



MPI

ARIZONA SUNBELT

CHAPTER

2019

TASTY TRENDS

Here's how changes in food and
beverage desires will impact
Arizona's meetings and events
industry in 2020

BEYOND THE BALLROOM



See why Tucson's one of a kind culture creates an experience that extends beyond the ballroom. Book now through 2021 and earn up to **\$15,000 OFF** your Master Account.

Contact Pamela Traficanti

National Sales Manager | 520.770.2150 | ptraficanti@visittucson.org

FREE YOURSELF.™

tucson
VISITTUCSON.ORG



Celebrate Your Events

AT DESERT DIAMOND CASINO HOTEL IN TUCSON, ARIZONA!

It's time to celebrate as our hotel, conference and meeting rooms are redesigned and upgraded to a whole new level. Come celebrate with us. Bring your next meeting or event to Tucson, Arizona!



- 148 well-appointed guest rooms with WiFi
- 19,000+ sq. ft. of Accommodating conference/meeting space
- Complimentary Airport Transportation
- Concierge Services
- Five On-Site Dining Options
- Gift Shop
- Ask about our "Celebration" package

For more information contact:
Hotel Sales: 520-342-3020
or hotelsales@ddcaz.com





TIFFANY HIGGINS: "I'm most looking forward to implementing ideas that myself and our leadership team learned at our World Education Congress in Toronto," says the president of the Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Arizona Sunbelt Chapter. *(Photo taken on location at The Stewart by Mike Mertes, AZ Big Media)*



HITTING NEW HEIGHTS

MPI Arizona Sunbelt Chapter president aims to create a stronger local community and help lift members during her leadership

By ERIN THORBURN

With a decade (and counting) of involvement in the Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Arizona Sunbelt Chapter, Tiffany Higgins is embracing her role as president with tenacity and a “go-team attitude.”

Her 13-year position as an event coordinator for her company, The Tiffany Event, has no doubt helped Higgins in her proactive drive and enthusiasm. For Higgins, it’s one thing to be a member of MPI Arizona Sunbelt Chapter and another to jump “all in.” All members of MPI and volunteers are welcome and encouraged to join a committee and become an active participant. But Higgins has taken it a step farther by becoming leader of the iconic industry association.



MPI ARIZONA SUNBELT CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Top row, from left: Bill Babin, Big Zephyr Entertainment; Sukki Jahnke, CMP, Tempe Chamber of Commerce; Heather Luvisi, Lucky Strike Entertainment; Maria Mwangi, The Van Buren/Comerica Theatre; Penny Allphin, CHME, Hassayampa Inn/Ariz Hospitality; Kerri O'Brien Rose, CMP, independent planner. Bottom row, from left: Becky Stengel, JSAV; Terri Crain, Karma Event Lighting & Audio Visual; Tiffany Higgins, The Tiffany Event; Melanie Volkers, CHSE, CHDM; MaryLynne Christman, CMP, CMM, Collaborative Event Management. *(Provided photo)*

Az Business wanted to learn more about why MPI Arizona Sunbelt's newest president is excited to continue her efforts to create a stronger local MPI community while helping to build long-lasting connections and strengthen professional development.

Az Business: What are you most looking forward to this year in your role as the MPI Arizona Sunbelt Chapter president?

Tiffany Higgins: I'm most looking forward to implementing ideas that myself and our leadership team learned at our World Education Congress in Toronto back in June. The theme was "shared

experiences" and it's our aim to share the knowledge we acquired through new educational and networking experiences.

AB: Which local chapter events are you excited about for 2020?

TH: I'm very excited about our upcoming EduCon this year. It's one of my favorite chapter events. EduCon is a weekend retreat which will take place at the Westward Look Wyndham Grand Resort in Tucson in August. It's a weekend full of educational content, networking and learning more about what the City of Tucson has to offer. We'll be continuing to build on last year's EduCon theme of "Back

to Basics" by learning how to take our events to the next level.

I'm also looking forward to our annual golf tournament, in partnership with HSMAI. This year it will be held at a new location, TopGolf Scottsdale, in October.

AB: What makes the MPI Arizona Sunbelt Chapter an asset to educating, encouraging and fostering engagement within the local meeting and event planning community?

TH: The MPI Arizona Sunbelt Chapter strives to provide relevant education and certification programs, as well as networking opportunities. These offerings



MEETING ADJOURNED

... but the adventure continues
at HiltonElConquistador.com/gold

For hundreds of years explorers
have come here in search
of legendary riches.
Today you come for
legendary experiences.

