

**Big Rental Speaks: 19th Annual 30 Top Rental Companies  
Going for 'Wow' and Not 'Whoa!': Smart Gala Design**

# SPECIAL EVENTS

**FALL 2016**

COVER STORY

## *Beyond the Ballroom*

**No venue can top a beautiful hotel ballroom,  
but it doesn't stop there. Here, stunning alternative  
spaces for special events.**

**EXCLUSIVE: 15TH ANNUAL  
50 TOP EVENT COMPANIES  
P. 9**

**DMCs SHARE EVENT  
SECURITY STRATEGIES P. 28**

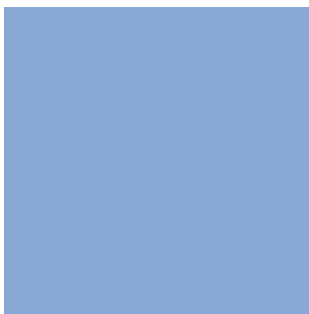
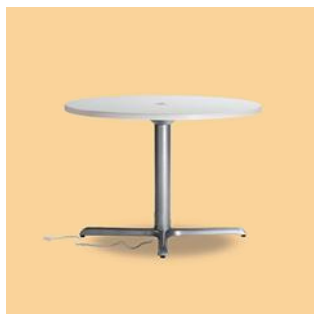
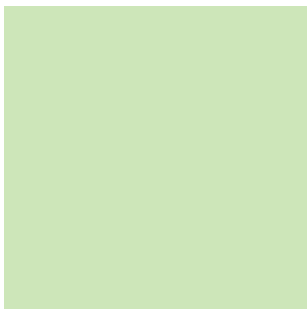
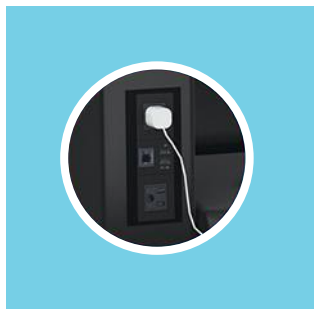
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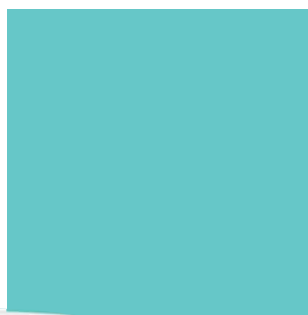
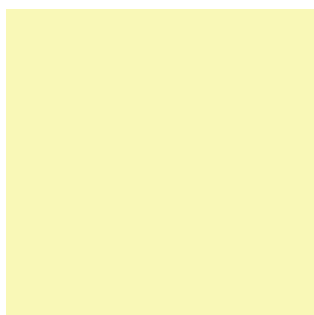
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COVER STORY

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Contributing editor **Susan Cuadrado** shares how event pros hit the right design note for fundraising galas, and shows how trendy appetizers get events off to the right start.



Our art director, **Cheryl Prats**, splits her time between *Special Events* and a range of design projects, both print and online.

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THE EVOLUTION OF EVENTS





## EDITOR'S PAGE

### YOUR EVENT ABCs

**If you want** to learn the top trends in the special event industry, we can spell them out for you. VR, AR and, oh yes, O2O—all are big forces you'll see at cutting-edge events.

Our look at the 50 biggest event companies—which starts on page 9 of this issue—walks you through the major trends. According to these influential event producers, events today pack even more of an emotional punch when they incorporate virtual reality (3D computer-generated environments) and augmented reality (which layers a computer-generated image or sound on a user's view of the world—think Pokemon Go). Such fancy flourishes on reality—along with good old social media extending the reach of live events—are examples of what some analysts call O2O, or the interplay between online and offline. As the team from Pico Global Services puts it, “In an increasingly connected and technology-savvy world, it is more important than ever to connect with audiences in both the physical and digital spaces.”

And what will those physical spaces look like? For that, turn to our 19<sup>th</sup> Annual “30 Top Rental Companies” list.

Yes, wood furniture and refined rustic are still big. But you'll also see “Modern Tribal” (layered patterns with florals and geometrics), “Refined Industrial” (think combinations of rough and soft finishes, such as cement and stone with fabric) and gleaming gold everywhere. And capping it all off—a gorgeous chandelier. Turn to page 31 for the full story.

And for more good looks, check out our “Divine Decor” department. Contributing editor Susan Cuadrado looks at the balancing act that producers of fundraising events must perform, creating decor that prompts “wow, it looks great” but not “whoa, you spent too much!” The story starts on page 25.

And “Food for Fêtes” will help you get your event off to the right start with a recap of the latest in fabulous appetizers. How about taking canapes for a spin on a Ferris wheel? Turn to page 21 for more.

Yes, digital tools help give events depth, but they aren't the soul of events. As InVision, one of our big event producers, says, more conferences are adding “digital detox” spaces to help attendees be “present”—off their devices.

Tech tools only enhance what's always been at special events—a heady, immersive environment that sends spirits soaring.

*Lisa Henley*

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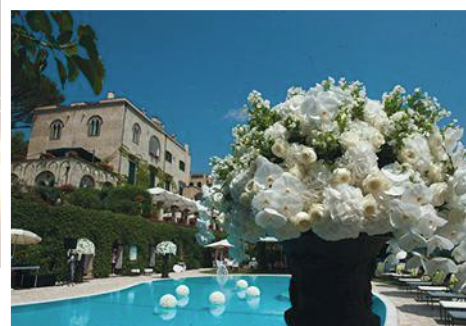




# CONFETTI



**La Dolce Vita wedding:** The team from Silhouette Group creates a multi-day wedding with a dazzling reception following a chic pool party and dinner in an historic site (clockwise from top). Photos by Foto Modern Agrillo.



## Opulent Amalfi Wedding

**A stunning setting, superstar entertainment and the talents of Silhouette Group result in a 'carefully curated' Italian experience**

**Can anyone improve** on a wedding held at an 11th century manor perched atop a cliff in a town on the Amalfi coast? Actually, yes, the team from New York-based Silhouette Group can—and did. For this remarkable four-day event—dubbed La Dolce Vita wedding—the Silhouette team brought 250 guests to the picturesque Villa Cimbrone manor in the tiny town of Ravello on Italy's Amalfi coast.

The extravaganza began with a welcome party, followed the next day by a pool party decked out in 1970s style, offering brunch, custom cocktails, gelato and music from DJ Cassidy. "We infused Hollywood glam with Italian

luxury," says Silhouette Group managing partner Lori Hart. "Lemon yellow accents popped on the white Tuscan lawn chairs, and white floral spheres floated alongside guests in the pool."

After the rehearsal dinner for the wedding party that night, held in an 11th century crypt on the villa's property, all 250 guests were treated to a welcome celebration at the Villa Rufolo in the historic center of Ravello. Dressed head to toe in white, the guests entered via a 150-foot walkway lined with candles to arrive at a concert from the Austrian Youth Philharmonic, which performed on a stage suspended from the cliffs. Next came a

performance from one of the bridal couple's favorite musicians, R&B singer Brian McKnight. As they left, guests were given a custom ceramic plate hand-painted with Amalfi lemons and the bride and groom's wedding monogram.

On the day of the wedding, guests were asked to arrive at Villa Cimbrone at 6 p.m. To keep attendees cool during their walk to the villa, locals passed out lemon granite, and water with Amalfi lemons was handed to guests as they took their seats. Just as the sun began to set, performer John Legend played the piano as the bride walked down the aisle under hundreds of white wisteria blooms. ▶



**Beautiful cake, beautiful view:** The wedding cake features Amalfi lemons. Photo by Foto Modern Agrillo.

The ceremony's highlight: the couple's baby son served as ring bearer. How? "We transformed a car seat into a white cloud and attached it to the manually run zip line," Hart explains. At the right moment, the baby began to float down the aisle "in what can only be described as an endearing moment that brought the groom to tears."

Following the ceremony, guests were invited for cocktail hour on the terrace of the Villa Cimbrone gardens, lounging on Italian-inspired furniture while sipping craft cocktails and enjoying passed canapes. Guests then took their seats at 23 tables dressed in white lace, as the bride and groom descended the Romeo and Juliet staircase.

The al fresco dinner was a four-course menu prepared by the Michelin-star restaurant on the

property. Following the main course, guests directed their attention to a large shadow box, where the shadow-dancing troupe Attraction performed a custom-choreographed routine chronicling the bride and groom's love story. The dance troupe, known from "Britain's Got Talent," interviewed the bride to learn the details of how they met and fell in love. Attraction then choreographed the routine, which was a gift from the bride to the groom. "We were hard-pressed to find a dry eye in the house," Hart says.

After dinner, guests flooded the dance floor as Grammy Award-winning singer Seal took the main stage for a two-hour set. As the bride and groom cut their six-foot-tall seven-layer cake, fireworks

exploded in the background.

On the morning following the wedding, the Silhouette team organized the baptism of the couple's son in the Villa Cimbrone gardens. "The ceremony was performed by the same priest that conducted the wedding ceremony," Hart says. "Family attended with pride and love in their eyes and, to commemorate the occasion, shared an intimate brunch under the Amalfi Coast sun. It was a beautiful note to end on." ●

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# 15th ANNUAL

# EVENT COMPANIES

**AR, VR and O2O:** The biggest event producers are speaking a new language as exciting new technologies such as virtual reality play a new role in special events. For the latest on what's coming next, read on ...

EDITED BY LISA HURLEY

| COMPANY   | CHIEF EXECUTIVE                      | AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR | ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2016 FORECAST) | NOTEWORTHY EVENTS  | TOP TRENDS   |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| <b>AgencyEA</b><br>Chicago<br>www.agencyea.com                                    | Fergus Rooney,<br>Gabrielle Martinez | 100 to 125                                | \$30 million                                       | In the last year, AgencyEA executed "impressive projects," management says, including Under Armour's Brand House opening in Chicago, Hilton Worldwide's Tru by Hilton brand launch, CityTarget's grand opening in Boston, the annual ASU GSV Summit, and ComEd's IceBox Derby. EA also recently opened a new creative space, Savage Smyth: "The venue offers 16,000 square feet of customizable, open space with ample natural light, modern elements and artisan detailing," they say.  | "One of the biggest things we're seeing in the marketplace is brands using live events as incredible content feeders—or ways for their brand to generate owned, shareable content," EA management says. "This has truly put events and experiential at the center of the marketing mix, and extends to a brand's approach to measurement as well. The focus is less about the numbers on-site at an event, and more about how that event was able to create shareable content that expands the reach, multiplies impressions, and creates opportunities for measurable impressions."   |
| <b>Allied Experiential</b><br>New York<br>www.alliedexperiential.com              | Matthew Glass                        | 500                                       | \$10 million                                       | With two big programs for Netflix under its belt, including the "House of Cards" campaign center and the "Orange is the New Black" float at pride parades, Allied is increasing its work with other streamed programming, management says.   | What's coming: The event industry should be ready for more live-streaming, real-time collection of data through polling and Q&As, more accessible virtual and augmented reality, and an increased use of event apps/CRM software to simplify check-in and registration processes, management says.   |
| <b>AMCI</b><br>Playa Vista, Calif.<br>www.amciglobal.com                          | David Stokols                        | 500                                       | \$100 million to \$125 million                     | Management has been busy opening new driving centers in various corners of the world as well as introducing "the first-ever digital executions including virtual reality, augmented reality, 360, and availability in app stores," they say.   | Doing more with less: "Ever more integrated and superior results are produced while budgets and margins are both retracting," management says.   |
| <b>AOO Events</b><br>Los Angeles<br>www.aooevents.com                             | David Merrell                        | 30 to 50                                  | \$3.5 million                                      | The past year has been busy with Super Bowl events for big-time sponsors and major sales incentive programs for Fortune 500 clients, management says.  | "Mobile technology continues to dominate most of the trends for 2016," the AOO team says. "Corporations are going back to last-minute decisions for pulling the trigger on corporate events." Big events are still happening and budgets are increasing, but "forecasting for business owners is getting more and more difficult."   |
| <b>Ashfield Meetings and Events</b><br>Ivyland, Pa.<br>www.ashfieldmeetings.com   | Gavin Houston                        | 900 to 1,100                              | \$125 million to \$160 million                     | Highlights of the past year have included celebrating the first anniversary of Ashfield's creative consultancy brand, Spark Thinking; the relocation of its office into a new space with an emphasis on innovation, collaboration and energy to continue to cultivate a creative mind-set and inspired work environment; publishing the "Science of Meetings" white paper based on independent research looking into the future of meetings; and the launch of an internal employee development program, Future Focus, designed to develop and identify future leaders in the organization to fill critical roles. | Big trends affecting the event and meetings industry include an increased focus on global security; "as the risk is heightened, and travel policies of big organizations react accordingly, fewer delegates will be willing to travel to different events around the world," management says. Other forces at play: the emerging "sharing" economy, the speed at which new technology is adopted, the new possibilities that virtual and augmented reality bring, and the emergence of "positioning" technology. "We have been exploring how best to use the new technologies available to create and enhance sensory and personalized learning journeys," management says. "By personalizing the experience and considering the individual attendee rather than the collective group, you can make it more meaningful and create specific event tracks, specialist interest groups, interactive signage, and personal event maps and programs." |
| <b>Awestruck Marketing Group</b><br>Los Angeles, New York<br>www.getawestruck.com | Lawrence Butler,<br>Robin Potash     | 80 to 100                                 | \$9.5 million                                      | Over the course of the past year the company has continued to drive engagement for clients with "breakthrough creative concepts and best-in-class execution," management says. Noteworthy projects have included a summer tour for LEGO Ninjago, Bravo's "Below Deck Mediterranean" message-in-a-bottle stunt and social sweepstakes, VHT's "Dating Naked" custom billboard at Hollywood and Highland in L.A., Diesel's Denim Master Studio in-store customization events, the New York Rangers Playoff Fan Mobile, and PetSmart's Doggie Ice Cream Social.  | 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.   |
| <b>Balich Worldwide Shows</b><br>Milan, Italy<br>www.balichws.com                 | Gianmaria Serra                      | 9   | \$70 million                                       | This year's event roster has included work on the opening and closing ceremonies for the Summer Olympics in Rio; the third edition of the Intimissimi on Ice Show at the Arena of Verona [Italy] with tenor Andrea Bocelli as a special guest; the re-opening of the Italian Pavilion in the Expo Milano 2015 area, now called EXPerience, with the new exposition "Italy, Hymn to the Beauty"; and special celebrations in the UAE.   | "We constantly work on the interpretation of different cultures, trying to understand the roots of their traditions in order to represent them in the best way through our shows," management says. "We amaze and speak to people's hearts, making them part of our work. In each show we make possible a direct dialogue and collaboration with locals. We are adopting new formats and models of communication, using different codes and languages. These new formats contain an equilibrium between very different items—like sport, fashion, music, art—and the fusion between modernity and tradition. We love creating immersive experiences and sharing of emotions."  |
| <b>Broadstreet</b><br>New York<br>www.broadstreet.com                             | Mark Baltazar                        | 30  | \$16 million                                       | Broadstreet points with pride to its work on the annual TV One upfront: "Over two days of events, attendees were invited to join artists and contribute to an ever-expanding and evolving graffiti wall, which served as a one-of-a-kind hands-on focal point," management says. "Participants answered the question 'How do you represent?' by tagging their thoughts directly onto the wall." Following the upfront, the wall was divided into individual art pieces that were delivered to attendees as a constant reminder of TV One and its impact on viewers.  | Social media is gaining a huge presence in the meetings/event space with user-generated content in the form of images and storytelling taking center stage, the Broadstreet team says. "Brands want event attendees to be a part of the whole experience, and using social media to generate content is an effective way to immerse them. Audiences have become more media-savvy, and the material they provide is more sophisticated, meaningful and memorable."  |



