The Chautauqua Harbor Hotel in western New York has its own small island with a gazebo.

ation lawn. Point Clear is a scenic beach hamlet near Fairhope, Alabama. When not enjoying the Gulf Coast shores, attendees can play at one of 10 tennis

courts, tee off at the Lakewood Club or visit the 20,000-square-foot Grand Spa. Also known for its extensive recreational amenities is Georgia's Sea Island



"It's great that I can go down the hallway and know that everybody's going to be mine — it's not a thoroughfare of the hotel."

Mary Alice Kahanek, CMP, Senior Manager, Events and Trade Shows, Goodman Manufacturing, Houston, TX

SOUTHEAST

Planners who are partial to Music City welcomed the opening of the JW Marriott Nashville in July. The 33-story tower houses 533 guest rooms and 50,000 square feet of function space, making it a major addition to Nashville's hotel portfolio. Property highlights include the award-winning Bourbon Steak by Michael Mina, Spa by JW and a collection of contemporary, music-themed art.

One of the largest hotel investments in the Southeast is the \$150 million expansion of the Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center in Kissimmee, Florida. The project will add 303 guest rooms to the 1,416-room resort and about 90,000 square feet of function space to the property's already massive 400,000 square feet. A new multilevel parking garage will be added by 2019, and the lodging and meeting space expansions are projected for completion in 2021.

This year marked the completion of a \$32 million, two-year renovation of the Grand Hotel Marriott Resort Golf Club & Spa, in Point Clear, Alabama. The 371-room property renovated its guest rooms and 38,000-plus square feet of function space, opened The Local Market and Bayside Grill and Southern Roots (complementing the Saltwater Grill and Grand Steakhouse) and added a recre-



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Credit: Lisa Diederich Photography

Music-themed art adorns the walls around the JW Marriott Nashville, which just opened in July.

Resort. This summer, the resort announced plans to invest \$25 million into enhancing The Lodge at Sea Island, adding six new cottages, an oceanfront pool and pool house. Completion is expected in November, when the resort will host the RSM Classic, an official PGA TOUR event held annually at Sea Island Golf Club. Golf enthusiasts will benefit from additional enhancements — a new state-of-the-art Golf Performance Center opening in early 2019, a fully renovated Sea Island's Plantation Course reopening in October 2019 and a putting course.

Savannah, Georgia-based Yates-Astro's attendees will experience these enhancements. The pest control company traditionally holds its Annual Managers Meeting at the resort. "Yates-Astro feels fortunate to be located close enough to one of the finest resorts in the country. It is because of this that we have held our Annual Managers meeting at Sea Island for the past 26 years," notes Anita Garris, office manager at Yates-Astro and planner of the event. The num-

ber of attendees has grown from 10 at the first meeting to 61 last year, a group size that is nicely accommodated in the Clubroom. "We also utilize the Sea Island Hudson and Summit boardrooms as a place for our branch locations to meet on Saturday," Garris adds. "The architecture and décor in the Sea Island meeting

spaces is beautiful. We have also had black-tie plated dinners in the Ocean View Room as well as casual buffet cookouts at Rainbow Island. This event gives everyone the opportunity to visit and enjoy Sea Island's delicious cuisine and fine wines. Whether casual or black tie,



After a two-year, \$32 million renovation, the Grand Hotel Marriott Resort Golf Club & Spa in Point Clear, Alabama, now has more meeting space and a recreation lawn.

Credit: Grand Hotel Marriott Resort Golf Club & Spa

they have always put together a wonderful menu for our event."

The conference services staff is also quite resourceful. "One year, we had scheduled a cookout at Rainbow Island, and had to move it indoors because of inclement weather," Garris says. "[Senior Conference Service Manager] Brittany

Blythe moved it to the Spanish Lounge at the last minute. A notice about the change was sent out to all of our guests. You would have never known that the Spanish Lounge wasn't our intended location."

Sea Island is part of the Golden Isles of Georgia, and groups can enjoy coastline views from many of the resort's meeting venues, which total more than 40,000 square feet.

Speaking of island resorts, a major new option opened last year in Nassau, Bahamas. Situated on Cable Beach, the Grand Hyatt Baha Mar offers 1,800 ocean, fountain and island-view guest rooms, including 230 luxury suites and residences. The property is a true destination resort, featuring a collection of

five restaurants, a 30,000-square-foot ESPA Spa, 100,000-square-foot casino, an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus Signature Design golf course and state-of-the-art tennis courts and facilities. At the same time, the property makes a strong bid for group business with the Baha Mar Convention, Arts & Entertainment Center, one of the Caribbean's largest meeting facilities at 82,000 square feet. That includes three unobstructed ballrooms (the largest spanning 29,600 square feet) and 16 breakout rooms. Overall, the Grand Hyatt offers 200,000 square feet of flexible indoor and outdoor function space.

Just as new 1,000-plus-room hotels are becoming game-changers in the meeting marketplaces of Seattle and Boston, the Grand Hyatt Baha Mar has given planners a major reason to consider the Bahamas. New properties mean new opportunities for groups, from the northern cities to the tropics. **C&IT**



Credit: Sea Island Resort

Golf enthusiasts will rejoice in the renovation of Georgia's Sea Island Resort, which will include a new state-of-the-art Golf Performance Center and a putting course.



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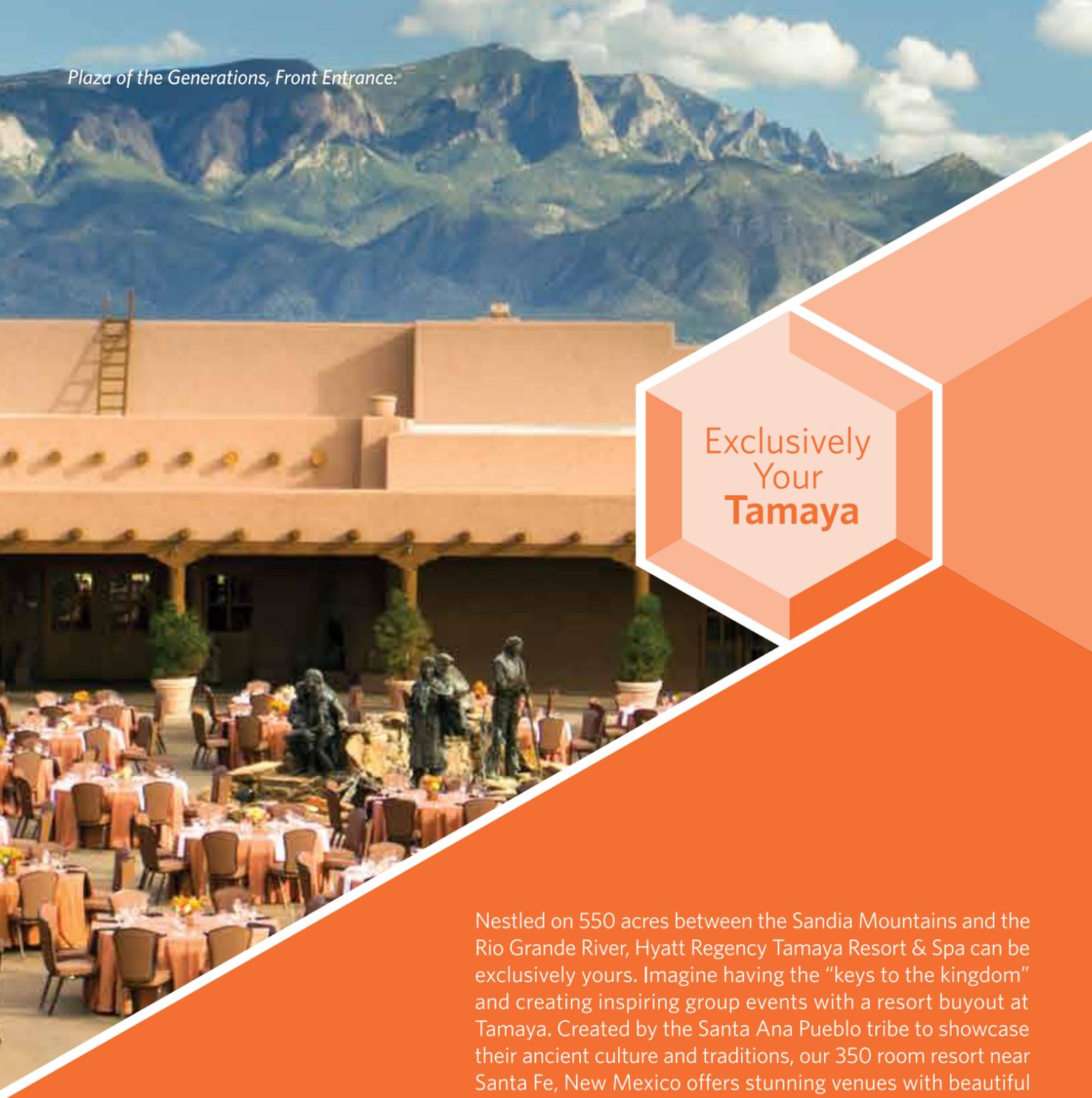
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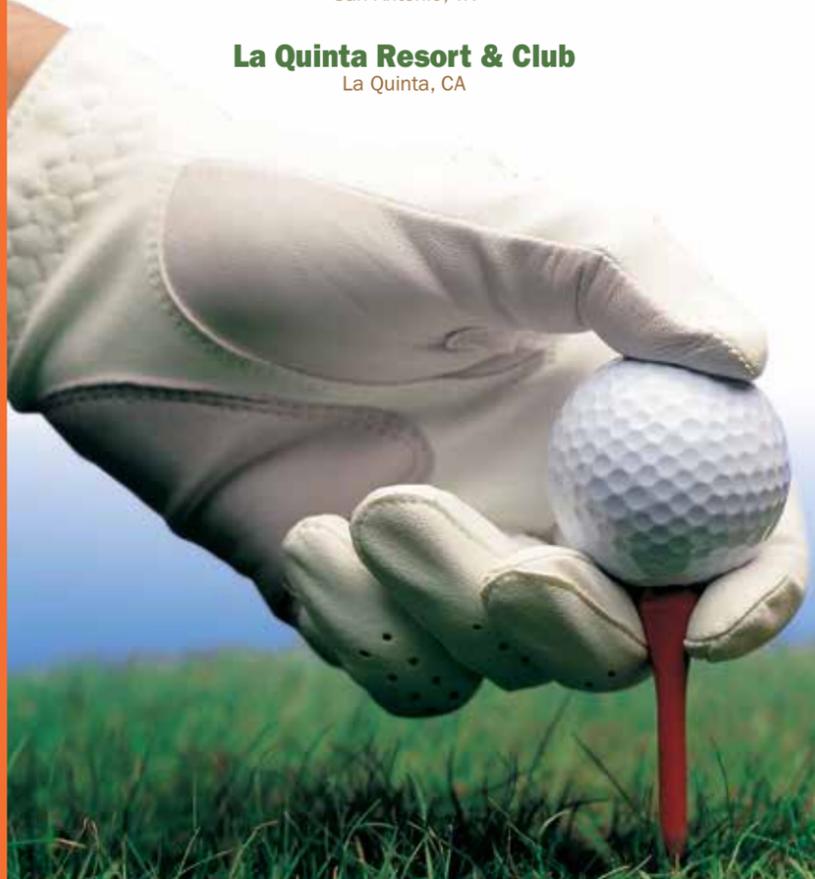
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Our 24th annual Greens of Distinction Awards special section recognizes the leaders who have demonstrated their excellence in designing and maintaining golf resorts that planners can count on. Consider these award-winning properties for your next golf program.



The Broadmoor

TWENTY-FOUR-TIME WINNER

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

Legendary Golf

Ranked among the best in the world, The Broadmoor's championship courses were designed by some of golf's most notable names — Donald Ross and Robert Trent Jones Sr. Over the past 100 years, The Broadmoor has played host to 28 national and international tournaments, including eight USGA tournaments, three U.S. Senior Open championships, two U.S. Amateur events and three U.S. Women's Open championships. Jack Nicklaus won his first major title on The Broadmoor's East Course in 1959; Annika Sorenstam took the women's title for her first major in 1995.

To honor The Broadmoor's rich past, a new Golf Heritage Hallway was created in The Broadmoor Golf Club. Beautiful and informative photos, panels and cases chronicle the traditions, the tournaments and the champions who wrote the pages of The Broadmoor's golfing legacy.



To enhance the golf experience for guests, The Broadmoor proudly partners with Callaway Golf. A custom club fitting program is available for those wanting the latest tech advancements to enhance their game, and new Callaway rental clubs are also available for play.

Dynamic Meeting Venues

The Broadmoor understands the unique attention required for successful meetings. With 185,000 sf of flex space, unparalleled accommodations and activities, The Broadmoor vows before an event is underway. From the 60,000-sf Broadmoor Hall to intimate spaces sprinkled through the resort, it's played host to conferences and special events since first opening in 1918.

Onsite, The Broadmoor boasts convenient tech that makes network-

ing solutions readily available, including wired and wireless internet for all meeting areas and guest rooms, onsite AV rentals and event production.

For a change of pace, groups of up to 60 can stay and meet at Cloud Camp, where 22 lodge rooms and cabins with spectacular 360-degree vistas are complemented by the 1,500-sf Overlook, a fully equipped, AV-ready meeting space.

Tastefully Yours

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

Getting Here

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

C&IT

Facts and Features:

- Guest Rooms/Suites: 784
- Meeting Rooms: 62
- Meeting Space: 185,000 sf
- Special Services and Amenities: Award-winning spa and tennis, outdoor adventures featuring fly fishing, rock climbing, falconry classes and a stunning wilderness zip line course ending at Seven Falls are part of The Broadmoor experience.



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THE BROADMOOR





Sea Island

SECOND-TIME WINNER

Steeped in golf tradition, Sea Island is home to three championship golf courses, including Seaside and Plantation, site of the PGA TOUR's RSM Classic, hosted each fall by Davis Love III, Sea Island touring professional, two-time Ryder Cup Captain and 2017 inductee into the World Golf Hall of Fame. Created in 1928 by Walter Travis, Plantation was redesigned in 1998 by Rees Jones and features ocean views and plentiful lakes.

