

Exclusive: 16th Annual 50 Top Event Companies
Appetizer Trends: From Artfully Exotic To Down-Home Delicious

SPECIAL EVENTS



**2018 THE
SPECIAL
EVENT**

January 30 – February 1, 2018
New Orleans, Louisiana

WHO'S ON TOP?
OUR 20th ANNUAL
'BIG RENTAL' LIST
P. 21

GALA DESIGN GETS
A REFRESH P. 31

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FALL 2017

COVER STORY

Where the Pros Go

Top event planners pick their favorite properties

**WHO'S ON TOP?
OUR 20th ANNUAL
'BIG RENTAL' LIST
P. 21**

**GALA DESIGN GETS
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FALL 2017 THIS ISSUE

TOP PLANNERS, TOP PROPERTIES

COVER STORY

**9 16th Annual
50 Top Event Companies**
It's our annual look at the
biggest players in event planning.

**15 Where the Pros Go:
Top Planner Picks**
Special Events asked five top event
planners to name their favorite event
properties. Here's what they said ...



COLUMNS

5 Editor's Page

Lisa Hurley on the
35th anniversary of
Special Events magazine.

36 The Last Word

Selina Chavry of Pacific
World on the future of
the DMC industry.

On the cover: Photo by W6 /
© Getty Images.

DEPARTMENTS

7 Confetti

L.A.'s Center Theatre Group turns to
a visual artist to create the celebration
for its 50th anniversary gala.

21 Rental Essentials

Lots has changed since last year
for our 20th annual "30 Top Rental
Companies," profiling the biggest
players in party rental.

27 Food for Fêtes

Hors d'oeuvre and appetizers today
run the gamut, from the artfully
exotic to the decidedly down-home.

FALL 2017 THIS ISSUE

DEPARTMENTS

31 Divine Decor

Stuffy ceremonies and strict seating charts? Not today. Galas are loosening up, with fresh new looks and innovative programming.

35 Ad Index

35 Marketplace

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Special Events®, Volume 36 No. 4 (ISSN 1079-1264), is published by Penton Media Inc., 9800 Metcalf Ave., Overland Park, KS 66212-2216 (penton.com). Canadian Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40597023. Canadian GST#R124631964. Canada return address: IMEX Global Solutions, P.O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2. Additional resources, including subscription request forms and an editorial calendar, are available at specialevents.com. EDITORIAL OFFICE: 11500 W. Olympic Blvd., Suite 574, Los Angeles, CA 90064, USA. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: Free and controlled circulation to qualified subscribers. One-year subscription prices: U.S., \$12.95; Canada, \$19.95; All others, \$24.95; all figures are in U.S. dollars. Prices subject to change. To order single copies or for subscriber services, write to Special Events Magazine, 2104 Harvell Circle, Bellevue, NE 68005, USA, or call 866/505-7173 (USA) or 847/763-9504 (outside USA), or visit specialevents.com. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Special Events Magazine, P.O. Box 2100, Skokie, IL 60076-7800, USA. REPRINTS: Contact Penton Reprints to purchase quality custom reprints or e-prints of articles appearing in this publication at 888/858-8851; reprints@pentonreprints.com; www.pentonreprints.com. Instant reprints and permissions may be purchased directly from our Web site; look for the iCopyright tag appended to the end of each article. PHOTOCOPIES: Authorization to photocopy articles for internal corporate, personal or instructional use may be obtained from the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at 987/750-8400. Obtain further information at copyright.com. ARCHIVE AND MICROFORM: This magazine is available for research and retrieval of selected archived articles from leading electronic databases and online search services, including Factiva, LexisNexis and Proquest. For microform availability, contact National Archive Publishing Co. at 800/521-0600 or 734/761-4700, or search the Serials in Microform listings at napubco.com. PRIVACY POLICY: Your privacy is a priority to us. For a detailed policy statement about privacy and information dissemination practices related to Penton Media Inc. products, please visit our website at penton.com. CORPORATE OFFICE: Penton Media Inc., 1166 Avenue of the Americas, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10036; 212/204-4200. COPYRIGHT 2017 Penton Media Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

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SPECIAL EVENTS

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Los Angeles, CA 90064
phone 424/465-6602 • fax 913/514-3753

Winner of awards from the American Society of Business Publication
Editors
and the Western Publications Association

Also publishers of MeetingsNet
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INTERNATIONAL
LIVE EVENTS ASSOCIATION



EDITOR'S PAGE

SAKES ALIVE, WE'RE 35!

We just couldn't let this issue publish without sharing a happy milestone: *Special Events* magazine just turned 35 years old.

Our first issue—Fall 1982—shared descriptions of various types of glassware, from tumblers to parfait glasses, along with a supplier directory. Subscribers who wanted more information about a product mailed us a postcard that had been stitched into the issue. The readership was party rental and party rental only. And on our cover: the smiling faces of Linda, Bob and Ducky Firnberg, of Ducky-Bob's Rental Center in Dallas.

The world is quite different in 2017—though Ducky-Bob's is still going strong, now under the M&M brand. For news about that brand—and the burgeoning world of event rental—turn to page 21 to find our annual “30 Top Rental Companies” list. It's the 20th anniversary of this article, which shares the size, scope and future plans of the biggest players in event rental. There have been striking changes since last year's edition—see all the news here.

Other big features in this issue are our list of the 50 biggest event production companies (page 9) and some hotels that event planners love (page 15).

Another constant over the 35 years that *Special Events* has been around: daunting challenges facing our lives and businesses. From natural disasters to man-made terror to economic debacles, the event industry has had to fight back to come back.

As I write this, the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in Texas is dominating the headlines. To help the industry, *Special Events* just shared stories from four event experts who faced similar challenges. They tell us what they did to stay in business and how you can, too. You will find the story on our website.

I also can't let this issue publish without sharing a story from one of the event rental operators that we interviewed. I had been pestering my contacts at TentLogix in Florida to send me their update for the “30 Top” article. The reply: “We will do everything we can to get it back to you tomorrow, Lisa; however, we're deploying a huge shipment of disaster relief material—tenting and flooring, etc.—to Texas. So please bear with us.”

I assured them that my article could wait.

Seeing problems, solving problems, and taking care of people. That's what this business has always been about, and always will be.

Lisa Henley

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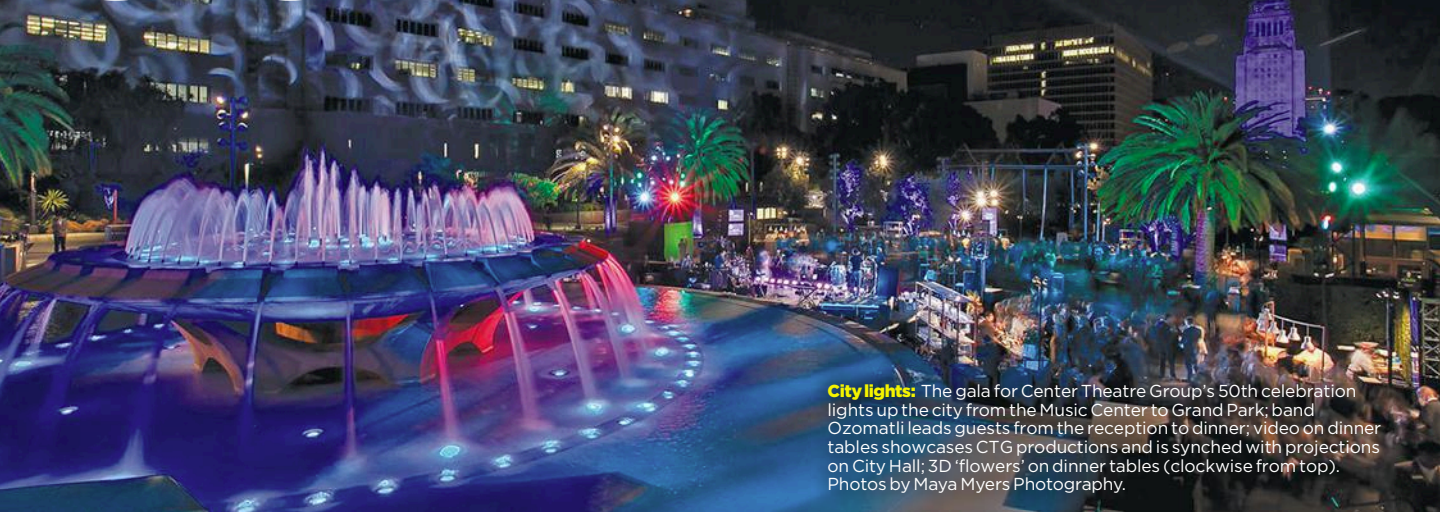
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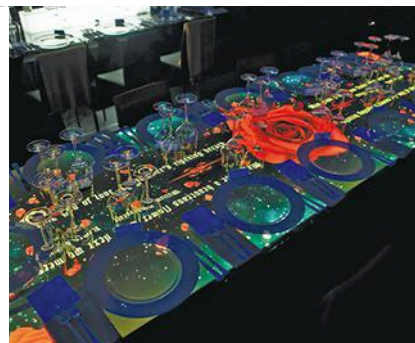
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Citylights: The gala for Center Theatre Group's 50th celebration lights up the city from the Music Center to Grand Park; band Ozomatli leads guests from the reception to dinner; video on dinner tables showcases CTG productions and is synced with projections on City Hall; 3D 'flowers' on dinner tables (clockwise from top). Photos by Maya Myers Photography.



Art for Artists' Sake

L.A.'s Center Theatre Group turns to a visual artist to create the celebration for its stunning 50th anniversary gala.

Los Angeles has plenty of talented event planners to pull off gorgeous galas. But when the venerable Center Theatre Group—comprising big guns the Ahmanson Theatre, Mark Taper Forum and Kirk Douglas Theatre—wanted to make a special statement for its 50th anniversary, CTG management turned to artists to create an art piece.

CTG tapped Emmy Award-winning filmmaker and visual artist Kate Johnson to helm the event as creative producer. Backing her up were longtime pros Greg Christy of Brite Ideas—a multiple *Special Events Gala Award* win-

ner—to oversee technical production, and Craig Weida of Render Event Design for design and decor. Both are based in L.A.

Although the fundraiser's format touched the traditional gala bases—cocktails, a presentation, dinner, dancing, after-party—the team's approach did not. Treating the event as a journey to discover the transformative power of theater, the event moved away from the traditional sit-down dinner on-site. The creative team aimed to "create a space where the audience will feel compelled to explore each table and each area and never feel 'locked in' to only one loca-

tion," the event team says, creating "a journey of discovery of theater, of that which makes us laugh, feel alive, and become ever more aware of wonder and of our humanity."

To pull this big idea off, the creative team looked to big Grand Park. The 12-acre site gave planners the chance to offer dinner under the stars, along with dramatic views including the Music Center (CTG's home) and the iconic City Hall building. But the site brought with it uneven terrain and a variety of disjointed spaces for guests—1,200 guests for the theater presentation, with 800 remaining afterward for the post-presentation



Showtime Dinner guests enjoy the show (here) as video projections saluting prior productions play across L.A.'s City Hall (below). Photos by Steve Cohn Photography.

reception and dinner. And the guests themselves: a highly sophisticated segment which attends multiple black-tie events each year, and which expects to be presented with nothing but the best.

To overcome the obstacles and make Johnson's vision come to life, the team put their heads together and came up with a plan to build a 15,000-square-foot deck, making the event space level. "As a subliminal nod to the performing arts, the deck was built from the same staging materials utilized for arena shows and rock tours," Christy says. "It was not covered with carpet, but purposefully left in its natural state so the guests would dine 'onstage.'"

The event began with a cocktail reception in front of the Ahmanson Theatre, then moved indoors for a 90-minute retrospective celebrating the history of CTG. To shift guests from being spectators inside the theater to active participants in the event to follow, Johnson came up with a distinctly L.A. solution. She worked with veteran L.A. band Ozomatli, known for its fusion of Latin, hip hop, and rock music. The band served as pied pipers, escorting guests for the five-minute walk from the theater to the dining area, playing all the while.

As guests turned the corner to enter Grand Park, they found a magic setting aglow with lighting draped throughout trees. The back-



drop for the park was L.A.'s iconic City Hall—known throughout the world thanks to movies and TV shows—transformed for the evening thanks to sophisticated projection mapping.

As Ozomatli played with the big Grand Park fountain as its backdrop, guests visited food stations from four celebrity chefs, all under the direction of high-end caterer Patina Catering, headed by Joachim Splichal. In order to accommodate the park's slope, the dinner deck perched guests in some areas atop the blooming jacaranda trees.

The dinner tables themselves were works of art. Designed to salute the various levels of patronage, the "specialty tables" featured custom rectangular lightboxes and succulents in glass decanters.

The second-tier tables actually were lightboxes, glowing from within with custom imagery and quotes

saluting the 50 show seasons that CTG has produced.

The top-tier custom tables offered ultra-high resolution LED screens as tabletops. These tables featured 3D flowers "blooming" on the tables, along with visuals celebrating centerpiece shows from CTG's past 50 years such as "Angels in America," "9 to 5" and "Cyrano."

As dinner concluded, the City Hall building came alive with a 10-minute original projection production created by Johnson presenting a visual journey of iconic shows staged by the CTG theaters. But the show wasn't playing just on the City Hall façade—imagery on the LED tables was synchronized with the building's mapping, creating a stunning immersive experience.

Any ambitious event plan meets challenges along the way, and CTG's 50th gala was no different. Hurdles included the loss of a vital access route, along with insufficient power and a show that ran over. But the team adjusted on the fly, cutting one reveal moment and moving the timeline for dinner up.

The ultimate test of success—asking the event team if there was anything they would have done differently. The answer: "No." ●

Center Theatre Group 601 W. Temple St., Los Angeles CA 90012; 213/628-2772; www.centertheatregroup.org

50 TOP Event Companies

The biggest players in event planning and production share with us what's new and what's next. Digital is in our DNA now, but live is still the soul of the business. See all the big news here ...

