Meetings & Events

State of Sustainability Study: Planners Demand a Change in ‘Business as Usual’

The Convention Industry Council (CIC) has announced the results of a new research project, "Sustainable Meeting and Event Practices: The State of the Industry." Study findings were presented late last year at IMEX America, in Las Vegas.

The research, originally commissioned by the Green Meeting Industry Council (GMIC), now a part of the CIC, and conducted by the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, reveals that meeting professionals prefer that their suppliers include sustainable practices at the RFP stage without having to ask about them. Additionally, planners don’t want to pay for sustainable practices, but expect their suppliers to absorb the costs because, ultimately, most of the actions will save the supplier money. “This suggests that both sides of the discussion can work on quantifying and communicating the financial as well as the non-financial benefits of sustainable practices to the company, the environment, and to society,” said Roger Simons, CMP, Chair, GMIC Leadership Committee.

The wide-ranging study surveyed global end-user meeting professionals, third-party meeting professionals, and suppliers to arrive at the state of sustainable meetings today. More than 150 responses were received, with participation from 5 continents. The study found that suppliers engage in more sustainable practices than their customers. Planners listed the top 11 most requested sustainable practices as sorting recyclables; donating leftover food to charitable organizations; diverting food waste from waste stream; linen and towel reuse programs; using water glasses and filling stations (in lieu of bottled water); offering vegetarian menus; offering allergy-friendly menus; sourcing local food; using event apps (to reduce paper usage); requesting energy-efficient lighting; and planning give-back programs for the local community.

All types of survey respondents expressed confusion around the multiple standards and certifications that are prevalent in the sustainable events industry. They also voiced a desire for common, simplified metrics to measure sustainable practices.

The Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau and Las Vegas Sands Corporation were sponsorship partners of this study.

Information for this article was provided by the Convention Industry Council. To learn more, visit www.conventionindustry.org.

PCMA Unveils Digital Experience Institute

PCMA (Professional Convention Management Association) late last year unveiled its new Digital Experience Institute (DEI), formerly known as the Virtual Edge Institute.

DEI is designed to deliver insights and connections essential to attendee engagement in a changing climate of connected experiences. As we look forward to the next generation of the attendee experience, its clear digital know-how will drive success.

Today’s online participants share common goals and challenges, whether they’re tuning in to livestreams, accessing educational content OnDemand or donning VR goggles for an interactive experience at their fingertips. Their digital experiences are rich, full of opportunities and thoroughly engaging. DEI ensures digital event producers are prepared to tune in to these audiences and the next wave of digital innovations.

Many of the sectors’ renowned thought leaders are members of the Digital Experience Institute’s Advisory Board. These luminaries from association, medical, corporate and event technology disciplines can be found on the DEI’s website sharing their knowledge and insights with the DEI community.

For the professional event industry, the DEI offers the only live online Digital Event Strategist education course and certification. With graduates from all corners of the world, this unique program is dedicated to elevating the discipline, strategy and quality of digital experiences. Additionally, the Institute continues its commitment to provide resources for organization leaders, event producers and vendors such as the solution directory, surveys and online resources.

PCMA CEO Deborah Sexton said, “The revealing of the DEI is the latest step in the PCMA’s commitment to providing the best digital educational tools and resources for the industry. Like the VEI before it, the Institute will represent our ability to harness future success for everyone involved.” Visit digitalexperienceinstitute.org for full access.

PCMA inspires, connects and innovates the global business events community. We are the world’s largest community for Business Events Strategists, providing senior education and networking for the events sector. PCMA crafts and shares knowledge and market intelligence enabling organizations to make informed business decisions, while providing a platform for peer-to-peer exchange. Headquartered in Chicago, PCMA has 17 chapters throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico with members in more than 40 countries. For more information visit the PCMA website at pcma.org and the PCMA Convene magazine at pcmaconvene.org.
Catalina Island – Los Angeles County’s Own Island for Meetings and Events

S anta Catalina, one of California’s Channel Islands, lies southwest of Los Angeles just 26 miles off of the coast, and behind the beauty is a remarkable history. When chewing gum magnate, William Wrigley Jr. bought the controlling stake in Catalina Island in 1919, he envisioned the island becoming an affordable and accessible getaway for the working-class population. Successful in his objective, the Island not only welcomed visitors from around the world, famous residents such as Marilyn Monroe called the Island home. The Chicago Cubs even held their spring training camps in Avalon.

Now, the picturesque and idyllic harbor town of Avalon welcomes a variety of meetings and events throughout the year. Whether it’s a corporate board meeting, a company team building event, a yoga retreat or a sales incentive location, Catalina Island has become L.A.’s go-to destination.

