

the official newsletter of the pcma capital chapter

## The Great Conundrum: Thoughts on New Sponsorship & Revenue Generation

What happens when you wake up to find everything you've known until now...has been a lie. That's exactly what's happened with business development and sponsorship procurement. No longer do we have the luxury of assuming that Brand Managers and other decision makers will gleefully fork over large sums of cash in exchange for names on a lanyard or tote bag.

Sponsors crave data, customized experiences and new ways to engage with their target demographic. Following are ways you can give them what they need in order to get what you want:



### Customized Experiences

Last year, a major liquor brand was rolling out a new product line geared toward woman. Instead of just having a booth or hosting a reception attendees were invited to a virtual reality experience allowing them to “be a part of the party.”

Another example, a gift card company event, conference goers entered a warm living room area, to enjoy comfort food etc. where pictures were taken and turned into beautiful gift cards allowing them to “tell your own story.” The set of finished gift cards were shipped to participants one week later.

Both experiences created an indelible memory and brand experience.

### Partnership & Engagement

Design a platform to position qualified partners as an industry authority. I created the Learning Initiative Partnership (L.I.P.), which allowed corporate partners to provide on-going information in the form of e-books, webinars, white pages,

etc. on a monthly basis. This free, industry specific content allowed our partners multiple touch points throughout the year to engage members without “marketing” to them.

The responses provided rich data to help partners to better serve their clients. Each new partner was an additional five-six figure revenue stream for the association and provided a new benefit we could use to attract/retain members. We announced L.I.P. at the Opening General Session creating a lot of buzz for us and our partners. A win-win-win for all parties.

It's time to start thinking outside of the box and to stop thinking merely about your own internal revenue targets. Ask yourself, “what's keeping my corporate partners up at night?” The answer will be your key to unlocking the vault to their marketing budgets. •

by Everett J. Woods, CEO, Sponsored By Pros

The PCMA Capital Chapter is where “You Belong”!

**Mission:** The mission of PCMA and the Chapter is to be the leading organization for meeting and event professionals by delivering superior and innovative education and promoting the value of professional convention management.

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If you have any comments, suggestions or would like to write an article for *The Chatter*, email: [PCMAChatter@gmail.com](mailto:PCMAChatter@gmail.com)



## Message from the Board

*John Rubsamen*

*Director of Meetings and Events  
Americans for the Arts*



### Investing in Our Future

This month's issue of the Chatter focuses on Finance, trends, and best practices. One of these best practices includes investments. Typically, when we think about investing Money Markets, Stocks, and Bonds come to mind. What we often don't think about is our non-financial investments

such as time, brain power, efforts for a cause, or professional development.

Regardless of the type of investment is being made, all of us are making decisions to invest in our futures. These are the types of investments our Chapter members and volunteers contribute every day.

As a professional organization, the PCMA Capital Chapter is committed to providing superior and innovative education and networking to our members. This is no easy task when innovation is evolving faster than ever before. Keeping at the top of the game requires investments financially, as well as, from our volunteers, sponsors, and industry partners. Without that support, the chapter would not have the resources for venues, technology, scholarships, education, marketing, and just about every aspect of our daily operations. When they invest in chapter programming, they are investing in the future of the chapter and you as a member.

Over the past year, our chapter has been hard at work investing in our future. This means creating new strategic plans, renewing our Mission and Vision Statements, forging new partnerships for technologies like webinars, and ensuring we prepare our member volunteers for success as they work to create successful chapter activities. The return is invaluable between new connections, partners, skills, and knowledge.

As members of the Capital Chapter, it is up to us to make the investment in our industry and professional development. I have found I only get out of any project, organization, or mission what I put into it. I challenge each of you to invest in your future, as well as our industry's and actively participate within the chapter. The return on investment for attending and volunteering is beyond the cost of time and money!

As Treasurer, I'm pleased to say the Capital Chapter continues to be financially sound, and with great partners, volunteers, and active members, we are well vested for the future. •



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## Collaborating to Offset Tourism Budget Cuts

As tourism budget cuts continue to occur on the local, state and national levels, CVBs and DMOs are being compelled to develop new strategies for attracting business to their destinations.

One successful tactic has been establishing “ambassador” programs where local officials, business leaders and citizens are encouraged to become involved in their associations, clubs or organizations and recommend bringing meetings to their home state. Ambassadors host meetings and events within their community to create a positive impact throughout the local economy. Many elected officials sit on boards or committees with annual meetings that rotate and could convene in their state.

The rising cost of advertising has forced many destinations to convey their PR messages via various digital sources, including low-to-no cost avenues such as blogging, customer review sites and/or social media platforms. To further defray costs, many destinations are being creative by using co-op advertising to cross-promote instead of seeing co-op ads as competing for the

same business. DMOs can embrace the trend by adopting a “rising tide lifts all boats” philosophy. In case after case, working together with other destinations has proved to be a win-win situation.

