

**Exclusive: *Special Events* Magazine's 18th Annual Corporate Event Forecast
Gorgeous and Good for You: Caterers Reinvent Desserts to Please Today's Guests**

SPECIAL EVENTS®

SUMMER 2019

25 YOUNG EVENT PROS TO WATCH

**Want to see the
future of special
events?
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the leaders
of tomorrow
right here.**

**15TH ANNUAL
25 TOP DMCs
P. 19**

**LABOR, FUEL,
TARIFFS:
RENTAL PUSHED
TO RAISE RATES
P. 33**

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SUMMER 2019 THIS ISSUE



30

14 25 Young Event Pros to Watch

One of our best-read features, here is our annual look at the young professionals who are the future of special events. Don't worry about our industry—you can see it will be in good hands!

9 18th Annual Corporate Event Marketplace

A *Special Events* exclusive—corporate event professionals share their take on the business outlook for the second half of 2019, and forecast what's ahead for us in 2020.

19 15th Annual 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.



27

COLUMNS DEPARTMENTS

5 Editor's Page

Lisa Hurley on the latest outlook for our industry.

36 The Last Word

Lenny Talarico on big events in his big career.

On the cover: See all the fresh young faces of special events in our cover story, starting on page 14. Photo by Yun Yulia / iStock / Getty Images Plus.

7 Confetti

Three fabulous festivals show that big or small, great festivals are indelible experiences.

27 Food for Fêtes

Desserts at events today are gorgeous and good for you, too.

30 Divine Decor

Thoughtfully designed, artistically inspired, deeply textured—and today, that's just the tabletop!

SUMMER 2019 THIS ISSUE

DEPARTMENTS

33 Rental Essentials

Where are rental rates heading? The latest poll from *Special Events* shares pricing strategies from the pros.

35 Advertisers Index 35 Classified Ads

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EDITOR'S PAGE

THE FACE OF THE FUTURE

Our cover story in this issue is one of my favorites, where we share profiles of 25 young event professionals to watch.

If the rigors of a life in special events are starting to wear you down, then take a look at these emerging industry stars. Their enthusiasm for events, their commitment to their colleagues, and their faith in the future will rub off on you. Turn to page 14 and be ready to be impressed.

Our Summer issue brings you other fun features. "Food for Fêtes" shows how consumers' concern for wellness has found its way onto dessert menus. Desserts today are not only gorgeous, but they're good for you. Find some delectable examples starting on page 27.

And for a rundown on what the best-dressed tables are wearing, check out "Divine Decor," starting on page 30. From luxe linens to isometric tabletops to colored glass with class, today's table makes a big statement. (And two words to keep in mind: French velvet.)

Special Events magazine has always been a mix of beautiful creativity and business strategy, and so we're glad to bring you the 15th edition of our "25 Top DMCs" list. The biggest players in the DMC industry are grappling with some big challenges, as politics roil relationships all over the globe. But the DMCs are fighting back, redoubling their efforts to offer unique, unforgettable experiences that are flawlessly executed. And, oh yes—that means on time and on budget. See the story starting on page 19.

The robust economy is prompting the rental industry to do something unthinkable a few years ago: raise rates. During the consolidation craze, many operators battled against competitors offering crazy-low rates—a practice that proved unsustainable for many. It's different today. Confident clients are ready to spend, and finding competent workers in this tight labor market costs money. As Dan Hooks of Party Reflections says, "If you are not adapting to be profitable now, you will certainly be in worse shape and out of position if and when the economy turns again." Turn to page 33 for the full story.

For a look at what's coming in 2020, see our annual forecast for the corporate event market, starting on page 9. Our results show that 96 percent of respondents predict they will stage the same number or more corporate special events in 2020 than they will this year. While 28 percent of respondents say their budget allocation for events will stay the same in 2020, 30 percent say it will go up as much as 5 percent, and 12 percent predict an increase of more than 10 percent.

That's a future with a very pretty face.

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CONFEETTI

Getting summer started: Fun at the Surrey Fusion Festival (here, lower left), the Chandler Chamber Ostrich Festival (below center) and the Lyft Intergalactic Art Car Festival (lower right).



Three Fabulous Festivals

Big, small, traditional or eccentric—great festivals are indelible experiences.

SUMMERTIME, and it's high time for festivals. But festivals are like weddings—no two are alike. Here, three fabulous festivals, all nominees for the 2019 *Special Events* Gala Award—all different and all exciting, engaging experiences.

GO INTERNATIONAL

Developed by the City of Surrey, British Columbia, and John Donnelly and Associates, Vancouver, British Columbia, the Surrey Fusion Festival is now Canada's largest multicultural celebration.

Last year, the event hosted a record-breaking 53 cultural pavilions and more than 150 performers across six stages. More than 100,000 people attended the festival, which invited attendees to experience the world's diversity via food, music and culture.

The logistics challenges involved in producing the event are complex, as the site requires more than 45 cooking areas be installed in tents, with power, gas, hot running water, and gray-water disposal management. The pavilions required installation of more than 100 big tents, power, signage and site decor, as well as the construction of six stages.

The festival relies on money from sponsorship revenue, federal grants and food concessions to offer the festival free to the public. In 2018, sponsorship revenue generated almost 50 percent of the festival's budget, management says: "This revenue allows Fusion Festival to grow into a world-class, free Canadian event that highlights the diversity of the local community." The *Special Events* Advisory Board was wowed with the event, giving it a Gala Award.

GO LOCAL Just as big as the Surrey Fusion Festival—but with a totally local vibe—the Chandler Chamber Ostrich Festival in Scottsdale, Ariz., is a bird of its own feather.

The 30th annual event, held last year, brought some 100,000 attendees together to celebrate Chandler's colorful early history of ostrich ranching. A staff of more than 1,400, including some 400 volunteers, oversaw a family-friendly event that included live ostrich races and ostrich-themed activities, entertainment, carnival midway rides, food, and arts and crafts.

The Ostrich Festival organizers don't have their heads in the sand. They note that it is the festival's unique attractions that make it such a hit. "This event is unique and distinctive from the very beginning—an entire festival celebrating our beloved ostrich is one like no other,"



Summer madness: Entertainment at the Ostrich Festival ranges from Kool and the Gang to carnival rides (top and bottom left); photos courtesy Steve LeVine Entertainment and Public Relations. Lyft's Intergalactic Art Car Festival gets rolling (top and bottom right); photos courtesy Lyft Nevada.



says the team at Steve LeVine Entertainment and Public Relations in Scottsdale, which oversees the festival.

“Our main focus each year is to change and exceed the expectations of our guests,” management says. “Our production systems, time lines, and teams are well-seasoned and ready to go every year.”

SOMETHING DIFFERENT With Nevada slated for big budget cuts for its arts programs, rideshare company Lyft Nevada stepped up to uphold its mission statement that transportation can improve lives by launching the Intergalactic Art Car Festival.

More than 10,000 people attended the eccentric event, dressed in interplanetary costumes, taking photos in the cars, and talking to the artists who created the cars. A highlight of the festival was a parade of cars driving down the famed Las Vegas Strip, including 30-foot aliens, praying mantises, rhinos, monsters, alligators, swans and even a office stapler.

Lyft worked with the City of Las Vegas and the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department to pull all required event permits. The team took test drives in their own cars to determine the length of time it took to travel the Strip at that time of night, then the art cars were scheduled in waves. Each car and art installation had its own unique power and technical or pyrotechnic needs, which required permits and certified operators. Also, each car’s turning radius had to be

carefully measured prior to the procession to ensure the cars could make the return trip.

To make the event inclusive, the organizers covered the cost of tickets for the first 10,000 people who RSVP’d on the event’s website. Lyft had one of the art cars, a praying mantis, programmed to welcome guests as they arrived.

The festival was a winner, raising more than \$20,000 for local arts programs.

For more information on the 2020 Gala Awards, send an email to info@specialevents.com. ●

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THE CORPORATE EVENT MARKETPLACE

An exclusive event industry study from *Special Events*

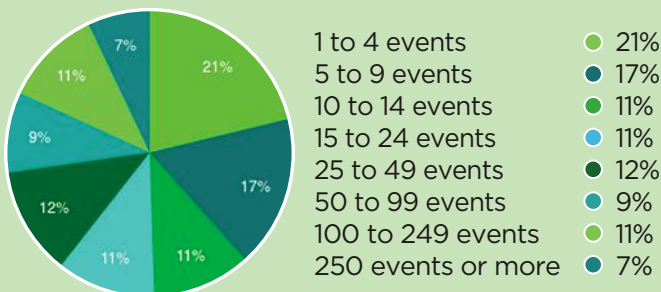
Busy with 2019 business? Then brace yourself for 2020. *Special Events* magazine has released its 2019 Corporate Event Forecast. Results show that some 96 percent of respondents predict they will stage the same number or more corporate special events in 2020 than they will this year.

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

STAGING EVENTS: THE PICTURE IN 2019

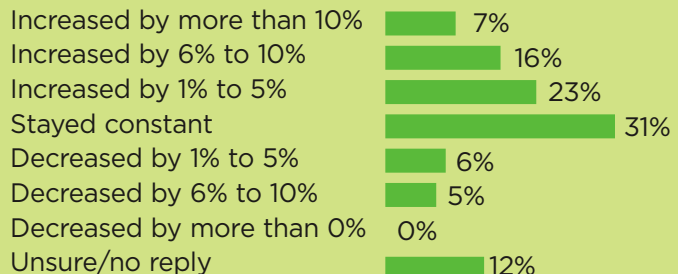
Note: Sums might not total 100% because figures have been rounded off.