THERE IS GOLD HERE.



**EL CONQUISTADOR
TUCSON**

A HILTON RESORT

UNIQUELY SOUTHWEST

10000 N Oracle Rd, Tucson, AZ 85704
520 544 5000 | hiltonelconquistador.com

help connect our members and local meeting and event planning professionals to foster engagement.

AB: How do these powerful relationships in MPI translate to boosting the health and economic wealth of Arizona's prospering hospitality/event planning industries?

TH: MPI AZ creates business partnerships and opportunities for business growth and development by bringing together all of the local hoteliers, conference centers and venues, exhibit companies, and other meeting and event industry professionals to keep Arizona unified and meeting together.

AB: What has been one of your biggest "wins" in your role as MPI Arizona Sunbelt Chapter president?

TH: As a team, one of our biggest wins has been reviewing feedback from our members on what they would like from their chapter membership in terms of value. The education team is working hard on continuing to providing quality educational content as well as some exciting new experiences for the upcoming

year. And our membership team created more networking opportunities in the upcoming year to help our members connect and learn more about each other.

AB: If you had to pick one word to encapsulate the Sunbelt Chapter going into 2020, what would it be? And why?

TH: The word I would pick is advancement. We are making shifts this year in all our areas: education, membership, finance, and communications to continue building us for a successful future.

AB: In this year's special section on MPI, we're discussing the role technology plays in the modern climate of meeting and event planning. What do you think some of the challenges and benefits of technology are in your industry?

TH: Technology is definitely important when it comes to pushing out information quickly to meeting attendees. I recently attended an annual conference where they chose not to use an app this year. During the conference, we had a few schedule changes, one of which was the cancellation

of an evening reception due to weather. It would have been much easier to send a push notification to the group versus an email, social media and using their team to spread the word to attendees.

AB: How has your role with MPI strengthened your career and/or vice versa?

TH: My role with MPI has strengthened my career in that it's helped me develop better leadership skills and given me access to lots of professional development through our chapter, the MPI Global website and conferences. It has also helped me make connections with fellow members to grow my business.

AB: If you could handpick a theme song for MPI Arizona Chapter, which tune would you choose?

TH: "We are Family" by Sister Sledge. After being a part of this association for 10 years, I have watched as we've come together and continue to grow as a great chapter full of events and programs, and more importantly, to be there to lift our members up when they're in need. **AB**

ABOUT THE MPI ARIZONA SUNBELT CHAPTER

MPI DEFINED: Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is the largest meeting and event industry association worldwide. Founded in 1972, MPI provides innovative and relevant education, networking opportunities and business exchanges, and acts as a prominent voice for the promotion and growth of the industry. MPI has a global community of 60,000 meeting and event professionals including more than 17,000 engaged members and its Plan Your Meetings audience. It has more than 90 chapters and clubs in 19 countries. For additional information, visit mpiweb.org.

ARIZONA CHAPTER: With more than 300 members, the Arizona Sunbelt Chapter, established in 1979, promotes excellence in the meetings industry through education, certification, advocacy and business alliances. The chapter hosts a number of special events annually, including the Summer EduCon the annual Awards Gala, the Spring Fundraiser, the annual Holiday Party and the MPI/HSMAI Golf Tournament.

LEARN MORE: Contact Executive Director Joanne Winter at 602-277-1494 or visit the chapter website at mpi-az.org.

LITTLE AMERICA *Hotel*



World-Class Meetings & Events

*With 13,750 square feet of meeting space, Little America Flagstaff's
10 meeting rooms can host events for 10 to 350 guests.*



FLAGSTAFF.LITTLEAMERICA.COM | 928.779.7921





GET YOUR EVENT ON TRACK AT THE MODERNIZED ISM RACEWAY

SHIFT INTO HIGH GEAR!



DDS EQUIS CURVE | BREATHTAKING LUXURY



DRIVER MEETING ROOM | VERSATILE, CENTRALIZED MEETING LOCATION



GARAGE SUITE | INTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT LOUNGE

TAKE THE WHEEL

Feel the rush of ISM Raceway with access to the race track via driving experiences and pace car rides. Guaranteed to separate your event as a truly one-of-a-kind experience!



MODERNIZED FACILITY | UNIQUE SPACES | UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE
STUNNING ACCOMMODATIONS | EVENTS FROM 20-2,000 PEOPLE

GET UP TO SPEED!