It is now common to see multiple destinations collaborating on client events and tradeshow, allowing for multiple organizations to split costs. This approach also benefits meeting planners who can meet with several destination representatives at once. Joining regional industry committees or societies also allows for organizations to pool their dollars and host larger events at a more affordable price.

The truest cost-effective platform is teamwork. When budgets are tight, destinations can look to each other and join forces. Whether it is with a CVB or local office, working together is the best form of alliance when promoting your product. •

— by Alex Hurd, Destination Expert,  
Discover Newport, RI

## Tips for Planning an Affordable Event That Exceeds Expectations

As groups and associations focus on strategic uses of funds and making the most of their budgets, producing high-quality, yet affordable meetings and events can become a challenge. Planners are often encouraged to do more with less, requiring a streak of creativity, resourcefulness, and the utmost intentionality in decision making. But event planning on a budget is not as difficult as it may seem.

### Intentional Site Selection

Top-tier cities pack a punch as meeting and event destinations, but smaller destinations give you the most bang for your buck. Focus your site-selection efforts on central locations with direct modes of transportation, like multiple non-stop flights or easy-to-navigate driving routes. Cincinnati, for example, is within 500 miles of 60 percent of the U.S. population, making it convenient for attendees across the country. Once in the city, details like walkability, public transportation, and dining and attractions near the meeting allow you to minimize costs, providing more leeway with your budget for other needs.



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### Utilize Already-Available Resources

The responsiveness and commitment of the CVB can make all the difference in planning an affordable event. Smaller destinations are often more apt to provide extra levels of service to assist in coordinating a meeting that exceeds expectations at a fraction of the cost. Early communication with the CVB means finding the best value through budget-friendly venues, cost-effective meeting dates, and programming and logistical details that are tried and true. An attentive CVB prevents you from reinventing the wheel, and provides you with resources for a successful meeting already at your disposal, meaning big savings in the long run.

### Creativity in Details

Non-traditional venues, like museums, sports facilities, zoos, or historical buildings leave a lasting impression and often have lower demand and lower prices. Consider inexpensive options like a dessert reception in lieu of dinner. Create unique, social experiences that provide more engagement with your attendees and draw them into the city by partnering with local events. Options like free fitness classes at a nearby park or activities related to a major annual festival can take the weight off of meeting planners to bring all of the programming together themselves while also lowering costs.

Planning on a budget does not mean cutting corners or lowering standards. Through inventive alternatives, collaboration, and strategic decision-making, your affordable event can meet and exceed expectations. •

— by Mary Beth Baluta, CTA, Regional  
Director of Sales, Cincinnati USA CVB







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# Plan for the Best, Prepare for the Worst: How to Work with Your Destination for a Successful Meeting During Unforeseen Circumstances

You've dotted i's and crossed t's, to ensure your meeting will be extraordinary; then you realize Mother Nature has other plans.

Here at Discover Newport, extreme weather situations have affected corporate travelers and we have firsthand experience. Two examples include Hurricane Sandy, 2012 and Winter Blizzard Juno, 2015.

Hurricane Sandy occurred during peak meeting season and attendees from varying meetings were forced to change travel plans, departing early hoping to beat the storm. Agendas were amended and cut short while meeting planners worked with the destination and multiple transportation vendors to safely get attendees where they needed to be. Some meeting delegates stayed behind to ride out the storm "sheltering in place," emergency response plans were effectively communicated and the Discover Newport, RI Team worked in coordination with our industry partners and local authorities to ensure a smooth outcome.

During Winter Storm Juno, Newport hosted a large citywide conference with attendees from all over the world. The quick moving storm, did not allow time for attendees to change

travel plans. The destination worked hand in hand with hotel properties assuring plans were in place in the event of power loss, and evacuation plans (if needed) were communicated. The combined effort of optimistic attendees, meeting planners and hospitality community made the best of the situation, organizing snow-related team building activities and storm-themed activities (especially entertaining for attendees who were experiencing a snowstorm for the first time). Attendees still talk about their time spent in Newport, RI and the unique activities arranged last minute in spite of an unexpected storm.

Many meeting destinations are faced with weather-related concerns; while it is impossible to control every circumstance, you can control the response. Have strong local relationships, work together and your team can help improve the overall approach with a proactive attitude to help avoid panic mode. Thankfully, the above mentioned circumstances had a positive outcome thanks to preparation, good communication and an emergency plan in place. •

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*by Alex Hurd, Destination Expert,  
Discover Newport, RI*



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## The Other Side of the Hurricane

In late August we were all glued to television sets, computers, and smart phones, thinking about friends and family in Texas as a storm barreled toward the Gulf Coast all the while keeping a wary eye on what looked to be another direct impact on the United States in Florida.

During this same time, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was looking for a location to open a temporary Recovery Service Center and selected Northern Nevada to house the facility. This resulted in an unexpected number of hotel rooms needed to accommodate FEMA and Department of Homeland Security employees in the midst of an already busy event season.

