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FALL 2017

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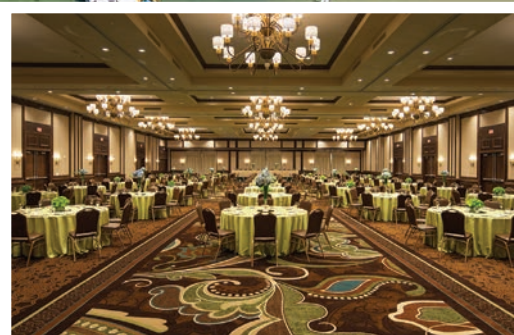
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SHARE SOME WISCONSIN FLAVOR THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



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OSHKOSH AND RACINE

ON THE COVER: LODGE KOHLER, GREEN BAY ©KOHLEH CO.





## EDITOR'S LETTER

We are excited to bring you the fall issue of *Wisconsin Meetings*. Our writers have been busy exploring some new venues that have recently opened in our beloved state, as well as exploring destination cities like La Crosse that are highlighted in this issue. There are so many wonderful places in Wisconsin to host your next

meeting or conference that we've begun working on a new tool that will help you explore these facilities, as well as find service providers and places for group outings and fun activities. We will be launching this new, free tool in January. So stay tuned for more information on this in the next issue!

This time of year marks our annual reader survey—the Best of Wisconsin Meetings. Each year for more than a decade, we've asked you to weigh in on your favorite venues, most helpful partners and fun outings. Be sure to visit our website, [wisconsinmeetings.com](http://wisconsinmeetings.com), to take this survey. Results will be detailed in our winter issue, coming out in January.

As we look ahead to the beginning of another year, please feel free to reach out to me and let me know what kind of information you would like to see in *Wisconsin Meetings* in 2018. We work hard to make sure we provide content relevant to you and your job and hearing from you allows us to continue to do so in the future.

Becky Peck  
Editor  
[bpeck@ntmediagroup.com](mailto:bpeck@ntmediagroup.com)



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## IN THE NEWS

### DELTA OFFERS FREE MESSAGING

Delta Air Lines began offering free mobile messaging on October 1, becoming the first U.S. global carrier to do so. This new, complimentary capability will enable customers to stay fully connected and exchange real time messages via iMessage, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. The enhancement is part of Delta's multi-billion dollar investment in the customer experience.

### ELCA RETURNS TO MILWAUKEE

Milwaukee will host the triennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) at the Wisconsin Center in August 2019. Last hosted in Milwaukee in 2003, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly is expected to draw upwards of 2,000 attendees. VISIT Milwaukee estimates the economic impact of the event at \$4.76 million.

### OSHKOSH NAMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Amy Albright has joined the Oshkosh Convention and Visitors Bureau as the new executive director. "I am excited to have Amy lead the Oshkosh CVB and continue to grow tourism in Oshkosh and Winnebago County," says Dan Schetter, Oshkosh CVB board chairman. "Her passion and involvement in the Oshkosh community and past tenure at the Oshkosh YMCA has shown she is a proven, loyal and committed leader who will bring a wealth of experience in branding, marketing, communications and community relations."

Albright was previously with the Oshkosh YMCA, holding a variety of positions over her 20-year career with the organization.

### MADISON LIKELY TO INCREASE HOTEL TAX

The Madison City Council is considering increasing the city's hotel tax rate. Currently at 9 percent, the proposal would increase the rate to 10 percent and is expected to generate \$1.8 million. Most of that revenue would be directed to the Greater Madison Convention and Visitors Bureau to help alleviate a shortfall in the organization's budget.

### BROWN COUNTY CLOSER TO NEW EXPO CENTER

The Brown County Board has approved funding to build a new exposition center. The \$93 million facility will be funded by a combination of increased room tax, a half-percent sales tax and \$8 million in naming rights. The new facility will replace the almost-60-year-old Veterans Memorial Arena and will be located across from Lambeau Field.



### SVITAK TAKES HELM AT VISIT LAKE GENEVA

Ed Svitak has been named president and CEO of VISIT Lake Geneva. Svitak brings more than 30 years of experience directing sales and marketing efforts at hotels and destinations in Illinois, California and Wisconsin, including Grand Geneva Resort & Spa. "I'm looking forward to returning to the Lake Geneva area to take the helm of such a prestigious organization and continue the VISIT Lake Geneva momentum of my predecessors," says Svitak.

### NEW LA CROSSE HOTEL OPENS

The new 67-room Gundersen Hotel & Suites opened August 15 on La Crosse's south side. The property's name is part of a licensing agreement with Gundersen Health Systems, which is located adjacent to the property. The hotel is open to anyone and offers several small meeting spaces, including a board room for up to 12 and another space for up to 25. The hotel is owned by Select La Crosse, LLC, and is operated by Premier Hotel Properties, which also operates the Holiday Inn Express in Onalaska.

### MPI FOUNDATION NAMES NEW LEADER

Christine Roberts has been named executive director of the Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Foundation. Roberts has 25 years of experience in the hospitality, meetings and event industries, is a current MPI member and previously was president of the MPI South Florida chapter. [WM](#)





## INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

# TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

## REINVENTING THE MEETING PLANNING INDUSTRY

BY CLAUDIA CABRERA

As we know, the event and meeting industry is constantly changing. There are always new trends and exciting concepts that meeting planners can incorporate into their daily lives. We have seen a huge increase in the use of social media platforms in recent years, especially in regards to promoting events, engaging attendees and building excitement for conferences.

I have seen this with all of the conferences I have attended with Marriott International in recent years.

Typically the engagement for an event begins with building excitement beforehand; the planner showcases the venue where the upcoming event will take place on their Facebook and Instagram pages. They then typically feature info on the host city, and local attractions and activities attendees can enjoy. This can be followed by more information on the event, including the theme.

Incorporate lots of photos into your social media communications. As we all say, “pictures speak louder than words,” so in order to successfully promote an event or conference, visuals can become your best friend!

In addition to social media, event apps offer planners the ability to engage with attendees during the event. They can include the event agenda, live feeds and alerts, and communication with other event attendees.

I recently attended Meeting Professional International’s World Education Congress (WEC) at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. After registering and months before the event, I was instructed to download the WEC app. I found it extremely informational, providing a detailed agenda, live broadcasts of the sessions, plus recaps as well—especially helpful when I wasn’t able to make it to a session I was interested in.

Social media and technology such as apps permeate each aspect of event planning and execution, including event sponsorship. No longer are sponsors happy with their logo appearing on an event program or a banner hanging from the ceiling. You need to incorporate technology into the sponsorship offerings you provide. This can include advertising on apps, digital broadcasts, social media and more.

When I attended an event for the Global Business Travel Association in Boston this summer, I noticed there were very few banners floating around the conference floor. About 80 percent of the conference signage was digital—from LED sign stands, located all over the conference floor, to rotating digital billboards showcasing the various conference sponsors.

E-mails and having a conference website are also two major tools for planners to market their event as well as connecting directly with the attendees. We all get those e-mails when we first register and get at least one or two a week before the event. This form of communication is created to give the attendee the right information and guidance before the big day. Not to mention, it also helps build the excitement of attending an event by getting previews of what the conference is going to be like or what major speaker will be presenting.

This form of communication is also intended to give sponsors some extra exposure by adding their logos on the weekly e-mail blasts as well as strategically placing them throughout the event website.

