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# FEATURES

- 16 **DESTINATION: GREEN BAY**  
TITLETOWN HAS A NEW TITLE THESE DAYS — A CITY PERFECT FOR MEETINGS AND EVENTS — DUE TO ITS MYRIAD VENUES AND SELECTION OF WIDE-RANGING ACTIVITIES.
- 24 **MEETING ON THE WATER**  
MEETING ON THE WATER PROVIDES PLENTIFUL LAKEFRONT VIEWS.
- 29 **HOW TO AVOID DROWNING IN A SEA OF DATA**  
DIGITAL AND HYBRID EVENTS AMASS VOLUMES OF DATA THAT, WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS, CAN HELP PLANNERS CONTINUALLY IMPROVE EVENTS.

# DEPARTMENTS

- 8 **IN THE NEWS**  
Briefs on the latest happenings in the meetings and events industry.
- 10 **VENUE SPOTLIGHT**  
**A Winning Event Venue**  
Beloit's ABC Supply Stadium hits a home run with well-appointed spaces for meetings and events.
- 12 **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**Forgiving the Forgetful Brain**  
Science reveals new insights into forgetting and how to remember better.
- 14 **PLANNER BASICS**  
**Budget Friendly Tips**  
These ideas can help prepare you to expect the unexpected in a current climate of economic uncertainty.
- 33 **ADVERTISER INDEX**
- 34 **PLANNER PROFILE**  
**Understanding the Big Picture**  
Rebecca Staats takes the reins at Meeting Professionals International-Wisconsin.

22 **DESTINATION SHOWCASE**  
**FOX CITIES CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU AND EXPLORE LA CROSSE**

On the Cover:  
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## EDITOR'S LETTER

For me, summer in Wisconsin always conjures up visions of crystal-blue lakes and streams, pristine beaches, picturesque lakeshores and toes in the sand. Whether your meeting and event goes like to take their water with a side of action or relaxation, the state boasts of more than 15,000 lakes for swimming, boating, skiing, fishing or simply relaxing. But Wisconsin offers more than lakeside venues. From cruises to water parks to fishing charters, there's a flurry of activities to

round out your meeting, event or outing on the water. Check out Page 24 for some suggestions.

Speaking of meeting on the water, Green Bay, the third largest city in Wisconsin, forms part of the shoreline of Lake Michigan, and it has a ton to offer meeting and event planners. Infamous as the home of the Packers football team at Lambeau Field, the Frozen Tundra, of course, lures football fans far and wide. But that isn't the only venue for which the city's known. From traditional to creative, Green Bay has a vast array of places to host your group. Our Destination Profile on Page 16 lists just a few of the city's gems.

Another quality about Green Bay that planners like is that it has options for not only extravagant fundraisers and galas, but more budget-friendly events, too. In fact, as product shortages plague the industry and inflation hovers around 8.3%, budgeting is becoming ever more critical in the meetings and events world. Fortunately, Kristen McGuire, CMP, the executive director at Executive Director Inc., has some cost-saving tips for planners trying to maximize their meeting or event's impact on a budget on Page 14. Hint: Are your registration fees too low?

While it's always beneficial to brush up on your budgeting skills, planners should not forget about upskilling their digital proficiencies either. Yes, groups are getting increasingly comfortable meeting in person, but hybrid and digital events are here to stay, and even becoming a cornerstone of some organizations' diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies. In addition to meeting the demand for these online events, planners can benefit from the data that they generate about their audience, producing metrics on registration, materials downloads, engagement, video views and Q&A questions. In pursuit of continuous improvement, as many planners are, analyzing this data can help enhance your next meeting or event. Read more on Page 29.

Who knows? Perhaps the data will lead you to book your next meeting or event on the water in Green Bay after paging through this issue... Have a fantastic summer and as always, enjoy the read!

Best,

Carrie Mantey  
Editor  
cmantey@ntmediagroup.com



If you're looking for the best meeting venues and suppliers Wisconsin has to offer, check out [wisconsinmeetings.com](http://wisconsinmeetings.com) to better plan your next event.



*Although many restrictions have been lifted in the state, please note that some facilities highlighted in this issue may still be operating on limited hours or temporarily closed. Please contact each facility directly to confirm schedules and availability.*

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state-of-the-art visitor center and office. Notable additions to the center include video displays and modern visitor amenities like charging stations, while the office space features multiple collaboration spaces for staff use.

“We are so pleased with our new location and office,” says Maddie Uhlenbrauck, marketing communications manager, Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau. “Many of our visitors have been complimenting the modern, state-of-the-art visitor center and they especially enjoy the easy-to-access location. We are confident the new location will serve us well for many years to come as we continue to welcome a growing number of tourists to the Fox Cities.”

Remaining near I-41 and Appleton International Airport were key components of the relocation planning, as both are major contributors to visitor center traffic. The traffic flow at the College Avenue/Nicolet Road intersection will allow for easier navigation to the Visitor Center, something visitors unfamiliar with the area will appreciate.

According to the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau, its board of directors understood and supported the need for a better location and upgraded space. “As the first point of contact for many travelers entering the area, it’s important for the Fox Cities Visitor Center to provide a high-quality first impression of our region,” confirms Amanda Hedtke, Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau board chair and general manager of the Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Appleton.

## WILDERNESS RESORT UPGRADE

**Wilderness Resort** in Wisconsin Dells is renovating all of its 446 guest rooms with new paint, flooring, furniture, artwork, televisions and more. Work will be completed in late 2022.

You may also want to check out the new escape room, Mission: Mars, coming to Wilderness on the Lake this summer. Participants journey to Mars to recover the 2004 NASA Rover Opportunity’s memory box and repair the rover. Participants have 30 minutes to complete the challenge. [WWM](#)



## NEW VENUES IN THE DEER DISTRICT

**FPC Live**, a Wisconsin-based promoter and venue operator, will open two new concert venues in the Deer District in late 2023 in a joint venture with the Milwaukee Bucks. Construction on these two venues, one with an approximate capacity of 4,000 and the other with an estimated capacity of 800, is slated to begin later this year and will be located in the northeast section of the former Bradley Center.

“Our venues will host concerts and other entertainment programming, as well as private events (such as weddings, corporate gatherings, community events and more),” confirms Crystal McDaniels, vice president of marketing at FPC Live. FPC Live estimates these venues will host more than 135 events per year, bringing an additional 200,000 fans annually to downtown Milwaukee, positively impacting local businesses.

Michael Belot, senior vice president of Bucks Ventures and Development, says, “The Deer District serves as a destination that’s redefining downtown Milwaukee and bringing two new venues to Deer District will continue to solidify it as Milwaukee’s premiere location for entertainment.”

## FOX CITIES CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU RELOCATES

The **Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau** relocated its office and Visitor Center to 213 S. Nicolet Road in Appleton after extensive renovations were completed in late 2021. The goal of the relocation was twofold: enhance the visitor experience in the Fox Cities and improve ease of access to the Visitor Center.

Formerly a restaurant, the 5,500-square-foot space was completely redesigned into a modern,





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## VENUE SPOTLIGHT

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# A WINNING EVENT VENUE

BELOIT'S ABC SUPPLY STADIUM HITS A HOME RUN WITH WELL-APPOINTED SPACES FOR MEETINGS AND EVENTS.

