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BUSINESS:

Designing the Future of Work 2022

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Leaders converged on Mobile, Alabama, for MPI's 2022 Thought Leaders Summit, the seventh annual event of its kind benefitting the MPI Foundation while providing VIP experiences, exclusive excursions and networking opportunities with the most strategic leaders in the meeting industry.

Mutual collaboration and connection happened through micro-keynotes, deep discussions and tell-all conversations to create actionable takeaways about how to make careers in the meeting and event industry more attractive, how to elevate the industry's brand and how to create

driven environment can help attract and retain employees. To create a values-driven culture, the values must be infused in everything the company does, from policies and procedures, to who gets promoted and how.

Employees want to see their personal values reflected in the organization's values. With over half of the workforce reconsidering what kind of work they are doing because of the pandemic, it's more important now than ever before to meet the needs of employees who want to feel they have a purpose not only in their personal lives but in the work they do.

To design this kind of environment, participants learned from Gina Samci, Marriott International's senior director of global sales, that they have to put people first. Samci shared Marriott's philosophy of delivering on this ideal by recognizing that by taking care of their employees, staff produce quality results and take care of their customers. The purpose Marriott instills in its employees and the sense of community it provides has helped the company move forward from the devastation of the pandemic. The personal connection to the company's values helps the hotel chain earn trust and loyalty from its employees.

Samci shared that Marriott has continued to focus on people first with initiatives to engage potential employees at a high school level, workplace readiness and flexibility with remote and part-time opportunities. The company has worked to provide competitive pay, increased benefits and hiring for the skill set the potential employee has, not necessarily the experience earned.

work environments that foster belonging to both attract and retain talent. Subject-matter experts delivered several micro-keynotes throughout TLS to provide both qualitative and quantitative data points to spark discussion and help deliver on practical action items the industry can put in place. Day 1 focused on how to develop organizations that attract and retain top talent, while Day 2 focused on how to build a pipeline of professionals who are ready and willing to fill roles in the industry.

Expert Advice
Valerie Grubb, a keynote speaker, trainer and executive coach, pulled from her experiences working at NBC Universal, Rolls-Royce and establishing the Oxygen Channel to demonstrate how a values-

Employees want to see their personal values reflected in the organization's values.

Grubb gave the example of hotel employees not just providing an overnight stay for someone, but contributing to a family being able to reconnect or delivering on someone's dream to travel the world. To create this values-driven culture, businesses will have to shift to communicating to employees the true value they bring to the workplace.

"The challenge is that we get so busy we stop talking about (our purpose and values)," Grubb said.

Survey Says...
For organizations to put people first and focus on values, the industry needs quantitative data points to guide next steps. Somya Mathur, an EX solution strategist at Qualtrics, presented data uncovered from its 2022 *Employee Experience Trends* survey. In the third year of this survey, Qualtrics has discovered legitimate trends in employee experience across 27 countries, with hospitality accounting for seven percent of responses from full-time employees.

Four global trends emerged.

1. There will be an exodus of leaders and women will be the first to leave, Mathur said. Much of this is contributed from burnout of not knowing how to lead through the pandemic. Overall intent to stay in a position dropped to 65 percent from 70 percent in 2021. The decline in women leaders can be attributed to so much responsibility falling to them during the pandemic. Mathur recommends making sure organizations are listening to women

leaders in a focused manner, to know their priorities and put systems in place to retain these leaders.

2. People will demand better physical and digital workspaces, with more flexibility. Employees indicate they feel underwhelmed by the technology and tools offered to them and when that happens, employee engagement falls to 24 percent. Productivity jumps to 91 percent when the right tools are in place. About 1/3 of respondents indicated they will look for new jobs if called back to the office full time. Survey data show the future of the office will be for collaboration or technology employees cannot access at home.

3. A lack of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging will no longer be tolerated by employees, according to the Qualtrics survey feedback. About 75 percent of the future workforce will be Millennials. "A top driver of engagement is 'I feel like I belong at this company' not 'I like the people here,'" Mathur shared. People want to work in an environment where they feel safe and accepted as their authentic selves.

4. Employees' lack of wellbeing is "a countdown to disaster," Mathur said. "This is the biggest challenge that awaits us." Twenty-nine percent of respondents to the Qualtrics survey indicated they do not always take a sick day when warranted. Of those who refuse to take a sick day, 61 percent cite a heavy workload as the reason they cannot. The survey also found that a source of anxiety in the personal lives of employees is linked to work issues.