These are just a few of the many examples that I have personally experienced, in how technology and the digital world have changed the way planners organize and execute meetings and events these days.

I know this industry will keep changing each year and I’m thrilled to see what is in store for us in the coming years and how technology will change the way attendees experience an event. **WM**



Claudia Cabrera is the current MPI Wisconsin Chapter president and the corporate sales manager for the Marriott Madison West Hotel. She has been in the hospitality industry for over 10 years and has served on the MPI-Wisconsin Board of Directors for five years.





## TECHNOLOGY

# BEFORE THE APP

## 5 CONSIDERATIONS TO ADDRESS BEFORE COMMITTING TO AN EVENT APP

BY SIDDHARTH JHUNJHUNWALA

Mobile apps are one of the fastest growing sectors of event technology. Providing organizers, attendees and sponsors with a powerful tool comprised of valuable features that can improve event management, deliver information, encourage participation, boost engagement, gather data and analytics, and smoothen networking among attendees and sponsors, apps have become somewhat indispensable for enhancing attendee experiences, especially where hybrid events are concerned.

And now these apps are expected to become more efficient in order to meet user expectation. According to Corbin Ball & Co., there are several meetings technology trends that event professionals will be on the lookout for.

These include social media channels focusing on video and live streaming from the event, data analytics improving events and enhancing attendee experience, software integration tools becoming integral parts of comprehensive event planning software solutions, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) becoming important parts of events and much more.

Event and meeting planners have already taken note that these trends will positively impact the meeting app arena too. In case you are one of the many corporate industry professionals poised for significant app adoption over the next few years, here is a checklist you can go over before you invest in an event app.

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A recent poll by Eventsforce found that 80 percent of event planners found apps a great investment for promoting engagement around their events and will continue to use them.

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### 1. ENGAGEMENT

One of the main purposes of an event is to encourage networking and increase business relationships. When you are investing in an app, you must make sure that you have the right solution to connect people with each other. The questions you must ask are:

- Is your app efficient enough to reach your audience, no matter what device they are using – mobile, tablet and desktop? Can it ensure that nobody is getting left out of the conversation?
- Can potential attendees access speaker profiles and sign up for sessions at least a month prior to the event? Can they book meetings and start interacting so that they are fully invested in the event and likely have their schedules full even before it starts?
- You have invested so much in your event; it would not be right to let the buzz die down once it's over. Do you have a solution that enables your attendees to interact even after the event is over?
- Is social media integrated into the app so that participants are aware who they already know at the event? In case, you want only filtered content to be uploaded on social media platforms, have you arranged for an in-app social wall where real time conversations will be possible?

### 2. EASE OF USE

Events are complex in themselves. So, you need to make sure that your app is made as easily usable as possible. The questions you must ask include:

- Does the app allow multi-day, multi-event and unconference event formats?
- Does your app allow you to make quick changes to agenda, tradeshow or other critical details and send that notification to all attendees instantly?
- Does the app send welcome and thank you messages and reminders to users?



- Does the app have Google Maps integrated? Does it provide directions to attendees, and does it help them plan ahead for appropriate transportation?
- Does the app include a floor plan to help attendees navigate the venue? Does it let attendees know where the expo halls, convention centers or at least the restrooms are?
- Does your app have a chatbot of its own that can function as a user's assistant before, throughout and after the event? Can the chatbot make it easier for the user to access relevant information, finalize schedule and participate in various sessions during the event?
- Does the in-app chatbot help to improve audience response on polling, Q&A and feedback? Can it provide the user with a list of people he/she can connect with using attendee matchmaking?

### 3. DATA

Post event analytics are a thing of the past. Question to ask include:

- Are you constantly getting clear insights on the participation rate at every session? Do you know which sessions, speakers, sponsors and exhibitors are most popular among attendees?
- Is your app efficient enough to gather data that can help you take action on participant behavior—for example to improve attendance or to send more traffic to an exhibitor or sponsor?
- Does the data help you promote future events to potential sponsors and attendees?

### 4. REVENUE

Business owners are tired of the traditional mold of inventory. It is time to offer exhibitors and sponsors something new. Re-evaluating and enhancing exhibitor and sponsor packages can increase their success, which in turn, can improve overall event revenue. Questions to consider:

- The app provides a comprehensive online experience to users. Can each element of the online experience be promoted? Can everything from mobile app to the agenda, from community home page to push notifications be sponsored?

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Sandy Bishop, Nicolet College

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Sheryl, audience member, YWCA

- Can the app send branded email content once attendees confirmed the meeting?
- Does your app allow exhibitors and sponsors to retrieve leads?
- Can the features of the app be customized based on sponsorship level?
- Can the app continue to fetch more value after the day of the event with all-year virtual exposure?

## 5. BRANDING

Yes, you have promoted your event on Facebook, LinkedIn and other platforms. However, are you sure that your brand is getting undivided attention? Your brand matters and it is important to leverage the app for event branding. Consider the following:

- Can you customize the look and feel of your app?
- Have your colors been used across your website, the app and promotion channels to achieve uniformity?
- Has your logo been used properly across the app?
- Can you integrate your app into your overall conference web presence?

Before you decide to invest in an app, it's time to look at the design and features of other successful mobile apps for events. Take note of what features have worked for them and what haven't yielded satisfactory results. Your app is a window to the event that you have so carefully organized.

It will give your targeted audience the first impression of your event. It is only natural that you would want to make sure that it's the best it can be. Keeping the above points in mind can ensure that you have a robust app for your event. [www](http://www.event2mobile.com)

---

Siddharth 'Sid' Jhunjhunwala, CEO of event2mobile is an entrepreneur in the software and information technology industry for more than 20 years. Event2mobile is an industry leader in enterprise events, conference and training engagement. Read more at [blog.event2mobile.com](http://blog.event2mobile.com)



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## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

# INSIGHT

## ANATOMY OF AN AHA MOMENT

BY MOLLY ROSE TEUKE

*A moment's insight is sometimes worth a life's experience.* — Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

How are you at coming up with a good idea? You know, that flash of awareness that solves a problem or answers a question that's been nagging at you. It's often a connection that comes to you out of the blue. Wouldn't it be handy to reliably have those aha moments when we need them?

Another word for an aha moment is insight—a bright idea or a solution from our subconscious that pops into our awareness in a heartbeat. It's what happens when we make new connections across existing knowledge in our brains.

### MENTAL MAPPING

We used to believe our brains were done changing by the time we reached adulthood. We now know that we grow new brain cells every moment of every day throughout our lives. And those brain cells—our neurons—are organized more like points on a map than like cogs in a machine. We create new brain maps every time we try to solve a problem.

In "A User's Guide to the Brain," Dr. John Ratey writes, "The brain is not a neatly organized system...it's often compared to an overgrown jungle of 100 billion nerve cells, or neurons...which intertwine to form an interconnected tangle with 100 trillion constantly changing connections." No wonder we need personal brain maps to find our way around.

All those neurons and tangles make up our mental databanks, and we can think of them in two ways. First, there's the databank that's readily accessible to our prefrontal cortex (where we do that thing we call thinking). Then there's the rest of the data in our brain, the data we can't always access easily. If you imagine the readily accessible data as a park, you would need all the rain forests on earth to represent the rest of the data we carry around upstairs. Most of us have well-traveled roads in our brains to navigate the park. Maps of our mental rain forest, if they exist at all, are mostly made up of overgrown logging roads.