BY RONNIE WENDT

If you want to integrate the all-American attributes of baseball and hot dogs at your next meeting or event, Beloit knocks it out of the park with its new ABC Supply Stadium. The privately financed \$37 million field opened last summer and the Beloit Sky Carp, the High-A Central affiliate of the Miami Marlins, is now playing its first full season.

"But this facility isn't just about baseball," notes Maria Valentyn, vice president of entertainment at ABC Supply Stadium, "we are an event center — great for outdoor events in the summer, but with beautiful indoor facilities in the winter as well."

The multipurpose building in downtown Beloit features a state-of-the-art ball field and stadium, with a 3,500 game-day capacity; two 1,245-square-foot clubhouses; a 575-square-foot player lounge; a right-field party deck; and outfield group areas — all of which planners can rent for events. A meeting on the field itself can fit up to 3,000 people!

The facility's Beloit Health System Stadium Club features a 5,000-square-foot, open-concept luxury club, an outdoor balcony and indoor seating, retractable floor-to-ceiling windows and views of the Rock River. "This area can comfortably hold up 250 people," says Valentyn.

On the opposite side of the stadium, the First National Bank & Trust Group Suites can

accommodate 100 guests total. They feature outdoor balcony seating, luxury indoor seating and retractable floor-to-ceiling garage doors, too.

ABC Supply services all these spaces with a full menu of food and beverages dished up by chefs from Geronimo Hospitality, which operates several restaurants in the city, including Merrill & Houston's Steak Joint, truk't, Lucy's #7 Burger Bar and The Rooftop at Hotel Goodwin. "We're not just a burger and hot dog place," Valentyn confirms. "We can do everything from steak and lobster to hot dogs and sliders to peanuts and Cracker Jack." Even traditional baseball fare comes with a twist, she adds. A recent board dinner had entrées themed after different U.S. ballparks: Chicago dogs for Wrigley Field, clam chowder for Fenway Park and sushi for Yankee Stadium.

Furthermore, planners can thrill guests with company messaging on a 40-by-40-foot video board in the outfield. They can also control hundreds of TVs throughout the ballpark for messaging or livestreaming events with the stadium's five event cameras. The on-site audio system lets organizers talk to attendees as far away as the parking lot. "We can control exactly where people see and hear you," Valentyn explains.

Host an event on game day and let guests attend a game after the meeting ends. ABC Supply Stadium offers several hospitality options that include baseball tickets, and food and beverage options. Attendees can get branded team gear at the Beloit Sky Carp team shop or make other purchases during the event's "seventh inning stretch."

"On non-game days, groups can take batting practice," Valentyn adds. "We set up the whole field for them to practice and compete. It's a great team builder. We can also include stadium tours. These are fun ways to cap off an event."

"ABC Supply, a roofing supply company, hosted its Founder's Day event here for 3,000 people," Valentyn says. "They had a rock wall, bouncy houses and a party deck on the field. We had an ice-skating rink in the field this winter, and will host concerts and movie nights this summer. We can even orchestrate fireworks and light shows. Tell us what you want to do. The options are endless here." **WWM**



*Ronnie Wendt is a freelance writer based in Waukesha, Wisconsin.*



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## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

# FORGIVING THE FORGETFUL BRAIN

SCIENCE REVEALS NEW INSIGHTS INTO FORGETTING AND HOW TO REMEMBER BETTER.

BY MOLLY ROSE TEUKE

---

*"What is memory without forgetting?  
To have proper memory function,  
you have to have forgetting."  
— Oliver Hardt,  
McGill University*

Where's my phone? I can't find my glasses. What is her name again? How could I forget to call my mother?! Such is daily life in the fast lane. It seems that our busy lives leave us ever more prone to forgetfulness and that can be annoying.

Yet, what if forgetting served a purpose? What if it were, in Hardt's words, "not a failure of memory, but a function of it?" Hardt, a cognitive psychologist studying the neurobiology of memory at Montreal's McGill University, is not alone in starting to give forgetting some respect. Daniel Schacter, author of "The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers," believes our memory system, for all its foibles, is highly adaptive. In his research at Harvard University, he views memory flaws as "the cost we pay for benefits in memory that make it work as well as it does most of the time."

In a counterintuitive quirk of memory, recalling something you've forgotten is more than just a memory replay. Recall strengthens the memory, making it easier to recall the next time. This has significant implications for learning, which we'll address in an upcoming column.

### TRANSIENCE

Most relevant for daily life are Schacter's first three sins of memory, which he catalogs as sins of omission. First is transience, the loss of memory over time. One way to fight transient memory loss is to spend time recalling an experience or information after you've begun encoding it. If you want to remember every detail of your daughter's wedding, devote time to "rehearsing" the experience after the fact. Describe it to someone because every detail you recall and describe will be more deeply written into your memory and take longer to fade.

### ABSENT-MINDEDNESS

Schacter's second sin is absent-mindedness — the "Where did I set my keys?" The real sin here is lack of attention. Chances are you don't remember where you put them because you never made the memory in the first place. You set them down without thinking — no wonder you can't find them. The solution is to pay attention. A workaround is to create a habit for where you set certain things. If you routinely set your keys in one specific spot, for example, it's easier to find them when you need them.

### BLOCKING

The third sin is what Schacter calls blocking and we all do it. You bump into someone at the grocery store and can't remember the person's name. You can picture her at the parent-teacher organization meeting where you met her; you can picture her kids and even her husband. You know she's from Nebraska. But you cannot remember her name. There's no easy solution to this one. The important thing is that it's a universal memory glitch. When it happens, remind yourself that it's totally normal.



## INFORMATION BLIZZARD

Imagine for a moment that forgetting never happens to you, that you are able to recall every bit of knowledge and experience gained over your lifetime. Before you celebrate, consider a man named Solomon Shereshevskii who was born in 1886. He had a seemingly unlimited capacity to store and retrieve memories. Given complex mathematical formulas or long lists, he recited them flawlessly hours, days or weeks later — in one instance, even 15 years later.

In his book, "Brain Rules," molecular biologist John Medina describes Shereshevskii as "living in a permanent snowstorm [of] blinding flakes of unrelated sensory information." Adrift in this blizzard, he was unable to see patterns or make meaning of anything, and it severely impaired his ability to function well in daily life.

## TWO KEYS TO MEMORY

There are two aspects of how we remember that help explain the vagaries of memory. First is storage strength: how deeply you encode information (declarative memory) or experience (episodic memory). Second is retrieval strength: how quickly you are able to recall the information or experience.

To get a sense of how these two strengths interplay, bring to mind your childhood address. Chances are good that bit of information has high storage strength, meaning you know it really well. If you haven't thought of it in years, however, it may have relatively low retrieval strength and it may take you a moment to recall it. Now imagine you're staying in a hotel. What's your room number? Chances are this bit of information has low storage strength in that you haven't deeply encoded it — why would you? But it has high retrieval (recall) strength because it's brand-new and relevant, at least until you check out. The following week, that room number is likely to have both low storage and retrieval strength.

## IT'S ALL ABOUT TOMORROW — AND TONIGHT

Schacter believes memory flaws are adaptive, especially when we draw on the past to predict and plan for the future. "We need to be able to recombine bits and pieces of our past experience to simulate novel upcoming events," he says. If your memory were one long tape recording of your life, it would be a lot tougher for your brain to pick out what's relevant for planning, or indeed, even for living life right now, today.

