

Exclusive: *Special Events Magazine's* 19th Annual Corporate Event Forecast
Happy Endings: Desserts Feature Plated Presentations and Comforting Classics

SPECIAL EVENTS

SUMMER 2020

**FRESH
FACES**

**25 young
event pros
to watch**

**SHOWTIME:
HIGHLIGHTS FROM
THE SPECIAL EVENT
+ CATERSOURCE
IN LAS VEGAS
P. 10**

**16TH ANNUAL
25 TOP DMCS
P. 25**

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CORT®

EVENTS

“
Designing
safe environments
doesn't need to
sacrifice style.”

Lilian Shen -
Director of Marketing, CORT Events

As you design spaces with safety and physical distancing in mind, utilize technology, modularity and creativity to develop thoughtful and trendy spaces that are both safe and comfortable for attendees. We at CORT Events are sharing guidelines and trends to follow for events and meetings in a post-COVID world.



Picture Left:
Bowery Chairs, Mesa Cocktail
Table, 4' Boxwood Hedge.

Picture Below:
(L) Lena Chair, Taos Accent
Table, Cone Boxwood Topiary,
(R) Powered Tech Tablet Chair.

Facilitate Safe Movement - When designing a safely-spaced social event, use a 6-by-6-foot grid to make sure attendees have room to circulate with a 36-inch “halo” around them. For reassurance, be sure to provide at least 500 square feet for every 10 attendees. Add barriers, like the Sedona or Taos Tables, between seats, so guests will know where to sit.

Accents and Technology - Since speakers will be sitting farther apart, design with drape and greenery so stages have a greater sense of warmth and comfort. For larger meetings, use comfortable Tech Tablet Chairs so attendees can charge up and remain in one seat for the entire event. Pro tip: Remember to lower music so attendees can hear each other at a distance.



For more pro tips or to schedule a demo, visit us at cortevents.com.

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SUMMER 2020 THIS ISSUE



18 25 YOUNG EVENT PROS TO WATCH

Every year, the Advisory Board of *Special Events Magazine* along with honorees from the year past share with us 25 young event pros—all under age 40—throwing the spotlight on their talents and plans. If you are looking for the future of our business, you will find it here.

FEATURES

6 19th Annual Special Events Corporate Event Forecast

Coronavirus is clobbering special events this year, but our survey shows a rebound in 2021. See all the statistics here.

10 The Special Event + Catersource 2020 Are Winners in Las Vegas

All the exhibits, all the education, all the excitement from the biggest and best show in the business.

25 16th Annual Special Events 25 Top DMCs List

Here's the latest on the people with the inside story on all the best places and spaces for special events—the big destination management companies.



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DEPARTMENTS

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Dessert is taking on a new look as special events get back in business.

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Our advertisers support you; won't you support them?

On the cover: This issue brings you the fresh new faces of young event pros, along with a recap of our great show in Las Vegas. Photo by Razoom Games / iStock / Getty Images Plus.

SUMMER 2020 THIS ISSUE

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with desserts in
"Food for Fêtes."



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On With The Show:

The Special Event + Catersource 2021
runs March 8-11 in Miami Beach. We want
you to join in!

We're looking for speakers, exhibitors,
sponsors and more. Please visit
www.thespecialeventshow.com.
See you in Florida!

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EDITOR'S PAGE

WILD RIDE

For the event industry, there's an eerily accurate meme on Facebook. A dearly departed man is at the Pearly Gates where St. Peter notes, "Says here you should be in Hell. But since you were in the event industry during the coronavirus scare, we'll count that as time served."

Our team was at The Special Event + Catersource early in March, when the whole world suddenly stopped spinning. Mandated shutdowns brought the event and hospitality worlds to a halt. In May, the killing of George Floyd—continuing a sickening string of widely publicized abuses suffered by African Americans—galvanized the public. Both real-life protest marches and virtual-life social media posts have compelled everyone—well, everyone with a working brain—to reconsider how our society functions and what many, many of us should start doing to correct its course.

And so, what's next?

While the issues are evolving fast, in these pages we strive to give you some perspective on where the event industry stands now and what's coming next.

Our annual "Corporate Event Forecast"—now in its 19th year—shares the obvious. Coronavirus has clobbered business this year, with 84 percent of respondents telling *Special Events Magazine* that they will stage fewer events in 2020 than they typically do. But the picture brightens for 2021, with 83 percent of respondents saying they will stage the same number or more events next year compared with this year. Learn more starting on page 6.

This issue also brings you our latest look at the big players in the world of destination management companies. They were candid with us about the impact of COVID on their businesses, but courageous about changing how they work. See more starting on page 25.

We also present an annual feature that has become one of our most popular: 25 Young Event Pros to Watch. Our fabulous-under-40 pros work in a wide range of event disciplines. And all use their arsenal of skills to make special events bigger and better. If you need some positive news right now, this list will help; it starts on page 18.

I hope you enjoy our photo recap of The Special Event + Catersource 2020. I cannot wait to meet you all again at our 2021 show, March 8-11 in Miami Beach. And it will be on the best platform of all—phenomenal, fabulous "face to face."

Lisa Hurling

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19TH ANNUAL EVENTS AT WORK

THE CORPORATE EVENT MARKETPLACE

An exclusive event industry study from *Special Events Magazine*

The coronavirus is clobbering the corporate event market, with some 84 percent of respondents telling *Special Events Magazine* that they will stage fewer events this year than they typically do. But the picture brightens for 2021, with 83 percent of respondents saying they will stage the same number or more events next year compared with this year.

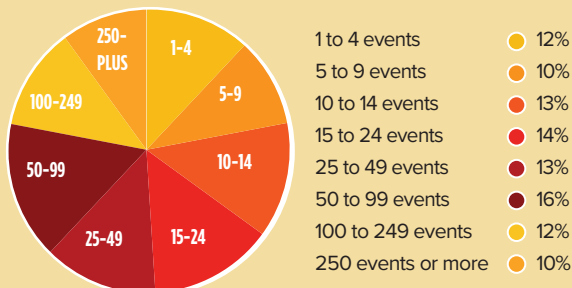
[See all the latest news starting right here:](#)

STAGING EVENTS: THE PICTURE IN 2020

Note: Sums might not total 100% because figures have been rounded off.

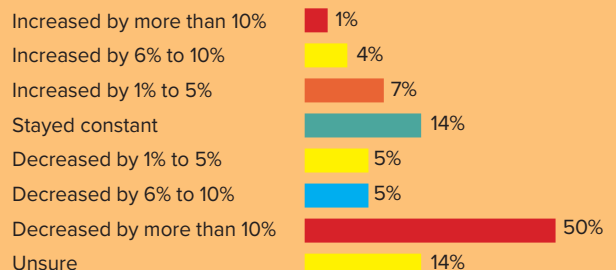
Approximately how many corporate special events (including incentive trips, gala product launches, marketing events, recognition dinners, company picnics, etc.) will your company stage in 2020?

Percentage of respondents



How has your organization's spending on corporate special events changed in 2020 compared with 2019?

Percentage of respondents

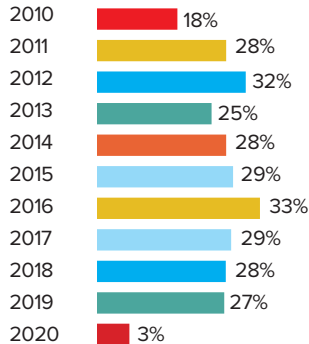


EVENTS AT WORK: THE PICTURE IN 2020-2021

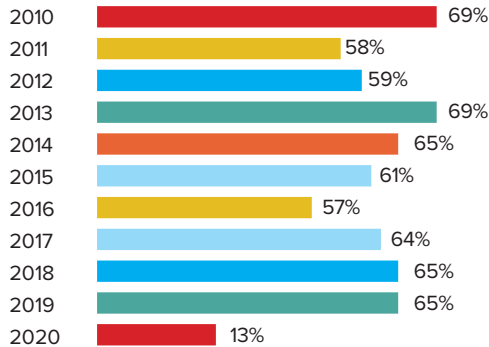
STAGING EVENTS: THE PICTURE IN 2020

Will the number of corporate events that you stage this year be more or less than your “typical” amount? (Data below compares responses from previous years with this year.)
Percentage of respondents

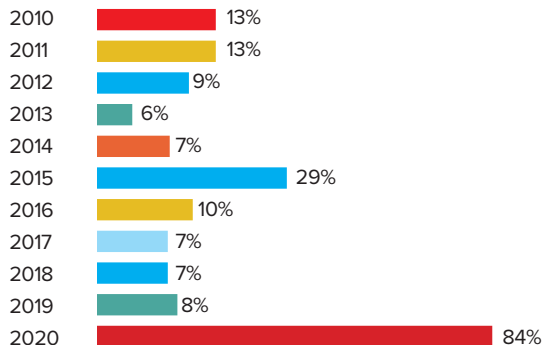
We will stage more events this year



We will stage about the same amount



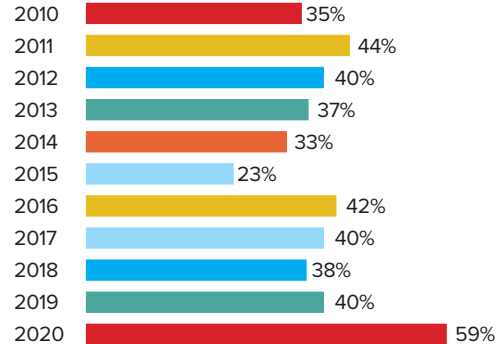
We will stage fewer events this year



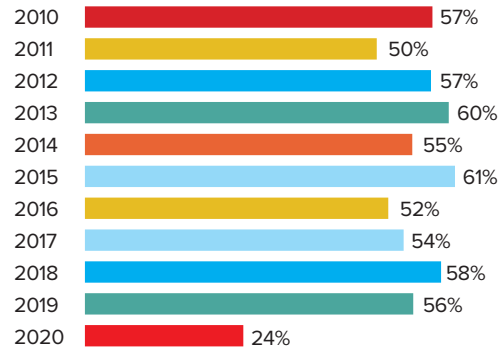
STAGING EVENTS: LOOKING AT 2021

How will the number of events you stage **next** year compare with this year? (Data below compares responses from previous years with this year.)
Percentage of respondents

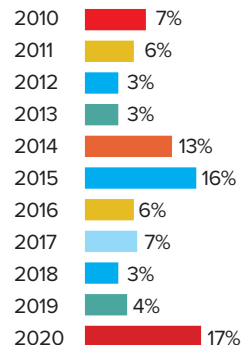
We will stage more events next year



We will stage approximately the same number



We will stage fewer events next year



KEEP THAT CLIENT:

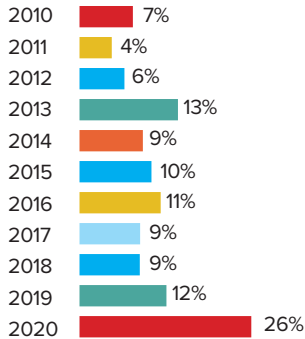
“CLIENT RETENTION” REMAINS THE NO. 1 METRIC FOR SUCCESSFUL CORPORATE EVENTS, THE SAME AS IT WAS LAST YEAR.

SPENDING, BUDGETING AND MEASURING

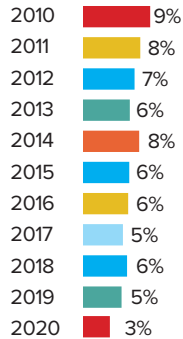
How do you expect your company's budget allocation for staging corporate special events to change **next** year compared with this year?