Much of the time when we try to solve a problem, we're drawing on data that's in the park, but sometimes we have to reach into that vast store of knowledge that's contained in the jungle. In order to have an insight, we need to forge new pathways to get to it.

### WHAT'S THE POINT?

Insight is one way we solve problems, especially problems that we can't reason out in a logical fashion. Our mental maps reflect all the different routes information travels in our brains—they represent all the connections from one data point to another. An example of a well-traveled road is the route we use to access all the information we need to drive a car. The route we would take to assemble a complicated tool that we haven't used in awhile would be more like an overgrown dirt road—and sometimes there just isn't an existing route.

That's where insight comes in. An insight—thinking about something in a new way—is what happens when we connect dots that hadn't been connected before, or when we reconnect old dots. It's what happens when we essentially alter our brain maps by creating new maps with new pathways.

Sometimes we need insight just to get out of a mental rut.

Einstein famously said: "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." In other words, we have to go beyond our existing maps. We have to forge new mental pathways through the rain forest in our heads.

### WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

Understanding the conditions that make insight possible makes it easier to have those aha moments when you need them. Where are you and what are you doing when you get your best ideas? I thought so...in the shower, when you're exercising, maybe when you're driving or when you're just waking up. These situations all reflect conditions that make insight possible.

The first condition is a quiet, calm mind. When we have an insight, we're often drawing on knowledge or experience so deep in the jungle that we didn't even know it was there. Imagine a group of school kids. When you pose a problem, there are plenty of

kids in the front waving their hands and shouting, "I know, I know!" But chances are pretty good they're going to give you the same old answers they always give you. Then you've got the kid at the back who's very tentative, barely raises a hand, and yet might have exactly the right answer. You need to get the loud kids to pipe down so you can hear the quiet one. We need to quiet the conscious part of our brain enough that we can hear those quiet signals when they try to get through to us from deep in the forest.

The second condition is a slightly positive frame of mind, because when we're feeling good, we tend to be more curious, interested and alert—and more likely to think creatively. This is related to another key operating fact about the brain. Everything our brains do, every decision they make, starts with this question: Is this a threat or a reward?

When our brain is in threat mode, our field of vision narrows, and we literally see less. We're also less open to new ideas. Even a very mild threat state can hinder our problem-solving creativity.

Third, we need to filter out distractions. We might close our eyes, or look up and away for a moment, or turn down the sound on the radio. Anything to tune out whatever's going on around us.

The fourth condition is taking your mind off the problem. You know how it is when you try to remember the name of someone you saw in a break-out session...try as you might, you cannot come up with it. But put it out of your mind, and what happens? You're driving home, and poof!, it just pops into your head.

Thinking harder is often not a very good way to come up with a solution. You have to let go of the problem or your brain gets in a rut and you keep thinking the same old thoughts. You have to let go of the wrong answer to let the right answer come into your conscious awareness.

Once you let go of wrestling with the problem, you allow your mind to range a little further afield. The answer is there, it's just not in a neatly labeled file drawer in your brain. It's somewhere out there in that jungle, and sometimes, we just have to let the answer find us, instead of the other way around. Creating a new mental map makes that possible.

These insights about insight suggest an answer to "How can I have more bright ideas?"

First define the problem with clarity. Be crystal clear on the question you're trying to answer. Then get your conscious brain out of the way—stop thinking so hard about it. Go for a walk, read a book or have lunch with a friend. Let your subconscious do the heavy lifting while you're doing something that's more fun. **WM**



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Molly Rose Teuke isn't a neuroscientist, but she plays one in her dreams. She speaks frequently on *How to Get Your Brain on Your Side®*. She also coaches clients globally, and delivers brain-based leadership training for the NeuroLeadership Institute, a world leader in creating corporate coaching cultures. You can reach her at [mollyrose@mollyrosec coaching.com](mailto:mollyrose@mollyrosec coaching.com).





## FOOD & BEVERAGE

THE PFISTER HOTEL

# GET CREATIVE WITH BREAKS

## SEASONS OFFER A GREAT THEME FOR YOUR TEAM

BY BRIAN FRAKES

**M**aking a meeting break extraordinary requires attention to detail and a passion for creativity. It also helps if you have easy access to exceptional local ingredients, bakeries and culinary artisans. Meeting attendees can be transported to an “in-house” doughnut shop using sweet treats from a local bakery or can take a fall sensory journey with a display of Wisconsin’s best—apples. Any of these ideas can help transform a meeting into a memorable experience.

Throughout the Midwest, but especially in Wisconsin, fall comes in the shape of an apple. Families pick apples, friends go on hay rides through apple orchards, teeth inevitably get stuck in chewy caramel apples and folks can warm their fingers holding a warm mug of apple cider. By tapping into these memorable experiences, culinary teams can create a truly unique and remarkable meeting break.

At The Pfister Hotel, the 25-person culinary team often builds an apple orchard indoors for meetings in September or October. To capture the essence of fall, the hotel partners with a local apple orchard that has more than 120 varieties of heirloom apples. The culinary team creatively customizes an engaging and delicious food and beverage meeting break. Depending on the year and the meeting, the break may highlight different elements of the apple from pies to ciders.

In the past, meeting attendees have enjoyed mini apple pies, warm apple cider, green apple macaroons, apple doughnuts and a customizable caramel dipping station,

where they could select different toppings for their apples, such as sprinkles, nuts, candy bars, drizzled chocolate and more. To create a full fall orchard experience, the team also decorated the table with hand-written signs, decorative apple arrangements in milk crates and pumpkins.

For The Pfister team, the break goes beyond bringing in the best fresh local ingredients, guests must walk away wowed. That was the goal for one apple orchard break. In addition to the food and beverages, guests were able to experience a dash of nostalgia and fun before going back to their meeting.

As a culinary team, the apple orchard themed break is a great example of how you can treat and wow meeting attendees. The break becomes extraordinary when meeting guests notice the hand-written signs, perfectly placed arrangements and personalized service, along with the fun, creative and good-tasting food.

Here are a few key takeaways we’ve learned building an apple orchard-themed meeting break:

- 1. Don’t stray away from color.** All of the senses, including sight are necessary. As professional chefs, culinary teams know that presentation is key. During the apple orchard meeting break, The Pfister team accentuated the food with bright, vibrant accent pieces. The use of color draws in attendees to the main food event. One could even say, a colorful F&B break offers a break for the eyes from the meeting presentations, too.
- 2. Customization is king.** Customization is a win-win for the culinary team and meeting attendees. They walk away with a unique, custom experience to share with friends and family, and customization allows the culinary team to be even more creative. By customizing each year’s fall apple orchard breaks, our culinary team is challenged to develop one-of-a-kind recipes and displays.
- 3. You don’t need to go far for great ingredients.** By working with a local grower, the hotel can showcase and support the best of the region. And, meeting attendees can experience a glimpse, or a taste in this case, of what southeast Wisconsin has to offer.
- 4. Make it unexpected.** Playing off of customization, meeting attendees also want to be wowed. Take the break beyond their expectations. Every detail counts. During the apple orchard break, our team offered a lot of variety, presented the dishes with a lot of color and brought in local ingredients with a compelling story. Meeting attendees loved the experience.

This fall, I encourage you to think apples for your food and beverage break. [www.thepfisterhotel.com](http://www.thepfisterhotel.com)



Brian Frakes is executive chef for The Pfister Hotel ([thepfisterhotel.com](http://thepfisterhotel.com)), which is owned and managed by Marcus Hotels & Resorts, a leading hotel management company that owns and/or manages 17 hotels, resorts and other properties in the U.S.