Every night, your brain makes sense of the vast tangle of information and experience you've loaded into it all day. It does the day's filing by culling the unimportant material and consolidating the rest into a framework that enables you to recall it the next day. How does it know what to pitch or keep? It notices where you focus your attention. If, say, you pay more attention to the joke you saw online (perhaps you even retell it a few times) and pay less attention to a bit of technical instruction, your brain is going to

make the joke easier to recall than the instruction. Attention is everything.

Your brain never takes a break. Research shows that insufficient or interrupted sleep makes it harder to recall something from the previous day. So what do we do with all this information? Pay attention to the important stuff and cut yourself some slack when you forget, knowing that your memory is just doing what memory does. But, if you want your memory to work a little better, get a good night's sleep. It will improve, guaranteed. **WML**



*Molly Rose Teuke has an enduring curiosity about what makes our brains tick. Pre-COVID-19, she offered a program for Nicolet College called Getting*

*Your Brain on Your Side and delivered brain-based leadership training for the NeuroLeadership Institute, a global leader in the performance arena. She also hosts a weekly classical music program on WXPB-FM. You can reach her at [mollyrose@mollyrosecoaching.com](mailto:mollyrose@mollyrosecoaching.com).*



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## PLANNER BASICS

# BUDGET FRIENDLY TIPS

THESE IDEAS CAN HELP PREPARE YOU TO EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED IN A CURRENT CLIMATE OF ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY.

BY RONNIE WENDT

Plans and budgets are musts in the meetings and events world, but today, these tasks are ever more critical as inflation hits 8.3%, and supply chain challenges and product shortages become the norm. Without solid planning and realistic budgets, planners may struggle to control costs while trying to meet event goals.

As an executive director for Executive Director Inc., Kristen McGuire, CMP, oversees meeting planning for the Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (AAEA). “Our budget has increased significantly,” she says. “Being a nonprofit, the current budget climate has been especially challenging.”

To address some of these increased costs, McGuire started walking AAEA board members through the challenges that lie before them. Then they set and prioritized event goals together. Hybrid and virtual meetings, technology needs and event cancellation insurance rose to the top of their prioritized budget list — all of which have much higher price tags than before the pandemic.

According to McGuire, it’s also harder to find sponsors or fundraise outside the organization: “Sponsorship dollars are not there, so where do you get funds to cover additional costs without them?” Her advice to other planners facing similar budgetary pressures is to “plan and

budget for the unexpected. Things will shift and change dramatically in the days, weeks and months before a meeting. Be ready to pivot.”

McGuire then offers five tips to help peers keep costs in check.

### 1. CONSIDER YOUR CONTRACTS

Roles have reversed from when the pandemic first strangled the meetings and events industry. Today, with space in sudden demand and prices at a premium, venues have the upper hand.

The AAEA books meetings five years out. The association inks these contracts based on the situation at the time. But now some association members remain uneasy with in-person events and attendance is down. “You may do a virtual or hybrid option to meet their needs, but you also have to consider your bottom line,” she says. “You are still on the hook for these contracts, and hotels and venues are now less flexible with contract obligations.”

Most hotels and venues set prices a year out. “Make sure they put those prices in writing in the contract itself. You can at least get pricing fixed as of a certain date so they cannot come to you a month out with a price increase,” suggests McGuire.

### 2. GET INVENTIVE WITH F&B

According to research from the Professional Convention Management Association, food and beverage represents 36% of all in-person event expenses. Here, McGuire says, “Get creative.” Incorporating food that is in season, buying in bulk or offering a buffet rather than a sit-down dinner can all save money. But the choices are not always this cut and dry.





pricing, and now charges the same price for virtual/hybrid and in-person attendees. McGuire explains virtual and hybrid meetings can cost more than in-person events, but the benefits of attendance remain the same.

To help gain acceptance, the AAEA's board president drafted a letter explaining the price increase and sent it to members. "The letter was open and transparent. She explained the cost of holding a meeting and noted the association was eating some costs. She added that, in order to ensure we offer a great experience, we had to pass costs on to them," according to McGuire.

#### 4. ACCOUNT FOR LAST-MINUTE COSTS

Keep a reserve fund to cover any last-minute expenses that were not budgeted. Increase the amount held in this account over previous years. "When the unexpected happens, you can dip into that pool of money," McGuire says. "It's critical to have reserve funds available so you have some flexibility."

*Without solid planning and realistic budgets, planners may struggle to control costs while trying to meet event goals.*

#### 5. PAD THE BUDGET

Though a conservative budget is always best, McGuire also proposes slightly padding budget numbers to cover higher costs during this unpredictable time. "Putting a little extra in the budget prepares you for the worst-case scenario," she confirms.

Inflation and supply chain challenges complicate setting realistic event budgets, but pragmatic planners use realistic numbers with an emergency fund built in to pivot as challenges arise. **WM**

McGuire also recommends talking openly and working together with vendors. "Say, 'This is my budget. Is there something we can do to get creative with the menu?'" she advises.

#### 3. INCREASE REGISTRATION FEES

Increasing registration fees can offset higher prices. The AAEA raised its event



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— DESTINATION —

# *Green Bay*

TITLETOWN HAS A NEW TITLE THESE DAYS — THE PERFECT CITY FOR MEETINGS AND EVENTS — DUE TO ITS MYRIAD VENUES AND SELECTION OF WIDE-RANGING ACTIVITIES.

By Shelby Deering



©LODGE KOHLER

**T**here are some places in Wisconsin that are far more than what they are known for and Green Bay fits that bill. Everyone knows that it's the Green Bay Packers' hometown, which is naturally steeped in football history and green-and-gold everything. But it's also a city that offers a diverse array of experiences, award-winning restaurants and meeting spaces galore — otherwise known as a dream for planners. Black-tie gala? Fundraiser? Seminar? You can do it all in this Wisconsin destination.

"Green Bay offers a variety of unique and memorable options for meetings or events to be held in our city," according to Beth Ulatowski, vice

president of sales and services at **Discover Green Bay**. "With a legendary history and a vibrant cultural scene, Green Bay offers the traditional meeting options in our hotel and convention facilities, but also provides one-of-a-kind venue options."

Above and beyond selecting a venue, however, Discover Green Bay says it's a "one-stop shop" when it comes to planning events. "We are here to assist you and help make your event a success. We also work closely with all the partners in the area, so we can help you think outside the box," explains Ulatowski. One of those experiences that the convention and visitors bureau offers is helping schedule former Packers to appear at events.





In addition to its charming location on the water and its rich athletic heritage, Green Bay is considered by many industry professionals to be a budget-friendly destination for events. "With Green Bay's numerous industries and diverse corporate landscape, it has a wide range of meeting venues to fit every event style and budget," confirms Megan Lehmann, director of community relations at **The Automobile Gallery & Event Center**. "Green Bay can accommodate the economical, more basic meeting all the way to the customized, white-glove event experience."

Planners agree that Green Bay is a great place to hold events and another reason for that is its location. Janice Mashak, vice president of member services and innovation at LeadingAge Wisconsin, has planned annual conferences

at the **KI Convention Center** for several years. She says, "The location is easily accessible for our attendees coming from throughout the state, as well as for vendors and presenters coming from across the country. Green Bay keeps our attendees happy and that works for me."

