

MPI EYE

PHILADELPHIA AREA CHAPTER MPI NEWS • FALL 2012



Understanding the
Planner/Supplier Relationship 4

Eye on Philadelphia:
Planners and Suppliers 11

Eye on Professionalism 15



PHILADELPHIA AREA CHAPTER

MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL

The Planner/Supplier Relationship



page **10**

EYE on Advocacy Bark in the Park

September Monthly Program	4	Eye on PAMPI Students	14
Member News	5	Eye on Professionalism	15
October Monthly Program	6	Eye on New Members	16
Eye on AV	8	Buy MPI	17
Eye on Living Legacies	9	Welcome New Members	18
Eye on Advocacy	10	Save The Date – Golf Outing	21
Eye on Philadelphia	11	From The Editors	22
August Monthly Program	12	Event Calendar	23
Eye on PAMPI Membership	13		

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President's Message

Laura Lee Wren, CHSP

Happy Fall, everyone! As I reflect on this issue's theme – supplier/planner relationships – I am tempted to simply praise our association for its commitment to serving as a vehicle for making connections. During monthly events, there are always opportunities to meet others in our industry, from newly employed to long-time leaders. We know that these connections can build and grow into valuable relationships, both professional and personal.

It's interesting then, that an educational event centered on this very topic can turn so volatile. Aren't suppliers and planners both dedicated to providing successful meetings? Are we really so different?

Perhaps it's because I was a planner for about 15 years before making a career move to the supplier side, but I truly believe we're more similar than different. Face it – a successful event is profitable and personally satisfying to us both!

Of course, we do have differing perspectives, so here are a few guidelines that I've found can help the supplier/planner relationship grow.

If a planner openly shares budget guidelines and which requests are flexible, a supplier is more likely to make an effort to make the budget a

reality and help with creative solutions to meet overall goals. Planners should also be respectful of the fact that RFPs can take quite a bit of time to respond, by avoiding sending out requests to those unlikely to be a good fit.

Don't forget to pick up the phone now and then. Technology has taken much of the human element out of the RFP process, but there is so much that can be conveyed via a quick conversation. A planner can define specific needs more clearly, and the supplier has the opportunity to add a personal touch.

During an event, if there is an issue, planners should resist the urge to run straight to senior management (unless, of course, it's truly warranted).

Meanwhile, suppliers will go a long way in building a respectful relationship by doing the same when dealing with a planner's client. By treating each other as partners, you'll strengthen the investment you've already made in your relationship.

Finally, planners should make an effort to honor a relationship with a supplier by remembering them when they have the opportunity to bring them business, but don't pretend to have business for them if it's unlikely to happen. Suppliers need to do the same for independent



continued on page 5

September Monthly Program: Understanding the Supplier-Planner Relationship

Sarah Fuller, CORT Event Furnishings

On Wednesday, September 19th PAMPI members gathered at the Independence Visitors Center in Philadelphia for a night of networking and education. Brulee Catering served up cocktails and hors d'oeuvres as attendees mingled with potential clients, suppliers, and friends. New and potential members were also welcomed with an orientation led by Mark Steinmetz of IMS Audio Visual.

The real fun started when guests moved into the auditorium for a spirited discussion on the supplier-planner relationship. Guest speaker, Jay Gubrud, began the conversation by reminding the audience why it's important to maintain a great supplier-planner relationship—that ultimately, higher satisfaction is achieved when both parties feel they can trust one another. He reminded us that whatever perception we have of the opposite party is usually the same perception they hold of us. That's why we should always assume the best.

He cited some common perceptions that can drive planners and suppliers apart. For example, too often a supplier assumes the planner is withholding valuable information, while the planner may assume the supplier is “making too much commission on the job.”

The conversation ignited when the speaker invited the audience to chime in. At times there was thrilling debate as the two worlds of suppliers and planners collided. “What



Mike Boris from the Independence Visitors Center



Gil Hall, CMP, CPCE, Stephanie Cavanaugh, Theresa Hall, CMP, and Bobbi Minner



Cathy DosSantos, CMP, SMMC, Camela Pastorius, CMP, Richard McCadden, Kate Hoffman and Mary-Ann Urbanovich, CMP

I found most interesting was the openness and ease of the dialog between planners and suppliers. I believe we have reached a place where both parties realize we need each other,” said David Jackson of Poconos Mountains Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Honest feedback, realistic expectations for follow up, and some direction as to what type of budget is available were all important things to the suppliers in the room, but the conversation revealed the complexities in the supplier-

continued on page 5

Understanding continued

planner relationship. While planners would prefer vendors put their best offer forward, sometimes suppliers aren't sure what the planner expects.

Cameron Wicks of Visual Sound Inc. said, "I think for me, the biggest insight was the planner point of view. Being a vendor, I know how I feel and I see the supplier side of the relationship every day, but knowing that how the planner members felt opened my eyes to things I hadn't thought of before."

As the discussion continued, planners offered great advice for winning their business. Some suggested asking better questions. Instead of saying, "what's your budget," ask "what did you spend last year?" Other suggestions included communicating in the format the planner prefers.

