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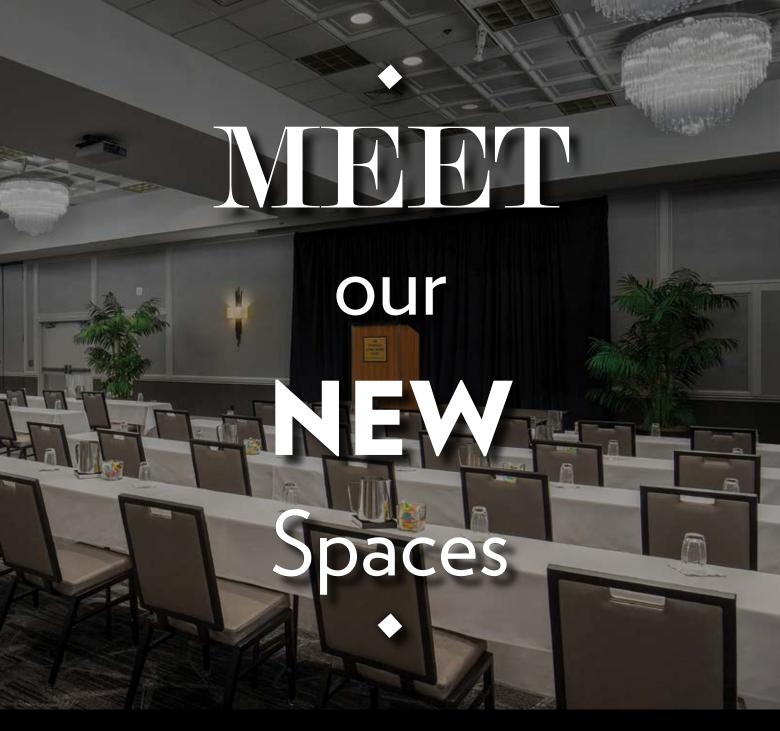


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"From Monona Terrace's supportive staff to its convenient location, people just like coming here."

> Christine Schmieden, UW Department of Surgery

# The power of an unexpected meeting place.

Your venue choice can mean the difference between a good meeting and a great one.

#### SELECTING A LOCATION THAT INSPIRES.

Looking for ways to encourage creativity and revive energy in your meetings? Might be time for a venue change. Christine Schmieden elected to host the UW Department of Surgery's Continuing Medical Education course at Monona Terrace because of its inspiring views and its ability to adjust to the increasing size of the conference. "Monona Terrace offers a refreshing atmosphere in which to hold our event and has been able to accommodate our growing needs," she says.

Thinking outside the box can breathe new life into anything from an annual meeting to a unique gathering. "There is a special draw to Monona Terrace," says Schmieden. "From the supportive staff to its convenient location, people just like coming here."

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#### GREETINGS!

I was struck by the number of new venues, facilities and renovated properties located in Wisconsin that have recently opened their doors to meetings and convention planners—many of which are noted on pages 10 and 11. A new performing arts center in Eau Claire, expansion at Sundara in Wisconsin Dells, Hotel

Goodwin opening in Beloit, the new Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center in Manitowoc, not to mention groundbreaking on the Brookfield Conference Center. It's an exciting time to host events and share these beautiful spaces with your groups. We all know how important it is to host meetings offsite, and now there are so many more options to do so!

While we are excited by all of the new spaces available, we wanted to call out some of the beautiful, historic spaces that have hosted groups for decades. While preserving the past, the venues that Nancy Herrick features on page 46 have all been updated to provide state-of-the art technology and amenities. The list is impressive and includes five star resorts—required for consideration if you are looking to wow your group!

And as football dominates the TV schedule this time of year, we thought it only fitting to check in with the community of Green Bay, where recent renovations to their convention facility, the new Lodge Kohler and the developing Titletown district are all giving planners new and exciting reasons to consider this destination for their next convention or meeting.

Finally, don't forget to vote in our annual Best of Wisconsin Meetings survey! An annual tradition, we look to you, our readers, to find out which suppliers and venues are your go-to for producing successful events. Share your thoughts so these important partners can be recognized for their contributions and importance to the industry. Go to WisconsinMeetings. com to vote!

Becky

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THE BESTOF



#### GROUND BREAKING FOR BROOKFIELD CONFERENCE CENTER

The City of Brookfield, together with Visit Brookfield and North Central Group (NCG), has begun construction on a 54,000-square-foot facility designed to host business and entertainment events. The new center will be located adjacent to the Hilton Garden Inn, just off Interstate 94 in Brookfield.

"This is an exciting milestone for the Brookfield market and a key piece to the redevelopment and revitalization in the area," said Nancy Justman, president/CEO of Visit Brookfield. "Thoughtfully designed to foster innovation, the new conference center will be a preeminent site for regional meetings, state associations or corporate gatherings of any size."

Completion is expected to occur in 2020.

#### BOUTIQUE PROPERTY OPENS IN BELOIT

Geronimo Hospitality Group has opened its newest boutique property, Hotel Goodwin. Located in Beloit, the hotel features 34 guest rooms and the Velvet Buffalo Café featuring tapas and woodfired pizzas. It is located across the street from one of the company's other properties, Ironworks Hotel. The Goodwin's name comes from the 19th century luxury hotel of the same name that operated in downtown Beloit until 1904.

The hotel boasts luxury features, including one-of-akind art pieces and open glass rainforest showers.

#### UPDATES COMPLETED AT GLCC

Green Lake Conference Center (GLCC) has completed renovation of its Lakeview Meeting Room. With a capacity of 400 people, Staughton Hall is now the most spectacular large meeting space at GLCC because of its eye-level view of the lake. Additional renovations included upgrades to the AV system, installation of LED lighting and an elevator with direct access to the new lobby.

#### CAMBRIA HOTEL TO OPEN IN MILWAUKEE

Construction has begun on the Cambria Hotel located near the intersections of Plankinton and Michigan avenues in downtown Milwaukee. The fourstory property will offer 132 rooms and an interior courtyard, "spa-style" bathrooms, fitness center and an indoor pool. Choice Hotels owns the Cambria brand, which has two other Wisconsin properties in Madison and Appleton. The hotel is scheduled to open in summer 2019.

#### GREAT WOLF TO ELIMINATE PLASTIC STRAWS

Great Wolf Resorts is replacing plastic straws at all 17 of its indoor water park resorts with more environmentally friendly paper straws. The familyfriendly resort company pledged to remove plastic straws from all of its food and beverage locations before the end of 2018, saving more than five million plastic straws from entering local landfills annually.

#### GREEN BAY TO OPEN VISITOR CENTER

Construction is expected to begin in spring 2019 on the \$6.5 million Experience Greater Green Bay Visitor Center, just west of Lambeau Field and Titletown. Scheduled to open in summer 2020, the facility is being facilitated by Experience Greater Green Bay, a 501(c)(3) partner of the Greater Green Bay CVB. The two-story, 12,500-square-foot visitor center will be managed and programmed by the CVB, which will move its offices there. The facility is being funded through contributions, which include a lead donation provided by the Oneida Nation of \$1.5 million.

#### ZILLI RENOVATES MILWAUKEE VENUES

Zilli Hospitality Group (ZHG), a full-service catering and special events company operating out of Milwaukee, recently completed an extensive renovation of the lakefront venue Coast, and a second renovation scheduled for completion in November—is underway for Miller Room. Both venues are part of the Zilli Lake and Gardens property located on Wisconsin Avenue in downtown Milwaukee. The site includes four venue spaces that can be used separately or together: Coast, Miller Room, North Garden and South Garden.