EDITED BY LISA HURLEY

COMPANY	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR	ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2017 FORECAST)	NOTEWORTHY EVENTS	TOP TRENDS
AgencyEA Chicago www.agencyea.com	Fergus Rooney, Gabrielle Martinez	100 to 125	\$40 million	This year has seen AgencyEA "significantly expand the range of its capabilities and projects," management says, forging new partnerships with MillerCoors and CLIF Bar and executing major events including Intuit's QuickBooks Connect, Hampton's general manager Huddle, and CLIF Bar's activation at the Pitchfork Music Festival.	"It's no surprise that 'data' is the buzzword of 2017, but it's what differentiates event and experiential marketers from their competition," management says. "In an overcrowded market, it's more important than ever to deliver measurable experiences that resonate and connect with target audiences."
Allied Experiential New York www.allied-experiential.com	Matthew Glass	500	\$10 million	Management points with pride to the prizes it has brought home for its work on the "Luke's Coffee Day" pop-up for the Netflix show "Gilmore Girls."	Put that smartphone down: "The industry is looking for ways to make people look up and around more, using dynamic video, audio and audience-interactive activities that will draw people's attention away from their screens longer."
AOO Events Los Angeles www.aooevents.com	David Merrell	30 to 50	\$4 million	Seeing good growth in the corporate incentive programs sector, management says, "while budgets in RFP development are smaller than we saw pre-recession." But upon awarding programs, "Corporations are able to find additional budget, and are buying smarter."	"Mobile technology continues to dominate most of the trends for 2017," the AOO team says. "Corporations are going back to last-minute decisions for pulling the trigger on corporate events" and so "forecasting is getting more and more difficult" for business owners.
Ashfield Meetings and Events Ivyland, Pa. www.ashfield-meetings.com	Gavin Houston	960 to 1,150	\$125 million to \$160 million	Highlights from the past year have included the development of technology partnerships with virtual-event and app-based technology platforms to diversify the company's offerings.	Big influences impacting events are the changing preferences of attendees and the continued importance of digital and social media at live events, management says.
Awestruck Marketing Group Los Angeles, New York www.getawestruck.com	Lawrence Butler	120 to 140	\$11.5 million	This full-service experiential agency works to create meaningful relationships between consumers and brands by creating engaging, memorable programs that exceed expectations, management says.	Incorporating the newest in social media and technology continues to be important and helps clients get the most out of the events while improving the overall experience for attendees, the company says.
Balich Worldwide Shows Milan, Italy www.balichws.com	Gianmaria Serra	9	\$130 million	This year's event roster has included "Intimissimi on Ice" in Italy as well as special celebrations including the Etihad Museum opening in the UAE, 45th UAE National Day in Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi 2019 Special Olympics Flag Handover, the Dubai World Cup Show, and Opening Ceremonies for the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games.	Entertainment trumps economic trends: "The live entertainment industry is growing steadily regardless of economic trends because people need distractions and fun," CEO Serra says. "In Italy, investments in live events are growing yearly at 10 percent."
Broadstreet New York www.broadstreet.com	Mark Baltazar	35	\$16 million	Broadstreet honed its tech chops this year by adding AR and VR activations to its offerings. The team developed a mixed-reality demo for Konica Minolta printers with HoloLens, and a 110-foot mosaic LED wall that interacted with live dancers at a national pharmaceutical sales meeting.	"'Story' has become a trend," management says, "but many events misconstrue theme and decor for story." The solution? "Understanding your audience's wants, needs, fears and desires. Tell stories that reflect your audience's emotions, and your event will be a success."
Bucom International Chicago www.bucom.com	Darlene Krammer	25 to 30	\$10 million	Bucom "proudly" celebrated 30 years of meetings excellence in May; "We are grateful to our clients and partners for this success, and we are energized and enthused for the future," management says.	Top trends: "Meeting attendees looking for creative and superior culinary programs that offer healthy options nicely and uniquely presented; creative and cost-effective team-building with CSR components; and social media as a business tool before, during and after meetings," they say.
Cerbelli Creative New York www.cerbelli-creative.com	Michael Cerbelli	100	\$6 million	For the honoree's 75th birthday, the Cerbelli team created "Vegas Meets the Catskills," which transformed Cipriani 25 Broadway to the Rat Pack days, with vintage paparazzi, show-girls and veteran crooner Paul Anka. Details included a neon sign of the honoree's name modeled after the iconic Sands casino sign.	Technology will transform events, management says. Two prime examples: VR and AR, which will "allow us to see things we previously could not see before," along with drones, as seen in Lady Gaga's 2017 Super Bowl halftime show.

16TH ANNUAL 50 TOP *Event Companies*

COMPANY	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR	ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2017 FORECAST)	NOTEWORTHY EVENTS	TOP TRENDS
CMS Communications Los Angeles www.cmsbiz.com	Diana Zimmerman	8 to 12	\$8.4 million	While CMS has been busy with events for clients including Firestone, Varian Medical Systems and Shaklee, "We are doing far more consulting," management says, "especially in the area of social marketing and brand strategy."	"Companies remain cost-conscious and not wanting to look as though they are producing extravagant events," management says. "Budgets overall seem to be stabilizing, but not growing."
Corporate Magic Dallas www.corporatemagicinc.com	Jim Kirk	15 to 20	\$20 million to \$25 million	Screen time: Corporate Magic has been featured on U.S. national television twice over the past year, having produced the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif., and the Red Kettle Halftime Show during the Dallas Cowboys Thanksgiving Day football game.	"Companies want to hold smaller and more intimate events, which allow the audience to feel much more engaged," says COO Jeff Kirk. "Due to a much shorter attention span of individuals, executives are giving much shorter speeches, and technology is used to bring the message to the attendees."
CSM Harrisburg, N.C. www.csm.com	Jay Howard	300	\$18 million	Formerly known as JHE, CSM's lineup of events for 2017 includes the Daytona 500 opening ceremonies, Team USA Awards Show, Music City Bowl fan zone, UNICEF multi-city tour, and NASCAR Silver Bullet Bash, presented by Coors Light.	Money talks: "A notable change in event design is the influence of sponsorship dollars," management says. "Clients are looking for scalable options based on the influx of sponsor dollars. So you design a concept at its most basic premise and then when funds warrant, you can add enhancements."
Departament Moscow www.departament.com	Pavel Nedostoev	60 to 65	\$10 million	Events over the past year have included the premiere of the Audi A5 Coupe, the first auto launch using real-time motion-tracking technology, the company says. Also busy with the Russian leg of the DTM 2017 race on behalf of BMW, and the "sneak peek" of the Porsche Panamera in Moscow and St. Petersburg.	Although it might seem that consumers want to live on their smartphones, live events are thriving in Russia, management says. It's not the information, which people can get online, but networking, says co-owner Yulia Signova: "People want to get offline, meet, and share energy with each other. It's a wonderful trend!"
Drury Design Dynamics New York www.drurydesign.com	Jill Drury	15	\$10 million to \$12 million	Highlights of the past year have included "Cognitive in Motion" for a tech client, which merged cognitive data visualizations, custom-made 3D motion graphics, and real-time 3D-rendered IMAG effects on the upper screen with an artist "live" drawing, plus pop-and-lock dancers interacting with the drawing in real time. The result was a social media explosion, the team says.	Pay attention to the influence of millennials, management says, including "the need for smaller sessions, more fun networking activities, hipper/funkier spaces, much more gaming, and social media around the event."
E=MC2 Events Calgary, Alberta www.emc2events.com	Jocelyn Flanagan	100	\$13 million	Highlights have included a series of events to celebrate the 20th anniversary of WestJet along with an elaborate project for longtime client the Juno Awards, honoring the Canadian music industry.	"We are seeing a continuing trend in clients requesting massive projection surfaces in an attempt to create immersive environments for guests," management says. "Supplying the infrastructure is not an issue or cost barrier, but the cost of the content to create the experience they envision is one that is more difficult to sell."
Enterprise Events Group San Rafael, Calif. www.eeginc.com	Richard Calcaterra, Matthew Gillam	113	\$42.2 million	A highlight event: EEG's "unconference," where the team took a raw space in San Francisco and created an event for 2,500 in a space for 1,300. In order to use every inch, the team used more outdoor space than indoor, staging a tented general session while putting breakouts and executive meetings in Airstream trailers and yurts.	In the move to nontraditional content, EEG sees a trend toward fewer sessions dominated by keynote speakers, instead working toward co-created content, "which allows attendees to feel as if their voices are heard, which leads to increased investment in the content." Also big: "brain breaks" and "chill-out breaks" as health-oriented pauses between work sessions.
Eventmakers Toluca Lake, Calif. www.eventmakers.com	Guy Genis, Mark Genis	50 to 75	\$17 million	Notable events have included a 10,000-square-foot activation at ComicCon for Skyrocket Toys, the launch of the WWE 2K18 videogame for 2,000 (featuring a performance by Snoop Dogg), and meetings for 12 regions of fast food giant McDonald's.	AR and VR continue to lead in the trends for events and exhibits, they say: "We recently produced an exhibit that showed a \$5,000 VR headset for business to business, boasting 225-degree views in all directions."
Eventum Premo Moscow www.eventum-premo.ru	Alexey Berlov, Alexander Shumovich	61	\$12.7 million	Noteworthy events over the past year have included the SAP forum for 5,000 guests, the Maybach car reveal in St. Petersburg, an airplane presentation for S7 airlines for 500 guests, the Renault Brand Days test drive for 3,000 guests, and the 25th anniversary celebration for Lukoil Co. at the Grand Kremlin Palace for 4,000 guests.	Good and bad news: "The first wave of enthusiasm associated with new technologies has passed. The idea and the strategy have returned to the fore," they say. The bad: "The acceleration of communication creates the illusion of making a big project or complex content really fast. But for good projects, you still need time."
EventWorks Los Angeles www.eventworks.com	Ted Bowers Janet Elkins	125	\$7.5 million	One event highlight: A big, empty space was transformed into four sections that represented distinct areas of California. The customized venue served for the shock reveals of two new products in one night. The natural L.A. skyline was the backdrop for a rooftop "La La Land" production that featured the Beach Cities, Downtown L.A., Hollywood and the Westside, all laid out around a central "freeway" area.	"While everyone was including custom event apps in their gatherings the last few years, we see a strong desire now to get attendees away from their smartphones," management says. "Real personal contact and verbal—not texted—conversation are coming back." And what else is coming back? "Giant versions of '70s and '80s social games are everywhere," they say. "Attendees are forced to drop their smartphone and work in teams to win."

16TH ANNUAL 50 TOP *Event Companies*

COMPANY	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR	ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2017 FORECAST)	NOTEWORTHY EVENTS	TOP TRENDS
Extraordinary Events Sherman Oaks, Calif. www.extraordinaryevents.com	Andrea Michaels	40 to 50	\$10 million to \$12 million	"We pride ourselves in maintaining relationships with longtime clients," management says, which includes shareholder meetings for CEMEX, events for Mary Kay, SteelHouse and PriceWaterhouseCoopers, a Costa Rica incentive for Mueller Corp., as well as a series of press launches for BMW.	The trend is in the uses of technology and all things social media for experiential engagement, management says. "Speakers are being replaced by 'influencers,' and their 'talk' is limited. TED has come home to the corporate market." But event pros face challenges: "In our world, the trend of 'we do it all in-house' is disturbing as it is taking away from the expertise of true event planners."
Filmmaster Events Dubai, London, Milan, Rio, Rome www.filmmasterevents.com	Andrea Varnier	42	\$63 million	The event roster this year has included the Khalifa Stadium opening, UEFA Champions League, Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology inauguration, and Camel Festival.	"The event industry is continuously evolving and the audience's insatiable need for new forms of entertainment is a reality," management says. "Live" is not just about living the moment. It now stretches far beyond engagement as today, events take on another dimension."
FIRST Global Events Agency New York www.firstagency.com	Maureen Ryan-Fable	250 plus	\$45 million	Highlights of the year have included partnering on the debut of the new Oath brand (formerly AOL), numerous launch activities, both for B2B and for internal employees, and the LG Signature Gallery—a larger-than-life, four-sided structure completely built from LED panels in New York's Rockefeller Center, created to launch the new line of LG Signature products.	The team sees four major trends: (1) crossover activations, which use a combination of the right technology and design to connect audiences to content; (2) the "festivalization" of events, which is driving brands' B2B activations to feel more like B2C-style experiences; (3) an increased focus on measurement; and (4) the greening of events.
Freeman Dallas www.freeman.com	Chris Cavanaugh	5,000 plus	\$325 million	The client roster over the past year has included work for Splunk, Anheuser-Busch, Jeunesse, Marketo, Salesforce and Atlassian. Freeman acquired Fusion Brand Experiences to increase agency capabilities and BaAM to expand into the sports and entertainment markets.	The arts of heightened sensory experiences and authentic personalization are essential today, management says. The big trends in special events are new and engaging ways to better tell a brand story, including digital activation, performance art, large-format concerts, self-directed experiences, and interactive culinary theater experiences.
George P. Johnson Experience Marketing Auburn Hills, Mich. www.gpj.com	Chris Meyer	2,300	\$300 million plus (Special Events estimate)	Longtime specialists in experiential marketing, the GPJ team continues to invest in digital tools, data analytics, and creative and live production talent. The team recently launched the "GPJ Experiential Ecosystem," which enables clients to merge data from multiple marketing sources and then use that data to personalize event experiences.	The good: Clients are deepening their understanding of and appreciation for solid experiential and event strategy, management says. The bad: "Many clients still struggle with integrating their event data insights into their other marketing channels."
GMR Marketing New Berlin, Wis. www.gmrmarketing.com	Cameron Parsons	180	\$10 million to \$15 million (Special Events estimate)	Busy over the past year with major global events for "hyper-targeted" B2B experiences, they say. Projects have included the Rio 2016 Olympics, with sponsorship programs for major brands; the launch of a cutting-edge surgical robotics system with "Stryker: The Mako Experience"—a 16-hour, 2,000-guest event that combined product education with experience through the use of immersive technology; and Lowe's Studio at Austin City Limits, which augmented the attendee experience with intimate artist sessions including hands-on activities.	Tech as a trend isn't new, management says, "but it's coming of age in live experiences in really compelling ways right now." Health care is using VR, AR and 360 video in ways that are "transforming the way doctors learn their craft—think augmented reality to practice surgery—and the way they deliver care to patients—like using virtual reality to treat phobias—and even the way insurers and other stakeholders interact with their customers."
Go West Creative Nashville, Tenn. www.gwcg.com	David Fischette	90	\$10 million	As business "continues to grow in events and experiential," the Go West creative services department also has expanded, working as a creative branding agency with clients including Long John Silver's and Aetna Insurance, they say.	"Story" continues to be the winner, management says. "Authentically connecting brands to consumers through the power of story has proven incredibly effective."
Hargrove Inc. Lanham, Md. www.hargroveinc.com	Tim McGill	600	\$80 million	The year began with the U.S. presidential inauguration, along with a full schedule of official balls, candlelight dinners, lunches, and more, they say. The team was also busy designing all the inaugural outdoor events, including the concert on the Washington Mall and the inaugural parade. "Additional State Department diplomatic work included the Arctic Summit in Fairbanks, Alaska, and the Adriatic Charter Summit in Podgorica, Montenegro," they add.	"As a company, we have seen growing interest in creating innovative ways for people to engage in real and meaningful ways on-site at events," management says. "We're really passionate about finding ways for events to actually evolve in real time as people interact. Recently we've incorporated evolving art installations into work for, among others, Ford, Stella Artois and the Human Rights Campaign, which grow and change as the event progresses. The interactivity is an additional element of event work that's really driving engagement, and we see that trend continuing."
Henry V Events Portland, Ore. www.henryvevents.com	Katja Asaro	100 plus	\$18 million to \$20 million	The team continues its work for marquee brands including Daimler, Freightliner, Western Star, Tillamook Dairy, Adidas, TEDx and Feast Portland.	The brand is still king: "While it's important to stay on budget, clients are looking for creative and compelling content to lead the way," management says. "Clients are very specific on how their brand and corporate image is on display to consumers and employees."