Arriving at the picturesque Island provides an immediate feeling of tranquility and perspective. A completely walkable village (there are no car rentals, but golf cart rentals are available for daytime sightseeing), groups can easily meander to one of 25 unique lodging properties on foot from the boat or catch a taxi from the heliport. Island lodging properties range from quaint bed and breakfast inns to full-service hotels, with the majority of properties independently owned and operated. A number of vacation rental properties augment hotel offerings and provide possibilities for group retreats and board meetings. Combined, Catalina Island offers approximately 1,000 guest rooms.

Group and meeting facilities on the Island include the historic Catalina Casino, the most visible landmark in Avalon Bay when approaching from the mainland. Catalina Casino gets its name from Italian and means “gathering place.” Despite the English connotation of the name, there is no gambling at the facility. This historic art deco, Mediterranean styled building features a theatre and balcony lined ballroom overlooking the ocean with spectacular bay and mainland views.

Another unique group venue is the newly opened Catalina Island Museum. This facility encapsulates the history of the island and offers groups a variety of indoor and outdoor venues, including quaint courtyards, open air plazas and an amphitheater. Groups can also gather in a variety of ocean view suites for meetings and retreats or choose from more traditional meeting room facilities.

An abundance of on- and off-water group activities are available. Inland scenic tours, four-wheel adventure tours, ziplining, golf and pedalling around Avalon on a bike are enjoyable land activities. Dolphin tours, glass bottom boat voyages, stand-up paddle boarding, kayaking, snorkeling, scuba diving and swimming are excellent ways to enjoy the sparkling crystal clear ocean. If relaxation and rejuvenation are in store after a day’s meeting, a variety of spa and treatments are available as an antidote. And yes, a stint on the sandy beach is a must for every guest.

Most of the Island’s retail shops, restaurants and bars are nestled in the square mile of Avalon. And many line Crescent Avenue, which is the main walkway and a pedestrian-only few blocks in front of the ocean and beaches. Group dining venues are abundant and include oceanfront establishments with spectacular vistas. Catered group menus offer a variety of fresh and locally caught seafood, ethnic, vegetarian and gluten-free options.

Getting to Catalina is easier than expected. Daily and regularly scheduled boats and helicopters provide island visitors a wide array of options to easily get to the island. A scenic and relaxing hour-long boat ride aboard high speed catamarans and a quick and spectacular 15-minute helicopter flight make getting to the island easy and enjoyable part of the meeting and event experience.

Catalina Express offers a fleet of high-speed boats with multiple daily departures from San Pedro, Long Beach and Dana Point. Sit back and review the day’s agenda or take in the views from the outside decks during the hour-long (on-average) boat ride. Group rates and boat charters are available.

IEX (Island Express) Helicopters offers departures from four mainland heliports: Long Beach, San Pedro (Friday through Sunday only), Santa Ana (John Wayne Airport) and Burbank (Bob Hope Airport). Group charters are available for six to 50 passengers. An experience in and of itself, getting to the island on a helicopter is a unique option.

For information and pricing for holding your next meeting or event on Catalina Island, visit Catalina-Chamber.com/groups.
Immersive Learning Experiences to be Unveiled at EMEC 2017 in Granada

Following highly successful conferences in Copenhagen and Krakow, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) promises to deliver more industry-leading education with evocative sessions and exciting formats at its upcoming European Meetings & Events Conference (EMEC). The conference will be held March 5-7, 2017, at the Granada Congress Centre, and in partnership with the Granada Convention Bureau and the MPI Spain Chapter.

MPI’s lineup of distinguished yet unconventional keynote speakers for EMEC 2017 include Monica Deza, David Beckett, Claus Raasted and Paul Bulencea. Deza, founder and CEO of the innovation and marketing firm Bendi Thinking, will present during EMEC’s opening general session. She will discuss the new wave of innovation that is transforming societies, cultures and businesses, and how to successfully navigate within the “Maverick Economy.”

Beckett, creator of The Pitch Canvas and author of Three Minute Presentation, will deliver an engaging session on how to develop the perfect pitch followed by several live pitches where the audience will vote and determine the winning pitch.

Co-presenters Raasted and Bulencea will shake up EMEC 2017 with a unique and transformational learning experience during the closing general session where they will share tips on how to thrive in the “Experience Economy” and challenge the audience to learn by actually doing. Raasted and Bulencea are two of five founders of the College of Extraordinary Experiences, which produces conferences that teach participants how to design memorable experiences as an alternative method to traditional business development and whose teaching staff has included creative leaders from Walt Disney Imagineering R&D, Google and The Lord of the Rings Trilogy.

“Each year we strive to take our signature conferences, EMEC and WEC, to new heights, experimenting with innovative design elements and embracing the charm of the host destination. At EMEC 2017, our passion for connecting the meeting and event community will be showcased at every touchscreen – from the engaging education to our hosted buyer program and networking events that celebrate Granada’s cultural heritage. This year’s conference program was designed to refocus on the human side of events and also inspire attendees to think outside the box,” said Paul Van Deventer, president and CEO of MPI.