By Betty W. Stark

# Shiny & New

AC HOTEL MADISON

## THE LATEST HOTEL AND VENUE OFFERINGS PROVIDE CHIC, SOPHISTICATED OPTIONS FOR PLANNERS

In a nod to Wisconsin's considerable attributes, major hospitality groups have launched new properties this year that take cutting edge to a new level. The results are exhilarating, offering meeting planners and guests space concepts that are fresh and innovative, décor that dazzles, and dramatic venues with plenty of wow!

### AC HOTEL MADISON

Perched at the top of the burgeoning East Washington Avenue Corridor, a scant block off Madison's Capitol Square, the recently-opened AC Hotel—the first in Wisconsin—has quickly become the new hot place for business travelers and corporate gatherings.

After launching the brand in Europe, hotelier Antonio Catalan of Madrid, Spain partnered with Marriott to roll out the concept in the

U.S. and beyond. They describe their 165-room Madison offering as “Midwest charm with European soul.”

The subtle sophisticated décor, including a variety of attractive textured surfaces and curated art, extends throughout the property. Guests drawn to the ninth and tenth floor dining/lounge, socializing and meeting spaces are rewarded with floor to ceiling knock-your-socks-off views of the Capitol and lakes Mendota and Monona. Fireplaces, cozy areas for smaller gatherings, and an outside balcony with seating and spectacular views offer several options for surveying downtown Madison from a lofty perch.

At 924 square feet, the meeting room adapts to groups from 24 (U-shape) to 64 (theater). Customizable lighting, state-of-the-art TVs and the latest AV technology offer maximum flexibility. An on-site team

is available for personalized meeting consultation and services, including a unique complimentary Reservation Link for guests to reserve rooms.

In addition to the meeting room, King Executive Corner Suites adapt for board-style meetings for up to 10 and include a kitchenette for breaks and light lunches. Local favorite small-plates restaurant Eno Vino offers a creative menu in the 10th floor dining room as well as custom menu selections for meeting breaks and full group dinners. [marriott.com](http://marriott.com)

### WESTIN MILWAUKEE DOWNTOWN

As further evidence that major hotel groups like what they see in Wisconsin, Westin Hotels and Resorts Worldwide debuted The Westin Milwaukee in June. It's Wisconsin's first Westin hotel.



Located in the heart of downtown, a short walk from Lake Michigan, the hotel is close to the business district and about seven miles away from Milwaukee's Mitchell International Airport. It's a block away from the Historic Third Ward neighborhood—think dining, shopping, night life—and several other Milwaukee landmarks.

The hotel's contemporary exterior showcases metal, granite and terracotta. Colors found in nature create a serene light-washed interior. Expansive windows dominate the urban-style lobby, restaurant, guest rooms and meeting rooms, taking full advantage of lake and city skyline views.

Meeting and event space totaling 9,654 square feet is spacious and diverse, offering options for small board meetings to grand events. All meeting and event rooms are state of the art, anchored by a 4,800-square-foot Grand Ballroom with LED lighting that gives planners options to customize with color temperature and selection. Touch panels control lighting and sound, digital signage and contemporary fixtures.

The Stella Van Buren "Steakhouse with an Italian flair" offers a private dividable room that seats 32, as well as semi-private areas for events up to 50 in elegantly appointed sections. The Stella Van Buren lounge with a soaring back bar is a popular gathering place. In-house staff assists with meeting menu planning.

The Westin brand is known globally for its emphasis on wellness furnishings and services including the Heavenly Bed and Heavenly Bath, as well as fresh and healthy creations from the SuperFoodsRx menu. Fitness offerings include lakefront runs and a fitness gear lending program that provides shoes, shorts and T-shirts for those who choose to pack light. [westinmilwaukee.com](http://westinmilwaukee.com)

## FOX CITIES EXPOSITION CENTER, APPLETON

The architects and contractor for the dramatic glass and concrete Fox Cities Exposition Center on West Lawrence Street in Appleton accomplished a first in the state of Wisconsin when they sited the one-of-a-kind building deep into a hillside at Jones Park.

The six-acre city park near downtown offers amenities for almost every season, including walking and biking trails, basketball, picnic areas, ice skating and a pavilion popular



WESTIN MILWAUKEE DOWNTOWN ©MICHAEL KLEINBERG



WESTIN MILWAUKEE DOWNTOWN ©MICHAEL KLEINBERG



FOX CITIES EXPOSITION CENTER

for seasonal music events. It will serve as a natural outdoor extension to the expo center.

While the hillside location is notable in part because contractors had to remove 76,000 cubic yards of dirt and pour nearly 9,000 cubic feet of concrete, the real buzz is the building itself.

An imposing multi-tiered structure wrapped in glass, it dramatically integrates with the park and its facilities from wide tiered concrete stairways. This unique construction allows for multiple uses including outdoor functions and respite space for event attendees seeking fresh-air breaks.

The dividable 30,000-square-foot Exhibition Center space is designed for multiple uses, for one large event or as three separate spaces. A 7,300-square-foot pre-function space adjacent to the main event space is ideal for breaks or overflow exhibits. A 17,000-square-foot outdoor plaza adds more options for receptions and other special events.

Two conference rooms at street level can be rented in conjunction with an exhibit center event. The lobby area opens on to Lawrence Street with lower levels incorporated into the Jones Park hillside. An expansive street-level civic plaza also provides additional outdoor event space.

The history of the Fox Cities area is an integral part of the center. Most notably, a unique 82-foot vertical spire incorporated into the building is lit by color-changing LED lights that can vary seasonally or for special events.

The spire represents the smokestack of the first hydroelectric power plant in the country. It began operation on the Fox River in Appleton in 1882.

The public expo center grand opening is scheduled for January 11, 2018. Groups are booked that month for an inaugural launch. Owned by the City of Appleton, the facility will be managed by and connected to the 390-room Radisson Paper Valley Hotel by an elevated walkway. Events will be booked through the hotel sales department. [fcexhibitioncenter.com](http://fcexhibitioncenter.com)

## LODGE KOHLER, GREEN BAY

Kohler hospitality has arrived in Green Bay and it's a winner.

Green Bay Packer fans, lovers of luxury spas and anyone who covets a custom-designed Kohler bathroom can rejoice at the recent opening of Lodge Kohler. This exclusive hotel is located in Green Bay's new Titletown District, an area that features a 10-acre public plaza in a parklike setting.

Located directly across the street from historic Lambeau Field, the five story, 144-room Lodge Kohler offers four-diamond amenities true to Kohler tradition.

The panoramic top-floor Taverne in the Sky restaurant and bar affords guests both inside and outside dining and socializing. Outfitted with fire pits and lounge seating, the adjacent fifth-floor Sky Terrace overlooks Lambeau Field just across the street. It's ideal for group gatherings up to 50 people.

Two private rooms within the restaurant are available for meetings, private dining or both, for up to 20 guests. Each dining room has Air Media capabilities that allow groups to wirelessly present on a flat screen TV from their laptop, tablet or any mobile device.

Located in the fifth-floor restaurant, The Tower is a semi-private environment for group dinners accommodating up to 40 people. It also works well for dinner, lunch or breakfast meetings with a screen and projector. Other configurations are possible for groups who want to buy out the space for the evening.