ROLL-BAR | CLIMATE-CONTROLLED SOCIAL SPACE



TRACKSIDE BAR & GRILL | INDOOR/OUTDOOR MULTIPURPOSE AREA



MILLER LITE BEER GARDEN | OPEN-AIR PATIO

**To plan your next event today, call us at
623-463-5619 or email gpowers@ismraceway.com**



An elevated experience

Here are the food and beverage trends to watch in 2020 for business meetings, events and conventions

By MICHAEL GOSSIE

Forget the ordinary. When it comes to food and beverage trends, the meeting and events industry will be driven to create nonstop Instagrammable moments in 2020.

“Say bye-bye to standard banquet offerings, including generic white wine, red wine and domestic beer options you might be used to,” says Jason Adler, director of operations for Spellbound Entertainment, which includes Dakota, W Scottsdale, aloft Scottsdale, Maya Clubhouse, and Maya Day + Night Club. “Instead, brands like ours are investing in locally sourced ingredients, fresh-squeezed juices and ‘wow’ elements to develop custom event signature cocktails and menus that would never be described as cookie-cutter.”

While meetings, conventions and events were once seen as a necessary part — or evil — of doing business, event-goers now view meetings and events as experiences and opportunities to see, taste and learn new things — both professionally and personally. And while meeting planners have to factor in the experiential element into each event, experts say they need to keep it Facebook-friendly — for the participants, planners and venues.

“Social media currently, and will remain, the dominant force behind exposure and marketing for any brand in the food and beverage industry,” Adler says. “Smart brands will market to events and meetings as part of their holistic approach to digital communications, and insert calls to action in their strategic communications.”

And beyond social media exposure, interaction will be a key to creating those positive experiences for those attending meetings and events in 2020.

“As event planners, personal engagement and social interaction will be key in ensuring memories made at the event are stories shared for days and weeks after the event,” says Mark Nelsen, director of food and beverage at Great Wolf Lodge Arizona. “Make your own guacamole with the guidance of the chef. Make your own mojito with the guidance of the master mixologist. Education and interaction will be at the core of these activities, and how photos of these moments translate to social media will be a major influence in their design.”

So besides making sure each event-goer has a selfie-stick and gets to meet the chef, what are the food and beverage trends to watch in the meeting and events space heading into 2020?