Percentage of respondents

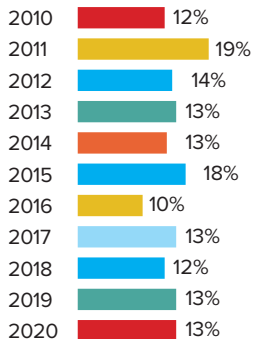
Increase by more than 10%



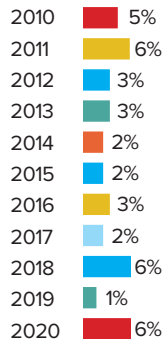
Decrease by 1% to 5%



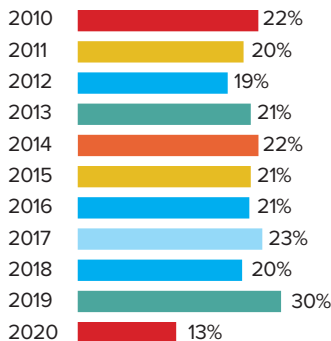
Increase by 6% to 10%



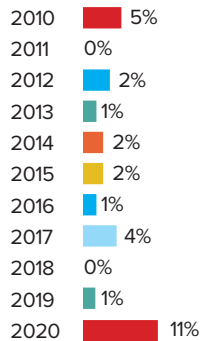
Decrease by 6% to 10%



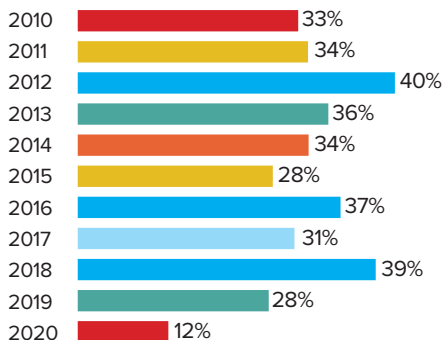
Increase by 1% to 5%



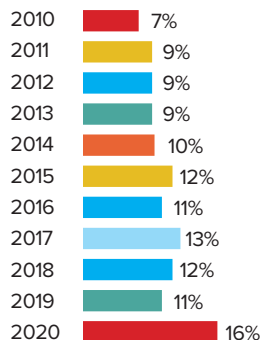
Decrease by more than 10%



Stay the same



Unsure/no answer

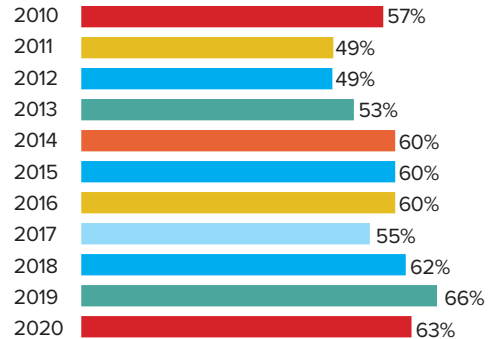


MEASURING THE EVENT'S EFFECTIVENESS

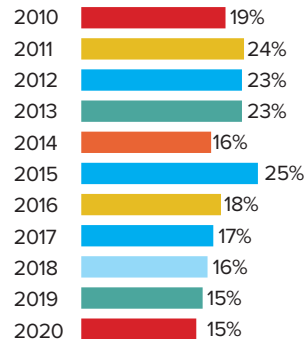
Do you attempt to measure the ROI (return on investment) of your special events?

Percentage of respondents

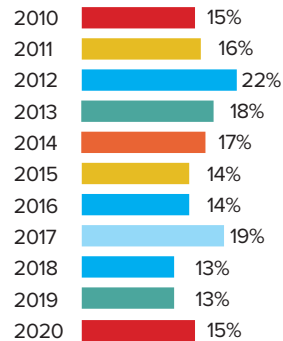
Yes



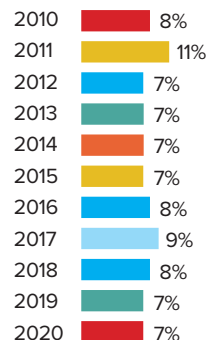
No, but we are considering it



No plans to measure ROI



Unsure/No answer



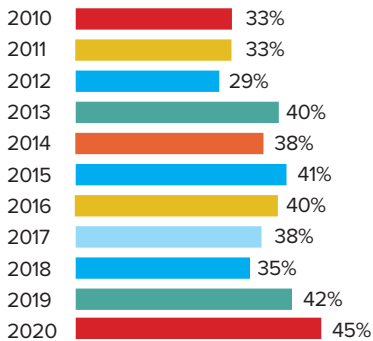
EVENTS AT WORK: THE PICTURE IN 2020-2021

INDEPENDENT EVENT PLANNERS: YEA OR NAY?

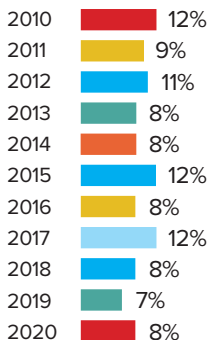
Do you contract with independent event planners?

Percentage of respondents

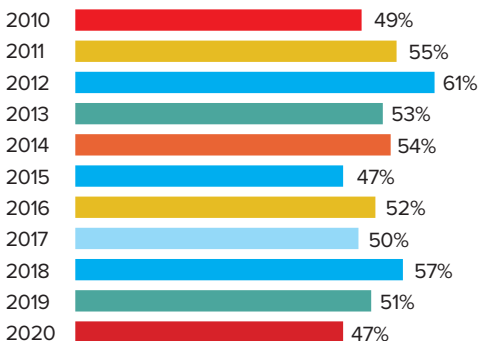
Yes



No, but we are considering it



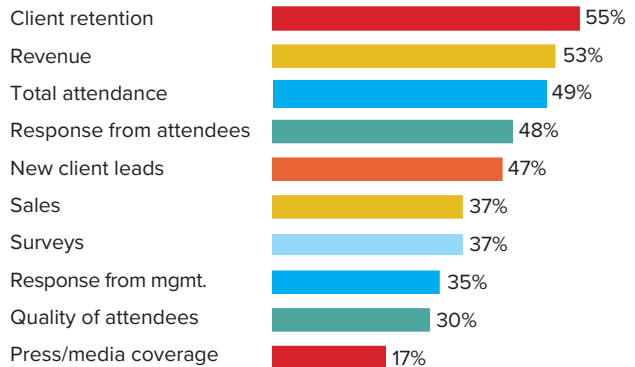
No, with no plans to contract independent planners



HOW DO WE KNOW IT WORKED? MEASURING ROI

What methods do you use to measure the return on investment (ROI) of your special events?

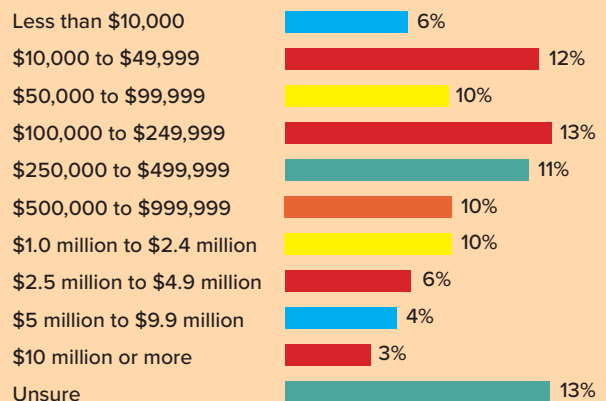
Multiple answers possible



Sums might not total 100% because figures have been rounded off.

WHAT WILL BE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S APPROXIMATE EXPENDITURES ON CORPORATE SPECIAL EVENTS IN 2020?

(Includes catering, AV, staging, entertainment, DMCs, planners' fees, venue costs, etc.)



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THE SPECIAL EVENT + CATERSOURCE 2020



1



2



3



4



5



6

The Special Event + Catersource 2020 is a Winner in Las Vegas

The biggest and best conference in the industry brings event and catering professionals from around the world together for three days of education, exhibits and excitement.

Playtime: The cats will play—and show-goers connect—at the Connect Live event, produced by White Hot Events at the Cat's Meow (1, 3, 4, 5). Fun food at the Event Experience (2). Hail to the chairs: Committee chairs for The Special Event + Catersource (6). The host property: MGM's Mandalay Bay.



Looking Good

Attendees at The Special Event + Catersource see exciting spaces on the Venue Tour and admire gorgeous designs at the Tabletop Gallery.

Sweet spots: The Venue Tour from Unique Venues visits Springs Preserve, MEET Las Vegas, Regal Cinebarre at Palace Station, Top Golf and the Las Vegas Convention Center (1-5). Tops in tables: The finalists for the 2020 Tabletop Gallery are "Crystal Phoenix" from Vision Gallery (6); "Swing into Spring" by Blueprint Studios (7); "Muse" by MGM Resorts Event Productions (8); "Through the Looking Glass" by Blue Spark Event Design (9); and "Let Spring Begin and the Birds Sing" by Felicia Events (10).

Photos by WASIO



1



2



5



3



4



6



7

On With the Show

Guests get a taste of retro and modern Vegas at the Opening Night Party, held at AREA 15 and coordinated by Divine Events and Hello! Las Vegas (1-4). That's hot: Michael Cerbelli and team showcase the coolest products and services at The Hot List (5-7). The exciting Opening General Session from Animatic Media and Cerbelli Creative, with showgirls (8), speaker Cyndie Spiegel (9) and showstopping act Afishal (10). Innovative products and services on the show floor, offering everything for events and catering (11-13). The Event Experience, produced by STKCH Events and Harwood Happenings at The INDUSTRIAL, showcases the latest event trends (14-15). SEARCH chairwoman Kate Patay welcomes guests to the annual fundraiser benefiting event pros in need (16); photo courtesy SEARCH.

Photos by WASIO





THE SPECIAL EVENT + CATERSOURCE 2020



Focus on Excellence

An outstanding array of education sessions and awards ceremonies to honor achievement are hallmarks of the event.

Experts from the catering and event worlds share their insights (1-3). At the Leader Lunch, produced by CSI DMC at the Keep Memory Alive Center, guests enjoy “mindful” activities (4). Honorees at the event included the late Patti Shock with the Special Events Gala Award for Lifetime Achievement, presented by Lenny Talarico (left) and accepted by Donnell Bayot (5); Informa Connect managing director Melissa Fromento winning the Steve Kemble Leadership Award, presented by Kemble (6); Lon Lane winning the Michael Roman Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by Catersource director of community and content strategy Kathleen Stoehr (7); and Larry Green accepting the Special Events Richard Carbotti Gala Award in recognition of his longtime commitment to philanthropy, presented by 2018 winner Susie Perelman (8).

Big night: The Ace, Catie and Gala Awards are all presented in one stunning night at a fast-paced ceremony chaired by Animatic Media at the Mandalay Bay (9-12).

Time to party: House of Blues Las Vegas and Imprint Group throw the Closing Night Celebration—the perfect place to dine, dance and let your hair down (this page, 1-6). And just who were those masked singers?

Photos both pages by WASIO

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(Continued on page 64)

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FACES OF THE FUTURE

25 YOUNG EVENT PROS TO WATCH

Every year, the Advisory Board of *Special Events Magazine* along with honorees from the past year share with us 25 young event pros—all under age 40—throwing the spotlight on their talents and futures. If you are looking for the future of the event industry, then look right here! **By Lisa Hurley**

BANK ON IT

Evan Babins, 31, events manager, Equitable Bank, Toronto

This busy young event pro cashes in on his ability to oversee a cross-functional team that supports many business units in his company—a major bank—in all aspects of event planning and logistics. He leads a team that produces more than 300 events a year, both internally and externally facing, locally and across Canada.

His secret to success? “My team and I go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure flawless execution of all events, big or small,” he says. “With over 10 years’ experience working in events, I have seen a lot of what the industry has to offer. In that experience, I have the privilege to work outside the box and show people what an event can become.”

His goal: to go on breaking barriers. “My dream job is to continue working in a space that allows me to break the barriers of the industry and work outside the box. I’d love to produce large-scale events like the NHL All-Star Game or Super Bowl halftime show, and spin those productions around to give audiences something a little different than ever before. While I wait for the call from the NHL, I am happy to continue growing my career, learning from my peers to allow me to excel as a leader in the industry.”

www.equitablebank.ca



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and empathy. The human element is what makes the special events world so great, and you have to really nurture it.”

He also has made the most of working in the wide array of disciplines. “I’ve been lucky in the sense that I’ve had the opportunity to work in so many different areas of hospitality and events,” he says. “I’ve always had an attitude of ‘go where you are needed,’ and try not to be restrained by your title. While I am a director of sales now, I came up through the events and catering world, and I feel that has given me some really unique tools in my current role.”

www.whitneypeakhotel.com

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

Jon Brown, CMP, 32, manager of event operations, LEO Events, Memphis, Tenn.

In his role with LEO Events, Brown oversees a wide scope of work. “My day-to-day responsibilities include maintaining vendor, hotelier and industry partnerships, client site visits, proposal writing, turnkey program management, and operational support,” he says. And if that’s not enough, “I additionally manage and lead the hiring, onboarding and training of LEO Events’ part-time team of 40-plus individuals,” he adds.

How he makes it all work? “I believe I’m successful at my job because I’m able to strike the perfect balance in having a sense of urgency with executing events, while also bringing a calm demeanor when things get hectic,” Brown says. “I’m provided the unique opportunity to be able to cross over into other departments such as production, and then bring that technical skill set back to the meetings and events division.”

Brown is particularly proud of his work overseeing the LEO staff, including those essential part-timers. “I’m confident that we have one of the best teams in the country, and I enjoy working in the trenches with them to exceed our clients’ goals,” he says. “There is no better feeling to me than being able to set the team up for success and watch each one of them grow and flourish in different positions.”

www.leoevents.com



3

BE OUR GUEST

Andy Bomberger, CPCE, 27, director of sales, Whitney Peak Hotel, Reno, Nev.

The Whitney Peak Hotel has a lot of moving parts: it offers 310 sleeping rooms and 16,000 square feet of event space in a “completely non-smoking, non-gaming environment,” Bomberger explains. And that makes for a great hospitality experience. “We have a truly unique and elegant event space, and it is so much fun to watch various programs come together,” he says.

Bomberger credits colleagues he was worked with along the way with his success today. “Throughout my career, I have been so lucky to work alongside and be mentored by some incredible folks in the industry—I take those experiences with me everywhere I go,” he says. “Everything I do personally and professionally, I approach from a place of honesty, integrity



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IT’S ALL IN THE MIX

Mark Catuogno, 26, MC Event Consulting, New Rochelle, N.Y.

