

PCMA EDUCON 2019 DISRUPT AND DELIVER WITH TIME TO SUN(SHINE)

The PCMA Educational Conference, June 25-28, 2019, was the largest to date, connecting meeting planners, suppliers and affiliates in sunny Los Angeles for four days of networking and education.

This year's educational highlight was the outdoor sessions. These unusual events are a prime example of PCMA's disruption, innovation, elevation, staying ahead of the latest trends and presenting options outside of the box! These sessions were offered outdoors in the California sunshine! Despite noise disruptions (traffic, boxing rings and the Rocky Theme playing loudly) they were a huge success and definitely a reprieve from the typical indoor meeting. Everyone truly enjoyed a breath of fresh air, a break from the norm, and the warm weather!

This year's speakers were extremely motivating and inspiring. The conference kicked off with John Ondrasik, a chart-topping singer/songwriter. In his own words, "Music is the great healer as well as a unique vehicle to raise awareness and funds for important causes". His storytelling, combined with music, is an ingenious way of delivering his message. The audience was captivated and charmed by his down-to-earth delivery. Another inspirational speaker was Tamika Catchings, VP of Basketball Operations of the Indiana Fever and former WNBA Superstar. Her story of conquering adversity (hearing loss) to become a champion is a story of perseverance and resilience. She was eloquent, commanding and FUN!

All images by Jacob Slaton Photography



Los Angeles, the City of Angels, home to the nation's film and television industry offered the perfect background for our conference. The opening reception at The NOVO was a true VIP Experience, featuring En Vogue (one of my favorite R&B/Pop vocal groups) on stage and catering by gastronomic superstar Wolfgang Puck. Full of glitz and glamour, it far exceeded expectations. The Foundation Fun Run and Foundation Give Back Bash were successes as well and offered a great way to give back to the industry. The closing reception at Universal Studios provided a unique opportunity to explore the park, enjoy rides (Including the Wizarding World of Harry Potter) and join colleagues for a fun filled evening!

PCMA EduCon is one of my favorite conferences. There is always a sense of anticipation at what the latest educational trend may be in the way of experience design and how many new friends will be made.

I cannot wait to see what PCMA EduCon 2020 in Montreal, Canada will have for us! I am excited to explore this city with its vast range of neighborhoods, the magnificent Notre Dame Basilica, and its friendly people!

Rosa Mendoza-Friedheim
Assistant Director of Sales, Seminole Hard
Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood

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If you have ideas for future Chatter Issues, please send them to pcma.capital.comm@gmail.com - we are also accepting articles for our library to be used for future issues, if you would like to write something, send an email for article guidelines.



message from the board



As I write this message, many of you are getting ready to attend the 2019 PCMA Education Conference in Los Angeles. As I look at the program, I see so many noteworthy speakers from outside of our industry: songwriter and performer Ciaran Gribbin, John Ondrasik from Five for Fighting, and leadership strategist Sara Ross, just to name a few!

This reminds me that many business innovations are inspired from "the outside." In Walter Isaacson's book Leonardo da Vinci, he opined that both da Vinci and Steve Jobs came up with novel ideas by studying different industries. Da Vinci benefited from living in Florence where the mixing of ideas from different disciplines was the norm. Jobs spent a lifetime exploring different areas outside of computing such as calligraphy, meditation in an Indian ashram, and even studying European-made washers and dryers for design ideas!

This is such an important lesson for business event strategists, whether it's developing programs for our own organizations or consuming programming at the events we attend. Because we live in a world where we are connected 24/7 and obsessed with cleaning out our e-mail inboxes, we often lose sight of the big picture. Opportunities like PCMA Educon offer a chance to step back, re-charge our batteries, and explore ideas we probably would never consider during our normal routine.

We are truly lucky to have chosen to work in the meetings industry. Unlike other professions, many of us are given the opportunity to hear from great speakers whose expertise is different than our own. I hope you take advantage of this, both professionally and personally!

As your Board Liaison to the Sponsorship Committee, I'd be remiss if I did not remind everyone that it takes the generosity of many sponsors to put together a program such as PCMA Educon. It also takes a group of hard working and dedicated volunteers to strategize what sponsorship opportunities are a good fit for a supplier and ask them to participate. Thank you, volunteers and sponsors!

While I am not lucky enough to be with you during Educon, I hope to hear about all the inspirations you discovered in the City of Angels.