The city is "a convenient destination for exploring the heart of the Midwest," concurs Shawn Dortman, general manager of **Lodge Kohler**.

Rob Weise, the director of student and family ministry and district events at the Forest Lakes District Evangelical Free Church of America, who has held several youth group events at the KI Convention Center, agrees with Mashak. He says, "Planning an event and working with Green Bay has been



©LODGE KOHLER



©RESCH EXPO

a pleasure — from the city to the convention and visitors bureau to the hotels to the food.”

### Versatile Venues

**Resch Expo**, which is directly across from **Lambeau Field**, is no stranger to large-scale wedding shows, beer festivals and concerts — and it’s a fantastic place to hold private events. This state-of-the-art venue is brand-new, opened in January 2021 with an ability to “handle meetings of any size,” according to Terry Charles, senior manager of corporate communications at PMI Entertainment Group. Six meeting suites have independent audiovisual equipment, temperature controls and large-screen video boards for presentations. For large meetings or events, one or more

halls can be made available with over 40,000 square feet of space.

**Radisson Hotel & Conference Center Green Bay** is another traditional venue, but with 30,000 square feet of modern event space. Board rooms are available for smaller gatherings or breakout sessions. During any downtime, groups can head to the adjacent **Oneida Casino** to try their luck.

For a unique and nostalgic meeting experience, look no further than The Automobile Gallery & Event Center, with its location next to the Fox River and impressive collector vehicles on display. Lehmann says that guests are wowed as they walk down a memory lane paved with more than 100 years

of car history. The event center can accommodate 20 participants with board room seating and up to 160 with banquet seating. Furthermore, events at The Automobile Gallery come ready with Wi-Fi access, audiovisual and presentation equipment, music streamed throughout the gallery, tables, chairs, linens, centerpieces, private access to the entire gallery campus, a full catering kitchen and a fully stocked bar.

With over 80,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, the **KI Convention Center** attached to the **Hyatt Regency Green Bay** is convenient for meetings, since participants can sleep and meet in the same space. The hotel handles all the food and catering for the KI Center, and additionally offers amenities like all-suite guest rooms, a hot tub and steam room, and Starbucks coffee.

As Green Bay’s first AAA Four-Diamond-rated hotel, Lodge Kohler’s meeting rooms and amenities are grand, and accompany the best Lambeau views in town. Dortman shares that, apart from 134 luxe guest rooms, Kohler Waters Spa and Taverne in the Sky panoramic bar, the property also features two private dining rooms with audiovisual equipment that can accommodate up to 20 people each. Outfitted with fire pits, the Sky Terrace is perfect for group gatherings of up to 50, while the Tower, located in Taverne in the Sky, is a semiprivate environment for group dinners for up to 40.



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And last but not least, what's a trip to Green Bay without a visit to the Frozen Tundra? You can plan an event at Lambeau Field itself. Pat Cavanaugh, event sales and service manager, says that, with over 20 event spaces, the landmark can accommodate group sizes from five to more than 1,000, with all food prepared on-site. "Lambeau Field has a series of exciting amenities for guests," Cavanaugh says. "In addition to the state-of-the-art Hall of Fame and private stadium tour options, Lambeau Field boasts one of the largest pro shops in all of professional sports. And many of our event guests will experience the full Lambeau Experience, which includes coming out of the tunnel."



## Bites and Brews

The area has no shortage of customary, and beloved, Wisconsin eats. Think locally crafted beer and stick-to-your-ribs fare. The recently completed Titletown District next to Lambeau presents several great eateries, like **Hinterland Brewery and Restaurant**, famous for its on-site-made brews and equally delicious appetizers, or **The Turn**, ideal for a fun group experience with its virtual interactive suites featuring golf and hockey. (And don't forget to try the cheese curds!) Green Bay also offers plenty of on-the-water dining, like **Hagemeister Park** with its 4,000-square-foot patio overlooking the Fox River, or **Fox Harbor Pub and Grill** that serves up seafood, steak and everything in between.

## Water and Beyond

Since Green Bay is centrally located between the waters of Lake Michigan and the Fox River, there's an abundance of water-centric activities in the area for your participants to enjoy. Walk alongside the river at the **CityDeck** promenade or hit the water with a rented kayak. Or for a fun waterside activity that'll bring your guests right back to their childhoods, head to **Bay Beach Amusement Park** and its famed rides. Just four blocks from Lambeau Field in the Stadium District is a 30,000-square-foot aquatic playground at the **Tundra Lodge Resort Waterpark & Conference Center**. The venue is also fully wired to meet the needs of meeting planners with over 18,000 square feet of conference space, with two grand ballrooms and 15 meeting rooms.

To appreciate the outdoors, meander around the stunning **Green Bay Botanical Garden** or visit the rescued animals, from owls to otters, at **Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary**. No trip to the city is complete without a jaunt around the Titletown District, showcasing its own football field, skating rink and tubing hill in the winter.

And this is just scratching the surface of all that Green Bay has to offer your event participants. Ulatowski puts it best when she says, "We are continually told by meeting and event planners how surprised they are by the offerings Green Bay provides, and how friendly and welcoming our people are. We invite you to experience it for yourself." **WM**



*Shelby Deering is a Madison-based lifestyle writer contributing to national and regional publications, such as Country Living, Good Housekeeping and Experience Wisconsin.*