# 15th ANNUAL 50 TOP EVENT COMPANIES

| COMPANY  | CHIEF EXECUTIVE                    | AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR | ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2016 FORECAST) | NOTEWORTHY EVENTS  | TOP TRENDS  |
|--|------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <b>BUCom International</b><br>Chicago<br>www.bucom.com                 | Darlene Krammer                    | 25 to 30                                  | \$10 million                                       | Company points with pride to its nearly 30 years offering logistics and creative services for corporate events, meetings and incentives to "Fortune 500 companies throughout the world," they say.   | BUCom's take on top trends: "The trends we see are meeting attendees looking for creative and superior culinary programs that offer healthy options, all nicely and uniquely presented; creative and cost-effective team-building with some CSR components; and social media as a business tool before, during and after meetings," they say.   |
| <b>CE Group</b><br>San Antonio<br>www.cegroupinc.net                   | Janet Holliday                     | 1,000 plus                                | \$8.6 million                                      | On this year's event roster: Grand opening events for the renovated Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center; Children's Hospital of San Antonio transformation celebration; Corner Store Country Run 5k Fun Run in nine cities; and year-long 110th anniversary celebration for H-E-B grocery company.   | CE management points to "the shift to experiential-driven events" as a top trend. "Technology and virtual reality have played a big role, but we still like to include a human touch," they say. "The foodie culture has also become a big trend in events. Guests expect us to include a higher level of culinary and mixology, with chef-driven menus and craft cocktails."   |
| <b>CMS Communications</b><br>Los Angeles<br>www.cmsbiz.com             | Diana Zimmerman                    | 12 to 15                                  | \$8.2 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."  |
| <b>Corporate Magic</b><br>Dallas<br>www.corporatemagicinc.com          | Jim Kirk                           | 15  | \$20 million to \$25 million                       | Corporate Magic was chosen as the event production company for the grand opening of the Dallas Cowboys' massive new team headquarters, training facility and entertainment/hotel/retail/commercial complex—The Star in Frisco, Texas. The star-studded affair included prominent participation from local high school teams, which will also share the \$1.5 billion facility.   | "Today, it's all about engaging the audience with new and exciting experiences that reinforce the overall message," management says. "We see an increasing focus on what happens outside the ballroom, not just inside it. Event experiences are becoming more personalized through the use of virtual reality, 3D animation, augmented reality and interactive installations."   |
| <b>CPG</b><br>St. Louis, Mo.<br>www.cpgagency.com                      | Keith Alper                        | 6   | \$2.5 million                                      | For the sixth year in a row, CPG will execute the Executive Leadership Council's Recognition Galas in Washington. "This special event gathers more than 2,000 guests, including many corporate CEOs, senior executives, thought leaders, etc., to honor individuals and corporations for their support of diversity, inclusion and achievement in business," management says.  | "CPG believes you must connect your people to your purpose and provide a communication strategy that helps them easily cascade communications post-event," management says. "Short, inspiring, TED-style talks are replacing keynotes laden with PowerPoint reports. By organizing the seating to promote networking, organizations are connecting their people faster and more effectively."   |
| <b>Department</b><br>Moscow<br>www.department.com                      | Pavel Nedostoev                    | 50 to 65                                  | \$7 million  | Events over the past year have included the Audi A4 launch using a futuristic dome-shaped shell with virtual reality; the interactive premiere of the MINI Clubman at a multimedia arts museum; and the launch of the Samsung Galaxy S7, where "we immersed the rooms of the old Moscow mansion in the futuristic and technological atmosphere," they say.   | Clients react to economic changes in Russia while trying to economize and invest their budgets into events more sensibly, management says. The effectiveness of events is now the top priority. "However, from the experience of 2015 that was rich in its 'wow' projects, there are still expectations of breakthrough creative concepts," they note.  |
| <b>Drury Design Dynamics</b><br>New York<br>www.drurydesign.com        | Jill Drury                         | 15  | \$10 million to \$12 million                       | Highlights of the past year have included the IBM InterConnect Event, which saw 26,000 business partners in attendance in multiple venues in Las Vegas, culminating in a concert from the one and only Elton John. For Johnson & Johnson Vision Care's Acuvue Oasys 1 day HydraLuxe contact lenses, the Drury team created an immersive environment that brought the brand to life: "Our 360-degree experience was inspired by the human eye." | The trends for 2016: More social integration within all aspects of an event, shorter and more visual talks akin to TED Talks, and events that "blur the lines" between main-tent sessions, expos and workshops into single spaces, management says. Also on tap: More activations and hands-on experiential marketing opportunities, and complete branding and marketing immersion in all available spaces in the venue (e.g., corridors, elevators, food stations, etc.).  |
| <b>E-MC2 Events</b><br>Calgary, Alberta<br>www.emc2events.com          | Jocelyn Flanagan                   | 100                                       | \$12 million                                       | An event highlight: the team produced the Juno Gala Dinner and Awards, honoring the Canadian music industry, for the sixth consecutive year. "Approximately 1,500 artists, industry executives, sponsors, VIPs and local dignitaries attend the ceremony," management says.  | "Experiential design has become a greater focus in events as guests and stakeholders are overexposed to technology and have come to expect instantaneous results," management says. "Event experiences must now be carefully curated by event design-ers in order to engage with the lifestyle touch points of the millennial generation." They add, "A big trend is the seemingly organic integration of technology platforms to create branded events and activations that reach guests on a deeper level."   |
| <b>Enterprise Events Group</b><br>San Rafael, Calif.<br>www.eeginc.com | Richard Calcaterra, Matthew Gillam | 103                                       | \$38.4 million                                     | A highlight this year: the client who held a futuristic-theme final-night party for 15,000 at the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas during the annual user conference. "Robotic light-up figures, Terminator-style actors in suits, a Starship Troopers-fronted band, and various other themed entertainers delighted attendees for hours at the indoor/outdoor event," the EEG team says.  | EEG management points to an uptick in live streaming during events, particularly user/developer conferences, via different software applications, as well as specialized geo-location tags via applications such as Snapchat. "Additionally, we see a continuation of requests from clients to get out of the ballroom and into unique venues: after-hours museums, refurbished warehouses, and concert venues are all on the table, particularly for tech clients." The bad news: "A trend that continues for third parties is the lack of availability and space from hotels and venues." |
| <b>Eventmakers</b><br>Toluca Lake, Calif.<br>www.eventmakers.com       | Guy Genis, Mark Genis              | 50 to 75                                  | \$17 million                                       | Notable events have included a multi-city upfront tour for Azteca Latin Network, a new transparent LCD technology used at an E3 exhibit, and collaboration with Chester Bennington from Linkin Park and Dave Navarro from Jane's Addiction and the Red Hot Chili Peppers on a concert for 5,000 GameStop managers.   | "This is the year for transparent LCD technology and multiple events utilizing virtual reality technology," management says. "We are collaborating with a major shoe company to produce an in-store VR experience to show off their clothing lines for upcoming seasons."   |
| <b>Eventum Premo</b><br>Moscow<br>www.eventum-premo.ru                 | Alexey Berlov, Alexander Shumovich | 55  | \$9.1 million                                      | Noteworthy events over the past year have included a conference for SAP; the Oriflame Megaforum and Banquet, where the event team put the guests in the middle of the event by using panoramic displays and 360-degree video; and an event in New York for 4,000 guests for Raiffeisenbank.  | The digital world is now merged with the real world; "It's evident that this is one world," management says. Second, global marketers recognize that brands with strong values cause intense reactions throughout the world. But to capitalize on this, the event team must take risks, they say.   |
| <b>EventWorks</b><br>Los Angeles<br>www.eventworks.com                 | Ted Bowers, Janet Elkins           | 140                                       | \$7.5 million                                      | Diversity of events and locations has been a recurring theme: Eventworks created a one-of-a-kind carnival and basketball-themed private event in Cleveland; a multi-day corporate event for 2,800 in Oahu; unique social and corporate events along the California coast; an event for the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo.; a three-day corporate incentive event on a 37,000-acre working cattle ranch near Missoula, Mont.      | Attendee engagement in highly customized, branded and experiential events is now the norm, they say. "Clients are looking to create 'evergreen' experiences and content generated from events that is fresh, relevant, sustainable and lasting post-event, either in social media, traditional marketing channels or internal content. Progressive event decor and design, increasingly sophisticated entertainment experiences, and unique venues lead the charge in these efforts to put a client's brand spin on attendee experiences."  |

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PARTY?  
CONCERT?  
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# 15th ANNUAL 50 TOP EVENT PARTY COMPANIES