This man is on a mission: Leveraging his mix of creativity and sharp focus on goals, “My mission is to produce events and experiences that wow participants and impress hosts,” he says. “Offering exceptional value is my top priority. I listen

25 YOUNG EVENT PROS TO WATCH

carefully to my clients to make sure I understand all the company's goals. Then my team and I work tirelessly to provide on-budget, timely service through the inevitable challenges that arise in every event."

Details matter to Catuogno. "I consulted with a client recently whose brand was a commitment to inclusivity. In designing the menu, we made sure to create a process that allowed us to ensure every attendee would be able to eat every item on the list," he says. "Once the parameters for the menu were in place, we were then able to create an inspired menu that supported the company's goal of inclusive fellowship. This is the kind of service we offer every client."

And big dreams matter, too: "One of my dream events to work on would be the Olympics. I think working on international events and dealing with culture and risk management is such a great aspect of the event industry." mceventconsulting.com



there as I began to network independently and take on as many projects as I could—both in nonprofit and entertainment, oftentimes blending the two worlds together."

In his current role with JJ | LA, Doud leads a team of event managers and coordinators, all the while focusing on satisfying the client. His creativity always comes to the fore: "Using my love and knowledge of pop culture and entertainment, I ideate new strategies and creative ways to execute experiences of all shapes and sizes—both live events as well as those that exist in the virtual landscape," he says.

Doud sees the event business as a transformative industry. "I grew up watching shows like the Oscars and Golden Globes, and movies were such a big part of my childhood. It created my love for the entertainment industry, and getting to work in nearly all facets of it now through events has opened my eyes to the endless possibilities that exist for our work," he says. "Being able to transform a show that's looking for a new perspective or creating a new show from the ground up can really help to enrich our culture and society—bringing some unity to what can often feel like a divided world."

www.jj-la.com



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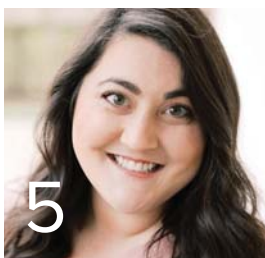
Mary Davisson, 30, owner/lead coordinator, Details Wedding and Event Planning, Phoenix

There is no such thing as a stress-free wedding, but Davisson and her team aim to make that dream come true. "We work hard to simplify the wedding-planning process, focusing on core values such as customer service, hospitality and fun," she says. "We believe that planning your wedding should be an enjoyable experience, so I do my part to provide a service that takes cares of the stresses our clients have during the planning process. By simplifying the process, we're able to ensure the most important facets of their day are attended to, through diligent planning, creative design and thorough coordination."

What makes her the best? Working with the best. "I train with industry masterminds to learn about the upcoming trends in our industry and how best to serve my clients. Through technology, we're able to make the planning process collaborative, rather than demanding. I execute the ideas of my clients rather than pushing my own agenda by educating them to make sound decisions."

And she loves being an entrepreneur: "I truly believe that I am working hard to build a future for myself, my team and my family. Any day that I get to live the entrepreneurial life and be successful is a dream come true."

www.detailsweddingaz.com



READY TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Michelle Dunnick, CPCE, 35, director of events and investor relations, United Way of Southeast Louisiana, New Orleans

Dunnick is one busy event pro.

Her day job as director of events and investor relations for United Way of Southeast Louisiana has her planning the association's large-scale events as well as managing its auxiliary Women United. On top of that, she also serves as immediate past president of the New Orleans Chapter of NACE.

She believes her big dreams make her good at her job. "As a veteran event and logistics professional, I bring hospitality and inclusiveness everywhere I go, from creating profitable relationships to serving internal and external clients as well as serving a company with a mission that echoes this welcoming and inclusionary perspective," she says. "My drive and dedication show up in many ways, including managing multiple projects at once, thriving off of change and deadlines, targeting and exceeding goals, as well as building community partnerships and relationships that pay off in many ways. I thrive in an environment where I can crush goals independently while working alongside team members and leaders who are passionate and charging towards their own goals, united in our mission as an organization."

Her dream job: "To oversee a company's social responsibility initiatives, as it marries my passion for nonprofits and events," she says. "I would plan and support events that are making a systemic impact on the community that aligns with our initiatives. I'd want to incorporate and encourage initiatives such as diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as green initiatives, to all of my events."

www.unitedwaysela.org



COME TOGETHER

Lee Doud, 30, head of events, JJ | LA, Los Angeles

Doud developed his love of the events world early. "I began my events career in the nonprofit world when I was just 19 years old. As someone who learns very quickly, I soaked up all the knowledge I could in a very short amount of time. I realized that I could handle the fast-paced, high-stress nature of the work, and that seeing the end product gave me a lot of creative satisfaction," he says. "My career took off from

THE BIG TIME

Byanca Ellul, 26, coordinator of meeting services, Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society, Chicago

Ellul describes her job as coordinating “small” internal meetings for HIMSS, but it adds up to a big job. She manages venue selection, contracts, food & beverage, and audiovisual, along with helping with registration, signage, food & beverage, housing, the awards program and other logistical needs for the association’s 40,000-attendee global annual conference.

Now working on earning her CMP, Ellul says she avoids the “this is how it’s always been done” mind-set.” She prides herself on being “resilient and resourceful,” and is “always asking questions.”

Her dream job: creating pop-up shops specifically for musicians. “I love the idea of taking an otherwise empty space, like a warehouse, and turning it into an experience for attendees, an opportunity for exposure for an artist, and a way to introduce and improve relationships among vendors,” she explains.

www.himss.org



8

BOTH SIDES NOW

Danielle Furnari, 31, development specialist in event planning, Geisinger Health, Danville, Pa.

Furnari’s team produces both corporate and fundraising events for this group of eight hospitals. She likes the variety: “We have done everything from galas to groundbreakings to a national symposium,” she explains, and adds that her team oversees everything from initial concept to day-of management.

She believes in the power of teamwork for events, not just with her colleagues but also her vendors. “We all have the same goal of making an event a huge success,” she explains. “This includes listening to each other’s ideas and opinions and implementing what is best for the event.”

Her dream job? Doing just the sort of work she does now: “Being a part of an event that raised the most funds we ever have at Geisinger Health for our children’s hospital was truly a dream come true.”

www.geisinger.org



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START IT UP

Ify Ifebi, 30, founder/CEO, Vendorspace, Atlanta

Ifebi is breaking new ground with her start-up, which aims to pair vendors with events such as conferences, festivals and the like. “I’m good at my job because I love what I do!” she explains. “I’ve been in the events industry for over



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13 years, producing everything from concerts and festivals to conferences and galas. My passion for creating a memorable experience led me to event tech. My ‘job’ doesn’t feel like work because I am building a tool that I can actually use and one that I know is valuable to so many.”

She is committed to the power of special events. “My dream job in special events would be creating live events for social good,” she says. “I believe entertainment can be a vehicle to positively impact society.”

vendorspace.co

SHOW ME THE RESULTS

Channing Muller, 35, principal, DCM Communications, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Muller brings her marketing expertise to event pros and owners of small businesses, guiding them to define their brands and then to develop leads that turn into sales. “All the leads in the world won’t matter if my clients can’t close the deal,” she notes.

She has little patience for marketing gurus who use “fancy buzzwords” to dazzle clients and suggest the process is complicated. Instead, “The key is focusing on the right tactics for a given business, and cutting out all the other practices that don’t work for event businesses,” she explains.

Results are what matters, she says. “It makes me so excited every time I see a client’s name in the news or as an award recipient,” she says. “Same goes for when I get an email that a sale closed faster, website traffic has increased, lead quality has improved, or that the social presence has increased. Knowing that I was able to provide them the tools and guidance to do it themselves is a big win for me.”

www.dcmcommunications.com



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ASK THE EXPERT

Elizabeth Nutting, CSEP, 39, vice president of brand strategy, Production Canada, Toronto

Nutting has her dream job—and she invented it: “Production Canada didn’t have a v.p. of brand strategy before I started, so I have been lucky enough to create my dream job.”

She serves as the company’s “resident subject matter expert” in current event industry trends, with the understanding of how to showcase a brand within an experiential setting,” she explains. “When clients come to us with just the kernel of an idea, I brainstorm with my team to bring their brand to life. And when I’m not dreaming alongside our clients, I work with our award-winning events team of technical producers focused on helping corporate clients manage production, operations and logistics.”

Getting involved in industry events has paid off for her. “As an active member of the International Live Events Association, I am exposed to event trends from around the world,” she says. “And attending and speaking at conferences like The Special Event exposes me to contemporary event trends that I can bring back to our clients.”

www.productioncanada.com



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25 YOUNG EVENT PROS TO WATCH

THE 'MEL' FACTOR

Melissa Park, 37, freelance event producer, New York

How does a solo event producer build a portfolio of clients from Australia to the U.S.A, based solely on referrals and attendee recognition? Park has the winning recipe. She acts as a producer who offers "the full realm of traditional 'end-to-end event management services,'" along with "close collaboration with my clients to deliver these services, tailored to their audience, with a very modern twist." It all adds up to what Park describes as her unique "Mel Factor."

Park's work helps organizations "elevate their brand, amplify their corporate message, and transform their struggling events into extraordinary 'must attend' experiences," she says.

She focuses on providing customized event solutions and transforming a vision into an "effective, organized affair that exceeds their original expectations and accomplishes their business goals," she explains.

www.melissapark.com



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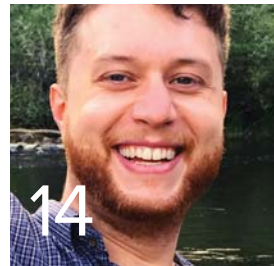
Aaron Poppie, 30, festival design specialist, Poppie Design, Eugene, Ore.

Poppie brings modern tools to a centuries-old event: the festival. Using satellite imagery, GPS data and computer-aided design, "My completed work is used to communicate the vision of the festival to potential investors with 3-D animations and renderings," he explains.

He's good at his job because "I excel at interpreting the visions of the client into practical and marketable solutions that will make their festival successful," he explains. "I am a good listener, I take lots of notes, and I do my best to understand the primary inspiration that has driven my clients to start a festival."

His goal is to make festivals more environmentally friendly. "Soil compaction, plastic waste, and other negative effects make it essential for festivals to be working today to mitigate their overall environmental impact," he says. "Ideally, this work would help make festival sites the world over sustainable for years and years of events to come."

events.poppie.com



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GET GROWING

Ronan Powell, 30, director of client development, Fifth Element Group, Toronto

Powell is an event pro on a mission. "My main focus is on the company's professional growth. I am lucky enough to work closely alongside the president and each team member on driving business development, client acquisition, and each event from concept to completion," she explains. "I keep up to date on industry standards and trends while scouting for the next big event production or marketing opportunity. I do everything I can to ensure Fifth Element Group's impeccable work is seen by as many people as possible, in as many ways as possible!"

She sees no limits to her role. "Growing in my role has proven to me that if you love what you do, it never feels like work," she says. "Fifth Element Group proves that there are no limits when it comes to the clients you can acquire and the events you can design, allowing me to push myself out of my comfort zone and reach higher than I ever imagined."

www.fithelementgroup.com



company focusing on sustainability. She relies on her creativity, analytical and communication skills, and organization chops to "confidently make decisions so my clients don't have to," she explains, "allowing them the opportunity to enjoy their event."

Details mean a lot, she says. "I truly enjoy the little things, paying meticulous attention to program planning and on-site execution of event activities, partnering closely with clients each step of the way."

But she has a big dream job. Watching the Olympic Games "was a household religion in my family," she says, adding, "it is my dream to run the production on one of the elements of the Olympic Games. I love how they put an emphasis on teamwork, collaboration and unity on a large scale. A production lead for an event at the Olympics plays a critical role, and successfully producing an event at the Olympics is the 'worthy dragon' I would like to slay in my career."

www.huckleberryt.com



THE LONG GAME

Darren Randle, 30, owner, Houston Tents and Events, Houston

His title is "owner," and Randle owns every aspect of his rental business. "There's days I'm on the computer doing orders/paperwork for 16 hours, and others where I'm driving the trucks for deliveries, loading equipment for the next day's jobs, or washing/prepping tents for the upcoming busy weekend," he says.

He describes his business philosophy in one word: integrity. "I take pride every day when I 'turn the lights off' that I genuinely did the right thing by the customer/client as well as my employees. Whether that be making a customer happy from a financial standpoint or treating my staff fairly, I would rather be known as the company that made ends meet for 50 years than the company that was a multi-million-dollar business, but there was low employee morale, terrible reviews online and through word of mouth, etc. I treat every customer or event with the same level of respect regardless if they partner with us for \$100,000 worth of business or one backyard-party customer pickup every year for \$100."

Although he is fully committed to his company for the foreseeable future, Randle has a dream "retirement." Turning to his experience with big-time sporting events and festivals, "I'd be with my wife and kids in a foreign country for two months managing load-in/out at the World Cup facilities. That's my dream job in our special events industry."

www.houstontentsevents.com



HERE COMES THE TECH

Elizabeth Sheils, 34, co-founder, Rock Paper Coin, Portland, Ore.