One thing was clear by the end of the evening: open communication and honesty are the keys to a successful supplier-planner relationship.

Julian Roksvaag of Maxvantage said, "Every individual has their own unique personality and work ethic – it's up to both the supplier and the planner to adapt and find what works best for both parties. Either way, it comes down to flexibility and effective communication."

Any tensions felt during the discussion were quickly settled over coffee and dessert as the evening wrapped up. Surely everyone left feeling they had learned something new.



Speaker Jay Gubrud leads the discussion on revving up the planner/supplier relationship

President's Message

continued

planners, as well. When was the last time you referred a planner to a client? If you're a supplier that hasn't seen ROI from networking events, yet has never referred a planner, it says a lot about the value of your relationship. Make sure you're worth it and prove a relationship with you is a valuable asset!

Just another way to Discover Your (MPI) Potential!

MEMBER NEWS

JR Global Events are proud to announce that Stephanie Krzywanski has obtained her Certificate in Meeting Management (CMM) designation! This is a huge accomplishment and milestone for Stephanie! Congratulations!

PAMPI offers excellent renewal incentives from October 2012-June 2013! One winner will be selected via a random drawing at the end of each month and announced via web and email. Prizes include a membership extension, free admission to chapter events, a new iPad, and free EMEC/WEC registration!!!

Don't wait – renew your membership today!!

October Monthly Program

David Hughes, Highgate Hotels' Hilton Cluster Sales Office, New York City

“Meet Like A Mouse: Apply Theme Park Methodology. Deliver MAGICal Results.™” *presented by Lenn Millblower*

On Wednesday, October 10 I had the opportunity to pretend that the NYC subways R, N, 4, 6, & E and the Amtrak Northeast Regional train from Penn Station to 30th Street station were all monorail rides leading me to a great Disney adventure (yes, I have an active imagination!). For on that evening, PAMPI members, guests and bosses gathered at the gleaming new Hotel Monaco to be transported to a behind-the-scenes look at the magical world of Disney, as delivered by keynote speaker Lenn Millblower.

After an informative and interactive roundtable “Twitter Boot Camp” and new member orientation, guests enjoyed a lively networking reception before being called to order by Laura Lee Wren, CHSP, who is president of the 10th largest MPI chapter in the world! Laura Lee gave thanks to PAMPI’s P3 Partners, as well as to the evening’s exhibitor: Charlie Bowden from Springloaded, Next, Bob Dmuchowski welcomed everyone to the new Hotel Monaco, a Kimpton Hotel. Bob is Director of Sales and Marketing, and everyone in attendance was suitably impressed with this new addition to the Philly hotel community! Laura Lee then turned it over to Kelley Dougherty of the Monthly Programs Committee the evening’s speaker introduction.

Lenn Millblower is a 25-year Disney veteran with experience in operations, entertainment and training. Lenn’s “Meet Like a Mouse” program is designed to highlight many

methods that have been employed by Disney, from architecture to layout to signage to entertainment in maximizing the guest experience, while drawing parallels to highlight real-world applications for those of us in the meetings and events industry.

Lenn structured his presentation around the acronym MAGIC: Message, Anticipation, Guidance, Immersion and Customization. Within the “Message” component, Lenn focused on creating a theme and telling stories within and to further that theme. His story of the



LauraLee Wren, CHSP, presents Bob Dmuchowski with a certificate of appreciation



Patricia Maurer, Maya Northen, Mary-Ann Urbabovich, CMP, Paul Fogarty, CMP, and Kristine Golden, CMP



Alex Aguirre, CMP, David Krakow, CMP, David Sampson, CTC, CMP, CMM



Rachel Wolkiewicz, Kacie Sheppeck and Jessica Dixon

continued on page 7

October Monthly Program continued

“GPS: Guide to Personal Solutions” message at the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration conference for returning Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans served to illustrate his point.

As mentioned earlier regarding my commute to Philly, I was already familiar with one aspect of the “Anticipation”



Anne Deon, Richard McCadden and Joyce Bagiraneza

element. Lenn was able to take that basic concept and show how Disney incorporates anticipation into the entire arrival experience. From parking to trams & ferries to ticketing and the arrival tunnel through coming attractions – everything builds toward the magical moment of arriving within the park. He quoted Walt Disney as saying “People move toward things that are inviting. Put a weenie at the end of each street!” Lenn used several examples from the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration conference as practical highlights.

The “Guidance” section focused on some basic elements of



Jillian Roksvaag, Lenn Millbower, Brad Magarity, David Sampson, CTC, CMP, CMM and Stephanie Schmauder

Disney’s theme park design (hub & spoke model) as well as some of Walt’s observations, such as right-siding (people tend to move to the right, so place high activity event activities such as registration to the right of the entrance).

If you’ve visited a Disney attraction, you’ve likely felt the “Immersion” experience. Everything from the colors used on highway signage to props and controlled sightlines contribute to creating the world of fantasy. In event design, creatively appealing to all senses via props, colors, music and food aromas can lead to more successful outcomes.