Approximately how many corporate special events (including incentive trips, gala product launches, marketing events, recognition dinners, company picnics, etc.) will your company stage in 2019?
Percentage of respondents



How has your organization's spending on corporate special events changed in 2019 compared with 2018?
Percentage of respondents

Percentage of respondents

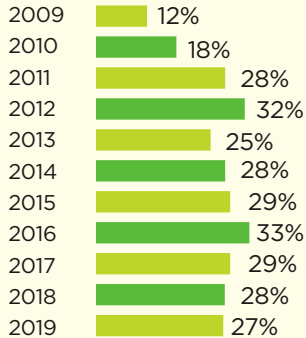


EVENTS AT WORK: THE PICTURE IN 2019

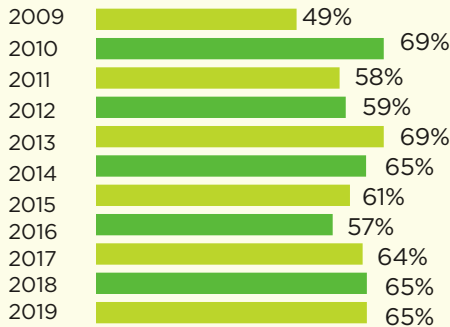
STAGING EVENTS: THE PICTURE IN 2019

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*

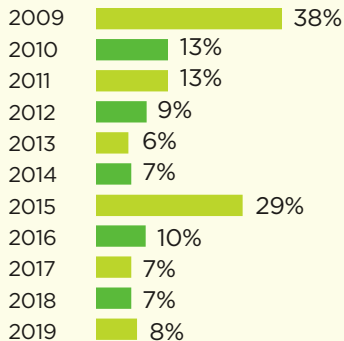
We will stage more events this year



We will stage the same amount



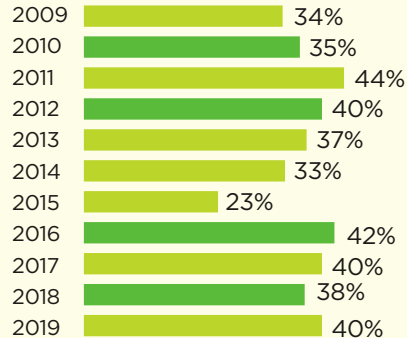
We will stage fewer events this year



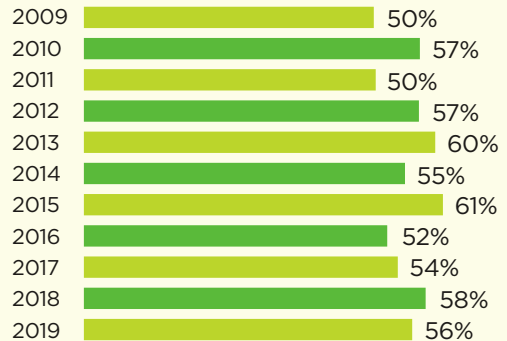
STAGING EVENTS: LOOKING AT 2020

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*

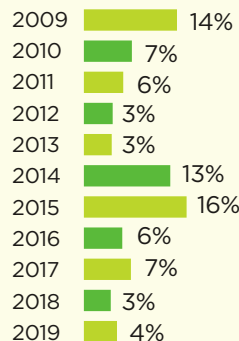
We will stage more events next year



We will stage approximately the same number



We will stage fewer events next year



KEEP THAT CLIENT:

The No. 1 metric for successful corporate events today is “client retention,” compared with “response from attendees” 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?

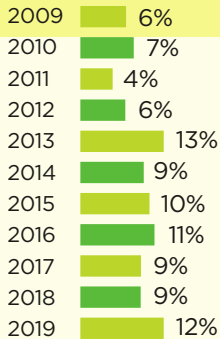
Percentage of respondents

MEASURING THE EVENT'S EFFECTIVENESS

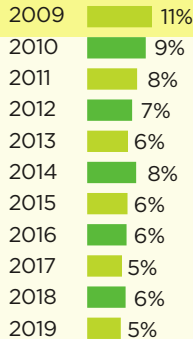
Do you attempt to measure the ROI (return on investment) of your special events?

Percentage of respondents

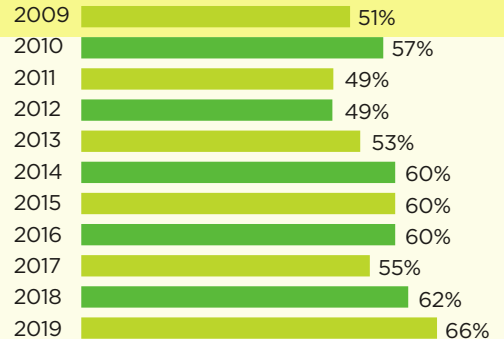
Increase by more than 10%



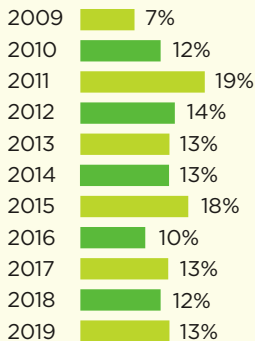
Decrease by 1% to 5%



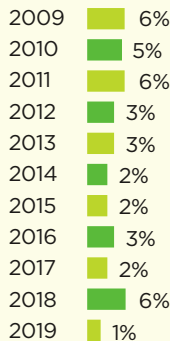
Yes



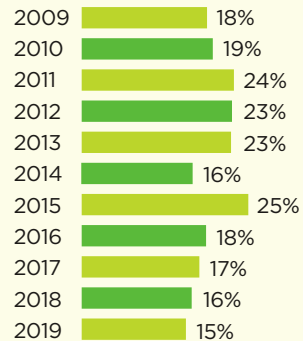
Increase by 6% to 10%



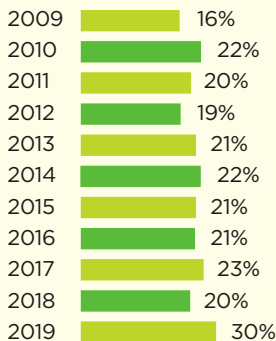
Decrease by 6% to 10%



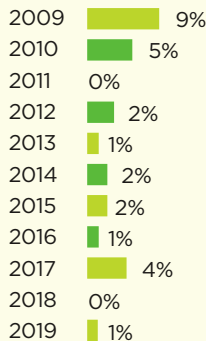
No, but we are considering it



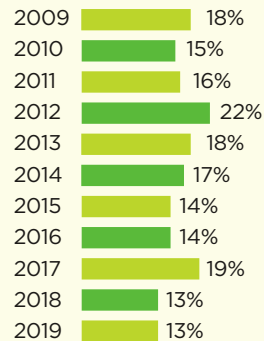
Increase by 1% to 5%



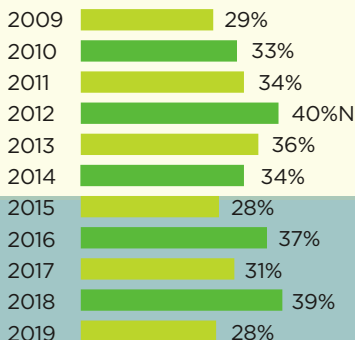
Decrease by more than 10%



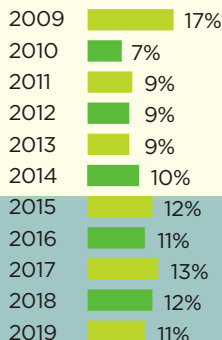
No plans to measure ROI



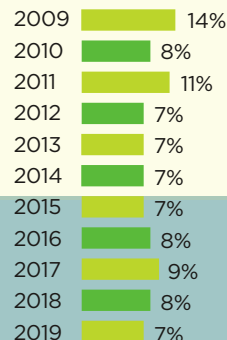
Stay the same



Unsure/no answer



Unsure/No answer

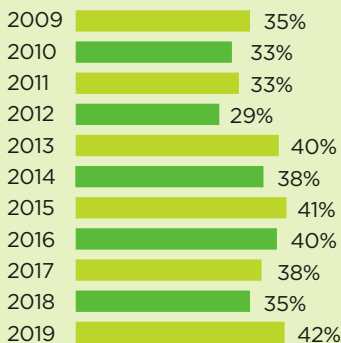


INDEPENDENT EVENT PLANNERS: YEA OR NAY?

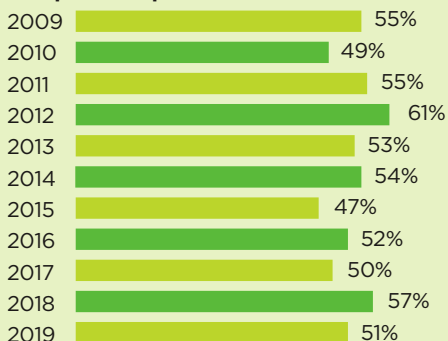
Do you contract with independent event planners?

Percentage of respondents

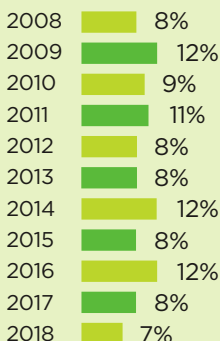
Yes



No, with no plans to contract independent planners



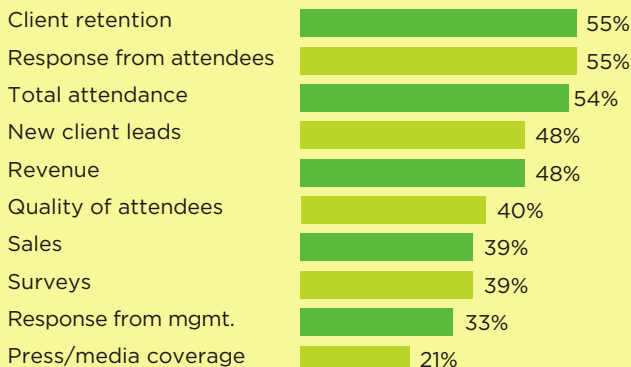
No, but we are considering it



HOW DO WE KNOW IT WORKED? MEASURING ROI

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

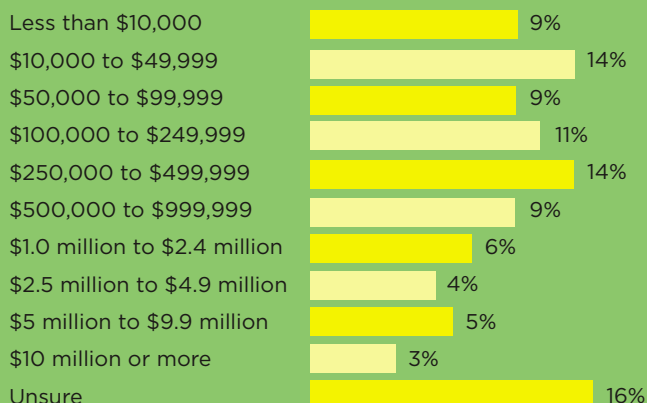
Multiple answers possible



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

WHAT WILL BE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S APPROXIMATE EXPENDITURES ON CORPORATE SPECIAL EVENTS IN 2019?

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



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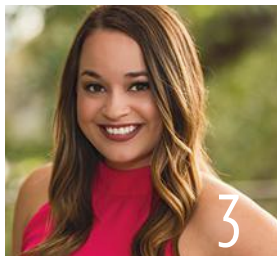
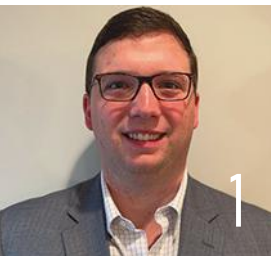
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WORTH A LOOK:

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 the event industry, then look right here!



DRIVING FORCE

1
Brewer Adams, 32, account director, George P. Johnson Experience Marketing, Franklin, Tenn.

Adams is the man behind the wheel, serving as account director on GPJ's global Nissan business. "Specifically, I am the project lead on all Tier I global auto show press and launch events, which includes events in the United States, Japan, China and Switzerland," he explains. "In addition to working on the global portfolio, I manage the domestic auto show business and press events. I also focus on business development within the account, working with senior leadership to identify new business opportunities."

How does he handle this big portfolio? By leveraging relationships that span different regions and client groups. "My ability to cultivate these relationships and gain clients' trust has made me successful thus far," Adams says. "Delivering events that go above and beyond and on budget has also helped me earn the respect of the respective client groups." He adds, "I have a passion for being a part of a team and achieving great results together, and this mentality has allowed me to lead and drive successful projects from inception to completion."