How do organizations start to tackle these four themes coming from the employee experience survey? Listen during times of disruption. This is the time to invite employees into a conversation and seek feedback with the intent to truly listen and take action. Surveys, like the one Qualtrics created to capture this information about the employee experience, should be treated more like digital conversations, Mathur recommended. Turn statements into questions and instead of just asking for answers such as "strongly agree," use logic to ask for more details based on what the employee shared.

Mathur said organizations should take an intersectional lens to data gathered from employees and see what women and minorities are saying throughout their employee experience. Review feedback from 30, 60 and 90 days in to their job experience. Seek feedback at their exit from the company and use all of this data to piece together an accurate view of employee experience. From there, Mathur said, organizations can utilize this data to
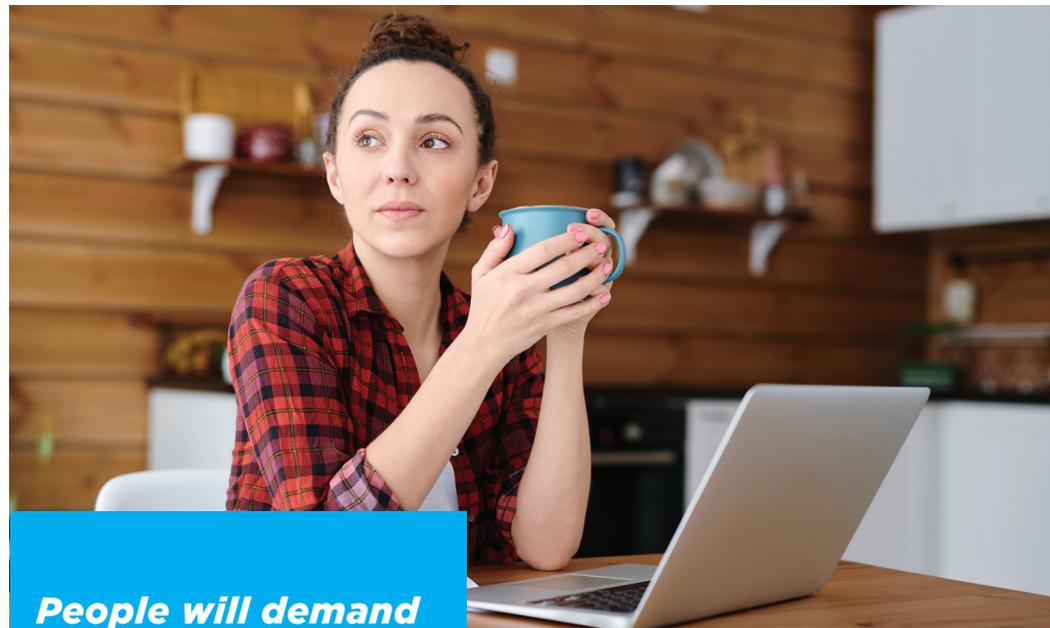
People will demand better physical and digital workspaces, with more flexibility.

take the right action in solving employee problems for better future retention.

Mathur indicated employees have struggled with these themes for some time, but the pandemic brought more of this to the forefront.
"People found a voice to express concerns that the pandemic made more prominent," Mathur shared.

Employee Personas
Once companies solicit this feedback, leaders should consider what kind of culture employees currently experience and how this might need to shift. Gregory Offner, founder and CEO of Global Performance Institute, shared his performance methodology and how "tip jar culture" can help leaders get the best performance from their employees, and in turn a better experience for their customers.

To review company culture, leaders must first examine the types of employees they have. Offner shared three types of employees.

1. The Keepers. Two subsets of these are the rockstars, which are about 10 percent of the company at best. These are the ones we immediately want to keep who contribute great ideas and work to the company. There are also the rock-steadies, the ones who keep showing up because they feel called to do their work. Offner said companies often set up processes that forget the people who are content in their roles and leaders should work to recognize them because of the success they contribute.

2. The Leapers. These employees are highly successful and not at a company because of a calling; they want to build career capital. Offner shared a story about a CEO who created an alumni program at his

company to engage the "leapers." He checks on them twice a year to stay connected and created a network of global talent ambassadors with these alumni to bring his company to other clients or make it easy to return to his company in the future. Instead of fearing the investment of time and training into leapers who will eventually leave the company, Offner recommended embracing them by using these employees to create your own talent pipeline.