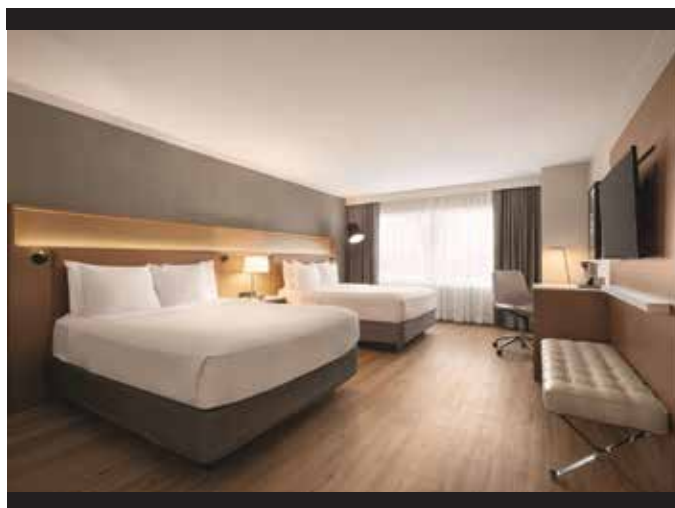


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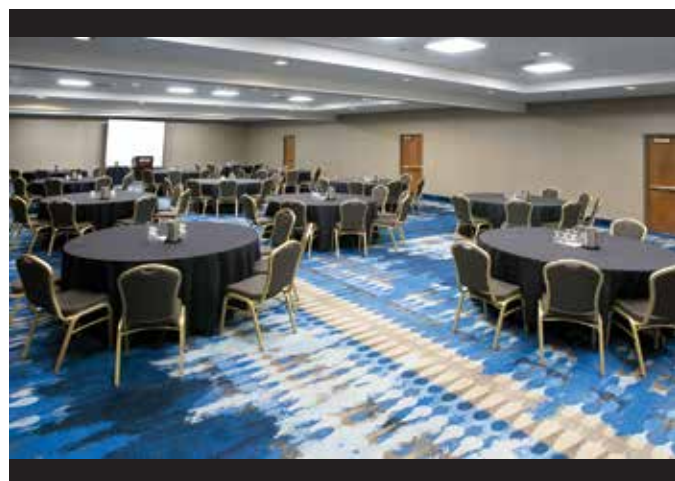
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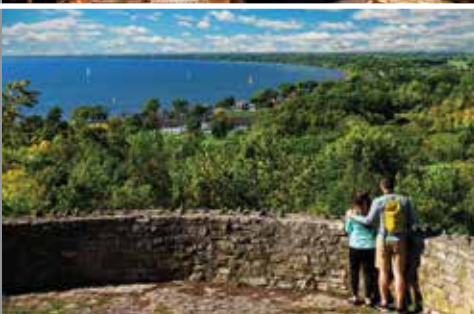
For the best of everything the waterfront has to offer, consider hosting your next event in Appleton's Riverheath community. Built on the banks of the Fox River, the Courtyard by Marriott Appleton Riverfront has both meeting space and lodging just steps from the water. Neighboring the Courtyard is Poplar Hall, a brand-new customizable event space that can seat up to 180. When the work is done, hop aboard the River Tyme Tours canal boat that docks in Riverheath for a guided sunset cruise down the Fox River. Looking for riverfront dining to cap things off? We've got that, too. Groups are always welcome at River Tyme Bistro, Fratellos, and Pullmans at Trolley Square.

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**Number of hotel rooms:** 3,600+  
**Hotel properties with meeting space:** 19  
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# Meeting on the Water

MEETING ON THE WATER PROVIDES PLENTIFUL LAKEFRONT VIEWS.

By Shelby Deering

**B**lue waters, punctuated by clouds and sailboats on the horizon. The sound of crashing waves, followed by the gentle receding of water. Seagulls cry in the distance. And your smartphone is put away and far from your mind. Although this may sound like a dream vacation, you may be surprised to learn that this idyllic landscape could be the setting for your next corporate retreat, group outing, meeting or event.

A waterside venue makes for a unique and fun atmosphere for a gathering. And with more than 15,000 lakes and a bevy of rivers, these locations

abound throughout the state. Whether you choose a lakeside resort, a cruise boat, a water park or a fishing charter, meeting on the water provides plentiful lakefront views.

Clare Mulcahy, charter sales and event manager of Lake Geneva Cruise Line in Lake Geneva, says that being near or on the water “creates a relaxed atmosphere that naturally produces fresh ideas and collaboration.”

Jaffe Wojcik, senior event planner and owner of Lake Geneva’s Graceful Events, has witnessed firsthand the laidback vibe that holding an event





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at a waterside locale can generate. For a “uniquely fun and productive guest experience,” Wojcik elects to host events through a local cruise line. Describing a recent networking event, she says, “With the excitement of the boat cruise, along with the natural ambiance, we were able to create an atmosphere that lent itself to fun and organic networking.”

She adds that, when the invitations went out, the demand to attend was “incredible and unprecedented. The guests truly enjoyed themselves.”

## The Osthoff Resort, Elkhart Lake

One famed, and historic, waterside venue is The Osthoff Resort, and it won the Best of Wisconsin Meetings designation for the Best Lakeshore Resort in Wisconsin last year. In addition to its 240 rooms and Aspira Spa, the resort contains 38,000 square feet of meeting space with rooms ranging in size from the 10,000-square-foot Grand Libelle Ballroom to a 450-square-foot boardroom.

“Most of our rooms are flexible or divisible, which allows us to customize our space to your needs,” says Tracie Toth, CMP, director of sales. She adds that the resort has a professional, on-site audiovisual team “that leaves nothing to chance.” The banquet food is made right on-site, too.

This horseshoe-shaped resort offers lakeside views all around and they can even be enjoyed from the meeting rooms. “Not to mention, groups love to use our lawns and

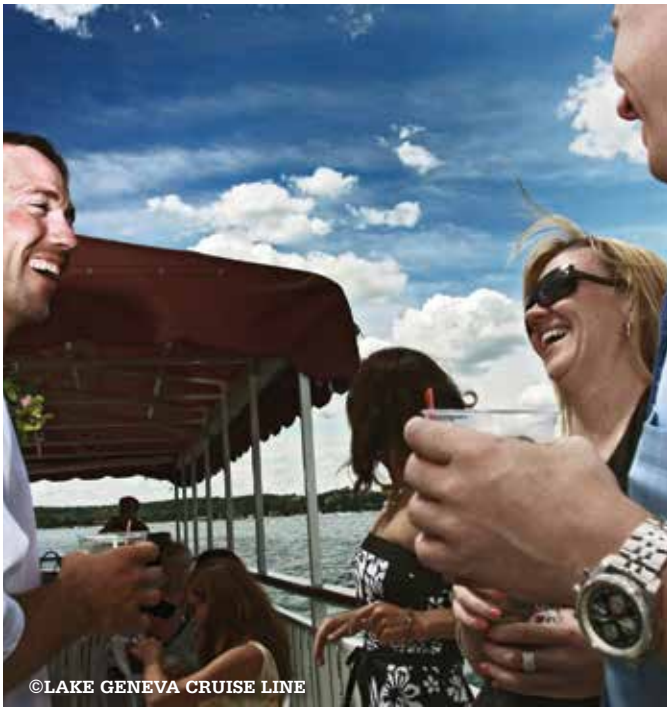
lakefront for their events, and take in the natural beauty of Elkhart Lake,” Toth adds.

The Osthoff features many activities that your group can take advantage of as well. There’s the beach that’s ideal for lounging, and serves as a take-off spot for kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding. You can book a pontoon ride for your guests, followed by an outdoor dinner and bonfire, complete with s’mores. Or you could plan a culinary class for your group at the on-site cooking school. Or you could treat them to golf, yoga classes or lawn game tournaments.

## Lake Geneva Cruise Line, Lake Geneva

For your event, maybe you want to get even closer to the water. That’s when a boat charter makes sense and Lake Geneva Cruise Line, serial winner of the Best of Wisconsin Meetings Best Group Outing, fits this bill.





available for up to 300 guests, we offer the perfect land and lake combination. Many groups use our boats as transportation or a cocktail cruise to dinner or a meeting at Pier 290, then enjoy a leisurely dessert cruise at the end of the night.”

Mulcahy explains that the cruise line has several preferred caterers to choose from, including its in-house catering company. All food, beverages and other details are coordinated with a designated event planner at the line. She shares words of wisdom for planning a boat event, suggesting, “Forego the formalities. Select a mingling-style menu that allows your guests to roam around the boat, talk with other attendees and not be seated at a dining table with the same five passengers. Make the most of your time on the lake.”