If he made a change: "My dream job would be working in the sports industry, working with brands, activating all of the world," he says. "Sports has a way of bringing people together across different cultures and backgrounds, so being a part of that experience would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."
www.gpj.com

DOUBLE DUTY

2
Jake Anderson, 35, president, FêteTech, Roanoke, Va.

Jake Anderson is a busy guy already. He launched Lighting Professors in 2012, which offers lighting design services for weddings and other special events. Also on his plate is the new company FêteTech, which launched in May. The new venture will offer software solutions that

"eliminate friction" for event professionals, Anderson's approach to handling his businesses has made this double duty possible. "A lot of event professionals focus 'in' their business, where I have been able to advance my company to a level where I only focus 'on' my business," he explains. "I stepped out of the day-to-day operations in 2016 to manage the company at a strategic level, and since that time the business has grown by leaps and bounds—from 2015 being myself as the only full-time person to now having nearly 17 employees, both full-time and part-time." He adds, "I'm very strategic in how I execute business plans, as well as highly process-oriented and methodical in my approach."

While some people want to see "president" or "CEO" in their titles, Anderson has a different role in mind: contributor. "It's very fulfilling for me to help someone else become successful and improve their life in some way," he says. "Therefore, I believe being a contributor to the industry is the best match for my passion."
fetetech.com

HEART OF TEXAS

3
Sydney Archer, CPCE, 27, account executive, AFR Furniture Rental, Houston

Archer sees events through from the very start to the very end. As an account executive for Houston, San Antonio and south Texas, she assists clients with furniture selection and installation, serving as "the main point of contact, from first phone call to breakdown, to ensure a maximum successful experience is achieved," she explains.

She prizes her relationships with her clients. "I pride myself on treating all my clients like family," Archer says. "My sales approach is simple—connect first, then sell. I'm a firm believer that making a genuine connection with your clients is crucial to building trust and loyalty in a long-term relationship." Her "other" job is her role in serving as an ally for the special event industry. "Whether it's supporting our national associations, advocating for millennials—catch me on a millennial panel

at NACE Experience this July in Cincinnati—or helping to raise the bar on industry standards, I'm always living under the impression that if we can't change, we can't grow."
www.rentfurniture.com

SHE LOVES L.A.

4
Jaelyn Ash, 29, CMP, DMCP, account executive, 360 Destination Group, Los Angeles

Tourists who come to Los Angeles might hit the landmarks, but Ash's local expertise goes much deeper. "As a destination management professional, I also am keenly aware of what is happening and evolving in Los Angeles," she explains. "From advances in transportation, activities, venues and entertainment, there is an extensive knowledge base to master and share with our clients." Along with developing programs, she also prospects for new clients, maintains 360's social media accounts, and sits on the board of directors for SITE Southern California.

Ash loves her work in destination management, a world she describes as "tough but rewarding beyond measure." "Not only are you producing incredible events, but you have to have your pulse on the ever-changing options our destination can provide," she says. "This industry, unlike any other, continually motivates you to think in the future and stay ahead of trends. Nothing is stagnant, and I am always trying to improve upon my knowledge base."

Ash explains that she wants to provide her clients with the "best, newest and most creative experiences—and I just happen to get to make a career out of it!"
www.360dg.com

TELLING THEIR STORY

5
Carline Beaubrun, 39, owner and creative director, Events by Carline, Garden City, N.J.

Beaubrun got her start in events 15 years ago, creating custom decor for social events. Now heading up her own company, design is the way she fulfills her true role as "a professional storyteller of events," she says.

Those stories come from her clients: "Everyone

25 YOUNG EVENT PROS TO WATCH



has a story to tell," Beaubrun says. "Their stories inspire my creativity, allowing the thoughtful details to come together to truly capture the reason behind the event." She shares the example of a first birthday party she created for a couple whose parents met and married in Africa. Keying on a "Lion King" theme, the party included life-size safari animals, African dancers and drummers, and the parents carrying their son, who had endured health problems his first year, into the event.

"To see the emotions, the love, smiles and laughter of his parents and family throughout the celebration really fueled my passion," she says, "and reminds me of why I decided to become a special event professional."
www.eventsbycarline.com

MAD ABOUT MIAMI

Danielle Blank, 35, event sales associate, Atlas Event Rental, Miami

Blank was handed the big job of building business at the new Miami operation of rental powerhouse Atlas, which has served the south Florida market for more than 30 years. And she's getting the job done. Says Heather Rouffe, Atlas partner and director of sales, "Danielle's energetic attitude for selling, a knack for solving problems, and a passion for being on-site for her events have all attributed to her taking the Miami area by storm."

Blank is committed to Miami and to her brand. "I believe that I am great at my job because I truly love what I do and love Atlas Event Rental," she says. "I have [brand color] pink in my blood! Having been with Atlas for six years, I have had the opportunity to create the greatest events in Miami while working with the world's most fabulous event planners, designers, venues and caterers. Loving what I do and the people I work with makes my abilities shine even stronger."
www.atlaseventrental.com

BEEN THERE, DOES THAT

Abby Borden, 33, owner/principal producer, Table Set Go, Los Angeles

A broad background in all aspects of events

led Borden to launch her company Table Set Go, offering freelance event planning and catering coordination. "I built up my tenure in events working for various catering and event production companies, learning everything I could about every part of the industry," she says. "Each time, I started at the bottom—a PA, busser, stage manager, runner or captain. What makes me good at my job is the wealth of experiences accumulated over time, and the relationships that were built with them."

As a freelancer, Borden takes on a wide range of tasks. "As a freelance event producer my job description varies between clients and projects. For the Recording Academy as their senior catering coordinator, I oversee menu curation, production logistics and event execution by over 350 staff for 5,000 guests," she explains. For event production company JJLA, "I get to be creative designing spaces and activations for the events we produce," she explains. "On any project, my goal is to always ensure that the guest experience is not just what the client wishes it to be, but more."
tablesetgo.com

READY FOR ANYTHING

Jeff Consoletti, 37, founder, principal and CEO, JJLA, Los Angeles

Since launching JJLA in Los Angeles in 2010, Consoletti has seen his event design and production company grow to include offices in New York and Boston as he oversees events ranging from public concerts, festivals and fan experiences to corporate brand activations, nonprofit benefits and private affairs. "Part innovator and part creative, mix of counselor and confidante, chief strategist and organizer, both captain and crew, about sums up my day at JJLA," Consoletti says. "I cultivate compassion and creativity in my colleagues and clients, and drive innovation and experience to not only imagine but execute the best events, no matter if it's the first or 100th time we've worked on it. I feel lucky that I get to wear many hats every day and find it a privilege to be trusted with the global brands, exceptional talent and unique projects we produce."

He looks forward to the future. "As I set goals for myself and my company for the next decade, the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics are a top-level benchmark of where I am setting my sights," he says.
www.jj-la.com

THINKING BIG

Drew Dedo, 37, founder, Harbor Entertainment, Nashville, Tenn.

What's the secret behind Dedo's success with his event design and production company? "He is always committed to big ideas that make each Harbor event something truly custom and unique," a colleague says. "There is no concept too crazy for Drew! He always goes above and beyond to ensure that the Harbor team and every vendor on-site has what they need to work confidently."

Dedo is a hands-on professional. "From logistics and production to overseeing our shop and working on the specialty pieces that are designed, I enjoy getting my hands dirty and digging into every project," he says. "I have a small company doing large events and a lot of output, so I work every day to ensure all projects are running smoothly."

And he is proud that his company is a family affair. "I get to work with a very talented designer—who is also my wife," he says. "We get the opportunity to travel together, work together, and hold each other accountable every day, and we love it." He adds, "I am in my dream job. I get to own and run a small business with my wife, work on the ever-changing projects that come in our door, and continue to build a great company."
harbor-entertainment.com

MAKING MAGIC

Bron Hansboro, 33, owner and art director, The Flower Guy Bron, Richmond, Va.

Before he became a floral designer, Hansboro was an educator specializing in serving students with disabilities. As a result, he is skilled in the art of listening and relying on his intuition, two talents that are of great value in his current role, he says.

25 YOUNG EVENT



The other skill he brings to his work: a little bit of magic. “I am the person responsible for our clients’ experience from start to finish and in many cases, it takes a bit of magic to pull it all off,” he explains. “As a designer I recipe, design and manage all the details of our clients’ events, thus guaranteeing the experience will exceed their expectations. I typically supervise anywhere from two to five designers to create a cohesive look that reflects my brand and aligns with the client’s vision. I wear several hats, but as an entrepreneur, this is what comes with the territory. I’ve learned that what I do can hardly be considered a job—it’s my life’s work, and I’m happy to call it my passion.”

www.theflowerguybron.com

TEAM QUARTERBACK

Katelyn Hill, CPCE, DMCP, 33, senior director program and event management, NxtEvent, Boston

You know you’re doing well when the founder of your company describes you as “extraordinarily creative with design, solving problems and solving financial challenges. She’s not just a rising star; she’s a leader, motivator and one of the nicest, well-liked young professionals in Boston.”

Hill describes herself as “Boston-born and world-inspired,” a background that enables her to oversee her team. “On-site, I am the quarterback calling it play by play, with sharp event intuition and logistical precision. I am where ever I need to be, as well as the custodian of the dream-weaving, or an on-site solutions engineer.” She adds, “I think makes me a great leader is that I have a great team—a team I have hired and evolved. I have invested in my team, by developing them to be the top of their game and the best event professionals on the rise.”

www.nxtevent.com

MASTERING ‘MINDFULNESS’

Lindsey Hollingsworth, CSEP, 28, events and wellness manager, Atlassian, Austin, Texas

Hollingsworth has a busy schedule with her role at big software developer Atlassian. As part of the company’s Workplace Experience team, she produces three annual internal events, including a family and friends day, a team-building day and a holiday party, with attendee counts ranging from 400 to 1,000. Also on her roster: monthly on-site socials, workshops and wellness initiatives “with a focus on mindfulness and mitigating employee stress,” she says. “I

also manage a small team who handles guest services and facilities, and enjoy the challenge of helping others with personal development and growth opportunities.”

It’s who you know: “I find my biggest asset that allows me to excel in my role is the industry connections I’ve made over the years through ILEA and attending industry conferences such as The Special Event and ILEA Live,” she explains. Also beneficial: her broad background. “My background in advertising, wedding planning and event rental sales has given me diverse viewpoints and the ability to interact with and anticipate the needs of vendors to maintain great relationships. I enjoy the challenge of trying to understand our customer base, aka the Atlassian employees, and strategizing to produce events that appeal to all.”

www.atlassian.com

COMPANY PRIDE

Kelly Hunt, 30, producer, LEO Events, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Hunt’s fans come from both her own company management and her big-time clients.

“Kelly has been instrumental in the growth and retention of LEO’s client base,” explains LEO principal Cindy Brewer, “including a top account—a leading financial services company—as well as being specifically requested to serve as the program manager to oversee all 10 of its annual events globally.”

As Hunt sees it, she has a lot to love in the event industry. “I love seeing months—and sometimes years—of hard work pay off, hearing the stage manager say, ‘Let’s do this! Have a great show!’ seeing the lights fade, then completely knocking our clients’ socks off. I love seeing our clients beam with pride after an event. And I love a good wrap party.”