In addition to the general sessions, EMEC 2017 will offer nearly 30 education sessions, including master classes, immersive experiences, meet-ups, and innovative learning sessions called EduLabs – many of which are eligible for clock hours or continuing education units. Session topics include event design, experiential marketing, slow meetings, technology and more.

Other program highlights include a brief demonstration from Dr. Boris Nikolaus Konrad – a neuroscientist and the current Guinness World Record holder for memory – on how to remember anything and anyone, a private tour of the Alhambra Palaces, the Welcome Reception at an authentic Andalusian farmhouse and the MPI Foundation Rendezvous fundraiser and networking event. Rendezvous is scheduled for the evening of Monday, 6 March at Alhatar, and proceeds from event will go toward the MPI Foundation Education Endowment to fund chapter grants and scholarships.

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To learn more and to plan your next meeting, visit us at millenniumhotels.com.
10 Tips and Hacks for a Successfully Catered Event

When you are handed the daunting task of organizing the catering for the office, business or even private party, it’s hard not to panic, especially once you start browsing on-line at the million and one options when you search the term “party food” or “catering,” the mind melts, where do I start? The options are far and wide.

The best place to start is to ask yourself what size of event am I undertaking here?

Big events (100 people or more) take a lot of work and you will definitely need professional help. But if you are catering for less than 100 people it is definitely possible to organize this with a minimum of fuss, if you answer ten basic questions:

1. DO YOU HAVE A BUDGET?
   Everyone has a budget, even if you haven’t formalized it yet. It’s first thing to finalize. Try your hardest to stick to it, otherwise things can get out of control and you could be in a lot of trouble with your boss.

2. WHAT TIME IS YOUR EVENT?
   This determines the style of food you need, do you need breakfast, lunch, dinner or just something to absorb the alcohol before people move on.

3. HOW LONG WILL YOU NEED FOOD?
   Sometimes people come and go from parties. It’s important to cater to everybody as they arrive at an event. This is the definition of a good host. Sometimes people also want something later in the night, midnight munchies are not uncommon at many modern weddings.

4. WHO ARE YOU FEEDING?
   Gender and age go a long way in determining what type of food, how much food, what quality food, that you are preparing to serve. It’s so obvious a point that it’s something that people forget to consider – they think we all eat the same amount, but that’s not true. This can determine whether you order over or under order the amount of food for your function.

5. IS IT A MEAL OR SOMETHING JUST TO EAT?
   Subsequent to all the questions up to number four, this point will answer itself once you have examined the guest list, the time of eating, the style of party, whether you want something substantial or just something to tickle the fancy.

6. IS IT STANDING OR SITTING? OR BOTH?
   This is an important question because finger food and seated dining are two very different types of catering. Canapes can start the night on a special note, then the chef can whip up something very special for your seated occasion. It’s also worth noting that canapes or finger food are not going to fill people up, unless you have 10 to 12 per person.
7. ARE THERE ANY SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS?

More and more we are seeing that people are allergic to food, this can cause anaphylactic reaction which can cause severe injury or even death. This means you have to be on top of your game when ordering food for people with allergies. The other issue concerning this question is the diversity of food lifestyles on offer - i.e. vegans, vegetarians, etc.

8. IS THERE A PLACE TO PREPARE AND SERVE THE CATERING?

This is important for yourself or the catering company to know, as experience tells us that if you don’t have a private or semi-private area to organize your food, then interruptions and general confusion will reign. You’ve heard the saying – too many chefs spoil the broth!

9. DO YOU NEED STAFF OR SELF-SERVE?

Sometimes people like to do these things on their own, which will save a lot of money. This is definitely possible, as so many people these days are such good cooks, however there are other options available. Some companies do drop off catering. Drop off catering is where chefs prepare the food to the point where it’s ready to serve and load it into temperature controlled boxes, be they hot or cold, and those boxes are delivered to the party venue, ready for the customer to serve when he or she is ready. This is a great option for many people, especially as all the food can be ordered online and we are always available for consulting if you need any help.

10. WHO IS CLEANING UP?

The rule in many homes is that if you cook you don’t clean. However this might not apply as your business event winds up, just be sure to have people allocated otherwise it will fall in your lap.

Information for this article was provided by Box Catering.

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An Island of Inspiration. So Close.

California’s only island resort lies just 22 miles from the southern coast. Catalina Island offers a rare and ideal combination of natural beauty, caring attention, a dazzling array of activities and special locations to assemble your group.

Collaboration happens when you take the square room out of the equation. Sparks of creativity fly when you gather in a place fostering togetherness and team camaraderie. The fresh, clean air, bright, clear skies and starry nights make Catalina Island a place where ideas come together, naturally. Catalina Island, the perfect place for inspiration.

Visit CatalinaChamber.com/Groups to learn how easy it is to book your next group gathering on an island.