#### PERFORMING ARTS CENTER OPENS IN EAU CLAIRE

The Pablo Center at the Confluence has opened its doors in downtown Eau Claire. The facility will host dance productions, family-friendly performances, literary and film events, as well as musical guests spanning multiple genres. It houses two theaters (one seating 1,200 and one seating 400). In addition, a new visitor center will open in late October, Visit Eau Claire offices will be relocated here and there is event space available on the third floor.

#### FWDC OPENS IN MANITOWOC

The \$13 million Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center has opened its doors, providing visitors with an opportunity to learn more about the state's agriculture industry. The state-of-the-art facility offers interactive exhibits that focus on the diversity of Wisconsin agriculture within a framework of sustainable and responsible farming practices. The onsite conference center accommodates groups up to 300 banquet-style.

#### SUNDARA EXPANSION NEARS COMPLETION

Final touches are being completed on the \$13 million, 40,000-square-foot addition at Sundara Spa. New outdoor features include: a new outdoor, seasonal saltwater pool, new indoor/outdoor soak pool oasis, a large outdoor woodland patio with water feature and numerous fire pits, and a Zen welcome garden. New spa features include: additional spa rooms (26 treatment rooms total) including a new salt therapy treatment room; expanded locker rooms, salon, boutique, and lobby; new quiet spaces for relaxing; retreat space and a woodland reflection room for meditation, wildlife watching and yoga. New lodging and dining amenities include: eight new suites, ideal for small group getaways and a large dedicated dining space, private dining room, and outdoor dining terrace. Plus a variety of new wellness activities have been added, including: personal training; spacious fitness area; guided meditation; specialized yoga and water fitness classes; kayak and stand-up paddle board tours; nutrition classes; and cooking demonstrations. WM





"Thank you for your dedication and enthusiasm to this topic!" Sheryl, audience member, YWCA



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BY MOLLY ROSE TEUKE

f you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced. —Vincent Van Gogh

Do you believe that either you're a painter or you're not? That you're musically gifted or you're not? You're a math whiz or you're not? An athlete? A writer? A [whatever you think you're not good at]?

Or do you believe that regardless of the extent of talent and natural aptitude with which you were endowed at birth, you can develop a level of skill and proficiency at anything provided you give it focus and effort? That you're just not good at something yet?

The concept of fixed versus growth mindset has gained considerable currency since Stanford University's Carol Dweck introduced it in 1988. Dweck describes a fixed mindset as a belief that our human qualities are carved in stone, and a growth mindset as a belief that human qualities, such as intellectual skills, can be cultivated through effort.

If we embrace a fixed mindset, we aim to validate our intelligence and our talents—to prove ourselves. If we embrace a growth mindset, our aim is to work hard to achieve mastery. With one, we give up if something doesn't come easily or "naturally." With the other, we aren't afraid to keep trying, even when it means we could be perceived as slow on the uptake. As Dweck notes, the distinction is that one group sees effort as a sign of weakness, the other as a sign of strength. In a fixed mindset, you believe that if you have to work at something, you must not be good at it, that genius requires no effort. "It's as if Midori popped out of the womb fiddling, Michael Jordan dribbling and Picasso doodling," says Dweck.

And Einstein scribbling ground-breaking theorems on a cocktail napkin.

Einstein is a stellar example of the growth mindset at work: "It's not that I'm so smart," he said. "It's just that I stay with problems longer." He didn't find effort daunting or shameful, as you might if you hold a fixed mindset.

Name someone who's recognized as an overnight success, and dig a little deeper into how much (or little) effort was required. You will almost always find that the person worked very hard indeed, that success didn't come "naturally." J.K. Rowling, for instance, became an "overnight success" in 1997 with the publication of her first Harry Potter book. Yet she'd been writing fantasy fiction for years and had endured rejection of Harry Potter from over a dozen publishers. Even when a publisher gave her a chance, her editor advised her to get a day job. Today, she is the first woman to become a billion-dollar author. Not bad for an unemployed single mom.

Like Einstein, Rowland embodies the growth mindset. She persisted in the face of repeated defeat, continuing to hone the skill that would ensure her success. But persistence is a tall order if you believe that having to make an effort means you're not very bright.

In "Mindset, the New Psychology of Success," Dweck describes a study indicating there's a difference in brain wave activity depending on whether you have a fixed or a growth mindset. "People with both mindsets came into our brain-wave lab at Columbia. As they answered hard questions and got feedback, we were curious about when their brain waves would show them to be interested and attentive. People with a fixed mindset were only interested when the feedback reflected on their ability...when they were told whether their answers were right or wrong. But when they were presented with information that could help them learn, there was no sign of interest. Even when they'd gotten an answer wrong, they were not interested in learning what the right answer was.

"Only people with a growth mindset paid close attention to information that could stretch their knowledge. Only for them was learning a priority."

In a fixed mindset, we shy away from anything that challenges us, even if it'll make us smarter. Validation is all we're after, because our identity rests on whether we can demonstrate that we're smart (or talented or athletic or whatever). In a growth mindset, we're less concerned with "being" than with "becoming."

If we believe our intelligence is static, no wonder we're concerned with looking smart. Yet no less a luminary than Alfred Binet, the man who devised the IQ test, said, "The intelligence of an individual is not a fixed quantity."

There's neuroscience behind Binet's assertion. At its core is neuroplasticity, the science of how our brains constantly change, moment by moment, creating new connections that enable us to do new things (like play a musical instrument) and to grasp new concepts (like long division). We weren't born with that skill or that knowledge, but we were born with the capacity to develop it.

How can you identify your own mindset? When you want to give up on something just because it's hard, or because you think others will judge your performance, that's a good cue. But Dweck points out that mindset is a continuum, not an either/ or proposition. We're all at various points on the mindset arc depending on the activity.

I think of myself as someone with a growth mindset, yet I spent years believing I wasn't any good at hand-eye coordination. I shed that fixed mindset when I said, "Maybe I'm not good at hand-eye coordination yet," and taught myself to juggle. Ditto for public speaking. Realizing several years ago that perhaps I wasn't good at it yet helped me shift from a fixed to a growth mindset about that, and it turns out I'm pretty good at it. It takes more than effort, though. It takes courage to learn, courage to try new strategies when the old ones don't work, courage to ask for help when you're stuck—and courage to fall flat on your face. I didn't learn to juggle by myself, and certainly not without dropping a lot of juggling balls. And I didn't get good at public speaking on my own. I grew that skill thanks to many critiques from fellow Toastmasters, and by trying it out in front of real, live audiences—when it did not always go well.

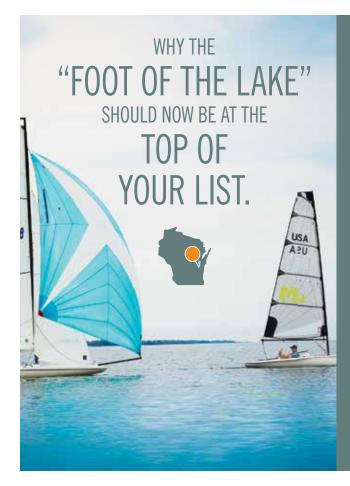
"Every time you push out of your comfort zone to learn something new and difficult, the neurons in your brain can form new, stronger connections, and over time, you can get smarter," she says. Juggling and public speaking were quite far outside my comfort zone and quite challenging, and now I've developed the neural connections and pathways that make those activities seem easy. Being comfortable with public speaking has opened many new doors for me, giving me a career path I never dreamed was possible.