She says she already has her dream job: “I know it sounds cliché, but I’m living the dream. I get to work daily with extremely talented, amazing people, and we get to travel to really cool places and create incredible experiences for our clients.”

leoevents.com

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Amy Iserman, 30, director of sales, Forte Belanger, Detroit

She’s only 30, but Iserman is already leading a team of six to hit the catering company’s sales goals, along with overseeing her own

portfolio of house accounts. Her mission: “We create remarkable events for Detroit’s elite social clients and top companies in the city,” she explains.

The secret to her success? Compassion based on her own experience. “I believe that I am good at my job because I can relate to my employees,” she explains. “I’ve walked in the same shoes that they have. I can empathize with their frustrations because I’ve had the same ones and I’ve grown above them. I can help them feel confident when they’re feeling insecure because I too have felt small when working with the magnitude of clientele that we work with. I can teach them to expect greatness from our team because I’ve learned our clients will accept no less. I’m not afraid to have the tough conversations, because I can think back to the ones that have been had with me and realize how much they’ve helped me learn and grow. But most importantly, I believe that I am good at my job because I believe in our brand, I believe in my team, and I believe in what we do.”

www.fortebelanger.com

HEAR HER SONG

Tamara Jade, 29, founder/CEO, Tamara Jade Music, New York and Washington

Jade sees her role as going beyond simply entertaining guests at events. “Every event I perform at or curate is carefully crafted to leave the listener or audience feeling not just entertained, but transformed,” she says. She takes pride in her broad repertoire. “I make it my business to personally pick every song with the audience in mind. Sometimes that means jazz, sometimes pop, sometimes R&B, sometimes reggae—and sometimes, all of the above!”

She has lofty goals. “My dream is to be ‘the entertainer to the stars,’” she explains. “I want to be the entertainer that Beyonce or any other music or pop-culture celebrity knows will keep the dance floor energized and filled with love at his/her parties. I want to be the person that celebrities know will help craft their events in a way that will leave not only their guests but they themselves both fulfilled and wanting more!”

www.tamarajademusic.com

PROS TO WATCH



THINK FAST

Cindy Kapp, 26, logistics and execution planner, East of Ellie, San Diego

Kapp oversees four major areas for this events agency, based in Shelton, Conn.: venue management, catering coordination, AV coordination, and furniture rentals. And she is ready to respond quickly. "Our clients come in fast and furious," Kapp explains. "We do some events that give us time to plan, but some of our most successful—and favorites—take place in a matter of weeks instead of months. We push the saying 'all hands on deck' to its limit, and I'm so proud to be on this team!"

Her work is varied; recent projects have included "an indoor park in London, a fully functioning swing set from scratch in the heart of New York City, and an L.A. glam studio on a movie set backlot at Paramount Studios," she notes.

She has a dream job in mind: "To own and manage a retreat-style venue that could host groups in a beautiful setting combining nature and functionality of an event space," she explains. "I envision my venue located somewhere in Hawaii, perched hillside with amazing ocean views and an abundance of trees and greenery. By delivering a retreat-style experience, attendees are in the ultimate vacay-mode and being around that atmosphere every day would truly be a dream!"
eastofellie.com

FLYING HIGH

Jeanenne La Bella, 34, CEO and co-founder, La Bella Planners, New York

Employers often nominate members of their staff for "Young Event Pros." But La Bella has been nominated by someone who works for her. La Bella event planner Jesse Calhoun says his boss "has a real passion for what she does, and she is able to run a thriving business while also being a wonderful mother to her two children. I think she is an amazing representation of the future of the events industry."

La Bella herself credits her team for the support that enables her to spread her wings. "My team helps handle and execute the everyday dealings with all-things event, so that my time is free to come up with creative and cohesive design concepts that adds so much personal touch to each and every event we

plan," she explains.

She would like to spread her event wings around the globe. Her dream job? "Producing and designing intricate destination weddings and events around the world."
www.labellaplanners.com

THE BIG TIME

Anthony Maggioro, CMP, 36, senior manager of meeting services, Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society, Chicago

Maggioro's role involves overseeing his association's annual global conference, a massive affair that draws 43,000 healthcare IT professionals from all over the world. Then again, he cut his teeth on big events, serving as an events manager at Chicago's mammoth McCormick Place.

His role rotates each year with two other colleagues between logistics, housing, and food and beverage/events. The F&B/events rotation also gives him the opportunity to plan the opening reception and other events. The rotation ensures that "I have a well-rounded perspective," he explains. "With everything I do I am always focused on the customer and what their experience will entail. It's so easy to get lost in the details when working in this industry, but I always have the big picture at the top of my thought process. I want to create an unforgettable atmosphere."
www.himss.org

HEAD OF THE CLASS

Brady K. Miller, CSEP, 37, academic events specialist, Unbricked Communications, Topeka, Kan.

When an event pro such as Jim Hooker of Stratelyst Creative refers to you as "one of the strongest strategic event experts in the industry"—and you're not yet age 40—you are doing something right.

Miller, who provides freelance services for academic events and currently serves as creative director for Austin, Texas-based Stratelyst, credits the decade he spent working on university campuses with giving him insight into the special world of academic events. "Having an intimate understanding as to the inner workings—and sometimes politics—associated with academe gives me a unique insight as to how to best communicate with and produce events for academic clients," he explains. "While higher education clients have much in common,

I also appreciate and am excited by the qualities that make each campus unique. Finding creative solutions that best highlight a community's distinctive attributes is what makes the projects in which I am involved both personal and successful."

He already has his dream job, he says. "I work with several different companies and with a whole myriad of clients across the country, so my environment is constantly changing," he says. "I feel like I add a unique contribution to the event teams with which I work. With most of my end clients being nonprofits and universities, I feel good about what I do. Helping these groups celebrate their ambitions and their successes is incredibly rewarding."

www.unbrickedcommunications.com

ROLE MODEL

Lauren Rodewald, 29, director of strategic hospitality, Centerplate, Stamford, Conn.

Rodewald's job is a big one: She has direct responsibility for the project management of foodservice new-build and renovation projects at sporting facilities, entertainment venues and convention centers in North America. "Working closely with the joint management teams for Centerplate and Sodexo, I am a key facet of the design process for all of our venues and their event-hosting capabilities," she explains, "ensuring that we are always raising the bar in the event hospitality and providing our guests with the best possible experience."

Why she is good at what she does: "Managing the design of foodservice areas and kitchens that all need to work in sync to serve 70,000 people at a live event all at once is a complex logistical challenge," she explains. "Architects, chefs, operators and construction teams all speak different languages and view challenges from different perspectives. In my role, I help to bring all the teams and their different visions together to make large-scale operations come together in a seamless way that enhances the guest experience."

Her dream job goes beyond the one that comes with a paycheck. "I'd I hope to be a role model for future women who are looking to enter the industry," she says, "especially in segments like sports and entertainment that do not have strong female representation."

www.centerplate.com

25 YOUNG EVENT PROS TO WATCH



RISING STAR 21 Tanya Scagnol, 30, creative director, Fifth Element Group, Toronto

Aaron Kaufman, CSEP, company president, describes Scagnol in two words: “emerging superstar.” “Her commitment to excellence in taking over an already experienced and award-winning Fifth Element Group team, and elevating it even further creatively is only exceeded by her fierce passion for the industry and the people in it,” he says. “When I look around at what the industry needs as a role model for the upcoming and emerging professionals, Tanya checks off each box and will undoubtedly be a force in the industry for a very long time.”

“Each day, you can find me working hard to continuously conceive of fresh new ways to activate on our live events,” Scagnol says. “I learned early on in this role that there are no boundaries outside of imagination and that complacency creates a mundane work environment in live events. I fight hard for my clients to ensure that we take a vision that they have, give it our own unique twist, and together with my team continue to raise the bar to become one of the industry’s top designers.”
www.fifthelementgroup.com

BIG GAMES HUNTING 22 Anthony Smith, 31, director of catering and events, Bruce’s Catering, Los Angeles

It was TV’s “Food Network” that inspired Smith to enter the world of food and beverage, and his creative streak that led to a career in catering. As director of events at Bruce’s Catering, he oversees all special events for the company, which average about 250 to 300 per year. “This ranges from small intimate dinners to major industry premieres, awards shows, and corporate galas,” he explains. “As the largest caterer to the TV and film industry, I also plan events in and around our daily contracts with local studios and productions.”

And Smith is thinking ahead—and thinking big. “I love large-scale events, especially ones that require many moving pieces and logistics. I also love creating unique dining experiences and formulating a cohesive experience from start to finish,” he says. “If I could play a part in the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles and deliver those experiences to guests on a vast scale, I think that would definitely be one of many career highlights for me.”

brucecatering.com

CREATIVE LEAD 23 Hillary Smith, CSEP, CMP, 39, executive creative director, PRA, Chicago

PRA is a grand old name in destination management, but Smith has a brand-new role for the firm: executive creative director. “As the first-ever executive creative director for PRA, I can make a deeper and wider impact on the special events industry by aligning all 29 offices in one creative vision,” she explains. “Our mission is to elevate and evolve the attendee experience through a cutting-edge creative design and by infusing B-to-C-style experiential into the business events sector. That is where my passion lies.”

In her role, Smith is responsible for creating “the most memorable, engaging and forward-thinking event designs and experiences for a list of Fortune 100 megabrands,” she explains. “In short, I get to embody their brand while making creative event dreams a reality, and I love it.” In the end, “The goal, ultimately is to change the way the industry looks at corporate events as a whole, with PRA leading the way.”

She stresses the importance of her team. “I have learned to be a good listener and while I am a leader, I wouldn’t be anywhere without the team. I think people would describe me as a hard worker, and being from the Midwest, I take pride in that.”
www.pra.com

COUNSELOR AT LOVE 24 Leah Weinberg, 37, owner and creative director, Color Pop Events, Long Island City, N.Y.

From attorney to wedding planner? It worked for Weinberg.

“A lot of the skills that make me phenomenal at my job come from the 10 years that I spent as a commercial real estate attorney,” she explains. “I learned how to manage dozens of deals at any given time, which makes me easily able to stay organized and on top of the multiple weddings I am working on. I also have a lot of experience dealing with challenging people and navigating high-stress and high-stakes situations. I know how to stay incredibly calm under pressure and to be a calming force for everyone in the room. I know how to think quickly on my feet and problem-solve if anything goes wrong. So yeah, I know how to plan a super-fun party, but my value really comes from all of the things that

couples don’t see.”

As for the future, Weinberg wants to continue planning weddings, while branching out to include speaking engagements. An e-book on event planning is in her future. And how about her own line of Color Pop party supplies? “Keep an eye out for that in 2020—fingers crossed!”
www.colorpoppevents.com

SOMETHING NEW 25 Audriana White, 29, senior manager of experiential and growth lead, Essence magazine, New York

White established her bona fides with more than three years at Forbes Media, championing the well-known Forbes conferences and custom events. Today, she has an exciting new challenge, taking on the role of senior manager of experiential and growth lead for Essence magazine. The brand is known for its tentpole events including the Essence Festival and Black Women in Hollywood.