FOOD TRENDS TO WATCH

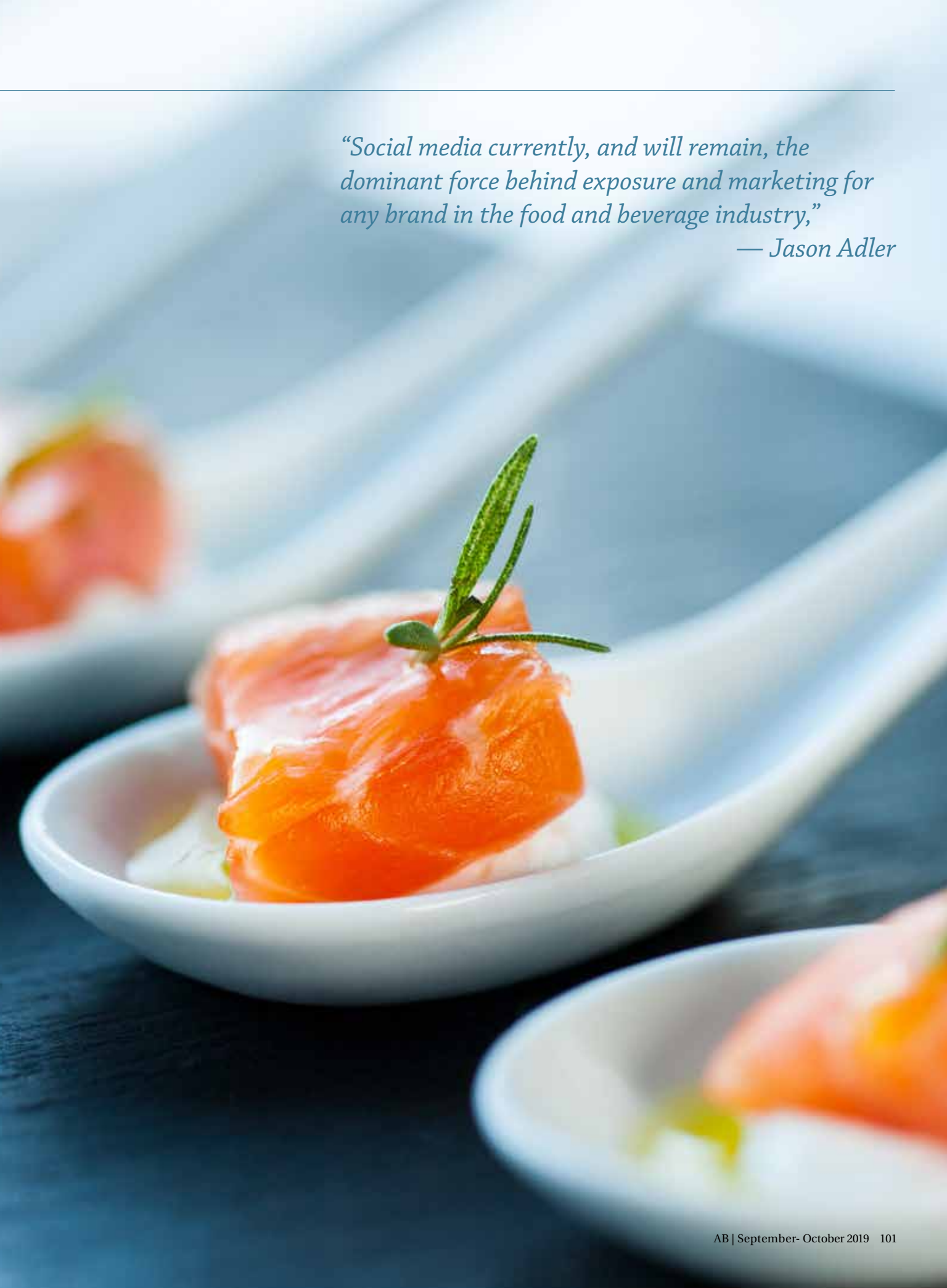
TEAMWORK: “We think we will continue to see partnerships — especially those that highlight a venue’s connection to the local market — help shape the industry into 2020,” Adler says. “For example, partnering with a local brewer or winemaker for a specialty tasting event or pairing dinner to elevate and customize an event or meeting, or with a local farm to bring in native ingredients for specialty menus during an event or meeting.”

NO MEAT: “Hands down, watch for vegetarian and vegan menu items,” says Nate Kinstlinger, food and beverage operations manager at Harrah’s Ak-Chin Casino. “Every year we see an increase in the number of requests for vegan and vegetarian fare. The growing acceptance



“Social media currently, and will remain, the dominant force behind exposure and marketing for any brand in the food and beverage industry,”

— Jason Adler





of plant-based proteins requires us to be creative and provide plenty of options for our guests. Our culinary team works hard to create innovative and delicious dishes that include lentils, quinoa and tofu."

HEALTHY OPTIONS: "I've said it for a few years, and it hasn't stopped: healthier food," says Kevin Moul, director of catering and conference services at Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North. "Our clients are requesting healthier food and along with this, they need to identify individual ingredients to help guests make choices when they have special dietary needs. In 2020, we expect to see more dishes that are interactive and transform in front of the guest, such as a plate garnish that transforms when a soup is added, or dessert that is smashed to reveal a sauce that oozes, or when a layer dissolves to reveal something underneath. I hate to say it, but food really does need to be 'Instagrammable.'"

LESS IS MORE: "Less food," says Jeff Pilditch, executive chef at the JW Marriott Scottsdale Camelback Inn. "Expect to see smaller portions, but with higher quality products that are being locally sourced. We are also seeing interest and appeal in healthier food

items during the day and more playful and indulgent foods in the evening."

SUSTAINABILITY:

"The big food trends include plant-based foods," says Erik Forrest, director of food and beverage at The Scottsdale Plaza Resort. "Mindful consumers maintain a continued focus on sustainability."

INTERACTION:

"Involving our chef is something we have added to our offerings for meetings and event dinners," says Oliver Badgio, chief brand officer at Steak 44,

Dominick's Steakhouse and Ocean 44. "Chef-manned food stations in the dining rooms are a great way to deliver a high-quality culinary experience and get your meeting guests up and out of the seats to meet and collaborate and enjoy more than dinner. Making great experiences is always in style."

