

the official newsletter of the pcma capital chapter

Living in a "Plan B" World

You may have heard the statement, "The key to true success is how well you adapt to Plan B."

One of the most challenging aspects of our job is anticipating the unexpected. This includes weather-related events, natural disasters, man-made threats, medical alerts, speaker or entertainment issues, transportation problems, work outages and security issues. So, where is a good place to start?

Preparation + Partnering Is Key

Strong working relationships with your Global Sales Organization (GSO) advocate and key hotel contacts are a very good way to be prepared. These professionals are vital in identifying contingency options during the pre-meeting process, so you will be prepared if the need arises. By partnering together there will be a strong "three-legged stool" relationship structure that will prove invaluable if a challenging situation occurs.

Among the topics to discuss are:

- Optional transportation logistics in case normal services are interrupted
- Options if changes to the logistics or timing of the program are needed
- On-site medical and safety emergency procedures, any state or local medical alerts, the closest medical facility, sources for CPR, and the local medical, fire, and police contacts
- The hotel's emergency plan
- Weather-related contingency plans



In the unlikely event something significant occurs and you need an alternate destination or venue, your GSO professional will immediately assist to provide support and open options. Their knowledge of your program and specs will accelerate the process and provide aid if the need arises.

Additional Thinking

Some other areas to address for Plan B include:

- Require that your outside suppliers, including your speakers' bureau, have contingency plans for their products and services.
- Prepare a list of all attendees with their contact information, including their cell phone for texting emergency info.
- Identify a real-time command center strategy for communication, for collecting and relaying critical information to your team, executives, attendees, venue contacts and/or suppliers.
- Have a Home Team that can assist in coordinating logistics if a major change is needed, augmenting the on-site team so they can focus on those at the program.
- Tap into such resources as the World Health Organization (WHO), U.S. State Department's Travel Alerts, U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC).

The hope, obviously, is that your program will proceed as you planned without any major issues. Yet the benefits of creating contingency action plans, and establishing a reliable network of support, will really pay off if needed. •

by Ashly Balding, Executive Vice President, Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI)

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



Message from the Board

*Kim Allison, CAE, CASE, CTA
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7 Personal Best Practices for Hospitality Professionals

Fall is upon us! This month's Chatter is about best practices and trends. How timely, as I believe Autumn is Mother Nature's Best Practice. A gorgeous trend of beautiful trees, sunny blue skies and a harvest of apples, pumpkins and of course Pumpkin Spice Lattes (PSLs)!

Let's all take a lesson from Mother Nature; to whom does she report? No one and everyone. Hmm, kinda feels like our world of boards, clients, attendees, members, supervisors, and more. Webster defines best practice as "a commitment to using all the knowledge and technology at one's disposal- a benchmark". No matter where we work or what we do, we are responsible for our own path personally and professionally. What best practices have you set for yourself? Follow your organization's best practices and make some for yourself too.

No time in history has offered us a better opportunity to combine knowledge and technology to set our own standards. We are so fortunate to work in this amazing industry. Here are some of the most frequently listed hospitality benchmarking trends that I have come across in my research:

Follow up/Communication: Now more than ever communicating is the easiest it has ever been. Taking the time to follow up and have open communication is critical to success.

Listen with intent: More than hearing, it's understanding what the person is saying.

Be warm and welcoming: It is central to hospitality!

Fail forward: This research is very popular in TED talks. Find one and listen. Learning from failure is a great teacher.

Always be accountable: You are your brand; your team will appreciate you.

Exceed expectations: A hallmark of the hospitality industry.

Be positive: Research shows the best leaders are positive; don't get mired in the little things.

We say the Hospitality Industry "is not rocket science" and indeed, it is not, but I honestly don't think rocket scientists could do it! Work hard play hard, aim high and do your best! Try to find work life balance but if you don't, it's still your life so enjoy it! THAT'S a best practice. •

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Yes, You CAN Donate That...

For many years, conversations about donating unused food from conferences have been halted by concerns over liability. It can be difficult to get venues who are donating unused product, to go on record saying that they do. The cycle repeats and many planners continue to believe that their options are limited.

Enter the nonprofit organization “Rock and Wrap it Up”. The organization started 27 years ago, and works with multiple efforts beyond conferences, including touring bands, professional sports teams, and film shoots. In partnership with industry icon Jim Spellos, they have also developed a “Whole Earth Calculator” which allows the planner to calculate how their donation translates into carbon footprint, which can be shared with attendees and members via social media.