“I help to plan and execute current event inventory, along with creating new events; all while keeping the brand, our sponsors and audience front of mind,” she explains. “My day to day can include anything from site visits and contributing to marketing decks to ideating on event concepts and building budgets. I work closely with the marketing, creative and other stakeholders to bring our audience and valued sponsors unforgettable, impactful experiences.” She adds, “I’m comfortable with taking risks and being the guinea pig when I want to try something new.”

As if this weren’t enough, White has also launched her own event planning company, Noble Gold Events, “where I keep myself busy planning weddings and other social events,” she explains. “It’s the best of both worlds—truly!”
www.essence.com; www.noblegoldevents.com

Do you know a young event pro we should cover? Please tell us at info@specialevents.com.

25 TOP DMCs

15TH ANNUAL

It's our annual look at the biggest brands in the world of DMCs—the experts on the best seats and eats in every place worth visiting. 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 2019 REVENUE \$100 million

CAPABILITIES Founded in 1969, ACCESS is “committed to working with companies to drive organizational change through the power of shared and inspiring experiences,” management says. The team aims to be the client’s “single source for everything from creative special event and program design to transportation logistics, CSR programs, recreational activities, and more. We offer local expertise everywhere and innovative solutions anywhere.”

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Highlights of the past year have included a five-day incentive program for a globally recognized health and beauty company for 4,500 guests in San Diego, including local must-haves such as skateboarding and biking demonstrations by X Game champions on a custom half-pipe, “bootcamp training” with real Navy SEALs, and a buyout of Petco Park complete with a custom fireworks show; the program was honored with a *Special Events Gala Award* nomination. The team also kept busy with the 20th annual Gabc Dunkin’ Donuts Thanksgiving Day parade in Philadelphia, with 750,000 spectators and 7 million TV viewers, plus a carnival-theme block party for 1,200 and a “Taste” event for 3,000, both in Chicago.

TRENDS TO WATCH “As the industry continues to consolidate, more than ever, planners are looking for consistency in service, creativity and, most importantly, program execution,” management says. “Being creative and having local expertise is a given for any DMC, but consistently delivering on what you say you’re going to deliver is what’s driving the long-lasting strategic partnerships planners are looking for.”

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 2019 REVENUE \$10 million to \$12 million

CAPABILITIES Serving big Florida destinations Miami, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, Naples, Marco Island, Palm Beach and Boca Raton, this DMC will celebrate 21 years in business this summer, and is proud to announce it has added two more DMCPs to its “record-setting roster of most DMCPs under one roof”—at 11.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Highlights of the past year have included turning a 100,000-square-foot warehouse in Miami’s hip Wynwood district into a “Havana Nightclub” for 2,700 guests at a social media giant’s global sales meeting, including 1950s cars, 12 Cuban food stations and a floating DJ booth with a thatched roof. At an event at Miami’s landmark Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, the Advantage team created a Cape Cod atmosphere for some 500 guests, placing furniture groupings all around the terraces.

TRENDS TO WATCH “‘Experiential’ events are super-popular and in high demand,” management says. “In today’s market, one size fits nobody and in order to stand out, you need to offer something that makes a lasting impression on your guests. It could be something as simple as appealing to your guest’s need—such as morning yoga before General Session—or having experienced something they’ve never seen or done before—such as shark tagging for research. Once you make your guests feel involved, it’s a win-win because now they have a vested interest.”



BBC DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Global DMC Partners

New Orleans

www.bbcdmc.com

TOP OFFICER Bonnie Boyd, CMP, DMCP

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR

150 to 175

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$5 million to \$6 million

CAPABILITIES The veteran DMC relies on its “creativity in every facet of event design,” custom decor design thanks to its in-house studio, “superior vendor relations,” transportation services, and “passion for the partnerships and the product.”

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS BBC’s work over the past year has included a citywide for 6,000 people that went “flawlessly,” they say: “We partnered with a wonderful Fortune 500 client in rebuilding a home in a Hurricane Katrina-affected area.” Another fun event included a competitive team-building go-kart experience with top winners racing in Ferraris and taking photos with racing legend Mario Andretti.

TRENDS TO WATCH “DMCs have to teach clients what their true value is in the market they represent,” management says. “We are not just the transportation or staffing experts, but truly experts in the heart and soul of our city. Give your DMC your goals and objectives and trust in them to give you back an unforgettable authentic experience!”

Photo by Oliver Kufner / iStock / Getty Images Plus

BIXEL & CO.

A DMC Network Company
Los Angeles
bixelco.com

TOP OFFICER Dabney Bixel

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 250

ESTIMATED 2019 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 The year 2018-2019 has been “innovative” for Bixel, management says, “as we have further grown and diversified our client base and produced programs for industry verticals that we have never partnered with before.” Highlights have included an event at a Hollywood studio fashioned after “The Godfather” movie, with themed decor, fine Italian catering, opera singers and an outdoor screening of the film. Another event was hosted at an historic mansion in Beverly Hills. “The event had a very classy feel with a touch of Old World sophistication,” the team says. “It was another event that allowed the team to exhibit our creative repertoire.”

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 2019 REVENUE \$5 million to \$6 million

CAPABILITIES CE values customer service and client relationships “above anything else,” management says. “We have created landmark events in San Antonio and utilized those resources to create authentic experiences for visitors to our culturally rich city. Our unique structure to service programs with a key project manager maintaining contact throughout the duration of a program sets us apart in our market.”

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS With San Antonio showcased as the site of the 2018 Final Four basketball tourney and the city’s 300th anniversary, the CE team has been busy with a program for more than 1,000 attendees with 15 different tour options and a golf tournament spanning 18 courses—all in the metropolitan area.

TRENDS TO WATCH Traveling in style: “Our tour experiences are seeing an increase in VIP customizations, which include sourcing unique transportation and providing meal and beverage service during transports,” management says. “Program lead time is decreasing, allowing our team to create flawless events with more direction, maximizing our client’s time and budget. Interactive entertainment is increasingly popular to capture those social media-worthy moments and give guests another talking point.”

CSI DMC

Washington
csi-dmc.com

TOP OFFICER David Hainline

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 1,000

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$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 office locations, CSI partners with clients in any location, bringing destination research and industry intel to wherever their programs may be next,” management says.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS “CSI is dedicated to finding new and unexpected ways to bring events to life for our clients,” management says, including an Alice in Wonderland-themed bash, a “totally new” take on a presidential party inside the Library of Congress, and an obstacle course on the beach where guests used RFID wristbands to compete for the best time.

TRENDS TO WATCH “Demonstrating to our clients that we are committed to partnering with them, to understanding their needs and helping them develop content that speaks to their guests in addition to their selected destination, year after year, is critical,” management says. “Our clients know that regardless of how a situation changes, during the planning process or even during the event itself, we are there every step of the way to ensure success. We want to look beyond just the needs of that one event and into the heart of our clients, what organizations and causes they champion, and deliver integrated touchpoints that create meaningful connections and support in their communities and around the world.”



DALLAS FAN FARES

Dallas

www.fanfares.com

TOP OFFICER Kaye Burkhardt

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 125

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$12 million

CAPABILITIES The company provides DMC services in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, along with managing corporate hospitality at major sports events, ground transportation, team-building programs and theme parties.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Events over the past year have included DMC services for sports events such as the Super Bowl, college football playoffs, Formula One, World Series and the Masters golf tournament, along with corporate events.

TRENDS TO WATCH The No. 1 trend? “It’s all about the experience!” management says. “The big influx of companies into this DMC’s market means many new opportunities for us in all service segments of our company.”

DECO PRODUCTIONS

A DMC Network Company
Miami

www.decoproductions.com

TOP OFFICER Sharon Siegel

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR

300 plus

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$5.5 million plus

CAPABILITIES This full-service, one-stop-shop DMC 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 Over the past year, the DECO team has produced more than 300 events, with the Miami Make-a-Wish Ball as a highlight, they say. “This one-night event required a three-day install, where we completely transformed the Intercontinental Miami Hotel into a ‘Summer of Love,’ featuring multiple themed rooms with custom-built decor, unique and award-winning entertainment, and a live fashion show. The event hosted 800-plus guests and helped raise over \$2.25 million for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.”

TRENDS TO WATCH The big trends: “Attendee engagement and brand awareness!” management says. “Our clients are really focusing on the networking aspect of the event and positioning of their brand. By creating fun interactive stations throughout the event, it allows attendees to engage with one another on a more personal level, creating an overall positive and memorable experience. Custom-built interactive stations and photo backdrops allow for brand awareness and exposure on social media—helping them reach an even larger audience post-event.”



Destination Concepts inc

DESTINATION CONCEPTS INC.

Global DMC Partners

San Diego

www.destinationconcepts.com

TOP OFFICERS Brynne Frost, Ana Reilly

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR

1,500 plus

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE

\$22 million to \$23 million

CAPABILITIES In business 20 years, this privately owned DMC offers production and logistics services, with in-house teams providing event design, graphic design, and entertainment. Offering “a new level of personalization that only a truly independent DMC can deliver, DCi distinguishes itself further from other ‘franchise style’ DMCs by featuring exclusive access to a design company with an expansive decor inventory and custom-built decor,” management says.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS The team has been busy this past year with events across the spectrum, from “an 8,000-person transportation departure in the pouring

rain that went off without a hitch to an Instagram photo-inspired pop-up event in the middle of LA.’s Xbox Plaza,” management says. “We’ve tackled a multi-day Orange County citywide conference for a corporate client and numerous Coachella-inspired events with thematic decor, interactive entertainment—our favorite is bringing in a Ferris wheel—and even an influencer experience during the festival itself.”

TRENDS TO WATCH “Trends we are seeing in the industry are large groups bringing amazing programs to the table with a much shorter planning time,” management says. “Another trend we are seeing is B2B events and B2C events starting to blur together, as the need for marketing throughout an event is becoming more apparent and widely used.”

DESTINATIONS BY DESIGN

Las Vegas

dbdvegas.com

TOP OFFICERS Melissa Aupperle, Debby Jacobs Felker, Josh Ford

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR

370 to 400

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$25 million to \$35 million

CAPABILITIES In operation since 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 Event highlights over the past year have included the team choreographing and producing a one-hour custom production taking 3,000 attendees on a journey through Las Vegas: past, present and future. This custom production included more than 20 professional dancers, orchestra members, eight specialty acts, singers and a custom video compilation. DBD also partnered with Aria Resort & Casino in Las Vegas on its spring lobby installation, including freestanding panels with moss, poetry inscriptions and botanical illustrations.

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.jtb-global.com/dmc,

www.globaldmcnetwork.com

TOP OFFICER Jun Takeda

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR

400 to 600

bbc DESTINATION MANAGEMENT
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ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$4 billion to \$5 billion
CAPABILITIES The team comprises 13 DMC partner companies, covering a total of 140 destinations over five continents. “These DMCs offer a wide range of high-quality services that include the arrangement of MICE, meetings and events as well as corporate travel across the world,” management says. “Our B2B network also offers specialized leisure groups and high-end FIT internationally, assisting agencies who wish to hold global events. As a result, we can offer true flexibility to our clients.”