Created in 1929 by Colt & Alison, Seaside was redesigned in 1999 by Tom Fazio. With 15 holes flanked by views of the ocean, sound and marsh, Seaside is Sea Island's signature course. Retreat Course, originally designed by



in the midst of a \$25 million enhancement program, which includes the addition of The Driftwood Course, an 18-hole putting course, opening in July 2018. Six new cottages with a total of 14 new sleeping rooms, an oceanfront pool and pool house debut ahead of the 2018 RSM Classic in November. In early 2019, a new, 17,000-sf Golf Performance Center opens with six instruction and club fitting bays, cutting-edge putting studio, full-service golf club workshop, gym with locker rooms, retail area and indoor

and outdoor meeting and event spaces. Phil Kenyon, recently named Director of Putting Instruction and one of the most sought-after putting instructors in the world, is designing the new putting studio for teaching and putter fitting. The existing Center continues to

serve as one of the finest instructional centers in the country, teaching every aspect of the game to all skill levels, from juniors to Open and Masters Champions.

An Overview

Since 1928, Sea Island has been known as an exceptional destination appealing to those who appreciate gracious service and heartfelt hospitality. With four Forbes Five Star experiences — The Cloister at Sea Island, The Lodge at Sea Island, The Spa at Sea Island and the Georgian Room restaurant — it is the only resort in the world to have received four Forbes Five-Star Awards for ten consecutive years. The only U.S. resort to host a G-8 Summit of world leaders, Sea Island provides exceptional settings and service for conferences and executive retreats.

Guest accommodations are available at The Cloister, a Mediterranean masterpiece; The Lodge, reminiscent of an English country manor or The Inn at Sea Island. A cottage option is also available.

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



Joe Lee, was renovated in 2001 by Davis and Mark Love and features a unique, dramatic layout.

Golf and Lodge Enhancements

Located between Seaside and Plantation, The Lodge at Sea Island is



Facts and Features:

- Guest Rooms/Suites: 390
- Meeting Rooms: 23
- Meeting Space: 40,000 sf (interior)
- Special Services and Amenities: Sea Island features three championship golf courses, the country's finest Golf Performance Center, five miles of private beach, Beach Club, five pools, tennis, squash, Yacht Club, Shooting School, sailing, water sports, hunting and more.

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Six New Cottages



New Pool and Pool House

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*, is adding new meeting and event space, sleeping rooms, a pool, and pool house. Once complete in November 2018, The Lodge will have 57 sleeping rooms and more than 11,000 square feet of meeting and event space, making it the perfect location for your next incentive trip, board of directors, or intimate corporate meeting. A new 18-hole putting course opens in July 2018 and a new Golf Performance Center debuts in early 2019, adding even more opportunities for an exceptional experience.



THE CLOISTER



THE LODGE

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Streamsong Resort

FOUR-TIME WINNER

Situated amid stunning scenery and hushed seclusion in Central Florida, Streamsong is a new luxury meeting and incentive destination intentionally designed in harmony with its natural surroundings and intensely committed to the highest aspirations of today's corporate elite. Streamsong combines golf at its purest and a resort experience at its absolute finest. It's rare that one resort can offer so many authentic experiences.

A Renowned and Revered Golf Experience

Opened in January 2013, Streamsong Red, designed by Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw, and Streamsong Blue, designed by Renaissance Golf Design (Tom Doak), rank on some of golf's most prestigious lists including Golf magazine's "Top 100 Courses in the U.S.," Streamsong Red #10, Streamsong Blue #14 and Golfweek's "Best Resort Courses."

In September 2017, Streamsong introduced a third course. Streamsong Black, designed by acclaimed architect Gil Hanse, is a dazzling par-73 championship layout offering breathtaking views of the vast landscape, which includes flowing elevation, and rolls, tumbles and sand ridges akin to the Sand Belt Region of Melbourne, Australia. This excit-



Credit: © Nile Young

ing addition features The Gauntlet, a two-acre putting course, and The Roundabout, a free-flowing practice area, each adding to the ultimate group experience. Adjacent to these, Streamsong Black's architecturally advanced clubhouse, including Bone Valley Tavern restaurant, showcases panoramic views of one of the most exciting additions to the game of golf today.

Designed to be walked, Streamsong Blue, Streamsong Red and Streamsong Black can host small, intimate groups as well as those of up to 288 players for tournaments, events and outings with the support of its PGA-certified staff.

But Streamsong is about much more than golf. The resort offers a distraction-free environment with 25,000 square feet of dedicated meet-

ing space. Thirteen large and small meeting rooms can accommodate 10 to 500 in complete comfort and privacy. General session and breakout rooms are conveniently clustered for effective program flow.

Set on 16,000 acres, Streamsong invites groups to get immersed in the outdoors via onsite guided bass-fishing expeditions, sporting clays, archery, tennis and a nature trail. Guest favorites for relaxation and rejuvenation include a lakeside infinity-edge pool and the unique grotto-style AcquaPietra Spa. Six distinct dining options include P2O5, Restaurant Fifty-Nine, Fragmentary Blue, Sotto-Terra, Hemy's and the Bone Valley Tavern. The resort boasts a variety of breathtaking outdoor venues from an intimate rooftop terrace, covered patios and pavilions to expansive lawns — all taking full advantage of the lush lakeside location.

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



Facts and Features:

- Guest Rooms: 228
- Meeting Rooms: 13
- Meeting Space: 25,000 square feet indoor; 60,000 square feet outdoor
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The Biggest Names in Hospitality are Making Bigger Moves

It is encouraging that hoteliers who have served the corporate meetings market for numerous decades are still quite focused on optimizing that service, as opposed to resting on their laurels. From Marriott, the world's largest hotel operator, to a relatively small chain like Rosen, the brands that many planners rank as "preferred" continually seek to refine their meeting facilities, provide the latest event technology, create innovative F&B experiences, incorporate wellness programs and more.

Hilton Hotels & Resorts

What better example than the on-

going group-centric initiatives of Hilton Hotels & Resorts, a company with nearly 100 years of experience in partnering with groups. "From the first airport hotel concept to introducing revolutionary in-room tech, we continuously redefine and lead the standards for corporate travel by providing guests with the offerings and amenities that matter to them the most," says David C. Marr, senior vice president and global head, full service brands. Research into the current needs of the business traveler is guiding that effort. "The corporate meetings market is a major priority for Hilton Hotels & Resorts and, this

By Patrick Simms

year, we launched a specialized initiative to better understand the new generation of business travelers and help them maximize their experiences traveling for work," says Marr. "The brand conducted a study that revealed the challenges they face, the perks they seek and the incentives that keep them coming back."

One interesting result of the study is that young professionals face certain health and wellness challenges when on the road: "Sixty-five percent of those surveyed admit they regularly pack workout gear but end up not using it, and 44 percent have gained weight due to travel-

"From the first airport hotel concept to introducing revolutionary in-room tech, we continuously redefine and lead the standards for corporate travel."

David C. Marr, Senior Vice President and Global Head, Full Service Brands, Hilton Hotels & Resorts



Credit: Hilton Hotels & Resorts

ing for business," Marr notes. "At Hilton, we have seen a significant increase in the number of corporate travelers who continue to seek out health and wellness offerings when traveling for work. To address this, we have created programs and offerings that make staying healthy easy and enjoyable for meeting attendees." Hilton's Meet with Purpose assists planners with integrating wellness elements into their programs. "Popular offerings include the 'Yoga and Yogurt' package, which offers attendees a chance to participate in an expertly led yoga class and then visit a gourmet yogurt parfait bar for a healthy balanced breakfast," says Marr.

This year, Hilton will test a new Meet with Purpose experience: "Mini Boost Camp," an active meeting break and fitness boot camp that is fun for attendees of all fitness levels. In-room fitness is also a focus of the Hilton brand, which recently introduced Five Feet to Fitness at select properties, including Parc 55 San Francisco, Hilton McLean Tysons Corner, Hilton Anatole and Hilton Austin. Each room includes a Fitness Kiosk, a touch-screen display where guests can receive equipment tutorials and follow guided workout routines. The room also features an indoor bike from British cycling innovator Wattbike and a Gym Rax™ functional training station.

In partnership with Aktiv Solutions, Hilton has also created more than 200 fitness videos as part of Five Feet to Fitness.

Hyatt Hotels Corporation

Wellness is also a focus of the meetings team at Hyatt. "We care for people so they can be their best — and being your best starts with well-being," says Steve Enselein, senior vice president, events. "One way this comes to life for

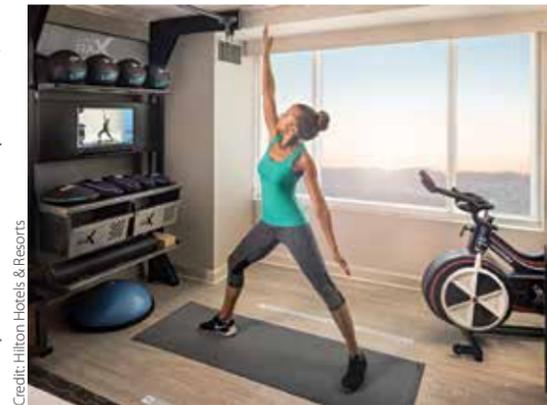
meetings and groups is through our F&B offerings. With personal preference menus that allow guests to select their option once at the table and seasonal banquet menus that utilize fresh options, we are able to cater to a variety of tastes and dietary needs and utilize food at the peak of its quality. As well-being continues to grow in importance for our guests and customers, we are identifying opportunities to create more well-being touchpoints for meetings and groups, guided by the expertise of our wellness brands Miraval and Exhale."

On the technology front, Hyatt is committed to enhancing digital engagement with its guests. Julia Vander Ploeg was recently named senior vice president, global head of digital. Vander Ploeg will report to Mark Vondrasek, global chief commercial officer. According to Vondrasek, she "is a dynamic and reputable leader in the digital space and will play a critical part in helping re-imagine Hyatt's digital capabilities and increase the frequency and depth of engagement with our guests." Last year, Hyatt partnered with SONIFI Solutions, Inc. to deliver a personalized in-room streaming solution to hotel guests. SONIFI's STAYCAST solution, powered by Google Chromecast, was integrated with the World of Hyatt mobile app. Participating Hyatt hotels offer guests simple, seamless and secure streaming of their favorite apps, such as Netflix, Hulu, YouTube and more than 1,000 others, to the in-room television through a Chromecast device.

With regard to meetings technology specifically, the company offers planners a number of tools. "Our Meetings on Demand tool, which focuses on small meetings, provides planners with a hotel's real-time availability and guest room pricing so planners can easily plan

and confirm a meeting online," notes Enselein. "Once the order is submitted, an event specialist will reach out to the planner to confirm details and share recommendations to enhance the event." The technological assistance continues once the meeting is underway. "Our Event Concierge app provides a way for planners to ensure all goes smoothly," he says. "With this app, planners can make requests to the hotel in real time, such as asking for more water. The request is then routed directly to the Hyatt team member who will fulfill the request, allowing the meeting or event to continue without any disruption." Post event, Hyatt's Group Bill allows planners to receive a streamlined final bill, Enselein adds.

Planners can also enjoy the convenience of partnering with Hyatt's National



Credit: Hilton Hotels & Resorts

Hilton recently introduced a new in-room fitness program called Five Feet to Fitness at select properties.

Event Planning Managers, "who travel from meeting to meeting with their designated group to ensure consistency and quality of service across events," says Enselein. "With a deep knowledge of the customer's culture, National Event Planning Managers are able to work between the hotel and customer to make onsite processes easier." In general, the brand's meetings professionals focus on "cultivating personal relationships with planners in order to serve as an extension of their team, starting with the planning phase all the way through to execution," he says. "With more personal engagements, we can better understand planners' needs and collaborate to identify solutions that will work best for planners and their meeting attendees."



Credit: Omni Hotels & Resorts

Omni Resorts pride themselves on creating customized experiences for their guests, such as sports and wellness activities.

Omni Hotels & Resorts

Sensitivity to the individual needs of group clients is also a hallmark of Omni Hotels & Resorts. “We pride ourselves on really creating a customized experience for any group — from teambuilding activities, sports and wellness activities to innovative food & beverage experiences,” says Cara Banasch, vice president of sales for the brand. “We believe every group is unique, so we work with our clients to make sure we give them a memorable, tailored experience that matches their goals.”

Providing unique event spaces is also

a strong point of the brand. Examples include a speakeasy with four professional bowling lanes at the Omni Louisville Hotel and Omni Frisco Hotel’s partnership with the Dallas Cowboys’ world headquarters, which affords groups access to Cowboys’ venues. In general, the company emphasizes the local character of each of its properties. “Our brand encourages regional focus and local flavor, allowing experiences at each property to be unique,” says Banasch. “This allows our CSMs and culinary teams to work together and create meaningful F&B offerings that are creative and play to the strength of the property.”

Flexibility in meeting planners’ needs and wishes is also enabled by Omni’s ownership structure. “Because of our unique ownership structure, we can be the most nimble partner to accomplish the goals of each planner,” says Banasch. “This structure allows us to be flexible and open to creative vision and innovative use of our spaces.” Planners also find it easy to work with Omni, thanks to “a standardized, global meetings contract that’s easy to understand and has fair and reasonable remedies when necessary,” she adds. “Similarly, we have

a two-page contract to make it easy for planners booking short-term meetings and events.”

To facilitate the logistics of planning, Omni has established a partnership with Encore Event Technologies. “Many of our convention center hotels are experimenting with technology that will map out their meeting spaces. Additionally, we are looking at enhancements that will allow for technologically advanced site visits,” Banasch says.