The organization’s founder, Syd Mandelbaum, explained that any conference and any venue can participate. At the point of contracting food and beverage, you simply reach out to Rock and Wrap it Up and they begin coordinating with a charity in the destination to pick up and distribute the unserved meals. They vet the organizations to be covered under the Good Samaritan Act, applying very strict liability guidelines.

The group already works with high-profile industry conferences such as Connect Marketplace, RCMA, and the Empire State Society of Association Executives. The organization also has relationships with many national hotel chains where unused guest room amenities such as soap and shampoo are donated to local charities.

Mandelbaum also championed the Federal Food Donation Act of 2008 (requiring federal agencies to donate unused food paid for with taxpayer funds), and is working on getting similar legislation passed at the state level. Please visit www.rockandwrapitup.org to learn more and to get involved!

by Mark Harvey, CGMP, CMP, CMM, Principal, Ethos Meetings and Events, LLC

Spotlight on the Artisan Trend

The rise of craft and artisanal products is undergoing a revival and is hotter than ever, especially when it comes to the meetings and events industry. Formerly considered a niche market that targeted an increasingly health conscious customer base, craft and artisanal businesses have exploded and now become a key piece to the food and beverage offerings for meetings and events.

Hand-crafted breads, pastries, chocolate, cheese and other foods are frequently defined as artisanal, mixing fine, fresh ingredients. Over the last decade we have seen a change in consumer tastes and preferences for natural, healthy foods. This has led to an increase in options when planning menus for your events, with more choices of breads, cheeses, fresh juice, cocktails and beers. More and more the turn has been to serve items that are hand crafted and locally sourced.

Event facilities and hotels have jumped on the trend as well, creating their own vegetable and herb gardens onsite that the food and beverage team can incorporate into the locally sourced menus they are creating. The Fairmont Royal York was the first Fairmont location install its own system of beehives that creates honey to be used in the food offerings at the hotel. Following on their lead of installing beehives include the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, The Westin Harbour Castle and Shangri-La Toronto, to name a few.

Healthy, organic food options has become a hot topic in recent years. As people have become more concerned about what they are putting into their bodies, they have started reading labels, asking questions, and searching for organic and healthier options. This has provided the opportunity for meeting planners to create a memorable meeting experience with well-designed menus that have a deeper reflection of the meeting location. •

by Jane Eastmure, Director of Sales, U.S. Market, Business Events Toronto



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Trends and Best Practices in Government Relations and Advocacy in the Meetings Industry

The meetings industry continues to be affected by national and regional policies. For example, at PCMA's most recent Capital Chapter education event held on October 16, Christine Frye, Co-Chair of the Government Relations and Advocacy Committee (GA), brought our attention to discriminatory legislation in the form of the "Bathroom Bill," which has cropped up in 16 states. Policies such as the travel ban (on appeal) or laptop ban (lifted in July 2017) create unease in the international meetings arena where the outcome may not only be lowered attendance, but also measurably increased negative perceptions of the U.S. in general².

What best practices can meetings professionals adopt around policies that affect our industry? As many of us witnessed on Global Meetings Industry Day, we can take initiative to stay up to date on current policies that affect the industry and then take action. Action includes reaching out to our officials with research, statistics, anecdotes, and calls to action through petition-signing, participating in advocacy days on the Hill, and collectively marching on an issue. In his article "Bad for Business,"³ Howard Givner writes, "Remind your representatives how many people your sector employs, how much tax revenue it generates and how much of both will be lost if certain laws are enacted." To explore issues and get involved, check out the resources below. Your voice matters. Your meetings matter. Take action and become a Meetings Advocate! •

by Helen Gineris, CMP, Director of Operations and Client Relations,
Event Photography of North American Corp. (EPNAC)

¹<http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/-bathroom-bill-legislative-tracking635951130.aspx>

²Durso, Christopher. "The United States of Uncertainty." *Convene* September 2017: 43-50.

³Givner, Howard. "Bad for Business." *The Meeting Professional*. September 2017: 54-57.

In a High-Tech World, Being Low-Tech Stands Out



Like virtually every other business on the planet, the meetings and convention industry has been revolutionized by technology. While technology has made our jobs infinitely easier, it has also made them much more complicated, particularly when trying to reach your target

audience. In an endless sea of tweets, posts, selfies and likes, how do you rise above the tide to reach your customer?

Embrace the Arts. Utilizing your local arts community to give your signage and collateral a unique look gives your meeting or event more of a distinct personality. Embracing low-tech painters and printers is actually very modern, as it follows two current trends: the "buy local" movement and the return to Old-World craftsmanship. Using local artists to paint scenes of the city where your conference is held could be used for welcome banners, and on electronic and mailed marketing collateral.