As Dweck says, "'Not yet' puts you on a learning curve, giving you a path to the future." WM



Molly Rose Teuke has an enduring curiosity about what makes our brains tick. She delivers a program for Nicolet College called Get Your Brain On Your Side, and delivers brain-based leadership training for the NeuroLeadership Institute, a global leader in the performance arena. She also hosts a weekly classical

music program and a monthly audioblog called BrainWaves on WXPR-FM. You can reach her at mollyrose@mollyrosecoaching.com.



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#### FIND A KILLER KEYNOTE KNOWING YOUR GOALS, UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE AND PROPERLY VETTING SPEAKERS WILL HELP YOU BOOK THE RIGHT SPEAKER FOR YOUR MEETING OR EVENT.

BY RONNIE WENDT

A keynote speaker commands a lot of attention, and the wrong one can set a negative tone for the entire event. In the article, "Four tips for choosing the right speaker for your event," Caroline Eimerman writes, "Even a well-staged business event can fail if the featured speakers do not deliver the goods."

Who you hire to speak at your meeting or event is critical, but also critical is staying within the confines of your budget. Fortunately, Wisconsin is packed with dynamic and engaging speakers with messages to fit your unique needs. Best of all, many of these speakers charge very little, if anything, for their presentations.

Did you know there are speakers in Wisconsin available to talk about the following?

- Cultivating a 21st Century mind.
- Inside the psychopathic mind: What brain science is revealing about criminal behavior.
- Relationship building and management.
- Applying mindfulness to your work-life.
- Ethical behavior in the office.

The topics run the gamut and the speakers are readily available for your specific event. They come from colleges and universities, local associations and more. You just need to know where to look for them and how to go about scheduling them for your event. But, booking the speaker is the easy part. There are other considerations and steps to take before you get to the point where you can book a presenter for your event.

1) Carefully consider the event itself. What is the purpose of your event? Answering this question will help you set a theme for the event, which in turn will help you select a speaker who best fits the theme.

**2) Know who attends your event.** What are their informational needs? What value might they be seeking from a speaker? Most speakers require information about your audience and the event theme to tailor their talks to your unique needs.

Eimerman reports knowing the demographics of your attendees is essential to booking a speaker that is the right fit. "Remember, an edgy young maverick may not necessarily appeal to a group of conservative upper management types, and vice versa," she writes.

**3) Set your budget.** Contrary to popular belief, speakers don't always jump at the opportunity to speak just for the exposure. Seasoned speakers often won't think twice about saying no. Develop a budget that covers lodging and meals for the speaker, and a stipend for their services should they require one.

4) Determine what kind of speaker you are looking for. Are you looking for a subject matter expert, inspirational speaker or a comedian? Do you want your speaker to inform the audience, inspire them or make them laugh? Maybe you want all the above. This is critical to know as you begin researching potential speakers.

5) Check the speaker's availability. Knowing that a speaker is available on the date you need them is only part of the consideration. Travel time also must be considered. If it takes a full day to drive to your event, speaking there will take them more than one day. If they're not free the day prior, they likely will be unable to speak at your event.

6) Book far in advance. Though the University of Wisconsin-Madison Speakers Bureau website reports speakers are often available just four weeks in advance, it also recommends booking four to six months out to be assured of getting your first choice.

7) Know where to find them. A wealth of possibilities exists in our home state of Wisconsin. Just about every school in the University of Wisconsin system offers a speakers' bureau. In most cases, the speakers' bureau covers the cost of travel, while host groups may incur the following expenses: staffing or preparation costs, event space fees, audio visual equipment costs, marketing

and promotion. The speakers in these bureaus offer talks that run a full gamut of topics. Check out the speakers available from UW-Madison by visiting speakers.wisc.edu/; UW-Milwaukee at uwm.edu/speakersbureau/speakers/; or gigmasters.com/search/motivationalspeaker-wisconsin. Requesting a speaker is simple. Most sites simply ask you to email or call and their staff will guide you through the process.

#### 8) Fully vet your short list of speakers.

Your work doesn't stop once you find two or three possible speakers for your event. That's when the fun really begins. It's important to contact your candidates and speak with them on the phone before signing a contract. In addition, review their demo videos. However, keep in mind, just as a trailer to a movie might make a movie look fantastic, when it's not, speaker videos may also do the same. A short wellproduced video is designed to cast a speaker in a positive light. They are effective tools to help you define your short list of possible speakers, but a follow up phone call will help you know for certain when a speaker is the right fit for your event.

Request several letters of recommendations from each speaker on your short list and call a media planner or two who has worked with this speaker in the past.

Doing all these things may create extra work for your speaker selection committee. But in the end, you'll find yourself with a keynote speaker who meets the needs of your audience and sets the tone for a successful event to follow.



Ronnie Wendt is a freelance writer based in Waukesha, Wis. Wendt has been writing about meetings and events since 2009.



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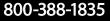


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# INDEPENDENCE DAY

10 steps to establishing the framework of your event business

By Clair Urbain

Meeting planners who have built a solid reputation in the field are often tempted to break out on their own. After all, you know the costs and probably have a heavy hand in making sure the quote and subsequent invoice are correct. And it's easy to realize that there can be quite a bit of wiggle room (profit) left over once all the event's bills are paid.

But savvy planners don't always make the best business owners. There are many back-office—and front-office functions that take time, interest and know-how. Navigating some of them can be tricky and usually require the assistance of an accountant, tax expert and occasionally, a lawyer.

Startup Savant (startupsavant.com/category/Wisconsin), built by Ryan James and hosted by Liesha Petrovich, is an online resource that helps aspiring business owners get started on the right track. It offers insight on business services and software that can help aspiring independent meeting planners find the best resources when starting a business. It offers 10 steps to consider when you're planning to make the break to become an independent meeting planner.

#### **STEP 1:** Develop your business plan

A professional business plan is important, even though it will not ultimately guarantee success.

A well thought-out business plan is your game plan. It helps you get the most out of your ideas throughout the business cycle and increases your odds of noticing golden opportunities.

Startup Savant offers free business planning guides online, however, there are other resources that can be tapped to develop a business plan.

Many Wisconsin universities have outreach programs that can help you properly plan your business startup. There are ample tools and resources online that can help guide you through the thought process needed to establish a solid idea, then develop a marketing plan, a budget, business milestones and a professional pitch to attract investors and/or customers, says Kevin Kaufmann, director of the Small Business Development Center at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater.

#### STEP 2:

#### CHOOSE YOUR BUSINESS STRUCTURE AND REGISTER IT

A legal structure is the backbone of your business. It establishes your company as a legal entity that can be registered, protecting your brand and also enables you to pay sales or other taxes through your business.

Most entrepreneurs form a limited liability corporation (LLC) because it has all the benefits of a corporation without the disadvantages like double taxation and the need for a board of directors or corporate officers. However, if you're trying to take your company public or raise substantial outside capital, you should probably form a corporation, suggest the experts at Startup Savant.

You can go over your options at startupsavant.com/writing-a-business-plan/, or take some time to discuss your options with a lawyer familiar with business law. You'll get a better idea of the advantages and disadvantages of each while building a solid legal foundation for your business.

#### STEP 3: TACKLE STATE TAX OBLIGATIONS

*Chief Executive* magazine ranks Wisconsin as one of the top 10 best states for business due in part to its business-friendly tax code. Once you've established and registered your brand and your business entity, you're ready to take advantage of all those tax incentives, subsidies, credits and kick-backs—and also sales and any other applicable tax.

To get registered with the state, go to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue website at https://www.revenue.wi.gov/Pages/Businesses/home.aspx. There, you'll find a free video/webinar on how to set up an account. It also features other pages for those starting a new business; it also offers online registration options.