Marcus Eng
CMP Senior Meeting Manager, APTA

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INDUSTRY INSIDERS

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?

Christine Edlund, Senior Sales Manager for the Hilton Minneapolis, gave us insight into her job as a sales manager, and she provided tips on how event planners can catch hoteliers' eyes with their request for proposal (RFP).

Each hotel property structures its sales team differently. Some are focused vertically, with each sales manager focusing in specific industries, such as pharmaceutical, government, trade associations, sports, etc. Other hotels are focused geographically, with sales managers responsible on specific regions of the country and the world. The Hilton Minneapolis deploys its sales team in a combination of geographical and vertical markets, and Christine's focus includes the DMV area, the government sector, and international meetings.

Much of Christine's role revolves around RFPs. Upon receiving a new RFP, the first thing Christine does is review it to understand as much as she can about the program. She then evaluates the program's fit for her hotel based on time of year, compression, and follow-up communication with the client. On any given day, Christine might be working on between five and twenty different programs.

A strong RFP will include the flexibility of dates, define the top items of importance to the organization, and clarify whether the hotel room rate is more or less important than the flexibility of meeting space. Christine recommends that clients

list all of the program's needs and then note which items that are more flexible.

If the program is appropriate for Christine's hotel, she will present the information to her Director of Sales and Marketing, as well as the hotel's Revenue Manager. Often, Christine will be competing for dates and space with her colleagues, so she has to advocate for her client's needs, such as a low room rate or specific attrition. In the RFP helps her to obtain the strongest possible offer for her client.

When Christine is not following up on client RFPs, she is forecasting her month and quarter. She also spends time making sales calls, presenting to decision makers, and attending industry events.

The role of a sales manager is multi-faceted; Christine loves working with clients, as well as the interaction and teamwork with other hotel departments, such as working with housekeeping, creating a room set-up specifically for a client, and designing new ideas with the executive chef for a site visit. Considering all of the relationships she has built with meeting planners that she now calls friends, this is the perfect role for her!

Rebecca Kane
Meetings Manager, U.S. Grains Council



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The Future Trends of Meetings & Events

AS SEEN ON PCMA CATALYST

SUMMER IS FINALLY HERE, AND THE MESSAGE BOARDS AT CATALYST ARE HEATING UP! HERE IS A GLIMPSE INTO THE HOT TOPICS BEING DISCUSSED ON PCMA'S FORUM:

Shelley Cohen, Meeting Manager at JHU WSE Energetics Research Group in Columbia, MD writes, *"I'm curious if anyone else has found creative ways to get reliable numbers (for a dinner) when tickets are not being sold, the event is included in registration, and a ticket exchange won't work since the guarantee is due pre-meeting."*

Well, Shelley, Catalyst has found some suggestions for you to share with your team in the coming months:

- > From Rachel Dillion, CMP, Senior Director, Meetings & Education at Sentergroup, Inc. in Chicago: "I would collect as much data as I could from history in order to plot actual event attendance at this meal. Hopefully, some trends will emerge, and you can at least guarantee knowing you've looked at all the numbers!"
- > Melissa Ocampo, Meeting Manager at Murdoch, Walrath & Holmes in Sacramento, CA writes: "One of our clients has a similar dinner. We loosely track attendance from year to year and use that as a starting point to plan for next year. We have found that only about 20% of attendees go. We don't order a buffet menu, we order several carving stations of varying sizes supplemented with heavy appetizer stations, so there is something for everyone."
- > Tammy Wightman, CMP, Manager, Global Accounts at HelmsBriscoe recommends "using your room pickup for the day of the event to be a potential indicator of attendance for the dinner." She also suggested offering an incentive for those who do attend. Wightman has seen increased commitment to attend when giving away free registrations, hotel nights, and gift cards.
- > Renee Hornsby, a Director of Communications and Marketing at the National Hardwood Lumber Association recommends charging a nominal fee, which will see your 'yes' RSVPs turn into true attendees.

Are you trying to calculate your conference's carbon footprint and implement a carbon offset program? Valerie Sumner from VRS Meetings and Events in mFalls Church, VA is trying to do just that! Visit her post on Catalyst to learn what her responders said about the myriad organizations that can assist in this area. Among them is one organization used by Melinda Colon, Director of Conferences and Events for the Society for Conservation Biology in Washington, D.C. to help them calculate their carbon footprint. This organization has projects around the world that you select to offset the conference's carbon footprint. They do charge an administrative fee, but Melinda's group adds it to the total carbon offset cost that they ask attendees to pay.