BEVERAGE TRENDS TO WATCH

HANDCRAFTED COCKTAILS: "Handcrafted cocktails are big and will continue to be a strong trend," Kinstlinger says. "Drinks that have a focus on locally-cultivated, organic ingredients and garnishes are very popular. At a recent event, we featured a drink called the Honey Buzz created with locally-sourced honey from a bee farm just down the road. The lemons we used in the honey sour were also locally grown. Preparing drinks with a local twist, gives our staff something to talk to guests about and is just another way we look to make every guest experience unique and memorable."

MOCKTAILS: "I think the big trend for 2020 meetings and events will be mocktails and local spirits," Forrest says. "Attendees are looking for an experience and mocktails offer an opportunity for guests to enjoy a drink that feels fancy without over indulging. For those who still desire a little kick in their cocktail, local spirits always provide an opportunity to taste something totally unique to our area."

SELTZER, ANYONE?

"Seltzer. Seltzer. Seltzer," Nelsen says. "The recent boom of hard seltzers in the market took everyone by storm, even inspiring many local craft beer brewers to add this emerging option to their lineup. Offering a universal, low-calorie and approachable option to the menu, the likes of Truly, WhiteClaw and locally-produced 'craft seltzers' served on tap, will be prevalent for the foreseeable future."

KOMBUCHA:

"Kombucha is a beverage that's having a moment right now," says Conor Favre, executive chef at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess. "It's versatile, healthy, and can also be used in cocktails and mocktails for a refreshing drink at the end of the day. Craft beer has maintained its popularity, particularly local brews and IPAs."

REGIONAL DRINKS:

"After the trend of flavoring liquors and the popularity of micro brews, there is growing demand for small, regionally produced hard liquor, such as gin, with strong botanical flavoring," Moul says. "We also are expecting even more demand for the highest-quality mixers. We also are seeing the use of botanical extracts for cocktails, which is a complete departure from sweetened syrups. Post-meal 'digestifs' — in particular the Italian Amaros — are growing in popularity, as are sherry, port, sweet vermouth and the classic cognacs."

HOLISTIC APPROACH: "I expect to see a lot more holistic and health conscience beverages like cactus water spritzers,



Kombucha mocktails and CBD-infused drinks,” Pilditch says. “Any kind of play on retro always comes full circle with modernized twists on the classics. Low-sugar drinks and flavored ices are on the rise as well.”

TINY TASTES: “Mini-signature cocktails offer an interactive and unique experience in which a group has an opportunity to taste a wide variety of mini versions of our signature hand-crafted cocktails, fully dressed up and presented like a small scale version of the real thing,” Badgio says. “It’s very experiential.”

MAKING IT SPECIAL

Forrest says it’s important to realize that attendees no longer see business meetings. They see business events.

“I believe we will continue to see groups turn their annual meetings into full-blown festival-style events,” Forrest says. “The demands will grow for menu customization and creative food to fit the theme of the event. Meeting and event attendees will also continue to become more demanding in having venues meet their dietary needs. Guests are much more mindful of their dietary intake.”

Attendees of 2020 events will also be looking to enjoy a sense of connection.

“Clients are looking for stories, such as the chef or bartender’s local or cultural ties,” Moul says. “They want freshly made foods that are far from packaged consumer foods. It started with potato chips and popcorn, and now we see it in cold pressed beverages and Kombucha on tap. Meeting planners are beginning to look for new and interesting items that are not mainstream. These may be something locally made or reflective of the location — like cactus water or agua fresca..”

Moul says he expects there will be demand for a more even balance of healthy and unhealthy food options, such as fresh pressed juices served alongside milk shakes. Which is exactly what experts say meeting and event planners will see in 2020: a mix of the old and new.

“Guests still want all the traditional elements of an event — good food, service, linens, themes, etc.,” Favre says. “But they want to leave having enjoyed a unique experience they will remember for a long time. Planners should be prepared to



Jason Adler



Oliver Badgio



Conor Favre



Erik Forrest



Nate Kinstlinger



Kevin Moul



Mark Nelsen



Jeff Pilditch

work with event hosts to create unique experiences that are on brand for the organization and on theme for the event.”

That’s the bottom line: Creating an experience for guests is a must in 2020.

“And it will go far beyond drink specials,” Adler says. “Our Maya concept is a key example of this in action. Most know the brand as Maya Day + Night Club, an indoor/outdoor club offering daytime pool parties, bottle service and DJ nights. During fall and winter,

however, we now transition the brand into Maya Clubhouse, open to all ages during the day and providing guests with yard games, craft cocktails, a complete food menu, live music and sports. It’s an experience that lends itself perfectly to team building, holiday parties, customer appreciation events and even private parties for the many groups in town during the high season.” **AB**

Alison Bailin Batz contributed to this story.