#### STEP 4: OBTAIN LICENSES AND PERMITS

Fortunately, Startup Savant reports Wisconsin's regulatory system is very modern and there are very few holes to jump through in terms of licensing or permits. You can do it yourself by going to dsps.wi.gov/pages/Professions/Default.aspx. It covers everything required on federal, state, county and municipal levels, how to get the forms and provides step-by-step filing instructions. Or, you can ask your lawyer or accountant to navigate the licensing or permit processes.

#### STEP 5: OPEN A BUSINESS BANK ACCOUNT

The next logical step is to centralize your business financials in a benefit-filled and startup-friendly banking institution with its own checking/savings accounts. Due to tax and audit implications, don't mix personal accounts with business accounts.

Startup Savant experts recommend shopping around at local and national banks or credit unions to compare features. Look at the institution's user-friendliness and check out if its website is fast and secure. Look for automated features that can help you easily forecast so you can make efficient budgeting decisions. Make sure the bank account can interface with any business accounting software to eliminate the need to make entries in two separate systems.



Once your bank account and business software is in place, the next step is raising working capital. Startup Savant experts report that Wisconsin has an entire smorgasbord of funding programs that can include credit, grants, venture capital, angel investor funds and even social lending. The Small Business Development Centers can help you identify funding options that can range from personal loans to angel investors.

#### **REALITY CHECK**



Wonder what it's really like to start your own business in the Midwest? We sat down for a Q&A with Kennedy Turner, owner of Blueprint Events, LLC, based in Madison, Wis. Founded in 2015, the company specializes in business and corporate event

planning throughout Wisconsin for small- to midsized businesses and nonprofits as well as city and county economic development departments.

WM What led you to this path to launch your own business?

KT I previously worked for two different chambers of commerce, one in Sacramento, Calif., as an Economic Development Events Coordinator, and one in Madison, Wis., as Program and Events Manager. I always knew I wanted to start my own company and used my time at both chambers to learn, making connections and build a foundation to take the leap into what is now Blueprint Events.

WM What have been the biggest surprises and challenges for you?

**KT** A big surprise for me was realizing how much of my time would be spent just running the business vs. planning events and working with clients. Running a business is hard; with that said... I love change and I am thankful for all of the great resources the Madison area has for women business owners.

Like most, time management as a solopreneur and a mom is a daily struggle. Asking for help and paying people to do the tasks I struggle with has been a challenge. Learning to fail fast and move forward, as well as finding daily motivators is key.

WM What recommendations do you have for others considering launching out on their own?

**KT** I recommend going through the Entrepreneurial Training Program through the UW–Madison School of Business (I created a business plan with their assistance) and the Doyenne Group (a mentorship organization for women entrepreneurs) strategic planning retreat (goal setting and planning). Also: find good mentors, stay grateful for the freedom, accept that running your own business is just going to be hard and ask for help when you need it.

#### STEP 7: PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS

Insurance is a staple of any business and it's no different with event planning. It's essential you have coverage should someone be injured at an event you produce. Most event planners will need general and professional liability coverage. However, speak with your insurance agent, and even legal counsel, to make sure you are covered for the variety of scenarios that can occur in relation to an event.

#### STEP 8: DESIGN AND PUBLISH A WEBSITE

For today's businesses, having a website pretty much goes without saying. But the Startup Savant experts report there are armies of startups that don't take it as seriously as they should. The first step is finding the right platform. Several free web-building sites, such as Wix, Weebly and GoDaddy are options. Or if you wish to outsource this service, you can often have a developer create a site for less than a few thousand dollars.

#### STEP 9: MARKET YOUR BUSINESS

Building a brand makes your products and services memorable. It defines the services you are offering and what your business represents. It requires extensive thought and development. Branding positions your business in the marketplace. Do you offer a niche service or work with a niche market? Those details should be conveyed in your brand, which is then communicated through all messaging: marketing materials, email communication and website.

#### STEP 10: CONTINUE LEARNING AND STAY INSPIRED

Taking the first nine steps can be a fun, exciting, frustrating and at times, a scary journey. However, business owners need to remain motivated to continue to grow their clientele and businesses.

Join professional groups such as the local chapter of Meeting Professionals International (MPI), local and state chambers of commerce or convention and visitors bureaus and other associations that can help you stay abreast of ideas, meetings and sometimes even discounts that can help propel your business to new levels.



Clair Urbain is a freelance business writer and marketer who has taken the steps to set up his own business, Urbain Communications LLC. If he can do it, nearly anyone can!



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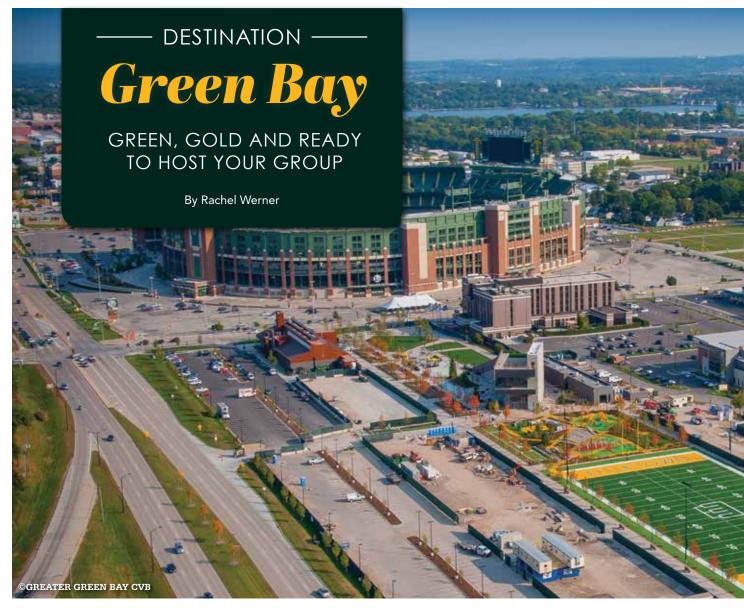
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All that glitters is definitely gold across Titletown as the Green Bay Packers barrel through their 100th season. "Not only can you enjoy the cool autumn air, but fall brings the energy of football to Green Bay," beams Brenda Krainik, director of marketing for the Greater Green Bay Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Planning a conference or a meeting in Wisconsin's iconic green and gold city increases excitement from attendees. Theming happy hours, lunches or even general sessions is easy, and teambuilding activities can take on a whole new meaning when you meet in a historic football city."

#### **KI Convention Center**

Downtown is the prime locale for large conventions, sport competitions and trade shows. The gem of Green Bay's meetings venues is the KI Convention Center, which was renovated in 2015. At 80,000 square feet, the facility can accommodate groups up to 3,000 people, including 2,000 for a seated dinner. The 24,500-square-foot ballroom offers a sleek, modern space for groups. Many of the event spaces connected with the KI's river-facing foyer on the upper level are pillar free—a feature that is particularly important for sports events as it offers unobstructed views for spectators and greater safety for participants.

The facility is connected by skywalk to two properties: the Hampton Inn Green Bay Downtown and the Hyatt Regency Green Bay, which also manages the KI Center.





#### **Resch Center Complex**

The other prime event space downtown is the Resch Center Complex, which includes the Resch Center, Brown County Veterans Memorial Arena and Shopko Hall. The facilities host a variety of sporting events including the WIAA State Girls Basketball Tournament—trade shows, concerts, consumer shows and more.

#### Titletown

However, the glitter of this downtown may be the all-new Titletown entertainment district being built adjacent to Lambeau Field. Phase I has been completed and includes a large, multi-acre park, the Rockwood Terrace event space, Hinterland Restaurant & Brewery and Lodge Kohler. Additional phases will include shopping and even a residential component. The massive expansion of Lambeau's corridor is flanked by outdoor foosball and ping pong tables, a book corral, a 40-yard-dash obstacle course activity for children and a regulation-size football field designed for year-round recreational use. After logging a few sprints on artificial turf, strap on skates to glide around the fire pit located in the center of the rink or duck underneath the three-level event center for hot chocolate or toddies in the warming den. Then promptly quench the need for speed on the 300-yard tubing hill sloping down the building's roof.