Sheils and her sister-in-law love their wedding planning business—Bridal Bliss—but not what they see as its outdated technologies. "Many small to medium-sized businesses were unable to have access to contract and invoice platforms without paying high subscriptions and processing fees," she explains.

To solve the problem, the pair launched Rock Paper Coin—an online platform designed to bring wedding planners, couples and vendors into one system. "By allowing these businesses to come under one platform to process contracts and payment, Rock Paper Coin takes the burden off working with the suppliers to save people time and money," she explains.

If Sheils sounds busy juggling both companies, she is. "Starting my own business was a dream for many years," she says. "I feel lucky to be on this journey. Although it's been bumpy, it's been rewarding."

www.rockpapercoin.com



DESIGNING WOMAN

Lauren Smith, 34, senior production designer, Bellwether, Tempe, Ariz.

Smith supports the work of this boutique production company by designing stages, structures and environments for corporate events, ranging from hundreds to thousands of attendees. "As senior production designer, I work with creative directors, producers, technical directors, vendors and clients to deliver effective designs within the project scope and budget. My process begins with preliminary ground plans and concept sketches before building a simple 3-D model for



DRAGON SLAYER

Melinda Y. Reese, 35, co-founder, Huckleberry Hospitality, Austin, Texas

After spending more than a decade working in events, sales and marketing for nationally recognized brands, Reese co-founded Huckleberry Hospitality, a full-service catering

25 YOUNG EVENT PROS TO WATCH

pricing estimates" she explains. "After a series of revisions to refine the client's vision and needs, I create a few photorealistic renderings or other visualization products as needed."

In the industry for just over six years, she has overseen nearly 100 projects, her favorites being those that are "minimal, bold and showcase the latest LED tech," she says.

She sees today's COVID crisis as an opportunity. "I'm ready to put my research and skills to the test as we move forward into the unknown," she explains. "The limitless design potential of virtual events will be the ultimate playground for my creativity. I look forward to dreaming up engaging branded fantasy worlds without the physical or budgetary limitations of traditional live events."

bellwethershow.com

FINDING THE NEW WAY

Amaia P. Stecker, 36,
managing partner, **Pilar and Co., Alexandria, Va.**

Company founder Stecker brings a unique resume to her event firm. She earned master's degrees in both government and business administration while working full-time in the U.S. Senate. She and her team now produce a wide variety of events for corporate, nonprofit and social organizations, approaching events "holistically,



with an eye for detail and a passion for making the experience purposeful," she says.

She sees part of her role as "challenging" her clients. "I challenge organizations to provide meaningful connections and tangible takeaways for their end users," Stecker says. "Authenticity and real connection are created when attendees have an experience that cannot be replicated."

And tradition? Not for her. "I refuse to do things the way they have always been done. What are the needs of the attendee, and how are they being met? I use design thinking to create the architecture of my events, giving them an achievable purpose."

www.pilarandco.com

SALUTING THE PRESIDENT

Alaina Tobar, DMCP,
32, regional general manager, **PRA Northern California, San Francisco**

Tobar is drawn to events because "no two days are the same," she explains. "But that's why I love this industry!"

Her days are a broad mix of responsibilities, including "managing an incredibly talented team of individuals to contract negotiations, sales strategy, supporting on-site operations, and everything in between," she explains. "In addition, I sit on an internal management team for the PRA system, helping to provide consistency and design efficiencies across our 29 offices."



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And as if that weren't enough, "I'm also proud to serve as the president of the Association of Destination Management Executives International where, alongside my dedicated board of directors and certification and accreditation board, we strive to define the DMC industry and uphold the highest level of professionalism and ethics across our industry."

Tobar thrives on collaboration. "One of my favorite things about special events is you get to work with passionate and collaborative people," she says. "That extends beyond our internal teams and reaches to our clients and our partners. I am a team player, and no task is too small or too large to accomplish when you have the right people in place."

pra.com

BRED IN THE BONE

Brandon Treadway, 23,
president/creative
director, Treadway
Events and
Entertainment,
Portland, Ore.

Treadway has the pedigree to be a success in special events. "Having grown up in the events industry, I obtained a good understanding of how events work and how to effectively hold social gatherings," he explains. "During my childhood, I spent hours volunteering on events in my community, where I learned a great deal about fundraising, event budgeting and more. I have a meticulous eye for detail, and I am procedure-oriented—two very important skills to have when planning events. Additionally, through trial and error, I've been able to improve my ability to handle stressful situations. To this day, I still volunteer and build connections through multiple organizations such as the ILEA Portland chapter," for which he serves as vice president of communications.

He says that as the owner of an event agency, he is living his "dream life": "From thrilling haunted house attractions to a lively nightclub for teens to an entertaining multicultural festival, Treadway Events has covered it all."

www.treadwayevents.com

READY TO PARTNER

Daniel Wakefield, 25,
account executive,
Image AV Denver

In his role with Image AV, Wakefield aims to create relationships with clients and other event professionals to show them how audiovisual can transform an event and, ultimately, choose to partner with his team. His recipe for success is simple: "When the client is happy, I am happy!" he says.

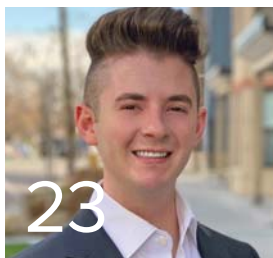
He strives to offer new concepts. "I am good at my job because I approach every event from a creative standpoint," he says. "Anyone can repeat what was done before, but when you design new concepts for a client, they see the value in you and your company."

He prizes creativity: "Even when an event calls for the basics, there can always be something new. I do my work from a customer-service aspect," he says. "This is how I am able to work with many individuals and earn their trust to produce the event. I may be a 'salesperson' by title, but I will never call myself that. I want my clients to see me as a partner who helps find solutions, and not a person wanting to make a quota."

www.imageav.com



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ON WITH THE SHOW

Patrick Wallian, 38, founder/CEO, Exhibau,
Vancouver, British Columbia, Chattanooga, Tenn.,
and Tempe, Ariz.

The boss is the boss: "As a CEO, I'm responsible for guiding the company," Wallian says. "I do this well because I've been in each position in my company before, understand the difficulties and ways to excel at them, and I also have a lot of experience in the industry itself. This will mark my 12th year in special events, and I've worked everywhere from Europe to Asia to the U.S.A. and Canada, coordinating with all types of cultures and labor capabilities, event venue landscapes, and client resources. This is what gives me an edge, as well as a cultural tolerance and understanding that's been built up over a decade."

He still has big dreams. "My dream job in special events is to be the project director for an Olympics in one of my home countries of the U.S.A. or Canada" he says. "Given my past experiences with the organizing committees for various Olympics locations, it would be an honor to be able to bring the knowledge home and execute well for all of the world to see. The Olympics provides such a great opportunity to showcase technical capabilities and creative design all wrapped in one, and that's what Exhibau does well."

www.exhibau.com

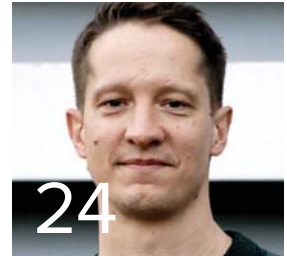
WE ARE FAMILY

Jillian Ziska, 31, owner/creative director,
To Be Designed, San Diego

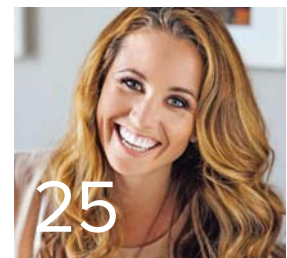
This busy company handles a wide range of events, from weddings to social events to corporate bashes. "We are a family that continues to grow together as we navigate expansion, industry changes, and innovations for events in the future," Ziska says. "There is never a dull moment in the day, and my daily schedule is always quite full, but I wouldn't change a single minute." The secret to her success? "Clients want to feel like they are your top priority and not just another check in the mail," she says. "Our strategy from the beginning has always been to partner with other vendors because we want that long-lasting relationship where a mutual benefit exists for both parties."

Going the extra mile matters: "We pride ourselves on going above and beyond for each client, and our consistent clientele knows this and continues to work with us time and again," she says. "So whether it be a special gift box, a note in the mail with a gift card, or just some extra furniture or flowers at the event that the client didn't pay for but we knew would add so much—that's what makes us the best at our job."

www.tbdsandiego.com



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Do you know a young event pro who should be on this list next year? (And maybe that's you.)

Tell us at info@specialevents.com.

Note: As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, information here is subject to change.

25 TOP DMCS

It's our annual look at the biggest brands in the world of DMCS—the experts with insider access to the best destinations on earth.

Edited by Lisa Hurley

ACCESS

San Diego

www.accessdmc.com

TOP OFFICER Jennifer Miller, DMCP
AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 2,000 to 2,500

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE

\$100 million

CAPABILITIES Founded in 1969, ACCESS offers a wide range of services, from creative special event and program design to transportation logistics, CSR programs and recreational activities. "We don't just focus on what your event should be, but why your event should be at all," they say.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Standout events from the past year include Music City's 3-D Block Party Experience, where the ACCESS Nashville [Tenn.] team shut down Broadway in the heart of the city for a private block-party experience for 4,000 guests. The huge event took over four iconic honky-tonks and set up a giant tent in the middle of the street. In Denver, the Colorado team transformed a hangar space into an interactive exploration of all things Colorado. Guests were served concessions via roaming beer bikes and were invited to slackline, raft the virtual rapids, or try to beat the pro on an oversized rock-climbing wall.

TRENDS TO WATCH "There's no question that risk management will be something the entire hospitality industry will continue to focus on this year and beyond," management says. "More than ever before, DMCS will have to work more closely with hotels, venues and supplier partners to ensure the health and safety of program participants. Group sizes and number of events are likely to decline in the short term, and as a result, clients will be expecting an event greater ROI on those events."

ADVANTAGE DESTINATION AND MEETING SERVICES

North Miami Beach, Fla.

www.advantagedms.com

TOP OFFICER Jim Post
AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 350 to 375

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$11 million to \$13 million

CAPABILITIES Serving big Florida destinations Miami, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, Boca Raton, Palm Beach, Naples, Marco Island, and the Florida Keys, this DMC was certified this year as 100 percent LGBTQ-owned and -operated; "This designation allows our corporate clients the ability to claim minority dollar spend when utilizing our services," management says.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Highlights of the past year have included a Super Bowl event for Bud Light and Bud Light Seltzer, with a graffiti artist, strolling oyster shuckers, and a branded flip-flop station. For another client, a global manufacturer of batteries, the team organized a battery-operated golf cart tour of Miami's Wynwood design district. Guests glided through the trendy neighborhood on their carts, then enjoyed lunch at the Wynwood Walls. Carbon footprint: zero.

TRENDS TO WATCH "With the current global situation, we are focusing on our own backyard and supporting the communities that support us," they say, such as working for a local nonprofit that aids first responders. "The trend to give back locally is immensely popular." A second big trend: flexible, amicable change and cancellation clauses for client programs. "We have found that clients want to work with us to either move their program dates to later this year or bring them back in 2021, and we are working with them to make this happen. Clients are looking for DMCS who will work with them to get through these trying times with flexibility and forward-thinking solutions," they say.



BIXEL & CO.

A DMC Network Company

Los Angeles

www.bixelco.com

TOP OFFICER Dabney Bixel
AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 300

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$10 million to \$10.5 million

CAPABILITIES Management points with pride to its reputation for producing "unforgettable events coupled with unparalleled execution, in addition to exhibiting a masterful grasp of our destination's ins and outs." The L.A.-born and -bred team notes the longevity and diverse interests of its members, giving them "unrivaled knowledge of our destination, ranging from iconic Los Angeles landmarks to the hippest new restaurants and nightspots, as well as access to many exclusive venues and activities." They add, "From Fortune 500 companies to boutique independent firms, our diverse clientele entrusts us with their most critical event, destination, incentive and meeting needs."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Highlights over the past year have included a "spectacular" five-day citywide program in downtown Los Angeles for 1,800 people; "This was a comprehensive and constantly changing project that required utmost attention to detail, ranging from daytime meetings, diverse activities, dine-arounds and evening events. It became especially technical when we produced 11 events at 11 different venues in the same evening simultaneously, which was a unique challenge and, ultimately, an impeccable success," they

say. Another highlight was an event that the team produced at a majestic L.A. mansion for an Ivy League University's alumni group; "The event felt very intimate, but also lively and fun, boasting an elegant aura and a fresh and chic aesthetic," the team says.

TRENDS TO WATCH "One of the major trends we continue to observe is our clients' focus on taking an experiential approach to their events and programs," management says. "At Bixel, we have always concentrated on leaving a lasting impression on our guests by providing engaging experiences, so this was nothing new for us." The team points to "a sharp increase" in companies wanting to strengthen the bond of their teams by calling for team-building activities.