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Highlights of the past year have included the Friendship Gala during the Honolulu Festival; TPI America’s handling of the Red Bull Incentive and Toyota India Incentive group; HONDA Thailand event by TPI Canada; LOTTE JTB’s support during the Pyeongchang Olympics; and the PwC Summit and Movement Disorder Society Congress Event by Tour East.

TRENDS TO WATCH “Political factors are having an effect on the travel industry,” management notes. “This, in combination with the digitization of travel, makes the travel industry more competitive. Our ability to adapt to markets and to offer new, unique venues and activities have helped us to overcome some of these factors, keeping us as one of the strongest global DMC networks worldwide.”

HELLO! DESTINATION MANAGEMENT Orlando, Fla.

www.hello-dmc.com

TOP OFFICER Paul Mears III

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 4,150

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$125 million

CAPABILITIES The company combines expertise in traditional DMC logistical services with an “absolute commitment” to innovative program and event design. “Our teams successfully manage over 35 destinations in 10 offices coast to coast,” management says, providing transportation, theme decor and entertainment, tours and activities, dine-arounds, team-building, off-site events, hospitality staff, and attraction and museum tickets.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS The team brought home a *Special Events Gala Award* in January for an event for a big financial services firm. Some 2,000 guests were swept back in time to an era when the kings of jazz reigned and people danced the Charleston to swinging tunes from big band orchestras. “As we intertwined their magical journey with the captivating history of the Arizona Biltmore resort and Wrigley Mansion, mirth and merriment awaited guests with surprise-and-delight moments from arrival to departure,” they say with pride.

TRENDS TO WATCH “We’ve seen an increase in dining tours as a daytime activity,” management says. “Guests are interested in discovering the local flavors and how they came to be favorites. They also love learning the story of how they are made and the people behind them. Thankfully, there’s no shortage of experiences in our markets to help us round out our clients’ event or program for a day of unforgettable local flavors.”

HOSTS GLOBAL

Las Vegas

www.hosts-global.com

TOP OFFICER Jennifer Patino, DMCP

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 1,000 plus

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$295 million

CAPABILITIES Hosts Global is “a strategic partner for meeting and event planners worldwide,” management says. “We offer full-service destination management in over 300 locations through our global alliance of select destination management companies. Our clients receive streamlined global planning, dedicated account management, and superior execution of group programs including meetings, conventions, incentive programs and special events.”

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Standout events from the past year include Hosts Washington DC’s production of a seated dinner for 200 at the city’s landmark National Cathedral and an incentive event from member Hadler DMC Scandinavia that took guests more than 3,000 miles over the course of nine days to enjoy the splendors of Denmark, Greenland and Iceland.

TRENDS TO WATCH The years 2019-2020 will “remain strong for the DMC industry overall,” management says. “Face-to-face meetings and companies recognizing the importance of incentives for their salesforce continue to be driving factors in steady growth for the events industry. Identifying event ROI and incorporating technology into meetings and group functions is not a trend, but a must-do. Planners are also seeking solutions for creating sustainable events, including all three pillars—social, environmental and economic impact. We continue to see a focus on risk management and ensuring emergency preparedness is in the forefront of the planning process. While this is not a new trend, it is now an expectation of our clients.”

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. “Our clients are pushing, and allowing, us to truly create events for them from scratch. They want something that has never been seen or done before and are relying on our creative team to curate that experience. From custom entertainment to unique branding elements and production, they trust us to execute and deliver on these ideas, on time and on budget.”

TRENDS TO WATCH Clients—especially in financial and automotive sectors—call for custom work. “They are in tune with what their competition is doing and don’t want to be presented with the same decor or entertainment representative of the destinations they are visiting,” management says. “DMCs are being challenged to work from scratch and not pull concepts off the shelf from previous events. The execution of transportation and activities is expected to be flawless and the destination experiences unique and memorable, not something individuals can walk off the street and do on their own. We’re working with our vendor partners to develop exclusive offerings to meet these demands.”



IVI DMC² ENTERPRISES

Cancun, Mexico

www.ividmc.travel

TOP OFFICER Jose-Manuel Garcia

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 250 plus

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$10 million

CAPABILITIES The company provides full destination services for incentives, meetings and events in more than 30 destinations in five Latin American countries (Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Panama). Management notes its ISO 9001:2015 certification, ADMC accreditation, full-coverage liability insurance, and safety and security programs.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS The team handled planning and logistics for a program of more than 7,000 participants from the United States in a course of five waves in 30 days at the Riviera Maya, including all arrival and departure transfers as well as private activities and tours.

TRENDS TO WATCH Clients today are looking for events with corporate social responsibility elements and for authentic experiences in which they can learn about the culture of the destination, management says.



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A DMC Network Company

Denver

www.imprintgroup.com

TOP OFFICER Nicole Marsh, CMP, DMCP

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 1,100

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$20 million

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 500 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

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 2019 REVENUE \$14 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, 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 and NCAA and PGA events.

TRENDS TO WATCH Short-term business is booming, the team says.

OVATION GLOBAL DMC

Geneva

www.ovationdmc.com

TOP OFFICER Sebastien Tondeur

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 10,000 to 12,000

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$75 million to \$85 million

CAPABILITIES Ovation's worldwide reach is its noteworthy capability, management says; the company has offices in more than 100 destinations across five conti-

nents. Operations comprise 26 wholly owned DMCs and a wide range of strategic partners.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Ovation Switzerland oversaw the Michelin 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." Also, Ovation has recently partnered with the Michelin Guide, which "sets the tone for cross-sector collaborative involvement of different providers."

PACIFIC WORLD

Barcelona, Singapore

www.pacificworld.com

TOP OFFICER Selina Sinclair

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 4,000

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$75 million

CAPABILITIES The 45-plus Pacific World offices are "fully integrated" as one company with 350 employees worldwide, management says. "With in-house creative teams, Pacific World is able 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 a conference in Bangkok for 1,000 guests; high-lights included a main plenary session featuring a content display that allowed interaction between the speakers and audience, and a thematic gala dinner that offered a unique "night in the souk" style. A custom program in Monte Carlo featured landmark monuments and venues, while other events showcased unconventional venues, such as a former bull ring in Spain and a banana plantation on Tenerife Island.

TRENDS TO WATCH Major trends include a growing interest in emerging destinations, events with corporate social responsibility elements, and clients' desire for wellness experiences, management says. Guests want to engage with locals and support the sustainable development of the local communities, which in turn immerses he guests" in a full destination experience." Also important: incorporating risk management and response elements into programs.



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PRA

Chicago

www.pra.com

TOP OFFICER Tony Lorenz

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR

2,000 plus

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$175 million to

\$200 million plus

CAPABILITIES PRA offers 28 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 aligned with business events and local destination experiences.” The team recently acquired event management firm Konzept Events, now operating as PRA South Florida, as well launched an office in the Louisville, Ky., market. All PRA offices receive global sales support, standardized business tools and systems, a quality-assurance compliance program, emergency preparedness and crisis communications protocols, and centralized, proprietary CRM software and other technology “to drive performance and consistency across our business,” they say.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Highlights of the year have included a five-day incentive program that featured a living art museum in a private hangar with 20,000 feet of string lights, custom watercolor prints, and living statues of Degas ballerinas. Guests of a high-tech client in Orlando, Fla., were treated to an aviation-themed event that put them into vintage airplanes to simulate classic World War I dogfights. To celebrate the big new cruise ship Bliss, the team coordinated six concurrent christening ceremonies with high-end entertainment and celebrity hosts across all the ship’s premier venues, with Xyloband technology leading the guests to venue assignments.

TRENDS TO WATCH “At PRA, we continue to help redefine our sector through further consolidation and service extensions around strategy, content, creative, experience and technology as continuing themes, without creating unnecessary channel conflict with our valued third-party client partners,” management says. “Our acquisition of PRA franchise offices in Boston, Las Vegas, and San Antonio/Austin and our new partnership with Tour East/JTB round out the primary levers we are pulling to deliver on the evolving needs of the market we serve.”



RMC: RESORTS | MOUNTAINS | CITIES

Aspen, Colo.

www.rmcdmc.com

TOP OFFICER Shawn Thomson

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR

350 to 500

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$31.5 million

CAPABILITIES To make events perfect, “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 F&B, 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 its 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 2019 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. “We had guests picked up in an oversized LED Volkswagen bus and transported to their LED futuristic event with pop-up entertain-

ment 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.”



Delivering Unparalleled Service

TERRAMAR

A DMC Network Company

Los Cabos, Mexico

www.terramardestinations.com

TOP OFFICERS Lee Chipman, Sunny Irvine

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR 300

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$15 million

CAPABILITIES Big changes this year, as the veteran Mexican specialist expanded to San Francisco with the acquisition of Cappa and Graham. “Terramar has renewed its entire fleet of vehicles, expanded its in-room gift service to Cancun and Puerto Vallarta, and has specialized in bigger, more complex events,” management says.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Management points with pride to “the largest program ever done in Los Cabos—an incentive group of 5,400 participants,” they say. “The company has also coordinated important industry events and very successful familiarization trips in our destinations.”

TRENDS TO WATCH “The confirmation window and the economy seem steady for the near future,” management says. “We provide estimated costs for events two or three years in advance, and we are getting used to that trend.” A big challenge: fly-by-night would-be competitors. “DMCs that are not regulated in any way,” they say. “They can ‘open’ and ‘close’ their office without any control, and it affects the image and reputation of accredited DMCs.” Another challenge is to compete with hotels for off-site events, they note.

THE DESTINATION MANAGER

Scottsdale, Ariz.

www.thedestinationmanager.com

TOP OFFICER Colleen Horan

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR

500 to 700

ESTIMATED 2019 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.”

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 700

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$50 million

CAPABILITIES 360DG added four new offices in 2018, growth showcased by an “incredible celebration” of an annual meeting with keynote, team-building activity and over-the-top dinner—all in a single day. “This client got the most out of their one-day/one venue program in New York City by putting 360DG’s creative and logistics skills to the test,” management says.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS “Keeping an entire program on location can be a struggle, but when the location you’re working with offers its own private beach, golf course, conference center and so much more, the challenge becomes how to fit everything into three days,” the team says. “360DG Amelia Island [Fla.] did just this for a high-profile client at the beautiful Omni Amelia Island Resort—with rave reviews.”

TRENDS TO WATCH The big trend: event data consolidation, they say. “Planners are looking holistically at various technologies integration: event management software, registration systems, event apps, post-event surveys. A data dashboard can consolidate relevant data and pinpoint actionable KPIs [Key Performance Indicators],” management says. “The goal is to get a 360-degree view of attendee experiences by bringing together the different technology tools used throughout the planning and executing process to build an all-encompassing picture of a program’s effectiveness based on the vast range of data points available.”



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ULTIMATE VENTURES

A DMC Network Company

Dallas

www.uvdmc.com

TOP OFFICERS Val Lenington, CSEP, DMCP,

Laurie Sprouse, CMP, DMCP

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS PER YEAR

150 to 185

ESTIMATED 2019 REVENUE \$8 million to \$9 million

CAPABILITIES As “local experts for over 25 years,” the Ultimate Ventures team keeps its focus on the Dallas-Fort Worth area exclusively, management says.