If getting down to business mere feet away from where dozens of hall of famers have scored is enticing, Lambeau Field is the ideal venue. Whether your event is during football season or after it's wrapped, Lambeau has some great meeting spaces, affirms Reggie Driscoll, senior meeting professional with the State Bar of Wisconsin, who has hosted events at the facility.

"The Champions Club with the rooftop patio provides a spectacular view of the fall colors around Brown County." Other noteworthy spaces within the stadium include the Festival Foods MVP Deck with panoramic indoor—and outdoor—views of the field and the Atrium, which can be arranged to comfortably entertain close to 1,000 guests.

Once the sun starts to set and the temperatures drop, seek warmth and luxury directly across the road at Lodge Kohler. The boutique hotel has 144 rooms and suites, each decked out in historic Packer memorabilia and true Kohler fashion, complete with bell service, luxe décor, plush linens and an in-house spa. What the









Kohler Water Spa lacks in size, it more than compensates for with its expansive list of services and meticulous attention toward prioritizing tranquility for guests.

And "if you are planning an event during a football game, the Tavern in the Sky bar and restaurant on the fifth floor of Lodge Kohler offers another incredible view," advises Driscoll. The restaurant's menu fuses gourmet tastes with game day farecranking out inventive appetizers such as tempura veggies, artichoke lemon fritters and smoked sturgeon spread, prepping diners to feast further well past halftime on poutine, barbecue pulled pork or rotisserie chicken. Dessert is best had in liquid form thanks to the bar mixing up an array of cocktails using Kohler's signature chocolate brandy. Whether it's the Chocolate Old Fashioned, Chocolate Mint or White Russian, the evening will be capped off with a smile.

#### **CONSIDER THIS:**

The odds are in your favor when you combine exciting gaming with your next event. Look no further than Oneida Casino and the attached Radisson Hotel & Conference Center Green Bay, which offers 30,000 square feet of event space.

#### The Automobile Gallery

Titletown Park's Phase I completion last year was a nice complement to the new influx of energy and entrepreneurship revamping the city's center. "The City of Green Bay has done a wonderful job revitalizing the downtown area with great restaurants, nightlife and weekly family activities," shares Kathryn Gardner, executive director for the Automobile Gallery. "Weeks into the fall, you will find local bands playing live music in parks and along the waterfront in addition to farmers' markets on Wednesday nights and Saturday mornings. Strolls along the riverwalk, biking on the trails and participating in community events are now a snapshot of daily life in Green Bay."

Located downtown, The Automobile Gallery is in the heart of the action. And Gardner insists the nonprofit's founder, William Lewis, selected this exact spot to help breathe new life into his hometown. "When people





are here for an event or meeting, it gives the guest something extra to see and do before, during or after the purpose which brought them to our doors."

The 18,000-square-foot gallery features a century of automobile history and includes a rotating inventory of classic cars, often conversation starters for guests.

Whether a corporate meeting, holiday party, seminar, customer appreciation, wedding or anniversary, the gallery excels at helping groups plan a successful gathering-the facility can accommodate seated dinners for up to 160. The banquet space and state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment includes video and audio integration, web conferencing via HD cameras and high-speed internet. Gardner states, "The Automobile Gallery is unlike anything you have experienced, with premier accommodations for nearly any type of event you would like to host. Consider it a 'mobile' meeting space. If you need more seating, cars can be removed from the gallery. If you need certain cars here to showcase, they can be brought in. If you can dream it up, we can do it!"



#### **CONSIDER THIS:**

For a unique space, also in the realm of transportation, consider the National Railroad Museum, where attendees can meet or dine on a train car while being pulled around the museum property.

#### **Green Bay Botanical Gardens**

Head northwest of the city's bustling hub if on the hunt for a storybook setting where modern meets whimsical at Green Bay Botanical Gardens. The lush and floral grounds make a picturesque backdrop for large award ceremonies, receptions and galas, while the Kaftan Lusthaus gazebo and the Foundation Classroom, nestled in the Schneider Family Grand Garden, are unique areas for smaller soirees and workshops for groups under 40. The addition of the Billie Kress Amphitheater stage lends itself well to any event featuring live entertainment. Plus event attendees also receive complimentary parking and full admission to the gardens while onsite.



"Autumn at Green Bay Botanical will captivate your guests with its enduring beauty. Wander through bright hues of orange, red and yellow surrounded by stunning architecture," explains sales and rental coordinator Jessica Martin. "Whether you're hosting a client reception, multi-day workshop or staff retreat, our facilities provide the perfect opportunity to escape from your day-to-day business and be reenergized by the sights and sounds of a crisp autumn day at the garden."

Although the football season may draw to a close sooner than many would prefer, rest assured Green Bay still has much to offer year-round. wm



Rachel Werner is the digital editor of BRAVA, a Wisconsinbased magazine created by women for women and the beauty and fashion host of GRAVY's mobile game show.

She enjoys overseeing culinary, arts, style, and live event coverage in her current roles and has previously contributed print, photography and video content to Madison Magazine, Entrepreneurial Chef, Hobby Farms Magazine and Urban Farm.

# **RISKY BUSINESS**

#### HOW TO DEVELOP A CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR YOUR NEXT EVENT

By Maura Keller

Predicting the future is like forecasting the weather. You think you know what's going to happen—then it doesn't. There has been a great deal written in the past few years concerning the legal liability of meetings and events, usually in terms of a weatherrelated crisis or the likelihood of personal injury. So to what extent do meeting and event planners have to pay attention to crisis planning, prevention and management? Quite a bit, say the experts.

In the world of meeting planning, there are a myriad of disruptive challenges that occur. While most of these disruptions are unpredictable and uncontrollable, evaluating and managing the inherent risk of offsite meetings and events is paramount in an age of unpredictability.

"Every meeting is unique so planning should begin with a risk assessment, the results of which will determine what security and other risks need to be managed," says Jack Plaxe, a career security crisis, and risk management professional with nearly 30 years of experience as a consultant and corporate security director. He also is founder and managing director at Security Consulting Alliance. "If you don't have the resources in-house to conduct an assessment, an outside security consultant may be able to assist."

Meghan Palm, CMP, owner and global meetings and events

manager at Meetings and Events Group, says it is vital that meeting planners know who is in charge in any given situation.

"As meetings managers, we are used to being in charge and having all the answers, but in emergency situations, it is our role to keep our constituents calm, safe and well informed," Palm says. "For hotel security concerns, it may be the hotel general manager or the director of security making the final calls or if there is a natural disaster, it may be the local government offices making decisions. All entities need to work together as a centralized team and have a clear understanding of the chain of communication to cut down on delays and confusion."

According to the Incentive Research Foundation, a study that the foundation conducted in 2016 to determine what was disrupting events and how planners were coping found that almost 60 percent of planners had experienced a disruption of at least one event

"EVERY MEETING IS UNIQUE SO PLANNING SHOULD BEGIN WITH A RISK ASSESSMENT, THE RESULTS OF WHICH WILL DETERMINE WHAT SECURITY AND OTHER RISKS NEED TO BE MANAGED."

-JACK PLAXE, SECURITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT PROFESIONAL that affected the event's overall outcome or success. The report indicated that the two most frequently occurring disruptions are weather-related events and vendor failures.

And since 9/11, terrorism has become a reality at home and abroad. That's why the safety of attendees is paramount and key in choosing a location for a meeting or event.

