

MPINCC Annual Conference & Expo 2016

Speakers



Josh Adams, CMP

As Vice President of Sales, Josh works closely with clients, partners and the internal streamlinevents team to provide high-impact, creative events that focus on the attendee experience. With 35 years of industry experience, Josh has excelled in operational roles. Additional experience within the FIT and destination management industry helped build a reputation for in-depth worldwide destination knowledge, flawless program execution and a passion for creating “once-in-a-lifetime” experiences for guests.

Websites:

[streamlinevents, Inc.](#)



Deborah Agricola Kuns, CMP

Deborah Agricola Kuns, CMP is a long-standing member of MPINCC and the Northern California Branch Director of SPiN. SPiN is the Senior Planner Industry Network for senior-level planners with 10+ years of experience and is a supplier-free community of peers. Deborah along with a committee organize Think Tanks and Meet-Ups that are CEU-accredited discussions on topics that matter to senior-level planners.

Deborah, also known as Deb Kuns, is an Independent Meeting Professional and manages two positions - Frosch and Christine Peat International “Global Concierge”. She’s on LinkedIn and Twitter @DebKunsCMP.

Websites:

[FROSCH/Christine Peat Intl](#)



Laura Bell Way, CMM

Laura Bell Way, CMM, manages the marketing events team at Autodesk, Inc. The group is responsible for strategy, execution, and ROI of customer-facing events, tradeshows, and user summits such as the flagship Autodesk University in Las Vegas. Previously, Laura implemented Strategic Meetings Management at Autodesk and before that spent over 20 years leading teams in the planning and execution of corporate events and incentives. Throughout her career, Laura has spent years on the board of industry organizations such as SITE, MPI, and GMIC and was additionally an adjunct professor at Golden Gate University.

Websites:

[Autodesk](#)



Cherryl Brazier

Cherryl Brazier joined Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group Hotels in 2010 as Director- Global Sales to represent the 700 International Hotels for Radisson Blu, Radisson Red, Radisson Blu Edwardian, Park Plaza Hotels, Park Inns and Country Inns and Suites. Previously Cherryl was with Millennium Hotels for 5 years as Global Director of Group and Incentive sales for the West Coast and Texas based in Los Angeles. Prior to that she was Director of Group, Meeting and Incentive sales at Thistle Hotels with responsibility for sales and marketing plans for the US and Canada. In 1998, she arrived in the USA to take on the position as Senior Marketing Executive with the British Tourist Authority in Los Angeles.

Cherryl began her career in London and the U.K. holding a number of management positions including prestigious venues such as the Café Royal and the Brewery in the City of London. She was responsible

for the implementation and launch of “Meeting 2000” for Hilton UK and in 1996, she joined the Royal Garden Hotel, in Kensington London, initially as Conference and Incentive Sales manager and then as Assistant Director of Sales during the reopening of the property.

A 30 year industry veteran Cheryl was educated at Leeds Polytechnic School of Hospitality Management in the U.K. and has been an MPI member for 20 years. Cheryl is also an active member of the Society of Incentive and Travel Executives for 20 years previously serving as Vice President of the International Board of Directors for SITE and served as Chair of the 2007 SITE International Conference. Cheryl holds the CIS and SEPC designations

When not working or traveling you will find her pursuing her passion for yacht racing or training for the next triathlon.

Websites:

[Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group](#)



Elizabeth Cherson, CMP

Liz is an accomplished event planner with over 9 years of event & meeting planning experience, 5 of which as a CMP. She is currently the Events and Meetings Manager for Greylock Partners, a top tier venture capital firm in Silicon Valley. Prior, she was with the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford University where she was responsible for large scale, regional and international events such as Homecoming, Reunion, and a Rose Bowl Tailgate which attracted over 10,000 fans. She started her career working for boutique third-party planning companies which gave her in-depth experience in schlepping and attention to detail. Liz earned her BA in Psychology from Bryn Mawr College, where she was a 4-year starter on the volleyball team and the Vice President of the Athletics Association.

Liz is currently the co-chair of the CMP/CMM committee for Meeting Professionals International Northern California Chapter. She has previously served as the Chair of the Monthly Programs Committee for the Philadelphia Area Chapter of Meeting Professionals International. Her work with that committee resulted in being named “Volunteer of the Year” for 2012-2013. She also served as an instructor on the CMP Study Group Committee for PAMPI from 2010 – 2013.