“This singular focus and resulting deep local connections allow us to pull off unique, award-winning events as well as flawless complex transportation programs for thousands.”

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS Highlights over the past year have included an event that donated more than 1,000 holiday gifts to the Boys and Girls Club and a stunning “Under the Texas Sunset” event.

TRENDS TO WATCH “After two of our best years ever, we are seeing the signs of the economy cooling a bit,” management says, “most likely due to the hiccups created by geopolitical forces. However, 2020 and 2021 look like they will be very strong.”

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THERE IS STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

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 ADMEI, 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

2019 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST \$11 million to \$13 million

TRENDS "The meetings industry is strong, and with strength comes the confidence to expand from basic content to enhance the attendee experience with a more energized format than we've seen in recent years," they say. "Entertainment, creative visuals, fun branding and similar are creeping back into events, which is exciting to see!"

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 ADMEI; "One hundred percent of DMC Network members have their ADMC accreditation," they say.

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

DMCS IN SYSTEM 42

2019 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST

\$150 million to \$175 million

TRENDS Today's pressures include "short-term business followed by always seeking something new and exciting to 'wow' clients," they say. Geopolitical issues are "always a concern" as they impact business confidence and spending decisions.

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

2019 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, Paris

www.euromic.com

CEOs Joe Lustenberger, Huw Tuckett

THE BASICS This nonprofit marketing association admits members by invitation only. Candidates must have a strong track record of delivery in their destination and demonstrate excellent relationships with existing clients and suppliers. "Our high entry standards and rigorous vetting process ensure that only best-in-class DMCs earn the right to use the Euromic brand," management says. "The objective of the association is to provide trade show representation, social media, PR and marketing tools for its members, while direct sales are the responsibility of each individual company."

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

DMCS IN SYSTEM 49

2019 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST \$600 million (DMCs combined)

TRENDS Management says that "Strong demand for alternative venues for events is rising, and delegates are more likely to attend and engage when they're hosted in inspiring spaces."

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. Member DMCs must have a minimum of 10 years in the industry; two bank references; three client and vendor references; at least \$2 million in liability insurance; and membership in two national professional organizations. As a member, the DMC is represented by Global DMC Partners as the exclusive DMC in their market(s).

AREAS SERVED Worldwide

DMCS IN SYSTEM 65 plus

2019 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST

\$275 million to \$300 million

TRENDS "Corporations are investing more in events and incentives because they see them as a tool to help keep employees engaged and motivated, ultimately reducing turnover," management says. "This is particularly important with the millennial workforce, where turnover is high. Incentive trips, travel and education are highly desired by today's workers, just as much if not more than work-life balance and benefits. This puts more pressure on meeting planners to plan engaging and meaningful incentives and events, and to think outside the box in order to make these events really stand out to employees as a 'must attend' event."

1 DMC WORLD

London

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

2019 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
THE DESTINATION PARTNERS

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 and have strong reputations, and hold certification or accreditation. Benefits include sales and marketing support worldwide.

AREAS SERVED Europe

DMCS IN SYSTEM 10

2019 SYSTEMWIDE REVENUE FORECAST \$30 million

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

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FOOTNOTE All information is provided by the companies listed; errors and omissions sometimes occur. Should you be on this list? Please tell us at info@specialevents.com.

FOOD FOR FÊTES

Stunning sweets: Beautiful desserts from Legendary Events include individual cheesecakes topped with piped 'tulips' (here) and s'mores with smoked chocolate ganache, burnt meringue, raspberry coulis, micro basil and chocolate pearls (below). Photo here by Robin Lori; photo below courtesy Legendary Events.

You Sweet Thing!

From clean and green to drippy and decadent, desserts at special events today are both gorgeous and good for you. By Susan Cuadrado

CLEANER CLASSICS The desire of event guests—especially millennials—to eat cleaner extends all the way to dessert.

“More of our clients are requesting gluten-free and vegan dessert options, so we enjoy getting creative and reinventing popular classic dishes to meet their needs,” says Ami Dand, executive pastry chef at Atlanta-based Legendary Events. She cites a vegan pecan pie/crème brulee hybrid—caramel crème brulee topped with dulce de leche and toasted pecan filling and finished with whipped cream and candied pecans as a prime example, saying, “It has all the flavors of pecan pie, but substitutes coconut milk for dairy milk and uses gluten-free flour.”

Robin Selden, managing partner and executive chef at Stamford, Conn.-based Marcia Selden Catering and Event Planning, has also found great success with plant-based sweets that cater to consumers’ increasing desire to eat cleaner—even when it comes to dessert.

“Our dance around this has been to create a series of really delicious plant-based, gluten-free desserts that can cover most of the dietary restrictions that come our way,”





Beautiful bites: Elegant desserts from Marcia Selden Catering include a milk chocolate-chile shortbread tart (here) and an upscale strawberry tart (below). Photos by Robin Selden.



Selden explains. Two favorites include a vegan and gluten-free raspberry coconut crème trifle with pistachio brittle and a strawberry meringue tart with lemon curd and dehydrated strawberries—a refined, gluten-free twist on strawberry shortcake.

SPICIER BITES Incorporating herbs and spices into the dessert realm lends an overall sophistication in terms of both taste and presentation to dishes. “I don’t like my desserts overly sweet, so using basil or thyme, or even a hint of cayenne, helps curb the sweetness and add a whole different level of flavors,” Dand says. “Micro herbs and edible flowers are also a great way to add a pop of color and flavor to a plated dessert.”

One of Dand’s most requested desserts is her take on a s’mores-inspired tart—a graham cracker shell filled with smoked semisweet chocolate ganache topped with toasted vanilla bean meringue and served with sea-salt caramel, fresh raspberries, dark chocolate pearls, and a micro basil garnish. “Sometimes we make the meringue different flavors to add to the uniqueness,” she adds. “Passionfruit meringue is a delicious complement to the chocolate and raspberries.”

“We use a lot of savory seasonings in our desserts, such as specialty salts, chiles and spicy honeys,” Selden says. “And we have been doing a ton of work on the sweet and savory side with tea,” citing a milk choco-

late-chile shortbread tart with candied orange and zabaglione, and a honey chamomile panna cotta with Mandarin orange as examples.

BOLDER BUFFETS From both a visual and variety standpoint, dessert buffets and action stations will never fall out of fashion. If anything, they are becoming more and more creative—and sometimes downright edgy.

Case in point: The team at Reseda, Calif.-based Someone’s in the Kitchen puts the “hot” in hot chocolate at their “Bad Ass Hot Chocolate” station, wherein a tattooed, machete-wielding server chops white, milk and dark chocolate shavings into customized cups of cocoa.

On the whimsical side, over-the-top candy stations appeal to both the kids and the kid in all of us, as do ice cream cone stations featuring dipped cones stuck into mounds of cotton candy.

“The preponderance of dessert lovers let loose when it comes to the sweets,” says Someone’s in the Kitchen president/owner Joann Roth-Oseary. “When we walk out with the monster milk shakes and individual chocolate souffles, they come running.”

At Marcia Selden Catering, stations go off the wall with custom-built bakery walls holding half-sheet pans filled with a variety of pastries and baked goods, such as doughnuts, retro black and white cookies, and house-made Twinkies. “We make fun stickers themed to the event and use them on mini bakery boxes or bags that guests use to collect their sweet treats,” Selden says.

Other popular stations include a “Float It or Build It” ice cream bar featuring fixings for DIY floats and sandwiches, and a walkaround custom cannoli station featuring flavors ranging from the classics (such as vanilla chocolate chip, hazelnut Nutella, pistachio, chocolate peppermint, and Key lime) to the creative (apple crumb, peanut butter-banana, salted caramel and bacon, Almond Joy candy bar and even a White Russian). ●



RESOURCES

LEGENDARY EVENTS

www.legendaryevents.com

MARCIA SELDEN CATERING AND EVENT PLANNING

marciaselden.com

SOMEONE'S IN THE KITCHEN

www.sitk.com



So bad it's good: The 'Bad Ass Hot Chocolate' station (left) and a station using cotton candy as a cone holder (here), both from Someone's in the Kitchen. Photos courtesy Someone's in the Kitchen.

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Mood makers: Table design for a summer luncheon at a ranch by CL22 Productions (here) and a first birthday party from Someone's in the Kitchen (at right). Photos courtesy CL22 Productions and Someone's in the Kitchen.



Tabletops Take Center Stage

Thoughtfully designed, artistically inspired, deeply textured—and today, that's just the tabletop! By Susan Cuadrado

TURNING THE TABLES

No longer just a blank canvas to drape and decorate, today the table itself is an integral design piece. “Drastic changes have emerged in relation to table shapes and styles,” says Cynthia Lopell, president of Los Angeles-based CL22 Productions. “Where once rounds or rectangles draped with linens were the norm, new shapes have emerged with isometric [3D] designs as pieces of art.”

Lopell favors the clean, “minimal opulence” of etched, lit-from-within acrylic tabletops in unconventional sizes and shapes, such as ovals, octagonals and oversized rounds. “Part of the appeal with the acrylic table is that the tabletop design feels as if it is floating on top,” she says. “While this may feel contemporary, it can change depending on what it is paired with. Adding metallics, smoked glass and mirrors will give it a glam-chic appeal, whimsical flowers and taper candles can give it a hauntingly romantic appeal, while woods and neutral palettes can bring in a midcentury vibe.”

Cheryl Fish, vice president event design services of Reseda, Calif.-based Someone's in the Kitchen, points to tabletops finished in slate, copper, stone, marble, cork and even chalkboard as viable options. “It's all about variety and personal taste—the sky's the limit,” Fish says.

Rectangular and square tables, often combining a mix of materials such as rustic wooden tops and sleek chrome legs, are on trend as well. “Higher end, residential-looking tables are favorites and, depending on their finish, can be used without the need for a linen to cover them,” says event designer Ramsey Prince of Chicago-based Kehoe Designs. Colleague Joey Berman, an event producer, agrees, noting, however, that the addition of a well-designed table runner, such as Kehoe's signature bronze laser-cut “Molina” from BBJ Linen, is the ideal enhancement for a rustic wooden top.

LUXE LINENS Regardless of style, quality is No. 1 when it comes

to linens. Elegant, couture-level textiles and rustic natural materials, such as linen, cotton, mohair and wool, are dominating the market, often meshed for a unique feel. “These seemingly opposite trends can be successfully combined,” says Prince, who pairs opulent beaded linens with soft, handwashed linen or weathered velvets for a chic boho vibe.

And the fabric making the biggest statement today? It's velvet—particularly French velvet, according to Lopell. “French velvet is off the charts, as it is luxurious in its feel, plush in a textural way, and adds a level of regality, especially in a natural garden setting,” she says. “There may be no greater way to elevate a scene than by adding this fabric to your table design—and it now comes in every color under the sun.”