CE GROUP

A DMC Network Company

San Antonio

cegroupinc.net

TOP OFFICER Janet Holliday

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS

PER YEAR 50 to 75

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$5 million to \$6 million

CAPABILITIES This company "stays relevant in our market thanks to the power and creativity of reinvention," management says. "When our clients want something different from what we first propose, we adjust and innovate. When our market dictates a new opportunity, we find the source and fill the need." Local expertise is the difference: "Our roots run deep in San Antonio," they say. "Our advantage is our local expertise among sales, creative and operation team members living and working in our city."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS The team tailored an event for a client in wealth management with an evening at a Ferrari dealership, complete with a gourmet chef, test-driving, and exclusive access to the private Ferrari vault. For a new spin on the holiday party, "We flipped a traditional masquerade theme on its head by incorporating three elements: Venetian masquerade, an underground speakeasy complete with a jazzy pianist, and an after-party with stilt-walkers and a major headliner," they say.

TRENDS TO WATCH "CE DMC is championing sustainability by incorporating green practices into our events and service standard," management says. "Great clients have allowed us the chance to create completely vegan events that also give back to the community. One example includes leveraging our relationship at the City of San Antonio to reuse and plant centerpieces along our iconic River Walk." The big force confronting

the industry: "The reaction and ripple effect from the COVID-19 pandemic," management says. "These are very uncertain times, and we need to—virtually—gather together as a hospitality community now, more than ever, to remind clients the value of face-to-face meetings."

CSI DMC

Washington

www.csi-dmc.com

TOP OFFICER David Hainline

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS

PER YEAR 300 to 500

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$30 million to \$40 million

CAPABILITIES This full-service destination and event management company takes pride in its expertise in special events, festivals, custom tours, community give-back activities, team-building, meeting management, transportation and staffing. "In addition to our strategic regional offices, CSI partners with clients in any location, bringing destination research and industry intel to wherever programs may be next," they say.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Recent events have included a first-of-its-kind team-building event that featured 40 free-standing mini kitchens constructed for a VIP incentive program, and a block party for several thousand attendees on the historic Copley Plaza in Boston. "In the last couple of months, we worked to help clients design innovative and captivating digital gatherings, as well as hybrid digital and in-person gatherings that connect participants from around the world," management adds.

TRENDS TO WATCH In the wake of the COVID pandemic, "Connectivity and virtual programming are vital to the growth and continued success of events," management says. "People crave connectivity, and we are here to bring them not only high-quality streaming and digital support but deliver hands-on elements as well. Trends on the rise include tactile accompaniments to the virtual sphere, from gifting and community give-backs to live entertainment and breakout sessions with activations."

DECO PRODUCTIONS

A DMC Network Company

Miami

www.decoproductions.com

TOP OFFICERS Sharon Siegel, Nicholas Zazzera

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS

PER YEAR 300 plus

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE

\$5.5 million plus

CAPABILITIES This full-service, one-stop-

shop DMC, located in South Florida, has been in business more than 30 years. Management says the team comprises "dedicated and experienced designers, producers, account managers and strategic planners who pride themselves on delivering elevated experiences to inspire, connect and transform people throughout the journey" of an event. Capabilities include more than 20,000 square feet of warehouse space and in-house custom fabrication, linens, florals, lighting, graphics, printing and design.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS A highlight of the past year was DECO's production of the first U.S. summit for a high-profile tech client. The program included theming, custom activations, meetings, three evening events, and "Shark Tank" star Robert Herjavec as keynote speaker—all pulled off with less than six months' lead time.

TRENDS TO WATCH "With COVID-19 having a huge impact on our industry this year, we are working on reinventing ourselves to offer virtual services to our clients," management says. "This can include online experiences such as team-building, interactive classes, engaging entertainment and virtual emcees. We are also creating custom stage and/or set builds for remote general sessions, awards dinners, auctions, etc., to give the virtual event a 'live' feel. Lastly, we are assisting clients in the planning of their virtual event and offering graphic design, branding and marketing services to help bring the same level of design and 'wow' factor to their online event, until they can host their next in-person event!"

DESILVA MEETING CONSULTANTS

A DMC Network Company

Paia, Maui, Hawaii

www.desilvadmc.com

TOP OFFICER Joshua DeSilva

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS

PER YEAR 35 to 50

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE

\$4.5 million to \$6.5 million

CAPABILITIES This Hawaii-based team specializes in high-end corporate incentives ranging on average from 100 to 400 guests. "We coordinate the management of each island's top activities, custom evening events, corporate social responsibility projects, amenities, exclusive transportation, speakers and unique experiences," management says.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Highlights of the past year have included a software company incentive at the USS Missouri featuring a USO show, and a Hawaii-theme incentive for a skincare company where guests could select local

amenities such as aloha shirts, pareo wraps and Maui Jim sunglasses. "A CSR to a local Hawaiian taro farm allowed attendees to give back to the community by building a learning center and clearing the taro patches to allow the plants to flourish," management notes. "The event ended with a sunset farewell dinner featuring the children from the CSR at the taro farm as hula dancers to say 'mahalo' for their generosity."

TRENDS TO WATCH In the wake of the COVID crisis, "Thankfully, most of our clients have opted to shift their dates for later this fall or in 2021," management says. "The work that our team has done on the programs will be applied to the groups' new set of dates. All of the custom events we've put together—activities, amenities and team-building events—will stay the same. We are looking forward to welcoming our groups to Hawaii in the spirit of aloha!"

DESTINATION CONCEPTS INC.

A Global DMC Partner
San Diego

www.destinationconcepts.com

TOP OFFICERS Brynne Frost, Ana Reilly
AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 1,500 plus

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$28 million to \$29 million

CAPABILITIES This "creative solutions agency" combines event design/production, logistics, experiential agency and DMC services "to deliver the most dynamic brand experiences in the business," they say. "We are a certified women-owned business and the largest DMC in the West, operating for over 20 years in the hottest destinations for meetings and events."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS DCi started 2020 off strong with a 1,700-person buyout of a San Diego beachfront venue, a custom gallery built for a tech conference, and feel-good activities like puppy yoga, but, "Our team was quickly forced to pivot to life in the new normal with the onset of COVID-19," they report. "Our team shifted focus on providing clients that were facing this new unknown with our same level of high-touch service and an empathetic approach, so they saw we had their best interest in mind. 2020 became the year of ideation, trying something new and delivering new options to our clients in order to set ourselves, our vendor partners, and clients up for a prosperous and successful fall/winter."

TRENDS TO WATCH "Trends for the year are most definitely virtual meetings, gifting and team-building," management says. "We hope there will be a balance

of face-to-face and virtual meetings in the future as the overall energy of a live event is hard to re-create, but we are doing our best to figure out how to deliver that to our clients. F&B trends will incorporate safety and health precautions. We may begin to see more touch-free activations and social distancing incorporated into design in a playful way, as well as smaller capsule meetings for 25 to 50 people to accommodate social distancing and space needs."

DESTINATION SOUTH MEETINGS AND EVENTS

A DMC Network Company
Atlanta

www.destinationsouth.com

TOP OFFICER Cynthia Alford, DMCP
AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 150

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$5 million to \$7 million

CAPABILITIES Large-scale event conceptual, planning and execution have become Destination South's "calling cards in our market," management says. "DSME is also unique in our market for providing in-house event marketing, design and production, experiential activations, full-scale content services and meeting planning, as well as race and festival planning and production."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Highlights of the past year include a 2019 holiday party for 6,000 for one of the globe's brands headquartered in Atlanta; the 2019 Atlanta Science Festival Exploration Expo for 18,500; and Stibo Connect and GFKO in Copenhagen. "By collaborating with Hadler DMC Scandinavia, we were able to produce two back-to-back conferences in under two months," management says.

TRENDS TO WATCH "The effect of COVID-19/coronavirus is the most unprecedented single major force impacting the industry this year," they note. "However, our team saw the predictions and projections and began quickly helping our clients adapt their meetings and events to hybrid or fully virtual formats."

DESTINATIONS BY DESIGN

Las Vegas

www.dbdvegas.com

TOP OFFICERS Melissa Aupperle, Chris Coaley, Debby Jacobs Felker, Allison Hart

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 370 to 400

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$25 million to \$35 million

CAPABILITIES In operation since

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MEXICO | CUBA | DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | COSTA RICA | PANAMA | COLOMBIA



1990, Destinations by Design provides high-quality destination management, event and design services to the incentive and corporate markets. Recent clients include Fortune 500 companies as well as major hotels and casinos in Las Vegas. Now 100 percent employee owned, DBD operates a 130,000-plus-square-foot facility, which supports both current business and growth for the future. The space is home to the company's more than 100 employees with all departments—warehouse, floral studio, design studio, entertainment, sales and operations—under one roof.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Highlights of the past year include "Pandemonium," a one-hour custom production for 3,000 attendees showcasing 20 dancers and 11 specialty acts; "Momentum," which took 5,000 guests across multiple resort pools with competitive ping pong, specialty velocity performances, games and activations; and "Tech Takeover," which saw 16,000 attendees take over a Vegas resort and casino consisting of six venues, seven restaurants, two garage-level transformations, 12 activations and 30 entertainment elements.

TRENDS TO WATCH DBD is proud of its hometown: "One reason Las Vegas is a top choice, year after year, is that there is always something new to see and experience," management says. "Our resort and business partners continually invest in improvements to keep the destination fresh and appealing to business travelers."

GLOBAL DMC NETWORK BY JTB GROUP

Tokyo

www.globaldmcnetwork.com;

www.jtb-global.com/dmc

TOP OFFICER Jun Takeda

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 1,000 to 1,500

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$3 billion

CAPABILITIES This network includes 13 DMC companies covering 140 destinations over five continents, management says. "Our strength lies in our professional employees who have knowledge of their destinations, latest industry trends, preserving the environment, their customers' needs and have long-lasting relationships with their partners and vendors. We can offer flexibility across our network because we truly are 'one group,' aware of each of our companies' specialties."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Highlights of the past year have included support for the Rugby World Cup 2019, the Imperial Enthronement in Tokyo, Asian Football Cup for Lawyers, World Veterinary Poultry Association Congress 2019, Shilla Duty Free Fan Festival with TVXQ,

and the global forum Innovation for the Future of Nuclear Energy.

TRENDS TO WATCH "We have seen an increase in the amount of leisure trips from Asia Pacific into Western Europe over the course of the last three years," management says. "Political factors such as the relatively easier availability of e-visas has made it easier for APAC travelers to visit Eastern Europe, but also the U.S.A. and Canada." And the team is responding: "We have adapted to new markets and offered new unique venues, products, services and—also, importantly—digital solutions."

HELLO! DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Orlando, Fla.

www.hello-dmc.com

TOP OFFICER Paul Mears III

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 4,150 (normal business cycle)

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$145 million (prior to COVID-19 disruption)

CAPABILITIES "The COVID disruption will bring renewed focus to stability and long-term planning," management says. "Our position as the only national brand that is privately held by a single family offers unique advantages for our clients. Without the disparate leadership priorities and financial positions inherent in private equity and network DMCs, we are powerfully positioned to manage this period prudently while focusing on continued improvement for our people and capabilities. We are defining priorities and moving towards them rapidly with unanimity of purpose. Our clients will feel that cohesion and capability across our brand, regardless of destination."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Hello's award-winning event "Wanderlust" was created to solve the client's challenge of transforming a ballroom space as an alternative to an off-property event. This digitally immersive culinary experience featured a "cloud" entrance emerging into an event space surrounded in floor-to-ceiling white material. Ceiling-mounted projection cast custom live images from seven regions of the world in succession, each projection session enhancing a food-and-beverage course reflective of that region.

TRENDS TO WATCH "During dramatic market contractions, DMCs' success is greatly affected by their financial prudence prior to the disruption and their ability to retain adequate resources to continue improvements to business systems," management notes. "As the market transitions through this period, a time frame that cannot be anticipated currently, DMCs must provide design/logistics expertise coupled with real-

time knowledge of local ordinances concerning how events may occur to accommodate safety practices."

HOSTS GLOBAL

Las Vegas

www.hosts-global.com

TOP OFFICER Jennifer Patino, DMCP

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 1,200 plus

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$295 million

CAPABILITIES Hosts Global's collection of DMCs "deliver memorable, meaningful and motivating group experiences from every corner of the world," management says. (Note: At press time, Hosts Global announced that effective May 18, it will temporarily suspend its global alliance of DMCs but will "continue to offer our global expertise to help service our clients.")

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Standout events from the past year include Hosts Chicago's delivery of a "quintessential destination experience" to 4,000 global hospitality leaders through food and beverage, entertainment and event decor, along with Philadelphia-based Roberts Event Group's production of a multifaceted night full of vibrant art installations, fun activities, local eats, and unforgettable entertainment for the City of Camden, N.J.

TRENDS TO WATCH Hosts Global management offers a concise forecast for major trends: "the impact of COVID-19 and working toward the new normal for face-to-face meetings and events around the world for the foreseeable future."