Websites:

[Greylock Partners](#)



Carlee Duncan, CMP

Carlee Duncan, CMP has had a number of roles in the Meeting and Events Industry over the last 12 years. Her career spans across venues sales, association planning, Destination Management and is now on the Strategic Meetings Team at Autodesk. As a past Board Member and Committee Chair for MPINCC, Carlee enjoys volunteering to give back to the communities that have helped her grow as an individual and professional. Outside of work she can be found officiating lacrosse games, volunteering for youth sports organizations and mountain biking in Marin. As a San Francisco native she has a passion for the local food scene and fun events in SF.

Websites:

[Autodesk, Inc.](#)



Barbara Dunn O'Neal

Barbara F. Dunn O'Neal is a partner in the Chicago office of Barnes & Thornburg LLP and is a member of the firm's Corporate Department and Associations and Foundations Practice Group. She focuses her practice on representing organizations in the travel, tourism, hospitality, incentive and meetings industries as well as non-profits and related organizations on a wide variety of legal issues.

Barbara received her undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan and her Juris Doctorate degree from the John Marshall Law School in Chicago where she was a member of the Editorial Board of the John Marshall Law Review.

For more than two decades, Barbara has worked with many individuals and organizations in the meetings industry including corporate, association and independent meeting professionals. She is a frequent speaker for Financial and Insurance Conference Planners (FICP), Meeting Professionals International (MPI) and Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA). Barbara is also a member of the Academy of Hospitality Industry Attorneys (AHIA) and currently serves on its Board of Directors as Vice President.

Websites:

[Barnes & Thornburg LLP](#)



Jason Eriksen

Websites:

[Merchants Exchange Productions](#)



Ron Foxworthy, CMP

Ron Foxworthy has been a leader in the experiential and event industries for over 15 years mostly in the San Francisco Bay Area. He has been a proud and active member and participant of various event organizations including Senior Planner Industry Network (SPiN), MPI Northern CA chapter, GMIC, FICP and SITE during this time. Ron is currently on the leadership team for the SPiN chapter of San Francisco and serves as Branch Venue Relations Vice President.

Prior to his role as Director of Corporate Sales Operations at IfOnly, Ron was a Senior Meeting Planner with Wells Fargo Enterprise Marketing and Operations Manager for R/A Performance Group handling and managing high end events for clients such as BMW North America, Wells Fargo and Lincoln Benefit Financial. Ron got his start in the event industry at LKE Productions helping to managing large scale IT conferences for a wide variety of Silicon Valley based corporations like RSA Security and BroadVision. Ron's passion is educating others about the power of meaningful attendee experiences, new technologies and face to face meetings.

He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Commercial Art and Advertising at the University of Central Missouri. During his spare time, Ron travels, keeps abreast of the local San Francisco food scene and loves a handmade craft cocktail.

Websites:

[IfOnly](#)



Brooke Gracey

Brooke Gracey is Senior Mobile Events App Strategist for CrowdCompass by Cvent, the division of Cvent that develops mobile apps for corporate and business events. In Brooke's current role she helps event organizers incorporate mobile in their planning and marketing strategies and enables the CrowdCompass sales and marketing teams to do the same. She's also the strategic mind behind CrowdCompass' trade show presence. Brooke is known for her extensive event technology experience and is often sought out as a subject matter expert in the mobile apps industry.

Websites:

[CrowdCompass](#)



Richard Harper

I have been the Executive Vice President of HelmsBriscoe for 3 ½ years and prior to that with MGM Resorts Int'l for 13 years and Westin Hotels for 17 years. Current Co-Chair of MMB along with Mike Dominguez. My job description is a blank sheet of paper.

Websites:

[HelmsBriscoe](#)



Elaine Herman

A native New Yorker, Elaine relocated to the Bay Area when she began her career in hospitality 20 years ago. Working as a banquet server while attending culinary school, she began her education as an event specialist while simultaneously studying to be a pastry chef. Upon graduating, she quickly learned that the kitchen wasn't where she wanted to be, and so began a professional journey that included several years as the Food & Beverage Director at an exclusive country club and as the onsite General Manager

of the corporate dining program at a large Silicon Valley software company. Even though she was on the management fast track, she kept gravitating back towards special events. Following her heart, she began to focus on catering and special event production, where she had the good fortune to work on celebrity events, large scale corporate events for thousands of people, meetings, conferences and incentives, and of course, weddings. This background has served her well, as she has an intimate knowledge of event logistics, venues, catering, décor, rentals...everything that takes place behind the scenes. It seemed like the next logical step was to work for a DMC where she could bring all her skills and experiences together. After a couple of years, she realized that catering and special events were her true and undying passion, and in 2013, Elaine had the opportunity to become a founding partner in 49 Square Catering. She hasn't looked back.