"How do you handle protesters at a conference?" wonders Glen Ellwood, CMP, LES,

Assistant Director of Conferences and Events at AMR Management Services in Lexington, KY. ABTS Convention Services' Anthony Prusak, Vice President of Business Development, shares his insights as well as these best practices:

1. Keep unnecessary people away from the demonstration.
2. Never proceed into or through demonstrations if faced with resistance.
3. Handle unrest in a non-confrontational manner.
4. If there is violence, property damage or credible threat, contact the police immediately.
5. Monitor access to your venue.

To end on a high note, there are PCMA members on Catalyst looking for help with developing cannabis policies for their meetings. Visit Catalyst at catalyst.pcma.org to respond if you have experience with this.

Check the next issue of Chatter for more hot topics coming your way!

Visit Catalyst to collaborate with your peers – browse dynamic discussion groups enabling you to communicate with like-minded people and grow your network of those who share your passion for the industry.

Tracy Blithe
CMP, Manager Meeting Operations
Heart Rhythm Society

PCMA Scholarship Winner Shares Experience

The PCMA Education Conference is hands down the most transformative professional and personal experiences I have had in a long time. I thoroughly enjoy opportunities for professional development, and the way PCMA, Discover Los Angeles, and the JW Marriott organized this year's conference elevated the way education should be delivered, connections should be made, and how experiences should be had.

Reflecting on my conference experience, there were three key takeaways that truly inspired me and serve as motivation as I return to the office:

- 1. The Power of the #EventProfs Tribe.** PCMA created a Facebook group for those attending the conference. That platform generated excitement surrounding the conference and offered new connections before landing in LA. There's truly nothing like a group of event professionals together in the same space. There were many lessons, laughs, and support shared. I left the conference with a new tribe who made me feel like I can do anything.
- 2. Don't be Afraid to Try New Things.** From sessions in cocktail bars to outdoors on the street, PCMA is not afraid to take risks to offer a new experience for meeting attendees. These offerings provided a memorable and inspiring experience for me. I'm excited to possibly try these things and more to elevate the events I plan.
- 3. Be Ready to Soar.** This message came from general session speaker, Tamika Catchings. She encouraged us to take advantage of every opportunity. This simple thought moved me because it's so powerful. It's a reminder to put yourself out there, no matter what, because you never know the return. For instance, had I not decided to submit my application for the PCMACC scholarship, at 11:57 p.m. of the midnight deadline, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to go to EduCon or write this article.

I'm truly overwhelmed and inspired by the energy surrounding #PCMAEC and I'm ready to incorporate what I learned professionally and personally. This week would not have been possible without the generosity of PCMA Capital Chapter and this scholarship. There really are no words to express my gratitude. From the bottom of my heart, thank you PCMACC, PCMA, Discover Los Angeles, and JW Marriott LA Live for an unforgettable week. This #PCMAEC was one for the books. I'm so grateful I had an opportunity to be a part of it.

Shameka Jennings

MTA, CMP, DES Director of Education and Events, National WIC Association



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PCMA Educon through the eyes of our Scholarship Recipient


Throughout Educon the phrase, when you meet face to face, you see eye to eye was on display. As a first time attendee, this statement put my experience into perspective and is an important reminder of the work we do. I enjoyed the opportunity to spend time connecting with other planners, partners, and our capital chapter members.

One of my key takeaways is the importance of asking What If? I had so many lightbulb moments in the PCMA & Marriott session The Future of Meetings and Events where I was encouraged to explore beyond the standards and try something new or different to create an element of surprise. I experienced these principles day after day during Educon where the event took us outside of the meeting space (and mindset) with sessions, tours and food trucks to explore what the City of Angels is all about.

Thank you to the Capital Chapter for this unforgettable experience!

Krista Whaley

Meetings and Events Associate, Americans for the Arts



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This expansion brings the total individual breakout spaces to 54, which includes 50 meeting rooms and the ability to divide the 35,000-square-foot ballroom into four 7,700-square-foot breakout spaces. The flexible meeting space related to the expansion will include two 10,000-square-foot spaces each divisible into 19 different configurations with seating capacities from 200-1,200 theater-style.