Rosen Hotels & Resorts

Rosen’s collection of convention properties includes the 800-room Rosen Plaza, 1,334-room Rosen Centre and 1,501-room AAA Four Diamond Rosen Shingle Creek. When combined, the hotels form a synergy for larger groups by offering 700,000 gross square feet and 3,635 guest rooms and suites within minutes of each other. The 44-year-old company has hometown roots, and its staff knows Orlando, one of the meeting industry’s pre-eminent cities.

Leslie Menichini, the company’s vice president, sales and marketing, elaborates on the proficiency of the sales staff: “We have a cohesive, dedicated team that

truly exemplifies something we call the Rosen Difference. Not only does our entire hotel staff deliver excellence every day, they shatter expectations. I truly believe this is the cornerstone to our overall huge repeat business and multi-year contracts.” She adds: “The longevity of our sales team is also a bit unusual. I’ve been with Rosen Hotels & Resorts for 17 years and will be here when I retire. We have a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with planners from our sales team, more than 50 percent of whom have been with the company 10-plus years. This is an incredible benefit to planners — and our team — who are fortunate enough to build long-term relationships and that all-important ‘short-hand’ that makes a planner’s life just that much easier.”

Rosen Hotels & Resorts is also continually enhancing its trio of properties. The lobby at Rosen Shingle Creek features a new golden palette and metal art murals displaying the colors of the sunset, and the communal seating areas have been expanded throughout the popular Headwaters Lounge. Rosen Centre guest rooms have recently been refreshed with new furnishings, and this fall, Rosen Plaza



“We believe every group is unique, so we work with our clients to make sure we give them a memorable, tailored experience that matches their goals.”

Cara Banasch, Vice President of Sales
Omni Hotels & Resorts

will introduce stylish new décor for its lobby and meeting space.

MGM Resorts International

MGM Resorts is making major strides in its Las Vegas meetings offerings this year with the recently completed expansion of ARIA’s LEED Gold-certified convention center (adding 200,000 square feet) and the MGM Grand Conference Center expansion, adding 250,000 square feet when it opens in December. In addition, Monte Carlo’s transformation into Park MGM has introduced Phase I of its new 77,000-square-foot conference space. As part of Phase II, Park MGM introduced Las Vegas’ first executive meeting center, Madison Meeting Center, and will debut the Ideation Studio in the fourth quarter. These high-touch, high-

tech meeting venues are designed to maximize productivity for small groups.

Additional space is, of course, helpful in accommodating more business meetings, but “we didn’t just add space, we put a lot of thought into making sure we had the appropriate amount of space for the amount of group business we need to make a 4,000-room building actually work,” explains Michael Dominguez, chief sales officer of MGM Resorts. One of the most thoughtful components of MGM Resorts’ meetings product, and in the industry overall, is Stay Well Meetings. “We definitely have doubled down on the Stay Well component, which is now at Mirage, Park MGM and MGM Grand, and with the additional space at MGM Grand, we’ve added more Stay Well components. At MGM, when we

More Brand Developments



Rendering of Live! by Loews

Loews Hotels

- Loews is expanding its partnership with Universal Orlando with the 600-room Aventura Hotel, opening in August. The property, run by Loews, is designed to appeal to a younger demographic.
- The \$150 million Live! by Loews – Arlington, Texas, is set to open in 2019. The 301-room hotel will be part of Texas Live!, a dining, entertainment and hospitality destination. The property will include the 35,000-square-foot Grand Event Center.
- Opening in 2020, Live! by Loews – St. Louis, Missouri, will be part of Ballpark Village’s \$260 million expansion. The property will include 216 luxury guest rooms, 17,000 square feet of meeting and special event space with views of Busch Stadium, downtown St. Louis and the Gateway Arch.
- The 800-room Loews Kansas City Hotel, opening in spring 2020, will house 60,000 square feet of function space that is connected to the Kansas City Convention Center.

Marriott International

- This summer, Marriott acquired the 1,000-room Sheraton Grand Phoenix for \$255 million. The company will pursue a major renovation of the hotel’s guest rooms and public space, beginning in 2019. The hotel houses about 77,000 square feet of meeting space.

- The W Nashville is expected to open in 2020. The 346-room hotel will offer 13,500 square feet of meeting space. According to Anthony Ingham, global brand leader, W Hotels Worldwide, the new-build hotel will be an ideal fit for the Music City market. “W has always been inextricably linked with music. From our star-studded live performances in W Living Rooms to our Billboard partnership uncovering emerging talent, from W Sound Suites (in-hotel recording studios) across the globe to our groundbreaking new music festival series ‘WAKE UP CALL’ — W Hotels has earned an authentic and long-held place within the music industry,” he says.
- There are more than 50 W Hotels now open globally, including the recently opened W Brisbane, W Amman, W Panama and W Shanghai – The Bund, as well as the soon-to-open W Costa Rica and W Kuala Lumpur. The company aims to have 75 hotels globally by the end of 2020.



Rendering of the W Nashville

Wyndham Hotel Group

- In January, Wyndham Worldwide acquired La Quinta’s hotel franchise and management businesses for \$1.95 billion. Wyndham announced that members of its Wyndham Rewards loyalty program and of La Quinta Returns will get a one-to-one transfer of points between the two programs and a complimentary status match.
- This summer, Wyndham Worldwide split into two companies: Wyndham Hotels and Resorts and vacation ownership and exchange company Wyndham Destinations.



C&IT



Park MGM introduced a new conference space, as well as Las Vegas' first executive meeting center, Madison Meeting Center, which will later debut the innovative Ideation Studio.

first launched Stay Well, it was 40 guest rooms. The second phase ran up to 170 guest rooms, the third phase almost 300, and we're now north of 400 guest rooms. And it's all based on demand."

MGM Resorts collaborates with Delos, the pioneer in wellness real estate, to design Stay Well rooms. "The wellness push is not going away, and we're trying to take the science and the research that is behind Delos and the wellness side of it because we think that will be sustainable," Dominguez says. "And we try to educate the industry on what is important and what the science is telling us we should be doing as hotel owners and operators. Delos does a lot of work with the tech world, and when you have technology companies converting their offices to be better in terms of wellness with lighting, air and ambience, we have a belief that when they're sending people to meetings, they're going to be looking for the same type of environment. The reason that's important to us is that the technology sector is our No. 1 vertical."

Speaking of technology, the Madison Meeting Center and particularly the Ideation Studio represent the height of meeting technology. "The Madison Meeting Center was built with the thought process of a conference center, which I know is not novel in its own concept, but we then combined Stay Well and other technology pieces to make sure we were being a little more innovative on what that space looks like," Dominguez explains. "In bringing Stay Well into the space, the lighting is probably the most critical [element]. A blue hue of light will

actually make us more alert and more conducive for learning and mental acuity than yellow-tone lights, which we've had in our meeting rooms for actually the last 30 years. And with LED lighting today, it doesn't cost me a penny more to have the right hue of light."

The conference center environment in the Ideation Lab will include cutting-edge Cisco technology called Webex Teams. "The difference with this system is that there are no wires, there's nothing to connect, but it's not Bluetooth," Dominguez explains. "Once you sign in to a Team room, you're part of the room, so anything being presented, anything on screen you'll be able to download, keep with you, reference and communicate with other attendees about it if you'd like. But what I think is most important in these types of spaces is that the technology is learning and device agnostic. Which means it will work on IOS, Windows, mobile device, tablet, laptop, etc. And that is unique because when I find these high-tech spaces, I also need a high-tech degree to make it all work. And what we're trying to do is create a space that is so user-friendly that the space will think for you. What I'm most excited about is that it's the first time Cisco is using this technology outside of their campus in a hotel environment."

Caesars Entertainment

Like MGM Resorts, Caesars Entertainment is also stepping up its game in Las Vegas' meetings industry. Caesars FORUM, a \$375 million, 550,000-square-foot conference center, recently broke

ground at the center of the Strip. The venue will have skybridge access to Harrah's Las Vegas and The LINQ Hotel and Casino, and pedestrian bridge access to Flamingo Las Vegas and the LINQ Promenade retail district.

Caesars FORUM will boast 300,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, including two 110,000-square-foot pillarless ballrooms, two 40,000-square-foot ballrooms, six state-of-the-art boardrooms and more than 100 breakout rooms. For convenient move-in, the venue is being built on one floor, along with nine easily accessible loading docks. The LEED Silver-rated facility will also feature FORUM Plaza, the first 100,000-square-foot dedicated outdoor meeting and event space in Las Vegas.

Caesars Entertainment's new offerings in the meetings market are not limited to Las Vegas, however. This spring, the company announced plans to bring the Caesars brand to two hotels in Dubai's Jumeirah Beach region and to the Puerto Los Cabos region in Mexico. And the company also recently broke ground on a new conference center at Harrah's Cherokee in Cherokee, North Carolina. The \$200 million conference center and hotel tower will offer 83,000 square feet of conference space and 725 guest rooms, along with dining and retail outlets.

This brief overview of hotel brand developments shows that major chains are actively developing both state-of-the-art meeting venues (e.g., Caesars FORUM and MGM's Madison Meeting Center) as well as avant-garde wellness programs (e.g., Hilton's Meet with Purpose and MGM's Stay Well). But fundamentally, becoming a preferred brand is about the quality of the convention sales and services staff. MGM Resorts provides just one example of a top-notch meetings staff: "Almost 90 percent of our convention services staff are CMPs," Dominguez notes. "We believe in making sure they are as educated as our industry is, and that they're up on the latest trends. Our expectation is to continue to reinvent the experience, not to just execute, and we continue to do that on an annual basis." **C&IT**

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Incentive Travel



Bring the Whole Family

By Christine Loomis

When Families Feel Welcome, Attendees Feel Grateful

Inviting families to accompany attendees at meetings and incentive events provides an array of potential positives. Including families can boost attendance, underscore and promote a family-friendly corporate culture and serve as motivation for employees striving to qualify for annual corporate reward programs.

There's no one kind of company, no one size of meeting, no one type of event that works for bringing family along. The addition of families can be a positive part of any corporate gathering.

Eric Czerlonka, principle creative director with Czerlonka Productions, brought an annual incentive group of 250 to The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Colorado, last year.

"This particular client," he says, "wants to support the importance of family and views this as a way of thanking the entire family for their support throughout the year."

Czerlonka worked closely with The Broadmoor to create children's programming that was available to parents during their stay. "It included

games, movies and snacks throughout the day, along with access to the resort's many amenities. In addition, Play at The Broadmoor, the resort's combination dining and games venue, offered activities such as shuffleboard, pool and bowling for the families. We found this to be a great benefit in our decision-making process."

Czerlonka notes that the addition of family did not directly affect the choice of destination or resort. "The beauty of the resort, its surroundings and the service are key to the success of

the program," he says. "However, a family component does change how we view the resort options."

Activities, dining and choices are key, whether or not family is along. "The Broadmoor offers luxury shops right on property, golf and amazing restaurants," Czerlonka points out.

Additionally, he says, there are options off-property that make The Broadmoor and Colorado Springs an ideal incentive destination. "Seven Falls, The Broadmoor's fly-fishing camp, Garden of the Gods and the Pikes Peak Cog Railway (currently closed for an operational assessment) are just a few of the experiences that groups gravitate toward."

Czerlonka also likes that whether attendees fly into Colorado Springs or Denver, the transfers are easy. "Transfers from Colorado Springs to The Broadmoor are very convenient, and the close proximity allows you to manage transportation costs," he says. "For those who decide to fly into Denver, we've found that the drive to Colorado Springs is one that is full of amazing views, and our guests don't mind the 90-minute trip to the resort."

This particular group had meal functions for all attendees including family, with at least one surprising result. "The culinary team at The Broadmoor was very creative with providing menus for the kids. We actually found adults going for the children's food items at times!"



Eric Czerlonka
Principle Creative Director
Czerlonka Productions
Melrose, MA

"Our goal is always to give them peace of mind that their children are in good hands."

At the end of the day, Czerlonka says there are some differences in meetings and programs with families vs. those without. "I believe the big difference is that the parents are looking for a balance and a safe alternative to having the children with them all day. Our goal is always to give them peace of mind that their children are in good hands.

To that end, we dedicated event managers from our team who partnered with The Broadmoor team in caring for the kids. From a planner's perspective, this is definitely an additional element that needs to be considered."

When a western U.S.-based corporate group was looking for a site for its incentive program, it turned to Kip Lambert, CIS, with Destinations, Inc. of Utah. Ultimately, the group of 720 headed to the Grand Hyatt Kauai on the Hawaiian island of Kauai.

"Hawaii in general and Kauai specifically are wonderful, family-friendly destinations," Lambert says. "Additionally, availability of airlift, ease of access, cost, quality of lodging and entertainment all contributed to the selection."

Lambert says that having family along is important to the company and to its employees. "Company officials feel that having family attend helps qualifiers maximize their incentive experience by being able to share the trip with those important in their life. And each qualifier wanted to earn this trip so that his or her family could enjoy this incentive vacation experience."

Lambert notes that the Grand Hyatt Kauai perfectly fit this group's culture and the attendees' needs. "The Grand Hyatt Kauai has a great mix of beautiful public spaces, pools, kids' areas and a large ballroom, making it a great choice for this program."

While arranging childcare was



Above: The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Colorado, offers Play at The Broadmoor, the resort's combination dining and games venue, with family activities such as billiards and bowling. In addition, specialty restaurants (right) provide kids' menus.





The Grand Hyatt Kauai on the Hawaiian island of Kauai has a wonderful blend of scenery, pools, kids' areas and a spacious ballroom.

the responsibility of each qualifier, Lambert says that families were encouraged, though not required, to attend all activities and group events. There was just one function open to qualifiers only.

In terms of extra work during the meeting, Lambert notes that the only added consideration was making sure that enough child-friendly items were available at the buffets.

That said, adding family to the mix does complicate some planning. "The biggest challenge to bringing family along was the extra logistics needed in booking airfare, rental cars and other group transportation," Lambert says.

In addition, having families in attendance may lessen peer-to-peer qualifier interaction during the event. "I feel like group events definitely end sooner or fizzle out quicker because people want to attend the event yet also want to end on time or end early so that they can spend the max amount of time with family. This makes meetings succinct and to the point with much less mingling afterward," Lambert says.