A firm believer in supporting the local professional community, Elaine has served on the Board of Directors of the ISES-NCC Chapter. She was recognized by ISES as Northern California's 2009 Rising Star. She has also been very active in the MPINCC Chapter and co-chaired the 2010 Gala and Silent Auction, for which she was awarded Meeting Professional of the Quarter and was nominated for Meeting Professional of the Year. In 2012 she co-chaired the ISES-NCC Chapter's Annual Gala and Silent Auction, a party that is still talked about as the one to beat. For her efforts, she was recognized with the chapter's Heart and Soul Award.

Websites:

[49 Square Catering](#)



Tyra Hilliard, PhD, JD, CMP

I am a speaker, largely on topics related to contracts, legal issues, and risk management. I am also a professor of business, hospitality, and event management.

My professional background includes time spent as a meetings industry attorney, a meeting, planner, an association executive, a catering manager, and a CVB sales manager.

I have the distinction of being one of only two people in the world who has a law degree, a PhD in Hospitality, and a CMP.

Websites:

[Hilliard Associates](#)



Judi Holler

Judi is an expert on personal branding who helps hospitality professionals understand the power of their personal brand.

Judi has spent the last 15 years working in Sales and Marketing for companies like Marriott, Omni, Starwood and the St. Louis CVB. She was recently selected as one of Connect Magazines 40 under 40 in the hospitality industry.

Judi serves on the Board of Directors for the Chicago Area Chapter of Meeting Professionals International and is the current President.

Judi is a professionally trained improviser and proud alumni of Second City in Chicago.

Judi also host "The Brandprov Show" on her YouTube Channel and works as an event emcee.

Websites:

[Holla! Productions, LLC](#)



Liz Keyser, CMP, DMCP

Liz has been Co-Owner of AlliedPRA Northern California since its inception in 2004. She earned her Certified Meeting Professional Designation (CMP) and Destination Management Certified Professional Designation (DMCP) in 2007. Recently, Liz was the driving force behind the Association of Destination Management Executives International (ADMEI) sponsored 'DMC Economic Impact Study'.

Liz has served on the Meeting Professionals International WEC Host Committee for the 2015 Conference in San Francisco and also serves as a Past President for ADMEI and for the MPI Northern California Chapter. She is a member of the AlliedPRA Franchise Advisory Committee and participates on several task forces for AlliedPRA. She founded the San Francisco DMC Council in 2009 and co-authored the book Best Practices in Destination Management. She oversees the operations of 150+ AlliedPRA programs per year while running an award-winning office. Liz lives in Lafayette and enjoys spending time with her kids, Charlotte, Stone and Redford, and her husband Matthew, visiting new restaurants and wineries, and trail running in the Briones Regional Park.

Websites:

[AlliedPRA Northern California](#)



David Kliman, CMM

David Kliman is a widely respected hospitality and communication industry leader with more than thirty years experience in business development, global sales and marketing, communications and operations management in both the hotel and financial services industries. He is a past International Chairman of MPI.

He is founder and president of The Kliman Group, a communication consulting firm specializing in assisting tourism organizations to maximize their profitability through a strategic understanding and interpretation of customer needs and market trends. His clients include numerous DMOs, hotel companies and trade organizations for which he creates and moderates Customer Advisory Boards and Think Tanks.

Websites:

[The Kliman Group](#)



Jeff Kramer

Jeff Kramer is the Founder and Artistic Director of ComedySportz, the longest-running show in the Silicon Valley. Since 1987 they have produced more than 5500 performances for audiences at their home location as well as nationwide. He has worked as a professional improviser across the country and for the troops in Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey. In addition, he has developed and led Applied Improv training programs for such clients as Apple, Google, eBay, Hewlett-Packard, Kaiser-Permanente, PG&E, The US Postal Service, AAA, Chevron, and Facebook.

Websites:

[ComedySportz](#)



Julie Lindsey

As Director of Global Events at Gap Inc., Julie manages a centralized events department that plans over 400 events annually for all of Gap Inc.'s divisions and brands. Responsibilities include development and implementation of a Strategic Meetings Management Program, leadership of Gap Inc.'s sustainable meeting standards, management of executive events, and ensuring flawless execution of meetings, conferences, and events. Prior experience includes eight years at Oracle Corporation, where she managed the Conferences & Incentives team and oversaw global event execution for Oracle's major employee meetings, sales incentives, events and conferences. Her meetings career began at a DMC in San Francisco. Julie's industry involvement has included leadership roles in MPI Northern California, Meetings Competitive Advantage Forum (MCAF), and GMIC Northern California.

