

MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL

# DEFINE



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL OHIO CHAPTER

**OCT — DEC 2021**

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Adriane Cesa

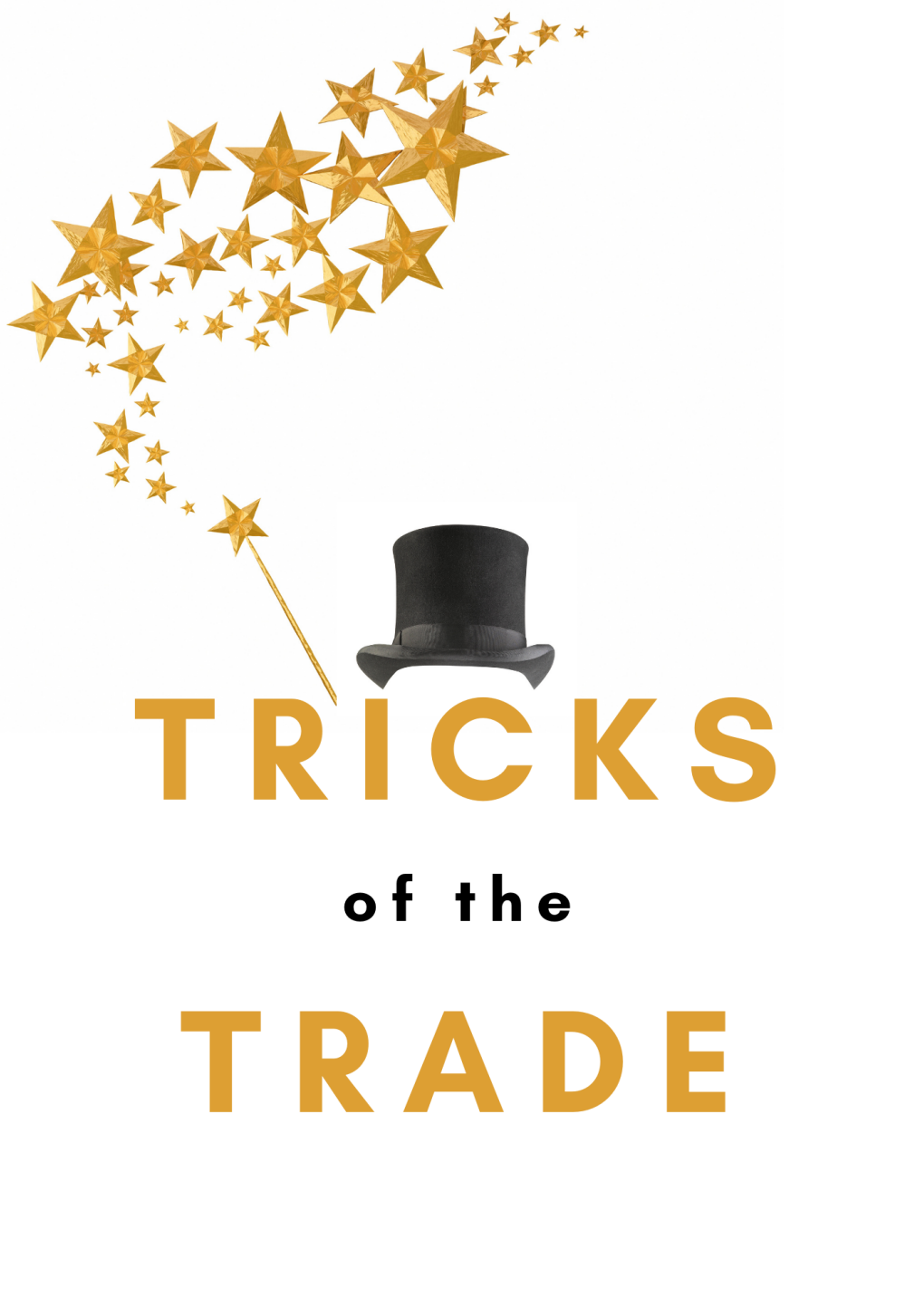
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## The Official Newsletter of MPI Ohio Chapter

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### MPIOH Mission Statement:

To enhance the overall quality and awareness of the meetings industry by ensuring the professional development and growth of its membership through targeted educational programs and networking opportunities.