To other planners who might work on a family-friendly program, Lambert has this advice: "Make attendees aware that if their airfare is booked



Kip Lambert, CIS
Brand Ambassador
Destinations, Inc. of Utah
South Jordan, UT

"The biggest challenge to bringing family along was the extra logistics needed in booking airfare, rental cars and other group transportation."

and then they decide later that they want to bring family, it can be difficult at that point to book the same flights at an affordable cost or to find seats together," he says. "I suggest you have them first make the decision as to whether or not they are bringing family and then book airfare only after that decision is made."

Additionally, he suggests, "Provide some kind of group childcare during those events where just the qualifier is invited. That might include games, an activity, etc."

Noël Mladinich, CMP, CMM, manager of meetings and events at Raymond James Financial, Inc., brought a group of 100, including family members, to the Salamander Resort & Spa in Middleburg, Virginia. "When our attendees are happy, they are more productive, and including family helps support the company's culture," Mladinich says.

The group was looking for a property that offered a relaxed and inviting setting and family-friendly activities, and Salamander fit the bill. "Salamander Resort has great meeting space, sleeping rooms and dining options," Mladinich says. "Plus, there's a wonderful pool area and kids' activities, including the unique equestrian options."

In addition, the region and resort also offered good airlift options and overall costs were in line with the meeting budget. Typically, the primary attendees spent their mornings in business meetings while family members had free time.

"We offered a family-friendly activity and invited guests of all ages to meal functions. We had a kid-friendly buffet at the dinner and s'mores at our fire-pit farewell function. We also had lawn games and a photographer on hand for family photos," Mladinich notes.

There were no challenges in organizing the meeting. In fact, Mladinich says, including family is an enhancement. "It adds depth and a personal touch to a business meeting. It's nice to see attendees with their families and for those families to get to know one another. Attendees truly appreciate being able to bring their loved ones, and they enjoy sharing the experience with them."

To other planners and companies trying to decide whether or not to include families in a corporate meeting or incentive program, Mladinich says, "Give it a try. I think you'll find it provides a high ROI."

Families Abroad

Family-friendly meetings aren't limited to those taking place within the United States. It's not unusual for incentive programs located in other parts of the globe to include family members as well — and with good reason.

Michael Dalton, CIS, president of



Michael Dalton, CIS
President
SITE Ireland
Dublin, Ireland

"It's a way for the company to...give the qualifiers a once-in-a-lifetime travel experience that they are able to share with the ones that they love."

SITE Ireland, with Moloney & Kelly, part of the Hosts Global family of DMCs, says incentives in particular make sense for family members.

"By the nature of the business of incentive travel, qualifiers have gone above and beyond their targets, mean-

ing they are likely to have spent a few late nights at the office and time away from their family. The incentive program is a reward not just for the qualifiers, but also for their families. It's a way for the company to thank the spouse and kids for their support and understanding throughout the year and to give the qualifiers a once-in-a-lifetime travel experience that they are able to share with the ones that they love.

"Time with family is precious," Dalton adds, "so companies recognized that by rewarding a qualifier's entire family, it also benefits the company significantly by generating huge loyalty among the staff."

Dalton worked on an annual incentive program for a North American client last July that included 75 couples plus children. The group stayed at The Killarney Park Hotel in County Kerry and Dromoland Castle in County Clare. The choices of areas to visit and specific hotels were influenced by the fact that children would be present.

"A safe, secure destination is a priority for any incentive program, but beyond this, it was more detail oriented in relation to property and activities," Dalton says. "Both locations used in this program have a strong reputation for delivering exceptional experiences for families on leisure as well as corporate incentives, so this was a good added bonus. We ensured there were child-friendly activities and a dedicated space with childcare professionals to run activities for children while parents were in meetings."



Ireland is a great choice for family-friendly hotels abroad. Whether they're horseback riding or hiking, everyone will enjoy the journey.

Moreover, Dalton says, "Air access from North America is extensive to Ireland with additional routes being added every year, making it an ideal location for North American clients. The quality of both properties is world class, and the value proposition for the destination is exceptional."

For this particular group, Dalton notes, "Children joined all of the evening events, and a special menu was designed to cater for their needs as would be done for any other attendee. The entertainment was all family-friendly and interactive."

The only real issue regarded setting up certain activities. "It was important to set minimum ages on some of the activities, and as we didn't know before registration how many children would attend or what their ages would be, it made it difficult to predict."

Like others, Dalton says that including children introduces some complexity to the planning process. "It adds another layer to the planning aspect having to ensure that you have an additional space to accommodate the children's needs and ensure that they have the same fantastic destination experience as the qualifier."

Dalton's best advice to planners working on a program that includes children is: "Always add a contingency into your budget to allow for any additional unforeseen expenses that may arise, such as ad hoc activity packs for children during transfers. Ensure that your DMC can provide you with the maximum occupancy per room in each property and specify bed types, along with what is classified as a child age versus an adult at the proposal stage."

Nicky de Champlain is part of another Hosts Global DMC, JPdI Destination Management Canada, based in Quebec. She worked with a group of 375 for an annual convention based at Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City. She says that the fact the event takes place in July makes it right for family inclusion. "It allows families to be together during the summer when children are, for most



Nicky de Champlain
Director of Sales
JPdI Destination
Management Canada
Quebec, Canada

"We found that the participants were more relaxed knowing their families were with them, yet they were also enjoying the conference program."

part, out of school," she says. "Parents can attend the business meetings yet still be with their families for a portion of the day."

De Champlain also notes that including families had a "huge bearing" on the selection of the city and hotel. "Quebec City is safe, easy to walk and offers a variety of restaurants, shops and attractions. And many of these are within a short walking (distance) from the hotel."

A dedicated program for children was offered during the convention. "The same space in the hotel was booked for the duration of the meeting," she says. "It had specific opening times with a specific schedule of activities, days and evenings. And qualified personnel were onsite at all times the Children's Club was in operation."

The Club offered activities, games

and workshops for a range of ages, and food and beverages were also served to the children at the Club. In addition, de Champlain says, "We also customized off-site activities to cater to families, both cultural and active."

Among the family-friendly events at the convention was a Family Day. "We had strolling and interactive entertainment, and a special child-friendly menu was created," de Champlain says. "Specific food stations with lower tables were adapted for children, and there were mixed seating areas with lots of colors that were vibrant and fun. A special reserved area was also set up for children, which provided better viewing of the stage and the main entertainment show."

There was a gala evening for adults only at an off-site venue while a special evening for children was offered within the hotel. The children's final night was grand, fun and made them feel very special!" de Champlain says.

In considering the differences between meetings with and without families, de Champlain says, "We found that the participants were more relaxed knowing their families were with them, yet they were also enjoying the conference program. The participants enjoyed every little bit of free time they had to be with their families. They got to discover a city that they may have never traveled to as a family. The participants were very appreciative of what was offered for the children."

While de Champlain agrees that inviting families can boost attendance, she also points out that there's a financial factor to consider. "It's OK to charge a minimal fee to bring children," she says. "To do it right, make sure you have the budget to have the proper program in place. If you don't have the money to do it right, don't include children."

Planners seem to be in agreement that while families can add some logistical challenges and unforeseen expenses, the positives and benefits of having them along, for attendees as well as for their companies, are well worth it. **C&IT**

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The Meeting Room OF THE Future

Are planners willing to change the way they think and embrace a new approach?

Over the past decade, the planning and execution of corporate meetings have been transformed, primarily by relentlessly innovative and far-reaching technologies, into something more sophisticated than what had preceded, almost unchanged, for a half-century. But throughout that remarkable metamorphosis, one element has remained virtually unchanged — the meeting room.

Now, ongoing breakthroughs in brain science and learning — combined with an ever-growing exploration of and commitment to attendee

engagement and interactivity — have begun to have a profound impact on what the meeting room of the future will look and feel like.

But it's an open question just how far along those considerations actually are. "It seems to me that the issue is late in being discussed by the meeting industry," says Samantha Meigs, Ph.D., director of experience design and associate professor of history at the University of Indianapolis. "I did a workshop for planners at MPI's World Education Congress, which was held in Indianapolis in June. And based on what I heard there, and what I see else-

where, it appears to me that the issue is being discussed in pieces and then only partly implemented. I also think, based on what I see and hear, that this is an issue that is really just now being discovered and talked about."

The element of the topic that most interests Meigs is that in the long run, the ongoing and dramatic breakthroughs in brain science and learning will eventually lead to what she dubs a legitimate sea change in the way meeting rooms are designed and meetings are conducted.

But based on her direct observations, such considerations are currently in their early stages.



Meanwhile, Meigs — who plans conferences in the history department at her university — believes that neither meeting planners nor vendors

“There are certainly some planners who are open to innovation, but a lot of the people were automatically defaulting to what they had always done before.”

Samantha Meigs, Ph.D., Director of Experience Design and Associate Professor of History, University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN

have yet approached the issue in a comprehensive or “holistic” way.

As evidence of that, she references the 2018 “Meeting Room of

the Future” report released in June by the International Association of Conference Centers (IACC), the organization’s third annual look at

the issue. This year’s report focused on supplier and vendor perceptions, while last year’s reflected the views of meeting planners.

Meigs cites a key finding in the new report: Resistance to change among meeting planners is an obstacle to progress. “Mike Van Der Vijver of Mind Meetings notices,” the report says, “that while meeting planners discuss the need for creating memorable meeting experiences, creativity and co-working between delegates, there is a continuation of relatively traditional programming and often a resistance to changes in meeting formats.”

“That finding is something I also found to be true in the workshop I did at MPI,” Meigs says. “There are certainly some planners who are open to innovation, but a lot of the people

were automatically defaulting to what they had always done before."

Ellen Sinclair, the Brunswick, New Jersey-based senior vice president of major hotel and IACC-certified conference center operator Benchmark, A Global Hospitality Company, sees that longstanding criticism of meeting planners abating. "I see that shifting significantly now," says Sinclair, who has chaired the IACC report team for each of its three years. "And one reason for that is that at Benchmark, we typically see a turnover of 30 to 40 percent per year among meeting planners we work with. So there is a new, younger generation of planners coming on board every year. And those new planners are embracing change. They're willing to try new things."



Ellen Sinclair, Senior Vice President
Benchmark, Brunswick, NJ

Michael Dominguez, chief sales officer at MGM Resorts International in Las Vegas, goes further. He categorically rejects the claim that planners remain resistant to change. "Candidly, I see the opposite of that as true," Dominguez says. "Everybody is trying to change their meetings now. What I have found, though, is that too many suppliers, partners and vendors have not been good resources to tell planners how to do that and help them do it."

A Low Bar?

Dominguez's premise seems to be somewhat reinforced by what the 2018 IACC report touts as its most significant finding. "The report shows that high-quality internet will be the most important meeting element in the coming years, and that the success of meetings today depends on the quality of a meeting venue's internet infrastructure," IACC CEO Mark Cooper noted in releasing the report. "Some of those surveyed reported to have created 'internet disaster recovery plans' in the event of internet outages mid-event, a sure sign that venues and planners understand the impor-

tant role that internet plays in meeting collaboration and connectivity."

Widely respected, Bellingham, Washington-based meeting industry technology expert Corbin Ball, who served as a volunteer on all three IACC reports, reinforces that conclusion. He, too, cites the ongoing need for high-quality, consistent internet service as a vital interest in meeting rooms. "To me," he says, "that ranks higher than anything else. And Wi-Fi is truly the lifeblood of meeting communications today."

That said, Ball adds, the

"There is a new, younger generation of planners coming on board every year. And those new planners are embracing change. They're willing to try new things."

still unreached frontier on the ever-closer horizon is adequate bandwidth at every hotel, conference center and convention center in the country — and the world. "And the venues are definitely realizing that and stepping up now," he says.

Sinclair agrees with Ball — and the IACC report — that the bandwidth required to facilitate flawless internet and Wi-Fi service is a critical consideration. "Most attendees travel with multiple devices these days," she says, "so you have to have the bandwidth available to provide fast and reliable service for all those devices."

Nevertheless, given the forward-looking issues that address genuine innovations in meeting room design based on brain science and learning, it seems that undue focus on something as fundamental as the quality of internet service confirms Meigs' point about the relative level of the debate on the meeting room of the future.

Reimagining Space

A more enlightened discussion of the topic, rather obviously, goes to the issue of the meeting room itself.

And to IACC's credit, the 2018 report addresses that factor.

"One of the things that both this year's and last year's report touched on was the flexibility of where the meeting takes place, where collaboration takes place," Sinclair says. "And part of the issue now is not just what happens in the meeting room, but also what happens around the meeting room. That means those other spaces become just as important as the main 'meat-and-potatoes' meeting rooms where your sessions are taking place."

As part of that evolution, now

underway, Sinclair says, ancillary and alternative spaces will begin to supplant what has traditionally been just another numbered — and standard — meeting room down the hall, so to speak.

Dan Freed, an architect in the Coral Gables, Florida, office of global architectural and interior design firm CallisonRTKL, echoes Sinclair's observation that an important evolution underway is how meeting space is perceived and used. Until recently, says Freed, who has designed more than a dozen major-flag hotels for brands including Wyndham, Hilton and Loews, a meeting room was a meeting room, and they also basically looked and felt alike. Now, thoughtful considerations of the adjacent space are being studied as a further way to enhance the attendee experience.

"What we see now is an interest in secondary spaces that are not what you would traditionally think of as meeting space," Freed says. "For example, we're seeing more interest in casual meeting areas, instead of a clearly defined — and confined — space. It's sort of a new hybrid com-



Credit: MGM Resorts

Park MGM's Madison Meeting Center has innovations like moveable ergonomic furniture, built-in audiovisual equipment and rolling whiteboards.

bination of what used to be called meeting space and pre-function space." And, he says, the essence of the concept is the attendee experience the space engenders. "And the desire for more informality is what is driving the increase in demand for spaces like that."