Plan Your Next Meeting at Gila River Hotels & Casinos

One of the biggest trends in business travel is “bleisure,” or blending work travel with leisure. In fact, industry trade publications are reporting that business travelers believe that bleisure travel helps maintain a healthier work-life balance.

“You Do You” for Corporate Events

At Gila River Hotels & Casinos – Wild Horse Pass, Lone Butte, and Vee Quiva, our “You Do You” slogan extends to meetings and corporate events. Meeting planners are taking note of our three versatile properties, and they appreciate that we offer a one-call, access-to-it-all event planning experience. Now in our 25th year of business, we’ve been doing “bleisure” long before it became a trend. Consider which of our award-winning properties works best for you:

Gila River Hotels & Casinos – Wild Horse Pass in Chandler is a beautiful Four Diamond-awarded hotel designed with groups in mind. Highlights include 242 newly refreshed guest rooms, flexible meeting space and amenities aplenty, with seven adjoining restaurants, live entertainment and gaming.

Traditional space at Wild Horse Pass includes an 8,000-square-foot ballroom, a variety of breakouts offering outdoor space and natural light, as well as a private boardroom.

The Showroom venue features amazing production possibilities, ideal for a general session of up to 1,400 people or a meal for up to 360 people.

Gila River Hotels & Casinos – Vee Quiva is tucked into the base of South Mountain, making it a magical venue for any event. Located in Laveen, this Four Diamond-awarded hotel is home to 90 boutique rooms adjacent to five dining options, two energetic lounges, and a variety of gaming. Our new George Lopez’s Chingon Kitchen is also generating a lot of buzz with its atmosphere and flavors that are as colorful as the comedian himself!

Home to 6,000 square feet of traditional space, an oversized foyer with floor-to-ceiling windows and private lawn space, Vee Quiva doesn’t disappoint, especially with its breathtaking mountain views and desert sunsets.

Gila River Hotels & Casinos – Lone Butte is the perfect option for groups that desire meeting space without having to commit to guest rooms. Lone Butte Event Center is home to 8,000 square feet of space, a large private patio and a separate entrance that keep even the largest events private. Located in Chandler, Lone Butte is home to five restaurants, lively lounges and all the gaming you can desire.

Our team is ready to customize a personal proposal and assist with all your planning needs.

**Contact us at 520-796-4923,
meetings@wingilariver.com or at PlayAtGila.com.**

Who says you can't mix *business* with *pleasure*?

With an abundance of beautiful versatile meeting spaces, Gila River Hotels & Casinos offers a one-call, access-to-it-all event planning experience. Leave the details to our talented staff of planning experts so you can focus on the big picture. Contact us today; your guests will thank you.



GILA RIVER[®]
HOTELS & CASINOS



vee quiva • wild horse pass • lone butte

Contact us for a personal proposal
at meetings@wingilariver.com



PlayAtGila.com | 800-WIN-GILA

Owned and operated by the Gila River Indian Community



The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa

6902 East Greenway Parkway | Scottsdale, AZ 85254 | 480.624.1000

[Marriott.com/PHXWS](https://www.marriott.com/PHXWS) | Christie Cline | 480.624.1328

Situated across 250 acres in Scottsdale, Arizona, The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa provides contemporary amenities and design paired with an ever-changing collection of distinctive experiences. A revitalizing desert oasis, the property features more than 200,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor space spanning 41 venues that are as visually impressive as functionally effective with state-of-the-art innovations offering the ultimate stage for high-tech presentations, general sessions, themed events or posh galas. Guests are met with an expansive portfolio of amenities, including Agave, The Arizona

Spa & Salon, 27 holes of championship golf, 10 dining venues, an Adventure Water Park, renowned retail and entertainment steps from the resort at Kierland Commons and Scottsdale Quarter, and more - all in one luxurious destination. Signaling the re-imagining of an elevated guest experience, transformed accommodations will make a full debut in holiday 2019. Designed to evoke a sense of living amidst the desert, the refined guestrooms and corridors will feature expansive interior redesigns, enhancements and guest experiences, all while retaining the Kierland character for which the resort is so renowned.



Limitless Possibilities, One Destination

Explore beautifully appointed indoor and outdoor venues across 250 acres,
with each luxurious space as visually impressive as functionally effective.