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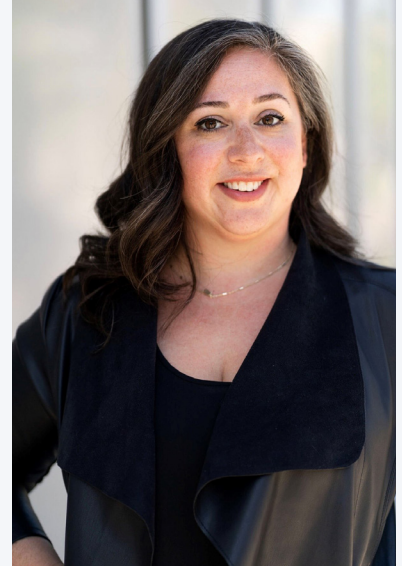
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# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

ADRIANE CESA



It's tricky...

When people ask me about how I got into event planning, I always say "It's tricky..." (and then proceed to have Run-DMC's song stuck in my head the rest of the day. You're welcome.).

As a history major at Ohio University, I never imagined a career in event planning. Like many people, I fell into event planning by chance as part of a larger job but it was always the portion I enjoyed the most and gravitated towards. I was able to see exhibit halls come together, advisory boards, Homecoming at Ohio University, speaker series, and everything in between.

Being part of so many different programs, I always had notes and de-briefed with the planners and suppliers afterwards on how things could have been gone differently. I've been lucky enough to have great partners and have learned so much from so many people – and I'd like to share it with you!

Here are my top 5 tips and tricks of the trade:

1. There WILL be something that goes wrong. The goal is that no one but you knows it!
2. Food is key. You can have the perfect location and best speakers but if there's not enough food, that's all they will talk about!
3. Remember your goals and objectives. Keep this at the forefront of everything you're doing. How will this help you meet those goals? Why do you have this objective?
4. Excel is your friend. I know, spreadsheets and formulas can be overwhelming. They are also your best friend when it comes to keeping your budgets on point. Create a template for your budgets – and don't leave out sales tax and service charges! (Feel free to email me for a template and keep an eye out for a special upcoming chapter meeting!).
5. MPI and MPIOH. The most obvious tip – lean on your fellow planners and suppliers! Combined, we have more knowledge than any individual could ever have on their own.

Bonus tip – find people and partners you LOVE to work with and TRUST! There's nothing greater than having a team that you know will support you and be honest and transparent with you.

What are some of the best tips and tricks that YOU have learned?  
Send me an email at [adriane@redstory.co](mailto:adriane@redstory.co) to share!

*Adriane Cesa*





# Designing an Event that Embraces Authentic Culture

**By: Ashley Lawson**

*Vice President & Owner,  
Achieve Incentives & Meetings  
2021 SITE Midwest President*

Do you want to host an event where your attendees experience a true sense of the destination, where they can have meaningful encounters and emotionally connect with the local people and culture?

How exactly can you create those experiences if you are not familiar with the destination itself?

The key is to get to know more about the destination's traditions and values. Start by researching or asking your on-the-ground partners these five questions:

## **1. What is a special tradition you have for birthdays or weddings?**

Special occasions like weddings and birthdays are all about celebrating milestones and togetherness. It is likely that you are bringing people together to do just that. Dive in and learn about some of the fun traditions your destination celebrates and include them in your agenda.

## **2. Tell me about your pastimes - what is a typical week like with friends and family?**

If you really want your attendees to emotionally connect with the local life, they need to truly be immersed in it. For example, in the Dominican Republic, locals love dancing bachata on Fridays and playing baseball on Sundays. In Colombia, neighbors play dominoes while listening to Champeta music. Oftentimes, the traditional pastimes are simple and casual – which typically means they will not break your event budget while offering a unique, meaningful experience. It is these simple activities that will leave a lasting impression.