IMPRINT EVENTS GROUP

A DMC Network Company

Denver

www.imprintgroup.com

TOP OFFICERS Nicole Marsh, CMP, DMCP; Chris Starkey

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 1,100

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$20 million (pre-COVID forecast)

CAPABILITIES This full-service DMC and experiential event company serves Colorado, north and central Florida, and Las Vegas, creating one-of-a-kind "events with identity" for clients, management says. "Working with a team with more than 600 years of combined experience allows us to look at each event, experience or solution with a unique angle in providing what's best for each client's specific goals and objectives. There is nothing cookie-cutter about what we do." Imprint also owns and operates a full-service entertainment and production company developing bands, unique live acts, team-building programs, and custom shows, along with

full-scale AV and production services for meetings and conferences.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Clients call for “high-end experiential events,” Imprint says. “What separates us is we take a boutique approach to our events and customize our work for our clients’ very specific needs. Whether it’s a corporate convention, a customized general session opener, an awards gala, or all of those in one week, our work truly can’t be replicated. Each event should have its own identity and communicate the client’s branding and messaging to their audience. With the unification of our sales, operations, digital and creative teams, we create that identity for our client and their company to be felt throughout the event’s entirety.”

TRENDS TO WATCH “As we are in the midst of COVID-19, uncertainty looms for the live events industry,” management says. “We were able to pivot quickly in offering twice-weekly virtual town halls and learning opportunities for our clients and supplier partners. We also developed a full array of online tools and offerings, from virtual meetings to team-building and more. From digital meeting enhancements to virtual incentive trips, we continue to deliver ‘events with identity.’ Our team is also at the forefront of thought leadership surrounding the live events industry’s ‘new normal’ as it relates to seating capacities, food and beverage service, public concerts, etc., educating ourselves, our clients and supplier partners for what is ahead.”



IVI DMC² ENTERPRISES

Cancun, Mexico

www.ividmc.travel

TOP OFFICER Jose-Manuel Garcia

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS

PER YEAR 250 plus

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$10 million

CAPABILITIES Since 1986, Ivi has provided full destination services for incentives, meetings and events in more than 40 destinations in six Latin American countries (Mexico, Cuba,

Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia). Management points with pride to its ISO 9001:2015 certification, ADMC accreditation, full-coverage liability insurance, safety and security programs, and a “full commitment” to make clients look great, they say.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Management points with pride to a recent event created in collaboration with its Amigos of the Planet Foundation. “We held a CSR event in a school at Playa del Carmen. With the support and donations of more than 250 people from a Canadian food retailer company, a public elementary school was restored,” they explain. “We had a great time carrying out fun activities with the kids, as well as painting a mural and the whole school, cleaning up the garden, reconstructing several areas of the school, and making an enormous piñata filled with candies, which was broken by the kids at the end of the activity.”

TRENDS TO WATCH “Clients today are looking for more events with the corporate social responsibility component as well as authentic experiences in which they can learn about the culture of destination,” management says. “We are also seeing a more specific focus on safety and security.”

METROCONNECTIONS

Minneapolis

www.metroconnections.com

TOP OFFICERS David Graves, Mike Graves, Tom McCulloch

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS

PER YEAR 1,200 to 1,600

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$20 million

CAPABILITIES Conference services, event services, production services and transportation services are combined in one strategic group. The company also owns a 35,000-square-foot facility including offices, a prop and set warehouse, and a fabrication shop, plus a content and video-editing office.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS The team has been busy over the past year with work for corporate clients and sports events in Minneapolis, including the Minnesota Sports Awards.

TRENDS TO WATCH “With current economic challenges related to COVID-19, the MetroConnections team has shifted their focus and expertise to provide virtual event and conference solutions for clients during a time when teams are unable to gather,” management says.

Ovation GLOBAL DMC

Geneva

www.ovationdmc.com

TOP OFFICER Sebastien Tondeur

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS

PER YEAR 4,000 to 6,000

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$40 million to \$60 million

CAPABILITIES Ovation counts its worldwide reach and standard operating procedures as two of its noteworthy capabilities, management says. The company has offices in more than 100 destinations across five continents; operations comprise 26 wholly owned offices and a wide range of strategic partners. The company serves a broad clientele, from the “biggest brands” in banking, consultancy, automotive, IT and pharmaceuticals through to direct selling. An online learning platform to constantly train and develop the team’s talents has been in place for nearly a decade.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Ovation Switzerland won the SITE Crystal Award for the Michelin Guide Premium Driving Experience: Grand Tour of Switzerland—a driving incentive in supercars fitted with high-end Michelin tires across stunning sites in Switzerland along with dinners in Michelin-starred restaurants. The Ovation Spain team continued in its role as a key partner to a number of large corporate clients during the Mobile World Congress 2019. Along with VIP services, Ovation Spain also handled 10,000-plus room nights during the Barcelona-based exhibition.

TRENDS TO WATCH Management points to three top trends: the rise of second-tier destinations, corporate entities choosing to work directly with DMC destination partners instead of their event management agencies, and the growing importance of experiential activities for incentive programs and events. “Food has become an important factor,” they say. “Not just the quality, but the story, local features and presentation that needs to be themed within the events is key.” Also, Ovation has recently partnered with the Michelin Guide, which “sets the tone for cross-sector collaborative involvement of different providers.”

PACIFIC WORLD

Singapore

www.pacificworld.com

TOP OFFICER Selina Sinclair

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS

PER YEAR 4,000

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$75 million

CAPABILITIES The Pacific World offices are “fully integrated” as one company with 350 employees worldwide, management says. “With in-house creative teams, Pacific World is able

25 TOP DMCs

to deliver event design, production and logistics in 100-plus destinations worldwide. We track the industry trends and are constantly listening to our clients' needs to design new products for meetings, incentives and events that engage guests with the destinations, their people and their culture, but also with the corporate brands hosting the meeting, incentive or event."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Big events this past year have included an incentive in South Africa with accommodations in a sustainable safari property and a networking function where various local artisans sold their goods to the guests throughout the evening. The money generated from these purchases went back into the community to support local families. The team is also proud of a high-end incentive in Dubai, where Pacific World secured a fleet of newly introduced vehicles to offer guests a self-drive in the desert. The exclusive experiential program also included golf clinic sessions, seaplane flights over Dubai, and a wine and dine in some of the most exciting venues in the city: Burj Al Arab and the Viewing Deck in downtown Dubai with an amazing view of the Dubai Fountain and the Burj Khalifa tower.

TRENDS TO WATCH "The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated some of the trends we have already identified for 2020 and created new needs for the events and incentive planners," management says. "We have seen an increase of interest for hybrid events and flexible events setups that include streaming sessions." They add, "Health and safety protocols and the sanitary infrastructure available will be key to decide about the destination. Events with corporate social responsibility elements and clients' desire for wellness experiences will continue to grow. The desire for connection has never been stronger, and the industry will face challenges but find solutions to continue creating events that bring people together safely."

PRA

Chicago

www.pra.com

TOP OFFICER Mike Fiber

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 2,000 plus (could be impacted by COVID)

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$175 million to \$200 million plus (could be impacted by COVID)

CAPABILITIES PRA offers 29 destination locations as well as a remote strategic account team to collaborate on event program execution worldwide, all with an eye to provide "transformative business

experiences," management says. Through its ownership of events and communication agency One Smooth Stone, "PRA offers end-to-end integrated creative, production and communication solutions for in-person and digital engagements, aligned with business events and local destination experiences." The team launched an office in the Seattle market in January. All PRA offices receive global sales support, standardized business tools and systems, a quality-assurance compliance program, emergency preparedness and crisis communications protocol, and centralized, proprietary CRM software and other technology "to drive performance and consistency across our business," they say.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS PRA worked with the largest managed health care company in the U.S. for its employees' summit, converting a raw venue space into a community health "mini city" with dedicated neighborhoods for employees, community officials and media to experience partner exhibits and curated conversations. The PRA team transformed the entire first floor, complete with street carpet, Astroturf, photo backdrops, street lamps with custom street names, faux and live trees, park benches, and picket fencing. Multiple green and CSR components were implemented as part of the program, including food and custom furniture donations. The team worked on a tight strategic timeline to execute a smooth load-in and setup, staying within venue timing so as not to accrue substantial fees and fines.

TRENDS TO WATCH "The attendee experience in both digital and physical platforms has changed as a result of the global health crisis," management says. "Now more than ever, it is important that we redefine what creative means to events, and the approach we take, to create engaging experiences that connect us, even when we can't be together in person. This new normal of business events will stretch beyond physical environments, resulting in a wider, larger audience we need to consider when creating an environment for deep connections. Events must be designed first by looking through the lens of the attendees—factoring in needs, how the audience will think and feel, and what they will do when they experience face-to-face or digital event experiences. This requires design competencies and alignment with suppliers able to adapt to new business models."

RMC: RESORTS | MOUNTAINS | CITIES

Aspen, Colo.

www.rmcdmc.com

TOP OFFICER Shawn Thomson

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 500 to 750

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$32 million to \$35 million

CAPABILITIES RMC thrives to "complete successful programs and execute epic events," management says. "We thrive on the details, from decor and entertainment to the extra enhancements and customization to make each client experience unique," management says. "We also provide the best customer service in the industry."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS In Jackson Hole, Wyo., RMC executed a Moroccan event with full ceiling activation, custom-made bars, and "stunning" event lighting, management says. "We had famous aerialist dancers perform throughout the event, and guests had a blast!" The team also threw a fam event to showcase Montage Los Cabos' [Mexico] venue space, as well as the hotel's food and beverage, service and atmosphere, targeting high-end corporate incentive meeting planners. "In addition, we wanted to showcase its decor ability—how we can take special events to the next level with a small budget."

TRENDS TO WATCH "Clients desire more interaction and guest involvement in their events, such as live bar action stations or magicians who provide sleight-of-hand tricks," management notes. "On the other end of the spectrum, our larger, high-end clients are asking for simpler, more elegant, yet powerful events where there is little customization/branding and more of a luxury feel. The focus is more about the guest connection to the brand and less about being entertained. Overall, events are becoming more social and focusing more on a sense of community between attendees and the companies striving to solidify their bond and culture."

SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE PLANNERS

A DMC Network Company

Scottsdale, Ariz.

southwestconferenceplanners.com

TOP OFFICER James Lammy

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 600 plus

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$11 million to \$15 million

CAPABILITIES The company provides DMC and transportation services throughout Arizona.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS "We create experiences for guests from the moment they arrive in our destination," management says. For one, "We had

guests picked up in an oversized LED Volkswagen bus and transported down to their LED futuristic event with pop-up entertainment throughout the event. We also create unique twists on themed events by bringing in the natural beauty of the desert. We designed an upscale fiesta evening for guests, where upon arrival, guests were served margaritas in mini Patron bottles and dined under trellises lined in greenery and hanging lanterns. The tables had Spanish influences to them while also accenting the desert scenery. Our mission is to deliver the highest level of service while creating memories of Arizona as a destination."

TERRAEVENTS

A DMC Network Company
Milan, Italy

www.terraevents.com

TOP OFFICERS Lorenzo Pignatti, Heather Williams

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 300 to 350

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$7 million to \$8.4 million

CAPABILITIES "Some of the top professionals in the DMC industry work for Terraevents in four countries," management says. "The creativity of our programs and the commitment to create memorable experiences are second to none. The industry certifications and awards to our team and to our company are a seal of guarantee."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Events over the last year have included an incentive program for top performers of a leading South African bank. "Our challenge: to feature the 'wow' factor throughout a program combining city and culture juxtaposed with nature and community to create a one-of-a-kind experience," management says. "Our solution: to showcase the destination's traditions and ethos with a program of content combining exclusive low-carbon footprint activities, an authentic Tuscan village *fiesta*, and a grand gala in an iconic Florentine Renaissance palazzo." Another highlight: "Porto's iconic Palácio da Bolsa stock exchange was the designated venue for an exclusive gala dinner for 300 key professionals and government authorities of Portugal's civil aviation and tourism sectors."

TRENDS TO WATCH "There is no doubt 2020 will be a difficult year for everyone in the MICE industry and its supply chain," management says. "Our industry has been incredibly affected and for many, the survival will already be a great success. We've guided our ship into safe waters and are now strategically planning to be ready and immediately effective when business returns."

TERRAMAR

A DMC Network Company
Los Cabos, Mexico

www.terramardestinations.com

TOP OFFICERS Lee Chipman, Sunny Irvine

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 320

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$15 million

CAPABILITIES This year includes expansion with Destination Tahoe Terramar with a focus on Lake Tahoe and Reno, Nev. "Our transportation department continues to expand in Los Cabos along with increased e-commerce efforts for all destinations," management says. Terramar is also working on "new and fresh ideas that include a very active marketing and promotional material program via social media with a new set of mini videos showcasing all six destinations."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS This year focus homed in on working with customers in different CSR programs in Cancun, Panama and Puerto Vallarta that included recycling florals from evening functions to make beautiful arrangements to go to nursing homes, towel giveaways shared with pet hospitals, and a "make a wish" program for an association to support kids with cancer.

TRENDS TO WATCH Management sees an exciting future thanks to the growth in hotels in its markets. "Growth in the hotel industry in Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta has exploded, with various major brands opening their doors to receive guests," they say. "In Los Cabos, new builds are Four Seasons, Montage, Auberge Chilen Bay, Zadun Ritz Carlton Reserve, Hard Rock, Solaz and Nobu, amongst the prestigious names."