Relationships Matter. While technology has made communication faster and easier, it has also taken the hospitality out of the hospitality industry. No matter how advanced civilization gets, people will still want to talk to other people. Picking up the phone or physically leaving your office to talk directly with someone makes an indelible impact. Getting some face time—as opposed to FaceTime—with your customer allows you to connect on a personal level. It also clearly illustrates the intrinsic value of the face-to-face meeting experience, which is the backbone of our industry. •

by Thomas Riel, CASE, VP of Sales & Services,
Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau



Walk Around the Destinations You Visit

It's sad to hear that meeting industry professionals sometimes travel to a conference and never leave the hotel! Getting to know the destination better can make your visit more enjoyable and enriching. Take the time to explore, if only to grab a coffee. Too pressed for time? Too much stress? All the more reason to step outside to clear your head. Even if it's only for 20 minutes, breathe in the fresh air and take a walk. If you're still not convinced that you have time, try incorporating an errand into your adventure to avoid feeling guilty.

Nneke St. Gerard, CMP, Director of Meetings and Events at America's Essential Hospitals, walks during her hotel site inspections to get a feel for what her attendees will experience, day or night. Nneke assesses and recommends nearby restaurants firsthand, as dining offsite is an important metric for her destination and hotel decisions. Her attendees compliment the hotels she selects, but in the end, it is actually the meeting locations that they praise the most.

Samantha Brown, of Travel Channel fame, addressed DMAI's 2017 Destination Showcase with this advice also found on her website, www.samantha-brown.com: "Get out of your hotel. Just go down streets because they look good. Create a daily ritual if you're in a place for a few days. It's a way to get centered. Most of us feel really bullied by time in travel and in life. Get that time back and be in the moment."

The next time you travel, take that walk. Whether you're in Memphis, Miami, or Milwaukee, it does not matter. Take the time to fully enjoy your next destination adventure! •

— by Kathy Semmes, Regional Director of Sales,
Greater Miami Convention
and Visitors Bureau

Think Like Your Audience: The Secret to Successful Events

It's no longer enough to produce the same annual event year after year. Today's audiences expect more. The marketing landscape is wide open for smart organizers to make a lasting impression on attendees as well as exhibitors and sponsors. But in order to deliver, you can't operate under the same old assumptions. You need to get in there and actually think like your audience. Here's how to get started.

Find the right mix. As a show organizer, you often focus on the quantity of attendees and exhibitors. And yet, quality is just as important. To strike the right balance, review your business objectives and marketing goals and identify and prioritize your audience segments. Once you've completed this exercise, understanding what each segment needs and expects from your event will become more obvious.

Get to know your attendees. You likely already have a wealth of information about your attendees, so harness this intelligence! Tap the following sources to gather data about behaviors, challenges, and opportunities:

- Email marketing data
- Website analytics
- Social media engagement
- Post-show surveys

Develop strong relationships with exhibitors and sponsors. Exhibitors will only want to attend your event if it offers qualified attendees and ample interaction opportunities. They want targeted, engaged audiences who influence purchases or are ready to buy. Sponsors also seek lasting, personal connections and are eager to become part of your digital and storytelling network. But be selective about the sponsors you choose — they should integrate seamlessly with your marketing goals and company culture. Evaluate the fit by asking key questions such as:

- What is your audience goal: to maintain exposure and awareness with your existing audience or reach new audiences?
- What type of engagement do you expect from this event?
- What is your budget?

Attracting and retaining high-value sponsors and exhibitors can add new dimensions to your events. Most notably, they can increase audience engagement, resulting in both an increased ROI for sponsors and a meaningful impact on the event's overall success. •

— by Katherine Zimoulis,
VP Content Marketing, Freeman



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Spotlight on a Supplier

*Margaret Miller, CMP
Strategic Sales Executive
Experient*



To know Margaret Miller is truly a treat, from her dry wit to her sly sense of humor—one cannot get enough! As an industry veteran with a wealth of knowledge to share, one would not have realized that hospitality was not her original career path. Margaret attended Purdue University and was focused on a degree in Animal Science with the hopes of going to veterinary school. Throughout school, she worked a lot of catering and banquet events as a server, and spent a good portion of time in the kitchens at the student union. One afternoon while there, one of the professors with the RHI program asked her why she was not in the RHI School. Intrigued, she took a few classes and loved it—the rest is history.

Her career has allowed her to work in a sales capacity for some truly terrific companies to include Hyatt Hotels, Disney, Omni Hotels and Experient. One of the many reasons she chose this industry was that it allowed her time to mentor others and give back to the community she loves. “It is truly nice to be in an industry and an environment where you can continue to learn and grow.”