16TH ANNUAL 50 TOP *Event Companies*

COMPANY	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR	ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2017 FORECAST)	NOTEWORTHY EVENTS	TOP TRENDS
Index Bangkok www.indexcreativevillage.com	Kreirngkarn Kanjanapokin, Kreirngkrai Kanjanapokin	70	\$70 million	The Index Creative Village team is proud of its big win on projects for the Thailand Pavilion at the International Expo 2017 Astana Kazakhstan. Also oversaw work for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.	With the incredible power of digital and online channels, "The event industry should add something new," Index management says, ensuring that event managers stay in the experience game.
InVision Communications San Francisco www.iv.com	Rod Mickels	150 to 160	\$68.5 million	The past 12 months of events have included Genentech NSM 2017, Dell EMC World 2017, Service Knowledge 17, Veritas Sales Conference 2017, Amway Achievers 2016, Coach SMC 2017, Oracle OpenWorld, Atlassian Euro Summit, NetApp Converge FY18, Oracle Modern CX, Sony DevCon, Roche Diagnostics NASM, Intercept US National POA Meeting and Siemens ILS.	Keep an eye open for "festivalization" and "suspended adulthood," which is the opportunity for adults—particularly millennials—to escape the responsibilities of 'adulting,'" management says. "Companies are integrating activities that are more adventurous (think summer camps and obstacle courses), social (role-playing) and good old fun (ball pits and 'rage rooms')." "
Jack Morton Worldwide Boston www.jackmorton.com	Josh McCall	1,000 plus	\$100 million (Special Events estimate)	"We have introduced an immersive and inventive technology offering," the team says, technology that presents "huge opportunities to take brand experiences to a new level—allowing us both to explore new worlds and to help create delightfully useful experiences."	"There's a great rise of interest and financial investment from brands in brand experiences," management says. But, "ordinary brand experiences will always struggle to make an impact. For this reason, our mantra at Jack Morton is: 'Do something extraordinary.'"
LEO Events Memphis, Tenn. www.leoevents.com	Cindy Brewer	150	\$24 million	The LEO team roars over the past year with work including the Walmart shareholders meeting, AutoZone's annual sales, vendor and incentive events, the activation of BlueCross Blue Shield of Tennessee sports sponsorships, and the Kaaboo Del Mar festival.	The LEO team sees three big trends: The "festivalization" of corporate events; the growing importance of safety planning and risk mitigation; and the rising role of VR and AR at special events.
Linkviva Dubai www.linkviva.com	Niousha Ehsan	55	\$22 million	Highlights of the year have included the Dubai Microsoft Font Launch; the Uber Swarm, a multi-city event that assisted people taking their first Uber ride; the World Council on City Data; and the C40 Climate Change Adaptation Conference.	While technology is center stage, "Effective integration and application of digital elements in events to maximize ROI for the client and experience for the audience remains the prevailing factor," they say.
Live Marketing Chicago www.livemarketing.com	Anne Trompeter	25 to 50	\$10 million	The team created a first-ever consumer-facing experiential tent experience for CenturyLink at the Leadville 100 MTB. Also produced the prestigious International Science and Engineering Fair for the Society of Science and the Public.	"It's all about the audience," they say. Use interactive tools help guests shape the experience because, "With the customer being more influential and more powerful than ever, it's now critical to advance your narrative through action versus communication."
MGM Resorts Event Productions Las Vegas www.mgmresortsevents.com	Jim Murren	1,300	\$16 million	Highlights of the past year have included the grand opening of the new MGM National Harbor outside of Washington; the opening of the new 5,000-seat Park Theatre on the Las Vegas Strip; and an incentive travel awards gala with 2,200 guests in Shanghai—the largest private event in the company's history.	The good: "Las Vegas as a destination continues to be very strong, and MGM Resorts International is positioned to capture the lion's share of that market," management says. The bad: "Compressed planning windows, high expectations, and a percentage of 'new to the industry planners,' which can complicate the process."
Next Group Milan, Rome www.nextgroup.eu	Marco Jannarelli	70	\$23 million	Highlights of the past year's work include the Sanpellegrino Young Chef competition; the 2017 Coca-Cola HBC Italia sales convention; and inaugural Milano Marketing Festival, where for three days Milan was animated with conferences, workshops, an awards program, and an exhibition curated by famed architect Italo Rota.	Events now are data-driven: "Clients ask for and we strive to provide them with a perfect combination of experience and data," management says. "When talking about corporate events—which is our core business—experience is about meeting design, a way to approach events based on format and design to enhance engagement. Data is the output of such an approach: figures that can prove the real effectiveness of an event."
Opus Events Beaverton, Ore. www.opusagency.com	Monte Wood	900	\$65 million	"In the last year, Opus has focused on the expansion of the agency's strategy capabilities, enabled by focused hires," management says. "As of mid-2017, Opus employs two VP-level strategists and an EVP of strategy," all part of plan to "evolve the offerings provided by the Opus team in the ever-changing event technology landscape."	Technology has advanced from "nice to have" to "essential," they say. "We're seeing big advancements in the capabilities and usage rate of key experiential technologies—many more of our clients are using VR, AR and even AI activations to augment their events. In addition, the continued growth of attendee data capture and mobile app capabilities is making it easier than ever to personalize and customize the attendee experience, and allowing companies to more closely track ROI and engagement at a granular level."
Pacific Event Productions/ PEP Creative San Diego www.pacificevents.com	Joanne Mera	850	\$10.5 million	A highlight of the year's events: the San Diego Museum of Art's "Art Alive" fundraiser.	New spins on classic themes have been trending, they say, such as disco turning into silent disco, Western turning into boho or Southwestern chic, and beach turning into boardwalk. "Branding and customization of products is a key component for our customers," PEP adds. "The ability to turn a rental product into something uniquely theirs is appealing and marketable."

16TH ANNUAL 50 TOP *Event Companies*

COMPANY	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR	ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2017 FORECAST)	NOTEWORTHY EVENTS	TOP TRENDS
Party Planners West Culver City, Calif. www.ppwin.com	Patricia K. Ryan	25 plus	\$28 million	PPW's busy event roster over the past year has included NFL and Host Committee Super Bowl LI events in Houston as well as events for the 2017 NFL Draft in Philadelphia and 2017 NFL Combine in Indianapolis.	
Paulette Wolf Events Chicago www.paulettewolfevents.com	Jodi Wolf	75 to 100	\$10 million	Busy this year with meetings, incentive trips and events for Samsung, Google, NetApp and CDW, multiple product-launch events for HM-Shost, and grand opening events for Rivers Casino and Hickory Street Capital.	The "wow" is back, they say: "The 'wow factor' features companies showcasing amazing, one-off live events. This can take experiential marketing to the extreme, having a huge impact and digital cut-through."
Pico Global Services Hong Kong www.pico.com	Lawrence Chia	340	\$360 million	Pico has been busy around the globe, including large-scale events for Bahrain National Day, Singapore National Day, and the WGC-HSBC Champions golf tournament in Shanghai, as well as corporate brand activations at the FIA Formula E race.	In light of the "relentless digital march," as Pico puts it, "By creatively expanding the use of technology at every touch point, event professionals can unleash the true power of digital, social and interactive technologies like augmented and virtual reality."
Podegiki Moscow www.podegiki.ru	Sergey Gorbachev	205	\$14.5 million	The year's event roster has included big events for Bayer, Janssen, Johnson & Johnson, Nivea, Orflame, Avon, KIA, Loreal, Pirelli, Sony, E&Y and Mars, along with the Atlases Business Forum.	The big trend for 2017: integrated communications. "Such omni-communication implies the accessibility of the contractor 24/7 through communication via both corporate mail, personal social networks, and messenger chats. Crowd-sourcing is gaining more importance as tool that helps to choose a contractor and gather a professional team," they say.
Red Frog Events Chicago www.redfrogevents.com	Ryan Kunkel, Joe Reynolds	75 to 100	\$40 million to \$60 million	Red Frog has been jumping this year, with events including the Warrior Dash, Firefly Music Festival, Chicago Beer Classic and Shamrock Fest.	Positive trends includes the increase in consumer dollars being spent on experiences rather than tangible items, management says, as well as new technology allowing for operational and consumer ease at events, such as cashless options.
Ruby J Events London, New York www.rubyjevents.com	Joanna Greenfield, Lucie Robins	35 to 40	\$4 million	Event highlights in the U.K. have included weddings at the exclusive Soho Farmhouse in the English countryside as well as a Royal Charity gala at the iconic Roundhouse in London. The U.S.A. side continues its work for corporate and social clients in New York.	"Both New York and London want to be ahead of the game," management says. "Whether it's the latest culinary trend or the hottest fashion craze, both cities strive to incorporate the most popular trends into their events—keeping it fresh, exciting and always in style."
Sequence New York www.sequence-events.com	Adam Sloyer	45	\$4.5 million	Busy this year with the Annual Total Health Forum; New York's "LEGO Batman" movie premiere; employee engagement events for LinkedIn; and annual award shows/galas for the American Red Cross, Toy Industry Association and Foot Locker Foundation.	Thanks to apps and social media, "More and more we're seeing technology driving event experiences to begin months before guests enter a physical space," management says.
Sequoia Productions Los Angeles www.sequoiaprod.com	Cheryl Cecchetto	30 to 45	\$12 million to \$20 million	This year's event roster has included the Academy Awards Governors Ball, Primetime Emmys Governors Ball, G'Day USA Gala, AMPAS Governors Awards, the Golden Screen Awards, UCFTI Expo, and events for Westfield and Goldman Sachs.	Clients clamor for innovative food presentation and drink recipes that offer unusual taste combinations. And on Sequoia's wish list: "We continue to be starved for good variety in furniture styles and looks to make sure events are varied."
Tamar Productions Chicago www.tamarproductionsinc.com	Mary Ann Rose	150 to 200	\$14.5 million	Busy this year with Kankakee Community College 50th Anniversary gala, Magnificent Mile 25th Anniversary Lights Festival, Siemens Health Care Corporate Conference, and Spartan Chemical 60th Anniversary Reception.	Event pros must grapple with lower corporate budgets in the face of competition from "nonprofessionals" who "undercut pricing and put events at risk," management says.
The Special Event Company Raleigh, N.C. www.specialeventco.com	Sally Webb Berry, CSEP	75	\$8.5 million	A full plate of events over the past year, including more than 25 events over a 10-day period during the Boy Scouts of America 2017 National Jamboree; a series of three-day Creator Events for Google/YouTube throughout South America, Mexico, North America and Canada; and high-level incentive trips for a financial institution's top performers in New York and Napa, Calif.	"Messaging is now one of the key goals in the design of special events," management says. "Event planners have to understand the fundamentals of marketing in the development phase of the program."
Uniplan Cologne, Germany www.uniplan.com	Christian Zimmermann	261	\$47.7 million	A busy year with events for Mercedes-Benz, Art Basel Hong Kong 2017, Longines, Lexus China, and Audi, along with Audi Moment Q5 and the SKL Millionen-Event.	Uniplan defines four essential trends for the event industry today: connectivity, meaning, human-centricity and sustainability.
Vok Dams Group Wuppertal, Germany www.vokdams.de	Colja M. Dams	395 plus	\$225 million	This international event powerhouse has seen "a great year," management says. "Beside noteworthy events for our key accounts such as BMW, IBM, Porsche, Siemens, Bayer, Adidas and SEAT, we won new clients including HERE, Lexus, Lidl, Hisense, Montblanc, Liebherr and Merck."	"Today, there are no more successful events without hybrid activities, because the impact and reach of an event can be tremendously improved by using online supported channels," management says. But never dismiss the power of live events; "They are at the heart of the campaign and provide the content for all other communication channels."