And last but not least, Lenn’s MAGIC tutorial ended with a discussion of “Customization.” He mentioned that Walt would sit at other theme parks and count how many steps customers would take before dropping trash, resulting in trash cans every 25 steps at Disney parks. For event planners, this has many applications not the least of which is strategic location of event signage, but also planning keynote and other high-interest sessions late in the day to keep attendees engaged longer.

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Eye on AV

Cameron Wicks, Visual Sound

AV is one of those meeting and event services that can be very confusing for the “uninitiated,” those who don’t work in it and aren’t regularly surrounded by it. Between all of the equipment, technical terms, venue regulations, pricing differences and labor rules, it can be a hard part of our industry to understand and keep up with.

In keeping with this issue’s focus on the planner/supplier relationship, I want to give you a couple of tips which will help you understand a little better where your AV vendors are coming from and what’s figured into the proposals they give you.

Venue Regulations

Different venues have different rules, and it’s important to understand what these are prior to venue selection. Many venues include a clause in their contracts which assess a fee if you bring in outside AV. Usually, it’s simple to strike this from your agreement before you sign it. Some venues may have services, such as rigging, which are exclusive to their in-house AV provider. Additionally, most will charge you for power (other than normal wall outlets) needed to run AV equipment. Some venues, especially historical buildings and art galleries, may have strict regulations on what equipment can be set up and where it can be placed.

Labor Costs

Nothing affects the pricing of an event more than labor. While it’s often fairly simple for suppliers to give discounts on equipment, the same can’t be said for labor. AV companies will always have to spend money on labor, whether in-house, freelance or union, and therefore have to pass that cost along to their clients. Labor costs are also very sensitive to event scheduling. Costs for late night labor can be different from normal hours, and weekend labor is almost always more

expensive than weekday labor. Furthermore, if there’s a short time to setup or turn an event around, more labor is required to make everything happen on time.

Pricing Differences

If you’ve ever managed the same meeting in multiple cities across the country, you’ve likely noticed that costs for everything, including AV, can fluctuate widely. Differences in the size or location of a city can change AV costs. Smaller cities often have lower costs for equipment and labor, while bigger cities may have more regulations for venues or labor. Additionally, unions may be more widespread in one city than in another, which affects labor pricing. When doing the same event in multiple cities, your budget must change with your location.

Technology

A lot of planners have asked me in the past how they can learn more about AV equipment and technology, in order to better understand their events as well as their vendors. The answer isn’t an easy one. There are magazines, websites, videos and certifications dedicated to AV equipment, and they do provide some information that will help planners understand the “techie” side of AV better. However, the best way to learn about AV is through experience. Working closely with your vendor, reviewing their proposals and asking a lot of questions will all help you understand the technology. Additionally, spending time with them onsite, as they setup and run your event, will also help.

Again, as I said for technology, the best way to learn more about all of these is through experience. Working with your AV supplier(s) over and over again will help familiarize you with all of these points.

Nothing affects
the pricing of
an event more
than labor.

Eye on Living Legacies: An Interview with Cindy Hamilton

Chris Niessen, Peddler's Village

I was given the task of interviewing a past leader or award recipient within PAMPI. As I am a new with PAMPI, I was drawn to speaking with someone who had been nominated as Volunteer of the Year. Not only did I want their insight into what PAMPI meant to them, but I also wanted to find out why they chose to volunteer for their particular committee. On a cold rainy Sunday evening in October, I had the pleasure of chatting with Cindy Hamilton, PAMPI's 2011 Volunteer of the Year.

Cindy is a graduate of Penn State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management. Her first job post-graduation was working as an intern at a Holiday Inn in San Antonio, Texas. It was during that time that she knew she had found the right career, and she has worked in the hospitality industry ever since. This year, Cindy celebrates her 25th year with Marriott International.

When did you first become an MPI Member and why?

Cindy: I first joined MPI in 2006 when I was a Sales Manager at the Seaview Marriott in New Jersey. I joined because I wanted to network with planners and other suppliers. I also found that the educational programs run by MPI have helped my career tremendously.

Why do you volunteer?

Cindy: Being on the Community Outreach committee has been a real eye opener for me and has given me the opportunity to meet and work with a wonderful group of people. In this crazy world, there are not enough hours in the day but making time to do things for people who are less fortunate than me has been especially rewarding. It also gives me a feeling of camaraderie. I feel especially fortunate to have the opportunity to work with wonderful people such as Beverly Wise who is co-chair of the committee.

What would you like to see more of within PAMPI?

Cindy: I really would like to see more members help out at the different events that the Community Outreach Committee has throughout the year! I am not sure that people realize that you don't have to be on the committee to volunteer at specific events. I urge you to go to one of our upcoming event to see how gratifying it is to give back to the community.

After talking with Cindy, the reason she was nominated as Volunteer of the Year was clear. I have a tremendous amount of respect for Cindy, for the hard work and commitment that she puts into the Community Outreach Committee. More importantly, I admire her dedication to making this world a better place. I urge all of you to contact Cindy at cindy.hamilton@marriott.com to volunteer for an upcoming event, such as the Philadelphia Marathon on November 18th or try to make it to another PAMPI Community Outreach volunteer opportunity; you will be glad you did.