| COMPANY   | CHIEF EXECUTIVE                                  | AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR | ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2016 FORECAST)     | NOTEWORTHY EVENTS  | TOP TRENDS  |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Extraordinary Events</b><br>Sherman Oaks, Calif.<br>www.extraordinaryevents.com  | Andrea Michaels                                  | 40 to 50                                  | \$10 million to \$12 million                           | Busy this year with grand openings and corporate events, including a massive event and VIP Party for OUE and the grand opening of Skyspace LA and its headline-making Skyslide and 70th floor outdoor observation deck. "The all-day block party celebration set a new benchmark for downtown Los Angeles where 15,000 people came out to enjoy the festival atmosphere," management says. Also busy with events for longtime clients Sysmex Corp. and CEMEX.  | "It is not team-building anymore, it is "sharing"; we no longer have guests; we have "participants," management says. "We need to deliver experiences that engage and have purpose and meaning. And we have to prove the value of everything we do. Live events have become much of what advertising used to be. With the impact of social media, the age-old adage of 'give them something to write about' means more than ever."  |
| <b>Feats Inc.</b><br>Baltimore<br>www.featsinc.com                                  | Robyn Kress                                      | 130                                       | \$10.7 million to \$13 million                         | The Feats team has been busy with work for Wellesley College, William and Mary, the University of Wisconsin, MIT and Stanford Medicine, among other top universities. Nonprofit clients included NAF: Be Future Ready, with 716 academies in 36 states, benefiting nearly 90,000 students; and the Heart of the School Awards, celebrating the work of outstanding public school principals.   | Generational change presents both an opportunity and a challenge for all organizations looking to engage their crucial constituencies, the Feats team says. "Finding the best way to communicate messages that will resonate with multi-generational audiences and engage them meaningfully in an institution's work will be key to planning and executing impactful events for many years to come."  |
| <b>FIRST</b><br>New York<br>www.firstagency.com                                     | Maureen Ryan-Fable                               | 180 to 200                                | \$35 million to \$40 million                           | Highlights of the year have included the AOL Access Newfront—a festival-style block party in New York's South Street Seaport District, which gave the 3,000-plus attendees access to AOL's brands across 13 immersive activations. Also on the roster: the New York Times New York Summit, which showcased professionals across varied industries discussing their experiences inspiring and leading people in today's work environment.   | "Continuing the trajectory seen in 2015, events have grown substantially as the cornerstone of corporate marketing strategies, and engaging influencers at every level is still paramount," management says. "Computer-generated realities continue to be the hot trend moving forward. VR environments are becoming more intricate while augmented reality has simply exploded with the launch of Pokemon Go. We can expect to see AR facial recognition during event registration and virtual floor plans come to life."  |
| <b>Freeman</b><br>Dallas<br>www.freeman.com   | Chris Cavanaugh                                  | 5,000 plus                                | \$287 million  | The client roster over the past year has included work for Anheuser-Busch, Jeunesse, Cisco, Marketo and Salesforce.  | Freeman has seen a shift towards immersive storytelling, management says. "This includes the incorporation of digital innovations and cutting-edge event technology. Participants want to enjoy a shared experience that is easily sharable through their social networks." Personalization is the key to a successful event: "Throughout the attendee journey, special events also need to tie back to the brand strategy and should be an authentic extension of the brand."  |
| <b>George P. Johnson Experience Marketing</b><br>Auburn Hills, Mich.<br>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 agency has acquired boutique experiential agency Pulse220 and made a strategic investment in Latin American agency Mill Publicita. GPJ has expanded its leadership role in experiential services for the technology and automotive sectors, and has made strides into consumer packaged goods, financial services, and food and beverage industries, they say.   | The good: Clients are deepening their understanding of and appreciation for solid experiential and event strategy; this is reflected in their willingness to tie their events to their broader marketing efforts in a stronger fashion, management says. The bad: "Many clients still struggle with integrating their event data insights into their other marketing channels."   |
| <b>GMR Marketing</b><br>New Berlin, Wis.<br>www.gmrmarketing.com                    | Cameron Parsons                                  | 180                                       | \$10 million to \$15 million (Special Events estimate) | The GMR team delivered 20 Super Bowl programs for 13 clients, including fan experiences for SAP, Sonoma County and Chevron, management says. Also busy with SXSW, where GMR created event experiences for Esurance as well as the Warner Bros' upcoming film "Suicide Squad." "Both brands were trending high on social media during the weekend, as Esurance delivered access and prime experiences, while Warner Bros converted a local shop into Harley Quinn's Tattoo Parlor, with GMR inking fans with branded tattoos—both temporary and permanent."   | "On a positive note, brands are integrating more pre-, during and post-event communication and touch points," management says. "This approach builds broader awareness, frequency and time with the attendees surrounding the event, as well as reaching others not able to attend." But digital interactions can be too much of a good thing: "The watch-out involves adoption, as many brands are looking to launch native applications or mobile platforms. These are additional platforms for already over-tasked attendees, versus leveraging and integrating within an already adopted event application or web utility." |
| <b>Go West Creative</b><br>Nashville, Tenn.<br>www.gwcg.com                         | David Fischette                                  | 70  | \$11 million   | Busy this year with creative events and content for major brands including Sonic, Petco, Kawasaki and Cox Automotive. "This was also a stellar year for our Spoken Cinema [experiential platform], launching several national social media campaigns, including #wearethelions with the YWCA and United Nations," management says.   | Entertainment is exciting, "But I see a return to entertainment for entertainment's sake," warns CEO David Fischette. "We must be storytellers and have a point to our creative. Everything needs to point back to the brand."  |
| <b>Hargrove Inc.</b><br>Lanham, Md.<br>www.hargroveinc.com                          | Tim McGill                                       | 600                                       | \$80 million   | A busy year for the Hargrove team with work at the Democratic National Convention and World Meeting of Families, both in Philadelphia, and the papal visit in Washington. The company continued to support big Washington, including CharityWorks Dream Ball, the Human Rights Campaign National Dinner, Fight for Children's Fight Night, the National Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony, and Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Leukemia Ball. In addition to producing the media center at the Iowa Caucuses, 2016 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington and the 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Summit at Stanford University, Hargrove also partnered with agencies on projects for Bud Light at the Super Bowl and Bud Light and Budweiser at SXSW. | Management points to continuing trends of "fully immersive experiential events with ties to both face-to-face, personalized marketing and social media, and digital integration," they say. "Technology is huge. From virtual reality and digital video mapping to simpler aspects like digital swag bags, digitalization is one of the biggest trends."  |
| <b>Henry V Events</b><br>Portland, Ore.<br>www.henryvevents.com                     | Matt Harper                                      | 100 plus                                  | \$16 million to \$18 million                           | The event team was excited to produce a Freightliner national product launch, Adidas U.S. Olympic Trials Athlete Lounge and Innovation Championships, the Tillamook Ice Cream Tour, Pacific Foods Tour, Union Wine Road Trip and Feast Portland.   | Human resources and training events are in an upswing for 2016, management says. "Rising costs of travel and venue expenses continue to stretch budgets," they warn, and there are fewer deals for off-season events available. "The smart use of technology continues to be a great way to control costs yet delivery major impact," they note.  |
| <b>Index</b><br>Bangkok<br>www.indexcreativevillage.com                             | Kreingkrai Kanjanapokin, Kreingkarn Kanjanapokin | 77  | \$63 million   | The expansion of businesses to the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region—including Myanmar and Vietnam as well as countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia—is fueling demand for a one-stop-service creative marketing solutions approach, management says. The company also organizes concerts and live festivals within Thailand and abroad.   | For the event industry in Thailand 2016, "the trend of doing activities that are able to engage between brands and consumers has increased continuously" due to consumers' behaviors on digital platforms, management says. As a result, businesses expand their event formats by adding special activities that enable consumers to get the new experiences both online and offline.   |

# 15th ANNUAL 50 TOP EVENT COMPANIES

| COMPANY   | CHIEF EXECUTIVE  | AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR | ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2016 FORECAST) | NOTEWORTHY EVENTS  | TOP TRENDS  |
|---|------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <b>InVision Communications</b><br>San Francisco<br>www.iv.com                       | Rod Mickels      | 150 to 160                                | \$65.2 million                                     | The past 12 months of events has included Genentech NSM 2016, EMC World 2016, EMC Global Partner Summit 2016, Amway Achiever Awards, Oracle OpenWorld, Veritas WSMC 2016, Adaptive Path UX Week, MobileIron Mobile First 2016, Gartner Symposium, NetApp Insight, PegaWorld 2016, HPE Discovery London, Cisco C-scape, Kubota Dealer Meeting, Atlassian Summit, Coach SMC, BoxWorks Conference and Freescale NXP Tech Forum.   | "A lot of our clients are looking for engagement strategies that increase audience engagement during and beyond the event," management says. "Content is more interactive, shorter and more focused on storytelling, both to capture short attention spans and be memorable. New tech is almost overwhelming event professionals, but we are seeing success when it's used in a seamless, purposeful way that isn't just about being flashy. Some of today's hottest technologies includes virtual reality/augmented reality, wearables, interactive wayfinding, 3D printing, drones, facial recognition and interactive data visualization." And in the face of the tech onslaught, "More conferences are adding 'digital detox' spaces or activities like meditation to help attendees be present and off their devices." |
| <b>Jack Morton Worldwide</b><br>Boston<br>www.jackmorton.com                        | Josh McCall      | 1,000 plus                                | \$100 million (Special Events estimate)            | This global brand experience agency stressed its creative chops this year by appointing Bruce Henderson chief creative officer. "As an ideas-led agency, the CCO takes a pivotal role, so this was a critical appointment for Jack Morton," management says.   | There are "huge opportunities" for immersive technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality to be meaningfully integrated into brand experiences and "beautifully blur the lines between digital and physical, audience and participant," management says, adding, "As more agencies compete for the same space, continuing to grow market share through broader service offerings is a key challenge. Increased competition, combined with increased expectations, requires a constant focus on ensuring that our quality and expertise in all these areas remains world-class."   |
| <b>JHE Production Group</b><br>Harrisburg, N.C.<br>www.gojhe.com                    | Jay Howard       | 350                                       | \$18 million                                       | This year's event roster has included the Google Gravity Games, CMA Music Festival with Big Machine Label Group activations, and the FOX Sports V/USGA putting green in New York for the start of the U.S. Open.   | "Partners and consumers are looking for what's different and sets their event apart from others," management says. "We are constantly challenged to develop something new and different for events, whether it's in graphics, activation or other elements within the event."   |
| <b>LEO Events</b><br>Memphis, Tenn.<br>www.leoevents.com                            | Cindy Brewer     | 150                                       | \$15 million to \$17 million                       | Busy over the past year with Sherwin-Williams Celebration 150, Walmart shareholders meeting, KAA800 festival, 10 annual global events for a major financial services firm, Software AG's global incentive program in Costa Rica, and Krone's BIG X product launch—held on a dairy farm in Florida—and dealer meeting.  | The LEO team is applying its expertise in festivals to corporate events. How? "Creating client 'personas' to define your target through mining registration data to make digital work for you; gathering feedback continuously throughout the entire event life cycle to fine-tune content strategy; and taking action on insights so the event becomes audience-curated," they say.  |
| <b>Linkviva</b><br>Dubai<br>www.linkviva.com  | Niousha Ehsan    | 50  | \$20 million                                       | Highlights of the year have included the Vogue Italia fashion show, held by Emaar Properties in the Dubai Mall.  | This Dubai-based company explains, "In a rich but transient region where entrepreneurship flourishes and trust is supreme, major clients are looking beyond connections and budgets and are partnering with event companies that can deliver on what they promise—not just what they pitch."  |
| <b>Live Marketing</b><br>Chicago<br>www.livemarketing.com                           | Anne Trompeter   | 25 to 50                                  | \$10 million                                       | Specialties include trade show marketing, activation strategies, product launches, meetings and events, interactive media, content development, and staffing, management says.   | "We've been hyper-focused on rethinking the reach of trade shows," management says. "With so many distractions on the trade show floor, it's harder than ever to cut through the clutter and grab the attention of potential prospects. We're particularly excited about direct mobile marketing using geo-location or geo-fence technology. We've had great success combining traditional direct marketing campaigns with at-site mobile marketing."   |
| <b>MGM Resorts Event Productions</b><br>Las Vegas<br>www.mgmresortsevents.com       | Jim Murren       | 1,300                                     | \$16 million                                       | Highlights of the past year have included the 20th anniversary of the Keep Memory Alive fundraiser held at the MGM Grand; an incentive travel awards gala with 2,400 guests on the tropical shores of Cancun, Mexico; the grand opening of the 20,000-seat T-Mobile Arena on Las Vegas Boulevard; and the largest pool party in the company's history, with 7,500 guests on the Beach at Mandalay Bay.   | MGM points to both good trends and bad in today's event world. The good: "Customer spending on rooms, F&B, meetings and events has returned to pre-recession levels." And the bad: "Their expectations related to discounts and product availability create fulfillment issues, as their lead times continue to be short."  |
| <b>Next Group</b><br>Milan, Rome<br>www.nextgroup.eu                                | Marco Jannarelli | 70  | \$20 million                                       | Busy over the past year with Best of Belron 2016 (an integrated event for 1,200 guests and an international competition between 27 countries); L'Italia dal vivo (a roadshow for Intesa Sanpaolo Bank); 40 Years in Nogara (celebrating the 40th anniversary of Coca-Cola HBC's biggest bottling factory in Europe and featuring 664 people forming the biggest human "Contour" bottle); and the Nestle Italiana 2016 sales convention (which took management and the sales teams to the Aerospace Logistics Technology Engineering Co. to teach them how to go beyond their limits; the plenary session took place in the Mars Room, a perfect reconstruction of the planet, used for simulations and training astronauts). | Strategy is the strongest trend, management says. "Events are getting more and more integrated in the corporate marketing and communication plans, and the strong focus is on results. Technologies and innovations, which have long belonged to the tactics, are finally being employed as strategic means, not as an end. This is also affecting the relationship between agencies and corporate clients, which is changing for the better: It's getting more that of a partnership than that of supplier-ship."  |
| <b>Opus Events</b><br>Beaverton, Ore.<br>www.opusagency.com                         | Monte Wood       | 900                                       | \$56 million                                       | Thanks in part to an equity investment in the agency last fall, "We doubled both our creative services and event production teams," management says. Opus continues to produce "high-profile, high-level events for clients including Amazon Web Services, Salesforce, EMC, Daimler Trucks North America, and Symantec."   | Where business will boom: "We are seeing continued above-average growth among tech-related companies, indicating a high likelihood of consistent experiential marketing spending in that vertical," management says. "Across all markets, we are seeing increased attention paid to the connection between engagement analytics and revenue results."   |
| <b>Pacific Event Productions/PEP Creative</b><br>San Diego<br>www.pacificevents.com | Joanne Mera      | 850                                       | \$10 million                                       | Company offers event coordination services across the U.S.   | "Revivals seem to be trending this year for events, and bringing in pop culture and themed eras has been very hot in 2016," management says. "We have seen more events bringing back 'old school' themes and borrowing from the media by utilizing superheroes and classic fairy tales."  |
| <b>Party Planners West</b><br>Culver City, Calif.<br>www.ppwinc.com                 | Patricia K. Ryan | 25 plus                                   | \$26.7 million                                     | PPW's busy event roster over the past year has included Super Bowl 50 events in San Francisco and Santa Clara, Calif.; the MLB All-Star Game pre-game celebration in San Diego; the BNP Paribas Open hospitality build-outs in Indian Wells, Calif.; and the 2016 NFL Draft in Chicago.  |   |