3. Sleepers. They are physically present, but they are essentially asleep, Offner said. He recommended reviewing how to

set better expectations to stop them from "quiet quitting," a recent phenomenon where employees quit working above and beyond work expectations. Offner said the key to stopping this is to invest in finding out the moment of disconnect for the employee, rather than continuing to pour time and resources into employee engagement without a true picture of why the employee is disengaged.

How does the company culture shift? Offner said leaders must be friction hunters. A keeper will turn into a sleeper or leaper due to unnecessary friction.

"The moment of disengagement is when your problem as an organization becomes my problem as an individual," Offner shared.

When leaders tackle how to stop the moment of disengagement, Offner said employee engagement happens more organically. Asking employees directly about their passions and helping develop those will lead to a more engaged workforce.

Labor Crisis

Leaders need more information on exactly who exists in today's workforce to know how to better engage them. Altaf Sovani, founder and CEO of Alzen Consulting,

Millennials will remain loyal if presented with opportunities to advance and grow their career with an organization

Inc., shared his research on the labor crisis in the hospitality, tourism and event industry. From his research emerged eight key themes of why Millennials are rapidly leaving their jobs.

1. Inconsistent application of organizational policies by supervisors: Leaders are not implementing policies in a consistent

manner. Sovani's research showed if the manager likes the employee, the employee will receive preferential treatment for trainings, promotions and more. Supervisors have become too busy and are not always properly trained, making for an inconsistent management experience for employees. "You don't manage people; you lead people," Sovani said. "You manage things, but you actually lead people."

2. A culture of favoring seniority: Millennials want promotions and opportunities to be based on how hard they work and not how much seniority someone has at a company. A culture of seniority and favoritism will only hold organizations back, Sovani said.

3. Opportunities for advancement: Millennials will remain loyal if presented with opportunities to advance and grow their career with an organization. They have the degrees and education, but do not often have the experience and grow frustrated with limited opportunities to grow that experience, Sovani shared.

4. Baby Boomer culture: Sovani's research found a clash of cultures between Millennials and Baby Boomers. Millennials do not want to be "parented" at work. Leaders should examine which generations are present in their organization and work to help these cultures mesh.

5. Communication with Millennials: Typically, less feedback is given the higher you move up in a company, Sovani shared. Feedback is being given only when someone has not done well. Millennials want to receive feedback and truly feel a part of the organization. He recommends that supervisors build relationships and get to know Millennials in their workforce to build a rapport that allows for consistent and often feedback.

6. Training and Development: Millennials indicated to Sovani in his research they felt only those who the company wants to retain receive access to additional training and development. Those who end up in supervisory roles are leaving if they feel they have not been adequately trained.

7. Compensation and Affordability: Sovani said his research found that compensation plays a huge factor in Millennials switching roles in the industry, looking for an employer that pays a little more on their journey to find higher wages.

8. Work-Life Balance: While this topic was widely discussed pre-Covid, trying to balance work and life has become a huge consideration for Millennials in the present. "For (Millennials), it's not a choice, it's a right," Sovani said of work-life balance. "There are too many competing needs to get done that it feels like you have to take work home." Sovani recommends employers having flexibility and even considering a four-day work week for increased productivity, looking to how resilient employees have been while working from home during the pandemic.

Sovani also found through his research that purpose is a key driver of what keeps people of all generations in the workforce. Considering how employees see their purpose at work will help drive how organizations retain them.

Industry Leadership

Several industry leaders from the hospitality and events sector shared how they are attracting and retaining critical talent necessary to help the industry not only recover, but truly thrive.

Fran Brasseux from the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (ICHRIE) shared that their partnerships have been important to rethink what the future of academia in the industry can look by utilizing micro-credentials for quick education.

David Clark with Visit Mobile shared the destination management organization has evolved beyond what it is, focusing also on workforce promotion and attraction. WorkinMobile.com provides an opportunity to connect employers with needed talent and growing a pipeline to focus on careers, not just jobs.

Annette Gregg with MPI shared that the organization continues to focus on upskilling faster through the Emerging Meeting Professionals designation and is setting the standard for curriculum in hospitality programs with MPI Certified.