Fish concurs: “High-end textiles provide the perfect background to every element on the table,” she notes. For a lush, summery, garden look, Fish suggests table linens embroidered with delicate leaves or



hand-painted with a floral design and set with vibrant colored tableware and rich floral centerpieces. “It’s all about texture and color,” she says.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT Blending styles, finishes and textures carries through with tableware. “The dinnerware, glassware and flatware designs are just as important as the floral arrangements, complementing the design, theme and story of the event,” says Will Holditch, vice president of sales for Ashburn, Va.-based Rental Resource Partners. “Making an impact through these utilitarian pieces benefits the price-conscious customer, who may not have the budget for extravagant floral arrangements. Fashion glass, readily available to rent, can double as a candleholder or vase, or simply become a statement piece as a water glass.”

Prince agrees. “Mixing colorful glassware into the tabletop design makes it more than just utilitarian; it becomes an integral part of the tablescape,” he says.

Lopell adds, “When choosing a simple place setting or color palette, adding a pop of color in the glassware will make an impact. Even choosing multiple colors and styles of glassware as your key feature will take it to the next level, with these same colors woven throughout the event decor.”

By the same token, intentionally placed, boldly patterned plates can make a big statement—though moderation is key. “Prominently feature only one in the collection—either the dinner plate, salad plate or charger,” Lopell advises. Prince likes statement plates and serving ware made from alternative materials, such as stone or wood.

Another featured player is flatware, which now comes in a multitude of colors, materials and finishes. “Classic silverware has taken a back seat to new designs in flatware, making it a featured design player and not just an accent,” Lopell says. Matte black, burnished copper, gunmetal, rose gold, vintage brass and even iridescent looks are among the myriad finish options available.

GETTING CENTERED Not surprisingly, less structure, more free-form designs, and high-quality materials define the look of centerpieces today. “Centerpiece styles are more whimsically arranged, going for loose rather than structured designs,” Lopell asserts. “This is the year of creating free-flowing, organic-style arrangements, pulling in more unusual earthy elements like pampas



Living color: Tabletops from Someone’s in the Kitchen glow with vibrant color (above). Photos courtesy Someone’s in the Kitchen.

A PERFECT SUMMER PALETTE

Pantone’s Color of the Year is never lost on event designers and rental houses. In fact, it very much sets the tone for event design throughout the year. Incidentally, you couldn’t find a more defining hue for summer tables than this year’s color—Living Coral. Here’s how event designers are using it:

“Coral with teal, neutrals and metallics!”
— *Joey Berman, Kehoe Designs*

“Every year when the Pantone color is announced, clients jump into it, and we jump into designing their event. Bold primary colors like coral define fun.”
— *Cheryl Fish, Someone’s in the Kitchen*

“Neutrals for the base—granite brown, moss green, swan white, champagne and toffee. Then add playful hues for pops of vibrancy: lively, spirited colors such as orange-red, deep red and Living Coral to blue and golden yellow.”
— *Cynthia Lopell, CL22 Productions*



Time to shine: Colored glassware from Rental Resource Partners (upper left) makes a statement, while gleaming candleholders add drama in a design from Kehoe Designs (lower left; photo courtesy Kehoe Designs).



grass, eucalyptus and ferns.” One look she especially loves is the all-plant table runner. “Think flowers, vines and grasses growing out of the table and dripping down the ends of long tables,” she says.

At Kehoe Designs, Berman finds that less is more when it comes to floral. A recent Kehoe centerpiece design incorporated exotic greenery with king protea and coral paper flowers for an unorthodox pop of color.

For Fish, colorful clusters of floral combining fresh herbs, fruits and foliage are a natural for outdoor summer and farm-to-table events, as are terrariums and succulent arrangements. However, monochromatic bunches of blossoms in clear acrylic vases remain a classic contemporary choice. ●

RESOURCES

CL22 PRODUCTIONS
www.cl22productions.com

KEHOE DESIGNS
kehoedesigns.com

RENTAL RESOURCE PARTNERS
www.rrptableware.com

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RENTAL ESSENTIALS



Photo by Porcorex / iStock / Getty Images Plus

Going Up: Rental Industry Ready to Raise Rates

Yes, the economy is strong, but uncertainty about what's ahead and rising costs are putting pressure on profits. By Lisa Hurley

EVENT RENTAL IS poised to raise rates this year. A strong economy and rising costs make the move a smart one, rental operators tell *Special Events*. Our “2019 Rental Industry Forecast” shows that 32 percent of operators plan to boost rates in 2019. And as one big California operator says, “Everyone else should, too!”

Tough competition has long pressured rental operators to keep rates low; operators grouse that clients will say that inventory is already “just sitting” in the warehouse. But today’s strong economy is the perfect time to make the change. “The overall economy could not be better for the industry,” says Dan Hooks, CERP, president of Charlotte, N.C.-based rental group

Party Reflections. “So if you are not adapting to be profitable now, you will certainly be in worse shape and out of position if and when the economy turns again.”

The average rate increase planned for 2019 is 5.25 percent, respondents tell *Special Events*. However, this figure varies widely, from a low of 2 percent to as much as 15 percent. Several operators note they will boost rates selectively, targeting high-cost items in particular. At AV Party Rentals of Newhall, Calif., labor-intensive items such as tenting, flooring and staging will go up the most, says president Rusty Parr.

Twenty percent say they will raise delivery rates this year, largely due to more complex, customized

orders and the rising cost of fuel. “Locally we have increased them by 20 percent to account for the vast fluctuation in gas prices,” notes Dave Reedy, owner and project engineer of Forest Hill, Md.-based Party Palace Rentals. “As we deliver to customers further away, we are modestly increasing the rate or keeping the rate the same.”

LABOR HEADACHES

The booming economy means confident clients are ready to host events. But the flip side: Low unemployment makes finding qualified workers a nightmare. “Orlando’s unemployment rate this month is 2.5 percent,” notes Ann Taylor, head of A Chair Affair in Orlando, Fla. “I also attribute the split shifts we

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Photo by Porcorex / iStock / Getty Images Plus

work to the problem; it's hard to find people willing to work in the morning, go home in the afternoon, and return that evening to work until the early a.m. hours. At times we resort to temporary labor staffing, which drives up our expenses."

Several operators bemoan the sagging work ethic of younger employees. "Even with offering higher wages, we find the mind-set among younger people very different because of today's technology," Reedy says. "We understand the use of today's products such as cell phones, but teaching the do's and don'ts of proper etiquette during work hours is a challenge. It seems as if they know we need them during the busy season, so we somewhat give in."

Although labor is listed as the No. 1 driver of higher operating costs, many rental pros also point to insurance as a pressure on profits, with Taylor saying auto insurance rates "have gone through the roof."

WHAT'S NEXT? A big factor roiling the rental industry in 2019—uncertainty.

The problem is pronounced for British rental company Thorns thanks to Brexit. At press time, the business world is wondering

whether the United Kingdom will exit the European Union with a plan of action on Oct. 31—the "soft" Brexit—or will simply crash out—the "hard" Brexit. Pessimists fear the result will be a sudden jump in the cost of imported goods, depressing consumer spending across the country.

Politics is clouding the outlook in some U.S. states, too. The state of Georgia just approved tough restrictions on women's access to abortion. "This is now causing a huge uproar amongst the thriving film community, which has decided to stop bringing new productions to our state," one operator says. "Our movie productions use tents for dressing rooms, hair and makeup tents, extras, catering and much more. About 40 percent of our annual revenue comes from this sector."

Probably the biggest wild card in the 2019 rental outlook is the prospect of tariffs. In June, tableware company Wittur & Co. advised customers to buy immediately from in-stock inventory "and avoid the 25-percent tariff price increase."

Robin S. Denny, CERP, CPCE, director of sales for CORT Party Rentals in Everett, Wash., sees

rough waters ahead. "The looming tariff and trade wars between the U.S. and foreign markets will have a dramatic impact on the cost of rental items over the next few years," she explains. "These increases in the cost of doing business will require an adjustment in the rental rates, which will have a trickle-down effect for our clients." ●

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THE LAST WORD



Leading Man

Lenny Talarico started out as a performer, but now is a leader moving the event industry forward. By Lisa Hurley

MY STRENGTHS: “Having come to this industry from a performance background has been a huge asset. Performing prepares you to be alert. As a professor of mine once explained, ‘Acting is reacting.’ Event professionals are constantly reacting. One’s proficiency and ability to do so are what count in those moments of the unexpected.”

I WISH I'D LEARNED SOONER: ... “To let go of expectations. There are things I do not have control over—as much as I may want to. However, this only sets you up for disappointments and stress. Understanding that things go wrong and learning to release can be difficult for many Type A personalities in this industry; however, I’ve gotten better at letting things go. That doesn’t mean I’m lowering my standards; it just means accepting that which I have no control over and managing the outcomes as best I can.”

INFLUENCER: “I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention my father’s support and the influence he had on my life. While he never lived to witness my event career, the lessons he instilled in me, such as conducting oneself with professionalism and showing respect and gratitude, remain with me today. I believe they are the cornerstones that lead to success.”

Great special events always have a bit of drama, and it’s that extra dramatic skill that Lenny Talarico, CPCE, CHE, has brought to his event career.

After studying musical theater at Hofstra University in New York, Talarico headed to Manhattan to “pursue life on the wicked stage,” he says. When overnight success failed to show up as planned, he supported his 20-year performing career with jobs ranging from answering phones for entertainment agencies to bartending to retail jobs creating “in-store” experiences for cosmetics and fragrance companies. “So in some ways, I’ve been in a form of events all along,” he says.

He first connected with big hotelier MGM in Las Vegas as a performer in 1991. “You have reached the pinnacle of show business when you are tap-dancing outdoors on concrete in 112-degree weather,” he jokes. He moved into special projects and slowly began the transition from performance to events. Stints at other hotels, a DMC and a design firm brought him back to MGM, where he rose to executive director of events for MGM Resorts Event Productions. Today, he serves as an independent event producer and instructor at the International School of Hospitality in Las Vegas, leading the event design and production curriculum for the next generation of the industry’s professionals.

His career in events has seen many changes in the industry, one of the biggest being the emerging role of technology. “Without a doubt, technology has helped make us better,” he says. “The development of software specific to our

industry has been a game-changer. Gone are the days of the ‘cocktail napkin’ setup diagram.”

But the efficiency of technology has brought its own new challenge: tight lead times. “I know it sounds odd; however, with the growth of events being the No. 1 vehicle for live marketing, there has been an explosion of need for event professionals,” he explains. “That has robbed all of us of time. We exist in an instantaneous society. Customers want what they want when they want it. When professionals are not engaged 24/7, it can amount to lost opportunities, so the vicious cycle of nonstop production can at times be crushing. While easy to say and hard to do, sometimes passing on certain projects and choosing a slower pace and sanity or establishing creative recharge time is a better long-term strategy.”

To cope, Talarico quotes fellow event pro Diane Butner’s motto: LAMSTAIH—Look at More Stuff, Think About It Harder. “What’s happening around us in other industries and in society is relevant and serves as the source for inspiration,” he says.

Next year, Talarico will serve as an ambassador for The Special Event, which runs March 9-12 in Las Vegas. “These are a city and an industry, each of which has played such a defining role in my life and career,” he says. “Being asked to serve as a TSE 2020 ambassador is both an honor and humbling.” ●

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