"Where will the meeting be held? If on a corporate campus, company security staff can be enlisted to secure the venue, patrol the area and control access," Plaxe says. "If off-site at a hotel or convention center, an assessment of the security arrangements should be conducted in advance of the meeting to ensure that they meet company requirements."

And whether in another country or in the US, it is important to remind attendees of simple ways to be safe and remain aware of their surroundings. Some helpful tips include: know where the local police station, hospital or hotel are located, have a cell phone charged at all times and avoid high risk areas. If overseas, a more in-depth country risk assessment is in order that considers travel risk, security risk, health risk and political risk.

#### **BEING PREPARED**

There are a number of ways that planners can prepare for disruptions—including tighter contractual language, more backup resources, better contingency planning, establishing more guidelines and extending planning cycles. But sometimes the preparation calls for more drastic action.

Having clear attrition policies, force majeure language, insurance coverages, data security, supplier responsibility and sponsor management contact chains identified, contracted and incorporated as part of the program are "must haves" when it comes to crisis management for meetings.

"Perhaps the most important issue that meeting planners should focus on is fire and life safety," Plaxe says. "Everyone should be told where the nearest primary and secondary emergency exits are located, along with assembly areas for each. Planners should have a way to account for all meeting attendees and contact anyone who does not show up at a designated assembly point in the aftermath of an emergency."

And while there may be hundreds of

THE TANK

situations that are disruptive, there are really only a few paths to manage the consequence of any event. One key way is by having a destination plan identifying the names and contacts of hospitals, clinics, emergency services, supplier emergency leadership and contacts. Also the creation of a guest "status check-in" process during a disruption event creates the ability to take a census of status and location of each guest.

Having a 'Plan B' ready for all major programmatic elements, working hand-inhand with the hotel and venue to consider alternative options, and knowing how to create VIP experiences out of delays or frustrations is the best way to turn around those pesky disruptive situations.

#### ON A LARGER SCALE

Since no meeting planner has a crystal ball, they should focus on having tools in place to handle the consequences of a possible event. These may include an internal handbook of emergency resources and strategies, understanding of a client's management hierarchy for decision making for financial, operational and PR decisions so the planner knows who to reach out to

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for what, and a communications tool to dialogue with guests for status and locations via their smart phones in real time.

Natural disasters, power outages, fire hazards and active shooters should all be planned for. However, if meals are being served at a meeting, it's important to prepare for foodborne illness and lifethreatening allergic reactions as well.

And, over the years, mass shootings, terrorism and bomb scares have taken a significant toll upon our society and instilled fear in many attendees when gathering at large venues–whether it is for a movie, a conference, a sporting event or a concert.

"Setting better policy, national standards and allocating funds that will provide safeguards, better security and better preparedness for the industry overall is critical," says Tim Heffernan, chief development officer at T3 Expo. "We fully support the idea of enhancing safety and security measures, but this will take money, resources and an active dialogue from many parties, including Congress." As Heffernan explains, T3 Expo, International Association of Exhibitions and Events, and its members have all been in discussions focused on increasing the physical security at events. The groups have been aligned with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to develop the Exhibitions and Meetings Safety and Security Initiative (EMSSI), which aligns convention center security guidelines with federal programs and the Department of Homeland Security/ Safety Act Office.

"This initiative will produce a comprehensive security benchmark helping create safer and more secure large-scale events," Heffernan says. "We need to step up venue security to provide immediate resources and funding. We need to look at investments in canine units for bomb threats, additional security around the perimeter and inside the events, and implementing metal detectors for other possible threats. Consumers are used to having bags scanned, we don't see this as any inconvenience, but as an assurance that our attendees are safe." "PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE THAT MEETING PLANNERS SHOULD FOCUS ON IS FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY. EVERYONE SHOULD BE TOLD WHERE THE NEAREST PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EXITS ARE LOCATED...."

#### -JACK PLAXE



Maura Keller is a freelance writer based in the Twin Cities.

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#### KEY RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Good crisis management know-how begins with diligent planning on the part of meeting professionals:



Know your audience. When planning ahead of time, the key element would be proper assessment of risk. Every meeting planner should have a good sense of who will be attending. Who will be meeting? A meeting for senior company leadership will require a different level of security from a meeting of lower-level staff. Also, a meeting being held by a controversial group may attract protests and demonstrations that will necessitate security and crisis management planning.



**Scout the location.** Know the entrances and exits well. Know potential hazards. Know who to turn to in the event of anything going on (emergencies, etc.). Try to book safe locations for venues. How far away are hospitals, fire departments and police stations? Is the building difficult to evacuate or at risk of a traffic jam?



**Prep.** Both the staff and the participants need to be briefed on the security measures that will be implemented. Providing people with a heads up is crucial, since it will let them be more comfortable. Bag searches, metal detectors, frisking, etc.—these are all practices which entail some amount of invasion of privacy and personal space.



**Gather intel.** What other events and meeting had recently taken place in this venue/area? What type of security was implemented? Were there any incidents? What can a planner learn from the achievements and/or mistakes of those who came before them?



**Plan for the best, expect the worse.** This is one thing that should not be forgotten, because if something could go wrong, it probably will. Ideally, a planner will have anticipated it. If not, the event may begin to spiral downwards rapidly.



**Establish a system for emergency communication.** This could be via text, cell phones, chats, social media, email or all of the above. You'll need to reach everyone quickly during a crisis, and hunting for contact information during an emergency could put people at risk. Review your safety and security plan with your meeting staff and with venue and vendors during any pre-conference meetings.



**Keep contacts.** Keep a comprehensive and organized list of internal and external contact information for each meeting. "If approved by attendees during registration process, ask for attendee emergency contact information," Palm says. "Include local contact information such as authorities, emergency rooms, pharmacies, CVBs and when to utilize each contact."

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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 Manitowoc, 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.

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#### **CONTACT INFORMATION:** Megan Bruckschen Contact: Phone: 920-686-3077 Address: 4221 Calumet Avenue, Manitowoc, WI 54220 E-mail: mbruckschen@manitowoc.info Website: www.manitowoc.info

COMMUNITY INFORMATION:

Population: 80,000 Number of hotel rooms: 1,000 Largest room block: 200 Largest meeting facility: 20,000 sq. feet Largest exhibit facility: 36,000 sq. feet Airport: Austin Straubel International, Green Bay DISTANCE FROM: Madison: 139 miles Milwaukee: 81 miles

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### The Informalist, Eau Claire

Haven't heard of this restaurant? There's a reason: it's new, located inside the Lismore Hotel Eau Claire — a DoubleTree by Hilton since 2016. A private dining room seats up to 30. "We call it 'the fishbowl,'" says Food and Beverage Director Alex van Oudenhove. "It's in the lobby of the hotel and it's got curtains and is glass-enclosed." Small groups can also dine in the 110-seat dining room.

Van Oudenhove and Joey Sieg, the restaurant's executive chef, recently began tapping into US Foods' new farm-to-table program, run out of the Twin Cities, which makes the job of transactions with farmers much easier. When the duo took over the restaurant, there were 88 vendors; now, it's less than 10. Another one-stop-shop order is with DragSmith Farms, an hour north of Eau Claire in Barron, which folds in other farms' harvest with orders. "That's been one of our biggest issues," says van Oudenhove. "We would love to buy from 25 different farms but from an office perspective, it's difficult, not to mention in the kitchen (due to the volume needed)."