Outside on the main level, the Gazebo gathering area is nestled in a courtyard with the Kohler Waters Spa in the background. Surrounded by plants and greenery, it's a



semi-secluded setting away from the stadium view for receptions and other social events. There is ample room for musicians and a bar.

Lodge Kohler offers catering services for gatherings of 20 people or more. [lodgekohler.com](http://lodgekohler.com)

## NOAH'S EVENT VENUE, MADISON

From its 2007 founding in Utah, Noah's Event Venues have opened in more than 35 locations across the country. The majority have launched since 2013 (there were five then) and several more are on the drawing board.

The Madison venue opened about a year ago just off Highway 151 in the American Center, a location strategically chosen for its proximity to key business locations and area hotels.

The American Center location is contemporary and high end, with soaring ceilings and large windows that flood the rooms with light. Various function rooms, smaller to large, accommodate meetings, banquets, weddings, reunions, seminars, conferences, holiday or office parties, training sessions, breakout rooms, board meetings, birthday parties and more. An outdoor patio can also accommodate events.

Each space is an inviting backdrop that can be personalized from the wide selection of customization packages. Options can include specialty linens, ceiling décor from fabric to crystal chandeliers, colored accent lighting, multiple table and chair arrangements, table centerpieces and other custom decorations, set-up and take down, state-of-the-art AV systems, lecterns and board room arrangements. Wifi is available throughout.

The company has an open vendor catering policy (they offer a "recommended" list; prep space is available onsite). Their alcohol policy requires that all be purchased from their preferred partner. Full-time staff is onsite and inspection tours are encouraged. [noahseventvenue.com](http://noahseventvenue.com) [WM](#)



Betty W. Stark is a freelance writer based in central Wisconsin.









# — destination — LA CROSSE

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN, SCENIC RIVER, GREAT  
MEETING SPACES—THE PERFECT COMBINATION

By Melanie Radzicki McManus | Photos provided by Explore La Crosse except where noted

When MOSES comes to town, business owners and citizens cheerily don overalls and plaid shirts to show their excitement and support. That's because MOSES, aka the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service, promotes organic and sustainable farming. For the last 15 years or so, MOSES has selected La Crosse as the site of its annual conference. The city's overall-and-plaid-clad residents might be one reason why.

"People really rally behind MOSES when the group comes in," says Phillip Wanke, director of group sales at Explore La Crosse, noting farmer-themed attire is one way for locals to join in on the fun. Not surprisingly, conference attendees appreciate the city's enthusiasm. "We hear that repeatedly from MOSES and other groups—how welcome they're made to feel," he says.

Warm welcomes may be one important reason why this city of 52,000 snuggled against the Mississippi River is such an attractive place for conferences and business meetings. In 2016, La Crosse welcomed a whopping 2.3 million business and leisure visitors, an impressive feat for a modest-sized city. With five new hotels downtown and a major conference facility expansion in the works, officials expect that figure to grow.

The La Crosse area is home to 2,500 rooms and typically hosts events ranging in size from 100 to 3,000, says Wanke. Many planners elect to hold their events at either the La Crosse Center, which sits right on the Mississippi River in the heart of downtown, or the OmniCenter, a few miles north in neighboring Onalaska.

The 100,000-square-foot La Crosse Center features two halls on its main level, which contain a combined 54,000 square feet of flexible meeting space. The second floor is home to an arena, ballroom overlooking the river and up to five boardrooms. There is also



the Zielke Suite, a more intimate, carpeted space for small, warm gatherings. A major renovation and expansion of the facility that will add another 50,000 square feet is in the works. While plans aren't finalized, the expansion will consist of building out from the top floor toward the Mississippi to incorporate more sweeping river views.

Seven miles north, the 50,000-square-foot OmniCenter sports two large arenas, a conference room with flexible space, a full kitchen and a semi-enclosed outdoor picnic shelter. From October to March, the two arenas are converted into ice rinks. Other popular meeting spots around town include the Radisson La Crosse, which boasts





11,500 square feet of meeting space and is connected to the convention center; the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites (500 square feet of space), which is also connected to the La Crosse Center, but via a walkway; and the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, with 5,000 square feet of meeting space.

Those seeking a unique venue aren't out of luck, as La Crosse has several. One is the Grand Hotel Ballroom, located above the city's Pearl Ice Cream Parlor in what was once a hotel—and brothel. Today it's a 1930s-era art deco space offering a live music stage, digital projector and screen, dance floor, and the ability to set up banquet or cabaret seating. Attendees with a sweet tooth can simply pop into the ice cream parlor on the main level, although meeting planners can also elect to have an ice cream sundae bar set up in the ballroom (or a theme bar offering premium liquors).



Another funky meeting venue is the Pump House Regional Arts Center. The arts facility was created from a former municipal waterworks structure built in 1880 to house the water pump that served as the city's fire protection. It offers a variety of visual and performing arts opportunities via a theater, three art galleries, a conference room, meeting areas and a pottery studio.

Similarly, the Weber Center for the Performing Arts offers meeting space in its Lyche and Veterans Studio theatres. The 450-seat Lyche offers plush seating and excellent sound and lighting equipment. The Veterans Studio Theatre is a smaller, creative space that can accommodate up to 100. In addition, the Weber Center's two-floor lobby holds up to 350 for drink service and 150 for a seated dinner party. Best of all, the facility is right on the Mississippi, which the lobby space faces.

## AFTER-HOURS FUN

A city's dining scene is important to conference-goers, and attendees aren't disappointed when they come to La Crosse. One popular spot for locals and visitors alike is Piggy's, a fine-dining restaurant housed in the city's 1871 Pioneer Foundry building, where parts were once forged for the paddlewheel boats that docked in town. Piggy's serves fresh, flown-in seafood such as Alaskan halibut and Gulf shrimp, plus steaks and a variety of smoked entrees and pork dishes from which the restaurant got its name. The facility offers live blues and





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comedy shows, and you can meet here, too, as its upper-floor ballroom has more than 2,000 square feet of space.

The Freighthouse is another favorite. Created out of the city's 1880 freight house, the restaurant features steak, seafood and combo platters, plus a nearly-100-bottle whiskey list. Like Piggy's the Freighthouse offers meeting space; it can host groups up to 120.

Other heralded dining options are the Waterfront Restaurant and Tavern, Lovechild and Le Chateau, all located within a few blocks of each other. They're also within La Crosse's historic downtown, which consists of 110 buildings, most of which were built in the 19th century and are carefully maintained today. A tidy, walkable downtown is another big draw for groups, including the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO). WASBO holds its annual conference in one of three or four different cities around the state, La Crosse being one of them. Their most recent stop here was May 2017.

Woody Wiedenhoeft, WASBO executive director, says his conference attendees love

the fact that the La Crosse Center is within walking distance of all of the city's downtown amenities. "And the atmosphere is very excellent," he says. "The older buildings are well kept up, so it's pleasant for people to go out for a walk when the sessions are over. It's important for attendees to be able to do that when they have free time."

The downtown is also home to many specialty shops perfect for off-time browsing, such as Generous Earth Pottery, Finnott's Nut & Chocolate Shop and the three-story Antique Center of La Crosse. You can also decompress by strolling through picturesque Riverside Park or signing up for a Mississippi River cruise on a riverboat replica. And many more attractions lay a mere 15 minutes or so away.