### Blue Harbor Resort, Sheboygan

Sheboygan is an intrinsically nautical area, with its bright-red lighthouse and surfers who frequent the waves on Lake Michigan. It’s also the setting for Blue Harbor Resort, which boasts 16,800 square feet of event space. There are a variety of room styles and setups at the resort, complete with Lake Michigan views, built-in bars, a cozy fireplace and the “flexibility

“With Lake Geneva Cruise Line, you are actually on the water, cruising past breathtaking estates and over 20 miles of beautiful shoreline,” according to Mulcahy. “Our seasoned captains will provide your guests with a highlighted tour of the historic estates and the families that built them,” accomplished with the line’s fleet of eight classic boats, decorated with mahogany, soft pine decks and brass-top bars. While the oldest boat was built in 1898, it still features a full sound system, just like the other seven boats. Several boats have monitors for video presentations, too. Plus, they sail whether it’s rain or shine.

“Besides our boats, we have our lakeside restaurant, Pier 290,” Mulcahy says. “With a variety of private and semiprivate spaces





DESTINATION



LAKE WINNEBAGO REGION

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Hello, I am Darcie, and these are my dogs. Don't worry, there will be no cringe-worthy dog puns, I just thought this was an awesome way to get your attention!

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1. I will always work to connect the dots for the planner – I will be your Fond du Lac and Waupun Sherpa...
2. The answer is always "YES" – especially at happy hour...
3. I will work to alleviate the struggles and maximize the value – the competition is tough in your field and mine, so let's shine together...
4. I will be your "meetings tailor", no off-the-rack meetings here, only bespoke events – you tell me if you want a FAM, you tell me what incentives are impactful, and of course you tell me how to customize your event...

Ok so maybe that was *FOUR* unbreakable rules, but at least there were no cringe-worthy dog puns.

To my event planner friends; if you are looking for an affordable, easy-to-reach destination with wonderful venues, that just might be Fond du Lac and Waupun, Wisconsin. If you are looking for a partner-in-crime to pull off an awesome event, that is definitely me, Darcie Holte.

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of a 9,000-square-foot ballroom able to accommodate 500 guests and divide into seven individual sections,” mentions Kate Dixon, director of sales and marketing. The resort also has a full kitchen for events.

The activity possibilities at Blue Harbor are seemingly bottomless. Dixon says that sailing, swimming, jet skiing, wind surfing, fishing charters, yoga, boating, surfing, paddleboarding and bonfires can all be made available to your guests, not to mention some impromptu sandcastle-building or sunset-watching. The resort can even help you plan off-site activities, from axe-throwing to wine tastings to Segway tours.

“It is our mission to not only make guests feel welcome, but also help them uncover the hidden gem that is Sheboygan,” acknowledges Dixon.

### First In Fishing Charters, Racine

For those groups who are willing to jump in with both feet and participate in a really unforgettable meeting experience, you could take your activity beyond viewing the water by adding an exhilarating boat ride and fishing, too. Captain Josh Keeran of Racine’s First In Fishing Charters takes groups out on Lake Michigan and, although the boat isn’t suited for large events (he’s allowed to take six passengers per vessel), guests are sure to have “a great time,” and often catch salmon and trout, according to Keeran.



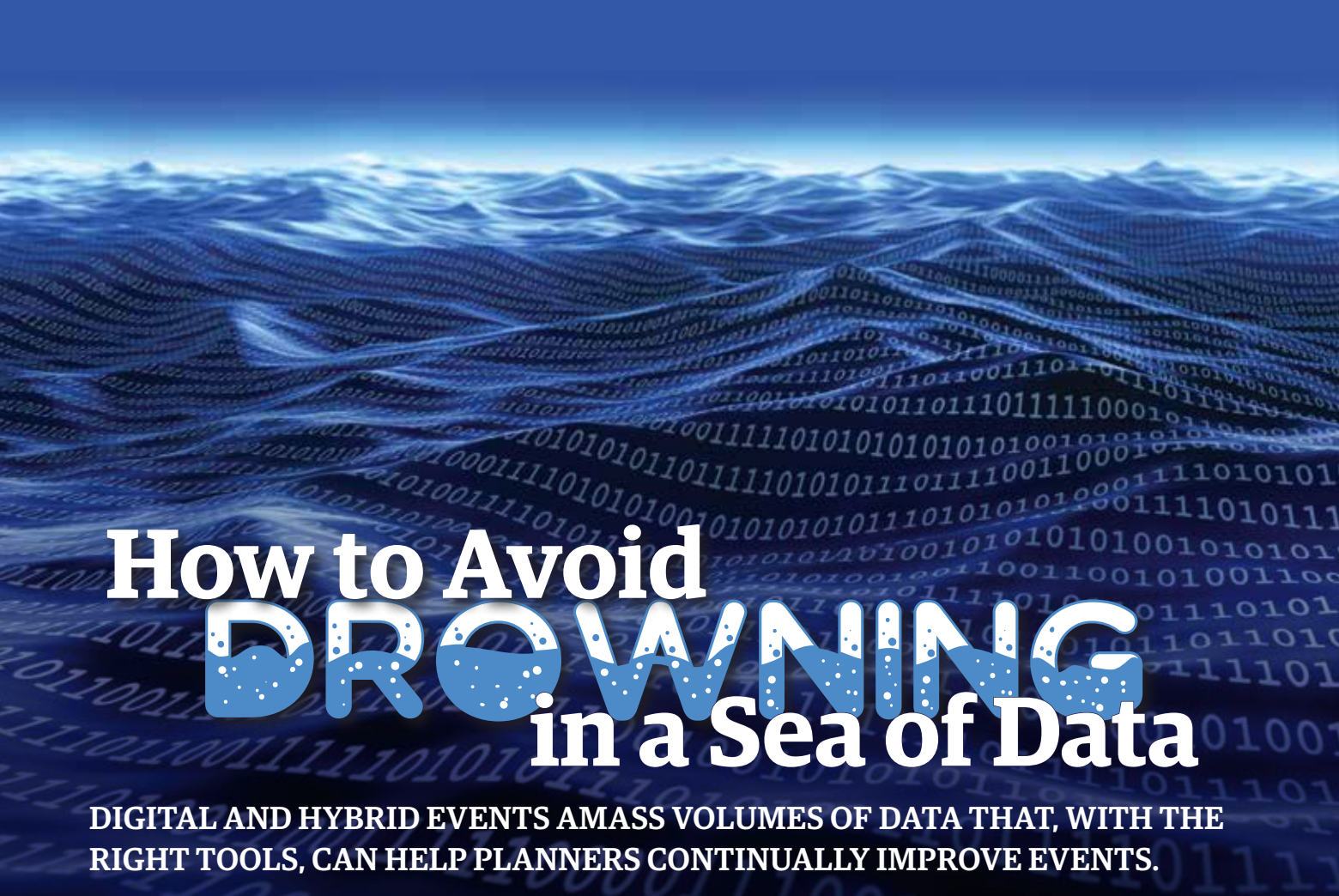
First In Fishing charters are available in five-, six- or eight-hour trips. All fishing tackle, including rods and reels, are provided. The crew handles everything, “besides reeling in the fish,” Keeran says, although he advises bringing along coolers with food and refreshments. At the end of the trip, the crew fillets, cleans and bags all the fish for participants to take home.

“One thing we see a lot of is team-building events or appreciation trips for employees,” Keeran shares. “Typically, these trips consist of more than six people. In these situations, we provide multiple charter boats. Some groups even set up a competition between boats to see who can catch the most or the biggest fish. It’s fun for everyone.”