NOTE: All information is supplied by the companies listed unless otherwise noted. Companies listed oversee production of special events, hiring specialists as needed. *Special Events* estimates are based on interviews by staff, industry experts and other research. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, errors and omissions sometimes occur; it is the policy of *Special Events* to correct such errors promptly. All figures are in U.S. dollars. Should your company be on this list? Tell us at info@specialevents.com.

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Making a splash: The Omni Frisco overlooks The Star (left) and offers a pretty pool ready for branding (here). For glam galas, parties star in the Star Ballroom (below). Photos courtesy Omni Frisco Hotel.

Where The Pros Go

Top Planners Pick Their Favorite Properties

Great planners can create wonderful events just about anywhere. But when you can have a great hotel as the venue? Well, that makes everything so very much better. *Special Events* asked five top event planners to name their favorite properties. And here's what they told us ...

BIG FUN IN BIG D

If you're talking Dallas, you're talking football's Dallas Cowboys. And the official hotel for the Cowboys is the Omni Frisco Hotel, in nearby Frisco, Texas. The property is conveniently located at The Star, the new 91-acre campus housing the headquarters and practice field for the team. "The combination of these two iconic brands offers unlimited opportunity for meetings and events," says Kaye Burkhardt, president of Dallas Fan Fares.

The Omni's star venue is the Star Ballroom. The 13,000-square-foot space can accommodate some 1,000 for banquets and 1,300 for receptions. "The Star Ballroom features 22-foot ceilings and contemporary chandeliers, and has the ability to turn off all lighting, creating a star-lit effect," says Elyse Callison, event marketing and social media manager for the property. "Each event has an assigned event concierge, allowing a personal focus to ensure a successful event." The ballroom's foyer offers floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the Dallas Cowboys' facility.

For smaller events, the 4,500-square-foot Wynne Ballroom can handle banquets for 374 and receptions for 449.

The Omni Frisco "captures the energy and future of this vibrant North Texas city," Carlson says. "So aside from a great event, your attendees can enjoy a destination experience they won't soon forget."



SEEING STARS ON RODEO DRIVE

It's not just elite service and elite event spaces that make the Beverly Wilshire Hotel a top pick for DMC pro Dabney Bixel. The head of Los Angeles-based Bixel and Co. also loves the property's superb location, on the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills.

"Not only does the Beverly Wilshire offer excellent event space on property, it is also very close to a great deal of eclectic off-site venues, making planning off-property events far more seamless when clients are



staying there,” Bixel says. “Take a 30-second stroll from the lobby and one can explore luxury shops, Michelin Star-restaurants, and the rest of the glamour and allure that is Beverly Hills. With its logistically central location, all of the most sought-after attractions in the Los Angeles area are just a short drive away.”

Along with its chic setting, the hotel’s Ballroom has a purely practical side, notes public relations director Lauren Dutton-Breen. With capacity for an 880-guest reception, the Ballroom is configured to allow parking for production and satellite trucks, along with cable pass-throughs. In fact, vehicles can be driven right in, she says, noting that the space offers “the easiest load-in in Los Angeles.”

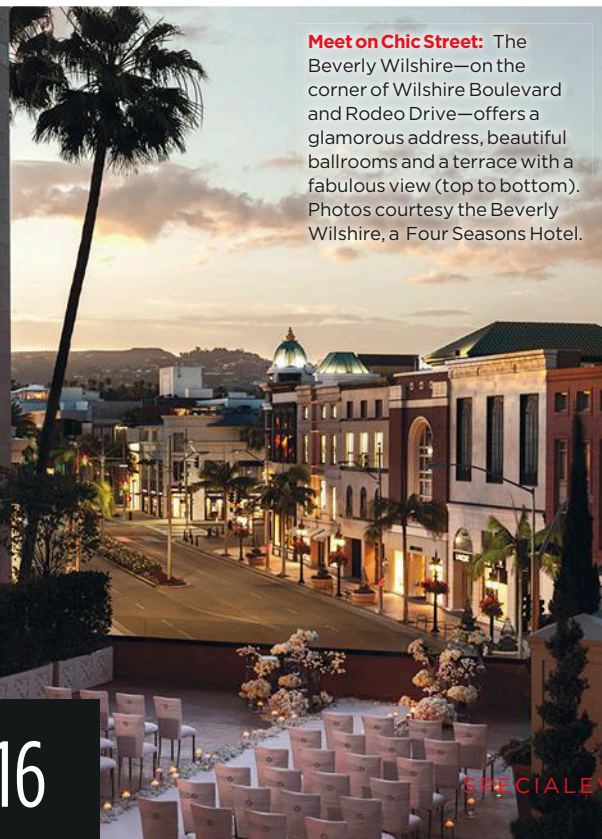
Other event options at the hotel include the Le Grand Trianon ballroom (offering up to 400 reception guests floor-to-ceiling windows), along with the Rodeo Terrace (with its up-close views of fashionable Rodeo Drive), and superstar chef Wolfgang Puck’s CUT Restaurant.

HOT STUFF IN MIAMI

For a complex event with “plenty of moving parts,” the team at Advantage Destination and Meetings Services in North Miami Beach, Fla., turned to 1 Hotel South Beach. “The hotel’s flexibility of allowing us to brand the conference and meeting areas was exceptional, because it enabled our team and the client to maximize our creativity while keeping the meeting’s message on brand to all the guests in attendance,” says Michael Avitable, DMCP, senior sales manager at Advantage. “The 1 Hotel South Beach has an excellent team that is willing to take the extra steps to ensure the client is happy.”

Along with three ballrooms—Terra (6,000 square feet), Atrium (3,700 square feet) and Poco Terra (1,850 square feet)—the property offers beautiful outdoor event spaces, notes marketing director Jacqueline VanderMale. ►

Meet on Chic Street: The Beverly Wilshire—on the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Rodeo Drive—offers a glamorous address, beautiful ballrooms and a terrace with a fabulous view (top to bottom). Photos courtesy the Beverly Wilshire, a Four Seasons Hotel.





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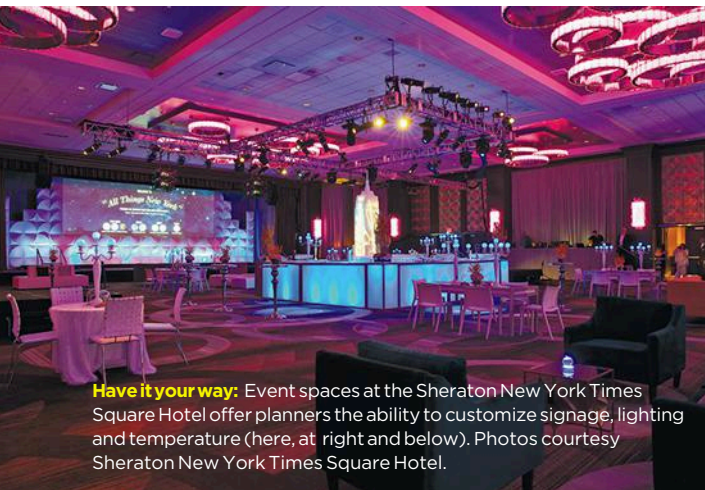
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Miami meet: The 1 Hotel South Beach offers planners the Terra Ballroom (here) and Cabana Pool (right). Photos courtesy 1 South Beach Hotel.



The NE Terrace overlooks the ocean and can seat up to 400 guests, while the Rooftop Pool offers views of the beach and downtown Miami's skyline. The Cabana Pool provides the quintessential SoBe chic space. And as if this weren't enough, the hotel also has its own private beach for events, complete with tiki huts and picnic furniture.



Have it your way: Event spaces at the Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel offer planners the ability to customize signage, lighting and temperature (here, at right and below). Photos courtesy Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel.

BIG EXPECTATIONS IN THE BIG APPLE

When the guest group has big expectations, the Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel can meet them. "Last summer, they hosted the Maritz Collaborative, and they went above and beyond—from accommodations and staff to food and beverage," says Anthony Napoli, CMP, DMCP, president of New York-based Briggs Inc. "The entire Maritz Incentive team came to New York, along with their trusted partners, so this was high stakes for the hotel in delivering an incentive-quality program to people who know how to do it! Well, the Sheraton outdid itself, from the initial site inspections to the final check-out."

The full 60,000-square-foot meeting space at the Sheraton New York Times Square includes 43 meeting rooms, the 13,768-square-foot Metropolitan Ballroom (which hosts up to 2,500 guests), and the 8,715-square-foot New York Ballroom (which holds 1,200 guests), the Sheraton team says. The event, meeting and pre-function spaces feature digital signage outside meeting rooms and in public spaces—with the ability to stream customized messages and live news—as well as client-controlled individual digital panels to customize lighting and temperature in each room. "As the third-largest meeting and event hotel in New York City, we have made service our specialty for events," they say.





Park here: Chicago's Millennium Park offers a range of venues for events in a stunning setting (here), including the stage at the Pritzker Pavilion (right). Photos courtesy Millennium Park.



PARTY IN THE PARK

While hotels are always hot for events, other special spaces do the trick, too. For Jodi Wolf, president of Chicago-based Paulette Wolf Events, “Millennium Park is my absolute favorite venue in the city!”

Her team has staged upscale milestone birthdays, galas with headline entertainment, food festivals, and numerous product launches at the park. “I love working with [private events manager] Jon Scott and his team,” Wolf says, “and I love all of the different spaces it has to offer.”

Located in the heart of Chicago on famed Michigan Avenue, Millennium Park offers five different event spaces, depending on the season. Up to 1,000 guests can attend a seated dinner in either the North or South Chase Promenades, Scott says, with clear-span tents available May through October. “Guests enjoy unmatched views of Chicago’s skyline and the renowned ‘Cloud Gate’ sculpture [aka The Bean] by artist Anish Kapoor,” Scott says.

Other spaces include the Rooftop Terrace, which can host up to 450. Offering a more private space, the terrace gives clients “a unique space with windows that can be entirely open or closed in minutes for inclement weather,” Scott says.

And although event hosts can rent the entire Jay Pritzker Pavilion for events—offering 4,000 fixed seats—another fun option is taking over the stage itself. Here, 200 guests can dine while looking out over the city skyline.

“Our experienced staff always tries to be a help, not a hindrance,” Scott says. “The sky is literally the limit in Millennium Park!” ●

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30 TOP RENTAL COMPANIES

20TH ANNUAL

A *Special Events* exclusive, here is our annual look at the biggest players in party rental

Rustic still rules but get ready for the gold rush. Here are the top trends in fashion and financials from the ultimate event insiders—big event rental companies.

EDITED BY LISA HURLEY

ALL OCCASIONS PARTY RENTAL

Pittsburgh

www.allparty.com

TOP OFFICERS Arthur Brown, president-CEO;

Jason Brown, COO

COMPANY BASICS This full-service event rental company, in business 40 years, provides an extensive range of rental items including furniture, decor, linens, branding, tabletop, staging and more, management says. Sister company Marbella Event Furniture and Decor Rental features one-of-a-kind inventory. Markets served include Maryland, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

CURRENT EVENTS Busy over the past year with the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Dick's Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon, and Vintage Grand Prix, U.S. Open and Hillman Cancer Center Gala at Consol Energy Center, all in Pittsburgh.

WHAT'S RENTING Clients clamor for chandeliers, farm tables and chairs, acrylic Casper chairs with printing, and monogrammed and seamless printed dance floors, management says. Gold tabletop items—including dishware, glassware and flatware—is big, along with rose gold flatware. And the gold rush goes beyond the tabletop: Gold tables and bars are a hit, too. "All gold rental items are being used, from lighting to dance-floor decals to flatware," they say.

WHAT'S NEXT Clients want their event environments to carry a message, management says. "Event branding is giving the ability to truly customize rental products and event design," they say, noting the popularity of "printed windows, mirrors, tent windows, floors, bars, tables and chandelier shades."

AI PARTY

Covina, Calif.

alpartyrental.com

TOP OFFICERS Chet Fortney, CEO; Rene Martinez, COO

COMPANY BASICS AI Party is best known for its depth of experience, impeccable service and diverse rental inventory, management says. "Our purpose is to provide stylish and innovative event rental equipment that supports our creative customers to design and experience the special events in their lives." The company serves private, public and corporate event sectors throughout southern California.

CURRENT EVENTS Event highlights of the past year include the 30th Annual Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards, the Classic West Concert Series at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, HARD Summer Music Festival, Insomniac's Electric Daisy Carnival, Kaskadee's Sun Soaked Beach Festival, and Fashion Week El Paseo Palm Desert.

WHAT'S RENTING Rustic items remain in high demand this year, "and we have seen a resurgence in the demand for the all-white modern look in this year's event designs," they say. Staying strong: earthy wood and metal items, such as distressed textures, wooden furniture, vineyard cabanas with warm drapery treatments, and soft accent lighting, which suit California's outdoor venues. And event hosts are going big—demanding bigger tents. "As event budgets and attendance capacities grow, we are constantly expanding our tenting inventory to accommodate client demands," management says. "Our largest clear-span structure is 130 feet wide with a length of 240 feet—and growing."

WHAT'S NEXT Rental rises to the fore: "We've seen a fundamental change in the role rental houses play in the industry," AI says. "As the event rental industry matures and becomes more mainstream, and the awareness of our capabilities become more commonly known to end-users and producers, the more we will be called upon to play a bigger part in the planning and execution of each event. Venue managers and event coordinators are now utilizing us for their event design and planning. They now rely on us for CAD layouts and renderings and for original artwork. We are currently experiencing this within the major sporting and music events industries. In these extremely competitive markets, producers are renewing their focus on the individual attendee's experience, and they are looking to more accomplished rental houses to help them improve that experience."

APRES PARTY AND TENT RENTAL

Minneapolis

www.aprespary.com

TOP OFFICERS Charlie Feldbaum, Michael Feldbaum

COMPANY BASICS Located in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Apres is a "family-grown" business now celebrating 30 years as a premier provider of event rental services specializing in the upper Midwest, management says with pride.