Beyond that, and proving more context for the discussion of the meeting room of the future, Freed says, is the simple fact that in research CallisonRTKL does, an increasingly high percentage of attendees — close to half — "do not want to be stuck in a boring old meeting room." And, Freed adds, meeting planners and attendees are now much more interested in casualness and comfort, elements that until fairly recently were

sees today is demand for different kinds of seating. "We see more and more planners asking for that," she says. "Some want people to sit at a high-top table. Others want them to be seated in soft chairs. And there can be a mixture. For example, in a room for 100 attendees, you could have four different types of seating in the same room, based on personal preferences. And in some cases, now we even see people who prefer to be seated on big pillows on the floor. I'd say that over the last year, that sort of flexibility and attention to personal preferences for comfort has become a genuine trend."

Another trend is a changing meeting room landscape over the course of a day, Sin-

"What I have found, though, is that too many suppliers, partners and vendors have not been good resources to tell planners how to (change their meetings) and help them do it."



Michael Dominguez, Chief Sales Officer
MGM Resorts International, Las Vegas, NV

clair says. "For example, the room can be set up classroom style when you come in for the morning. Then you go out for a break and when you come back, it's couches and soft chairs. So just by changing the layout of the room, you can stimulate creativity or collaboration. And in turn, some of the research into brain science and learning shows that different layouts and

almost entirely ignored in the design of meeting space. In turn, the evolution of the definition of meeting space now includes elements like the "event lawn" and "wellness garden" that are being incorporated into the new Callison-designed Hilton Miami Dadeland, opening in November.

One fast-moving change Sinclair

sees today is demand for different kinds of seating. "We see more and more planners asking for that," she says. "Some want people to sit at a high-top table. Others want them to be seated in soft chairs. And there can be a mixture. For example, in a room for 100 attendees, you could have four different types of seating in the same room, based on personal preferences. And in some cases, now we even see people who prefer to be seated on big pillows on the floor. I'd say that over the last year, that sort of flexibility and attention to personal preferences for comfort has become a genuine trend."

seating arrangements can contribute to attention and retention. At Benchmark, we've been paying a lot of attention to that sort of thing because we think it is very important."

Another long-overdue consideration now becoming mainstream, Sinclair says, is natural light in all areas of the venue, including meeting rooms and ballrooms. "In the past, a lot of meeting planners did not want any natural light in their space because they thought it was distracting," she says. "Now people won't buy a room that doesn't have natural light."

Freed enthusiastically corroborates the view that natural light is currently among the most important changes in the design of meeting rooms. "There should be natural light in every meeting room we create," he says. "Traditionally, the hotel industry has thought that you need sterile rooms with no natural light. But I think those days are in the past."

Another consideration that Freed sees increasingly being raised in the design of new hotels is the personality of the local destination. "One of the interesting things about the 'experiential meeting' debate that has been going on for quite a while now is that whenever, as a culture, we talk about experience, we talk about local experience. So we are now seeing that reflected in the discussions about meetings. When an attendee goes to San Antonio, they want to feel like they're in San Antonio and when they're in Miami, they want

to experience Miami. So as a hotel designer, it's important to us to think about the things that really embody the destination. And then we translate those things to the meeting space we are creating. And the tools we use can range from something as simple as the color palette to the views that are generated from the meeting rooms." Progressive design of meeting space, Freed says, now include elements that mimic cultural or geographical aspects of the local destination, as opposed to the relatively generic look and feel that major-flag hotels have displayed in the past.

Raising the Bar

While the debate goes on about what the meeting room of the future will look like, one hotelier in particular, Las Vegas behemoth MGM Resorts International, has significantly raised the bar with the development of two new facilities at its \$550 million Park MGM, formerly the Monte Carlo, which made its debut in April.

Its Madison Meeting Center caters to meetings for 10 to 50 attendees. The 10,000-square-foot complex features 10 flexible rooms that can accommodate various layouts ideal for classroom-style training, certifications, product seminars and workshops. It also offers moveable ergonomic furniture, built-in audiovisual equipment and rolling whiteboards.

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

"We have based the things we're

doing on the underlying science," Dominguez says. "For example, a key question in the meeting industry is why attendees get tired in the middle of the afternoon. And the reasons are twofold. One is that you've been sitting in really crappy light all day long, which means a yellow hue. We have gone to blue-hued light in our Stay Well meeting rooms. And that's important because blue light allows your body to suppress melatonin. And that allows you to remain alert and attentive.

"The second reason is that because you're indoors all day, you're not getting enough Vitamin D. So what we now know from the science is that it's not just important that the food you eat at the meeting to be nutritious, but also for it to be Vitamin D-infused. So that is now a focus on our menus."



Dan Freed, Architect
CallisonRTKL, Coral Gables, FL

retreats and brainstorming sessions, with eight unique environments and four distinctive room types that each can accommodate groups of six to 25 attendees. Each space has been intentionally planned with a wide array of workspaces to spur collaboration, productivity, creativity and innovation.

"The basic idea was to design a space that was specifically created for collaboration and consensus-building. And again, the facility is based on underlying science."

The Long View

From an academic perspective, the meeting room of the future will address factors that reach far beyond material considerations, such as seating, light-

ing or nutrition, although those things are vital to the final result, Meigs says.

The single most important factor, she explains, is what she calls a "minds on" level of attentiveness from attendees. "It's the mental equivalent of 'hands on,' and it means a more in-depth way of talking about things and communicating," she says. "It means having people be more actively involved in engagement with your material and with problem-solving."

The inherent flaw in the current way meetings are conducted is that levels of attention and engagement among attendees range from minimal to meaningful and effective, along with everything in between.

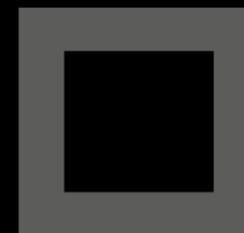
How can that reality be overcome? "One way is to do anything that is unexpected and presents some kind of a challenge," Meigs says. "The idea is to do something to get people involved in a way other than what they would normally expect. That gets them fully engaged, as opposed to just lis-

"We're seeing more interest in casual meeting areas.... It's sort of new hybrid combination of what used to be called meeting space and pre-function space."

tening to somebody give a report or read a paper."

Perhaps the most critical element of the larger discussion, Meigs says, is that her academic understanding of experience design differs quite sharply in one key respect from what meeting planners typically do. "True experience design, as I think of it, is all about sort of letting go of control. And meeting planners are typically very much in control of everything, which they have to be. But I think that control is also antithetical to the idea of a better experience. In the future, the most successful results are going to come from letting go of control, which seems to be a very difficult thing for people in the meeting industry to do." **C&IT**

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Meeting Planners Recount Their Best and Worst Experiences From Floundering Failures to Super Successes

By Christine Loomis

Success, according to legions of leaders from industry, politics and beyond, is in many ways dependent on failure. John C. Maxwell, noted author and speaker, put it this way: “Without failure, there is no achievement.”

Elon Musk, founder of SpaceX among other companies, famously points to his resume of “epic failures” and says, “If things are not failing, you are not innovating enough.”

So how do the most talented in our industry create successful programs? And what do they do when success eludes them? We asked eight meeting and event professionals for their insights.

One thing is clear: Most of us don’t like the word “failure.”

“We don’t use the word failure at our company,” says Paul Nix, CMP, CTA, DMCP, president of Capers DMC, a Hosts Global member in San Antonio, Texas. “We view ‘failures’ as an opportunity. Simply put, they are learning experiences.”

Dana Weaver, CIS, with Growmark, Inc., and a SITE Foundation trustee, also sees challenges as opportunities. “Beware of a planner who says, ‘Everything always goes according to the original plan.’ In fact, alternate plans are implemented more often than not. I believe there are

no problems; just lots of opportunities to discover new solutions.”

Nell Nicholas, senior director, global accounts with HelmsBriscoe, believes learning from mistakes is a lifelong proposition. “I feel

“Mistakes are the portals of discovery.”
— James Joyce

blessed that I’m at a stage in my career where I can more easily learn from my mistakes than perhaps

when I started in the industry. Didn’t we all think we were infallible in our 20s? For me, the life lesson is to accept that mistakes are an inherent part of the learning curve, and we are never too old to learn something new, professionally and personally.”

In the end, it’s really about how you face challenges, what you learn and how you move forward.

Rhonda Brewer, MICE industry consultant and SITE president in 2015, describes an event that went sideways when the contracted entertainment didn’t show or respond to calls. “Since we had prepaid, we didn’t have a plan B,” she says. “We went into action calling multiple providers of the same service. We ended up with a show — just not the show that was promised. Fortunately, no one knew what to expect, so in the guests’ eyes, it

“Ultimately, there is no such thing as failure. There are lessons learned in different ways.”
— Twyla Tharp

was still a successful evening. But in our eyes, it was much more stress and not what was promised.”

Planners will always be challenged with “curve balls,” Brewer notes. It’s how they deal with them and how they communicate to the client that turns things around. “Honesty on the situation and what you are doing to resolve it is the best plan of action. Assess the situation,” she advises. “How will it impact the client and guests? How will it impact your budget? Then quickly determine steps to resolve or come up with an alternative — and communicate, communicate.”



The sounds of a violin duo echoing throughout the formal gardens, as well as a grand fireworks display, created a successful event at Vizcaya Museum & Gardens in Miami.



Weaver recalls a challenge early in his career at Growmark, an agriculture supply company, which traditionally had an average qualifier group size of 150. In the last three months of the earning period the year Weaver arrived, the group more than doubled to 352, leaving two months to make adjustments.

“We needed more resort rooms, more rental cars, more space for activities, more dining area, more meeting space, more awards and more gifts,” he says. “I learned that my reputation as a buyer/planner is important in these situations. I also have to have a full understanding

of the industry, knowing what’s possible and what is not possible to overcome a problem. As our incentive programs are open-ended, I learned that selecting resorts with 500-plus rooms gives me flexibility to add rooms if needed. I also learned that the participants who earn the reward don’t know the original plan, so most changes go unnoticed by them.”

Colleagues also make a difference. “Attending industry education and networking events allows me to engage in conversations about opportunities to overcome unplanned situations,” he says. “The best resources are other planners

who help me think through situations and discover solutions.”

Amy Maxey, manager, global conferences and events with Hyland, a software company, learned a hard lesson in 2014, when she joined the company. “Balancing customer expectations, budget and growth can be a nightmare for planners,” she says.

That year, rising production and F&B costs coupled with increased attendance were making it difficult to balance the budget. One strategy was to eliminate free-flowing coffee, bottled water and bottomless bowls of candy

“Honesty on the situation and what you are doing to resolve it is the best plan of action.”



Rhonda Brewer
MICE Industry Consultant
SITE President, 2015
St. Louis, MO

our networking event schedule. Through our partner, Experient, we negotiated additional incentives, such as food and beverage discounts and rebates, into our contracts to help offset costs. Finally, we researched conferences of similar size and scope and realized we weren't charging enough. Through a nominal increase in registration fees, we increased available funds and improved attendee experience."

The strategies worked. "Our Net Promoter Score (NPS) jumped more than 32 points in one year! Our alumni rate (repeat attendees) has increased every year. As planners, we take tremendous pride in the events we produce. These events are built with our blood, sweat and tears, and we want attendees to have the best conference experience possible," Maxey says.

"Following the 2014 event, I read every word on each individual survey and was heartbroken. I made it my mission to turn that failure into success."

Today, Hyland continues to grow its global customer base and conference attendance. "Our annual end-user conference has more than doubled since 2014, and our NPS scores remain high," Maxey notes. "That being said, I still read every word on each survey to ensure I keep pace with

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure."
— Colin Powell



"Beware of a planner who says, 'Everything always goes according to the original plan.' In fact, alternate plans are implemented more often than not."

Dana Weaver, CIS
Growmark, Inc., Bloomington, IL

customer feedback. I've started reading the real-time responses in the mobile app during the event to address attendee feedback immediately. Now, instead of being heartbroken when I see the results, I'm beaming with pride

that our customers are having such a positive experience."

What ultimately separates success from failure? Hard work, preparation, creative thinking and willingness to venture where others have not can define successful events. As for failure, sometimes the issue is out of a planner's control, and sometimes failure results from an error in judgement. Professionals understand that both success and failure are part of the job.

Danielle Rothenberg, experience designer with AlliedPRA South Florida, is rightly proud of a successful event set at Vizcaya Museum & Gardens, an opulent, Italian-inspired National Historic Landmark.

"The event was crafted as a complete surprise for attendees, beginning with guests entering through the unmarked service entrance," Rothenberg says. "They were greeted with a specialty

cocktail and led down waterfall steps to the sounds of a violin duo echoing throughout the formal gardens. After cocktails, guests were escorted through a secret garden entranceway and around the waterfront to the East Terrace for dinner. Special touches were made throughout the entire event, including a history of the property."

The site's architectural, landscaping and natural beauty made the setting stand out, and the thought and service

Rothenberg and her team put in elevated the event even higher.

Sometimes, however, situations arise that cannot be foreseen, as was the case with Rothenberg's high-end incentive program just six hours before check-in.



A planner made the impossible possible by getting part of the San Antonio Riverwalk closed off for a private cultural event.

We triaged guests, booking those first who had to get home for commitments that couldn't be missed."

And the program went on as planned. "What we learned," Manion says, "is that open and honest communications and not leaving participants in the dark was key. By doing our best to reduce guests' concerns, they continued to enjoy the program, and everyone left Panama on the originally scheduled departure day."

Sometimes success is in making the impossible possible, which was the case when a client of Nix wanted to buy out San Antonio Riverwalk.

"As the DMC, I asked, 'You mean the

"A foreign king, his security detail and the secret service were staying at the luxury hotel. They decided last minute to extend their stay. The planner was literally in the air on the way to our pre-con when she was informed that the guest rooms she booked were no longer available. The hotel worked vigorously to secure sleeping rooms at two comparable area hotels."