Like Grandad Bluff, a 600-foot bluff offering sweeping views of the city and Mississippi River Valley. Or Norskedalen, a Norwegian heritage and nature site tucked into 400 acres of wooded bluffs. You can tour a Norwegian homestead and chapel here, wander along the property's miles of trails and through its arboretum, and maybe even observe a rosemaling or lefse-making demonstration.

"Between the bluffs and the river, we're very known for our outdoor activities," says Explore La Crosse's Wanke. "We'll work to help groups plan kayaking, mountain biking, hiking or foraging. Or we'll set up various river trips. The silent sports are really prevalent here."

No matter your group's interests, whether it's the outdoors, wineries or shopping, Wanke says you can count on them. "We will work with any group coming in. We will coordinate anything. We'll do spousal tours, area tours, whatever you want." That kind of attitude, meeting planners say, is priceless.

"We couldn't have been more pleased with the assistance we received," says Wiedenhoeft. Adds Jeanne Deimund, WASBO's associate executive director, "The convention and visitors bureau did a great job. Whenever you have an active bureau, it really helps." **WM**



Melanie Radzicki McManus often writes about Wisconsin from her home in Sun Prairie, Wis. In 2015, she received a Lowell Thomas Grand Award as Travel Writer of the Year, honorable mention. Lowell Thomas Awards are considered the most prestigious travel writing awards in North America.





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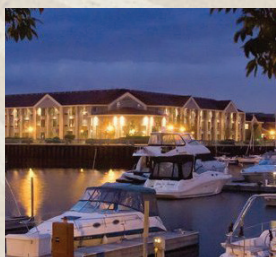


## DESTINATION showcase

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### YOUR GUIDE TO GREAT MEETING AND EVENT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE BADGER STATE

Wisconsin has the best of all worlds, from the cosmopolitan atmosphere of its big cities to the welcoming charms of its small towns. Whether you're in search of a site to host a large-scale convention or a smaller, more intimate team building meeting, Wisconsin offers a variety of affordable and conveniently located facilities to suit your organization's needs. Add to that a wealth of convention and visitor bureaus staffed with professionals eager to share the best of their communities with your group, and there's no question that Wisconsin is the ideal place for your next meeting or convention.

As a meeting planner, you know that every detail counts. Wisconsin's CVBs understand this and make every effort to ensure that none are overlooked. They aim to be your resource throughout the planning process, from assisting with RFPs, setting up walk-throughs, recommending local vendors and planning group outings, to providing the kind of number crunching that guarantees you get the deals to keep you within budget while still ensuring that your event will be memorable.

In this issue we focus on the great meeting and convention destinations of Fond Du Lac, Fox Cities, Oshkosh and Racine. The community profiles include an overview of what makes their locations, facilities, accommodations and services unique. Some area activities and entertainment options are also highlighted to give you a sense of the offerings that can make the after-meeting hours as productive and enjoyable as the actual work sessions. The profiles list some of the specifics — number of hotel rooms, largest meeting facility, nearest airport, phone numbers, websites and more — that give you an idea of whether or not these communities are the right fit for your group and, if so, includes the contact information to get you started planning your event.

When you begin searching for a site for your next meeting or convention, look no further than Wisconsin, where your options are endless and your event's success is every CVB's top priority.



# DESTINATION\_SHOWCASE

## OSHKOSH CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

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The Oshkosh CVB's outstanding sales and services team understands that every gathering has different needs. We are just as comfortable working with a small association meeting as we are with a gathering attracting more than 500,000. We pride ourselves on meeting the particular needs of each group that chooses Oshkosh.

Our convention services staff's versatility comes from working with such a variety of events, from national conventions and trade shows to business meetings and reunions. The Oshkosh CVB's experienced staff is eager and prepared to work with any event.

Oshkosh's venues accommodate a broad range of meetings and conventions. The Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel & Convention Center is the only facility of its kind on Lake Winnebago. It features 24,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting and exhibit space, 19 breakout rooms and accommodates groups up to 1,500. Hotel guests have direct access to the convention center via a skywalk.

Other unique venues include the beautiful Hilton Garden Inn with a 5,000 sq. ft. ballroom, Oshkosh's Alumni Welcome and Conference Center, which can accommodate groups of 500, and the Sunnyview Expo Center offering more than 31,000 sq. ft. of meeting and exhibit space. Have your expo in a 40,000 sq. ft. hangar surrounded by historic aircraft or gather in a yacht club on the shores of Wisconsin's largest inland lake. Oshkosh presents an amazing array of excellent options.

Oshkosh's year-round attractions include the Paine Art Center and Gardens, Oshkosh Public Museum and EAA AirVenture Museum. The Outlet Shoppes at Oshkosh is home to more than 40 brand-name stores. And, with more than 1,000 events held in Oshkosh annually, your event attendees will always find something fun to do.

When you select Oshkosh, you're choosing experience and a track record of success. Put Wisconsin's Event Experts to work for you – go to [visitoshkosh.com](http://visitoshkosh.com).



### QUICK\_INFO

#### CONTACT INFORMATION:

**Contact:** Cathy Cluff, Director of Sales  
**Phone:** 920-303-9200  
**Address:** 100 North Main Street, Suite #112 Oshkosh, WI 54901  
**E-mail:** [cathy@visitoshkosh.com](mailto:cathy@visitoshkosh.com) **Web site:** [visitoshkosh.com](http://visitoshkosh.com)

#### COMMUNITY INFORMATION:

**Population:** 67,000  
**Number of hotel rooms:** 1,000  
**Largest meeting facility:** 24,000 sq. ft.  
**Largest exhibit facility:** 40,000 sq. ft.  
**Airport:** Appleton International Airport (20 miles)

#### DISTANCE FROM:

**Madison:** 86 miles **Milwaukee:** 87 miles  
**Minneapolis:** 274 miles **Chicago:** 176 miles





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# DESTINATION\_SHOWCASE

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## QUICK\_INFO

### CONTACT INFORMATION:

**Contact:** Eileen Arnold  
**Phone:** 262-884-6407  
**Address:** 14015 Washington Ave., Sturtevant, WI 53177  
**E-mail:** eileen@realracine.com Web site: www.aboutracine.com

### COMMUNITY INFORMATION:

**Population:** 130,000  
**Number of hotel rooms:** 1,300  
**Largest room block:** 100  
**Largest meeting facility:** 10,000 sq. ft.  
**Largest exhibit facility:** 17,000 sq. ft.  
**Airport:** General Mitchell International, Milwaukee

### DISTANCE FROM:

**Madison:** 100 miles **Milwaukee:** 25 miles  
**Minneapolis:** 356 miles **Chicago:** 68 miles

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By Kristine Hansen

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Ease workplace tension and deadline pressure by winding down with the team at a destination spa, miles away from the office, as part of a wellness break or team-building activity. Hosting a corporate retreat or board meeting at a resort-style spa goes deeper than a massage in a private treatment room with aromatic oils or soaking in a hot tub. Many Wisconsin spas are connected to resorts or hotels that offer meeting space and dining areas rivaling that of any boutique hotel, with calming décor (remember, this is a spa) and activities designed to bridge the mind, body and spirit.

Set aside any notions that spa days are not work days—and that they could distract from work goals. Quite the opposite often occurs when the team returns to the office refreshed and revived. Organizing a meeting at a spa might be just what the team needs to reset and reboot.