THE DESTINATION MANAGER

Scottsdale, Ariz.

www.thedestinationmanager.com

TOP OFFICER Colleen Horan

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 500 to 700

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$8 million to \$11 million

CAPABILITIES "We have redefined what it means to be a DMC by emphasizing and internalizing event design services," management says. "With three full-time interior designers on staff, their capabilities both enhance and streamline our organic creative process. Transformative event environments are our specialty, and we're proud to be touted as a leader in this arena."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS The team's portfolio includes original thematic concepts such as "Pop Art Cowboy," "Desert Island" and "Sonoran Safari."

TRENDS TO WATCH "With the onset of COVID-19, our industry has come

to a virtual pause," management says. "At current moment, we are focusing on preparing and strategizing for the new landscape once recovery begins and group gatherings are allowed. Implementing health and sanitization measures in every aspect of the program is step one."

360 DESTINATION GROUP

Irvine, Calif.

www.360dg.com

TOP OFFICERS Shelly Archer, Joe Fijol, Trevor Hanks, Sharon Purewal, Pete Samulewicz

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 1,000

ESTIMATED 2020 REVENUE \$60 million

CAPABILITIES Keep on growing: The company launched offices in Austin, Texas, and Las Vegas in 2019 in response to "growing demand" from clients, they say, as well as an in-house creative services division. "We view the addition of this important division as another step at being the best and most innovative DMC in the industry," management says. "Our creative designs have always been of high caliber, but with this new creative services team focusing on the client's creative needs, our output will be even more targeted and elevated."

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS The team points with pride to "Lollapa-YOU-za"—a festival-themed event that aimed to personalize every aspect of the attendee experience. "From customized CSR components to thoughtful interactive entertainment touches incorporated every step of the way, guests embraced a true festival experience," they report. "Not only was this national sales meeting for 600 one of the first buyouts of the Midwest's largest rooftop venue, it went from the first phone call to the final invoice in just six short weeks!"

TRENDS TO WATCH In the wake of the COVID crisis, "Virtual meetings will gain more traction, and we anticipate seeing an increase in hybrid meetings," management says. "Our goal as a destination and event management company is to deliver a holistic experience for our clients, whether it be virtual or live in-person meetings and events. Our virtual solutions are geared toward strengthening the human connection while also delivering the authenticity of each of our unique destinations to attendees."

Note: All information here is supplied by the companies listed and was current at press time. The evolving COVID crisis may well affect data.

Should you be on this list next year? Send us an email: info@specialevents.com.

GET WITH THE GROUP

Many DMCs join groups that function as marketing networks to bring in business and provide operations support.

DMC ALLIANCE

Las Vegas

www.dmc-alliance.com

CEO Stephanie Arone, DMCP

THE BASICS Invitation-only to join, limited to one member per destination. Members must be small businesses, with brick-and-mortar offices in a single destination. Companies must be active members of ADME, be in business in their destination for more than five years, carry \$2 million in professional liability insurance, and submit client references to assure quality in service. Members know that "when your clients are not in your destination, their needs are being met by like-minded independent small businesses in sister destinations," they say.

AREAS SERVED U.S.

DMCS IN SYSTEM 8 plus

2020 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST \$11 million to \$13 million

TRENDS "The current industry-wide halt of all meetings and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have created tremendous uncertainty in the industry, as there is no safe projection for when meetings will resume to the full scale that they were produced prior to the ban," management says. "When the curtain is lifted, it will be a scramble for planners to get fully up to speed in the short term, which will make bringing in local DMCs to support conference teams much more efficient than ever before. As ambassadors of our destinations, we welcome the opportunity to rally around the rebuilding of the meeting industry and showcase our destinations for professionals!"

DMC NETWORK

Addison, Tex.

www.dmcnetwork.com

CEO Dan Tavrytzky

THE BASICS "We are the meeting industry's only fully member-owned community of destination management companies, operating in 100 global destinations," management says. Members are required to have their ADMC designation from the Association of Destination Management Executives International; "One hundred percent of DMC Network members have their ADMC accreditation."

AREAS SERVED North America, Central America, South America, Caribbean and Europe, with other areas of the world connected through alliances of preferred DMCs.

DMCS IN SYSTEM 45

2020 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST \$150 million to \$175 million

TRENDS The biggest trend: COVID-19 and its global impact on the meetings and events industry, they say.

EDPGLOBAL

St. Paul, Minn.

www.edpglobal.com

CEO Wim Crabbe

THE BASICS EDPglobal is a single-entity representation firm for DMCs. Members receive representation in the U.S., Canada and South America. Requirements for membership include strong reputation; minimum of five years in business; references from clients, vendors and banks; insurance, licenses and permits commensurate with all laws and ordinances for that destination; acknowledgement of RFPs within 24 hours; a guarantee of proposal delivery by deadline; advance disclosure of all policy information regarding site inspections; and accessibility of full-time key DMC staff during program events.

AREAS SERVED Worldwide

DMCS IN SYSTEM 27

2020 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST \$15 million to \$20 million

TRENDS The big trends: Shorter lead times, growing technology requirements, and the specter of terrorism and political unrest.

EUROMIC

Chicago, Lisbon

www.euromic.com

CEOs Joe Lustenberger, Huw Tuckett

THE BASICS Euromic members are full-service DMCs who can handle group travel needs completely, whether clients are looking for an end-to-end incentive program or a more à la carte approach. Euromic members "can arrange everything from meeting packages and special events, to ground handling, guest speakers and entertainment, baggage services, audiovisual and anything else that might be required, ensuring an event is truly memorable," they say with pride.

AREAS SERVED Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia, Latin and South America

DMCS IN SYSTEM 52

2020 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST \$150 million to \$200 million

(early forecast based on one real quarter of revenue in Q4) (DMCs combined)

TRENDS "At this time of great uncertainty, we want to assure clients we are here working busily, postponing and re-scheduling confirmed business, and working on RFPs for the second half of 2020, 2021 and 2022," Euromic says. "After 50 years in the DMC business, we have learned to adapt and be resourceful."

GLOBAL DMC PARTNERS

Washington

www.globaldmcpartners.com

CEO Catherine Chaulet

THE BASICS Independently owned and operated DMCs pay a fee to join the partnership. DMC members represent more than 500 locations worldwide. Global DMC Partners meets with member DMCs at least four times per year to focus on strategy, best practices, industry trends and standards.

AREAS SERVED Worldwide

DMCS IN SYSTEM 65 plus

2020 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST \$275 million to \$300 million

TRENDS Although the MICE and travel industry has been hit hard, "We're seeing extraordinary strength and resilience from our industry during the current global COVID-19 pandemic," management says. "We all have such an enormous passion and commitment for what we do and for supporting each other during difficult times. As the landscape shifts, our industry is quickly responding and evolving. We're seeing much more demand for current solutions, such as webinars, as well as a new demand for virtual meetings and virtual site inspections and the technology that can support these new ways of connecting. At the same time, we're still seeing the need for face-to-face meetings in the future when the pandemic passes. In the spring of 2020, we're already receiving leads for programs taking place in late Q3 and Q4 of 2020 and 2021. This gives us a great deal of hope for better days ahead."

1 DMC WORLD

Dorset, U.K.

www.1dmcworld.com

CEO Paul Stephen

THE BASICS Representing one DMC per country, with admission by invitation. All partners are individually owned and operationally licensed in their destination; they pay a joint marketing fee, for which they receive digital marketing support, quality guidance, market intelligence and client communication support.

AREAS SERVED Worldwide

DMCS IN SYSTEM 100 plus

2020 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST \$150 million plus

TRENDS Today's world means it's a "very competitive market, so we have to deliver creative event ideas, competitive pricing and fast replies to enquiries to win business," they say. "Incentive and meeting programs are seeking out authentic and sustainable experiences that involve interaction with the local community."

PREFERRED DMCs

Barcelona

www.preferred-dmcs.com

CEO Marc Schwabach, DMCP

THE BASICS This boutique consortium of select, independent and "highly qualified" European DMCs provides global sales and marketing support to its members. Members are recruited by invitation only and must have ADMEI membership, be well-established, have strong reputations, and hold certification or accreditation. Benefits include sales and marketing support worldwide.

AREAS SERVED Europe

DMCS IN SYSTEM 10

2020 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST \$30 million

TRENDS "We can see a clear trend for DMCs to move away from being a 'order-taker' purchasing commodities, moving towards being an 'architect' or 'consultant' who is the expert in the destination," management says. ●

FOOD FOR FÊTES

Pretty plating: From Catering by Michaels, the pretty 'Living Coral' plated dessert featuring strawberry ganache (here) and fun rainbow cake push-pops (below).

Happy Endings

Dessert is taking on a new look as special events get back in business. Caterers foresee an emphasis on plated presentations and homey recipes for everyone's favorite course. By Susan Cuadrado

PACKAGE DEALS In the aftermath of the pandemic, “The next 12 months will see a shift in overall food presentation and service,” says Dina Biondo Iglesias, vice president of sales and marketing at Atlanta-based Proof of the Pudding. “Everything is going to change as far as how food will be presented, but that does not put any limits on creativity. It will just make us change how we serve, not what we serve.”

To that end, she envisions creative pre-wrapping and individual packaging of desserts on buffets, and carefully executed, consumer-safe, super-hygienic chef stations (e.g., masked, gloved and plexiglass-shielded attendants, chef-assisted “build-your-own” bars, hand sanitizers) as ways to navigate the new normal. “Bountiful, open dessert displays are definitely gone for the foreseeable short term.”

Lisa Ware, director of business development for Chicago-based Catering by Michaels, agrees, citing consumer safety and creativity as paramount priorities. “I don’t think dessert buffets or sweets displays will be a thing for quite a while,” she admits. “Anything that has direct contact with all of the guests will likely be avoided for guest safety. There are some very creative





Take comfort: Comforting desserts from Occasions Caterers include lemon bread pudding (top left) and New York-style cheesecake (above). And a glam take on an old favorite: Occasions' *kakigori* shaved ice (top right); photo by Manda Weaver.

ways we can use packaging that could fill that gap of the usual over-the-top dessert and sweets displays.”

If the days of everyone grabbing a doughnut from the doughnut wall are over, the days of serving a beautiful, creatively plated dessert have begun again in earnest. “Plated and individual presentations will play a much bigger role in the coming years, where every item feels intentional and singular,” says Chicago based-Entertaining Co. founder Wendy Pashman.

As for what’s on the plate, Biondo Iglesias believes that pastry chefs must get creative with potentially limited ingredients, and, like the rest of us, use what they’ve got on hand—at least for a while. “We will see a shift in the commodities markets, and chefs will have

to adapt to the changing markets and be creative on a daily basis,” she says. “Desserts will be simpler, with an emphasis on what the market dictates and what’s available. Less elaborate and perhaps more traditional desserts that can be scaled down to individual sizes will dominate the plate.”

COMFORT CRAVINGS “Now that the world is a different place, I think we’ll be seeing more home-style, comforting, American dessert classics with a focus on great, local ingredients—apple pies and fresh apple doughnuts, trays of cookies just out of the oven, cobblers, cheesecakes of all sorts, and, of course, anything made with deep, dark chocolate, such as our hand-made, dark chocolate-dipped sea-salted caramels,” says Eric Michael, president of Washington, D.C.-based Occasions Caterers.

“Even post-pandemic, people will be drawn to home-style desserts, ones that feel nostalgic or family-oriented, desserts that are more ‘homier’ than formal,” adds Pashman, citing luxury chocolate brownies, skillet cookies, small-batch cinnamon rolls, olive oil cakes, and citrus-tinged pound cakes spiked with turmeric as examples.

“Our client demand in the past has always been more fruit-based, or a balance of something decadent and something fruity,” says Kristine Sanabria, marketing and events coordinator for Tastings NYC in New York. “It will be interesting to see what kinds of desserts people create.” Pre-pandemic familiar favorites, she says, were mini fruit tarts using oranges, lemons, blueberries, strawberries, rhubarb, figs and dates, bite-size strawberry and vanilla Battenberg-style cakes,



Get shortcake: From Someone's in the Kitchen, deconstructed vanilla custard shortcake cups.

and mini sticky toffee cakes with vanilla Chantilly cream—all of which can be served wrapped or plated as needed.

And since few things soothe the soul better than chocolate, Joann Roth-Oseary, president of Tarzana, Calif.-based Someone's in the Kitchen, foresees batches of brownie bread pudding and Belgian chocolate-dipped s'mores skewers filling the retro bill. "Comfort reigns supreme, and it will for quite a while," she says.

FROZEN ASSETS Combine warm summer months with emotional eating and you get ice cream, perhaps the most comforting dessert of all. "Before the pandemic hit, we were working on a lot of Japanese-inspired desserts with the Olympics on the horizon," Michael says. "A favorite of mine is *kakigori*, which is essentially shaved ice, but with really interesting syrups, fruits and toppings. I'm fascinated by the increased availability of exotic citrus fruits. By now, everyone is familiar with yuzu. We're experimenting with others like sudachi, Australian finger limes, and pomelos, all of which make great flavors for ice cream."