We Want to Hear From You!

Recently promoted, married, gave birth, started a new business, expanded your current property, partnered with a new company?

Share your news with the PAMPI MPI to Eye team, so we can highlight it in the quarterly magazine.

Eye on Advocacy: Bark in the Park

Cameron Wicks, Visual Sound

On Saturday, October 13th, PAMPI members and animal lovers from across the Philadelphia area gathered at Rose Tree Park in Media, Pennsylvania for the Delaware County SPCA's 5th Annual Bark in the Park.

Starting at 10AM, hundreds of event attendees and volunteers, along with their pooches, walked for two miles around the park. Money raised by the volunteers, as well as registration costs and sales of food and other items, goes directly toward caring for animals in the DelCo SPCA's shelter, as well "programs to reduce the overpopulation and suffering of animals all over and beyond Delaware County."

After the walk, the SPCA hosted a Fall Festival. The Fall Festival included vendor booths, food trucks, a food and sweet table (manned by this reporter), a DJ and canine contests. Since it's October, you know there were plenty of dogs in costumes. I saw, among other things, a witch, a princess, Superman, a hot dog and several football players.

"I would like to say how graciously we were treated by

the two young ladies running the event," said PAMPI's

Allen Anderson. "I thoroughly enjoyed handling on-site registrations with Nicole Benner, who handled the often unruly dogs while I handled the forms and took in payments from the wonderfully considerate pet owners."

The fun of the event was interrupted several times with excitement as some dogs got loose. Your intrepid reporter joined with SPCA volunteers to chase down a pair of Chihuahuas, while Allen Anderson helped round up an escaped spaniel.

PAMPI wants to extend a special thanks to the Delaware County SPCA for letting us participate in this wonderful event. The next event for the Community Outreach committee will be the Philadelphia Marathon on Sunday, November 18th.



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Annie Jones

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eye on philadelphia

David M. Krakow, CMP,
Swank Audio Visuals



Planners and Suppliers

There are golden rules in life, and there are golden rules in hospitality.

One of those rules is that, economics notwithstanding, planners have certain expectations that must be met regardless of the venue or budget. And those suppliers have an obligation to match those expectations, regardless of or within those budgets.

As a supplier at the Four Seasons Philadelphia, I have witnessed firsthand the delicate balance that plays out within that relationship. When I started here, pre-recession, in late 2007, planners were spending what it took to host the kind of event they wanted to host – and be seen hosting. They wanted the basics, for sure, and also that little extra to make the event special.

Then, by late the following year, that had changed. My clients who had spent robustly in 2008 had been told to rein it in. The extras had to go and I might get a fight on the price of the basics! And this was not just in audio visual: they'd fight a little harder on room rate; the breakfast buffet suddenly turned into a continental breakfast.

From 2008-2010, being a sales manager could be a tough job. I had to fight to stretch the planner budget everywhere I could.

The challenge, however, was that planners still wanted it to seem as if there had been no cost cutting. Because the golden rule about those expectations survived the belt tightening.

"No change regarding state of things now," said Vicki Koch, Executive Assistant at Brandywine Realty Trust who has been holding meetings at the Four Seasons for years. "We are always worried about cost, but we are (also) always worried about exceptional service. When selecting meeting locations,

we tend to put in the forefront hotels where food quality, service and dependability are exceptional and where A/V services are on site."

This was echoed by David Sampson, Meeting and Travel Planner for the American Board of Internal Medicine, who meets frequently at the Four Seasons. "Relationships are the ONLY thing that matters to making my programs successful," he said, with emphasis. Trust, and the inevitable give-and-take between parties, is paramount. "I

always prefer to meet my contacts face to face early in the relationship so both parties recognize who they are dealing with."

Personally, I have had many clients over the past several years that knew they could afford more elsewhere, but chose to stay at the Four Seasons. But some do miss the halcyon days when the business was flowing and empty spaces were not hard to fill.

"I miss the good old days when planners actually called their friends in sales and said they had to book some programs, what could I do for them," said Allen Anderson, Director of Sales and Marketing at the Hilton Philadelphia Airport. "Or, I could call them during a slow month, say I need a program, and they might say 'well, I was thinking of Boston, but I can bring it to Philadelphia.'"

But here at the Four Seasons, this supplier has found the belt loosening, bit by bit over the past 18 months or so. When I ask about an enhancement, something a little extra that is not needed, they listen. Some still say no, but unlike two years ago, they listen.

August Monthly Program: PAMPI Leadership Day and All-Team Meeting

Chris Niessen, Peddler's Village

PAMPI's Leadership Day and All-Team meeting was conducted on August 15th at the Ace Conference Center in Lafayette Hill, PA. This day of learning and community was a great opportunity for all chapter board members, chairs, and volunteers to come together to lay the ground work for the upcoming year.