### Other Waterside Venues

With so many lakes and rivers in Wisconsin, it’s not surprising that you’ll have plenty of waterside venues from which to select. You could head to Madison for an adventure on Lake Monona or Mendota with Betty Lou Cruises. Lake Lawn Resort in Delavan has over 32,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, along with Calladora Spa, golf and private boat charters. Heading up North? Trego’s Heartwood Resort on Hoinville Lake offers over 10,000 square feet of meeting space and several on-the-water activities, like canoeing, fishing and tubing. [wmi](#)





# How to Avoid **DROWNING** in a Sea of Data

**DIGITAL AND HYBRID EVENTS AMASS VOLUMES OF DATA THAT, WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS, CAN HELP PLANNERS CONTINUALLY IMPROVE EVENTS.**

By Ronnie Wendt

**D**igital and hybrid events can collect a vast sea of data. If not careful, planners can quickly find themselves awash in information without a measurable way to use it. Naomi Tucker, founder of **Planners on Purpose**, an organization with a mission to help destress and empower event planners, says limited time and the sheer volumes of data lead many meeting organizers and stakeholders to avoid reviewing the information at all.

Instead, she recommends analyzing data from two valuable perspectives: as the meeting organizer and as the attendee. “Meeting organizers must consider how they can use the data to improve the planning process. They also need to review the information to improve the attendee experience,” Tucker says.

## **MEANINGFUL METRICS**

Digital meetings and events can gather metrics that go beyond speaker evaluations. They can include the number of logins, new users, active users, unique views, video replays, likes per session, notes taken, registrants, chats, Q&As and more.

With that much data available, planners must zero in on the metrics they want to collect in advance, advises Patrick Smith, the senior vice president and chief marketing officer at **Cvent**, noting this begins by setting event goals and

determining the target audience. “Consider what kinds of informed decisions you want to make, and what insights will most benefit your core business or mission,” he suggests. “The answers to these questions will guide planners and marketers to the type of data they should collect.”

Meanwhile, Tucker recommends reflecting on the answer to two basic questions: What is the outcome I seek from this event? What do I want attendees to experience at this event? “The answers to these questions,” she says, “will drive the data you collect.”

Though metrics vary based on goals, Smith also advises collecting both satisfaction data and engagement data. “Satisfaction data will tell you if attendees liked your event, agenda topics, speakers and more, while engagement data will complement that information by telling you how deeply attendees engaged with every aspect of your event. For example, did they download a session deck for reference later on?” he asks. When planners combine these data sets, they can paint a clear picture of what resonated with attendees and what did not. This helps ensure subsequent events are better than the last.

“Tracking these engagement touchpoints not only gives planners and marketers better insight into attendee

interests before and during the event, but it also allows them to personalize each customer's experience after the event with targeted post-event campaigns and messaging," Smith stresses. "By delivering more customized and curated content, attendees are more likely to be engaged long after the event ends — enabling year-round engagement or something we call the continuous event."

Jodie Daugherty is a marketing services manager for Barnes & Thornburg LLP, a law firm with locations across the U.S. The firm hosts up to 250 digital meetings a year. Daugherty admits she collects far more data with digital events. "We collect registration information, materials downloads, engagement metrics, post-event video views, Q&A questions and more," she says. "We are most interested in what happens during the event. But we also do a post-event survey that asks basic questions about the presentation."

Barnes & Thornburg uses these metrics to chart the course for subsequent meetings or events. "The data helps us personalize future events," she explains. "We ask attendees, 'What do you need from us?' If they say, more on immigration, for example, we follow up later and ask, 'What types of information on immigration do you need?'"

Q&A responses also direct future programming. Daugherty points out that questions in the Q&A often show a need for future programming. "We frequently develop a question from the Q&A into a full program," she says.

Daugherty also assigns a social media hashtag to most events, noting, "People are more honest on social media than in other places." Then she reviews and analyzes hashtag comments. "Is this person a frequent attendee? What didn't they like? Why didn't they like it?" she asks.

Smith stresses tracking attendee engagement data across multiple events can provide an even clearer picture of interests and event performance. "Data can serve as a guide to help illustrate areas of improvement to increase engagement across the entire event platform," he says. "With these actionable insights, events have become even more important to organizations as they look to maximize their reach and engagement with their target audience."

New metrics also arose out of the pandemic, Tucker adds. For hybrid events, it now makes sense to ask virtual attendees why they didn't attend in person, for example. "It helps you monitor how personal preferences are changing," she explains. "It's also critical to see how long they stayed on the actual event and when they logged off."

Beyond passive metrics, planners can additionally incorporate more feedback sources via peer-to-peer gamification, mobile apps, live session polls, social media challenges, roundtable discussions, interactive programs and video content. "These things can collect data, and track more detailed information about attendee sentiments and

interests," Smith says. "The more opportunities you give attendees to interact with your event, the better insights you will gather — and the more engagement you will drive."

## POST-EVENT SURVEYS

Surveys after the fact can provide metrics for future improvements. But Daugherty warns poor responses to post-event surveys are a problem. "We're trying to find a better way to collect post-event feedback," she says. "Out of 40 people, you may get two to respond."

Barnes & Thornburg now collects feedback during events via polls and quizzes. The questions include things like: Was this presentation beneficial to your job? Is the topic what you expected? Was there something specific you were hoping to learn that you didn't? This approach garners an 80% to 95% response rate, she says.

## DATA-MINING TOOLS

Information that sits in siloes (that is, without context) is meaningless. So, what are some ways to derive insights from the collected data? Cvent offers its Attendee Hub, a full hybrid platform that allows planners and marketers to track all data points in one system of record, and compile them into an attendee engagement score. "Engagement scoring allows event planners and marketers to attribute different values to every touchpoint based on their unique event goals," says Smith. "The engagement score gives a clear indication of attendee interest — delivering critical data sales and marketing teams can deploy to have more informed follow-up conversations."

Smith continues, "Looking at individual attendee engagement touchpoints in siloes will not be extremely helpful in improving and personalizing future event experiences. But organizing and turning data into an engagement score allows planners and marketers to organize attendees' engagement levels and understand their interests — which allows for easier personalization at future events and for targeted marketing campaigns."

Other companies offer data-mining services. For example, Tucker also serves as a customer success director for **Meetings & Incentives Worldwide**, which offers a business intelligence service that helps meeting organizers make sense of their data. "We collect and review gathered information, see where the story is interesting, and present that information to our customers in a way they can understand it and take action," she says. "Our customers love looking at our conclusions, and our list of opportunities and suggestions. It's so much easier than sorting through columns and columns of data."