CURRENT EVENTS This year has seen continued growth throughout all markets, especially in the high-end wedding market, corporate events, fundraisers and galas, management says. Clients served include 3M, Medtronic, IBM, Cargill, GE, Ecolab, Harley-Davidson, Toyota, Cambria, Red Bull, Northern Tool, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche, AT&T, U.S. Bank and Wells Fargo.

WHAT'S RENTING "We are always expanding our inventory to keep up with the latest trends that will set our clients event apart from others," management says. "Unique, modern and rustic items are continually drawing a lot of demand in our market. We also seeing increased interest in clear-top tents, tent flooring with unique coverings, rustic/vintage decor, lounge furniture, specialty lighting, chandeliers, illuminated bars, and custom linens and decor."

WHAT'S NEXT Management shares both good news and bad. The good news: Demand is strong from clients. And the bad: Rental faces a tight labor supply. "The demand for our services is at a record high, and skilled labor is more difficult to find than ever," Apres management says. "This combination requires us to continually work harder and smarter for our customers. People aren't only looking for a great value, but they are also looking for top-notch service, which we pride ourselves on offering our clients every time. The future growth of our company continues to look very positive, as we are seeing a steady increase in corporate, public and private events."

ARENA AMERICAS

Milwaukee

www.arenaamericas.com

TOP OFFICER Paul Bryant

COMPANY BASICS Since 1964, Arena Americas has specialized in providing full-line special event equipment rental products and services, including semi-permanent and permanent clear-span structures, custom design and manufacturing capabilities, tents, HVAC, power generation, lighting, flooring, staging, furniture and tabletop equipment to clients nationally and internationally. "Our team has established a reputation for delivering high-quality products, custom design and manufacturing to fit specific client visions and/or site requirements, in-house branding and graphics capabilities, a superior level of service, and an unsurpassed record of project success and client satisfaction," management says.

CURRENT EVENTS Highlights this year have included support for the U.S. Open Golf Championship at Erin Hills, Wis., New York City Marathon, Met Gala, Frieze Art Fair, Lakefront Festival of Art in Milwaukee, Lollapalooza, Kentucky Derby and Celestial Ball at Chicago's Adler Planetarium.

WHAT'S RENTING The big demand from clients: Custom structures, including curved beams, single slope and double-deck structures. "All represent new and exciting opportunities to stand out visually, and the double-decker is a great way to maximize event space with a smaller footprint," management says. "The double decker two-story height creates greater visibility while offering amazing opportunities to increase visual brand exposure, create awareness with custom-printed graphics, and interior build-outs, including VIP mezzanines and high-end event and guest experiences."

WHAT'S NEXT Management notes an increasing demand for custom work, including specially designed structures, custom façades, double-deck structures, and custom-printed graphics.

20TH ANNUAL 30 TOP RENTAL COMPANIES

BRIGHT EVENT RENTALS

Sonoma, Calif.

www.brightrentals.com

TOP OFFICER Michael Bjornstad

COMPANY BASICS A new power player on the rental scene, Bright provides full-service event rentals throughout California, Arizona and New Mexico.

CURRENT EVENTS Event highlights of the past year include charity galas, designer weddings, corporate marketing events, entertainment industry celebrations, milestone life events, sporting events, and “a wine tasting or two,” management says.

WHAT’S RENTING The Bright team is “proud to be part of today’s special events industry,” they say, noting the “many creative product introductions from many different companies.”

WHAT’S NEXT Some good news: “Expect the robust events market to continue despite the ever-changing world in which we operate,” management says, noting that it “remains more important than ever to the industry that we continue to invest and run our businesses responsibly and ethically.”

BUTLER RENTS

Denver

www.butlerrents.com

TOP OFFICER Barry Reynolds

COMPANY BASICS In business more than 40 years, Butler’s inventory includes tables, chairs, tabletop, linens, china, glassware and foodservice equipment in its 80,000-square-foot warehouse.

WHAT’S RENTING Popular items include resin chairs, chiavari bar stools, rustic tables and chairs, and brushed aluminum tabletops, along with rose gold flatware and specialty linens and glassware.

WHAT’S NEXT Continuing trends include specialty items, irregularly shaped dinnerware and serving pieces, and specialty linen, management says. “Unique items that make each event slightly different from the next seem to drive the rental industry now,” such as rustic tables and chairs, whiskey barrel tables, and fire pits. A side note: The company’s Barbara Bown Wyatt was just named to the board of directors of the American Rental Association.

CHAIR-MAN MILLS CORP.

Toronto

www.chairmanmills.com

TOP OFFICER John Van Schepen

COMPANY BASICS Founded in 1911, this Canadian rental powerhouse takes pride in its “stellar reputation” for providing quality rentals and top-flight service to the event industry in Toronto. Operating under its three significant brands, the company provides best-in-class event rentals through its Chair-man Mills and Event Rental Group divisions, and is also Canada’s leading provider of tents through its Advanced Tent Rental division. The company serves many of Toronto’s top venues, caterers and event planners, and is proud of its long history of supporting a wide array of not-for-profit and fundraising foundations and organizations, management says.

CURRENT EVENTS The company manages “large and complex events,” they say, including the Toronto International Film Festival, Toronto Taste, Bloor Street Entertains and Hockey Hall of Fame Inductions, as well as other large festivals, outdoor shows and sporting events.

WHAT’S RENTING Clients call for “nature-inspired items”—anything organic, linen, wood, eco-friendly, simple and natural. On the opposite end of the spectrum, over-the-top gold flatware, cut crystal, and gold-trimmed china are in demand, management says, while the vintage trend stays strong.

WHAT’S NEXT And the outlook is bright: “We see continued growth in the exciting and rapidly developing Toronto event industry!” they say.

CHOURA EVENTS

Torrance, Calif.

chouraevents.com

TOP OFFICER Ryan J. Choura

COMPANY BASICS In business since 2005 serving southern California and parts of the western U.S., Choura is a “creative event agency,” they say, specializing in high-end tenting, event rentals and building custom event experiences. In June, Choura acquired a major portion of Classic Tents, becoming the largest tenting provider in California, they say.

CURRENT EVENTS Event highlights this year have included the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach, ESPYS, Arroyo Seco Music Festival, Walker Cup, Newport Food and Wine Festival, Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Kaaboo Del Mar and the Electric Daisy Carnival.

WHAT’S RENTING What’s hot: A-frame structures, custom bars, modern and industrial furniture, and decor elements, management says.

WHAT’S NEXT “We think clients are bored of rental companies that just sell commodities,” management says. “Clients are able to easily compare and shop competitors online, so having a compelling brand that engages with its fans is becoming more important than resting on reputation alone.” Also, “Customers are also less forgiving when it comes to average product—they expect, and deserve, great equipment every time. Companies that truly provide benefits in the form of customer service, design and overall ‘event support’ success are going to rise to the top.”

CORT PARTY RENTAL

Seattle

www.cortpartyrental.com

TOP OFFICER Phil Heidt

COMPANY BASICS This full-service party rental company serves the Seattle metro area along with the Pacific Northwest, offering structures, staging, flooring, canopies and tabletop items. CORT prides itself on leading the area in design trends and providing an outstanding customer experience, management says.

CURRENT EVENTS This year’s event roster has included Microsoft Oneweek, the Boeing Classic, Auction of Washington Wines, and Sasquatch! music festival.

WHAT’S RENTING “In our market, our clients are responding to a greater variety in tabletop items,” management says. “Rose gold flatware and chargers have joined the traditional silver and gold for an expanded palette. The natural look of the Pacific Northwest continues to enthrall local brides, with natural fabrics, neutral colors and farm-style tables and chairs.”

WHAT’S NEXT Playing it safe: Safety and proper tent ballasting will continue to be a concern as regulation of the industry tightens on the municipal level, management says.

DC RENTAL

Arlington, Va.

www.dcrental.com

TOP OFFICER William Homan

COMPANY BASICS In its 31 years, DC Rental has become a fixture in local Washington-area special events. “Offering the finest in party equipment, unique linens and exceptional service, the company has grown to serve additional markets throughout the East Coast and beyond,” management says.

CURRENT EVENTS Highlights of the year have included large fundraisers, major sporting events such as the Preakness Stakes, the Kennedy Center Honors gala, large embassy events, the Leukemia Ball, and “countless” corporate events and weddings.

WHAT’S RENTING Trending now: “Old meets new,” management says. “Clients are mixing contemporary items like matte gold flatware with vintage plates or classic cut-crystal stemware.”

WHAT’S NEXT What’s hot? “Patterns! Patterns! Patterns!” they say. “Clients continue to embrace color and ‘go for bold’

when pairing linens and tabletop items. With the rise of chef-centric events, unique stoneware and compartmentalized food presentations remain a top request. We’re also seeing a renaissance of old classics like melamine—now offered in contemporary patterns like marble and wood grain—and smoky glass.”

DIAMOND EVENTS AND TENTS

Salt Lake City

diamondeventsandtents.com

TOP OFFICER Mark Clawson

COMPANY BASICS The event side of the company has rebranded from Diamond Rental to Diamond Events and Tents, and added a new warehouse facility.

CURRENT EVENTS “We increasingly serve clients on a regional and national basis,” management says, “and have experienced some solid growth from all of the ‘Classic chaos,’” referring to the fallout from the breakup of party rental giant Classic Party Rentals earlier this year.

WHAT’S NEXT And more good news: “2017 has been a very good year for us, like everyone else,” management says. “Our national event business has been strong. We see good things ahead,” they say.

HALL’S RENTAL SERVICE

Niles, Ill.

www.hallsrental.com

TOP OFFICERS Jack Luft, Tom Luft

COMPANY BASICS A fixture in Chicago since 1958, Hall’s offers a 3,500-square-foot showroom, 125,000-square-foot warehouse, and inventory including 15,000 tables and 60,000 chairs in 100 different styles and sizes. Tabletop includes hundreds of different china, flatware and glassware patterns in all styles. Also available: an extensive cooking and catering equipment inventory.

CURRENT EVENTS Big events this year have included gala fundraisers for the Field Museum, Ravinia Festival, Lincoln Park Zoo, Steppenwolf Theatre, Chicago History Museum, Museum of Science and Industry, Nature Museum and Shedd Aquarium.

WHAT’S RENTING The “wine country” look is still in demand, especially wine barrel and other vintage bars, often mixed with modern and industrial-style tables, chairs and accessories. Clear and black acrylic chairs, tables and serving pieces are also very popular, Hall’s says.

WHAT’S NEXT Guest counts and budgets have increased for all social events, especially weddings, management says. Corporate events are steady “but with shorter lead times.” Overall, the team is “looking forward to a stronger second half of 2017.”

KIRBY RENTALS

Orlando, Fla.

www.kirbytent.com

TOP OFFICER Paul Weidner

COMPANY BASICS Locations in Jacksonville, Orlando and Ormond Beach, Fla., with a satellite office in Tampa/St. Petersburg, Fla.

CURRENT EVENTS Kirby’s event work includes many projects for high-profile sporting events.

M&M THE SPECIAL EVENTS CO.

Carol Stream, Ill.

mmspecialevents.com

TOP OFFICER Mark Murphy

COMPANY BASICS In business since 1980, originally serving the event and hospitality industries in the Chicago metro and the DFW Metroplex. But M&M Event Rental is one of the year’s big movers and shakers, expanding through acquisition into Atlanta, Austin, Texas, Kansas City, Nashville and Memphis, Tenn., and San Antonio, as well as broadening its reach within its existing Chicago and Dallas markets.

CURRENT EVENTS “By combining the talents, products and resources of [its acquisitions], we can offer our customers

20TH ANNUAL 30 TOP RENTAL COMPANIES

a wide variety of event rental products and services, while continuing to raise the level of customer service that our customers have come to expect and deserve," says Mark Murphy, M&M CEO.

WHAT'S NEXT Look for the company to rebrand its various operations into a single brand over the next few months. "We see good things ahead" for 2017, they say. "Stay tuned!"

PARTY REFLECTIONS

Charlotte, N.C.
partyreflections.com

TOP OFFICERS Daniel W. Hooks, CERP, president/CEO; Maurisa Beaver, chief culture officer; Christian Eastman, COO; Jonas Hutchison, CERP, chief business officer

COMPANY BASICS Family-owned and operated since 1958, this full-service rental firm has operations in Charlotte, Raleigh, and Greensboro, N.C., as well as Columbia, S.C. Along with tents, tables, chairs, tabletop and custom linen, the company offers CAD services, logistics management, custom draping, production services and on-site management.

CURRENT EVENTS Highlights have included the 2017 Wyndham PGA Championship, Wells Fargo Championship, Queens Cup Steeplechase, Carolinas Cup Steeplechase, the Concourse d'Elegance Pinehurst car show, Volvo Cup tennis tournament, Winston-Salem Open Pro tennis tournament, NASCAR Speed Street festival, UltraSwim 17, 2017 BMX World Championship, and many "high-profile" weddings and corporate events, management says.

WHAT'S RENTING Hot items include farm tables of various sizes, benches, crystal and other unique chandeliers, custom linen sizes and applications, specialty glassware, unique custom furniture, vintage pieces, custom tent liners and draping, custom bars, and kitchen equipment for client caterers, management says.

WHAT'S NEXT "We continue to be optimistic about the economic future surrounding the special event industry,"

management says. "Partnering with professionals who are constantly learning and growing in their field of expertise is critical to the success of these events and the industry itself. We believe regional consolidation will continue around the country as economies of scale help improve operations within a manageable region. We continue to look for opportunities to grow our business both organically and through strategic acquisitions."

PARTY RENTAL LTD.

Teterboro, N.J.
www.partyrentalltd.com

TOP OFFICER Gary Halperin

COMPANY BASICS A family-owned business since 1972, Party Rental Ltd. has been the leading party rental company serving the Northeast and mid-Atlantic regions with a wide selection of linens, tables, flatware, china and catering equipment. "The company provides rentals for over 50,000 events a year and prides itself on service, quality and variety of rental products for any occasion," management says. You'll know them by their trucks featuring that famous pink hippo.