Throughout all, Margaret’s love of animals persists, for she rescued her standard poodle, Emma, a few years back, and Emma gets along well with her three cats. In addition to her love of pets, Margaret enjoys cooking and traveling with friends. She is also quite content relaxing with a good book and with an equally good bourbon in hand.

When asked for a sage piece of advice to share, “make balance work for yourself. You have to give to yourself so that you can give to others. If you like to read, instead of saying you never have time, schedule that time and make it work!”

—by *Caroline Gardner, CMP,
Director, Convention Sales
Mid-Atlantic,
Choose Chicago*

Spotlight on a Planner

*Jocelyn Argarin, CMP
Director, Education & Events, Nonprofit
Federation & Email Experience Council
Data & Marketing Association*



Jocelyn Argarin has been a PCMA member for almost 15 years, and is grateful to have had the professional opportunity throughout her career to be a part of the organization. Having been in the Washington area for 25 years, she originally thought that moving here would mean working in government, which she did. However, she quickly discovered that it was not

for her, and since she loved organizing and planning events, she started looking for a job in the meetings industry. She was offered a job with American Trucking Association and that pretty much sealed her career path.

Jocelyn grew up in New London, Connecticut, and went to college in Providence, Rhode Island. Her grandmother taught her to have empathy and sympathy towards others, and that you need to put yourself in someone else’s shoes to see how they feel; then you will understand why they are reacting and behaving the way that they are. Working in the meetings industry, you have to be able to adapt and be patient. She’s glad to have had this advice growing up and continues to apply it.

Jocelyn advised all to educate yourself! When she first started in the industry, there weren’t as many learning tools as there are now. She remembers being on a limited budget but notes how you can now take advantage of the free webinars and educational sessions. Every bit of knowledge helps!

Jocelyn has recently learned how to crochet and knit and has a deep passion for learning all things new! When asked about the best part of her current position, she mentions that her two-fold position allows her to work with both in the nonprofit industry (fundraisers and charities) and email marketing. One of the major perks is that she works with inspiring and creative people both inside and outside of the organization.

—by *Jennifer Haire, CMP,
Director of Association
& Conference Services,
National Center for
State Courts*



3:22 PM

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PCMA Capital Chapter Community Service Event at Humane Rescue Alliance on July 10—**Huge Success!**



Insight from Emerging Professionals

The Emerging Professionals Committee's passion is to lead the charge of connecting individuals with the tools and resources needed to grow, develop and thrive in their profession. Whether they are just beginning their journey or want to become a part of the hospitality industry in the future, EPC is here to serve, collaborate, engage and learn alongside them.

We asked one of our newest committee members as well as an Emerging Professional herself, Jessica Baker, Senior Sales Executive with Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center what are some of the best practices Emerging Professionals use when starting out their new careers and how she thinks industry organizations can help them to succeed?

Baker says, "As an Emerging Professional I feel it is important to surround yourself with industry professionals that you aspire to be like. Get involved, be a sponge for knowledge, and actively learn and listen to those industry professionals that have been in your shoes and can help you get to the next level. I think that PCMA does and can play an instrumental role in our ongoing development by facilitating shadowing and mentorship opportunities that connect these emerging professionals with industry leaders. This kind of relationship is invaluable, and is at the core of what our industry stands for. For an Emerging Professional, there is every resource for connecting electronically, but do not think that a LinkedIn connection is all you need. The face to face contact is vitally important to build and sustain your network. Your involvement in PCMA sets a tone for not only who you know, but who knows you. Get active, stay involved and giving back will grow your career and your profession."

by Rene McCoy, National Sales Manager, SMG/Montego Bay Convention Centre, and Erinn Tucker, Ph.D., M.B.A., M.S., Faculty Director and Associate Professor of the Practice, Global Health Leadership, Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies

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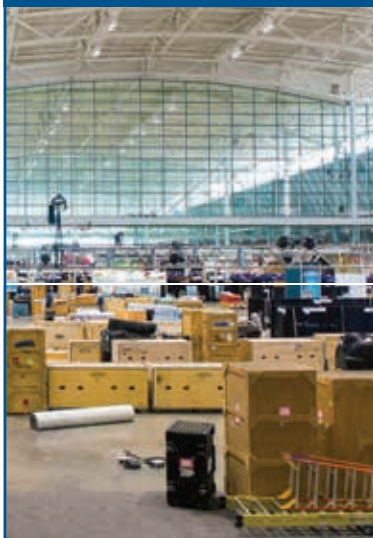
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