Leadership should be able to infuse the company's values into everything, from onboarding to communication from the C-Suite.

Debra Zabloudil with the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) discussed how the organization is working with young professionals to learn how to better attract them to and retain them in the industry. Their education efforts are focused on more micro-credentials, as well as a new program called ReadyMe to prepare professionals to move into leadership roles.

Jennifer Clark Fugolo with the American Hotel & Lodging Foundation (AHLA

Foundation) discussed the organization's initiatives to expand their reach by helping people build careers and improve lives by strengthening the hotel industry. The AHLA Foundation has focused on workforce development through their partnerships with community-based organizations to upskill and give others exposure to the hotel industry.

Tyler Davidson with *Meetings Today* shared that leisure and hospitality roles account for 61 percent of jobs lost during the pandemic, and reinforced data that young employees are more motivated by learning and opportunities for career growth over money, and that employers should move outside of their comfort zones to be flexible and attract more talented candidates to the industry.

Actionable Next Steps

After learning from subject-matter experts, Thought Leaders Summit participants had opportunities for deep-dive discussions focused on answering the call to craft solutions to building a more robust and engaged workforce in the meeting and event industry.

Several themes emerged as thought leaders identified steps industry organizations can take to create values-driven work environments, utilize employee experience trends and support workforce development for the future of

the meeting and events industry. Those include communication and feedback; talent development; leadership; education; culture and belonging; hiring practices and talent attraction; company brand and industry messaging; pay and incentives, and how to take action.

Communication and Feedback. *Employees in today's workforce crave transparent and vulnerable communications from those in leadership positions. They want to have a voice and feel that what they have to say matters and contributes to the overall success of the company. These people want to see the company's values in action as communications to employees are made.*

to understand how to collect the data needed to truly understand the employee experience at your organization. Leaders must be committed to not only collecting this data but looking at those intersections to understand what each type of employee experiences while working for the company. Committing to use this data will foster belonging as employees feel seen and heard.

- Hire analytical firm experts. Want to survey employees but not sure how or where to start? Consider investing in help creating a survey that elicits the data needed to take action.

space for employees to share their feedback. When employees see this feedback being taken and changes made, this will continue to help the employee see the company's values in action.

- Ask for continuous feedback. Employees today seek feedback throughout their professional journey, not just a performance review time. Managers should be trained on how to give consistent feedback based on the company's values and not surprise an employee with negative feedback months later during a performance review.

With all of the investment that goes into training and developing an employee, it makes sense to expose professionals to other areas of the company and other job functions beyond their own.

- Ask for feedback and listen to employees. Employees want to be heard and to contribute to the overall organization. As shared from several subject-matter experts throughout TLS, employees who feel they are connected to the values of the organization and who feel heard will feel more loyal to the company and feel they are fulfilling a larger purpose.

- Communicate values, all the time. Leadership should be able to infuse the company's values into everything, from onboarding to communication from the C-Suite. Evaluate processes and procedures to see how those align with the organization's values. When everything can be measured based on the mission, vision and values of the company, employees better understand their role and see themselves in the company's values.

- Survey staff for employee experience. The data provided through staff surveys is crucial to driving any organizational change. Review assessment types

- Share action plans and be transparent in accountability to meet that plan. As leaders commit to collect feedback on the employee experience, they must commit to also be vulnerable in sharing that feedback. Transparency in sharing a created action plan based on that data is also crucial to employee buy-in that cultural shifts can happen.

- Implement change and model values. Change may not be easy, but employees must see that willingness to change and see leadership modeling values through communications to employees.

- Create a "suggestion box" culture. Provide avenues to receive continuous feedback through options like suggestion boxes or regularly scheduled town halls.

- Provide coffee talks or 1:1 time. These opportunities to connect with leadership provide employees a way to feel seen and heard when providing feedback. Leadership should be committed to allowing these times to connect to be a safe

Talent Development. *Thought leaders identified a critical missing piece in workforce development today: development of skills for current employees. Those who suddenly found themselves in supervisory roles had no experience and did not know where to turn for education. Employees who had to take on new functional areas or roles during the pandemic had little to no training. Onboarding can be rushed and not fully cover all aspects of the role.*

- Utilize each employee's talents. Employees leave when they feel undervalued or underutilized. Build a relationship with your employees to understand what exactly their talents are and how those can best be put to use by the organization.