## **3. What recipe has been handed down for generations? What is a popular regional cocktail?**

One of the best ways to give your attendees a true taste of the destination is to have them make a local meal. Hosting a cooking and/or mixology class is a fun and interactive way in which every participant can learn facts about the history of the ingredients and why the meal became important to the destination and its people.

## **4. What music do most locals listen to?**

Music is often the heartbeat of a destination. Create a destination-themed playlist (Spotify is a great option for this) and share it with your attendees before the big event so they are able to feel the rhythm of the destination before they even arrive onsite.

## **5. Do you have a typical phrase or saying among locals? How does one say thank you?**

Whether you are hosting a domestic or international event, many destinations have a unique phrase or saying. Find out what that special message is and include it, along with its meaning, in your pre-event communications. If you are heading to a destination where a new language is spoken, find out how to say “thank you.” This phrase is the most powerful one you can equip your guests with. When they are able to share their gratitude in the destination's local language, it creates a greater connection and sense of appreciation between cultures.

By becoming more familiar with the aspects that make each destination unique and special, you can start weaving these components into the entire event journey. Immersing your attendees in a destination's authentic culture before and during the event will not only create awareness of the local culture - it will build a deeper connection to the destination and its people, leaving participants with a more meaningful and memorable experience.



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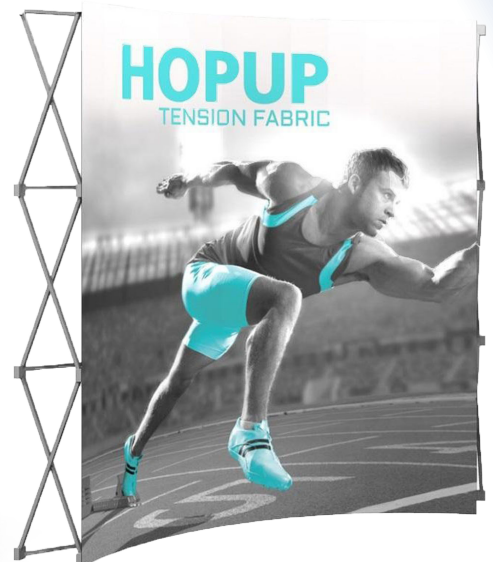
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# INNOVATE YOUR NETWORKING WITH SPARKWEAR

**By: John Rattray**

*Sparkwear Contact Info - [contact@sparkwear.technology](mailto:contact@sparkwear.technology)*



What's the most important element in holding a successful event? Is it the people, the food, the entertainment, the decor and layout? It's the people of course! Engaged attendees mean higher ticket sales, higher attendee satisfaction, and higher likelihood of future participation. Increasing engagement at events is not always a simple task, and the approach needed must be as dynamic as the people who attend them.

Not surprisingly, the number one reason people attend networking events is ... to network. Unfortunately, there are a number of factors that make that difficult, ranging from large venue sizes spreading attendees far from one another, to attendees not having the right tools to optimize the networking experience. When designing an event, placing the attendee's social experience at the forefront of the design phase can help mitigate many of these challenges.

A lot of the complaints about networking events that inspired the creation of Sparkwear have been around for decades, and many of these complaints still exist today. The most common complaint is that networking events often feel forced. Described by many as, "a time and place with alcohol where people awkwardly start conversations with one another," networking is seen by many as something to avoid, not get excited about.

Sparkwear set out to change this narrative and help consistently unlock the potential in these events. It's a staggering fact that most organizers know - 80% of jobs are filled through networking, not through applications. It's this networking potential that motivates Sparkwear to continue innovating ways for attendees to make the most of their experience. Their smart wristbands make personalized introductions with a buzz and on-screen readout of nearby attendees based on hobbies, industry, interests, and more. With their innovative approach to illuminating the invisible connections that exist between us all, Sparkwear helps spark conversations, increase engagement, and improve the success of events for both attendees and organizers.