We began with opening comments from LauraLee Wren, PAMPI's 2012-2013 President. Laura Lee thanked all of the volunteers and discussed the session objectives and agenda. She pointed out that as a chapter volunteer, we are given the opportunity to learn new skills that we wouldn't otherwise obtain in the everyday workplace. LauraLee challenged us to ask ourselves the question: "Why do I volunteer?" We know that people volunteer for many different reasons. Being a part of something is one common reason why people

volunteer. Others volunteer because it makes them feel good about themselves. She also stressed the importance of succession planning: who will take over our current role as well as asking ourselves, "What is the next role within MPI that I am going to pursue?"

Stephanie Kryzwanski discussed the importance of structure and communications within the chapter. One interesting aspect of communication that Stephanie touched on was the importance of being able to delegate when we aren't able to do something. She pointed out that people have more respect for someone who is able to say no when asked to do something that they do not have the time or ability to complete. Nothing is more frustrating than when someone says "I'll do it, I'll do it!" but then the job doesn't get done.



Larry Treu reminds us to have a positive attitude.



Camela Pastorius, CMP, Caryn Taylor-Lucia, CMP, Dan Love and Judi McLaughlin, CMP work together to construct the tallest balloon tower



LauraLee Wren, CHSP presents Katie Schultz from the ACE Conference Center with a certificate of appreciation.



The Social Media team develops their new outreach program (foreground) as other committees plan for the 2012-2013 year.

August Program continued

Next, Tricia Steege from Transformation Strategies facilitated a fun balloon tower activity. The activity focused on team interaction while exploring communication skills, cooperation, planning, and having fun. We were broken up into teams and each team was given a handful of balloons and a few rolls of tape. The groups were instructed to build the tallest possible free-standing structure using only the tape and balloons provided. Each team was instructed to select 5-7 characteristics that the groups felt were critical characteristics for PAMPI to reach its success this year. Next, we were to write these words on the balloons and include the balloons in our tower.

We had 20 minutes to build our tower. Some people immediately began to take charge and become project leaders. Others were more than happy to be given instruction and help out where needed. It became very frustrating when the balloons started popping and we were given the news that there were only a finite number of balloons. What we learned from this was the importance of making the best of last minute changes and having resiliency.

We finished the day with cocktails and tasty hors d'oeuvres from Wolfgang Puck. Throughout the program, we were given opportunities to fine tune our leadership skills, map our career paths, and learn from and network with industry leaders. What a wonderful day!



Anne Madden, CMP, Meg Torpey, LauraLee Wren, CHSP, Jonathan Esten and Gary Miller offer a toast to teamwork.

Eye on PAMPI Membership

Maya Northen, Chimera Travel

Traditionally, the Eye on Membership article focuses on an inside look specifically at our PAMPI membership. However, given this issue's theme of relationships, I thought I'd focus on two new relationships that MPI has formed in recent months, which do indeed fall into this category, for their importance and relevance to our members.

This summer, MPI announced a partnership with the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI). In September the next phase, a dual membership for both associations, was announced. To promote this new partnership, new and existing members who join both organizations by December 31, 2012 will receive a 20 percent discount.

In early October, MPI and the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) announced a joint-venture in which they will be working together to create education and training opportunities. The two organizations have formed

an LLC to develop a new meetings management education curriculum. The program is being designed from components of GBTA's Strategic Meetings Management Certification and MPI's Certification in Meetings Management, and is expected to be available to both memberships in 2013. It is important to note that both the SMMC and CMM will continue to be recognized by their organizations.

Both of these new ventures share a common theme – industry organizations working together to expand educational and networking opportunities for their members, and for the meetings and events community as a whole. PAMPI will continue to keep our membership informed about the new developments as these programs progress – make sure to check our Facebook, LinkedIn, and twitter updates for announcements as they happen. 2013 looks to be an exciting year in our industry and in MPI!

Eye on PAMPI Students: The Next Protégé

Angie Alfonso & Sara Mireles- Temple University School of Tourism and Hospitality Management

Through building relationships and hands on experience, Temple University's School of Tourism and Hospitality Management (STHM) prides itself on having hard working and unique students as their graduates. Graduates are among the most recognized industry professionals and are an important part of the hospitality industry. As STHM students, we are inspired to gain as much experience as possible through our interactions with industry professionals. STHM has given us the tools to be part of our community and the opportunity to become a bigger part of the industry through Meeting Professionals International.

"MPI believes that meeting and event planners serve a critical role in the success of business, and is committed to giving its member the very best in professional development, business opportunities and a vibrant industry community."

As active student members of the Temple University chapter of MPI (Meeting Professionals International), we aspire to utilize the tools offered by MPI to impact the STHM community. We believe the possibilities are endless when combining such a successful organization with hard-working and goal-oriented students.

We have been lucky to be part of a few MPI events which have been unforgettable learning experiences. At every event attended, we have been welcomed with open arms

by industry professionals willing to share their experiences, struggles and successes. We aspire to be like these industry professionals, who are our role models and offer brief snapshots at what our future may become.

Our goal is to work hard on creating innovative ideas while generating more awareness of the MPI organization. We want to spread the word and let students take advantage of what the hospitality industry is willing to offer. Connecting and building more long-lasting relationships is what we aspire to do as a student organization. We value the experiences MPI provides and recognize how beneficial being a member of MPI is to our future careers.