Come fall, Sieg plans to create dishes incorporating corn, beets, kohlrabi, squash and peppers. One of his favorite creations is Southern-style hush puppies with sweet corn and poblano peppers. Square Roots Farm, a 10-minute drive from the hotel, grew a special corn varietal for the chefs. "We can go to him and say, 'What do you have? We'll take all of it,'" says Sieg. Lettuces and other salad greens come from Superior Fresh, a fish farm-greenhouse enterprise in Jackson County. "The product is amazing," says Van Oudenhove.

### Braise, Milwaukee

Located along what is becoming known as Milwaukee's Restaurant Row (South Second Street in Walker's Point), Braise's chef and owner, Dave Swanson, has championed local farmers for decades, even before opening his own place in 2011. Recently he's begun reaching out to Amish farmers, sending letters through the mail and hopes to bring more of their bounty into the menu soon.

Groups (between 40-90) can book a separate event space upstairs, which connects to a rooftop deck, home to the restaurant's beehive and garden. There is also the option to reserve an 18-seat area next to the bar, half of the dining area or a seven-seat table (with a curtain that can be closed for privacy).

"We're pretty flexible on how we can accommodate a group," says Swanson. While Braise is only open for dinner, lunches or brunches for small groups can be booked upon request.

Dining at Braise this fall and winter? This is prime time for meats as they are typically harvested in fall. "I think most people are versed in the seasonality of vegetables but they may not be in meat," says Swanson.

For groups, Braise can create a signature punch recipe and ladle it from antique punch bowls acquired from the antique market that used to be across the street. Otherwise, there's a roster of seasonal punch recipes to draw from, including last summer's rhubarb-based punch with strawberry tinctures. "It's a throwback to the punch days of the '50s and '60s," says Swanson.







### **Chives, Baileys Harbor**

In the quaint town of Baileys Harbor, just up the road from The Ridges Sanctuary, Chives' setting is almost as delicious as the food. The building's white-clapboard exterior hugs the street, up a flight of stairs; and two large picture windows frame Lake Michigan views.

Sprinkled throughout the fine-dining dinner menu are many farm-sourced items from the Northeast part of Wisconsin, including certified-organic beef cheeks from Waseda Farms (also in Baileys Harbor) and LaClare Family Creamery's (in Malone) award-winning cave-aged Chandoka cheese in the Wild Mushroom Pappardelle entree. The culinary career of chef-owner JR Schoenfeld—who opened the restaurant in 2014—actually began in similar resort destinations (including Denali National Park Hotel in Alaska) and he's found his stride in Door County. It's a true family business with his son Lucas, a certified sommelier, picking the wines; his daughter Jessa baking the breads and his son Nick, running RYE in Appleton with his wife. The family's other restaurants are Barringers Restaurant in Fish Creek and the original Chives in Suamico. JR's wife, Cindy, runs the office.

In town over the weekend? Sunday brunch is a treat, with items such as brioche French toast topped with vanilla custard and macerated berries and "fancy home fries" (French fries topped with a fried egg, cheddar and seasonal vegetables). Sartori MontAmore cheese is highlighted in the Simple Salad—watermelons, radishes and vegetable slaw.

### L'Etoile, Madison

One of Wisconsin's first farm-to-table restaurants, then chef-owner Odessa Piper opened the doors to this Capitol Square fine-dining spot in the 1970s, culling as many items as possible from the farmers market hosted on the square. When she retired in 2005, one of her chefs-Tory Miller-took over as executive chef/co-owner (with two other partners) and quickly made the restaurant his own, while still retaining Piper's vision. He also opened Estrellon, Graze and Sujeo, with similar farm-to-table mantras as L'Etoile. In 2012, Miller was crowned James Beard Award Best Chef: Midwest and competed on "Iron Chef Showdown" earlier this year (spoiler: he won).

But back to the food. There are two options at L'Etoile: an a-la-carte-style menu (first and second courses, and dessert selections) or the seven-course Chef's Tasting Menu. For wine lovers, the Chef's Tasting Menu is a must because the pairings (additional \$55) with items like Fox Heritage Farms pork belly (from nearby Fitchburg) with blueberries, bacon and basil; or Blue Valley Gardens duck confit (from nearby Mount Horeb) with red currants and wild chamomile are teachable moments for any home chef. Occasionally, L'Etoile hosts wine dinners that are just as farm-to-table in concept as its daily menu. This includes a recent Italian-wines dinner where Dreamfarm goat cheese from Cross Plains was used in a dish with Pinn-Oak Ridge Farm lamb's guarter (from Delavan), paired with an Amarone wine.





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### Carmella's an Italian Bistro, Appleton

At first glance, you might not think this family-owned Italian restaurant tucked into a strip mall near Fox Valley Mall could be a major player in the farm-to-table dining game, but think again. Current owner Kristen DeFranza draws from her family's previous experience running a restaurant just north of New York City, a story that the entryway's framed black-and-white photos unspool. That restaurant dated back to the 1920s. The current chapter is in Appleton.

DeFranza supports as many local farmers as she can when sourcing for the menu, whether it's fresh herbs, cheese, meats (such as Whistleberry Farm's pork chops, located in the Fox River Valley) or produce. One of the most popular items on the menu is peppercorn-dusted sea scallops. Pastas are all made in-house, a testament to the quality and attention to the lunch and dinner menus.

A group with up to 27 people can comfortably fit in a private room, which includes a bar, and there's an option to use a set menu of six items, not the entire menu, to streamline the ordering process. Sold at the restaurant is a line of bottled sauces, the perfect souvenir to remember one's time in Appleton.



Kristine Hansen is a freelance writer based in the Milwaukee area.

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# **Making History** HOTEL VENUES THAT WILL TAKE YOUR GUESTS BACK IN TIME

By Nancy A. Herrick

A successful corporate event can be informational, educational and even inspirational. If you choose the right venue, it could be historical, too.

Most full-service hotels across Wisconsin offer event space that accommodates a range of needs. Here are five that stand apart, however, by taking a page from the past. They provide up-to-date amenities in a setting that hearkens back to another era. ы

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### The American Club, Kohler

In many ways the American Club in Kohler is a story of the American Dream. The Kohler Co. began as a manufacturer of plumbing fixtures and has grown into a multifaceted global group of well-known brands. It was founded by John Michael Kohler in 1873, in this small community about an hour north of Milwaukee and just west of Sheboygan.

"Sheboygan was a small community and didn't have enough workers for the Kohler factory, so he sought out foreign workers," explains Christine Loose, group director for lodging for the American Club. "When they came over from Europe, he built a dormitory in 1918 that provided a place for them to live, three square meals a day and a hot shower."

The company also provided English lessons, instruction about citizenship and more than adequate wages for the time.

"Kohler and his family originally were immigrants, too, from Austria. And John Michael Kohler wanted to offer others a better life and to be able to participate in the American Dream," Loose says.

In 1981, another vision was realized. The immigrants' former dormitory was converted into a full-service boutique hotel that has achieved Five Star and Five Diamond ratings and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The impressive complex also includes a destination spa, health and racquet club, design center, access to nationally known golf courses and a 500-acre wilderness preserve.

The 241 guest rooms include 186 in the original dormitory building and another 55 at the Carriage House. Each room is different and distinctive and, not surprisingly, many boast spa showers, whirlpool tubs and more.

Meeting facilities are abundant, ranging from the Founder's Board Room that accommodates 14 to the Grand Hall of the Great Lakes, which totals 7,500 square feet that can be divided into spaces ranging from 720 to 2,300 square feet. The Appley Theater offers 2,100 square feet of tiered seating for up to 88.

More unusual settings for meetings include the Kohler Co. pottery center, hangar and office building, Loose says.

There are five food and beverage venues on site and the banquet staff can serve up to 850 people at a time.