CURRENT EVENTS "To us, all of our events are noteworthy, because they're special to those planning and attending," management says.

WHAT'S RENTING "The tables in our Furniture Collection have been very popular this year, including our new Loft Tables, Country Tables and Mason Tables," management says. "Clients love the linen-less look, and the tables can be styled rustic, industrial or even classic, which is right on trend." Also a hit: "Our Chalkboard Bar—it's the perfect statement piece!—so we introduced additional surface choices that coordinate with other pieces in our collection. Decorative tabletop pieces, like uniquely ornate chinaware, gold flatware, and textured glassware, add a ton of personality to designs, which our clients have been loving."

WHAT'S NEXT "We're seeing increased demand for more

furniture-like statement pieces that really 'wow' guests, so we're in the process of developing new products for our Furniture Collection, like a beautiful, bold wood bar," management says.

"While the classics never go out of style, we find that our clients want unique, stylized tabletop pieces that will set their designs apart, so we've been introducing a variety of collections to support that. Lastly, 'going green' and finding ways to be sustainable will be big trends for years to come, and embracing new technology has been an integral part of our efforts."

PARTY RENT GROUP

Bocholt, Germany
www.partyrent.com


TOP OFFICER Joris Bomers

COMPANY BASICS Founded in 1992, this event equipment supplier serves markets across Europe. Along with providing equipment, the company offers project management and event logistics services.

CURRENT EVENTS This year's event roster has included the Bonn Climate Change Conference, Le Mans Spirit Club WEC, and German Open Rothenbaum tennis championships.

WHAT'S RENTING The company has had great success with its original designs for event furniture from providers such as Vitra, Lapalma, COR and the HAY brand from Denmark. Also, planners often ask for "concepts with an individual touch," management says. Creating tables from old wooden planks has been very popular, and "every piece that got into the trending 'craft' style is fast selling at the moment," they add.

WHAT'S NEXT "Rental companies have to work flexibly to answer the customers' individual preferences," management says. "It's not the product that makes the decision—it's the whole concept."



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PEACHTREE TENTS AND EVENTS

Atlanta

www.peachtreetents.com

TOP OFFICERS Joe Freedman, CEO; Grant Baker, COO

COMPANY BASICS Longtime event providers Event Rentals Unlimited and Tents Unlimited were acquired by Peachtree Tents and Events. "We have integrated our Atlanta party rental businesses and will have a new combined downtown location by the first of the year. With locations in Atlanta, Nashville, Tenn., and Birmingham, Ala., we have strengthened our ability to comfortably service the entire Southeastern region much more efficiently now," they say.

CURRENT EVENTS The team was "instrumental" in providing rentals, flooring, and/or tent structures for many high-profile events, management says, including the NBA All-star Game events in New Orleans, Music Midtown Music Festival in Atlanta, Live on the Green in Nashville, Tenn., and the BB&T Atlanta Open tennis tourney.

WHAT'S RENTING Rose gold and metallics are hot in Peachtree's markets right now; "Anything we can accent or get in those colors is being used like crazy," they say.

WHAT'S NEXT "We are experiencing solid revenue growth, and event planners are being given better budgets with latitude to provide custom experiences again," management says. "The cookie-cutter approach is disappearing, and clients are asking us to create environments. It is a trend back to creativity and value being placed on that creativity, rather than the events that feel more like a 'commodity.' We are also starting to see many acquisitions going on in our space as a result of that profitable growth. In fact, PTE is expanding and will be in additional markets by year-end."

PEAK EVENT SERVICES

Woburn, Mass.

www.peakeventservices.com

TOP OFFICER Robert Traina

COMPANY BASICS PEAK Event Services offers "exceptional service and quality products for all party rental, catering and tenting needs throughout New England," management says, "from Maine to southern New Hampshire, Boston to the Cape and islands, Rhode Island to Connecticut, and all points in between."

CURRENT EVENTS The company participates in several large-scale community events every year including the Boston Marathon, Best Buddies, Pan Mass Challenge, Nantucket Wine Festival, James Beard Taste America, Alzheimer's Association, Asperger's Association, WaterFire Providence, Rodman Ride for Kids, and the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Curing Kids Fund, among others.

WHAT'S RENTING Trending this year: "Textured and patterned linens, such as crushed velvet or blush/dusty blue, with pops of metallics pair to create a glam and modern look," they say. Also big: "Mixing round tables covered in linen with farm tables to create depth in a space and mix up the floor plan." And: "All things metallic/matte—gold, rose gold, silver—and especially flatware, to easily tie the look of table together."

WHAT'S NEXT PEAK forecasts the future: "We are starting to see more and more people incorporate their love of travel into their events. Whether it's modern with clean lines inspired by Copenhagen or use of more textiles, colors and bold pieces inspired by a trip to Mexico, immersion in travel and culture will play a big role when determining what event rentals to choose. Couples are creating their own signature looks and branding their celebrations."

PEERLESS EVENTS AND TENTS

Arlington, Texas

www.peerlesseventsandtents.com

TOP OFFICERS Brian Jenkins, president; Matt Crosby, v.p.

COMPANY BASICS "While continuing our focus on increasing our presence in the tabletop arena of the rental industry, we

have purchased several new lines of dinnerware as well as switching out our various lines of glassware and consolidating to just two glassware vendors—Fortessa and Reidel," management says. "We also purchased the inventory of a very high-end linen company; while not a large acquisition, it does take us to the next level of linen rentals. We will celebrate our 12th year in business in September and look forward to the upcoming year, as we continue our focus on profitability while giving our customers world-class rentals and service."

CURRENT EVENTS Peerless hit the road: "This year we have increased our travelling; not only do we install hail restoration tents of all sizes throughout the southwest United States, we also installed over 170 tents ranging from 30-by-45 to 60-by-120 throughout a four-state area in support of firework sales," management says. "Additionally, we have set up hundreds of tents in support of various 'parking lot' sales throughout the Southwest. We continue to increase our event planner and caterer clientele as we become a leader in tabletop and linen."

WHAT'S RENTING Just how cool is "rustic"? "Our rustic line is still as hot as a Texas summer day," management says. "We also recently invested in the Eureka X2 tent system, which is a standard frame tent that is kedered like a structure tent. This style of tent allows us to offer our budget-conscious tenting customers a less expensive option to a more costly structure tent, yet gives them all the stability and beauty of the more costly option."

WHAT'S NEXT Good to grow: "We have continued to grow financially as well as in the customer service field," management says. "We have designed an 'Inspiration Box' that will be introduced in 2017. Our customers will have the ability to go to our website, order samples of linen, tabletop, even a table, and we will deliver them in a specially designed box to their front door. We feel that this will bring our showroom into our customers' living room, allowing them to 'play' with our equipment on their own timeline and terms."

PERFECT SETTINGS

Landover, Md.

www.perfectsettings.com

TOP OFFICER Peter Grazzini

COMPANY BASICS Founded in 1998 by professionals with 30-plus years of industry experience, Perfect Settings is a full-service special events rental company in the Washington metropolitan area, management says. "We employ 230 people in our cavernous 150,000-square-foot office and warehouse space located in Landover, Md.," they explain. "Our focus continues to bring new and exciting items to the special events industry."

CURRENT EVENTS Among other noteworthy events this year, Perfect Settings handled the U.S. presidential inauguration, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee Policy Conference, and the United States Golf Association's U.S. Open.

WHAT'S RENTING Nature calling: "We envision natural and rustic design elements as the direction in which the industry is trending. In addition, we believe the present trend of neutral palettes interspersed with bright colors will carry on for the foreseeable future," management says.

WHAT'S NEXT "To date, 2017 has been a record-breaking year for Perfect Settings in terms of sales volume," the team says. "A new administration in the [U.S. presidential] Oval Office often leads to a spike in the number of events throughout the greater Washington metropolitan area. Perfect Settings plans to ride the wave of this burgeoning economy, which should allow the company to grow exponentially in 2017 and beyond."

PRO EM EVENT MANAGEMENT

Phoenix

www.proem.org

TOP OFFICER Brady Castro

COMPANY BASICS The PRO EM motto: "We offer inspiring innovative event solutions." The company delivers quality rental items and excellent customer service to events of all sizes, they say; "Weddings, high-profile sporting and cultural events, corporate meetings and social gatherings are just some of the events we specialize in. The services portfolio also includes event management and consulting, valet service, security guards, logistics, traffic control and other event personnel."

CURRENT EVENTS Last October, PRO EM took on a new financial sponsor—Dos Rios Partners. "In June 2017, we acquired Illinois-based Partytime-HDO Productions, and in July, we acquired Universal Resource Supply and SoCal Tents and Events, a Los Angeles-based event rental company," management says. "This adds strength to our ability to serve our customers across the country."

WHAT'S RENTING What's in: A clean, modern look using white furniture with color accents using pillows and rugs, as well as a Bohemian vibe with bright jewel tones, farm tables, mix-and-match furniture, and accents such as greenery. Charging stations and branding options have become very popular as well, they say.

WHAT'S NEXT "For 2017, we will continue to see our clients interested in upscale products, soft furniture decor, and unique lighting elements," management says. "The current event environment features clients looking for the 'wow' factor for their events. Our clients seek more personalization and attention to details and look for a company who can fulfill those needs. Social media is playing a large role in this trend as clients are seeking inspiration from the various available channels. Additionally, as sustainable practices become more and more prevalent in our industry, willingness to be proactive and develop 'green' solutions to event management is also a priority for some corporate events and institutions."

RAPHAEL'S PARTY RENTALS

San Diego

www.raphaels.com

TOP OFFICERS Raphael Silverman, Philip Silverman

COMPANY BASICS In business since 1981 serving the southern California market, the Raphael's brand includes Raphael's Event Works, Floral Works and Events by Raphael's, and Raphael's Convention Services, along with PRE Sales—an equipment import business. Services include general rentals, specialty lighting, event design and production, specialty props, floral and event decor, lounge furniture, tents, and trade show services.

WHAT'S NEXT Raphael's management will continue to focus on networking to build business and cutting costs to maximize margins.

SIGNATURE PARTY RENTALS

Santa Ana, Calif.

www.signatureparty.com

TOP OFFICERS Randy Berg, Valdur Tamme

COMPANY BASICS In business since 1986, this company has locations in the greater Los Angeles area in addition to a full-service location serving the Palm Springs, Calif., market. With a warehouse offering more than 150,000 square feet, Signature is "heavily focused" on providing a high-quality, affordable rental experience for event planners, caterers, hotels and coordinators, management says.

CURRENT EVENTS Big moves for Signature Party Rentals in 2017, management says with pride. "We moved into a new state-of-the-art 110,000-square-foot building in Orange County [Calif.] and are adding a new 46,000-square-foot building in the desert. Large-structure events including Children's Hospital of Orange County and Chapman Celebrates allow clients to see the both the tenting capabilities as well as our vast creative inventory of tabletop, furniture and decor items."

WHAT'S RENTING Chandeliers, sequin linens and black

20TH ANNUAL 30 TOP RENTAL COMPANIES

RANK IN 2017	COMPANY	HEADQUARTERS	ESTIMATED 2017 RENTAL VOLUME (IN U.S. MILLIONS)	NUMBER OF LOCATIONS	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
1	BRIGHT EVENT RENTALS	SONOMA, CALIF.	\$100 PLUS	9	800 PLUS
2	PARTY RENTAL LTD.	TETERBORO, N.J.	\$100	8 (3 WAREHOUSES, 5 SHOWROOMS)	800 FULL-TIME/700 SEASONAL
3	M&M THE SPECIAL EVENTS CO.	CAROL STREAM, ILL.	\$90	11	1,000
4	PARTY RENT GROUP	BOCHOLT, GERMANY	\$83.4	24	700 TO 750
5	TOWN AND COUNTRY EVENT RENTALS	VAN NUYS, CALIF.	\$64	1	600 PLUS
6	PEAK EVENT SERVICES	WOBURN, MASS.	\$60	8	625
7	ARENA AMERICAS	MILWAUKEE	\$55	5	425
8	PRO EM EVENT MANAGEMENT	PHOENIX	\$40 TO \$50	4	1,500 TO 2,000
9	CHAIR-MAN MILLS CORP.	TORONTO	\$32	2	400 TO 450
10	RAPHAEL'S PARTY RENTALS	SAN DIEGO	\$31.4	1	230
11	TENTLOGIX	FORT PIERCE, FLA.	\$30 PLUS	1	275 PLUS
12	PEACHTREE TENTS AND EVENTS	ATLANTA	\$25 TO \$35	5	200
13	SIGNATURE PARTY RENTALS	SANTA ANA, CALIF.	\$28	2	300
14	SPECIAL EVENT RENTALS	EDMONTON, ALBERTA	\$21.5	5	220 PLUS
15	PARTY REFLECTIONS	CHARLOTTE, N.C.	\$21.2	4	200 TO 225
16	HALL'S RENTAL SERVICE	NILES, ILL.	\$20	1	250
17	CHOURA EVENTS	TORRANCE, CALIF.	\$19	1	145
18	DIAMOND EVENTS AND TENTS	SALT LAKE CITY	\$17 TO \$20	4	90 TO 130
19	PERFECT SETTINGS	LANDOVER, MD.	\$18.2	1	230
20	STAMFORD TENT AND EVENT SERVICES	STAMFORD, CONN.	\$17 TO \$17.5	2	165 TO 185
21	KIRBY RENTALS	ORLANDO, FLA.	\$16 TO \$18 (SPECIAL EVENTS ESTIMATE*)	4	115
22	CORT PARTY RENTAL	SEATTLE	\$15 (SPECIAL EVENTS ESTIMATE*)	2	100 TO 200
23	PEERLESS EVENTS AND TENTS	ARLINGTON, TEXAS	\$15	4	175 TO 200
24	STUART RENTAL CO.	MILPITAS, CALIF.	\$14.2	3	140 TO 165
25	A1 PARTY	COVINA, CALIF.	\$12	1	130
26	DC RENTAL	ARLINGTON, VA.	\$11.5	1	160
27	THORNS GROUP	LONDON	\$10 (SPECIAL EVENTS ESTIMATE*)	3	100 TO 125
28	APRES PARTY AND TENT RENTAL	MINNEAPOLIS	\$9.375	1	85 FULL-TIME, 150 PLUS IN PEAK SEASON
29	BUTLER RENTS	DENVER	\$9	1	70 TO 90
30	ALL OCCASIONS PARTY RENTAL	PITTSBURGH	\$8	3	110

20TH ANNUAL 30 TOP RENTAL COMPANIES

matte flatware from Signature add glamour to events. “We also continue to see strong demand for lighting and furniture,” they say.