The biggest challenge, Rothenberg says, was that the group's meeting space, receptions and meals were already scheduled to be hosted on property. "Don Bontemps, senior event producer, was quick on his feet to save the day. He worked with the hoteliers and client to come up with solutions. Sleeping rooms were selected at one of the comparable hotels, and a continuous shuttle service was arranged between the properties."

Not as simple as it sounds. "Special arrangements had to be made for continuous use of the hotel's front ramp for the shuttles. Mr. Bontemps had to coordinate directly with the royal family's security detail and the secret service to ensure that our group's movements wouldn't interfere with the royal family's arrivals and departures," Rothenberg says. "It was the definition of every planner's worst nightmare."

In the end, hard work and creative re-planning turned disaster into success. Among the positives according to Rothenberg: "Attendees were able to experience not one but two of the most amazing properties in Miami Beach with two totally different design aesthetics."

The devil, as the saying goes, is often in the detail, as Nicholas has learned.

"One client's objectives is to 'delight

the attendee.' If that succeeds, she considers it a successful program even if things aren't going perfectly behind the scenes. We recently booked a unique property that had unconventional meeting space, a good fit for this group. When we saw the A/V setup, however, we realized the screen was too small for the space. We thought surely this would hinder the attendee experience. When we told the attendees that we found another hotel for next time, they made clear they wanted to stay at the unique hotel with unconventional meeting space. As a venue finder, the failure on my part was that I was focused on finding the right ambience, one objective for this program, but failed to consider more carefully the A/V placement. The program was a success, but I gave my client a few gray hairs in the interim."

For Terry Manion, executive vice president with Meridian Incentive Consultants in Ontario, Canada, a lesson involved a perennial planner challenge — airlines.

"The morning after the welcome dinner of a program in Panama, we were boarding the group onto coaches for tours when we learned our airline had gone bankrupt. The airline took no responsibility and provided no assistance. The only option was to make individual bookings for each of the 220 guests."

Manion's team went to work and kept attendees informed. "We set up a communications lounge so people could contact family and co-workers.



"We are never too old to learn something new, professionally and personally."

Nell Nicholas
Senior Director, Global Accounts
HelmsBriscoe
Cornwall, CT

second-largest visited tourist attraction in the state of Texas? You want to close it down for a private event?"

He told the client not to get her hopes up as it had never been done — but didn't say no.

"We knew we'd never get approval to buy out the entire Riverwalk, so we went to the city with a scaled back request of a buyout of 10 restaurants and two museums on the Riverwalk, with the addition of a large, flat parking lot and a six-block street closure."

The theme developed into a carnival

Never Fail

Jessie States, CMM, manager of professional development at Meeting Professionals International and recipient of the 2018 Pacesetter Award from the Events Industry Council, has this advice for planners regarding failure:

- Own your failures.
- Speak up, admit your role in what transpired — but also your role in recovery. Detail how the failure happened, what could have been done differently and how you'll change processes to prevent it from happening again.
- Tell others what you learned.
- Share the lesson you learned and how it will make you (or your event) even better next time. Discuss with your team the business value of your failure and share that story. Make sure you've created an environment where you and your team can fail safely.
- Move on.
- The ability to recover from failures is a future-proof skill that all meeting professionals should learn — and practice. — CL

and culinary night under the Texas stars. Success was realized, Nix says, thanks to a city government that knows the importance of hospitality and to the Capers team's relationships with the agencies involved.

"City agencies were not a 'road block' to our plan but helped us bridge our ideas into a workable plan," he says. "Agencies included Visit San Antonio (our DMO), the San Antonio parking division, streets department, health department, police department, fire department, downtown operations, parks department, park police and Texas Alcoholic Beverage Control, to name a few."

Nix says it took many hours of meetings to get approvals, but the plan came to fruition. "We took on this massive project with one main point of contact and then divided the work among team members. We believe anything can be accomplished with detailed planning. The party was a huge success due to out-of-the-box thinking and the great relationship we have with our city government and our DMO."

The outcome, he notes, "was serving 5,000 people from 10 private restaurants and two museums and incorporating each restaurant and a major catering company on the streets and parking lot to create a true cultural culinary experience of San Antonio. Carnival rides, games and activities were spread throughout the six blocks of closed streets."

The client called it the best closing-

night reception the group had ever had. "That, to Capers, is a true success story."

It can be brilliant to say yes to the impossible. But saying no can be the smart move, too.

"We want to make our clients happy," Nix says. "We want their guests to have an awesome experience in San Antonio. Sometimes, however, we don't realize our own limitations. At times, we say yes when instead we should tell them that what they want can't be done successfully."

One such "learning opportunity" arose when Capers was tasked with transporting 2,500 guests from the convention center to a ranch an hour away during high-traffic time.

"We went to work to see what Capers could offer to make this bus ride feel as short as possible," Nix says.

"First, we arranged a police motorcycle escort with every group of busses to expedite transport. Then, we came up with a brilliant idea that we had done successfully on three to four coaches in the past, but never 53 vehicles. We spoke to vendors that had previously provided trivia and other games on bus rides for us. Two turned us down, stating they couldn't get enough bus leaders trained for so many vehicles. That should have been a red flag for us."

Ultimately, they found a vendor willing to work with them and shared the team's expectations and how they

sold the overall experience to the client for its attendees' enjoyment. There were microphones on every bus, and they all worked.

"However," Nix says, "the challenge was that once a question was answered, game attendants had to put down the microphone and walk back to give that winner a prize ticket. They had to keep the program running while they did this, and no one on the bus could hear them as they walked up and down the aisle. Additionally, there was no consistency with the energy of the bus leaders. Most just read questions from a card and it became boring fast, while some leaders were energetic and kept people engaged."

What was the lesson learned? "We should have known our limitations and that of our vendors and not offered this service," Nix says. "From our client's mouth to our ears, 'It was a flop.' Ouch! We failed our client because their guests didn't receive the experience we had been able to provide for smaller groups."

With so many complaints, Capers refunded the client's fee. "We want to make our clients happy. Sometimes



"It was the definition of every planner's worst nightmare."

Danielle Rothenberg
Experience Designer
AlliedPRA South Florida
Fort Lauderdale, FL

we stumble in the process to make that happen. This learning opportunity helped us better know our limitations and those of our vendors. You must be willing to learn from the lows in order to create more highs," Nix says.

The truth is, failure is inevitable. You can't always prepare for it, but you can always learn from it. Once a planner discovers that, success is sure to follow. **C&IT**

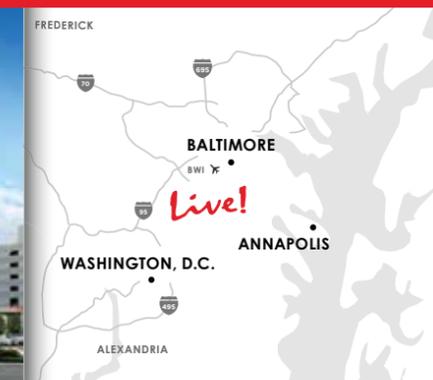
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Destination



Atlantic City's resurgence has not only attracted more residents and tourists, it has brought an influx of business meetings to the area.

The New Atlantic City Planners Can Feel Lucky About the City's Renovation, Expansion and New Development

By Derek Reveron

There was once a perception that Atlantic City was in a slump due to closing resorts, fewer meetings and visitors and an over-dependence on gaming. However, these days nothing could be further from the truth.

This year alone, two new casino properties opened. Resorts are renovating, expanding and adding more meeting space. And, Atlantic City is also opening new attractions, entertainment venues and dining experiences.

According to Jim Wood, president and CEO of Meet AC, the sales and marketing force supporting the Atlantic City Convention Center (ACCC), Atlantic City's resurgence is attracting more meetings. "Though our audience is primarily from the Mid-Atlantic region, we are starting to see more national growth in the meetings segment," says Wood. "Investors are buying properties and meeting space is expanding, such as Harrah's Waterfront Conference Center and meeting space additions at Resorts Casino Hotel, Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa and The Claridge, etc."



Jim Wood, President and CEO
Meet AC, Atlantic City, NJ

Atlantic City is also broadening its variety of entertainment and attraction options to draw families and young adults.

According to Wood, "Headline entertainment continues to grow with the Hard Rock Casino opening and a commitment to bring midweek entertainment back to Atlantic City," says Wood. "We also envision Atlantic City growing its beach concert series

"We are starting to see more national growth in the meetings segment. Investors are buying properties and meeting space is expanding."

each summer and attracting massive crowds to the beach. Another example is the recently opened Observation Wheel at Steel Pier. And with the Boardwalk being expanded and connecting to the Marina District, great things are in store."

Atlantic City's upgrades ensure that it will continue to entice repeat visitors, such as the Tri-State Metro Operating Unit of Coca-Cola Bottling Company. In June, Tri-State Metro held a meeting at Tropicana Atlantic City for more than 100 employees. It was one of several Tri-State Metro meetings at Tropicana over the last eight years for groups ranging from 20 to 150 attendees.

According to Don Barsalou, director of sales and planner for Tri-State Metro, Tropicana's national sales manager is a big

"We had brand groups jumping from one room to the other to make presentations, and the boardrooms at the Havana Tower were perfect for this."

Don Barsalou, Director of Sales and Planner
Tri-State Metro Operating Unit of Coca-Cola Bottling
Company, Philadelphia, PA

reason for the company's repeat visits. "She is great to work with, and she is able to keep my costs under control," says Barsalou. "She is consistently checking in with me during our meetings and is only a phone call away if any issue arises. She was also able to have someone pre-check-in our group so everyone could get their room keys at the end of our day-one early meeting and go directly to their rooms."

Tri-State Metro is also attracted by Tropicana's constant improvements, including its acquisition and \$200 million renovation of The Chelsea Hotel, a non-gaming facility.

The Chelsea, which is connected to the Tropicana via a skybridge, increases the total number of meeting rooms to 2,730 and adds more amenities, some of which Tri-State Metro attendees enjoyed. These include Chelsea Towers' Cabana Five Bar & Pool Deck with poolside dining and live entertainment; Oasis Pool; Whiskey Five bar; Chelsea Five Gastropub; and Gilchrist Restaurant.

More than ever, Barsalou notes, Tropicana has everything Tri-State Metro needs for its meetings. "It's truly a value property," says Barsalou. "Sleeping rooms are renovated, meeting rooms are close and can fit any size group. They also have ample room for large meetings, and boardrooms are great for smaller meetings. For this last meeting, we had brand groups jumping from one room to the other to make presentations, and the boardrooms at the Havana Tower were perfect for this."

Tropicana's several dining experiences are also popular among Tri-State Metro attendees. "We usually use the Tropicana's restaurants for our food and beverage," says Barsalou. "The food and service are always great." He noted that popular restaurants among attendees include Il Verdi, which offers Italian cuisine, oceanfront experience Olon, and Palm Restaurant, a steakhouse.

Offsite activities for Tri-State Metro attendees included a teambuilding event of competitive beach games at Bally's Beach Bar, located on the Boardwalk a short distance from Tropicana. "It was our first activity at the Beach Bar, and it was a hit," says Barsalou. "Afterward, we had drinks and food and enjoyed a DJ and local band. Our meeting was also a hit, and we will be returning to the Tropicana."

Tropicana is not the only Atlantic City property renovating and upgrading. Two new properties, Ocean Resort Casino and Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, opened this year.

Ocean Resort opened in June after acquiring, rebranding and then upgrading the former Revel Casino Hotel. As part of the Unbound Collection by Hyatt portfolio of properties, the 1,399-room Ocean Resort Casino is the tallest structure in Atlantic City and presents scenic ocean views. The resort offers planners a complete package of meeting space necessities, including 160,000 square feet of indoor event space and 90,000 square feet of flexible outdoor space. Entertainment and activity options include six swimming pools and 138,000-square-foot of gaming space.

Groups seeking a variety of cuisine experiences under one roof will enjoy Ocean Resort Casino's nine dining concepts. These include Zhen Bang Noodle & Sushi, American Cut, Italian seafood concept Dolce Mare and Chef Jose Garces' Distrito (Mexican fare) and Amada (tapas) restaurants. Other amenities include the world's largest Top Golf Swing Suite, six pools and the 40,000-square-foot Exhale spa.

The Hard Rock brings its signature rock 'n' roll glamour to Atlantic City following its opening in June with 200 nights of music featuring more than 50 shows and events with top acts. Located on the site of the former Taj Mahal, the Hard Rock underwent a \$500 million makeover. Renovations included guest rooms and suites, meeting and convention spaces, performance venues and an indoor pool.

Refurbished spaces also include the Hard Rock Casino, Hard Rock Café and the Rock Spa. The many dining options at the Hard Rock include Italian restaurant Il Mulino, seafood experience Council Oak Fish and Robert's Steakhouse. In



Planners are getting creative with their events to bring a more personal and fun flair for their attendees.

“We create events at clubs ... which gives planners incredible space to create events and at lower price points.”



Larry Huttinger, CMP, Owner
D. Lawrence Planners, Atlantic City, NJ

ninja course, skydiving simulator, and bar and retail space. Attendees also can find fine shopping at fashionable outlets on resorts such as Caesars, Borgata and Tropicana, as well as offsite outlets.

Atlantic City is also underrated when it comes to golf, offering about 25 courses that attract corporate groups from throughout the Northeast, including the New York area.

According to Karen Shackman, president, Shackman Associates, a New York City DMC specializing in domestic and international corporate meetings and incentives, “Because the Atlantic City region is an outlier against a national trend of golf courses closing, we know this is a huge plus for attracting corporate meetings and incentives.”

Shackman has worked with corporate groups that have held outings at some of Atlantic City’s top golf courses, including Stockton Seaview Hotel and Golf Club and Galloway National Golf Club. “Both are located a short drive from most of the resorts,” says Shackman. “Seaview is considered one of the most exclusive ‘old school’ clubs in the area, and it’s even more valuable to attendees to add on an intimate dining opportunity there or at a resort.”