After surviving a unique period of networking without in-person interaction, the events industry has been exposed to how critical the face-to-face element is to its success. With in-person events returning to their former ubiquity, it is an exciting time to take the lessons learned to improve the way we design events and connect with one another.

John Rattray is the CEO and Founder of Sparkwear Inc. and has been singularly focused on inventing ways to improve everyday life throughout his career. While finishing his Ph.D. in computer engineering at Johns Hopkins University, John realized that the social technology being developed did not equally focus on improving relationships in the physical world as it did in the digital world and so he set out to change that. His favorite moments of running Sparkwear have been seeing the enthusiastic responses from attendees after literally feeling and seeing how connected they are to others and enjoying a truly first-time experience.



# CREATE MORE ENGAGING NAME TAGS

By: Sheila Fox

## 8 TIPS TO CONNECT YOUR ATTENDEES



Name tags are a key element to any successful event. They help break the ice for attendees and make the networking process easy.

"You're from Columbus? Me too!"

Two people can quickly find a commonality and start talking.

Event planners are any event's biggest critic, and too many times I've attended an event with less than sufficient name badges. Here are a few ways to make the name tags at your next gathering work for you and your attendees:

### AN EASY-TO-READ FONT

Arial, Times New Roman or other simple font is best.

### LARGE FONT FOR THE FIRST NAME

I recommend at least 24-point font size for the first name. Attendees should be able to read the first name from several feet away.

### FULL NAME ON THE LINE BELOW

The attendee's full name should go on the line below, in a slightly smaller font, but still large enough to read from a distance.

### INCLUDE TITLE AND COMPANY

Many suppliers looking to do business with potential clients need to know which attendees are the decision-makers. It also helps attendees in similar positions at different companies or branches connect with each other.

### DIFFERENT COLORED PAPER TO IDENTIFY ATTENDEE CATEGORIES

Many associations or conferences have several categories of attendees - vendors, exhibitors, affiliates, etc. Using different colored name tag paper is an easy and inexpensive way to help conference-goers quickly find those they are looking for from a distance. Another option is to use different colored name badge holders.

### HORIZONTAL RIBBONS

Need to recognize sponsors, speakers, board members, or other VIP guests? Horizontal ribbons save space on the name tag and make an attendee feel less like they just won a prize at the state fair than their vertical counterparts.

### ASSIGNED SEAT ON THE BACK OF BADGE

Does your luncheon or dinner have assigned seating? By placing a label on the back side of the name tag paper, it allows the attendee to quickly remember their seat assignment and prevents your event staff from telling guests their table number over and over. Labels can be created in a merge file and imported from an Excel spreadsheet of seat assignments.

### TRANSPORT BADGES EASILY AND INEXPENSIVELY

OneWay Nametag cases are lightweight, clear plastic cases that hold 50 tags per case. They can be shipped and reused over and over (despite their name, they last for years).

### RESOURCES:

Marco Promotions offer affordable nametag paper, badges and ribbons. PC/Nametag sell unique meeting supplies, including the OneWay Name tag cases, ribbons, and other meeting supplies.

*\*I receive no compensation from Marco or PC/Nametag - I just think they offer great products.*

*A proven event management and consulting expert, Sheila Fox of Event In Site, LLC equips her clients with the vision and direction it takes to succeed in their goals. Headquartered in Columbus, Sheila specializes in serving state and national associations, non-profit organizations, and corporate clients. Explore services and learn more at [www.eventinsite.com](http://www.eventinsite.com).*



# IGNITE

## SPARKING CONVERSATIONS

RECENTLY HOSTED AT  
COLUMBUS STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE





# Meet a Planner

BY: ANN NETZLEY HOLLINS



## Share a little bit about yourself, your career path, and your current position.

Born and raised in Ohio, I moved to Columbus from the Dayton area in 2003. A proud University of Dayton graduate and Flyer fan, I still make my way back to the area to visit my parents, who I owe so much gratitude to for simply being the best. After moving to Columbus, I focused on my event career representing Marriott full-service hotels and a local university in both manager and director roles, before founding Events Outlined. Events Outlined is a project and event management company that partners with the association, corporate, and higher education client. The calm to my storm, biggest supporter, and favorite person is my husband, Isaiah. Our family is complete with our fur baby, Macy, who is a 12-year-old Cockapoo. I remain active in my local community, serving as a Board Trustee for Visit Westerville and Uptown Westerville Inc. Board Member. Many suppliers looking to do business with potential clients need to know which attendees are the decision-makers. It also helps attendees in similar positions at different companies or branches connect with each other.

## How long have you been an MPI member and what prompted you to join?

I have been an official member for three years but have attended many MPI events over the past 18 years in Columbus.

## How has membership been of value to you?

As an independent planner, it serves as a home base for me to connect with others in the industry to share resources, solutions, and friendships.

## Have you developed any notable partnerships or collaborations with other MPI members?

Yes, I am a big believer in partnering with your circle of trust from both the supplier and planner side. It is so important now, more than ever, that the industry works together as a whole and MPI serves as an avenue for suppliers and planners to connect and collaborate.

## What is the best career advice you have ever received or ever given?

Take time to mentor and pay it forward.

## This quarter's newsletter is focused on the theme TRICKS OF THE TRADE. Can you share any work-related "tricks of your trade" that you find most helpful?

Outline a plan for all the "what ifs". Always have band-aids and batteries when on site.

## What about your best life-hacks in general?

Make the best use of closet space by using shower rings to hang pants/jeans by the belt loops and tank tops on one hanger.

---

*\* Ann Hollins (Netzley) is the Chief Experience Officer of Events Outlined, LLC*





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## ***Meet a Supplier – Brian Monahan***

**I have spent the largest part of my career in the audiovisual industry. I have an interesting start as a “Combat Visual Imagery Specialist” in the US Marine Corps, which is AKA av technician in camouflage. My current role is VP of Sales and Business Development. Aside from my passion for the meeting and event industry, I am also passionate about personal development. I am also certified as a professional life and business coach.**

### **How long have you been an MPI member and what prompted you to join?**

I have been a member for 13 years. I first gained interest in MPI when I heard about the Mid America Conference hosted in Cincinnati around 2010. I thought it would be a great opportunity to network and grow my professional skills.

### **How has membership been of value to you?**

My professional network is first class. I have created relationships with MPI Members throughout the United States. I am currently serving on the MPI Potomac Chapter Board of Directors leading publications. MPI has provided me not only meeting and event industry skills but also leadership skills.

### **Have you developed any notable partnerships or collaborations with other MPI members?**

Prestige has created numerous partnerships with associations and corporations through our relationships developed at MPI. When possible, we refer our fellow supplier members to our customers when they require a service not offered in our suite of services.

### **What is the best career advice you have ever received or ever given?**

Jeffrey Gitomer is one of my favorite sales authors/experts. Early in my career while providing the audiovisual for one of his public seminars, I was introduced to his mantra “Value First.” It resonated with me, and I have committed my career to always providing value first. I always ask myself, how can I serve my customer, industry colleague or fellow human first. I believe in the long run I will be rewarded.

### **This quarter’s newsletter is focused on the theme TRICKS OF THE TRADE. Can you share any work-related “tricks of your trade” that you find most helpful?**

Public Speaking is one of the best ways to grow your network and presence in the industry. Develop a workshop or training and offer to teach it at a chapter meetings or industry conference. Now instead of networking one to one, you get to “meet the entire room” but your name shows up on website and agendas. You will be surprised at how many people you don’t know who now know you.

### **What about your best life-hacks in general?**

Of course, as an AV professional, I am never without my duct tape, but another go to item is command strips. I use command strips with Velcro to affix all kinds of accessories such as a key hook rack affixed to my desk to assist with cable management.

---

*\* Brian Monahan is the VP of Sales and Business Development at Prestige AV & Creative Services*



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