- Expose employees to other divisions or job functions. With all of the investment that goes into training and developing an employee, it makes sense to expose professionals to other areas of the company and other job functions beyond their own. This could help retain top talent as they look to build additional skills or advance their career.

- Help with transferable skill development. Look for educational opportunities for employees to develop future critical skills in areas outside of their immediate job function. A micro-course focused on persuasion or critical thinking can help the employee develop skills that could transfer to another department at your company or section of the industry, while also helping them provide additional output in their current role. Employees who feel their managers invest in them will feel more aligned in their personal values with those of the company.
- Create stretch assignments to tap into passions. This is another way to assist with transferable skill development. Work with employees to create these assignments they are passionate about, which will lead to more productivity from the employee and more sense of accomplishment and belonging.
- Provide better and more thorough onboarding. Onboarding should be re-evaluated to make sure it ties back into the mission, vision and values of the organization. It should be thorough in training for all aspects of the job role and the company. Research has shown that employees who do not feel properly trained will leave.

- Trust and empower employees to have authority. Leadership should find ways to build that empowerment within employees to have authority to make decisions. Training for managers on how to lead a team, avoid micromanagement and coach others can help foster that empowerment.
- Embrace and balance organic passion. Building meaningful relationships with employees can help managers find that person's organic passion with a plan to help foster it for a more engaged employee in the workplace.

Leadership. *Shifting from the idea of people management to leader will be crucial to retaining talent. Research has shown that people can become leapers and sleepers from poor experiences from their direct supervisor. Supervisors need complete training and continued development to provide the leadership experiences employees crave.*

> **Companies must evolve and move to an all-encompassing focus of not only diversity, equity and inclusion, but belonging.**

- Provide education. So many role shifts have happened, and continue to happen, as a result of the pandemic. Suddenly, employees have found themselves leading teams with no real leadership training or experience. Supervisors are leaving when they do not feel adequately trained, and employees are leaving after negative experiences from supervisors. We must partner with industry organizations providing education to better equip supervisors to be leaders.
- Train for tough conversations. Managers need more training on how to tackle tough conversations with courage and vulnerability. These kinds of conversations are never easy, but essential to problem solve and get back to business.
- Set goals and give feedback. Employees want to take part in setting goals together and sharing not only goals to meet for their specific role, but their professional goals as well. They also want the opportunity to share feedback on how their supervisor can be a better leader. The culture needs to be in place across the entire organization for employees to feel safe in sharing that feedback about their manager.
- Make 1:1s a standard practice. Research shows that employees need 1:1 time with managers to build meaningful relationships and direct their work. These should become a standard practice to deepen employee engagement.
- Take more action. Employees want to see leaders who take action and live out the company's values in all interactions and the work they do. They also need managers who take action on direct feedback and see changes and shifts being made.

Education. *Increasing talent in the workforce means the industry needs more education available to potential employees. Curriculum for hospitality programs needs to be updated and made available at the high school level. The industry needs to meet younger talent*

where they are – TikTok and Instagram – and educate them on how they can see themselves fitting into this industry.

- Educate about the industry on social media. Highlight employees and how they joined this industry by sharing on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

- Connect with high schools. Look to career and technical education associations for ways to offer programming for high school students. High school students can participate in education and enter the meeting and event industry workforce immediately after graduation with a certificate.

- Shadowing and Internships. These opportunities not only build brand awareness but provide a way for young professionals to belong and see themselves in a position with your organization. Create expectations around these positions and empower an employee who wants to move into a leadership role to supervise one of these positions.

Culture and Belonging. *Gone are the days of simply figuring out how to infuse diversity in the workplace. Companies must evolve and move to an all-encompassing focus of not only diversity, equity and inclusion, but belonging. Research presented at TLS shows there is a social aspect to work that people crave, whether working in-office, hybrid or remote. Creating a culture that promotes belonging and wellbeing should be a focus for companies wanting to retain employees long-term.*

- Be intentional about creating community. Consider ways for colleagues to connect with each other and celebrate each other's successes. Establish department engagement champions who oversee how those teams build relationships with one another.

- Conduct a culture check. What kind of culture does your organization have? Do employees feel empowered to take days off? Are teams siloed

from other departments or even each other? Are people truly allowed to show up in the workplace as their authentic selves? Ask these questions of employees to gauge the culture and make shifts as needed.