Websites:

[Gap, Inc.](#)



Susan Piel, CMP

Susan has over 13 years of meeting & event planning experience. She is currently Global Events Manager with FireEye based in Milpitas, CA. She was previously with TIBCO Software and has also worked at Affymax, Inc., the American Academy of Ophthalmology and spent over 10 years at Hanley Wood as Conference Director. She has also been a business manager and HR manager for a small business. She started her career in meeting planning working for a third party planning firm, Rosenbluth International.

Susan has been passionate about the hospitality industry ever since she was a hospitality management major at the University of San Francisco where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration.

Susan is currently the co-chair of the CMP/CMM committee for Meeting Professionals International Northern California Chapter. She has previously served on the Board of Directors and is a member of the USF Hospitality Management Advisory Board.

Websites:

[FireEye](#)



Cindy Ramesh

Cindy has been in this industry for 22 years, starting her career down in Monterey working for an assortment of Hotels. For many years she was the Director of Sales at the former Doubletree Hotel Monterey Hotel and Conference Center and was instrumental in establishing the Monterey Meeting Connection. She eventually left to assist in the creation of the Monterey Convention Authority – as Director of Sales and Marketing for the organization for 5 years. Cindy then moved on to the Planning side and worked as Regional Vice President for ConferenceDirect in Portland Oregon. A third party sourcing and planning company. In that role she worked mainly with Fortune 500 Technology Companies on their meetings and events. For the past six years she has been here at the Hilton San Francisco Union Square as the Director of Sales, and this past year now also responsible for the complex which includes the addition of the Parc 55, A Hilton Hotel. Cindy has earned her CMP, and is a Northern California Chapter of (MPI) Meeting professional of the year past award winner, Hall of Fame award winner, and past President.

Websites:

[Hilton San Francisco Union Square](#)



Ron Rosenberg

Ron Rosenberg, president of QualityTalk, Inc., is an award-winning speaker, author, and coach. He is a nationally recognized expert on marketing and customer service, has authored several books and learning systems, and leads high-level marketing and business development coaching programs. Since 1994, Ron has presented over 850 presentations to businesses and associations serving a wide variety of industries and professions including self-storage, funeral, nursery and landscape, medical and dental, and others too numerous to list. He has also worked with groups that serve minority and woman-owned businesses, community rehabilitation programs, early child education, and military families, and has spoken for many association-management and destination groups. Over 20,000 people have subscribed to his Tricks & Tales newsletter. His expert commentary has been featured in The New York Times and The Washington Post, and in Smart Money and Real Simple magazines. He has been a guest on nationally syndicated radio shows including ABC Radio, Dateline Washington, and The Gary Nolan Show.

Ron holds an undergraduate degree in Computer Science from Rochester Institute of Technology, and an MBA from Southern New Hampshire University.

Websites:

[QualityTalk](#)



Matthew Schermerhorn, CMP

Matthew recently started Black Box Meetings, an independent meeting planning consultancy, built on his career managing meetings and travel teams at AAA, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Health Net; and heading up hotel catering and convention services departments. He is passionate about planning board and leadership meetings and international / incentives, strategic meeting management, and evolving advances in industry technology. He is proud to be an NCCMPI past president. Matthew also founded and is president of Musaica, a bay area men's a cappella vocal ensemble in which he sings baritone.

Websites:

[Black Box Meetings](#)



Heather Shatz

Heather Shatz's career with Hilton Worldwide has spanned various positions over a combined 26 years. Currently she is a Director of Sales, Technology Accounts including key accounts like Cisco, Intel, Microsoft, Symantec, etc. She had a 4 year hiatus from Hilton when she worked as a Director of Business Development for Fusion Productions, an event technology company based in Rochester, NY.

Heather has been a longtime member (since 1985) of MPINCC and found serving as a member of the board very worthwhile and a great foundation for long term professional and personal relationships. The board member participation was a jumping off point to additional board positions including a current role on the board of CEMA – Corporate Event Marketing Association. She also belongs to GMIC Northern California Chapter.

She has partnered and collaborated with Birgess Angeles with B Line events on seminars and breakouts on various topics to educate both the planner and the supplier including areas of contract re-negotiation, contract language and Internet technologies for meetings. Additionally she co-partnered on a breakout with Carolyn Pund from Cisco the importance of the SMMP and Supplier Relationship at the PCMA 2015 Annual Meeting.