# 15th ANNUAL 50 TOP EVENT COMPANIES

| COMPANY  | CHIEF EXECUTIVE                 | AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR | ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2016 FORECAST) | NOTEWORTHY EVENTS  | TOP TRENDS  |
|--|---------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Paulette Wolf Events and Entertainment</b><br>Chicago<br>www.paulettewolfevents.com | Jodi Wolf                       | 75 to 100                                 | \$10 million                                       | PWE has had a full slate of events this year including meetings, incentive trips and events for NetApp, Arrow, CDW, IBM and Cisco, multiple product launch events for HMSHost, grand opening events for Plainridge Casino and Hollywood Casino, private anniversary events featuring Keith Urban, Train and Buddy Guy, as well as a concert series for Duke University.  | The big trend: Sponsors and event hosts can no longer simply have logos at their event and consider their work done, management says. "Increasingly, innovative experiential marketing, new and expanding digital platforms, and stiffer competition for sponsor dollars have led to a savvy set of decision-makers who have elevated sponsors' ROI, as well as built symbiotic partnerships."  |
| <b>Pico Global Services Ltd.</b><br>Hong Kong<br>www.pico.com                          | Lawrence Chia                   | 330                                       | \$340 million                                      | New services, new markets for Pico over the past year: "We delivered a wide variety of marketing-related activities to top companies around the globe, managing cross-country roadshows and media and dealer events, among others," management says. "We also expanded our work into growing markets like art shows, including Morocco Art and Culture, Art Carnival and i Light Marina Bay in Singapore, and Art Central in Hong Kong, along with auction events—providing services for clients including Bonhams, Hanhai Auction, K Auction, Poly Auction and Tokyo Chuo Auction." Other projects have included mega-sporting events such as the Olympics in Rio, work for global car brands such as Aston Martin, Volvo and Ford, and many celebrations for Singapore's 50th anniversary. | "While evermore engaging and seamless O2O [offline to online] campaigns remain the mainstream in terms of the wider business climate, especially in the retail sector, event marketing trends continue to be dominated by technology on all fronts—apps that employ virtual or augmented reality, wearables, geo-caching, and intelligent assistants, to name just a few examples," management says. "In an increasingly connected and technology-savvy world, it is more important than ever to connect with audiences in both the physical and digital spaces."                           |
| <b>Podegiki</b><br>Moscow<br>www.podegiki.ru   | Sergey Gorbachev                | 174                                       | \$9.2 million to \$10.5 million                    | The year's event roster has included big events for Bayer, Janssen, Johnson & Johnson, PepsiCo, Nivea and Yam.   | Three big trends are influencing events today, management says. For one, client expectations are high, which compels event producers to develop thoughtful strategies. Second, the onslaught of tech tools means events can have multiple influences on guests. And finally, a dip in event budgets—especially painful in Russia, where the ruble has fallen—means that clients are more demanding, forcing event agencies to work smarter.   |
| <b>Ruby J Events</b><br>London, New York<br>www.rubyjevents.com                        | Joanna Greenfield, Lucie Robins | 35 to 40                                  | \$2.5 million                                      | Event highlights in the U.K. have included the first-ever wedding at London's new German Gymnasium, continuing work for the Future Dreams charity, and an upcoming 50th birthday at Kensington Palace. For U.S. clients, the team has handled a VIP hospitality suite at the Olympic Games in Rio, a gala for Friends of the Museum of Israel, and a 25th anniversary gala dinner with 1,200 guests for a big medical services company.  | In London: It's all about the details, management says, "from personalized napkins at each place setting to bespoke drinking glasses to serve cocktails. Each event, whether it be social or corporate, wants to know they are treating their guests to little surprises throughout their event." But in New York, bigger is better: "Most events are on a much larger scale, and it is our job to make sure that we control budgets and personalities when bringing the events to life."   |
| <b>Sequoia Productions</b><br>Los Angeles<br>www.sequoiaprod.com                       | Cheryl Cecchetto                | 25 to 40                                  | \$12 million to \$20 million                       | This year's event roster has included the Academy Awards Governors Ball, Primetime Emmys Governors Ball, Saban Media Center Opening, G'Day USA Gala, AMPAS Governors Awards, and events for San Diego's Horton Plaza Park and Goldman Sachs.   | Social media activities incorporated into corporate and entertainment industry events still top the list, the Sequoia team says. But, "The downside is that everyone is so involved in capturing the event via technology that guests are missing out of the experience in real time."  |
| <b>Sobyte</b><br>Moscow<br>www.so-bytie.ru   | Mikhail Struchkov               | 52  | \$3.5 million                                      | Landmark events over the past year have included the 70th anniversary of Victory Day in Moscow and the 150th anniversary celebration of the Moscow-to-Nice route, which connected Russia to France via rail.   | What is more important than things? Experiences, this agency says.  |
| <b>Tamar Productions</b><br>Chicago<br>www.tamarproductionsinc.com                     | Mary Ann Rose                   | 150 to 200                                | \$14.5 million                                     | Busy this year with McDonald's Worldwide Convention, Riverside Medical Foundation Gala, Face the Future Foundation Annual Gala, and Chicago Police Foundation Second Annual True Blue event.   | "Branding is the top request from most events," management says, and "there is also a trend for not-for-profit organizations to reach out to event professionals to produce their events instead of using volunteers." And let this motto guide your design decisions: "Bling is in!"   |
| <b>Uniplan</b><br>Cologne, Germany<br>www.uniplan.com                                  | Christian Zimmermann            | 265                                       | \$49.7 million                                     | The very busy Uniplan team has worked on the Parisian Grand Opening, Lumières Hong Kong, Audi Q7 Launch, Audi A5 Launch, Hong Kong Formula E, 15th Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business, Schuller kitchen jubilee, Tourism Australia Aquatic and Coastal Campaign Launch, Art Basel Hong Kong, Volkswagen New Multivan and Caravelle Launch Event, Tahitian Noni Beverages Morinda Summer Conference 2016, Mercedes-AMG Racing Event 2016 GT Asia Shanghai, Cadillac Egg-Centric Challenge, Maserati Levante Regional Launch, Maserati Sneak Preview, and Longines Masters of Hong Kong.   | The big trends that the Uniplan team keeps in mind: The Internet of Things (where everyday objects have Internet connectivity); new technologies such as virtual reality; the power of social media (such as WeChat in Asia) and Big Data; individualization and personalization; and hybrid events and pop-ups.  |
| <b>Vok Dams Group</b><br>Wuppertal, Germany<br>www.vokdams.de                          | Colja M. Dams                   | 370 plus                                  | \$210 million                                      | Beside noteworthy events all over the world for marquee key accounts such as BMW, Lamborghini, BASF, Jeep, Pepsi, Adidas and Goodyear, the team is proud to have won new clients including IBM, L'Oréal, Siemens and MyAustrian Airline.   | The world—and consequently the event industry—is facing upheaval: "Digital transformation, disruption, economy 4.0, the Internet of Things, and Big Data force agencies and clients alike to extend their business models," management says. "The effect of the digital revolution on agencies is the need to introduce agile project management. Agile project management is based on a clear project structuring in conjunction with a self-reliant team organization and the highest degree of flexibility, which is already integrated into the process at the beginning of a project." |

**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](mailto:info@specialevents.com).**

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# THE BALLROOM AND BEYOND

COVER STORY

**No venue can top a beautiful ballroom, but the hotels here show that it doesn't stop there ...**

**Think that hotels** offer nothing more than ballrooms for events? Think again. Here, eight striking properties spotlight not just their top ballrooms but other special spaces that make the most of special events.

## EVENT STARS

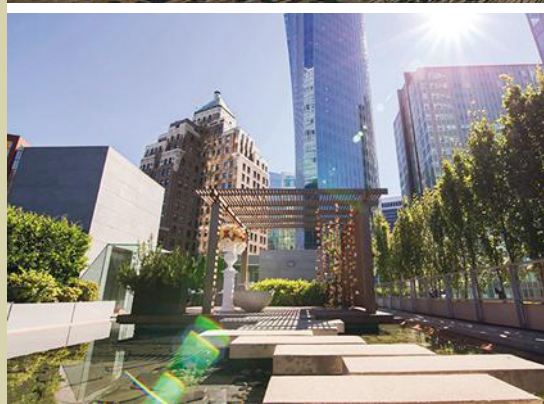
**Fairmont Pacific Rim, Vancouver, British Columbia**  
[www.fairmont.com/hotel-vancouver](http://www.fairmont.com/hotel-vancouver)

### **The Ballroom: The Star Sapphire**

Warm walnut wood, ivory leather panels and ceiling “clouds” add charm to this elegant ballroom (middle), which provides a contemporary setting for up to 500 guests. A 4,800-square-foot foyer area with floor-to-ceiling windows providing corridor views to the dramatic harbor offers a spectacular setting for ceremonies, cocktails, dancing or post-dinner mingling. The hotel stresses its commitment to take the “bored” out of boardroom meetings by transforming the Star Sapphire environment. A variety of tabletops can be set with nostalgic toys and candies to kick-start engagement, while unique food and beverage offerings include gourmet picnic-style sandwiches, salads in a jar, and one-bite desserts—all designed to increase productivity and performance while inspiring creativity.

### **And Beyond: The Chairman's Suite**

Inspired by a Balinese villa, the Chairman's Suite (top, bottom) offers 2,250 square feet of luxury. Located on the hotel's ninth floor and accessible via a private elevator, the suite connects to an 1,800-square-foot landscaped and tented private outdoor terrace for up to 40 guests for a seated dinner. The patio features a private cabana, fireplace and dramatic views of Coal Harbor.







## LIVING FOR THE CITY

**Four Seasons San Francisco**

[www.fourseasons.com/sanfrancisco](http://www.fourseasons.com/sanfrancisco)

### The Ballroom: Veranda Ballroom

Corporate events, product launches and weddings: all have had a place in the Veranda, a 7,000-square-foot ballroom that can accommodate 540 for banquets and 1,200 for receptions. The ballroom has floor-to-ceiling windows that fill the space with natural light. The ballroom connects to an outdoor terrace with views of Yerba Buena Gardens and the SoMa district (left top). “It is the only outdoor space connected to a ballroom in the city, making it a unique space for events that want an indoor/outdoor location,” notes spokesperson Meg Paynor of Paynor PR.

### And Beyond: MKT Restaurant

Perched on hotel’s fifth floor, this “urban chic” restaurant features dark wood paneling and views of the city’s Financial District. The various rooms within the restaurant include the Private Dining Den (left bottom), which can host 75 for a reception or 42 for a seated dinner, and Windows, which can accommodate 44 for a reception and 22 for a seated meal. The entire restaurant is available for buy-out, which offers 200 guests the Four Seasons dining experience.

## IT TAKES TWO

**Hilton Anaheim Hotel, Anaheim, Calif.**

[hiltonanaheimhotel.com](http://hiltonanaheimhotel.com)

### The Ballrooms: Pacific Ballroom and Catalina Ballroom

Not just one, but two ballrooms are located on the second floor of the Anaheim Hilton (right), each able to accommodate 2,500 for receptions, 2,000 for banquets and 2,800 theater-style. Promenades—an elegant 11,215-square-foot pre-function foyer—and a convention registration desk join the two ballrooms for additional flexibility and optimum traffic flow. The hotel is adjacent to the Anaheim Convention Center.

### And Beyond: The Lanai and Sunset Decks

The hotel’s fifth floor features two landscaped open-air spaces: the Lanai and Sunset decks. Each deck offers 19,000 square feet of flexible space that is ideal for social gatherings, banquets, ceremonies or themed private events. Tenting and open-air canopies can be installed (right).







## FROM HIGH TEAS TO HOEDOWNS

**Houstonian Hotel, Club and Spa**

[www.houstonian.com](http://www.houstonian.com)

### The Ballroom: Grande Ballroom

At more than 6,000 square feet, the Grande Ballroom (above left and right) can accommodate up to 500 guests and is the site for “weddings, weddings and weddings,” notes Lisa Hopkins Barry, CPCE, CMP, the hotel’s director of catering and conferences. The Grande Ballroom is complemented by other, smaller rooms that can be combined as needed. “I think what makes it all special is that each space can stand alone or be used in combination with another,” Barry says. “The most popular combination is a ceremony on the front grounds in front of the large tree, and then the wedding in the Grande Ballroom.” Photos at top by David Jones.

### And Beyond: The Manor House

The Manor House (middle right), located on the hotel grounds, offers planners a high-end event option for up to 80 guests on the property’s back lawn. The “Under the Texas Big Sky” party can include grills, pit setups and live entertainment. Photo at middle right by Hugh Hargraves.



## HEATING UP EVENTS IN PHOENIX

**Sheraton Grand Phoenix**

[www.sheratonphoenixdowntown.com](http://www.sheratonphoenixdowntown.com)

### The Ballroom: The Valley of the Sun Ballroom

Offering more than 14,000 square feet, the Valley of the Sun Ballroom (right) offers unobstructed views along with useful pre-function space and an attached outdoor terrace. The hotel itself is the largest in Arizona, with 1,000 rooms and over 100,000 square feet of flexible meeting space.

### And Beyond: Valley Outlook

Guests can take it outside with outdoor event spaces including the 6,000-square-foot Valley Outlook (right), overlooking the downtown Arizona State University campus. Outfitted with strings of LED lights, Valley Outlook offers state-of-the-art AV capabilities. Nearby, the Oculus outdoor area offers 2,100 square feet, and the fourth-floor Garden Patio is surrounded by an urban vegetable garden.







## THE SOUL OF SAN ANTONIO

**St. Anthony Hotel, San Antonio**  
[www.thestanthonymotel.com](http://www.thestanthonymotel.com)

### The Ballroom: Anacacho Ballroom

Hosting event for more than 60 years, this dramatic ballroom (above left and right) features a second-story gallery. Accommodating 275 guests, the ballroom offers a band stage, vintage wooden dance floor, and six iconic chandeliers. It is the site of the annual King's Ball, which honors the defenders of San Antonio's legendary Alamo. Photo above right by David Sixt.

### And Beyond: Sky Terrace

Perched on the 10th floor of the hotel, the Sky Terrace (top) is an open-air ballroom overlooking the city. It can accommodate 200 for seated meals and 300 for receptions. Photo by Daniel Holman Studios.



## FIT FOR A PRINCESS

**Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, Scottsdale, Ariz.**  
[www.scottsdaleprincess.com](http://www.scottsdaleprincess.com)

### The Ballroom: The Princess Ballroom

The Princess Ballroom comprises 22,500 square feet of flexible meeting space with a ceiling height of 18½ feet. Built-in rigging points enable multiple design options. The Princess Conference Center opens to the resort's main plaza and is adjacent to the La Hacienda Plaza and Canyon Lawn, providing convenient access to outdoor venues for meals and breaks (above).

### And Beyond: Sunset Beach

Sunset Beach (left), which opened early this summer, features a zero-depth entry, splash-pad water experience, and a brand-new 9,000-square-foot beach, thanks to the addition of 830 tons of fluffy white sand. The new pool is designed to be a playful venue for group events.







## ARIZONA AFTER HOURS

**Westin Phoenix**

[www.westinphoenixdowntown.com](http://www.westinphoenixdowntown.com)

### The Ballroom: The Copper Ballroom

Located on the hotel's 11th floor, the 3,000-square-foot Copper Ballroom (left) boasts floor-to-ceiling windows with views of the sparkling cityscape. Featuring a neutral decor palette, the ballroom is pillar-free, offering completely unobstructed views. Outside there is built-in check-in table if needed and ample pre-function space.

### And Beyond: Lapis Pool Terrace

This outdoor pool (right), perched on the second floor of the hotel, lets guests enjoy Arizona's balmy spring and fall weather while surrounded by the sights and sounds of the city below.