Ian Opitz, Michael Mitloff and Megan Mulray at the October Monthly Meeting



From left to right: Camela Pastorius, CMP, Erin Fedirko, Ian Opitz, Jessica Bauer, Angie Alfonso, Jeanne Gray and Marissa Emmons at the 2012 Backpacks to Briefcases Event

Eye on Professionalism: “Pinpointing the ‘P’ in MPI”

Cameron Wicks, Visual Sound

In September, I, like many of you, attended PAMPI's monthly education program. It was entitled “Rev Up the Supplier/Planner Relationship,” and it was presented by Jay Gubrud, a speaker who specializes, among other things, in “alliance building” and “dialogue and engagement.” The event was meant to encourage discussion between the PAMPI's planner members and supplier members, about how they could better interact and work with one another in a business capacity.

Like I said, it was meant to encourage discussion, and boy, did it ever. I've never been part of a professional event that got people as fired up as this program. There were strong opinions on both sides about where the planner/supplier relationship was strong, and where it could use some improvement. After witnessing that event, I have some ideas of my own that relate to this important topic.

First, I think it's extremely important to remember what the “P” in “MPI” stands for. It's not “Planners” and it's not “Providers.” It's “Professionals.” We are an organization of meeting professionals who rely on one another for our livelihoods. We work together, we collaborate together, and, sometimes, we hang out together. This industry would not exist if one of our two groups disappeared. Without suppliers, planners would have nobody to provide catering, venues or audiovisual services. Without planners, suppliers, like myself, would be out of work, because there'd be nobody to put meetings together or order our services.

In a time when our industry has been wounded by the recession, and when it's taken hits in the media, we must, at all times, work together to ensure that we survive the storm and come out stronger than ever. We all have to be thoughtful about how we do business with each other

and how we interact with each other and what we expect from each other. This sounds obvious and simple, but it's something that both sides, planners and suppliers, need to work at and perfect.

Second, if you've read my columns before, you know that I'm a big fan of communication. As someone who handles sales and networking for an event audiovisual company, communication is at the heart of everything that I do, and it's something I stress time and again. I firmly believe that bad communication is at the root of most problems, and especially relationship problems, whether the relationship is between friends, lovers or business partners.

Clear communication, coupled with understanding and realistic expectations, is in the end the only thing that can “rev up” the planner/supplier relationship. We must communicate our needs, our wants and our expectations to one another if we want these business relationships to work.

Planners need to make sure they're being precise when they tell suppliers what they need for the event, and need to layout the framework of the business partnership and, in some cases, the proposal process in a way that makes sense to suppliers. Likewise, suppliers need to be honest and clear about what services they can and should supply, what's entailed in those services, and what the cost will be. That's the only way these relationships will work to the benefit and favor of everyone involved.

Again, while there are two different sets of business and people involved in MPI, in the end, we're all “professionals.” We need to keep that in mind every time we meet and do business with one another.

It's important to remember
what the “P” in “MPI”
stands for.
It's not “Planners” and
it's not “Providers.”
It's “Professionals.”

Peggy Cummings, CPM, OnSite Meeting and Event Management LLC



Sarah Lindenmuth, Director of Sales and Marketing, Uniquely Philadelphia

Within moments of my first conversation with Sarah, I realized that this year is one of new beginnings for her, and the enthusiasm and energy in which she embraces it all is simply contagious. Sarah is the new Director of Sales and Marketing for Uniquely Philadelphia, a local Destination Management and Event Planning and Production company, and with only a month behind her, she is already making her mark.

Sarah most recently worked as a director for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, concluding almost a decade of experience within the non-profit sector. With such a mission-oriented profession, not just any position would prompt such a large career change, but that right opportunity came in working for Uniquely Philadelphia.

Sarah now works in tandem with Uniquely Philadelphia's president and owner, Maria DiBenedetto, and according to her, this is the most rewarding part of her job. Aside from Maria's business acumen and exceptional work ethic, Sarah was inspired by her long-time philosophy that there is indeed a place in business for a genuine warmth and care for clients. As the new face of Uniquely Philadelphia, Sarah looks forward to making connections within the community and taking that same approach with prospective and returning clients.

Uniquely Philadelphia is experiencing growth too. Since Maria acquired the company seven years ago, the team has continued to expand its client base and by the new year they will unveil a comprehensive new website to complement their virtually unlimited menu of specialty services. Uniquely Philadelphia's mission is to provide unmatched service, translate their client's vision into a finished product that exceeds expectations and forge long-lasting relationships with their clients. The team at Uniquely Philadelphia is committed to upholding this pledge of excellence and as Sarah tells it, their mantra is: perfection does not have to be the exception.

In the midst of these exciting professional changes, Sarah is planning for one more life-changing event - her February 2013 wedding. When I asked Sarah how she is handling these new roles, she offers a simple but insightful reply: "productivity, creativity and strategic thinking make for a good night's sleep at the end of every day." I have a feeling we'll be seeing a lot of Sarah at PAMPI events in the coming months.