Tucker concludes that meeting organizers may find themselves awash in a sea of data that means little and changes things even less unless they have a clear purpose and goals, predetermined metrics, and a platform to derive actionable insights. **www**



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## ADVERTISER INDEX

THE AUTOMOBILE GALLERY & EVENT CENTER.....	13
<i>theautomobilegallery.org</i>	
BLUE HARBOR RESORT.....	7
<i>blueharborresort.com</i>	
DESTINATION LAKE WINNEBAGO REGION.....	27
<i>sites.fdl.com/meetings</i>	
DISCOVER GREEN BAY.....	19
<i>greenbay.com</i>	
DOUBLETREE BY HILTON HOTEL RACINE HARBOURWALK.....	32
<i>racineharbourwalk.doubletreebyhilton.com</i>	
ELKHART LAKE TOURISM.....	2
<i>elkhartlake.com</i>	
EXPLORE LA CROSSE.....	23
<i>explorelacrosse.com/meetings</i>	
FOX CITIES CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU.....	22
<i>foxcities.org/originals</i>	
GERONIMO HOSPITALITY GROUP ..	36
<i>geronimohospitalitygroup.com</i>	
HILTON APPLETON PAPER VALLEY.....	35
<i>hilton.com/en/hotels/atwpvhh-hilton-appleton-paper-valley</i>	
THE INGLESIDE HOTEL.....	31
<i>theinglesidehotel.com</i>	
JANESVILLE AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU.....	9
<i>janesvillecvb.com</i>	
LAKE LAWN RESORT.....	4
<i>lakelawnresort.com</i>	
THE MADISON CONCOURSE HOTEL AND GOVERNOR'S CLUB.....	31
<i>concoursehotel.com</i>	
MIDDLETON TOURISM COMMISSION.....	15
<i>meetinmilton.com</i>	
MILFORD HILLS HUNT CLUB.....	11
<i>milfordhills.com</i>	
THE OSTHOFF RESORT .....	2
<i>osthoff.com</i>	
RADISSON HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER GREEN BAY.....	21
<i>radissonhotelsamericas.com/en-us/hotels/radisson-conference-green-bay</i>	
VISIT BROOKFIELD.....	3
<i>visitbrookfield.com</i>	
WAUKESHA PEWAUKEE CONVENTION AND VISITOR BUREAU.....	33
<i>visitwaukesha.org/meetmore</i>	

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## PLANNER PROFILE

# UNDERSTANDING THE BIG PICTURE

REBECCA STAATS TAKES THE REINS AT MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL-WISCONSIN.

BY CARRIE MANTEY

Rebecca Staats hails from the other side of the meeting and event industry as the director of sales at the Residence Inn by Marriott Eau Claire, and Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott Eau Claire Chippewa Falls. And as of July 1, she became the president of the Wisconsin Chapter of Meeting Professionals International (MPI). "It has been a longtime dream to become president of an MPI chapter," she says. "I am a department of one person in my current role in a small market. Volunteering with MPI-WI helps me expand on additional leadership skills and allows me to be a part of something bigger."

After graduating from high school, Staats worked a variety of jobs, but fell in love with bartending "because of the interaction with people of all walks of life," she remembers. "That inspired me to go to college in the fall of 2001; I attained my associate degree in travel and hospitality. My first job after college was in a hotel sales office and I was hooked. I am still in love with this industry 20 years later!"

Staats climbed most of the rungs in the hotel business — from banquet server to sales coordinator to event manager to senior sales manager and now director of sales at several big hotel brands, including IHG, Hilton, Starwood and Marriott hotels in Minneapolis, Chicago and Eau Claire.

She also spent a few years as a travel agent with AAA in Eau Claire, "which added another fun layer to my travel and hospitality experience," she notes. "Working a lot of varying positions in hotels, and being curious and asking questions has helped me understand the big picture. And the same applies to MPI-Wisconsin. As president-elect, I took on projects that helped familiarize me with responsibilities I would not have learned or known about otherwise. Now to the role of presidency, I bring a solid understanding of the chapter because I am going into my fifth consecutive year of volunteering and serving on our Board of Directors."

As an active MPI member and volunteer in both Minnesota and Wisconsin, Staats wants to help MPI-WI not only recover, but grow this year. "It is particularly important to me to grow our membership and attendance at chapter events," she emphasizes, "which is down approximately 35% from pre-pandemic levels. We plan to achieve that by being more proactive. Behind the scenes, our teams are working diligently to secure all of our events for 2023. It is our hope that people rejoin the association and we start to see green in the 2022-2023 year."

"MPI-WI has helped lead, and will continue to lead, the charge back to in-person meetings led by the philosophy that we will continue to offer top-notch education and networking opportunities at our events despite lower membership and attendance. We have just rolled with it — all of the changes, including guidelines and dates — and we have been safely hosting in-person events since October 2020."

Staats thinks what everyone wants now is stability and flexibility, but she urges meeting and event planners to be patient with suppliers, and vice versa, since everyone is dealing with the labor shortage. Everyone's also dealing with inflated prices, supply chain disruptions, and many facets of hospitality and travel seismically shifting over the last few years.

But Staats changes her tone to reflect the bigger picture: "Despite new and ever-evolving challenges, our industry holds the hearts of some of the fiercest and most loyal professionals out there. Our passion is infectious. Meeting face-to-face holds so much importance, especially after lockdowns and long stretches of isolation. Both suppliers and planners need to advocate for meeting in person, because when we meet, we change the world." **MM**





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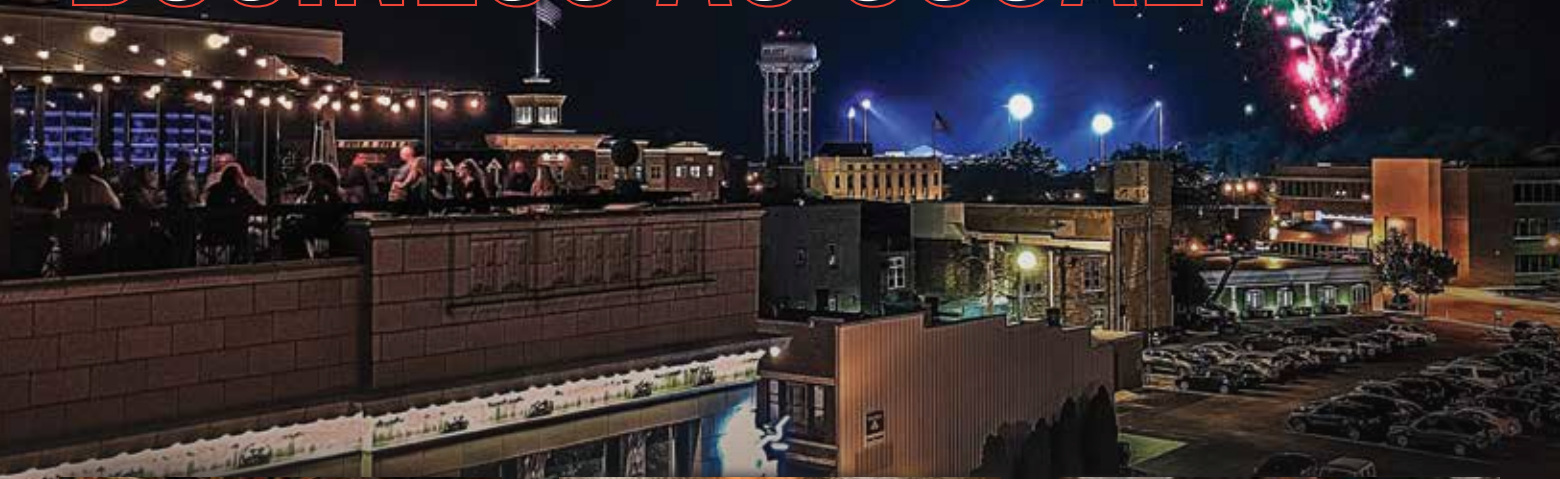
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