The local hospitality community quickly rallied, working with travel agents and a tireless Federal Agency Team to accommodate out of town guests from across the country. Hotel sales staff, the Convention and Visitors Authority, and front desk teams answered calls throughout the Labor Day weekend and were able to handle the initial deployment using sixty hotels from Reno to Carson City.

As the flurry of activity in Carson City continued, FEMA announced that they would also need temporary local help with the disaster support effort and would be looking for local citizens to fill some of those roles.

A positive economic impact from a storm happening nearly two-thousand miles away is not something anyone asks for. However, when a disaster occurs in one area it often brings an impact to another. While the citizens in Nevada have seen an impact from this disaster, they are more focused on how the community is able to play a small part in the recovery effort and helping to get people back to their lives in Texas!

The thoughts of the hospitality community across Northern Nevada are with each and every person impacted and we hope for a quick resolution and recovery. •

*by Tanna Pearman, National Sales Manager, Silver Legacy Reno, NV*

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## Member Spotlights

### Spotlight on a Supplier

*Ron Sipes  
National Account Executive  
Greater Houston Convention & Visitors Bureau*



Ron has a passion for travel. You might even say it is in his blood. Ron grew up in Columbus, Ohio. One of his favorite childhood memories is watching airplanes with his father. In the early 1970's, he served in the Air Force as an air traffic controller.

After serving his time in the military, he returned to his Midwest roots and worked on the family farm for a short period of time. It was soon after that his love for aviation had him back doing what he loved and he started working for the FAA as an air traffic controller. Do you see a trend?

Ultimately, Ron was hired by American Airlines where he had a long tenure becoming part of American's group and meeting travel project. This is where he first got connected with convention and visitors bureaus. He would work with those bureaus that were major hubs for American partnering with them as groups looked at booking destinations.

After 21 years and many changes in the airline's approach to meetings, he decided it was time for a change. He was approached by the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau to become part of the DC based sales team. Ron has now been with Visit Houston for 13.5 years. He has seen the city grow and change into the world class city that it is today. Ron said that despite the damage brought on by the hurricane, Houston is very much open for business.

When Ron is not working to represent the great city of Houston, you can find him golfing or traveling with his lovely wife. Apparently, Ron never tires of travel. ·

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*by Will Trokey, CMP, Director, Global Accounts, Omni Hotels & Resorts*

### Spotlight on a Planner

*Tracy Blithe, CMP  
Manager, Meeting Operations  
Heart Rhythm Society*



Approximately seventeen years ago, Tracy Blithe was at a crossroads in her career and considered becoming a veterinarian, nutritionist, or meeting planner.

She was managing a local PA Chapter of No Kidding! And when the PA Chapter hosted the No Kidding! National Conference, attendees recommended she consider a career in meeting planning.

Tracy quit her job with Vanguard and took a temporary position with AstraZenca where she asked for the chance to work on the Annual Sales Meeting. Her request was accepted and Tracy was "bitten by the meeting planning bug."

In 2005 Tracy attended a program through Temple University and began exploring the criteria to apply for the CMP Exam; she completed her second recertification for the CMP this past summer!

Tracy's first official meeting planning position was with NAHA in Philadelphia, PA. Since then she has also held positions as Meeting Planner/Project Manager for HMP Communications in Malvern, PA (5 years) and Manager of Meetings and Special Events for the New Jersey Association for Justice (2 years).

Several years ago Tracy and her boyfriend (now husband) Rick Shutt decided to move to the DC Metro area where she began working with the Heart Rhythm Society in February 2015.

In January 2017 Tracy attended her first PCMA Convening Leaders Conference. She loved the energy, breadth of knowledge, variety of vendors, and overall experience during the conference.

Her favorite part of planning meetings? "I love the early morning right before the meeting, the silence and anticipation of excitement to come and then attendees begin to arrive with a desire to learn. I enjoy knowing that I'm partially responsible for those connections."

Advice to new planners? "Always keep exploring, whether in the industry or a hobby, keep your zest for life alive! You never know where things might lead you."

Tracy follows that advice; she enjoys creating greeting cards and is looking forward to pursuing a new interest in calligraphy. Tracy started a Women's Dinner Group using Meet-Up and definitely epitomizes a ZEST FOR LIFE as she continues to explore! ·

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*by Tanna Pearman, National Sales Manager,  
Silver Legacy Resort*





## Mark Your Calendar

Please join us for these upcoming events. Visit our chapter website for details and to register. [capital.pcma.org](http://capital.pcma.org)

**October 16**  
3:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.  
**Fall Education Event**  
Fairmont Washington DC, 2401 M St NW, WDC

**November 6**  
5:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m.  
**REWIND - A Year in Review**  
Washington Marriott Wardman Park, 2660 Woodley Rd NW, WDC  
*Sponsored by Washington Marriott Wardman Park & PRG*

**November 15**  
9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. or 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.  
**Service N'Sync Day**  
Capital Area Food Bank, 4900 Puerto Rico Ave NE, WDC

**January 7-10, 2018**  
**PCMA Convening Leaders**  
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