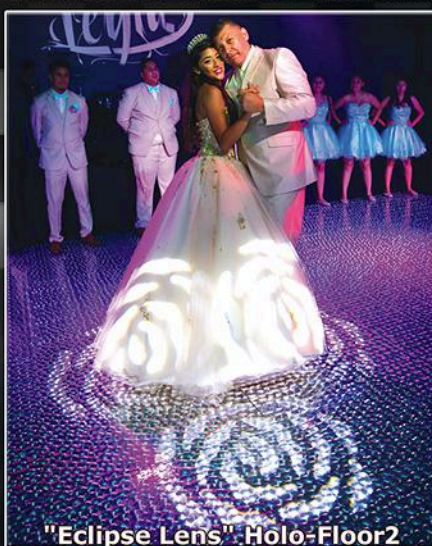
Another fun spot: the patio at the hotel's Province Urban Kitchen and Bar. Separated from the restaurant by sliding glass doors, the patio is a hidden sanctuary from the bustling streets of Phoenix.

A waterfall and fire feature add extra ambience to the space. ●

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## FOOD FOR FÊTES

# The Right Start: Appetizers Get Events Rolling

**Striking serving:** Occasions Caterers offers seafood on an ocean-inspired driftwood tray (here) and on a Ferris wheel (below left). Photos courtesy Occasions Caterers.

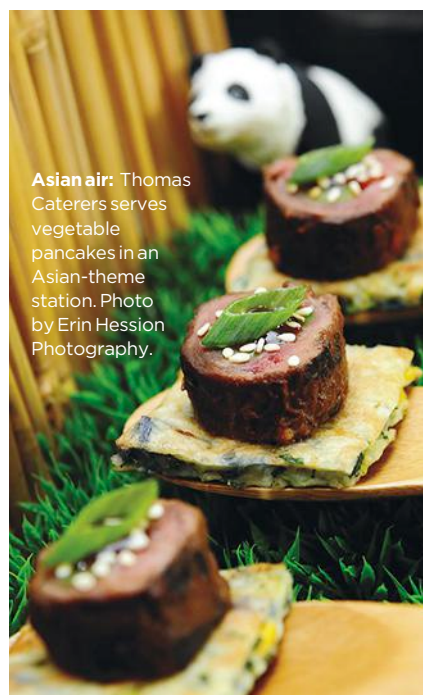
**Delicious bites that are perfectly presented—appetizers get the party started.**

**By Susan Cuadrado**

### PURPOSEFUL PRESENTATION

“Many of our passing trays are purpose-built for specific hors d’oeuvre,” says Eric Michael, co-owner of Washington-based Occasions Caterers. For example, smoked scallops with minted pea puree on potato crisps are served in scallop shells perched on a tray of driftwood. The same notion holds true for stationary buffets. “Our custom Ferris wheel is both an attraction and a one-of-a-kind moving hors d’oeuvre buffet,” he says. At nine feet tall, the working wheel offers hors d’oeuvre, tiny salads, small-plate appetizers and even cocktails.

At Indianapolis-based Thomas Caterers of Distinction, executive chef Rach Keovorabouth pairs food



**Asian air:** Thomas Caterers serves vegetable pancakes in an Asian-theme station. Photo by Erin Hession Photography.





**Craving the classics:** Brioche toasts from Kensington Caterers (here, photo by Carol Dickson) and a caviar station from Culinary Capers Catering and Good Gracious Events (below, photo by Capa Productions).



and music for tray-passed hors d'oeuvre presentations. "Traditional Japanese music was played through tiny speakers hidden in a tray of our Japanese vegetable pancakes topped with a beef asparagus roll and ginger-Worcestershire dipping sauce," she explains.

"Customers are veering away from the traditional large displays and platters—crudités, in particular, are getting a makeover," notes Michele Polci, CPCE, CMP, director of citywide catering sales/Las Vegas, Caesars Entertainment National Meeting and Events. Rather than a tray of veggies with assorted dips, Polci suggests placing mini vegetable bundles in small vessels with the accompaniment—baba ganoush, hummus or tzatziki—at the base.

Wendy Pashman, president of Chicago's Entertaining Company, cleverly combines food and drink with cheeseburger sliders served atop mini mugs of root beer.

**VIVA LA VEGETABLES!** Once seen merely as a boon to the budget, vegetable-based appetizers are a sought-after option, a tasty mainstay on both tray and buffet.

"Food is trending towards a more plant-based, wellness-focused philosophy," says Deb Lykkemark, CEO and founder of Vancouver, British Columbia-based Culinary Capers. "We are always looking for ways to make delicious, innovative food that is vegetable-centric and gluten-free." To that end, the

caterer has veered away from the traditional toasted bread base, using alternative ingredients such as puffed wild rice, celery root bark, puffed quinoa, pickled potato, celeriac and tapioca—to name a few—with great success. Favorites include beetroot tartare on crispy celery root with horseradish cream, and a gluten-free savory pumpkin tart with fresh cheese and a caramelized onion reduction.

For Richard Mooney, president of Los Angeles-based Kensington Caterers, vegetable-based bites are among his very best sellers, notably a burrata, pickled vegetable and smoked granola shooter, brioche avocado cumin toast with heirloom tomato concasse and smoked sea salt, and crispy polenta croquetas with Spanish manchego and roasted piquillo pepper dipping sauce.

"We do a ton of budget-friendly vegetarian hors d'oeuvre," Keovorabouth adds. Most popular are the mozzarella en carozza with caper mayonnaise, savory spinach and artichoke cream puffs, and bruschetta tomato tuiles filled with Parmesan mousse garnished with balsamic glaze and basil crystals.



## FEASTS FROM THE EAST

"Some recent trends with staying power are boldly flavored bites with ethnic ties," says Michael, specifically the Middle East, with traditional spices sumac and za'atar enhancing dishes such as falafel waffles with fattoush salad and spicy tahini yogurt and sea bass rolled in fresh grape leaves with tahini sauce. Desirable charred, smoky flavors are added through the use of ash syrups and oils, charred vegetables, ash-veined cheeses, and bruléed finishes.

Keovorabouth adds Indian, Moroccan and African into the melting pot, but can't deny the popularity of Japanese cuisine and ingredients, including her current favorite—Obulato paper, an edible transparent film made out of potato starch, which she uses to create mini edible film paper tostada shells for tiny Asian-inspired shrimp tostadas.



**Perfect pair:** A cheeseburger slider on a mini mug of root beer from Entertaining Company. Photo courtesy Entertaining Company.

peppers; golden beets with mustard seeds and chives; seared halloumi cheese, bocconcini seasoned with fennel and chile flakes, pumpernickel croutons, charred green onion vinaigrette ... you get the idea), which the chefs combine, chop, shake and serve.

Culinary Capers plucks the salad right out of the garden, so to speak, with its living greens station, where guests cut a variety of greens and herbs for a customized salad to accompany small plates of free-range chicken or wild salmon.

For the fall months, Polci favors composed salads based on root vegetables and dark, hearty greens.

"They offer a great texture and range of color," she says. "Therefore, choosing the right vessel that allows each of the components to be seen is important." ►

**SALAD DAYS** What's better than a good salad bar? A made-to-order chopped salad bar, that's what.

The chopped salad station from Occasions allows guests to customize their salads with a staggering array of goodies (pickled watermelon radish, lemon-dill compressed English cucumbers; grilled shishito

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**Branding down cold:** The seafood bar from Caesars says it all. Photo courtesy Caesars Entertainment.

## MODERN CLASSICS

Few buffet elements are as iconic as the carving station. What's being carved, however, has evolved. Polci and her team opt for whole miso- and mirin-glazed sea bass accompanied by coconut sticky rice and macadamia cream, or truffle-dusted Tomahawk steaks with bacon mac and cheese. "Not only are these proteins more visually interesting on a carving station but they can be paired with innovative accompaniments," Polci says.

The caviar bar, according to Lykkemark, is another classic hors d'oeuvre offering making its comeback. "Clients are willing to spend more money on menu items that are sustainable, ocean-wise, and local," she says. "We use only Northern Divine caviar, which is organic, internationally recognized and Canadian."

At Occasions, savory waffles—



corn cake waffles with braised short ribs, smashed avocado and pickled red onion, and arepa waffles with pork pernil, radish slaw and cilantro-lime aioli—add that necessary comfort-food component. Likewise, one of Pashman's best sellers is her fried chicken waffle cones. "You can never go wrong with a fried chicken component," Polci agrees. "It holds

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well and tastes great. Sliders are a great way to go." For fall, Polci's team is creating a biscuit version enhanced with pomegranate, cranberry and raspberry. ●

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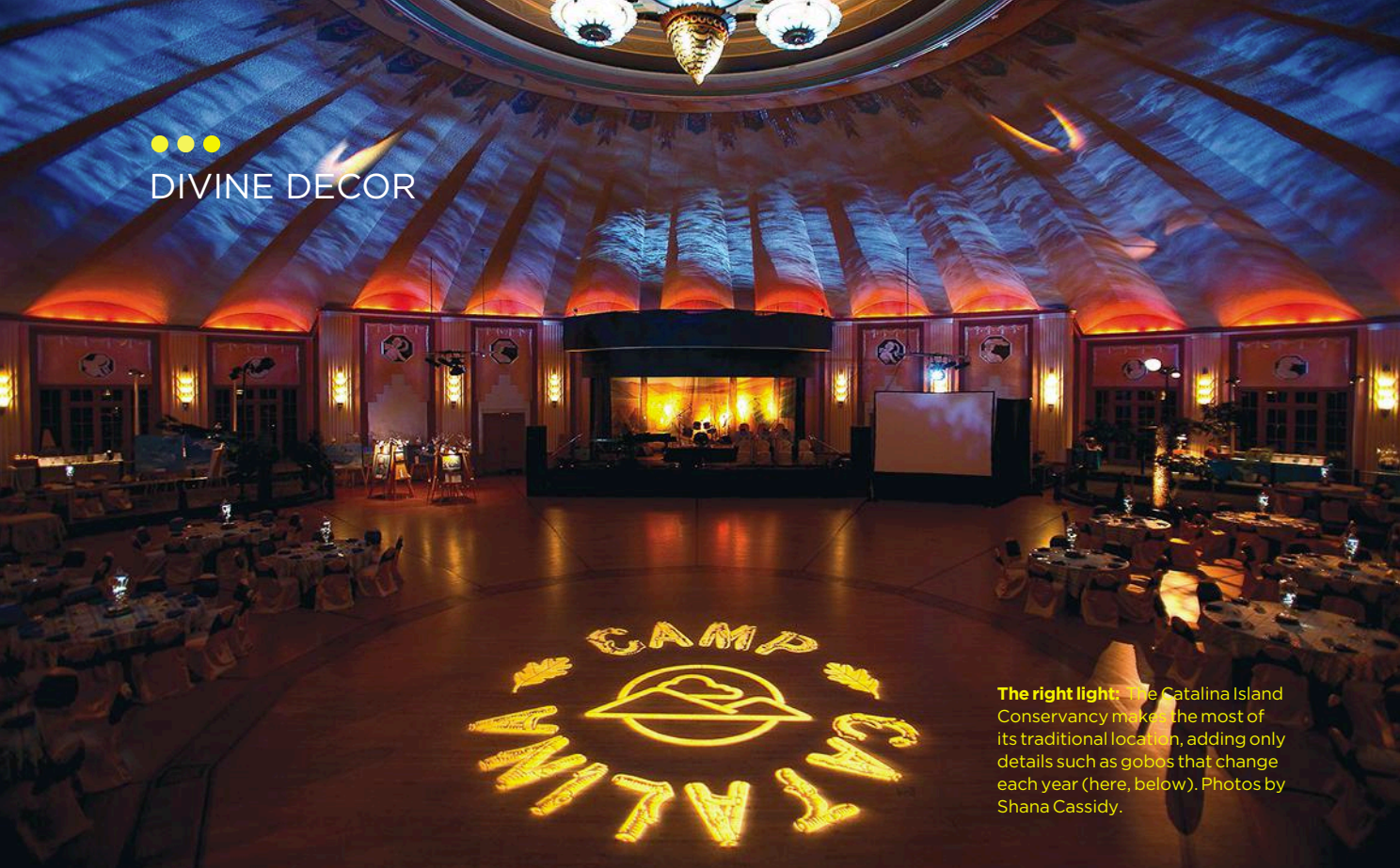
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## DIVINE DECOR



**The right light:** The Catalina Island Conservancy makes the most of its traditional location, adding only details such as gobos that change each year (here, below). Photos by Shana Cassidy.

# The Balancing Act

**These fundraising pros share how to walk that fine line between ‘wow’ and ‘whoa!’** By Susan Cuadrado

**When it comes** to designing galas for nonprofits—which is essentially walking that fine line between “wow, that looks amazing” and “whoa, you spent too much”—Jen Poyer, CSEP, senior special events manager for Long Beach, Calif.-based Catalina Island Conservancy, sums it up best:

“Nonprofit events have a lot of variables when it comes to what is on trend and what is acceptable. We work in a world of savvy consumers who have been exposed to a variety of experiences, and expect each experience to surpass the last,” she notes. “What they do not often connect with is the cost or logistical requirements required to support some of those high-level experiences—and this is where things become a bit tricky.”



### **SAME SPACE, NEW FACE**

Indeed, one of the trickiest design elements pertains to location—creating a new and different event experience in the same venue year after year. “Keeping an event fresh when retuning to the same venue challenges you to think creatively, not only to use the space in a different or unexpected way, but also to present the organization and content in a new way,”

says Michelle Rathbun, president of Washington-based Chromis Event Strategies. “I have presented the same nonprofit events in the same venue using vastly different colors and imagery to create a completely different feel.” For a military client, Rathbun skipped a staid navy blue and white color palette with traditional decor, using instead a more modern approach that amped up authenticity with an exhibit of rare, never-before-seen military artifacts. “This allowed guests to see and experience the nonprofit’s mission and event in a very different way,” she explains.