The American Club recently underwent a major upgrade to its parking garage and adjacent spaces in anticipation of its centennial, and beyond. It will take its place in the international spotlight when it serves as host for the Ryder Cup golf competition at nearby Whistling Straits (also a Kohler Co. property) in 2020.

The resort keeps an eye toward the past, too.

"We offer tours to guests that tell the story of how we came to be," Loose says. "For our centennial we have converted space in our library into a display that speaks to our history. Plus the entire lower level of the Design Center tells the story of how the company started and grew into what it is now."

If you love history and are planning a visit, Loose says, "be sure to visit Waelderhaus, a replica of the type of home the Kohlers came from in Austria. It's within walking distance."

#### The Pfister Hotel, Milwaukee

The Pfister is considered by most to be Milwaukee's premier hotel. Celebrating its 125th year, this grand establishment features bronze lions imported from Rome, a four-story frescoed ceiling, massive marble columns and a grand staircase - and that's just in the lobby! It also boasts what is considered to be one of the world's largest Victorian art collections located in a hotel.

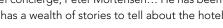
Almost all of the U.S. presidents from the past century until today - from McKinley (who referred to The Pfister as the "western White House") to Trump - have stayed there. Most professional sports teams have stayed at The Pfister, and so have many famous bands and musicians who play in Milwaukee while on tour. In fact, Elvis has both entered and left this building. The hotel keeps the presence of luminaries a secret and is careful to protect their privacy.

Of The Pfister's 307 guest rooms, 122 are in the original historic building and another 185 are in the tower that was added in 1962.

Most of the meeting rooms are concentrated on the seventh floor and can be configured in multiple ways, from 400 square feet to 9,000 square feet in the Imperial Ballroom for weddings, galas and annual meetings.

"Milwaukee has become a respected destination in the Midwest and we hold events representing local, statewide, national and even international entities," says Sarah Banach, account manager for Marcus Hotels and Resorts, which owns The Pfister. "We can accommodate groups ranging from as few as 10 to up to 700 people."

If you love history and are planning a visit, Banach recommends guests "talk to our chief concierge, Peter Mortensen... He has been with The Pfister since 1986 and has a wealth of stories to tell about the hotel and its past."











### Hotel Retlaw, Fond du Lac

Legendary Hotels bought Hotel Retlaw out of receivership two years ago and is spending \$25 million to return this downtown Fond du Lac charmer to its past glory – and then some.

Built in 1923, the hotel was "quite magnificent," says Steve Frantz, a principalpartner in the new owner group. It was built by Walter Schroeder of the Schroeder chain.

"He was a self-made millionaire and the Hotel Retlaw was his baby," Frantz says. "Its name is 'Walter' spelled backwards."

But the only hotel in downtown Fond du Lac had fallen on hard times and was closed in December of 2015.

Legendary Hotels is benefiting from the support of the Fond du Lac community as well as state and federal sources that have provided funding and historic oversight for the renovation.

"We are very cognizant of the hotel's history," says Frantz. "Eleanor Roosevelt, JFK, Jack Dempsey and others stayed here. We are preserving all that we can,

including the wood flooring and tile work. The chandelier from the Crystal Ballroom is being restored right now."

When it opens in December, the hotel will have 127 rooms, most of which will be single kings, with some double gueen rooms. The original footprint remains, except on the eighth floor, which will have signature suites.

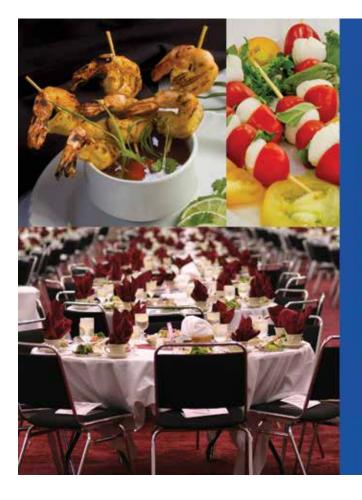
Frantz says he anticipates the meeting facilities will draw from around Wisconsin and the Midwest

"We are an hour from Milwaukee, Madison and Green Bay and will be the only Four Star, full-service luxury hotel in the area," he says.

The nearly 10,000 square feet of meeting space will include the Crystal Ballroom plus breakout areas, all on the second floor.

"We will offer state-of-the-art technology amid an old world atmosphere," he says.

If you love history and are planning a visit, Frantz says, "be sure to check out the mailbox in the lobby. It's original, it's polished brass and it's a perfect reflection of the era when the Hotel Retlaw came to be."



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### The Charmant Hotel, La Crosse

One of Wisconsin's most unusual hotels, The Charmant is a former candy factory where premium chocolates were manufactured starting in 1898. With the original wood flooring, beams and brick walls intact, it is said that the sweet scent lingers.

Now a 67-room luxury boutique hotel, The Charmant overlooks Riverside Park and the Mississippi River. Its downtown location is just a short walk to dining, shops and the La Crosse Center, where conventions and expos are held.

"We've been recognized as one of the top 25 hotels in the nation by Trip Advisor's Travelers' Choice awards and that's an accolade that means a lot to us," says Stacy Erickson, director of sales for The Charmant. "Experienced travelers who have stayed with us tell us you could take our hotel and drop it in the middle of Chicago or Minneapolis and it would fit right in."

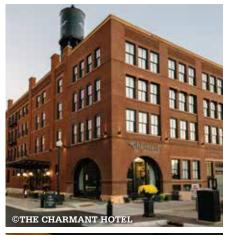
While moving forward, the building's transformation didn't forget about its past. The color scheme replicates the colors of the original candy boxes and the hue on the original wood flooring is said to be a mix of spilled molasses and other chocolate ingredients.

There are eight room styles, including standard kings, two gueen beds and some suites. Many rooms have river views and some have walk-out balconies.

Just 150 miles or so from Madison and Minneapolis, the hotel also is a half-day's drive or so from Milwaukee, Green Bay and the Fox Cities. "We are a central hub and can draw from many larger metro areas," says Erickson, "so when it comes to corporate meetings and events, our location works to our advantage."

Meeting spaces include the Royal Crown boardroom that seats 14 and the Serenada, which holds up to 50 for receptions and theater-style events. The restaurant, which serves French-inspired cuisine, can accommodate 75 for a sit-down meal and a private dining room seats 12. A rooftop terrace also is available.

If you love history and are planning to visit The Charmant, Erickson says, "be sure to check out the original elevator bell between the lobby and the parlor. It is another special remnant from the original factory."







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### **Maxwell Mansion, Lake Geneva**

This small hotel incorporates Lake Geneva's first mansion, its carriage house and stables.

It was built in 1856 for Dr. Phillip Maxwell, an Army doctor from Chicago, whose name also was lent to Maxwell Street in that city. He performed surgery in the basement of the mansion, which originally was on the shore of Lake Geneva but now is a block or so away from the water.

It has six guest rooms in the main house and another 20 rooms in the stable and carriage house, with heated floors and steam showers.

Architecture buffs will appreciate the original hardwood floors, high ceilings, elegant windows and sweeping staircases.

Meetings can be held in the Crystal Ballroom on the main floor, which accommodates 40 or 50 participants, says Lisa Steagall, a member of Maxwell Mansion's hospitality staff. Maxwell Mansion's sister hotel, Baker House, is another historic gem that offers lodging and meeting space. Just a short walk away, it is right on the water.

Bygone glimpse: If you love history and are planning to visit Maxwell Mansion, Steagall says, "be sure to check out the mantel in the main lobby, which was owned by John Walker, who developed Johnnie Walker scotch. It was once in his home in Scotland. It has been placed over the original marble mantel, which is still visible."



Nancy A. Herrick is the former Travel Editor for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel who is now a freelance writer and editor in Milwaukee.

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