- Offer business resource groups. Create resource groups for employees to connect over both professional and personal identities. These allow employees to be their authentic selves and foster belonging.

With the reshuffling throughout the pandemic, opportunities are endless to attract potential employees looking for a career shift.

- Hold focus groups. Receiving feedback in employee surveys? Create employee focus groups that seek specific solutions about solving an issue. Take that feedback to drive real change and let the focus group see that their work is valued and used.

- Create mentorship programs. Pair new hires with mentors in a different department to foster connectedness and give those employees a safe

space to confide in someone outside of their team. Set parameters and expectations around these relationships to generate relationship building and professional growth for all involved.

Hiring Practices and Talent Attraction. *To evolve for today's workforce, industry businesses must be flexible and examine how they not only attract talent but how they hire and fill vacant roles. Transparency and flexibility will be key to attracting top talent and retaining them through the hiring process.*

- Change hiring requirements. Consider hiring for potential and not just experience. Research shows Millennials want to see fairness in the workplace when it comes to valuing work being done over seniority at a company. Train hiring managers to recognize potential and transferrable skills could result in filling vacant roles with long-term employees who value the opportunity for a career, not just a job.

- Attract those who want a career change. With the reshuffling throughout the pandemic, opportunities are endless to attract potential employees looking for a career shift. Again, the ability to identify those transferrable skills and help those looking for those

changes see themselves as a fit for the role can help in attracting new talent with a fresh perspective. Consider transparency in your job listings about hiring not just based on experience and encouraging those to apply who are looking for a career change.

- Lure talent with incentives. While this may not always be possible, consider what incentives could be attractive to someone just coming out of high school, college or looking for a change in their career. Perhaps loan forgiveness, flexible work

locations, unlimited paid time off or other programs would entice top talent.

- Emphasize skill development. So many people in the meeting and events industry are entrepreneurs who have created their own businesses and agencies. Much of this work requires skills in project management and being strategic. Highlighting these skills will help talented candidates see the value of joining this industry.

- Consider entry-level options in event management. Look beyond the need for formal education or years of experience to create opportunities for those with no experience but potential to enter the industry.

There must be more entry-level jobs created that funnel candidates with potential into roles in event management to learn and then move up in the organization for more long-term retention.

- Create transparency for interview demographics. Be honest with your current employees, and even potential ones, about your interview demographics. Demonstrate you are focused on diversity by seeking out diverse candidates.

Company Brand and Messaging. *The industry as a whole has a messaging problem.*

> ## Potential employees want to see that the organization cares about them as human being.

The public does not understand that meeting planning reaches far beyond planning menus. Many do not understand the transferable skills and opportunities that are available by working in the hospitality and event industry. Organizations must align their branding and messaging to demonstrate the value of working in this industry.

- Consider branding. What messages are we sending young people who could move into roles in our industry even out of high school? How does

our brand attract those who wish to make a career change later in life? We must consider what is important to our audience and how that will resonate with their values. Perhaps the organization's focus on sustainability or help charting their career path? Craft branded messages specific to the audience you want to target.

- Evaluate values. The company's values should be effortlessly infused throughout the brand and be easily understood by those who we wish to attract to the industry. Connecting the audience's personal values to those of the company will help clear up messaging and help top talent see themselves as a viable candidate for your available positions.

- Tell stories. Learning how to tell the story of the industry and your specific organization matters. We must find what resonates with top talent we want to attract. What might resonate with a Millennial may not resonate with a positional employee from Gen Z. We should look at the platforms our audience uses and find them there, such as TikTok or Instagram.

- Look at different career paths and connect the dots with transferrable skills. Potential employees want to see that the organization cares about them as human being. Embrace being a part of upskilling the workforce with transferable skills, rather than fearing investing in an employee only for them to leave. Creating avenues for those employees to be ambassadors for your brand, not only referring potential business but future employees to your organization, will help create that pipeline of talent.

- Consider guest speaking opportunities. Venture into high schools for career days and attend job fairs at colleges and universities. Seek partnerships to highlight what your organization does and how to chart their career path in this industry.

- Help employees build a brand. Your employees can be your biggest advocates and ambassadors to show potential candidates the value of building a career at your company. Provide training on building a personal brand on LinkedIn and teach them how to promote the industry through various social media platforms.