Nonstop Improvement

Borgata Hotel Casino illustrates how even Atlantic City’s premiere casino resorts are reinventing and upgrading. Planners can hold larger-than-ever meetings and events at Borgata due to its new 18,000-square-foot Central Conference Center (CCC), which offers customizable event space with five meeting rooms and two ballrooms encompassing a 6,500-square-foot ballroom. The CCC increases the Borgata’s total event space to 106,000 square feet including The Water Club at Borgata and The Event Center.

Away from the meeting spaces, attendees at the 2,000-room Borgata Hotel can enjoy some of the finest dining options in Atlantic City, including some headed by famous chefs, such as Wolfgang Puck American Grille, Bobby Flay Steak and Izakaya Modern Japanese Pub.

Caesars Entertainment Corporation — owner of Bally’s Atlantic City, Caesar’s and Harrah’s Atlantic City Hotel & Casino — continues to set a standard for enhancing its properties.

Upgrades at Caesars Entertainment include more than



Karen Shackman, President
Shackman Associates, New York, NY

“Because the Atlantic City region is an outlier against a national trend of golf courses closing, we know this is a huge plus for attracting corporate meetings and incentives.”

in addition, Hard Rock promises to offer entertainment every day of the year in venues that include two 7,000-seat arenas.

New and expanding resorts are driving Atlantic City’s growing number of entertainment activities. “With the Hard Rock looking to offer so many entertainment options over the next 12 months, it’s believed this may be a trend



Attendees are always excited to experience the local flavor of the oceanside city with their co-workers and peers.

in providing entertainment with which other casino hotels may have to compete,” says Larry Huttinger, CMP, owner of D. Lawrence Planners and Destination Philly A.C.

All of Atlantic City’s new activities provide more options for planners. “We create events at clubs such as the Pool at Harrah’s and Premier at Borgata, which gives planners incredible space to create events and at lower price points,” says Huttinger. “We also use the third floor of the Playground Pier connected to Caesars, using the restaurants operating in that location for evening dining with entertainment throughout the space.”

Options for family-oriented activities are multiplying in Atlantic City. A highly anticipated attraction, the 350-foot-high Polercoaster roller coaster, is scheduled to debut in 2019 on the site of the former Sands Casino. Additional attractions planned to open near the Polercoaster include a zip line, extreme

\$30 million in improvements to Harrah’s Resort. Enhancements include a redesign of 450 guest rooms and suites in the Bayview Tower and a facelift of The Pool After Dark pool and nightclub.

In addition, several new restaurants expand the variety of Harrah’s dining experiences, such as Martorano’s Italian Restaurant, Coastal Craft Kitchen + Bar and Mexican restaurant Veracruz. Culinary options at other Caesars Atlantic City resorts include Guy Fieri’s Chophouse at Bally’s and Gordon Ramsay Pub & Grill at Caesars.

One Company. One Contract. Countless Options.

The culinary additions at Harrah’s follow the premiere of its 100,000-square-foot Waterfront Conference Center (WCC), one of the biggest hotel-conference centers in the Northeast with two 50,000-square-foot ballrooms. Planners wanting green meetings can consider the WCC’s Leed Silver Certification status. Meanwhile, Harrah’s sister property, Caesars, offers 28,000 square feet of meeting space, including the 17,135-square-foot Palladium Ballroom and 10 meeting rooms.

All of Caesars Entertainment’s properties follow the company’s philosophy of “One company. One contract. Countless options.” as expressed on its website. It’s the idea behind Caesars’ program that allows planners to conveniently book properties through a single contact with one contract and one minimum. Planners can even mix and match properties within a destination.



Planning events at nightclubs like Premier at Borgata can save money while giving the attendees that “night-out” experience.

Another Atlantic City property, Resorts Casino Hotel, has renovated its Ocean Tower’s 480 guest rooms and suites and completed a \$35 million enhancement of the Jimmy Buffett-inspired Margaritaville entertainment complex, which includes Jimmy Buffett’s Margaritaville restaurant and Landshark Bar and Grill. The improvements are part of Resorts Casino Hotel’s ongoing \$100 million renovation and expansion to complement its three-year-old modern convention center, which offers 64,000 square feet of meeting space, including two ballrooms.

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The Resorts Casino Hotel is undergoing a \$100 million renovation and expansion to complement its three-year-old convention center.

Credit: Resorts Casino Hotel

the Apple iTunes Store or Google Play Store under the title of Meet AC, provides interactive floorplans of the ACCC.

The ACCC is also a draw for planners seeking a large meeting space with sustainable efforts, having reduced the facility's energy consumption every year since opening in 1997. For example, in 2017, the ACCC's solar roof panels produced 28 percent of the building's total electrical consumption.

In all, the ACCC expects to save \$4.4 million in electricity costs since opening through 2029. The savings result from the ACCC's strategy, which considers "going green" a main operating objective, and has a "Green Team" which focuses on five issues — energy efficiency, recycling, water usage, client communication and composting preparation. In addition, Atlantic City's gaming industry is expanding and diversifying. Gaming revenue increased 2.4 percent by the end of November 2017. While online gaming accounted for most of the increase, additional growth is expected from the approval of sports gaming.

Borgata recently became the first Atlantic City casino to launch sports wagering as a result of new sports betting regulations in New Jersey. The regulations follow the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to strike down a federal law banning sports betting and leave it up to state legislatures. Borgata's sports wagering area, known as Race & Sports Book, features 100 seats, 40-inch color betting machines, 10 betting windows and a video wall. At least three betting windows are dedicated to sports wagers.

Atlantic City's new activities, resort additions and makeovers are improving value for planners. According to Huttinger, "Atlantic City offers more value due to its location and sizable casinos and meeting space. Room rates compared to other New Jersey and regional cities, such as Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, NYC and Boston, means planners are looking at prices 40 percent to 60 percent less during most seasons. That, along with low rates or complementary rates for meeting

Planners see new and expanded properties that attract groups from its Northeast base as keys to Atlantic City's continued resurgence, and expect to see value rise along with more growth in the years ahead. "If you have a group local to the New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey area that is budget conscious, Atlantic City is a good fit," says Christy Lamagna, CMP, CMM, CTSM, president, New York-based Strategic Meetings & Events.

In order for value to continue rising, notes Lamagna, "It's not just a few hotels that have to be open, it's the surrounding area that has to be attractive for groups. Continuing to share that message and showcase the new energy and opportunities in Atlantic City will help change its image. New Orleans is open for business again and Detroit is becoming more relevant, so we know it can be done."

Atlantic City's improvements are boosting business. According to Meet AC, sales of the Atlantic City Convention Center (ACCC) will reach \$10,493,488 in 2018, up from \$9,517,000 in 2017. Enhancements to Exhibit Hall A, Wi-Fi upgrades and the creation of a welcoming marquee atop the ACCC will also help to draw more business to the facility, which is located just blocks from the Atlantic Ocean and offers 600,000 square feet of meeting, exhibit and function space.

Sales will get an added boost from Meet AC's new virtual reality (VR) marketing tool. The program, provided by YouVisit, is designed to attract planners, convention business and visitors. The tool allows anyone to virtually visit each room of the ACCC, Boardwalk Hall and surrounding area. Another tool, available in



"It's not just a few hotels that have to be open, it's the surrounding area that has to be attractive for groups."

Christy Lamagna, CMP, CMM, CTSM
Strategic Meetings & Events, New York, NY

spaces, depending on the size and spending of the group, make for an ideal location for planners."

While Atlantic City now offers about 7,000 guest rooms and 1 million square feet of meeting space, the destination is not one to rest on its accomplishments, no matter how big they are or how fast they come. Atlantic City will continue to add more of everything that planners need get value for large and small meetings alike.

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Beaches & Business

Finding the Best Island for Your Meeting



By Christine Loomis

The islands of the Caribbean and the Bahamas offer planners destinations that provide everything needed for a successful conference — and a great deal more!

Each Caribbean and Bahamas island has its own distinct personality and traits. Geographically, some are mountainous with dense forests spilling down to the sea while others are as flat as floating pancakes. They might be lush and tropical or desert dotted with wind-sculpted cacti and boulders.

The district is set to be a hot spot for convention-goers in Puerto Rico.



Credit: The district

Their cultures and histories began with indigenous tribes, but over centuries, varying degrees of French, English, Dutch, Spanish and African influences have created a rich and vibrant *mélange*, with each island offering its own take on food, language, music, architecture and traditions.

Most islands face the Caribbean Sea on one side and the Atlantic on the other, though a few are surrounded entirely by the turquoise Caribbean Sea. The 700 or so islands of the Bahamas are not in the Caribbean at all. Rather, they spread across warm Atlantic waters that happily provide the same tropical vibe.

What they all share in common are balmy waters with brilliant clarity, sweeps of inviting beaches and reefs, and wrecks offshore that attract schools of tropical fish, divers, snorkelers, sailors and anyone who simply wants to dip their toes in the sand and sea.

Best of all, for folks in the eastern half of the United States, doing so involves only a short flight to reach many of the islands, including the Bahamas, which start just 50 miles from Florida. For others, it's a longer, but well worthwhile, journey ending in an alluring version of a tropical paradise that also delivers meeting satisfaction and ROI.

Here are three options for meeting planners to choose from. There are hundreds of others, making the Caribbean and Bahamas destinations that planners and groups can return to again and again, with each visit different from the last.

Puerto Rico

Perhaps its biggest draw is the fact that no passports are required for U.S. citizens, there are no currency issues to deal with in contracts, and though Spanish is spoken by most residents, so is English.

Puerto Rico was hit hard by hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, which affected power on much of the island. There's still

restoration work to be done, but planners should know that almost all of the infrastructure critical to tourism and meetings has been up and running for months. Most hotels and resorts are back in business, and groups can enjoy Puerto Rico just as they always have.

Perhaps most important, it's not just about recovery. New meeting destinations on the island are also being built. Brad Dean, CEO of Discover Puerto Rico, provides a peek at what's coming in the not-too-distant future.

"Puerto Rico has over 130 hotels, more than 4,000 restaurants and 189 sights and attractions open right now. The island



"The island offers state-of-the-art meetings and convention facilities and growing this business is one of our biggest priorities."

Brad Dean, CEO
Discover Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico

offers state-of-the-art meetings and convention facilities — including the largest and most technologically advanced convention center in the Caribbean — and growing this business is one of our biggest priorities as major investments continue to be made in this sector. Coming Q4 next year, for example, is a five-acre hospitality and entertainment district built in partnership between Island Hospitality Partners (led by PRISA Group) and the Puerto Rico Convention Center District Authority. The district is destined to be the Caribbean's most vibrant and popular setting for events, conventions and performances of all types."

American Airlines is one of the biggest players in the

Caribbean in terms of airlift from the United States, and San Juan is one of its critical hubs. Not surprisingly, many of the airline's employees live on Puerto Rico, and the company wants to show its support for the island. One effort: holding its global sales conference there in May, an event that drew 1,000 attendees.

The conference was based primarily at the Sheraton Convention Center, but also used Hyatt Place, Hyatt House, La Concha Renaissance and the San Juan Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino. All of the hotels were chosen based on their proximity to the Puerto Rico Convention Center in San Juan.

Lindsy Wyner, CMP, senior specialist, meetings and events with American Airlines, says giving back to the local community was part of the goal of the meeting. "With the number of American Airlines team members in Puerto Rico, it was important for us to take a meeting of this size there and give back to the community to help them rebuild."

"With the number of American Airlines team members in Puerto Rico, it was important for us to take a meeting of this size there and give back to the community to help them rebuild."

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

Wyner says the group didn't have any problems with facilities being closed or inaccessible. "Nothing that we wanted to access or use was closed down. We stayed in the San Juan area, and everything was functional and open for business. We did not experience any power issues. All services that we required were available with no issues."



Puerto Rico is home to the largest and most technologically advanced convention center in the Caribbean.

The group used a variety of venues for meetings and functions. "Our meeting was held at the Puerto Rico Convention Center," Wyner notes, "but we had our opening reception on the beach at La Concha resort. It was wonderful, and the hotel was accommodating, amazing to work with and completely on top of all of our needs."

"The most important thing for planners to know," Wyner says, "is how kind and wonderful the people of Puerto Rico are. They want the business, and they want to rebuild. It's a fantastic island with many options and opportunities to pull off a successful meeting."

The other advice she offers to those planning a meeting on the island is use Meet Puerto Rico. "They were so helpful in getting the logistics together for a meeting with so many moving parts. We also used a DMC, Destination Puerto Rico. They made everything so easy and assisted us with transportation, décor and entertainment, and it was all a huge success!"

Among the resorts reopened after the hurricanes is Wyndham Grand Rio Mar Puerto Rico Golf & Beach Resort, about 30 miles east of Old San Juan and less than 20 miles from the international airport. The resort's multimillion-dollar upgrades include new dining outlets, such as Comfort Kitchen Restaurant and Iguana's Pub, set to open by Thanksgiving. The resort also contributed significantly to restoration of the island's premier tourist and local attraction, El Yunque National Rainforest, collecting \$1 for every room night in March and April to fund restoration. The goal was \$10,000. The actual result was a check for \$16,000 to the National Forest Foundation.

In that spirit, the resort is offering volunteer opportunities for guests and attendees who add purpose to their visit by helping with aspects of the island's recovery — lunch and transportation provided by the resort.

Aruba

Set in the Southern Caribbean, the 19-mile-long island of Aruba is an autonomous country within the



Credit: Wyndham Grand Rio Mar Puerto Rico Golf & Beach Resort

After the devastation from Hurricane Maria in 2017, Wyndham Grand Rio Mar Puerto Rico Golf & Beach Resort is giving back by assisting volunteers who are on the island to help with the recovery.

Credit: Meet Puerto Rico

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Credit: Atlantis Resort

Netherlands. It sits about 15 miles off the coast of Venezuela, which puts it far below the hurricane belt that impacts other Caribbean islands summer through fall. Its Dutch influence is clearly evident in the local food and architecture, and though residents do speak Dutch and Papiamentu, a Creole language comprised of Spanish, Dutch and Portuguese elements, the fact is that most residents are multilingual and speak English and Spanish very well.