Heather works remotely in Burlingame, CA and along with her husband, Steve, she spends time with her 2 daughters and their dog Tucker.

Websites:

[Hilton Sales Worldwide](#)



James Spellos

James Spellos is the President of Meeting U., a company specializing in helping people become more productive and comfortable with technology. Jim is certified as a Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS). He delivers over 150 seminars annually on how to use technology more efficiently, including social media. Jim is a faculty member at New York University, teaching in the School of Professional and Continuing Studies since 1990. He has been honored with both their Award for Teaching Excellence and their Outstanding Service Award.

With hospitality industry colleague Corbin Ball, Jim released in 2012 the TechSpec app, helping meeting planners to assess the technology capabilities of a hotel during a site inspection.

In 2014, Jim joined the Board of Directors for Rock and Wrap It Up, an anti-poverty/hunger think tank, which supports over 43,000 agencies in North America. Jim co-created for them the Whole Earth Calculator app, which helps organization's identify the quantity of food donated and carbon footprint reduced from food recovered from meetings and events.

Outside of the meetings industry, Jim is an accomplished musician and songwriter, playing guitar, keyboards and singing for the New York City rock band Contraband. They released their first CD, "Welcome to the Neighborhood" in late 2008, and is back in the studio recording new songs for a 2015 release.

Websites:

[Meeting U.](#), [Way Cool Tools](#)



Shawna Suckow, CMP

Shawna Suckow, CMP, has been a planner for over 20 years. Today, she is the Founder & Chairwoman of SPiN, the 2,500-member Senior Planners Industry Network. Shawna works with planners to provide strategic networking and rethink audience engagement at their conferences. She also works with CVBs to help them market more effectively to today's planners.

Honors include being named to the 2015 list of Top 100 Women Business & Tech Speakers, 2015 Top 25 Women in the Industry, Top 25 Most Influential in the Meetings Industry in 2012, 2013 and 2014, and Planners' Favorite Speakers of 2014 and 2015.

Websites:

[SPIN Planners](#)



Thom Ward

Thom has a diverse background in the Hospitality Industry and has mastered the art of Sales & Marketing. He has held a variety of positions of including, VP, GM, Regional and DOS for Hyatt Hotels, Atlas Hotels, Long Beach CVB, Presentation Services, Photo & Sound Company, Walt Disney Attractions and Resorts, Planet Hollywood North American, Conference Direct and NASCAR.

In 2001 his entrepreneurial spirit and energy led him to leave the corporate structure to open his company Dining Connections which has provided representation to over 80 restaurants as well as marketing solutions to hospitality groups including contracts with The Newport CVB, the RRAZZ ROOM, The Stinking Rose Corporation, the Great Lakes Brewing Company in Cleveland and Concierge Services at the Infinity and The Brannan. He is also a Conference Direct Associate.

He served as MPINCC President in 1996-1997 and on the MPI Foundation Board 1998 – 2000. He served as President of the Orange County HMSI, and the Board of Directors for SFTA (formerly SFCVB), Los Angeles HMSI and Orange County NACE.

Thom was awarded MPINCC Hall of Fame Award in 2000, 2007 and 2015 and Chicago Chapter's

President's award in 2011. He has been a member of ASAE, PCMA.

Thom is a graduate of California State University, Fullerton - Journalism/Public Relations Certification from PCMA – Learning Environment Specialist (LES).

Websites:

[Dining Connections](#)



Beth Ziesenis

Meet Beth Ziesenis, your own personal Nerdy Best Friend. Beth Z keeps up with all the new online applications and downloads that can help you look like you're working with a team of marketing, computer and productivity experts, even if you suffer from a shrinking staff and a disappearing budget. Named an editor's pick for best speaker of 2013 by MeetingsNet and a Favorite Speaker by Meetings & Conventions magazine in 2014, Beth Ziesenis is an author, speaker, technology consultant and self-proclaimed nerd. Since her first Commodore 64 computer, Beth has been fascinated with technology and computer shortcuts that make people's lives easier. Beth helps computer users all over the country filter through thousands of apps, gadgets, widgets and doodads to find the perfect free and bargain technology tools for business and personal use through presentations and her books, including the latest title, Nerd Know-How: The 27+ Best Apps for Work and How to Use 'Em, available on Amazon.com.

Websites:

[Your Nerdy Best Friend](#)