If you see Sarah or Kathy at a future meeting, please introduce yourself and welcome them to the chapter!



Kathy Murphy, Gray Consulting International Meetings & Incentives

What a delightful pleasure it is for me to be in a position to write an article about a client, especially someone as charming as Kathy Murphy. As many of you may know, I have been a contributor to our PAMPI publication for several years, finding it most enjoyable to meet and showcase our newest members. It is most unusual that I actually know or have met any of my subjects. Not the case with Kathy.

Almost twelve years ago, when I entered the world of the Independent Contractor as an Onsite Meeting Manager/Travel Director, one of the first Companies I received a call from was Gray Consulting. Working with their wonderful team at meetings and incentive programs throughout the world has been a mutually desirable experience.

Kathy hosted a festive gathering at the cozy home she shares with her husband and their two lovely daughters in New Jersey, just minutes from her center city office. At this party, she shared her

continued on page 17

Buy MPI: Q&A with the New Sheraton Valley Forge

Kristine Plourde Golden, CMP, Glenmede

I recently had the pleasure of working with a new property and supporter of PAMPI – the Sheraton Valley Forge Hotel, host of the 25th Annual PAMPI Silent Auction. Lisa Karl, Director of Sales, sat down to tell me more about the exciting happenings just outside of Philadelphia.

What makes your location ideal for groups, meetings and events?

LK: Experience re-imagined style, comfort and versatility at the new Sheraton Valley Forge Hotel, located less than 25 miles from the Philadelphia International Airport. Several Fortune 500 companies, Valley Forge National Historical Park, and the popular King of Prussia Mall are all nearby. From corporate meetings to social gatherings, our 25,000 square feet of flexible event space provides the ideal setting with 13 conference rooms, two executive boardrooms designed with the latest audio visual technology and an incredible 10,000 square foot ballroom; the largest in King of Prussia. We also offer a beautifully landscaped courtyard for outdoor events.

What does your property offer that sets you apart?

LK: Nearly 25,000 square feet of Flexible Event Space! The meeting space for can be customized to the last detail with the assistance of our professional catering team, for business meetings and social events. Our 14 conference rooms and two executive boardrooms have been expertly designed with the latest audio visual technology, and our 10,000 SF grand ballroom with 25-foot ceilings provides a gorgeous setting for receptions and social events.

Unique Courtyard Area: Step outside to admire the large garden courtyard and join friends to gaze at the stars by the fire pit or swim laps at the indoor pool or just relax in the whirlpool after a long day.

Restaurant & Lounge: Enjoy a taste of authentic local cuisine in the sophisticated atmosphere of the famous Italian restaurant, Ralph's of South Philly. The original Ralph's has been drawing crowds of celebrities and neighborhood locals alike since 1900, and was recently named the oldest Italian restaurant in the country.

Sheraton Fitness: Work out in the spacious state-of-the-art fitness center featuring a cardio room, weight room and private locker rooms.

The Link @Sheraton is the connectivity lab of our lobby experience. Guests can surf the web, watch the game, borrow a magazine or newspaper and easily print out airline boarding passes.

Why are you (or your staff) members of MPI?

LK: Being a member of PAMPI for over 15 years, I have enjoyed networking, which resulted in making terrific friends; both clients and fellow hoteliers. The educational aspects that the organization provides are important to me as well because I like to stay current with the industry trends.

For more information on how you can partner with PAMPI to showcase your facility or services, email Director of Venue Procurement at Kristine.Golden@glenmede.com to learn more!

eye on new members

continued

passion for expanding adoption opportunities for children living in foster care throughout the United States. Her board member position on the Executive Committee of the National Adoption Center, which is based in Philadelphia, affords her countless opportunities to accomplish this goal.

As co-founder of Gray Consulting, she and her partner, Scott Gray, have enjoyed 18 years together, focusing on all aspects of events including meeting development and planning, venue selection, negotiation and contracting, budget development and reconciliation, attendee registration and management

and onsite services.

Awards which have been given to Gray include CMI 25, Corporate Meeting & Incentive Magazine's top 25 Companies serving the NA corporate market. Kathy serves on several Industry advisory councils and boards, including PCMA. Kathy's outgoing demeanor and zest for life fuels the energy it takes to not only participate but take an active role in her endeavors. We look forward to seeing Kathy at many PAMPI events, and know that she will be a most involved new member.



welcome
new members!

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welcome new members! continued

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Save the Date – April 22, 2013

SPRING GOLF OUTING AT TALAMORE COUNTRY CLUB, AMBLER, PA!



Mark your calendars for a fun-filled day which features activities for everyone.

Monday, April 22, 2013

11am-12:30pm - Registration & Lunch

12:30pm - Shotgun Start / Clinic

5:15pm - Reception & Dinner

Planners - are you interested in playing but not able to have your entry fee considered a business expense? Consider signing up and being matched with a supplier who will cover your entry fee. Suppliers, please consider one of our sponsorship levels. Sponsoring a hole is a great way to maximize your exposure to all the golfers and buying a foursome is a great way to show appreciation to your clients.