## GRAND GENEVA RESORT & SPA

WELL Spa + Salon is tucked into a separate building, away from the Lake Geneva resort's restaurants and rooms. Yoga classes and a rock-climbing wall heighten the senses and encourage tactile movements away from the computer. But that relaxing spa-like feeling clicks into place immediately upon entering the 1,300-acre property. Formerly Hugh Hefner's Playboy Club Hotel, Grand Geneva has been a resort since 1994, folding a golf course, spa, horseback riding and (come winter) skiing onto the property. All three restaurants offer private dining areas for 16 to 40 people for a post-spa meal, such as a surf-and-turf dinner at Geneva ChopHouse or a mini-trip to Italy at Ristorante Brissago, where every dish is inspired by Italian cuisine and nearly every ingredient is imported from Italy.

## HEIDEL HOUSE RESORT & SPA

Centrally located in Green Lake, this resort is ideal for employees scattered around the state to easily meet in one location. Like Grand Geneva's spa, Evensong Spa is in a separate building across from the resort, creating even more privacy. Walking the indoor labyrinth coaxes a slower heart rate and more meditative mood, and the spa café hosts an artisan-cheese plate, scrumptious salads, and glasses of wine and Wisconsin craft beer. (Staying overnight? Serve attendees an energy-focused continental breakfast.)

Meetings can be held in nine different spaces throughout the property and—provided it's warm weather—tack on activities like a yacht cruise around Green Lake, followed by a s'mores reception, for further wellness and relaxation.





THE EDGEWATER

## THE OSTHOFF RESORT

It's hard to believe this rural, elegant property in Elkhart Lake is only an hour from Milwaukee and Green Bay. With its white exterior and lakefront setting, it feels more like an East Coast getaway than it does Wisconsin. The lake's energy is harnessed at Aspira Spa, with treatments such as the Sacred Waters Massage, using water drawn from the lake. Yoga classes, a meditation sanctuary and lunch at the cafe round out a day at the spa. In addition to 38,000 square feet of meeting space, another perk for groups are al-fresco meetings on outdoor patios. For smaller groups, the Conference Center's Villa Gottfried Room and the Villa Gottfried Parlor—with its fireplace and comfy furnishings—are great spots to hash out a new plan or initiative. Groups can also engage in a fun teambuilding exercise by taking a class at the on-site L'école de la Maison cooking school. Dinner at Lola's On the Lake spans seafood and meat entrees but also includes Aspira Spa signature dishes—like a pear salad or caramelized scallops in champagne-orange sauce—to keep the health-minded wellness aspect going throughout your event.

## SUNDARA INN & SPA

An adult angle to the family-friendly resort community of Wisconsin Dells, Sundara is a zen place surrounded by forested land. And the water features are way more relaxed than a water park (there's a heated outdoor infinity-edge pool). While suites are available for overnight booking in the same building as the spa, groups might like to host meetings in an adjacent 1,700-square-foot villa, boasting an outdoor veranda with enough room for eight and a three-sided fireplace within the interior. This can comfortably hold eight people for meetings as well as overnight stays. Meditation Trail is a great spot to decompress after meetings. Groups of up to four people at a time can receive a private yoga class. Kick off a day of business with sunrise yoga, a new offering at Sundara. Group bookings in the spa are available Monday through Thursday only, to ensure proper attention, as weekends can be busier.



HEIDEL HOUSE RESORT & SPA

## THE EDGEWATER

Convenient for government and university employees to escape their offices for a spa break, one of Madison's newest hotels hugs the Lake Mendota shoreline in downtown Madison. Lesser known about the property than its waterfront views and dining options



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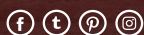


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THE PFISTER

is its spa, a destination with a yoga studio (from restorative, ultra-calming yoga to yoga dance parties), pool and steam rooms. Almost every class comes with a view of Lake Mendota. Meeting venues include Nolen Gallery and The Grand Ballroom but there are also more intimate spots for break-out sessions and discussions. A group meeting here doesn't ever have to leave the building thanks to five restaurants, including the Boathouse, with its patio curling up against the lakefront. And, of course, lake views from most rooms provide that feel of serenity even though you are steps away from the Capitol, UW campus and more.

## THE PFISTER

Even with the current hotel boom in the downtown of Wisconsin's largest city, this historic, luxury hotel has a stronghold on the most luxurious spa for miles. A quiet oasis, WELL Spa + Salon is in the lower level of the luxury hotel. Interestingly, the hotel used to house Turkish baths in the exact same space. This modern-day spa is also a nice retreat from the bustling environment outdoors, with two-room suites that can be used for a half-day affair. Among the signature treatments is a take on



THE OSTHOFF RESORT

those mud baths, with the Hammam Steam Shower + Mud Spa, using natural mineral clay imported from Morocco followed by a shower and then a steam application. The Orchid Room can be reserved for a group of up to 12 people, with the option to cater in meals (breakfast or lunch only) prepared by the hotel's culinary team. Or there are other meeting spaces within the hotel. Thankfully, there are so many amenities at The Pfister that a group can easily dine, conduct business and receive pampering—all under

one roof. A pool on the 23rd floor is open to guests only and, almost every night of the week you can enjoy live jazz in the Mason Street Grill for a chill-down dinner at the conclusion of your group's time together. **WM**



Kristine Hansen is a freelance writer based in Milwaukee.





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# VIRTUAL Promotion

Power up meeting  
attendance with  
podcasts

By Clair Urbain

Part of increasing attendance at meetings and seminars means creating some sort of buzz about the subject matter and the upcoming event itself. In the past, that meant getting play in the media, but podcasts may be one of the most effective ways to create that buzz, and in turn, interest and attendance in your meeting.

"Podcasting had its first wave of popularity in 2005 when Apple released iTunes 4.9 with native support for podcasts. Podcasts were viewed as an obscure medium confined to a small group of enthusiasts. However, over the last 10 years all that has changed, and podcasting is enjoying a widespread resurgence, particularly for businesses and brands," says Simon Dunant, founder of New Rise Digital, a digital marketing consultancy.

Traditional content marketing channels are becoming highly saturated, and whether you're trying to get your message out via social media, blogs or other forms of written

content, it can be hard to break through the noise and rise to the top, says Dunant. "Not so with podcasting where there are still lots of opportunities to own your category on iTunes and the many other podcast distribution channels."

## PODCAST POPULARITY

Edison Research recently completed some studies related to podcast listeners:

- Podcast listeners are from a more affluent demographic. That means attracting a higher-value customer with more disposable income.
- Podcast listeners are an engaged audience, staying tuned for an average of 22 minutes per episode. That is five times longer than reading a blog post.
- Podcast listeners are far more likely to follow brands on social media, which encourages social influence and content sharing.

So how can podcasting help event organizers engage their audience and market their events? Before the event, a podcast that shares pre-event experiences can build anticipation for attendees and also help people discover and engage more closely with your event.

For example, if you run an endurance event, interview health and fitness professionals on a podcast. Ideas: give tips on the best way to train for the event or offer nutrition and diet ideas. If the event is for a cause, share personal stories that help build a stronger human/emotional connection with the audience. "Music events can use podcasts to gain awareness. This is an especially interesting method because concert/event goers already use audio as their medium of choice," says Dunant.

If you're running a conference, there are huge opportunities for you to run interviews with speakers and other subject-matter experts around the topic of the conference. If it's a multi-day conference, produce a daily update that attendees—and those who couldn't attend—can download to their phone during and after the conference. "Those episodes can be used as promotional tools the following year to remind attendees of the valuable information presented, which can help encourage future event sign-ups," he says.