Alison Silcoff, president of Alison Silcoff Events in Montreal, Quebec, produces the Daffodil Ball, currently in its 24<sup>th</sup> year





**The power of focal points:** Chromis Event Strategies uses restraint in displaying artifacts at events that raise funds for military veterans (at left) and creates a focal point to distract from unattractive features (here). Photos by Joyce Boghosian and Haik Naltchayan/Naltchayan Media.

raising funds for the Canadian Cancer Society. “The first few years, the decor was strictly floral effects using thousands of daffodils,” she said. However, since 2003, the gala has featured a different theme each year, with the iconic yellow flowers a common, unifying thread. “Daffodils appear in every theme, but otherwise the look and experience is completely different,” Silcoff says.

Repositioning the room is another way to re-create the space without breaking the budget. “We encourage our clients to change the orientation of the room to keep things fresh,” says Shelly Tolo, president of Seattle-based Tolo Events. One trick, she says, is to add seating risers to the floor plan to elevate guests on the sides or in the back of the room. The result is twofold: It changes the look of the room and also makes the guests seated around the perimeter feel just as important as those seated in the middle.

## THE ‘WOW’ FACTOR

Decor for a nonprofit fundraiser has everything to do with strategy—putting the proper piece or prop in the perfect place. There’s no room for the superfluous. “You often don’t have a large budget to spend on room transformations, so you need to be strategic and think about where you want to draw the guests’ attention—and focus your money and creativity on that spot,” Rathbun says. To that end, she



**Saying it with flowers:** Alison Silcoff Events brands the Daffodil Ball with ballerinas holding daffodils poised to greet guests. Photo courtesy Alison Silcoff.

suggests using a visual anchor—a dramatic piece that draws the eye and keeps focus where you want it. For a recent event, she staged a custom Harley-Davidson motorcycle on a riser, spotlighted from above. “It drew guests into the room and captured and held their attention; they never looked up to see the empty 150-foot-high ceiling stretching above them.”

Silcoff agrees—in threes. “We try to have at least three decor ‘wows’ at each event—one at the entrance, one at the cocktail area, and at least one in the dining room,” she explains. “If you splurge on just three eye-catching creations, you can often get away with scrimping elsewhere.”

As an example, she cites the 2015 “Shanghai Silk” themed Daffodil Ball, which featured an “Oriental Pearl” stilt-walking character towering over guests, backed

by a massive wall of colorful Chinese parasols.

For Tolo and her team, it comes down to technology—specifically video and video mapping. “We have a media content designer on our team who animates everything from ballroom walk-in looks to the live auction marketing,” she says. “We live in a digital and interactive world, so static screen images just don’t keep people’s attention throughout a long event. And frankly, the video screens are the biggest canvases in the room, so it’s important to include money in the budget to use them correctly.”

## FRUGAL FLORAL

“When it comes to florals for fundraisers, cost-saving strategies demonstrate thoughtfulness, creativity and fiscal responsibility,” Rathbun says. “We see a lot of creative designs, including the use of succulents and a focus on sustainable arrangements, such as herbs.”

To that end, Rathbun suggests buying seasonally and locally, which saves money and supports area producers, issues that might resonate with both clients and attendees. For example, for a spring gala for a nonprofit with an environmental component, Rathbun and her team presented tulips in birch-bark vases. “The tulip colors were based on the brand, the natural wood was fitting, and the overall effect was lovely without looking extravagant,” she says. She also



recommends the use of non-floral options that support the theme or mission of the organization. "We've used food baskets, as well as photographs with inspirational quotes," she says.

## DELIGHTFUL DONATIONS

Silcoff finds donations to be her best budget-buster. "Rather than cutting back, we invest our time in getting as much as possible donated or deeply discounted," she says. "The sales pitch to suppliers and sponsors is the visibility that their products and services will get to a very high-profile clientele. For example, a miniature train we used as a Mardi Gras float cost us less than \$1,000, and the owner received two requests to book it within a month of the gala."

Creative interpretation of theme, she adds, is another way to avoid unnecessary expense. For example, at the "Madame de Pompadour" theme Daffodil Ball in 2003, Silcoff knew that characters dressed in 18<sup>th</sup> century costumes would be prohibitively expensive. Instead, she lined the staircase with ballet students in black leotards, who clutched bouquets of daffodils trailing colorful ribbons. Similarly, for the 2011 "Russian Romance" theme, the ballet students donned long white tutus while Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake" played. ●

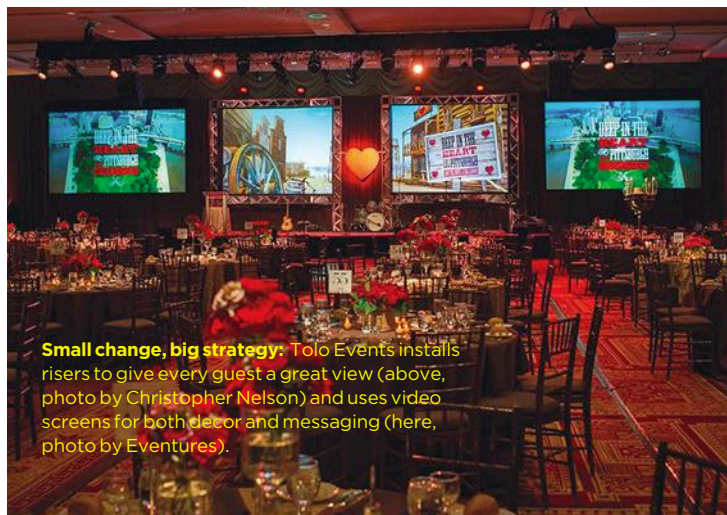
## RESOURCES

ALISON SILCOFF EVENTS  
[www.alisonsilcoff.com](http://www.alisonsilcoff.com)

CATALINA ISLAND CONSERVANCY  
[www.catalinaconservancy.org](http://www.catalinaconservancy.org)

CHROMIS EVENT STRATEGIES  
[www.chromisevents.com](http://www.chromisevents.com)

TOLO EVENTS  
[www.toloevents.com](http://www.toloevents.com)



**Small change, big strategy:** Tolo Events installs risers to give every guest a great view (above, photo by Christopher Nelson) and uses video screens for both decor and messaging (here, photo by Eventures).

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ON TREND

# SECURITY

## Tackling The Threats: DMCs Share Their Security Strategies

**DMCs are taking the lead on keeping events safe in scary world**

**BY LISA HURLEY**

**Violent crime, terror** attacks, natural disasters: A sharper sense of danger is putting a chill on special events, and adding a painful new urgency to the jobs of event professionals.

Some 80 percent of DMCs responding to an informal *Special Events* poll say their clients are raising the issue of security more often today than they were five years ago. As a result, many of the big DMCs profiled in the latest *Special Events* “25 Top DMCs” tell us that they have been offering security strategies as an essential element in their event proposals.

“It used to be a conversation on a walk-through or at a pre-con with clients about ‘we may need

some security just in case’ is now interfacing with corporate security teams or even focused on full meetings for deep understanding of the ‘what ifs’ and how we react if things go sideways,” notes Trevor Hanks, partner in San Diego-based 360 Destination Group. Planning today involves “much more detailed plans,” he says, and security is a “must” discussion.”

### **PLENTY TO WORRY ABOUT**

Making the topic more challenging is the sense that there are simply more threats to worry about.

Several respondents tell *Special Events* that these days, they plan for dangers—such as terror

attacks—that were not top of mind five years ago.

“I feel like the threats five-plus years ago were more based on natural disasters than the unimaginable tragedies that have been taking place around the world,” explains Nicole Marsh, CMP, DMCP, partner in Denver-based AXS Group. “The current realities are nearly impossible to anticipate and prepare for, which makes the advance crisis/risk management efforts and planning even more important.”

A Florida-based DMC, who asked to remain anonymous, points to a newly emerging threat: the Zika virus. “I’m afraid even to bring it up in the media because we already have some clients timid

Photo by Andrey Popov / © Getty Images

about it in Miami,” the DMC official says, adding, “We feel it is being handled very well, and the overall ‘threat’ to clients is nominal.”

“The biggest challenge is that you don’t know what the threat will be,” says Marty MacKay, DMCP, president of Las Vegas-based Hosts Global Alliance. “It could be nature, human or cyber. So the best thing we can do is to talk about how to best prepare for all situations, even the one you don’t know about.”

**CLOSING THE SECURITY GAP** The team at Hosts Global Alliance, which owns five DMCs and partners with more than 50 others, has brought security planning to the fore.

“Beginning last January, we realized there was a gap in the destination management industry on this subject, and so we set out to fill that gap,” MacKay explains. “Working with an emergency preparedness firm, we created and launched a template that all our DMC members can use to ensure that they, proactively, have a plan in place.”

And the plan has been popular. “This industry-leading template has also been adopted by some of the large incentive houses,” MacKay adds. “In addition, we have held seminars for some of our association clients, including all their sponsors, to further the awareness and help educate on what steps should be taken.” Further, the HGA Global Forum, held in July, included several expert speakers who addressed both clients and DMC members on emergency-preparedness planning and communication.

**TAILORING THE PLAN** Several DMC leaders say their security approach is a mix of template plus customization.

“The basic questions that need to be asked for each event can be in the form of a template and are good prompts to begin the discussions,” Marsh says. “Client security protocols, chain of command, media interaction, etc., are some of the basic elements of a security plan that can be filled in. The details end up being customized to each event based on the size of the group, time of the year, specific venue, etc.”

The high-tech tools in Hollywood movies are part of security, but low-tech strategies can often do the trick, too.

“Something as simple as requiring name tags for admittance to off-site events is a strong security step in the current environ-

ment,” explains Jeff O’Hara, president of AlliedPRA New Orleans. “Sure, attendees find it a pain and planners are reluctant to ruffle feathers with enforcement—but a terrorist is unlikely to

know to counterfeit a credential to gain access to the target. Nor is a common thief, who poses a different type of security threat.”

A vital tool—albeit low-tech—is a team of alert event personnel. “There have been multiple instances where our event staff has intercepted people who did not belong at events we were producing,” O’Hara explains. “Recently at a technology company kickoff meeting, we had to constantly move people away from a product launch. They could have been innocent curious hotel guests, or they could have been looking to find out about the IP being

launched. We’ll never know. Similarly, we have stopped people from entering our off-site events several times in the past year. They could also be curious and innocent, could be small-time thieves, or worse. Again, we will never know, but by being proactive and having staff trained to look for suspicious persons, we will never have to know.”

**SUBTLE SAFETY** Indeed, providing the appropriate arsenal of security tools all while keeping the event fun and festive is a balancing act.

“At the end of the day, all of the preparation that goes into this—our planning with the venue, the client, the on-site protection—has to be invisible to the attendees, which is kind of ironic,” O’Hara says. “People that attend our events attend events all over the world and understand the inherent risk of travel, but nobody wants to be in a security state. So by definition, all of our hard work needs to go unnoticed!”

The high-stakes environment in Washington has brought increased acceptance of the need for security.

“In the past, the security procedures that are installed throughout the D.C. area were obstacles for special event planning and execution,” says Sue Jeon, CMP, DMCP, general manager of CSI Washington. “Clients wanted to remove the metal detectors, avoid guests having to go through security checks, etc. However, in today’s world, our clients are not complaining about the security measures that need to take place. In fact, there are times when they bring their own security team to work at certain venues.”

**DMCs KNOW BEST** In several ways, DMCs make ideal security resources for planners





thanks to the DMCs' fine-tuned location expertise.

"Many planners still do not realize how crucial a DMC's local connections, destination knowledge and expertise are in times of emergency," explains Catherine Chaulet, president of Washington-based Global DMC Partners. "They have the contact information of all the essential local entities, and whether it's a sick attendee, lost passport or an even greater threat, they will know right away who to contact and how: embassies, police, hospitals, fire or local emergency dispatch numbers."

Chaulet adds, "A DMC can give planners peace of mind before their program by outlining all the necessary steps and naming an on-the-ground crisis team to ensure that if an emergency occurs, that they are on top of it by taking immediate action according to the plan."

While large venues that regularly host events usually have security plans in place, it's the enticing, alternative venues that often need to be educated on safety.

For example, Anthony Napoli, CMP, DMCP, CEO/president of New York-based Briggs Inc., got push-back from an event venue when he brought in a bomb-sniffing dog to ensure safety. "The vendor kept insisting the board of health did not allow pets on the property!" Napoli says. "We enlightened him."

### SHARE THE PLAN

These experts stress the need to weave security consciousness throughout their events.

"It is not only our approach to security that has changed, but having a well-thought-out emergency response plan that is communicated to all parties involved in the event in advance of the event,"

Marsh says. "What good does it do to have it sitting on a desk or stored in a computer? It needs to be shared and discussed so everyone is on the same page should something go wrong." ●

## RESOURCES

**ALLIEDPRA NEW ORLEANS**  
[alliedpra.com/locations/new-orleans](http://alliedpra.com/locations/new-orleans)

**AXS GROUP**  
[www.theaxsgroup.com](http://www.theaxsgroup.com)

**BRIGGS INC.**  
[www.briggsnyc.com](http://www.briggsnyc.com)

**CSI WASHINGTON**  
[www.csi-dc.com](http://www.csi-dc.com)

**HOSTS GLOBAL ALLIANCE**  
[www.hosts-global.com](http://www.hosts-global.com)

**GLOBAL DMC PARTNERS**  
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19TH ANNUAL

# 30 TOP RENTAL COMPANIES

**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.

Photos by Jerry Hayes Photography courtesy Marquee Event Group.

**EDITED BY LISA HURLEY**



## ALL OCCASIONS PARTY RENTAL/ MARBELLA EVENT FURNITURE AND DECOR RENTAL

Pittsburgh

[www.allparty.com](http://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, 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.

[aipartyrental.com](http://aipartyrental.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 have included the 2016 U.S. Olympic marathon team trials, 2016

Fashion Week El Paseo, concerts for Beyoncé and Coldplay at Rose Bowl Stadium and Guns N' Roses at Dodger Stadium, and the Doritos #Mix Arcade at E3 at Staples Center.