That's just one of the reasons the Aruba Convention Bureau says the island is an excellent meeting destination. Others include ease of airlift, and the fact that U.S. attendees can pre-clear U.S. Customs and Immigration at Aruba's airport, a broad choice of hotels flagged by the world's leading lodging companies, stellar connectivity with technology options comparable to those in the United States, a mere 20 inches of rain each year so planners can depend on setting functions in gorgeous outdoor venues, spectacular beaches and, of course, a dedicated convention bureau that can assist with every aspect of conference and event planning.

Sergino Croes, CIS, business development manager with Eco Destination Management Services of Aruba and Curacao, a DMC, says Aruba has other assets as well. "Being an island where the tourism industry generates over 80 percent of

It's never a dull moment at The Atlantis Paradise Island in the Bahamas. A multitude of activities, including water slides and an open-air marine life habitat, will contribute to an amazing event.

the GDP, we care for this industry, and it is part of our culture and development. The great weather, the short distances and safety are key components to providing great experiences."

Those experiences cover a broad range of options. Croes breaks it down into "Explore Our Waters," "Explore Our Land" and "Explore Like a Local."

On water, he says, there's sailing, snorkeling, shipwrecks, windsurfing, kayaking and deep-sea fishing. Intriguing land experiences can be found on different sides of the island, where terrain varies. In addition to off-roading in quad racers, dune buggies and Jeeps, there's horseback riding, mountain biking and hiking. Arikok National Park is an intriguing destination, as well. On the cultural side, groups can learn firsthand about the island's aloe and make their own products, or they can make the island's rich Carnival tradition part of a program. Groups can also arrange to have a local spice and herb expert provide a hands-on experience in which attendees make their own sauce.

One of the most fabulous events his group worked on, Croes says, was creating, planning and executing a VIP dinner in the caves at the south side of the island.

"The setting was just amazing, with a nice, four-course dinner, a saxophone player and a local artist who captured the setting and created an art piece on canvas for each top



Aruba is an ideal location for horseback riding on the beach.

performer. This was the perfect way to push the eight top performers to maintain or improve their performance while also sharing the unique experience with other participants in order to motivate them to achieve this selected group. This has been, both in experience and in return on investment, a great event for the client and the participants."

Although Aruba is an ideal destination any time of year in terms of weather, Croes notes that demand drives seasonal differences, meaning planners have the option of choosing value dates — June, August and September — if budget requires that, with no worries about hurricanes.

Other Islands to Consider for Your Next Meeting

The Caribbean has a slew of islands that are business-savvy and business-friendly, to say nothing of offering all of the sun, sand, activities and brilliant blue water that attendees could want.

A few to consider:



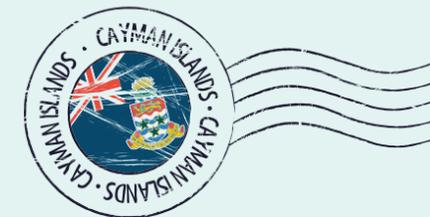
Trinidad & Tobago

Trinidad is business-oriented by nature — it gets relatively little money from tourism while its energy industry is an economic powerhouse. Many of the world's top business hotels are located here. Smaller Tobago, with its wide beaches and lush rain forest, is the perfect option for tours and pre- or post-conference stays.



Barbados

Offshore finance and information services are important in the Barbados economy. It's also home to one of the largest meeting facilities in the Caribbean, the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, and some of the most revered resorts and golf courses in the region.



The Cayman Islands

Well-known as a banking and finance center, the Caymans have more than 60,000 companies registered for operations there, making it ideal for global meetings of all kinds. But exquisite beaches and renowned diving also make it a place attendees want to go.



Jamaica

Always a favorite with U.S. tourists, Jamaica is also a major destination for business travelers from across the world. It's an island that blends adventures, beaches and business with ease.



The Dominican Republic

The DR is one of the largest trading partners for the United States in the Western Hemisphere. Capital Santo Domingo is the business hub, but meetings can also be held in the country's resort areas, including Punta Cana, home to multiple resorts, ballrooms and conference spaces, and La Romana, home to Casa de Campo, a favorite for conferences and incentives, which includes a 5,000-seat amphitheater. **C&IT**



The Bahamas

Although the Bahamas is comprised of some 700 islands and cays, only a few islands are really able to accommodate larger meetings. One of those islands — arguably the most well known and most developed — is New Providence, often referred to as Nassau, which is actually the name of the city on that island which also serves as capital of the Bahamas.

Just offshore from New Providence and connected by bridge is Paradise Island, home of the Atlantis Resort, staggering in its scale, design and acres devoted to an open-air marine life habitat. With more than 3,000 guest rooms and 500,000 square feet of flexible indoor and outdoor meeting and function space, Atlantis can accommodate groups of 15 to 4,000. Within its massive conference center, it offers a 50,000-square-foot ballroom — the largest in the Caribbean region, 34 meeting rooms, 15 boardrooms, thousands of feet of pre-function space and a great deal more.

The resort has multiple towers and lodging options within it. The Royal Towers is where Nailor Industries of Houston, Texas, has held its VIP meeting each March for the past four years. The event draws 225 attendees.

Charles Piserelle, director of sales for Nailor Industries, says Paradise Island and Atlantis offer “ease of access and what our group likes to do.” In fact, he adds, “It has just about everything a person could want in an island getaway.”

Although he says the destination presents no real challenges

Atlantis easily lends itself as a destination for family-friendly meetings, but not just because it offers a multitude of activities and programs for children of all ages. “The hotel is totally safe,” Piserelle notes. “If you are bringing your kids, you can just turn them loose, and they will be safe.”

Given the size of Atlantis, it’s easy for attendees to spread out and go in many different directions. For that reason, Piserelle

.....
“(The Atlantis Resort) has just about everything a person could want in an island getaway.”

.....
Charles Piserelle, Director of Sales
Nailor Industries, Houston, TX
.....

offers this suggestion for planners who are considering bringing a group to the resort: “If you are trying to keep the group together, consider setting up a specific place to have drinks and food during the day.”

The Nailor group rents a cabana complete with a bartender and available food so that Nailor staff and customers can have ongoing quality time networking even while enjoying all that paradise offers.

Across the bridge in Nassau, along Cable Beach, sits the island’s newest resort complex, Baha Mar. Three hotels provide three distinct lodging options within the complex. Grand Hyatt Baha Mar was the first to open and is the largest with 1,800 guest rooms. SLS Baha Mar combines style and luxury with an upbeat, energetic vibe. Among its 299 guest rooms are 107 suites. Rosewood Baha Mar was the final hotel to open. In addition to 233 guest rooms, the Rosewood has four luxury beachfront villas, ideal for executives and VIPs on high-end incentive trips.

Baha Mar’s Convention, Arts & Entertainment Center features 200,000 square feet of art-filled indoor space and exquisite outdoor venues that can accommodate groups of all sizes. The convention center is easily accessible from all three hotels, meaning planners can offer attendees a variety of lodging price points and amenities all within the same complex. In total, there are dozens of restaurants, beachside food trucks and bars and lounges, as well as poolside and cabana service, plus

a nightclub to entice attendees with chef-driven food and creative, contemporary beverages in eclectic daytime and nighttime settings.

Wherever in the Caribbean or Bahamas you desire to meet, there is an island that will meet your group’s needs. Chances are, it will increase meeting attendance and provide the perfect backdrop, whether your goal is networking, incentive rewards, increased sales, customer retention, team building, product development or buy-in to company transformation. **C&IT**



Credit: Grand Hyatt Baha Mar

In addition to its tropical setting, Grand Hyatt Baha Mar in Nassau boasts 200,000 square feet of indoor-outdoor event space and 1,800 guest rooms.

and points to ease of access as an attribute, Piserelle notes that “direct flights would make getting there just a little bit easier.”

Music to planners’ ears is Piserelle’s assessment of the staff at the resort. “The people I have worked with have always found a way to get me what I am wanting,” he says.

The group has used a variety of function venues, and Piserelle gives especially high praise to the F&B team at Atlantis. “All the places we have had our functions have been great,” he says, “and the food at these functions is by far the best at the hotel!”

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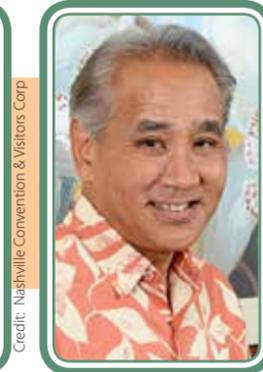
GIAQUINTA



CRUNSTEDT



SIEMERS



CONCHING



NÚÑEZ

Las Ventanas al Paraiso, a Rosewood Resort in San Jose del Cabo, Mexico, has appointed **Marinette Dorkhom Giaquinta** as director of sales and marketing. She was most recently director of global sales at Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group.

Teneo Hospitality Group has named **Ashley Crunstedt, CMP**, as director of events. She was senior event manager for Ewald Consulting, based in Minneapolis.

The Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp has promoted **Adrienne Siemers** to Senior Vice President of Sales. Siemers has been with the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp since 2005 and has led several high-profile projects.

BENCHMARK has appointed **Jon Conching** director of sales and marketing for Turtle Bay Resort. Most recently, he held the position of director of sales and marketing for the Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort & Spa.

Visit San Antonio has promoted **Néstor Núñez** to the role of senior sales manager. Prior to Visit San Antonio, he served as sales director with Hilton Hotels & Resorts.

Mitch MacGregor has joined AlliedPRA, Inc., as Global Sales Manager. MacGregor previously worked as a brand ambassador for Global Travel Alliance in the Midwest.

Noble House Hotels & Resorts, Ltd., has appointed **Andrew Ladd** as director of sales for Kona Kai Resort & Spa in San Diego. He has more than 15 years of hospitality and sales experience.

BENCHMARK has appointed **Kendra P. Clough** as director of conference services for the Doug Pitcock '49 Texas A&M Hotel and Conference Center. She was previously the director of conference services for the Woodlands Resort & Conference Center in Texas.

Montage Laguna Beach has appointed **Anne Marie Doyle** as director of sales and marketing. She was formerly the director of sales and marketing for The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara. **C&IT**



CLOUGH

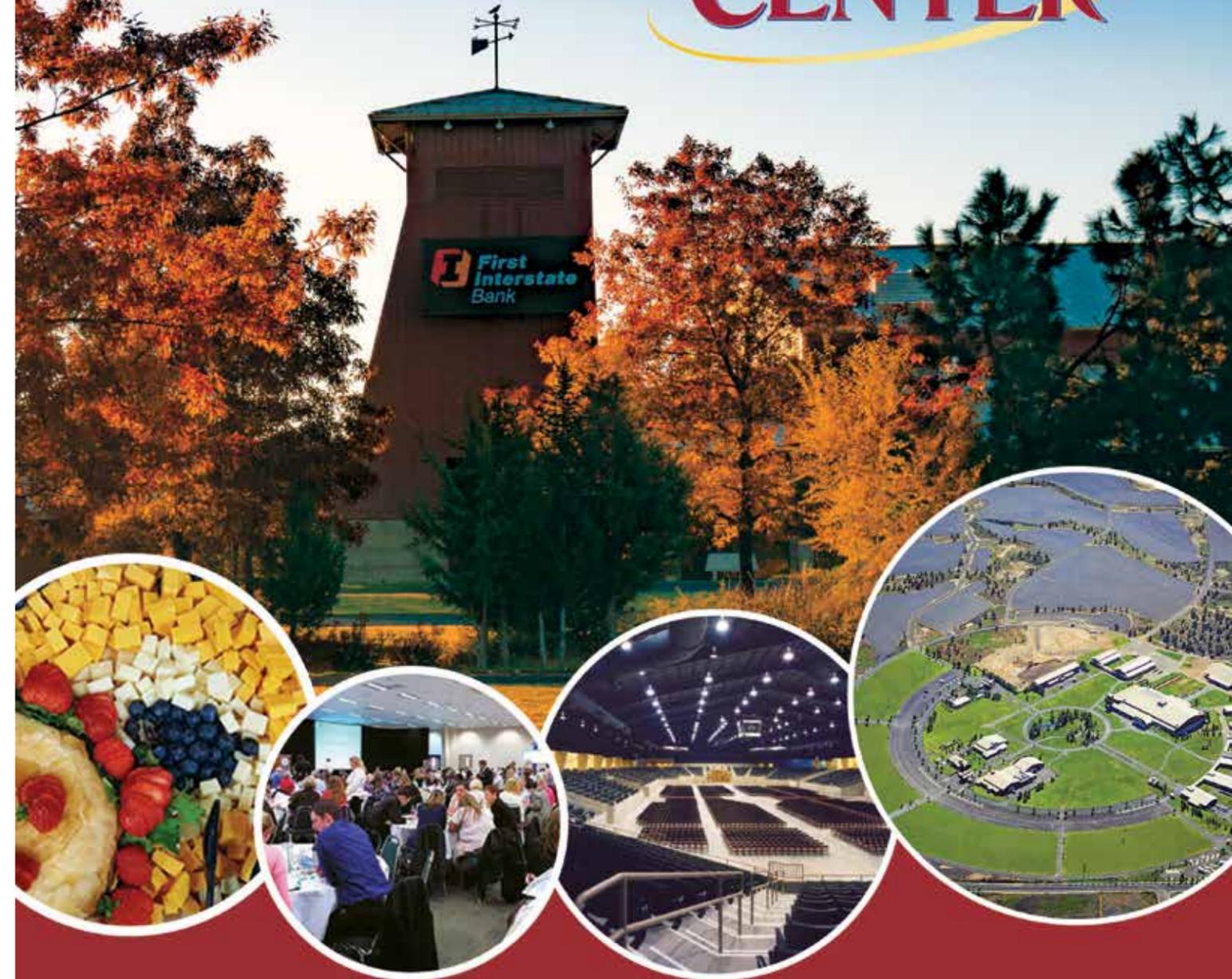


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