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2019 Special Feature

MEMBERS AND THEIR PETS

I was scheduled to site New Orleans on August 23, 2005 for a client and watching the weather reports which were predicting a category 5 hurricane to hit Louisiana. I was not surprised that on August 22, my New Orleans contacts informed me they were under mandatory evacuation and we would need to postpone.

On August 23, the day I should have been in New Orleans, my husband and I went for a run in our neighborhood and when rounding the corner back to our house in Wilmington, a little cat came out of the woods. I fell in love the minute I saw her. There was no collar or notices posted around the neighborhood. I coaxed her to come to my house and I knew, having had cats growing up, that if I fed her, she would be mine.

My husband had no idea what he was in for. I said we would let her stay in the garage for the night but leave the door open in case she wanted to go home. The next morning, she was still there (my plan had worked).

For the first week we called her cat and she stayed in the garage and then I needed to travel and decided to board her. The vet said she needed to be up to date on her shots and, since I didn't know her history, I told the Vet to give her anything she needed. At that point, if I was spending all that money on her, she was mine and she was moving into the house.

We named her Zydeco after music that started in Louisiana – a fitting tribute since I should have been in Louisiana. I still have her!

DeVonne Parks
Independent Planner

ANNETTE M. SURIANI, CMP, CHIEF MEETING STRATEGIST, AMS MEETINGS SOLUTIONS TELLS US ABOUT THE CAT THAT CAPTURED HER HEART.



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VICKI JOHNSON, CMP, PRINCIPAL AT VICKI JOHNSON & ASSOCIATES, LLC GIVES US INSIGHT ON HER LOVABLE COLLIE/SHELTIE MIX NAMED TROOPER

Vicki Johnson also has a hurricane story; however, this time her pet came from the place where the hurricane happened.

Trooper is one-year-old and weighs about sixty-eight pounds; he is a rescue from Puerto Rico and came north when he was just few weeks old. When he arrived he was full of ticks and fleas. His first "new home" was the shelter for several days as they cleaned him up and then on to a foster home for a week. Vicki pleaded to adopt him and promised to give Trooper a good home.

Vicki was approved and marvels at how smart her "guy" is. "It only took one and a half days to train him to use a set of bells by the door to tell me when he needs to go outside and he immediately lays down outside my condo door to get his feet wiped, honestly, he is brilliant."

Trooper has many fans in the neighborhood and knows he is loved by everyone who sees him. Vicki explains that it is not unusual to take him out for a walk and have him simply sit down on the sidewalk waiting for people to pass by and pet him. "I could simply leave if I wanted and come back hours later, he would still be there, waiting and anticipating more adoration from his fans."

- « First photo- Finally, after a full year together, the "kids" have decided to be friends! I believe it's that Fosse, the cat, finally came to terms with the idea that the dog was staying!
- « 2nd one-just simply too cute-both of them!
- « Last photo-who knew that this little one would grow just like a Chia pet and now he is taller than Vicki (me)

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HOW I GOT MY JOB

At PCMA Convening Leaders, Networking Opportunities can be Life-Changing

I have always heard from my industry colleagues that PCMA's Convening Leaders event provides amazing networking opportunities. It wasn't until I attended my first Convening Leaders this year in Pittsburg PA, that I truly understood what they meant.

In addition to the world-class education that Convening Leaders offers, this event provides attendees with countless opportunities to network with other industry professionals. This makes for an excellent environment for those looking to hire recent college grads and it gives those of us who are looking, a professional and unintimidating atmosphere in which to do so!

While at Convening Leaders, an opportunity unexpectedly presented itself during my networking activities. In between sessions, I met Maggie Pearson, Senior Director at

Conference Managers in Herndon, VA. After speaking with her about my professional goals, Maggie invited me to interview for a conference assistant position at her organization. I have always been interested in working in the field of Conference Management, so this opportunity was extremely exciting to me.

After interviewing, I was offered and accepted my first full time position for post-graduation, even before graduating. I owe finding my first full time job to networking at Convening Leaders. Because of my experience I now recommended every undergrad in the hospitality industry join PCMA and attend Convening Leaders!

|| **Jessica Kelly**
James Madison University 2019 Graduate

EDUCATION CORNER

Discovery Studio: Taking the Fear out of "What If"

The industries of hospitality and tourism are an ever-changing landscape. However, encountering unique obstacles both large and small seem to be par for the course. Many times, it feels like there are even more countless daunting "what ifs" on the horizon.