Experience the most refined levels of service, impressive culinary and spirit creations,
and state-of-the-art innovations that come together to set the stage
for posh galas, corporate retreats, themed events and memorable soirées.



THE WESTIN
KIERLAND
RESORT & SPA
PHOENIX-SCOTTSDALE

480.624.1000 | Marriott.com/phxws



HARRAH'S AK-CHIN

15406 N Maricopa Rd, Maricopa, AZ 85139

www.caesars.com/meetings/locations/other-destinations/harrahs-ak-chin

Harrah's Ak-Chin features 530 stylish guestrooms and luxury suites that easily meet the needs – and expectations – of your guests. This property offers more than 28,350 square feet of conference and event space easily accessible from guest rooms and property entrances, but set apart from the casino, ensuring privacy and utility.

Situated in the heart of Arizona's Southern desert landscape, Harrah's Ak-Chin offers an ideal mix of desert backdrop with authentic Native American culture. Harrah's Ak-Chin features 530 stylish guestrooms and luxury suites that easily meet the needs – and the expectations – of your guests. This property offers more than 28,350 square feet of conference and event space easily accessible from guest rooms and property entrances, but set apart from the casino, ensuring privacy and utility. Within

driving distance of many of the Southwest's largest cities, Harrah's Ak-Chin is an ideal luxury experience for your next meeting or event. Guests and meeting planners alike will enjoy the exceptional service and accommodations that we pride ourselves on. Experience Maricopa's only cactus garden all while enjoying Arizona's unbeatable climate.

Harrah's Ak-Chin offers more than 28,350 square feet of conference and event space easily accessible from guest rooms and property entrances, but set apart from the casino, ensuring privacy and utility. The flexible space allows multiple configurations to meet your needs, from an intimate board summit to a dazzling reception or an extravagant banquet. State-of-the-art audiovisual technology and incomparable service and support ensure that any meeting of any size will always make a huge impact at Harrah's Ak-Chin.

ONE RESORT ONE CONTRACT ALL CONVENIENCE



Harrah's
AK-CHIN

Our professional staff will make your conference worry-free.

Book your event now to take advantage of our easy one contract planning, 28,350 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space and 296 days of sunshine in the Valley of the Sun.

CaesarsMeansBusiness.com



CAESARS
PALACE

CAESARS

CAESARS
FORUM

Harrah's

HORSESHOE

Flamingo

THE
LINQ

THE
CROWELL

BALLY'S

NOBU HOTEL

Paris

ph planet
hollywood

rio

HARVEYS

CAESARS
INTERNATIONAL



A NEW REALITY

Here's how event technology is changing the events and meetings industry

Advances in technology have revolutionized the way we live our lives, and this is no different for events and meetings. Many new technologies have either replaced the old methods or have opened entirely new areas that were once only possible in science fiction. From digital signage and holograms to augmented reality and interactive video, event technology has never been more exciting, so let's jump right in and look at how technology is changing the events and meetings industry.



Jeremy Martorano
Meeting & Events

HOLOGRAMS

While true holograms are still a way off, we have several technologies that are mimicking the effect with astonishing results. The simplest version is a spinning fan of LEDs that creates the illusion of a floating image. The fan spins so fast, you don't see the blades and all you see is the moving image. These fans are about two foot in diameter but can be synchronized with many units to create massive displays. Individually we've used these hologram fans for simple logo displays to attract attention to a booth or attention to sponsors. Trust me, they're definitely eye catching.

Other types of hologram technologies have hit the entertainment market with deceased musicians making guest appearances at concerts or performers manipulating visuals in mid-air like on America's Got Talent. This is all done with a special scrim fabric that is invisible to the eye until a video projection hits it from a hidden angle. From an event perspective, imagine a CEO on stage manipulating a PowerPoint presentation like Tom Cruise in the movie *Minority Report*. Or maybe a hologram of an honored guest that couldn't make it to the event standing next to the presenter on stage. Hologram-like technologies are quickly evolving and could be very exciting for the event industry.

Augmented Reality apps are also a step closer to real life holograms. Much like the game *Pokémon Go*, users can interact with objects that aren't really there all with the help of their phones, tablets or special glasses. We've seen users scan an item in a booth with their phone and the screens comes alive with all types of brand information or interactive content that really brings audience engagement to a new level.