**WHAT'S RENTING** Rustic items remain in high demand right now, management says, yet at the same time. "We have seen a resurgence in the demand for the all-white modern look in this year's event designs." 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. "We are getting more and more requests for a crisp, contemporary look from our clients this past year," they add. "Back in demand are white deco modular lounge pieces, deco-inspired bars, white acrylic accent pieces, and mirrored tables."

**WHAT'S NEXT** "We've seen a fundamental change in the role rental houses play in the industry," AI management says. "As the event rental industry matures and becomes more mainstream, and the awareness of our capabilities becomes 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 original artwork. We are currently experiencing this within the major sporting and music events industry; 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.apresparty.com](http://www.apresparty.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 29 years as a "premier" provider of event rental services, specializing in the upper Midwest, management says.

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

**WHAT'S RENTING** "Our clients tend to be drawn to our new items that are unique and will set their event apart," management says, such as clear-top tents, tent liners and fabric treatments, tent flooring with unique coverings, rustic/vintage decor such as farm tables and benches, lounge furniture, specialty lighting, chandeliers, illuminated bars, and custom linens and decor.

**WHAT'S NEXT** "Although the economy has improved significantly and our industry continues to grow, it has still required us to work harder and smarter for our business," the Apres team says. "People aren't only looking for a great value but they are 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](http://www.arenaamericas.com)

**TOP OFFICER** Jon Tabeling

**COMPANY BASICS** Arena Americas specializes in providing full-line event equipment rental products and services, including semi-permanent and permanent clear-span structures, tents, HVAC, power generation, lighting, flooring, staging, furniture and tabletop equipment to clients internationally. "Our team has established a reputation for delivering high-quality products, a superior level of service, and unsurpassed design innovation," management says.

**CURRENT EVENTS** Highlights this year have included the NFL Draft, U.S. Open Championships, Democratic National Convention, New York City Marathon and Met Gala.

**WHAT'S RENTING** The big demand from clients: double-deck structures. "They are a great way to maximize event space with a smaller footprint," management says, "and their height creates greater visibility while offering a great opportunity to increase brand exposure with custom-printed graphics."

**WHAT'S NEXT** Management notes an increasing demand for custom work, such as specially designed structures, custom façades, double-deck structures, and custom printed graphics. "These unique requests have been made possible by our talented in-house design team and manufacturing capabilities," they say.



**BRIGHT EVENT RENTALS**

Sonoma, Calif.

[www.brightrentals.com](http://www.brightrentals.com)**TOP OFFICER** Michael Bjornstad**COMPANY BASICS** From its headquarters in California Wine Country, the company provides full-service event rentals throughout northern California.**CURRENT EVENTS** Event highlights of the past year include the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art opening, Auction Napa Valley charity event, and V Foundation Wine Celebration.**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," management says, noting that it's "important to the industry that we continue to invest and run our businesses responsibly."**BUTLER RENTS**

Denver

[www.butlerrents.com](http://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.**CURRENT EVENTS** The year's event roster has included the ESPN Winter X Games, Aspen Food and Wine Festival, Booklovers Ball, Denver Stock Show, Fête des Fleurs, Urban Nights, Do at the Zoo, Colorado Avalanche home opener, and Denver Nuggets home opener.**WHAT'S RENTING** Hot items include resin chairs, chiavari bar stools, rustic tables and chairs, and brushed aluminum tabletops, along with specialty linens and glassware, and rose gold flatware.**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.**CHAIR-MAN MILLS CORP.**

Toronto

[www.chairmanmills.com](http://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. In addition to being the largest event rental company in Canada, the company is also the largest provider of tenting solutions to the Canadian market through its Advanced Tent Rental brand, management says.**CURRENT EVENTS** The company manages "large and complex events," they say, including the Toronto International Film Festival, Toronto Taste, Bloor Street Entertains, Hockey Hall of Fame Inductions, and Toronto Honda Indy, as well as other large festivals and outdoor shows.**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 notes, while the vintage trend stays strong.**WHAT'S NEXT** The rental outlook is bright: "We see continued growth in the exciting and rapidly developing Toronto event industry!" they say.**CHOURA EVENTS**

Torrance, Calif.

[www.chouraevents.com](http://www.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 and event rentals including tables, chairs, lounge furniture, bars, tabletop and more.

**CURRENT EVENTS** Event highlights this year have included the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach, ESPY Awards, NFL Honors, L.A. Pride Festival, Live Nation HARD Festival, Comic-Con, 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, they say.**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 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."**CLASSIC PARTY RENTALS**

Los Angeles

[www.classicpartyrentals.com](http://www.classicpartyrentals.com)**TOP OFFICER** Jeffrey Gault**COMPANY BASICS** With more than 30 years in the event rental industry, this rental company takes pride in "unparalleled customer care, endless capabilities and impeccable service." Servicing the event planner, corporate, university, hospital and health care, and sports industry markets, and "many more," they say.**CURRENT EVENTS** Management says that the company is honored to work with influential clients including Fortune 500 companies and major events such as the PGA Championship, Ryder Cup, Pebble Beach Food & Wine, Major League Baseball All-Star Game, Super Bowl 50, Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, NASCAR, Emmy Ball, Golden Globes, South Beach Food and Wine Festival, and Academy Awards Governors Ball.**WHAT'S RENTING** "We are still seeing a lot of wood finishes in the design scheme of an event, whether in furniture, dining tables or wall treatments," the Classic team says. Spicing it all up: matte gold or rose gold metallic chargers, glassware and flatware continue to trend. Flying out of the warehouse: bistro lighting, chandeliers for outdoor spaces, bentwood chairs, Arezzo gold flatware and Opus glassware.**WHAT'S NEXT** The vintage boutique, mid-century modern, and rustic shabby chic looks are still popular, management says, "but we see the trend moving towards the industrial look with mixing metals with wood; the more adventuresome are mixing metals, and light and dark wood tones." From a color perspective, blush tones, apricot, creams and pinks all remain popular for accents in floral, they add.**CORT PARTY RENTAL**

Seattle

[www.cortpartyrental.com](http://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. They've been "a leader in the market since 1968," they say.**CURRENT EVENTS** This year's event roster has included Microsoft Oneweek, the Boeing Classic, Auction of Washington Wines, and the Bumbershoot and Sasquatch music festivals.**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, neutrals and farm-style tables and chairs."**WHAT'S NEXT** Safety and proper tent ballasting will continue to be concern as regulation of the industry tightens on the municipal level, management says.**DIAMOND EVENTS AND TENTS**

Salt Lake City

[www.diamondeventsandtents.com](http://www.diamondeventsandtents.com);[www.diamondrental.com](http://www.diamondrental.com)**TOP OFFICER** Mark Clawson**COMPANY BASICS** From locations in Salt Lake City, Orem, and Ogden, Utah, Diamond offers high-end party and tent rental services to customers throughout the Mountain West. The company also operates 10 equipment rental locations. The company has separated out its Diamond Events and Tents group in order to better handle larger events on a more regional and even national basis, while the Diamond Party Rentals locations continue to serve party rental customers in the Mountain West.**WHAT'S RENTING** "We see continued movement toward sleek, contemporary and even industrial looks," they say.**WHAT'S NEXT** Looking ahead: "2015 has been a very solid year," they say, "and we anticipate the same in 2016—sustained growth across market segments and geographical areas."**EVENT RENTALS UNLIMITED/****TENTS UNLIMITED**

Atlanta

[www.eventrentalsunlimited.com](http://www.eventrentalsunlimited.com);[www.eventflooringsolutions.net](http://www.eventflooringsolutions.net);[www.tentsunlimited.com](http://www.tentsunlimited.com)**TOP OFFICERS** Dan Nolan III, CEO; Sam Wodetzki, CFO**COMPANY BASICS** Established in 1992 and 2006 respectively, Tents Unlimited and Event Rentals Unlimited service the tent and party rental markets primarily in the southeastern U.S. "The companies have a national presence and travel often to other parts of the country to offer their unique brand of service to their clients," management says.**CURRENT EVENTS** The focus over the past year: "We continued to grow our infrastructure platform by adding over 150,000 square feet of new flooring products, additional investment in tents to support the growing number of core events, and adding a new rental chair—the Elysian—that is the first of its kind in the Southeast," management says.**WHAT'S RENTING** The company has answered client calls for a new and different chair with the Elysian—a chic, cut-out oval-back Louis XVI chair. "We are introducing that chair to the market in September, and our clients are excited they will have a stackable chair that looks and feels upscale and different from the staple chiavari chair," management says. "We also made a significant investment in new flooring products designed for trucks and cranes to operate and protect turf surfaces."**WHAT'S NEXT** "For now the event landscape continues to stay stable," management says. "We are seeing the trend continue toward better events with respectable budgets. There seems to be a lot more planners now than in years past, and social media is making them easier to locate and hire. Pictures of a great event are just one click away, and that's driving the creativity differently than anything ever has in the past. Social media is providing end clients many more ideas, which has spawned a wave of creativity that helps drive designers and their parties. Overall it's been helpful to execute the vision, and nice to see new, talented individuals contributing to the event industry." And, "It is always a bit uncertain in an election year, and this one has proved to be both different and vexing. Overall we see a continuation of good times!"**HALL'S RENTAL SERVICE**

Niles, Ill.

[www.hallsrental.com](http://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, 60,000 chairs in 50 different styles, and 80,000 place settings in more than 60 different patterns. And it's all available for delivery nationwide.



**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 in farm tables, French country chairs and tabletops is still very popular, management says, often mixed in with modern and industrial-style tables and bar stools. Clients call for lucite tables in clear and black, with Mirage chairs in clear, black and white.

**WHAT'S NEXT** Guest counts and budgets have increased for all social events, especially weddings and fundraisers, management says. Corporate events are increasing "but with shorter lead times." Overall, the team is "looking forward to a stronger second half of 2016."

## M&M THE SPECIAL EVENTS CO.

Carol Stream, Ill.

[www.mmspecialevents.com](http://www.mmspecialevents.com)

**TOP OFFICERS** Seth Berk, president; Scott Berk, president/Texas operations

**COMPANY BASICS** In business since 1980 serving the special events and hospitality industry in the Chicago metro (northwest Indiana to southern Wisconsin) and the DFW Metroplex. "We offer a one-stop resource for event needs with everything but the food with a single call, single delivery/pickup and a single invoice," management says.

**CURRENT EVENTS** Corporate clients have returned and are nearing their pre-recession spending levels, M&M says; "Social business—weddings, mitzvahs, parties—continues as a strong base, and our college, hospital and foodservice clients are growing exponentially."

**WHAT'S RENTING** "Lounge furniture, lighting and linen continue to be the mainstays of most events," they say. "Our floral and non-floral decor continues to grow, which enables us to offer the client a seamless event, getting everything from a single resource."

**WHAT'S NEXT** "As our clients' events continue to grow in size and scope, our ability to provide superior logistics proves to be a real value to the customer," management says. "Providing a larger share of the event enables us to link the creative team with the ops team to deliver great events at a true value."

## MARQUEE EVENT GROUP

Austin, Texas

[www.marqueeeventgroup.com](http://www.marqueeeventgroup.com)

**TOP OFFICER** Damon Holditch, CSEP, CERP

**COMPANY BASICS** From its start in 1985 as a small general rental store, the company has evolved into a full-service event rental company with four divisions: Marquee Rents, Marquee Tents, Marquee Linens and Marquee San Antonio.

**CURRENT EVENTS** Marquee Austin's event roster has included the Austin City Limits Music Festival, State of Texas Book Festival, Austin Food and Wine Festival, and the SXSW Conference and Festivals. In San Antonio, the team has provided services for the UTSA Folklife Festival, Gary Sinise Foundation, Kerrville Festival of the Arts, and corporate events at the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts. Both locations have also serviced high-end weddings and social events in the Hill Country area, management says.

**WHAT'S RENTING** "We launched Dept. 70, an extensive line of specialty furniture, in 2016," management says, "in order to expand our corporate and social rental offerings. We also introduced a very popular new Driftwood line of custom wood tables and bars. Since we service a destination wedding location, we continue to concentrate on more modern rustic, industrial and natural elements in furniture, chandeliers and tabletop to reflect our market."

**WHAT'S NEXT** "Marquee continues to see demand for distinctive custom and upscale linens," management says. "Metallics were a big trend that should continue in to next year. We are also looking forward to seeing our clients use our china, glassware and flatware mixed in new and creative ways. Since every event is now unique, personalized and

eclectic, we will continue to respond with fresh and exciting inventory."

## PARTY REFLECTIONS

Charlotte, N.C.

[www.partyreflections.com](http://www.partyreflections.com)

**TOP OFFICERS** Daniel W. Hooks, CERP, president; Maurisa Beaver, v.p. talent development; Christian Eastman, v.p. sales; Jonas Hutchison, v.p. operations

**COMPANY BASICS** Family-owned and -operated since 1958, this full-service rental firm has operations in Charlotte and Raleigh, N.C., and 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 2016 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 16, Tour Davita bike race, and many "high profile" weddings and corporate events, management says.

**WHAT'S RENTING** Hot items include farm tables, 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 expect continued double-digit growth for next year across all of our markets," management says. "The special events industry continues to mature, which has helped strengthen relationships among professional organizations who depend on each other to produce major events."

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](http://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 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 rustic, vintage-inspired look is still extremely popular, they say. "Our cross-back chairs have been so popular that we recently introduced a coordinating bar stool. We also launched a new wood table, the Mason dining table, which is a darker, sleeker alternative to the popular distressed farm tables." Clients are also looking for unique, stylized pieces that add a pop of personality among the classic staple items; "We just brought in gray metal bistro chairs and bar stools, which are French café-inspired—and already extremely popular—and our new Roma glassware line, which add pops of color and a Tuscan feel."

**WHAT'S NEXT** The big trend is going green, they say: "We're committed to finding new ways to be environmentally responsible."