What if there was no hotel attrition? What if membership was a-la-carte? What if CVB funding didn't come from a government source? At the PMCA Capital Chapter May Discovery Studio, attendees broke into roundtable discussion groups to have lively conversations on how they would create opportunities out of these challenges.

The thought of no attrition prompted these questions: Would brand loyalty be gone? Would service standards increase if there were no longer multi-year contracts based on attrition? Would suppliers be forced to oversell rooms, creating unhappy guests if they did indeed sell out? What will break our industry?

What we do know for sure is with current and future challenges, we will do what we do best – evolve and adapt. Whether on the supplier or planner side, we all want a good experience for our attendees.

This exercise shed valuable perspective on the importance of strategic planning and working together.

|| **Elise Fritz-Gage**
Senior Manager, Programs & Events, The Optical Society

DISRUPTORS

DISRUPTION IS EVERYWHERE

As we considered topics for this article, it became clear to us there are many places disruption can occur and we don't think much about it. In this issue and the next, smaller segments of disruptors will be discussed. While these are positive disruptions in some ways, they have created more work for meeting planners with the need for increased communication to traveling attendees.

REAL ID

Though only a temporary disruption, compliance with the federal REAL ID Act should be on every traveler's radar. The topic has been floating around for years with various confusing deadlines and extensions. With just over a year before 100% compliance will be enforced, here are some facts:

From DHS.gov FAQs, "Starting October 1, 2020, every state and territory resident will need to present a REAL ID compliant license/ID, or another acceptable form of identification, for accessing Federal facilities, entering nuclear power plants, and boarding commercial aircraft. The card, itself, must be REAL ID compliant unless the resident is using an alternative acceptable document such as a passport."

According to TSA, "REAL ID compliant cards are generally marked with a star located in the upper portion of the card."

A quick google search may show your state is compliant, but does that mean YOUR driver's license is? States could be considered in compliance if they are currently issuing REAL ID drivers licenses. However, if your license was issued BEFORE your state began offering compliant REAL IDs and expires AFTER October 1, 2020, you will need to get a new compliant driver's license. Contacting your state DMV or MVA is the best source to be certain.

It will be especially important for planners of fall 2020 conferences to remind their attendees. Get a head start by putting information on your 2019 conference websites.

More information at <https://www.dhs.gov/real-id>
For specific TSA FAQs and resources that can be downloaded and shared with attendees can be found here: <https://www.tsa.gov/real-id>

LEGAL CANNABIS

The times, they are a changing, and with ten states and the District of Columbia legalizing marijuana for adult recreational use, so are the need for policy changes.

This discussion has crept up on the Catalyst Forum, blog posts and many industry articles nationwide (Simply google marijuana and the meeting planner...you will be surprised). It is a disruption from the norm, although quickly becoming accepted as the norm. What does it mean to meeting planners?

- 1. Educate yourself.** Add cannabis laws to your ever growing list of knowledge. Understand the implications to your organization, the attendee, where cannabis can be used and how it is distributed. You need to be prepared to answer questions that five years ago would have been uncomfortable to ask, yet now fall in the category of asking where the best local brew pub is located. Take a crash course about the difference between THC, the psychoactive component of cannabis and CBD Oil, legal in most states because there is no THC in the oils.
- 2. Have a clearly stated policy in place.** This policy should be in place whether you are meeting in a destination where cannabis is legal or not. Many attendees may be coming from states where cannabis use is legal and might not consider the implications of traveling to a location where it is illegal. Having clear policy communicated to all attendees will help to avoid any confusion about your organization's position regarding cannabis use at meetings.
- 3. There is a lot of discussion about whether to incorporate cannabis into the meeting as a cultural part of the community, just like having whiskey or craft beer in certain states.** We will not address that here, just know the discussion might come up and be prepared to address it. As a side note, many experts agree it is not a good idea to incorporate cannabis or alcohol as a giveaway at meetings.
- 4. Include cannabis use in your contingency plan.** You are going to have people ingesting edibles at your meetings. It is going to happen. How are you prepared to handle any situation that might happen as a result?

Clearly much to think about in these two "little" disruptors. Communications is the key to getting the information broadcast to all attendees.

|| **Kristen Parker**
CASE, Director of Eastern Regional Sales, Visit Austin

|| **Tanna Pearman**
Business Development Director, THE ROW, Reno



Newsbytes

Shameka Jennings, MTA, CMP, DES is the new Director of Meetings and Partnership Development at the National Coalition of STD Directors.

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