WHAT’S NEXT “Cautious optimism continues as the southern California economy continues to be strong,” management says. “However, minimum-wage pressure and overall expense increases will present challenges to maintain margins. Recent changes in the competitive environment will also need to be observed and responded to accordingly.”

SPECIAL EVENT RENTALS

Edmonton, Alberta

www.specialeventrentals.com

TOP OFFICER Neil Goodkey

COMPANY BASICS Special Event Rentals is the largest event rental company in western Canada, with locations in Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer and Banff, Alberta. Since 1985, the company has offered a full range of event equipment including tents, tables, chairs, linens and decor. Its broad inventory allows the company to service corporate, social, bridal and nonprofit events, management says.

CURRENT EVENTS Favorite events for the Special Event Rentals team this year have included the Calgary Stampede, ITU World Cup Triathlon, Canadian Derby, Government of Alberta’s Canada Day 150th celebration, Servus Credit Union Heritage Festival, Taste of Edmonton, K-Days, International St. Albert Children’s Festival, Edmonton International Fringe Festival, and the Keyano College Foundation Gala.

WHAT’S RENTING Colored glassware and unique cutlery are hot right now, management says. “We are also seeing an increase in the rental of floral overlays, while sequin linens remain popular,” they add. “Farm tables and benches continue to rent as rustic-themed events continue.”

WHAT’S NEXT Good news: “2017 has been a year of growth within our company,” management says. “The local economy is improving, and we are seeing an increase in corporate events, festivals and personal events.”

STAMFORD TENT AND EVENT SERVICES

Stamford, Conn.

www.stamfordtent.com

TOP OFFICER Stephen Frost

COMPANY BASICS Stamford sticks to its knitting, saying the team is “staying focused on our core business of tenting, flooring, and related products and services. Having two locations has helped maintain our high level of service and keep costs down.”

CURRENT EVENTS Noteworthy events this year have included several “very high-profile” celebrity weddings, along with unique and challenging custom projects, management says.

WHAT’S RENTING Sailcloth tents are still popular, management says, and wide-plank floor coverings continue to be strong sellers. “Custom tenting is very hot right now,” they add.

WHAT’S NEXT An above-average increase in sales coupled with improved efficiencies have made for a very good year, management says, and the team is projecting similar results in the year ahead.

STUART RENTAL CO.

Milpitas, Calif.

www.stuartrental.com

TOP OFFICERS Michael C. Berman, R. Andrew Sutton

COMPANY BASICS Stuart Event Rentals is the longest-running event rental company serving the San Francisco Bay Area and northern California, management says with pride. “We have withstood the test of time by continually expanding inventory, growing our staff and event expertise, innovating, and staying on the leading edge of the event industry. With one of the most extensive rental product inventories in our region, Stuart provides the tent over your head to the flooring below your feet ... and everything in between for any size corporate, social, or nonprofit event and

celebration. Our experienced staff also offers services including event planning, event design, logistics and guest flow, CAD drawings, and permitting assistance.”

CURRENT EVENTS Busy this year with repeat events including festivals and graduations. “We also helped our clients with weddings, galas, car shows in Pebble Beach, the Yoga Festival in Lake Tahoe, and lots of Silicon Valley corporate events,” they say.

WHAT’S RENTING Tents are as popular as ever, management says. “Our customers love that they provide greater flexibility and customization than traditional brick-and-mortar event venues. We’ve also invested in new styles of linen, furniture, chairs and other custom-built pieces to keep up with our clients’ desire for unique pieces that stand out among the usual rental options.”

WHAT’S NEXT “A steady customer demand for customized experiences has reinforced our mission of staying on the leading edge of event services and production,” management says. “Our customers continue to seek out not just an increased variety of rental options, but the expert assistance of a rental team who draws on decades of experience to be able to reliably and professionally handle whatever is thrown their way. Being in the heart of Silicon Valley, we expect a continued push for innovative event spaces and experiences.”

TENTLOGIX

Fort Pierce, Fla.

www.tentlogix.com

TOP OFFICERS Nate Albers, Dennis Birdsall, Gary Hendry

COMPANY BASICS TentLogix specializes in innovative tenting solutions, event flooring, and event rental products throughout the United States and the Caribbean. Also offers a full line of event rental products including pool covers, furniture, staging and dance floors, HVAC, restroom trailers, tables and chairs, linen, glassware, china, flatware and catering equipment. Key event segments serviced include professional sporting events, corporate events, celebrity weddings, high-profile social events, and product launches.

CURRENT EVENTS Notable events supported this year include the Republican National Convention, the Invictus Games, National Business Aviation Association convention, Art Basel, the 2017 Solheim Cup, 2017 Miami Open, U.S. Senior Open, U.S. Womens Open, numerous PGA and LPGA tournaments, and “a large number of professional sporting events, corporate events, and celebrity affairs throughout the United States,” they say.

WHAT’S RENTING What’s hot: Full-color printed graphics, unique floor coverings, curved-beam structures, mono-pitch structures, and low-pitch roof systems, they say, along with glass walls with printed custom graphics, colored tinting, and frosted and mirrored finishes. Highly customized event structures with stadium entrances, porches, mezzanines, patio extensions, recessed gables, curved sections, and printed graphics on the tops and gable ends “allow discerning clients to create their tented environments from the ground up,” management says.

WHAT’S NEXT Highly customized and fully engineered tenting solutions will continue to be the trend for the high-end event market, they say, along with unique event furnishings, vintage items, alternative materials and “the introduction of new products currently not available to the rental market.”

THORNS GROUP

London

www.thorns.co.uk

TOP OFFICER Graham Langley Jones

COMPANY BASICS As one of the largest event equipment hire [rental] companies, “We provide complete hire solutions to events of all shapes and sizes across the U.K. and beyond,” management says. “We supply everything from cutlery through to bespoke furniture. We work with organizers of all types of events including events, conferences, corporate hospitality, exhibitions, festivals, offices, parties, product

launches, seminars and weddings.”

CURRENT EVENTS The Thorns team continues to provide services to leading event, exhibition and festival organizers at some of the largest venues in the U.K., including London’s ExCeL, Birmingham’s NEC, Manchester’s Central and ACC Liverpool, along with leading hotels. Thorns has also supplied top sporting events including Royal Ascot, Wimbledon, Twickenham and British F1 Grand Prix, as well as major corporate hospitality events including RHS shows and Goodwood.

WHAT’S RENTING Fashion and furniture go alongside each other, Thorns says. “As well as prints, individual concepts and patterns are taking a step forward. Ghost furniture is also taking a swing and coming back in to fashion. Demand is increasing for the all see-through perspex [acrylic] furniture. Metal bar furniture and industrial-style pieces that are contemporary and modern also remain popular.”

WHAT’S NEXT The Thorns Group continues its growth, with the acquisition of Yorkshire-based catering equipment and furniture hire company YouCanHire.

TOWN AND COUNTRY EVENT RENTALS

Van Nuys, Calif.

www.tacer.biz

TOP OFFICER Richard LoGuercio

COMPANY BASICS In its 13th year, Town and Country continues its impressive growth “by virtue of a continuous rollout of unique and exciting products and outstanding service, and continues to implement best practices along with operational improvements and efficiencies,” management says. “With satellite showrooms in Pasadena and Santa Barbara [Calif.], Town and Country enjoys a loyal following of clientele in the southern California market; however, is often called upon to provide services nationwide.” To keep pace with growth, management is looking to expand its inventory and product lines as well as add an additional 50,000 square feet of warehouse space.

CURRENT EVENTS The company continues to support major Hollywood industry events, movie premieres and awards shows including the Golden Globes, Grammy Awards, Emmy parties and more. Social and fundraising events including notable museum galas and high-end weddings continue to see growth, they say, along with large-scale projects that include the Breeders’ Cup and Kaaboo music festival.

WHAT’S RENTING To keep up with demand, T&C has spent in excess of \$3 million dollars this year in expanding its tenting and structure inventory along with an across-the-board “beef up” of the basics that includes major increases in cooking equipment, furniture and new chair offerings, they say. Another \$1 million has been spent on additional china, glassware and flatware patterns, they say.

WHAT’S NEXT “Rustic is still holding strong and doesn’t seem like it’s going anytime soon,” they say. “However, clean contemporary looks also dominate style trends. Clients are looking for anything custom that truly sets their events apart from the others. We have invested in machinery, large-format printers and computerized CNC routers to provide custom products and signage.” But costs are a worry: “The cost of labor and insurance along with overly burdensome government regulations are a continuing challenge that we battle every day to keep costs down,” they add. ●

***NOTE:** All information is supplied by the companies listed unless otherwise noted. Companies listed are full-line event rental companies offering a range of products from tabletop to tenting. *Special Events* estimates are based on interviews by staff, industry experts and other research. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, errors and omissions sometimes occur; it is the policy of *Special Events* to correct such errors promptly. All figures are in U.S. dollars.

Should your company be on this list? Tell us at info@specialevents.com.

Hit me with your best shot:

From Bold American Events, Vietnamese rice paper rolls with shots of soy sauce. Photo courtesy Bold American Events.

Little Bites for Big Nights

Hors d'oeuvre and appetizers today run the gamut in terms of preparation and presentation, from the artfully exotic to the decidedly down-home.

By Susan Cuadrado

FEASTS FROM THE EAST Be it the Middle East or the Far East, flavors from this part of the globe are trending on tables and trays.

"Middle Eastern food, particularly Persian cuisine, is a big trend in restaurants," says Saffold Smith, catering consultant at Atlanta-based Affairs to Remember. "Our executive chef, Ahmad Nourzad, creates authentic Middle Eastern as well as fusion appetizers and hors d'oeuvre for our clients." Among the standouts are za'atar grilled shrimp brochettes with minted yogurt; lamb pepperoni and balsamic-marinated mozzarella skewers with basil; and falafel fritters with radish raita and micro greens served in a ceramic spoon. Additionally, the caterer's "Marrakech Market Munchies" station offers saffron-infused Israeli couscous with fresh peas topped with a choice of harissa and brown sugar-braised beef with West African spices or a medley of curried vegetables.

Doug Finney, district manager of Centerplate at the Pasadena Convention Center—a high-end, boutique convention center in Pasadena, Calif.—attributes the desire for exotic, often Asian-inspired fare both to the area's diverse, multicultural community and to southern California's easy access to fresh seafood. "The latest appetizer craze is our mini Korean bibimbap bowls and the build-your-own poke bar, which features fresh yellowfin tuna, salmon and crab salad along with various toppings, such as seaweed salad, fresh corn, scallions, chopped peanuts and avocado."

At Atlanta-based Bold American Events, spicy Vietnamese rice paper spring rolls with a "shot" of soy sauce, Buffalo chicken sushi, and cheeseburger egg rolls give a playful nod to Asian fusion. "Our clients want simple hors d'oeuvre with a unique twist—recognizable, but different," says corporate sales manager Kim Pollard. ▶



Head East: From Bold American Events, cheeseburger egg rolls (here) and edamame hummus cornets (below). Photos courtesy Bold American Events.



PACKED WITH ACTION Interactive food presentation is nothing new; in fact, you'd be hard-pressed to find an event that doesn't feature some form of action station, whether it's as simple as a Spanish jamón carving station or as elaborate as Japanese "ishi-yaki," which uses scorching hot lava stones to sear proteins, most commonly seafood. "It's always fun to step away from the butane burners and griddles," Smith says, "and discover new ways of cooking on-site that are entertaining and provide a unique guest experience."

On a somewhat simpler note, Affairs to Remember has recently introduced its short rib and polenta tasting board action station, at which an attendant pours polenta onto a 4-foot bamboo board, then tops it with braised short ribs and a choice of cheese. Each guest is served a portion directly from the board.

Anthonie Lardiere, catering sales director for Centerplate at the Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, serves up Midwestern barbecue pork belly with creamed husk corn, and rib-eye medallions with truffled mushroom potatoes and a chive demi-glace to his lineup of meat-based action stations.



Pretty presentation: From Centerplate, an array of appetizers (here) including Korean barbecue ribs (at right). Photos courtesy Centerplate.





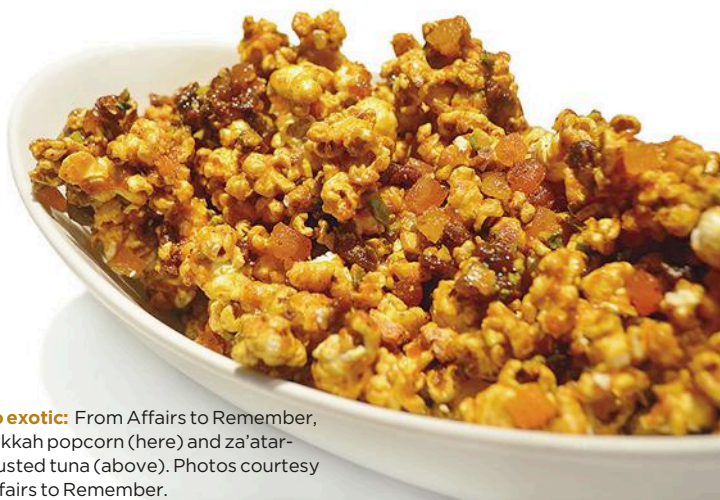
That Southern spin: From Affairs to Remember, falafel fritters (here) and a Southern-style mezze board (right). Photos courtesy Affairs to Remember.