---

If you already  
host an event  
or conference,  
repurposing that  
work by recording  
it and spinning it  
slightly can create  
another venue  
for your meeting  
presenters to  
share their  
information.

---

## GETTING STARTED

Like getting olives out of a jar, the first attempt at podcasting is the most difficult, but there is plenty of advice available online to help you get started.

"It's very easy to get started with podcasting. Low-cost, high-quality USB condenser microphones make getting wired for recording easy. You can also get started by recording audio on a smartphone using just earbuds," Dunant says.

Apps like Ringr are making it easier than ever to record interviews with guests using just your mobile phone, and innovative services like Blab are increasing access to community-based audio and video recordings online.

"On the discovery and sharing side, tools like Clammr are springing up to integrate audio snippets and calls post directly into existing social media accounts," says Dunant. "Building a multimedia marketing experience helps potential attendees find out about your next event."

"One of my personal favorites is Blog-TalkRadio," says Lori Soard, content editor and publisher at Attendee Events. "They have free options and you can either record via your computer with a microphone, call a number and record, or upload a previously recorded file."

Soard suggests using software such as Audacity to prerecord the blog. "Audacity also allows you to edit. If you tend to stumble over your words, this editing feature can be quite useful and can allow you to come up with a polished sounding podcast," Soard says.

## REPURPOSE FOR FUTURE PROMOTION

If you already host an event or conference, repurposing that work by recording it and spinning it slightly can create another venue for your meeting presenters to share their information.

"For example, one Attendee Event client gives local talks about gardening tips," says Soard. "Since the client runs a blog and writes gardening books and articles, she already has created a built-in way for her to reach more potential clients and readers, while sharing her wealth of knowledge in a new format. Whether it is a cooking class or

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workshops at a conference, think about ways you can record workshops into podcasts and release that content to an online audience.”

Another option is to record specifically for a regularly scheduled podcast. “This allows you to go more in-depth on some topics and answer questions your regular site visitors might have. You could easily take notes from a workshop and turn it into podcast,” says Soard.

### HASHTAG IT

Another idea is to combine your podcast with a Twitter feed. Simply create a hashtag around a topic and tweet that hashtag with your audience and set a time for your Twitter chat/live podcast. When it’s time to podcast, pull up two screens, one for the podcast and the other for Twitter feeds and interact with both audiences simultaneously. “Listeners can ask you questions as you’re teaching or add their own input. You simply read off the comments on the pertinent messages. Be aware that conducting a live podcast requires good verbal communication and multi-tasking skills. Practice to get good at this,” Soard says.

### BUILD ONLINE CONTENT

Podcasts are excellent content to add to your website. “You can publish them to your blog along with notes, study questions and additional resources. You can also gather similar topics and put them on a CD to pass out to potential clients or event attendees. With a little thought, you can easily turn your workshops into podcasts and benefit from an extended audience for your events,” Soard concludes. 



Clair Urbain is a freelance writer based in Fort Atkinson, Wis.



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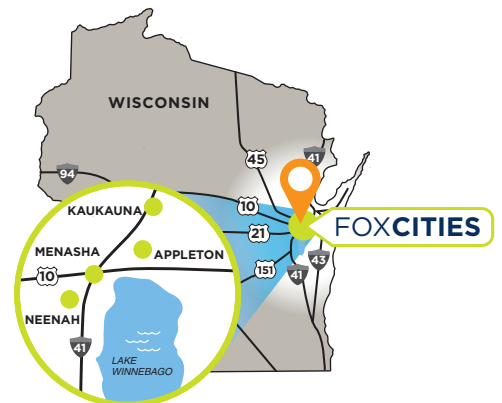
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Looking for some unique gift ideas that will impress clients and remind them of your company well into the new year? Here are some of our favorite ideas; some with Wisconsin flair, of course, while others are just simply cool.

**1** Bacon... do we need to say more? The Neuskes have been selling their applewood smoked meats for more than 80 years. Located in central Wisconsin, this family run business offers a variety of tasty gift options, however, don't consider sending a Neuske's gift basket that doesn't include their famous, mouthwatering bacon! Even Al Roker is a huge fan. Bacon gift baskets that include three one-pound packages of applewood and peppered bacon start at around \$40. More robust gift baskets include other types of meats, such as sausage and ham, cheeses, chocolates, kringles and mustards run from \$50 to \$150 plus shipping. [nueskes.com](http://nueskes.com)



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2. The Penzey family has been selling spices since 1957. Bill Penzey purchased the business from his parents and has grown it from a small Milwaukee-area shop to more than 70 locations across the country. You can purchase one of a variety of gift boxes that include interesting seasoning blends that range in price from \$20 to \$45. Boxes are themed and are a great gift idea for the client that enjoys cooking. [penzeys.com](http://penzeys.com)



3. If you want to say Wisconsin, there's no better way than by sending the gift of cheese. Artisan cheese boxes, a hot and spicy gift basket ... even a cheese of the month, Wisconsin Cheese Mart offers just about everything you'd expect from the Dairy State. Businesses have the opportunity to brand gift boxes and cheese wheels with their logos. Volume discounts are available. Gift boxes are \$30 and up. They include a variety of Wisconsin-made cheeses, sausages, mustards and sweet treats. [wisconsincheesemart.com](http://wisconsincheesemart.com)



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4. Everyone gets their share of holiday fudge and cookies, but for a unique sweet treat, consider a kringle from Racine. This buttery, flaky, oval-shaped pastry, often filled with fruit or other goodies, is iconic to Racine. When Danish settled in the community in the late 19th century, they brought the tradition of kringle with them. Now several bakeries continue to create this tasty treat. At Racine Danish Kringles, you'll find more than 25 varieties. Each kringle is hand folded with 81 layers that rests for three days in order to develop its delicate texture. Racine Danish Kringles offer corporate discounts and allows you to send a personalized note or even an imprinted mug with your gift of kringle. [kringle.com](http://kringle.com)



5. If you are planning to bring your clients or a group to Lake Geneva in 2018, feed anticipation with one of a number of books on the area. From books detailing the history of the Geneva Lakes area, including the historic estates that line the lake, to a history of Grand Geneva Resort (home at one time of the Playboy Club) to a fun and whimsical coloring book featuring iconic attractions and scenes of Lake Geneva, choose from a number of gift ideas. [atthelakemagazine.com/shop](http://atthelakemagazine.com/shop)

6. Wisconsin is the number one producer of cranberries in the US. And this small, family-run company located in central Wisconsin, where cranberry bogs likely outnumber corn fields, offers a variety of goodies that will remind your clients of Wisconsin. Rubi Reds offers a variety of dried cranberries, chocolate cranberries, trail mix, cranberry salsa and more. [rubireds.com](http://rubireds.com)



7. The only bond stronger than a Wisconsinite's love for the Green Bay Packers may be their relationship with the brat—a staple for any tailgate party or summer outing in Wisconsin. Celebrate our state's German heritage with a gift from Milwaukee's famous Usinger's. This Milwaukee-based family has been sharing its recipe for sausage for more than 130 years, now offering over 70 different varieties of old world sausage! Recipes remain the same as when the company began in 1880 and many are still made at the Old World Third Street location in downtown Milwaukee. A variety of gift baskets are available starting at about \$35. [usinger.com](http://usinger.com) 







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['mētiNG] *noun*

1. Taking notes while watching PowerPoint presentations and just wishing you were doubling down on the blackjack table.



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