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HOT TOPICS

Our editorial advisory board members talk about the shortage of hotels, technology must-haves and the next ‘big thing.’

MIM+E: What are some hot topics you’re hearing about in our industry?



Rebecca Schlüssel, marketing director, Star Trax Events: There’s a shortage of hotel rooms in Detroit. With all the sporting events happening downtown in one city, I think we’re going to get some big hotels, especially with the sports venues hosting other events. In the social sphere, we used to start planning large life cycle events 18 months, two years out. Then it scaled back, now we’re back there.



Jennifer Berkemeier, catering and special events sales manager, Cobo Center: Detroit still loses events, some large conferences because we don’t have enough hotel rooms. We don’t have a hotel that connects to the Cobo Conference Center. The RFPs I see are comp rate this and comp rate that, this is included, that’s included. We just respond and don’t take that as a make or break it. They’re still asking for it, but I don’t think it’s a deal breaker.



Taryn Miracle, area director of sales, Great Wolf Lodge: Some clients will still throw it out there a number of requests and take whatever sticks. Most understand it’s a seller’s market right now. All of the conversations we have with them right now are even more important to gaining the most benefit for the client, to gauging needs as well as wants.



Lindsay Krause, senior manager, Special D Events: I have some clients who are thinking more long term. If it’s an annual event, thinking two or three years out and staying with the same brand and working the negotiations that way. They’re realizing they can’t on a whim just get the space they need. My clients are looking for more of a 360-event experience. Not just the venue. They want to know about the city, what the city offers and what you can do there. It’s not just about the space and the F&B anymore.



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Aaron Wolowiec,
president, Event Garde:

Associations are susceptible to so much change. Some attendees and exhibitors are now going to certain in-person conferences only every other year. Many associations are also co-locating or merging events. I’m seeing a lot of change really fast. I have clients who are nervous about keeping up with stakeholder needs—designing must-attend learning and networking meetings and events—while also navigating what has become a seller’s hotel market.



Mark Ephraim, wedding officiator: Clients are much more interested in getting a great experience for their event. They’re more flexible on the budget than they were a few years ago. Which brings me to my concern, which is service excellence. I think it’s been faltering a little bit. Everybody is more concerned about the sale. People at Cobo Center proved that can be turned around and turned around amazingly.



Kat Paye, executive director, National Cherry Festival: Traverse City is booming in construction. We also struggle with hotel rooms. I’m five years out to make sure I get what I need to have entertainment solidified with hotels. It’s a challenge to be a festival that keeps growing, bringing in up to 600,000 visitors. But where do they go? They’re staying as far away as Cadillac. That doesn’t help us as a community, doesn’t help our tourism if people can’t find a place to stay or a place to eat.