FUSS-FREE FAVORITES Some of the most beloved, tried-and-true appetizers are often the least expensive—a boon to both caterers and clients. “People still enjoy traditional canapés, such as deviled eggs reinvented, prosciutto-wrapped asparagus, and beef carpaccio,” says Colin Burslem, executive chef at the Fairmont Vancouver Airport. “The classics, such as chips and dips, are making a big comeback. Simple finger foods like poutine croquettes with smoked ketchup are really popular.” In the same vein, potato crisps with bacon and blue cheese crema, and edamame hummus coronets are favorite no-fuss finger foods at Bold American Events.

Smith likes the creativity that inexpensive ingredients can inspire, such as with deconstructed charcuterie displays featuring local meats and cheeses with house-pickled vegetable accompaniments. “Deconstructing the presentation of the items makes them look lush and bountiful,” he says. Similarly, he suggests incorporating more unusual vegetables such as kohlrabi and baby bok choy with tahini yogurt, dried shallot dip, and lentil cream dipping sauce to up the ante on crudité displays.

According to Alicia Lapriore, senior catering manager at Fairmont Copley Plaza in Boston, toast isn’t just for breakfast anymore. “As an appetizer, toasts can be the perfect balance of hearty and light,” she says. Popular toppings at the Copley Plaza include avocado and crab with burrata, sautéed wild mushrooms with ricotta, and smoked blue fish with aioli. Speaking of smoked fish, Lapriore is seeing a demand for canned seafood, such as smoked oysters and olive oil-packed tuna, served with toasted artisanal breads, butter and savory jams. “The tins are adorable for a station display,” she adds. ►



Go exotic: From Affairs to Remember, dukkah popcorn (here) and za’atar-crusted tuna (above). Photos courtesy Affairs to Remember.

Home run: From the Fairmont Copley Plaza, mini Fenway frank sliders with mini root beer floats. Photos courtesy Fairmont Hotels.



LET IT SLIDE Arguably one of the favorite finger foods is the slider, in all its varied incarnations. Lardiere's lineup includes pot roast sliders with sweet caramelized onions, pulled smoked pork sliders with house-made barbecue sauce, Buffalo chicken sliders, and surf-and-turf sliders with beef tenderloin and creamy lobster salad. Bold American Events adds mini Cuban sandwiches to round out its slider selection.

"Guests love anything involving the word 'mini'—it sounds adorable and is easy to eat," Lapriore adds. "Since we are based in Boston, guests particularly enjoy our mini Fenway frank sliders paired with mini root beer floats." ●

RESOURCES

AFFAIRS TO REMEMBER
www.affairs.com

BOLD AMERICAN EVENTS
www.bold-events.com

CENTERPLATE
LUCAS OIL STADIUM
CENTERPLATE PASADENA
CONVENTION CENTER
www.centerplate.com

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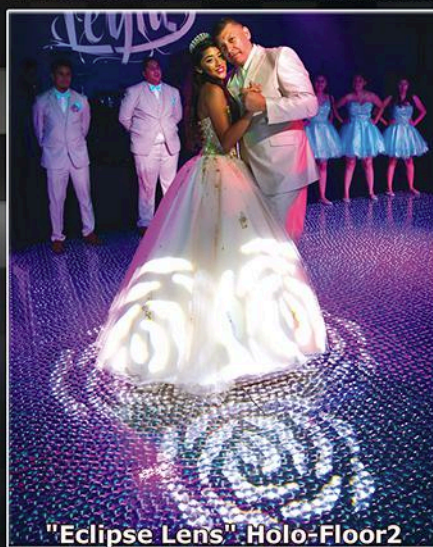
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Hello, Gorgeous: The team from Destination Concepts Inc. uses chandeliers and wall treatments to make bold statements at galas (here, below). Photos courtesy Destination Concepts Inc.

Gala Design Gets a Refresh

Stuffy ceremonies and strict seating charts? Not today. Galas are loosening up, with fresh new looks and innovative programming.

By Kelly Rehan

The gala, once the stiff black-tie stereotype of the event world, is loosening up. Nature-inspired styling and bolder looks are breathing new life into the traditionally formal fête, while the event's program is getting its own switch-up.

GO GREEN Dakota Long, senior designer, and Jackie Fennelly, designer, at San Diego-based Destination Concepts Inc. say that while the term “gala” is open to interpretation, they are seeing a shift from traditionally fancy gala events to design themes that draw upon nature.

Sharing an example of a gala they produced in Orange County, Calif., Long and Fennelly say the client wanted oranges in the decor to create a statement that would be both memorable and indicative of the destination.

“We were able to take the natural inspiration of orange trees and turn that into an upscale event for their gala, even though oranges weren't in season,” Long says. “It was an unconventional look but truly made for a more interesting event.”

Long and Fennelly say that garden-inspired looks and centerpieces with natural elements—such as ferns, succulents



and plants versus roses and other floral—are gaining popularity. Mixing tables of different styles—big communal tables with rounds, for instance—is another new approach for creating dramatic spaces.

“Clever, intricate details in the decor, whether it be for name cards, table numbers or



It grows on you: Destination Concepts Inc. brings nature indoors for this gala. Photo courtesy Destination Concepts Inc.



Going organic: Natural, organic shapes dominate design in galas from ACCESS (above, here and left). Photos courtesy ACCESS Destination Services.

bar treatments, is a great way to enhance the mood while not distracting from the real reason the guests are there,” Long says.

NEW THIS YEAR Because they are often annual events, galas can fall victim to stale design and robotic programming. But with inspiration popping up around every corner of the social-media sphere, clients are challenging event professionals to spruce up the standard.

“Our clients are reaching a point where they have seen all types of decor ideas, whether from their many years in the industry, endless Pinterest boards or Instagram posts,” Fennelly adds.

Now more than ever, clients want their gala to be something they have never seen before.

RIGHTFUL RECOGNITION Redefining the gala awards ceremony has been a big hurdle for designers, but the move away from ultra-formal events has helped the cause.

Barb Smith, CMCP, partner with ACCESS Destination Services Palm Springs in Palm Springs, Calif., says she’s reorganized the typical awards ceremony schedule to shake things up.

“If there is an awards element, the dinner is not in the middle of the program and not the final night,” she says. “The thought is when people are recognized for their achievements, they are able to interact and receive accolades from their associates for several days instead of leaving the following morning.”

Designers are also moving away from heavily themed galas, which can steal attention away from honorees. Here, choosing to create a mood enhances the event without becoming the focus itself.

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT When showcasing the gala sponsor’s brand at the event, some clients prefer subtle touches—such as a logo on a menu card—while others have grander ambitions.

“The two most notable branding elements we created were a branded hedge wall at the entrance and custom



Bringing the brand to the party: The team from Centerplate brings the sponsor's brand to life at galas in ways big and small. For a event in the Frozen North, an ice chandelier (top), while desserts are topped with a corporate logo (above). Photos courtesy Centerplate.

rotating metal centerpieces for the tables," Fennelly says. "Even with the heavy branding, the event still felt like an elegant gala."

Smith says she uses color to reinforce sponsor branding. Incorporating brand colors through staff uniforms, lighting, linen and florals is a powerful way that she reminds guests why they are there.

EAT IT UP Food is another way to spotlight brands.

"Hotel chefs are incorporating the company logos in dessert presentations and butter pats," Smith says. "And bars are offering signature cocktails incorporating the company in the cocktail's name."

Staying on the food front, Bobby Ramirez, Centerplate general manager at the San Diego Convention Center, says his team strives to push the bounds of using logos creatively. If done correctly, he says, it should stimulate conversation around the table.

"We had an event for a company celebrating its 20th year anniversary, and our skilled pastry chef imposed an edible image of its logo and a Google road map of California showing where the company conducted its first conference and where it traveled for the next 20 years," Ramirez says.

As designers look to create more natural atmospheres, food has become an integral player in decor, says Andrew Pollard, general manager and regional vice president of Centerplate at Vancouver [British

GALA'S GREATEST HITS

Event designers share their favorite gala decor themes:

"We designed a beautiful and ornate garden party-style event. We created cabanas with hanging glass orbs suspended above the tables, which made for an enchanting and unexpected setting."

Dakota Long, senior designer, Destination Concepts Inc.

"We helped transform a ballroom into a Southern plantation by bringing a bit of the outside natural beauty into our event."

Jeff Nelke, DMCP, partner, ACCESS South Florida, Hollywood, Fla.

"We were challenged by a client to not use the typical 'Hollywood look' prevalent in our destination.

We came up with clear Lucite inner-lit tables with five different styles of table and chair designs. Throughout the night, the colors in the rooms subtly changed.

We also incorporated inner-lit twinkle trees to give the room height and dimension."

Barb Smith, CMCP, Partner, ACCESS Palm Springs

Columbia] Convention Centre.

"Our in-house pastry kitchen and bakery allows us full artistic control over the look of every item we produce," Pollard says. "This means we can easily incorporate colors and ideas to match the group's logo or theme."

Eye-catching culinary delights from Pollard's team include football-shaped bread rolls with "laces" for a Canadian Football League's Grey Cup dinner, and a doughnut wall shaped as a Canadian maple leaf for a law firm reception. ►



Branding in good taste: Centerplate presents brands deliciously with a Canadian maple leaf doughnut wall (here) and branded cookies (right). Photos courtesy Centerplate.



STAY LIGHT For tighter gala budgets where splurging is selective, Ramirez recommends knowing thy audience.

“Put yourself in the demographics of your guest and understand what is important to them,” Ramirez says. “It may be that the wine is the most important item of the evening. It could be the decor or the lighting. You need to know where to splurge to make the greatest impact.”

To maximize budgets, Long and Fennelly recommend spending less on centerpieces and instead upgrad-

ing existing elements at the venue, such as hotel chairs.

Smith says she cuts out custom linen in favor of table runners. She also opts for candles over live floral, and eliminates perimeter decor when budgets run dry.

While designers have many ideas to cut costs, they all agree on one thing: Don't skimp on lighting. When creating a truly special event, lighting's transformative power can create a mood that makes the stuffy, black-tie-only ghost of galas' past fade far away. ●

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www.accessdmc.com

CENTERPLATE

www.centerplate.com

DESTINATION CONCEPTS INC.

www.destinationconcepts.com

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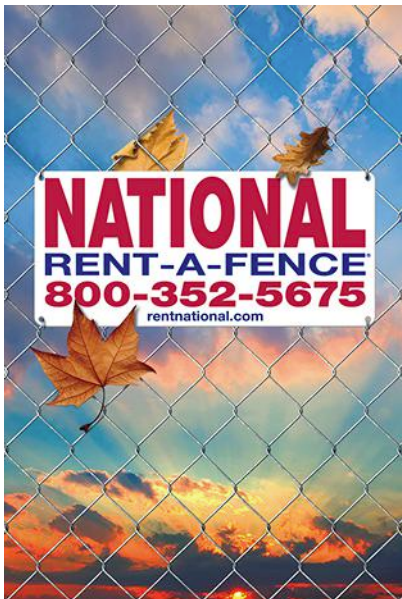
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THE LAST WORD



On Top of The World

Selina Chavry on coping with the challenge of ongoing change

By Lisa Hurley

MODEL MOTHER

"My mother taught me that I can do anything, never to give up, to push myself and to wear my heart on my sleeve. Even now when I have to face a difficult situation, I draw from the memories of her strength."

DARE TO FAIL

"The other main influence has been my mentor, [Pacific World chairman] Hervé Joseph-Antoine, for teaching me about balance in life and how to be a great leader. He has always given me the freedom to fail, to succeed, to explore my own ideas."

FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE

What is better, what is worse in the DMC industry: "Better: Globalization of our industry has opened the way to greater industry collaboration, and the strong relationships we have are growing in both strength and in importance. Worse: Creativity takes time. The shortening of lead times limits the ability to deliver exceptional experiences."

I WISH I'D LEARNED SOONER ...

"That it is OK to fail. Only with failure can innovation really happen."

Selina Chavry, CMP, has the world before her—literally. As global managing director of Singapore-based Pacific World, she oversees a destination and event management company with operations in 38 countries and more than 100 destinations. The company is a longtime fixture on the *Special Events* "25 Top DMCs" list.

After studying business management and marketing in Australia, Chavry thought she would pursue either law or interior design. But her job as an administrative assistant for a London-based event management company changed everything. "I fell in love with the events industry," she says. "I found an industry that both challenged and played to my sense of adventure."

She pushed herself to take on different roles in the business, from operations to vendor management to international sales and marketing. In 2012, she brought her skill portfolio to Pacific World, attracted by the chance to "re-launch Pacific World into a modern global company," she says.

She started as country manager for Singapore and Malaysia, progressing after two years to regional director for Asia, then to global managing director in 2015. "I'm proud of the evolution of our brand. We are constantly challenging ourselves to think differently and be a thought leader," she says. "What makes me as the leader proud are our people, the passion they have for what they do, and the lengths they go to to deliver exceptional experiences for our clients."

Today's boom in technology tools is a boon to the DMC industry, Chavry

says. "Technology will allow the automation of many traditional DMC services," she says, such as managing transportation via online platforms.

Technology will not, however, replace the crucial role of people. "Our industry is all about people," Chavry says. "Engaged employees will be critical in driving our companies' success."

Indeed, Chavry says the key skills for DMC professionals these days "are not task-driven, but EQ [emotional intelligence]-related skills." She describes her own key skills as communication, intuition and adaptability. But, she adds, "I wish I were better at public speaking. Collectively, we need to do a better job at giving our industry a voice."

The biggest challenge facing the DMC industry, Chavry says, is change. DMCs are facing "changing audiences, changing expectations. What makes companies successful is the ability to continue to make progress and innovate in a changing environment." She foresees continuing consolidation: "In five years, I predict there will be five or six main players in the market."

In the end, Chavry is optimistic that the DMC industry will survive. But, "In order to do that, we need to continue to find new ways to add value and to constantly reinvent our approach." ●

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