EVENT SIGNAGE

Event signage has come a long way from the banners and gobos we used to use. Metal and glass gobos are being replaced with digital gobos now. In basic terms, a digital gobo is just using a video projector instead of a traditional leko fixture

to project a logo, monogram or special message. The benefits to digital gobos are many. With video projectors you can display a full color logo for a fraction of the cost of glass. The logo will display perfectly from any angle where as leko lights will distort the image. Another benefit is same day turn around and even the ability to fix errors or make changes on-site. You can even animate these logos or messages. They don't have to be projected onto a wall either. How about surprising your guests



as they leave the event with a special on the ground by valet saying "Thank You for attending" message with fireworks in the background. They're not expecting it there and it will stand out more than any logo projection inside the event!

Want something more interactive? What if your guests could trigger a logo display or video message on a wall or floor by walking by it? While this technology started out as games or educational displays in museums and schools, we've used it at events to create magically appearing logo projection on the walls as guests walked by. Another time we used an element from a logo to create a "carpet" of multi-colored triangles that scattered away as guests walked through it to reveal the event logo. For a PBS Kids day event we projected a coral reef video on the floor and as kids walked through it, the water would ripple, and the fish would scatter.

All different purposes, but the result was the same – higher brand engagement.

ELEVATED EXPERIENCE

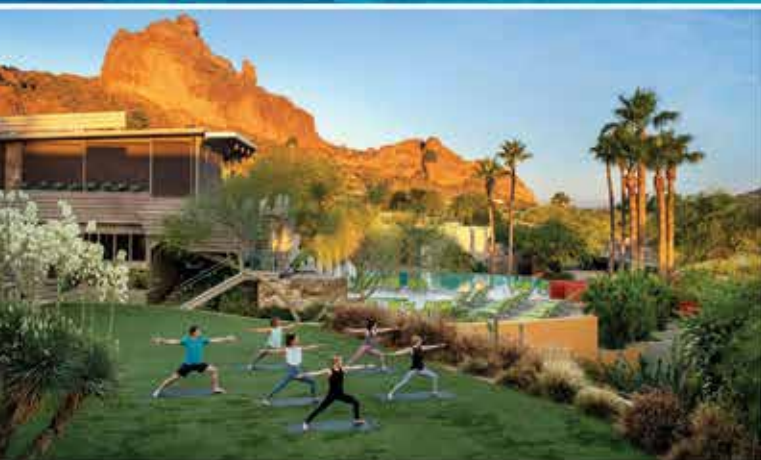
We're always looking for new ways to accent a special moment or grand entrance at an event. Confetti, fog geysers, and search lights are fun but now you can have 16 foot indoor /outdoor firework fountains right on your stage. Talk about a wow factor for your event! Imagine every award winner walking on stage to a backdrop of real firework fountains or "waterfalls"! Cold spark technology makes this possible.

And just like the name says, it's cold to the touch with temperatures only at 62 degrees. That's colder than your body temperature! It's safe for indoors and completely non-flammable. But how do you ask? It's a special mix of titanium and magnesium that is ground up and shot out in a geyser of sparkles. This effect will definitely make your event memorable.

Have you been to a concert lately or seen the Olympics opening ceremonies where the entire stadium lights up in waves of color to form patterns or words? This is a cool new technology from companies like PixMob. While you might not have events that large, you can use these led bracelets for corporate or social events. One way is to simply use these as fun party favors for your guests to wear all night that you control the color to match the music or event. Or for corporate events, we've used them to color code large groups and notify them when to come to the stage for their award. This technology has come way down in price and is very accessible for events and meetings.

Whatever technology you want to use at your event, you should ask yourself "how will this improve my guest's experience?" We always think about Return on Investment, but we should also now think about Return on Experience. Our guests should walk away with a more memorable experience which increases brand awareness and loyalty. Or from another perspective, "That was the best damn event I've ever been to!" **AB**

Jeremy Martorano is the owner and creative event architect at Karma Event Lighting & AV.



A mountain of inspiration

Treat your group to intimate, secluded meetings in Sanctuary Camelback Mountain's extraordinary 53-acre setting, with an impressive diversity of flexible indoor and outdoor space.

LEGEND®
Preferred
HOTELS & RESORTS

844.886.0855 | SanctuaryAZ.com | Scottsdale, AZ

"Top Resorts in Southwest" – Condé Nast Traveler, 2018
"America's Top 25 Luxury Hotels" – TripAdvisor, 2018

SANCTUARY
camelback mountain
resort and spa

Redefining Luxury.