Sundaes, of course, are truly soul-filling, such as Proof of the Pudding's popcorn-sundae action station, which features ice cream and fresh-popped corn topped with myriad sauces (hot salted ancho caramel, hot bourbon praline) and toppings (shaved chocolate,



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Be an individual: Individual desserts include sweet treats with herb accents from Tastings NYC, fruit truffle and Godiva pound cake cups from Proof of the Pudding, and brownie bread puddings from Someone's in the Kitchen (clockwise from top).



roasted pistachio crumbles). But if you really want to go back to happier, simpler times, nothing beats a hand-held frozen treat.

“Remember the push-up pops we had growing up? This is a fun dessert idea that we will bring back,” Sanabria says. Flavor combos of these mini trifle-style frozen treats will include cookie dough and coffee ice cream with chocolate chips, rhubarb and lemon vanilla raspberry, and rum butter banana with vanilla rum graham cracker.

RESOURCES

CATERING BY MICHAELS

cateringbymichaels.com

ENTERTAINING COMPANY

entertainingcompany.com

OCCASIONS CATERERS

occasionscaterers.com

PROOF OF THE PUDDING

proofpudding.com

SOMEONE'S IN THE KITCHEN

sitk.com

TASTINGS NYC

tastingsnyc.com

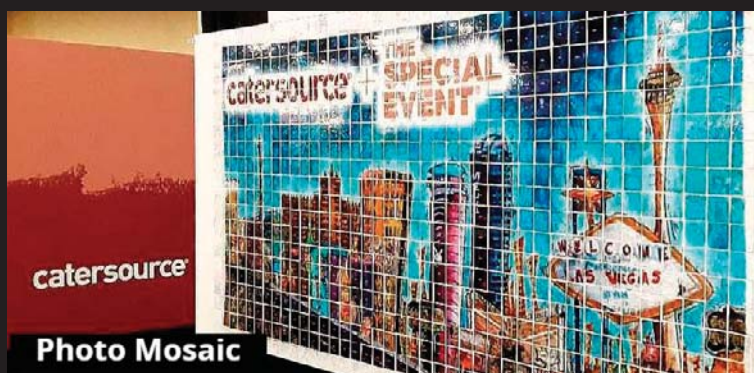


“Our ice cream ‘choco taco’ is definitely our signature dessert,” Ware adds. “We can do this as a station, a roaming cart, or individually passed with different ice cream flavors, dipping sauces, and all the toppings. It is, hands down, our most popular dessert item.”

Unusual flavors, such as sweet corn and avocado gelatos, are popular as plated desserts, Ware says. “We serve the avocado gelato in an actual avocado shell with a homemade doughnut hole as the ‘pit.’” Ah, there’s that doughnut! ●



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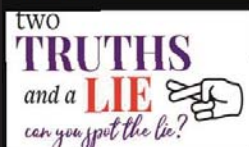
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WWW.VirtualGamesShow.Com



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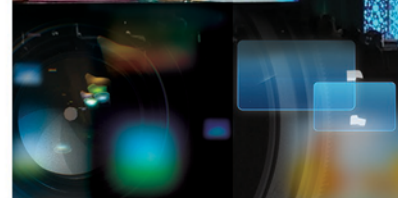
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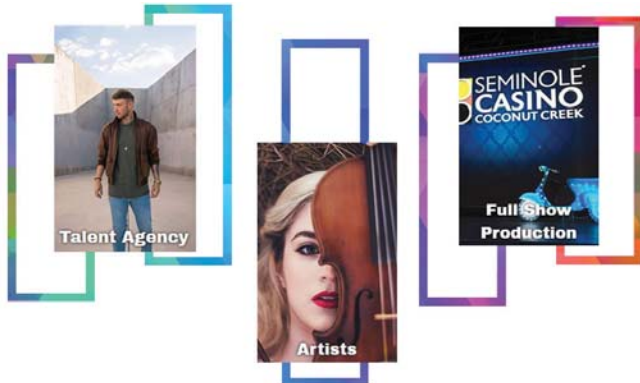


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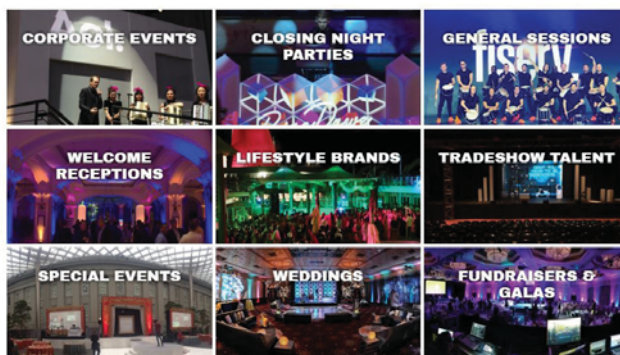
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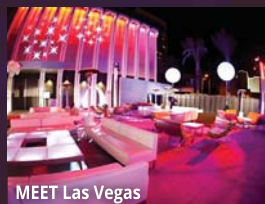
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A promotional poster for Wayne Hoffman, a mentalist and illusionist. The top half features a portrait of Hoffman on the right, looking directly at the camera with his hand near his face. On the left, the name "WAYNE HOFFMAN" is written in large, white, distressed capital letters. Below it, a red banner contains the text "MENTALIST AND ILLUSIONIST" in white. The bottom half of the poster is a dark red band containing logos for various media outlets and a list of services. The logos include "America's got Talent", "TODAY", "ellen", "NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC", "CNN", "FOOL US", "CBS", "NBC", "abc", "フジテレビ", "FOX", "TLC", "tv asahi", "MARILYN", and "PICKLER & BEN". The services listed are "STAGE SHOWS", "ROVING ENTERTAINMENT", and "MOTIVATIONAL KEYNOTE".

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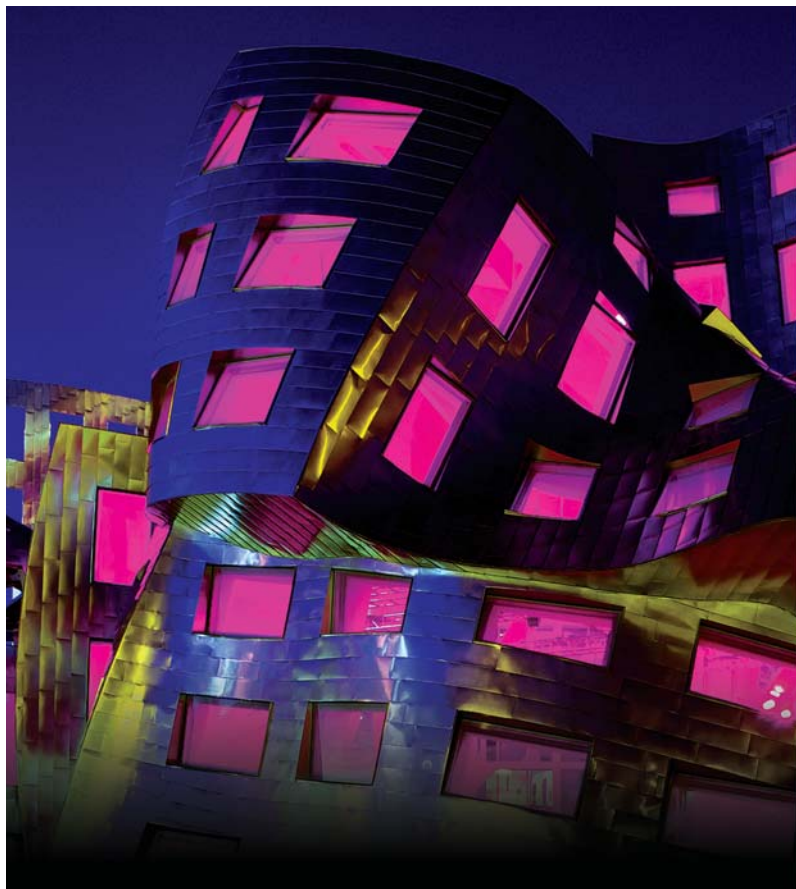
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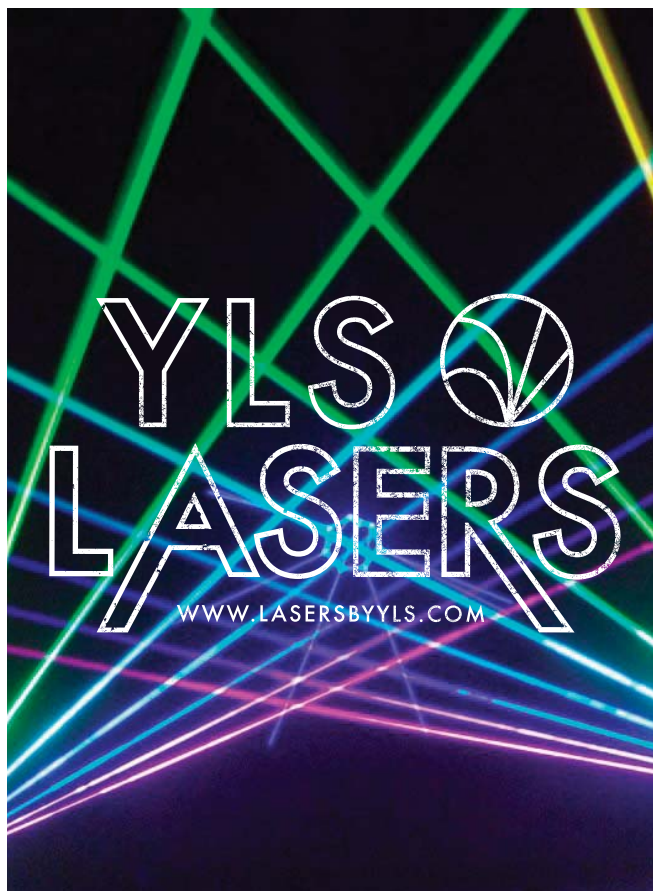
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THE LAST WORD

Photo by Leroy Hamilton Photography



The Science of Special Events

**Chris Sion of the California Science Center brings a range of skills to events that are building the future.
By Lisa Hurley**

CURATION INSPIRATION

"I am in awe of the work of great directors, choreographers and curators, and admire the way they tell stories in a visual and immersive way. The way curators have the ability to edit the narrative of a body of work and pare it down to an exhibit experience has always reminded me that restraint can be a powerful tool in event planning. As event planners, we not only coordinate and execute events, but we direct, choreograph and curate the guest experience."

THE GOOD

Since her start in special events, we now have "global access to products and services." She says, "'Could you possibly videomap my space shuttle to look like King Tut's sarcophagus?' 'Absolutely!' said BARTKRESA Design."

AND THE NOT SO GOOD

"Wireless internet is amazing until your connection fails and your 500 guests can no longer bid on the auction items that will help achieve your fundraising goals."

ANALYZE THIS

"Working for a nonprofit organization, I feel it's not only my duty but my obligation to be an analytical, business-minded, budget-focused, number-cruncher, contract-scrutinizer in order to be successful."

It's sometimes a winding road to a career in special events. Christina "Chris" Sion took that road—from potential lawyer to psychologist to retail buyer—before realizing that event planning was where her heart is. And she has found her heart's home, with the L.A.-based California Science Center Foundation, where she serves as vice president of food and event services.

Her stint working as a buyer at Bloomingdale's in New York—and seeing their great events—was her "aha" moment. "Seeing this major event come together from the inside, watching the decorators convert the utilitarian furniture gallery on the seventh floor to an immersive event space to entertain the likes of Estee Lauder, Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger and Betsey Johnson—to name a few—was more inspirational and exciting to me than any grad school class I attended," she explains. "The ability to transform a somewhat ordinary space to an immersive event experience is still a thrill."

In 1990, she was back in L.A. to take on the role of director of special events for the California Museum Foundation, the nonprofit arm of the museum that was to become CSC. CSC's 25-year master plan is unfolding in three phases, with the addition of the big new Samuel Oschin Air and Space Center slated for 2022. She oversees a staff of seven, which creates from 125 to 200 events a year.

As CSC has grown, its special events have celebrated landmark

events and, via offering event space for third-party events, raised vital funding.

"The road map of how we planned to fundamentally operate our program still guides us today," Sion says. "By extending our Science Center hospitality and offering our various public spaces for private third-party paid events, the earned income not only covers the cost of our department's operational expenses but also provides additional revenue to enhance our exhibit and education programs."

The expertise of Sion's department is well known. Along with a slew of *Special Events Magazine* Gala Award nominations, the team brought home the Gala trophy in March for its "Dogs! A Science Tail" Discovery Ball, which offered sly nods to its canine theme.

With the COVID crisis sidelining events, including its signature Discovery Ball, the CSC team is using this downtime to strategize for the future. "We are like sponges now," Sion says, "absorbing as much information as we can. We recognize that the soul of our industry is the live event, but we are looking to learn ways to bridge the live event with interesting virtual components that will ultimately serve to improve the guest event experience." ●

California Science Center
700 Exposition Park Drive, Los Angeles CA 90037; california-sciencecenter.org.

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