Incentives. *While professional development and opportunities to grow resonate with the Millennials in the workforce, employees are reshuffling to other higher-paying roles. Crafting ways to meet pay needs through additional incentives can help retain talent.*

- Evaluate pay. Evaluating if employees are making a fair wage based on the marketplace or similar roles at other organizations, and being transparent about that, can help retain employees.

- Create incentive programs. Offer opportunities to earn incentives based on performance, meeting company goals and recommendations from colleagues.

- Offer referral incentives. Looking for top quality candidates for open positions? Leverage your existing employees to help find the best and brightest to apply for these openings. Provide some sort of incentive or referral bonus when those referrals are hired.

- (Re)consider benefits. Look beyond benefits like vacation and wellness to consider additional benefits such as a four-day work week, working from home, and setting a few core hours employees must work while allowing them to set additional work hours based on what works best for them.

- Incentivize on profitability. Opportunities to profit share can encourage employees in meeting productivity metrics.

Taking Action. *Often, employee frustration comes from seeing leadership not taking action on suggestions or not tackling issues head-on as they arise in a vulnerable and*

transparent way. *Employees in today's workforce want to see those company values in action by seeing change take place when needed.*

- Offer transparency in problem solving. Employees are looking to leaders to admit when there is a problem and then ask the employee to help identify solutions.

- Ditch the call center mentality. If an employee comes to a manager

> ### *Research shows employees want to share feedback, but more than that, they want managers to seek that feedback from them.*

with a problem, managers need to be equipped to solve it quickly. Employees do not want to be read a script about why things cannot change. They want to be part of the solution and feel heard.

- Seek feedback. Research shows employees want to share feedback, but more than that, they want managers to seek that feedback from them. They want their opinions and ideas to be valued and respected. Doing this gives them more of a stake in the success of your organization. Use employee focus

groups or surveys to generate that actionable feedback.

- Implement ideas and strategies quickly. When employees make suggestions or leadership crafts new strategies, be strategic in how these can be implemented. The employees in today's workforce need to see a quick turnaround from ideation to implementation.

The Role of Associations

Thought leaders at TLS also worked with member association representatives in the industry to make recommendations on how those groups could better support workforce development, in addition to plans already in progress by those entities. The main themes that came out of this deep dive include brand messaging and awareness, education and partnerships.

- Brand messaging and awareness. Companies and organizations look to the associations across the industry to evolve brand messaging and industry awareness to attract more top talent. Using new avenues to promote the industry and partnership will be key to elevating the industry's brand.

- Find common industry nomenclature. Associations should partner together

to determine a common name of the industry should even be. Brand confusion comes from the different names and sectors, such as hospitality, meeting and event industry, tour or travel industry, hotels and more. The confusion about what the industry is and how it does starts with having a clear moniker for the industry that encompasses all sectors, similar to STEM standing for science, technology, engineering and math.

- Use association members as brand ambassadors. Leverage these

- Provide educational pathways. Employers are overwhelmed with options for education across the industry. Associations should provide an educational pathway to help professionals chart what education is needed and when for development. Spell out who would benefit from certain educational courses to help professionals see themselves needing that type of education.

- Create micro-certificates. Industry leaders need quicker avenues to educate their teams on different skills needed in the industry, such as

Partnerships. *Acting on these recommendations will require a renewed spirit of partnership among associations across all sectors of the industry. Everyone has a seat at the table when bonded by the need to promote, build the pipeline for and educate professionals in the industry.*

- Leverage resources. Employers want to see membership associations partnering to pull resources to reach more professionals across the industry who would benefit from the development those partnerships could provide. Work together to provide educational courses.

Create a collective voice. More partnerships could mean more of a collective voice to advocate for and promote the industry together.

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members and help elevate them to be influencers in the industry, showcasing their positions and the industry as a whole on their social media channels.

- Launch marketing campaigns. Craft marketing campaigns that highlight not only the association, but the industry as a whole. Leverage this marketing to attract top talent to the industry by highlighting the successes and stories of members in their careers.

- Find new avenues to spread awareness. Consider using TikTok and Instagram more to share industry awareness messaging. Visit career days at local high schools. Leverage chapters or members and provide incentives for working with local programs focused on educating future professionals for the industry and capturing their attention early.