Not a golfer but always wanted to learn? Consider participating in the clinic which received rave reviews last year and is sponsored by PA Dutch CVB.



Watch for more information soon!



Nicole Benner
Blank Rome LLP



Amy Drum Caruso, CMP,
CAE, Drum Meeting
Planning & Event
Consultants, LLC

From the Editors

Nicole The planner/supplier relationship seems to have conflicting end-goals – the need for suppliers to make up lost ground due to the recession results in less flexibility with pricing, but planners' budgets still haven't bounced back to pre-recession levels. Still, we need to look past the bottom-line, and focus on value – the lowest price isn't always the best deal.

Because of my planner role at Blank Rome, I'm asked often for vendor suggestions, specifically for vendors who sell promotional items. Not too long ago, I was asked for my contact's information, and passed along the name of the vendor I use for these sorts of products. However, the person in charge of the task decided to place the order with a less expensive online vendor.

When the product was delivered, I noticed right away that the logo had been imprinted incorrectly. The logo that had been sent to the vendor was our full color version, not grayscale, and it resulted in the misprint. Had they gone with my contact, who has multiple versions of our logo on file and who is aware of this issue with our full color logo, the error wouldn't have happened.

Customer loyalty should be earned through trust and respect. Suppliers should ask probing questions about the purpose and ultimate use of their services, and not just take orders. Sometimes what is needed isn't what's asked for, and suppliers who ask questions can suggest alternatives that could save money or result in a better outcome. That care, concern, and attention to detail is the justification for a higher price (if in fact there is one), and having an anecdote or testimonial on hand to demonstrate your value can go a

long way toward forging a solid relationship.

If we only focus on the bottom line, we risk commoditizing suppliers instead of focusing on the unique service (and friendship) that each vendor can provide. Sure, a microphone is a microphone whether you go with AV Company A or AV Company B, a logoed pen is a logoed pen regardless of where it comes from, and most comparably starred hotels offer similar services and pricing that's usually in the same ballpark. But having a supplier know your company, understand your business, and know your history can be priceless. Paying a little more on the front end can save embarrassing (and potentially costly) mistakes.

It's generally accepted that people like doing business with people they like. PAMPI allows us to get to know one another, to become colleagues and hopefully even friends, and those friendships can go a long way to improving the negotiation process and fostering planner/supplier relationships that are profitable and valuable for both sides of the equation. You can't discount friendship, and you can't put a price on the value of your supplier caring about you and your business.

Amy Help when you least expect it: Partners....planners, suppliers, neighbors

Who are your neighbors? Do you know your neighbors? In our professional world our neighbors can be considered our professional partners. We can call on them when we have a quick question, a specific meeting/event need, help producing a new meeting, or even special requests or ideas.

If you read my column last winter, you know that I had just moved. I was fortunate to meet my closest neighbor before I even moved in. She was so excited to know we were moving

in and I was relieved she was so friendly! She made such a great first impression that it was important to me to keep up the new friendship. Since we didn't move in right away it was even more important. We stayed connected through email and voice mail. She saw me bringing things in house early last fall and working in the yard before the first freeze. When the big day came, we were easy to spot! Our first week in she brought my kids candy and me a blooming plant, and even some bread for breakfast! "Wow," I thought, "what a great new neighborhood."

Coming from the city, I knew many on my block, but most people just kept walking or going their own way. It was easy to stick to my routine and comfort zone. We did know some people for many years and the relationships expanded over time. It was a relief to see new ones happening immediately.

Like our profession, we encounter many people on a daily, weekly and yearly basis. Many are familiar friendly faces, but many we just nod to or smile to occasionally. But then there are those we have gotten to know and continue to work with on a regular basis. It is important in our planner and supplier relationships, that when we encounter new members (or new

to us partners), we embrace them like a new neighbor and show them we value them and want them in our network. You never know when you will need their service, their quote, their professional advice or their partnership on your next program.

Incidentally, this Fall in the second week of school, I encountered an emergency situation, and my not so "new" neighbor saved my day and picked my kids up after school while I sat in the Emergency Room. What a relief to know my kids were safe and so well taken care of when I finally returned home.

Similarly, what a relief to know a supplier we've known for years can make us shine and help our program to meet and exceed our attendees or customer's expectations. And how exciting it can be when a new partner gives us great new options we may not have considered or we were not expecting, and make the project even more enjoyable. Embrace all of your "neighbors" and partners in PAMPI and know that together we can be successful!

events calendar

register online at pampi.org



Wednesday, December 5, 2012

Breakfast Education Program

8:30 – 9:00 a.m. Registration and Continental Breakfast

9:00 – 10:15 a.m. Program (CEU Credit available)

Topic: "Shifting Gears: How to Move from Logistic to Strategic"

Speaker: Karen M. King, CMP, CMM, principal of meeting strategists, llc
Dave & Buster's, 325 North Columbus Boulevard, Philadelphia, PA, 19106

Monday, April 22, 2013

Spring Golf Outing

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. - Registration & Lunch

12:30 p.m. – Shotgun Start / Clinic

5:15 p.m. – Reception & Dinner

Talamore Country Club, Ambler, PA