Education. *Associations must focus on educational opportunities to upskill both the current workforce, and new talent. Quicker ways to learn and verify skills will be critical to boosting the industry's workforce. Using tangible ways to share this education through badging and credentials will be key to verifying skills and elevating the workforce.*

supervisory skills. Associations could partner to develop and provide this education to those who need it most.

- Offer more education to span various sectors of the industry. Associations must review what kind of education is needed and reach out to businesses and sectors of the industry to ask. Hotels, for example, need more credentials and certificate programs available for new employees.

- Provide badges and credentials. Employers want to see more badges for employees to demonstrate they are a verified professional after taking a combination of educational programs. Consider offering these badging opportunities for professionals to highlight the verified skills they have earned after completing certain education or credentials.

- Co-develop curriculum. Seek out colleges and universities with programs and majors related to the industry and work to develop curriculum based on the needs of the current workforce. Leverage these relationships to attract these students to the industry.

Consider providing a verified badge after a professional has completed courses from multiple associations in different functional areas.

- Standardize titles. Associations should partner together to issue best practices when it comes to job titles. With varying titles across different companies and sectors of the industry, thought leaders indicated it can become confusing to understand what level a professional is at in their company in relation to the rest of the industry.

- Create a collective voice. More partnerships could mean more of a collective voice to advocate for and promote the industry together. Organizations want to see more of this collective voice and partnership from associations.

These actionable steps created by thought leaders in this industry will be crucial to securing top talent and building the workforce of the future.

Contributors

The MPI Foundation thanks the following contributors for their expertise in the creation of this report.

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Meeting Professionals International

Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is the largest meeting and event industry association worldwide. The organization provides innovative and relevant education, networking opportunities and business exchanges, and acts as a prominent voice for the promotion and growth of the industry. MPI has a global community of 60,000 meeting and event professionals including nearly 13,000 engaged members. It has nearly 70 chapters, clubs and members in more than 75 countries worldwide. Visit www.mpi.org for more information.

About Dani Kloap

Dani Kloap serves MPI as the Manager of Curriculum. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism and a Master of Arts in Adult Education. She pulls from her experiences as a journalist, graphic designer, salesperson and association professional to create engaging educational experiences to provide both personal and professional development. Dani loves designing curriculum and providing quality education for the meeting and event industry.

White Paper Sponsor

As the official marketing organization for Louisville, the agency's mission is to enhance Louisville's economy through tourism - to position and sell the community worldwide, in partnership with the public and private sector, as a premier destination for conventions, trade shows, corporate meetings, group tours and individual leisure travel. In pursuit of its mission, Louisville Tourism generates increased visitor spending, local tax receipts and job development.

Visit **GoToLouisville.com/Meet** for more information.

Q&A WITH CLEO BATTLE

Why did Louisville Tourism feel like it was important to sponsor this white paper?

Visitors expect a high level of hospitality while traveling, and our industry needs to be fully staffed to have the depth of service capabilities to meet or exceed guest expectations. As one of the oldest convention and visitor bureaus in the country, Louisville Tourism believes that destination management organizations should lead the charge and be the trailblazers within the hospitality community as the conduit to our industry by partnering with agencies and educational institutions from high school to college. As Louisville Tourism President & CEO and considering my upcoming 2023 MPI chair role, the development of our future leaders will be a key priority to highlight over this next year.

What is Louisville Tourism doing locally to help with the workforce development?

Louisville Tourism has and will continue to co-host hospitality industry career fairs with our local hotel association featuring community stakeholders, hotels, attractions, facilities and more to connect job seekers and employers. We have built relationships with community agencies including our local Urban League, refugee ministries and religious charities, while fostering relationships with area universities, colleges and local high schools. We routinely discuss staffing challenges during speaking engagements and media interviews to raise awareness in and outside of our industry.

What does the future hold for hospitality when it comes to employment?

As demand continues to drive employer needs, we've seen bolder steps to recruit staff, which has resulted in increased wages, more flexible hours and a dedicated focus on cross-training to be ready to meet travelers' needs. As we've welcomed the rapid return of leisure travel, cities like Louisville are quickly trying to adapt to the inconsistent travel trends versus the stability of corporate travel—but in both cases, the consumer demand is there thankfully. The silver lining is that while leisure travel trends have rebounded— meetings, conventions and corporate travel are all incrementally showing a very positive upward trajectory.