## PEERLESS EVENTS AND TENTS

Dallas

[www.peerlesseventsandtents.com](http://www.peerlesseventsandtents.com)

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

**COMPANY BASICS** "With our transition from a primarily

tent-focused company to a full-service rental company that provides everything our customers need from tents to tabletop, we have also changed our philosophy. We have changed from a company that focuses solely on sales volume to a company that focuses on profit/quality before volume." They add, "We feel that this new philosophy not only strengthens our bottom line but also helps our brand, focusing on quality and not quantity. We continue to increase our customer base in event planners and caterers through our vast array of tabletop, unique furniture, specialty linens and catering equipment."

**CURRENT EVENTS** A highlight of the year: providing more than 40,000 square feet of structure tenting on scaffolding from 2 feet to 8 feet high for a \$6 million quinceañera featuring Nick Jonas and Pit Bull as entertainment. "What made this job more difficult is we had one week to prepare and one week to execute," management says. "Working 15- to 20-hour days for a week straight, we were able to complete the installation in time for the event, helping to make this young lady's transition from girlhood to womanhood a memorable experience."

**WHAT'S RENTING** The Peerless rustic line is "the hottest we have," management says. "Rustic tables and bars, gunmetal bar stools and cocktail tables, along with our Mason jar glassware and cross-back chairs are all hot items!"

**WHAT'S NEXT** People will pay for quality, management says. "Getting business through discounting, while still prevalent in our industry, is also damaging the viability and brand of those who do it. We feel customers will pay for quality equipment and service."

## PERFECT SETTINGS

Landover, Md.

[www.perfectsettings.com](http://www.perfectsettings.com)

**TOP OFFICER** Peter Grazzini

**COMPANY BASICS** As the company enters its 19th year, "We launched a new website that was designed as a tool for our clients," management says, "featuring custom mood boards as well as a bar and chair designer that allows you to put different cushions on chairs and customize bar panels and tops." The site also allows clients to download their own pictures to add to their mood boards. "We will be adding many new items to our inventory for 2017; they will include new types of chairs, baseplates and many new tablecloths."

**CURRENT EVENTS** Noteworthy events this year have included the AIPAC policy conference and the U.S. Open.

**WHAT'S RENTING** Make mine modern: "The modern look in the rental industry continues to strengthen," management says. "Lucite chairs and steel-frame tables are all doing very well, even in the very traditional D.C. market."

**WHAT'S NEXT** The year 2015 "was a solid year; we saw good growth," management says, and "2016 looks to be a very big year in D.C. The convention center has 16 big new groups that are bringing large conventions to D.C., and it is sure to bring a flood of new business to the special events industry as a whole."

## PPC EVENT SERVICES

Woburn, Mass.

[www.petersonpartycenter.com](http://www.petersonpartycenter.com);

[www.rentals-unlimited.net](http://www.rentals-unlimited.net)

**TOP OFFICER** Robert Traina

**COMPANY BASICS** With the merger of Peterson Party Center and Rentals Unlimited, the new PPC team offers "exceptional service and quality products" for all party rental, tenting and catering needs throughout New England, they say, from Maine to southern New Hampshire, Boston to the Cape and islands, Rhode Islands to Connecticut, and "all points in between."

**CURRENT EVENTS** The company participates in several large-scale community events every year including Party in the Park, Nantucket Wine Festival, James Beard Taste America, Asperger's Association, WaterFire Providence, Rodman Ride for Kids, and the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Curing Kids Fund, among others.

**WHAT'S RENTING** The team points to two big trends this





year. For one, the “everything organic” event, featuring true linen and woven fabrics paired with hedge walls and wooden partitions. Second, “We are also seeing the lush and luxurious coming back around, with velvet fabrics, heavy brocades and overstated dining chairs,” they say.

**WHAT’S NEXT** PPC forecasts the future: In color, super-saturated jewel tones will emerge—aubergine, teal, sapphire, garnet—mixed with neutrals—champagne, blush, cream—for high drama and contrast. “Gray is the new black,” they say, paired with dusty versions of popular on-trend colors such as sea spray, indigo, plum and rose. Big style drivers will be Modern Tribal (layered patterns—tribals, florals and geometrics—in bright palettes inspired by exotic locales); Scandia (clean and sparse with a hint of rustic, with Scandinavian-inspired palettes of whites, creams and grays “with a focus on texture, texture and more texture”); and Refined Industrial (combinations of rough and soft finishes—cement, stone, steel—in organic palettes of clay and charcoal mixed with varying shades of greens ranging from aloe to moss; call it “new meets natural”).

## PREMIERE EVENTS

Austin, Texas

[www.premiereeventsonline.com](http://www.premiereeventsonline.com)

**TOP OFFICER** Delores M. Crum

**COMPANY BASICS** Founded in November 2000, the company serves greater Austin, Texas, including San Marcos, San Antonio, Georgetown and the Texas Hill Country. Locations include luxury boutique rental operation Premiere Select, in central Austin. The newest member of the Premiere Events family is Party Time Rentals, established in the late 1970s and serving Bryan-College Station, Brenham, Huntsville, Conroe and The Woodlands.

**CURRENT EVENTS** Busy this year with the Bandana Ball for Ronald McDonald House Charities, Bobcat Bonanza (on Jim Wacker Field at Texas State University), SXSW, and Blues on the Green.

**WHAT’S RENTING** Big trends include metallics, especially gold and rose gold; sequin linens; and the colors navy blue, blush and charcoal. “Country chic, along with rustic glam, continue to be popular looks for Texas Hill Country brides,” management says, while farm tables finished with lace runners, succulents or wildflowers “are big in Texas.”

**WHAT’S NEXT** “We’re anticipating more of the ‘Restoration Hardware, Pottery Barn’ look—upholstered rather than leather furniture, and more casual pieces with a residential look and feel,” the Premiere team says. “We think that copper will be the new rose gold, but that all the metallics will remain popular. The organic, natural, ‘earthy’ look and feel will always be in fashion in Texas.”

## PRO EM EVENT MANAGEMENT

Phoenix

[www.proem.org](http://www.proem.org)

**TOP OFFICER** Amir Glogau

**COMPANY BASICS** The company “delivers quality rental items and excellent customer service to events of all sizes and scope—weddings, high-profile sporting and cultural events, corporate meetings and social gatherings,” they say. The services portfolio includes event management and consulting, valet service, security guards, logistics, traffic control and other event personnel. The PRO EM motto: “We offer inspiring, innovative event solutions.”

**CURRENT EVENTS** This year’s event roster has included all ASU home games, Waste Management Phoenix Open, Scottsdale Culinary Festival, Cubs baseball team spring training, Alice Cooper’s Solid Rock Gala, Phoenix Grand Prix, AZCentral.com Food & Wine Experience, and Phoenix Pride Festival, as well as events for both private and corporate clients.

**WHAT’S RENTING** What’s in: A clean, modern look with color-blocking using furniture with color accents, as well as a Bohemian vibe with bright jewel tones, farm tables, mix-and-match furniture and accents such as succulents, they say.

**WHAT’S NEXT** “For 2016, 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 and attendees are more sophisticated than ever and have access to trends and products everywhere. They seek more personalization and attention to details, and look for a company who can fulfill those needs. 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.raphael.com](http://www.raphael.com)

**TOP OFFICERS** Raphael Silverman, Philip Silverman

**COMPANY BASICS** In business more than 35 years 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. Management notes that it just expanded its warehouse by another 20,000 square feet.

**CURRENT EVENTS** This year’s event agenda has included San Diego Pride, OysterFest, concerts, and the big Miramar Air Show.

**WHAT’S RENTING** New inventory that is moving well includes market lighting, urban-style furniture and acrylic furniture, they say.

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

## SIGNATURE PARTY RENTALS

Santa Ana, Calif.

[www.signatureparty.com](http://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 75,000 square feet, Signature is “heavily focused” on providing a high-quality, affordable rental experience for event planners, caterers, hotels and coordinators, management says.

**WHAT’S RENTING** Chandeliers, sequin linens and black matte flatware from Signature add glamour to events.

## SPECIAL EVENT RENTALS

Edmonton, Alberta

[www.specialeventrentals.com](http://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 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** Floral backdrops are popular, management says, and sequin linen and drape panels are in high demand. “Wooden tables continue to rent well, with the addition of whiskey barrels as cocktail tables,” they say. The hot seating trend is the bench, and gold is the preferred metallic—“People want it in everything: plates, cutlery, linen, votives, vases.” And big floral is out: “Centerpieces are more commonly built using multiple smaller components grouped together rather than the big, dramatic ones we saw a few years ago.”

**WHAT’S NEXT** “The oil and gas sector sets the pace in our [Alberta] market, so we felt the effects of its decline this past year,” management says. “Many corporate clients cancelled events, reduced budgets, and limited corporate sponsorships for local festivals. This stunted our revenue growth, but we’re hopeful for a more optimistic 2017 event season.”

## STAMFORD TENT AND EVENT SERVICES

Stamford, Conn.

[www.stamfordtent.com](http://www.stamfordtent.com)

**TOP OFFICER** Stephen Frost

**COMPANY BASICS** Stamford sticks to its knitting, saying it 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, and 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 has 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](http://www.stuartrental.com)

**TOP OFFICERS** Michael C. Berman, R. Andrew Sutton

**COMPANY BASICS** Established in 1849, Stuart Event Rentals continues to be “a leader in providing event rentals and services to the San Francisco Bay Area and northern California,” management says. “With one of the most extensive rental product inventories in our region, we offer everything our clients need for any size corporate, social, or nonprofit events and celebrations.” Three locations offer large and custom structures, lighting and staging, climate control, chairs, furniture, linens, serving and cooking equipment, tabletop accessories “and everything in between. 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 visits from U.S. president Barack Obama and the Treasure Island Music Festival. “We also helped our clients with multiple Super Bowl events, a campaign visit from Hillary Clinton, the Dragon Boat Festival in San Francisco, and plenty of Silicon Valley corporate events,” they say.

**WHAT’S RENTING** Higher end furniture continues to be a favorite of corporate clients and industry service providers, “so we keep adding new styles to our rental inventory,” they say. “The demand for customized tenting and lighting remains strong. Our clients come to us feeling comfortable about pushing the limits of what is possible in designing an event space because they know we have the most experienced production team in the Bay Area—who are always ready and excited to take on new challenges.”

**WHAT’S NEXT** “The economy here continues to be on an upward trend with no signs of slowing down,” the Stuart team says. “Being in the heart of Silicon Valley, we see firsthand that cutting-edge innovation isn’t limited to the technology arena. Our corporate clients and the Bay Area event service industry continue to push boundaries to create event spaces their guests haven’t seen before.”

## TENTLOGIX

Fort Pierce, Fla.

[www.tentlogix.com](http://www.tentlogix.com)

**TOP OFFICERS** Nate Albers, Dennis Birdsall, Gary Hendry

**COMPANY BASICS** This award-winning event rental company specializes in innovative tenting solutions, event flooring, and event rental products throughout the United States and



| RANK IN 2016 | COMPANY   | HEADQUARTERS       | ESTIMATED 2016 RENTAL VOLUME (IN MILLIONS) | NUMBER OF LOCATIONS                                      | NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES             |
|--------------|---|--------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|
| 1            | CLASSIC PARTY RENTALS                                   | LOS ANGELES        | \$250                                      | 25   | 2,000                           |
| 2            | PARTY RENTAL LTD.                                       | TETERBORO, N.J.    | \$100                                      | 8 (3 WAREHOUSES, 5 SHOWROOMS)                            | 850 FULL-TIME PLUS 700 SEASONAL |
| 3            | PPC EVENT SERVICES                                      | WOBURN, MASS.      | \$53.5                                     | 8  | 600                             |
| 4            | TOWN AND COUNTRY EVENT RENTALS                          | VAN NUYS, CALIF.   | \$51                                       | 3 (HEADQUARTERS/ DISTRIBUTION FACILITY PLUS 2 SHOWROOMS) | 500 PLUS                        |
| 5            | ARENA AMERICAS  | MILWAUKEE          | \$50                                       | 5  | 400                             |
| 6            | CHAIR-MAN MILLS CORP.                                   | TORONTO            | \$30                                       | 2  | 450                             |
| 7            | RAPHAEL'S PARTY RENTALS                                 | SAN DIEGO          | \$29.15                                    | 1  | 230                             |
| 8            | TENTLOGIX   | FORT PIERCE, FLA.  | \$25 PLUS                                  | 2  | 275 PLUS                        |
| 9            | SIGNATURE PARTY RENTALS                                 | SANTA ANA, CALIF.  | \$25                                       | 2  | 300                             |
| 10           | BRIGHT EVENT RENTALS                                    | SONOMA, CALIF.     | \$25                                       | 3  | 200                             |
| 11           | PRO EM EVENT MANAGEMENT                                 | PHOENIX            | \$20 to \$25                               | 2  | 900 to 1,200                    |
| 12           | HALL'S RENTAL SERVICE                                   | NILES, ILL.        | \$20                                       | 1  | 250                             |
| 13           | M&M THE SPECIAL EVENTS CO.                              | CAROL STREAM, ILL. | \$20                                       | 4  | 150                             |
| 14           | PARTY REFLECTIONS                                       | CHARLOTTE, N.C.    | \$19.3                                     | 3  | 190 to 225                      |
| 15           | SPECIAL EVENT RENTALS                                   | EDMONTON, ALBERTA  | \$18                                       | 4  | 200 PLUS                        |
| 16           | CHOURA EVENTS   | TORRANCE, CALIF.   | \$17                                       | 1  | 130                             |
| 17           | PERFECT SETTINGS  | LANDOVER, MD.      | \$17                                       | 1  | 210                             |
| 18           | EVENT RENTALS UNLIMITED/<br>TENTS UNLIMITED             | ATLANTA            | \$16 to \$17                               | 3  | 50 to 70                        |
| 19           | STAMFORD TENT AND EVENT SERVICES                        | STAMFORD, CONN.    | \$16.4                                     | 2  | 165 to 185                      |
| 20           | DIAMOND EVENTS AND TENTS                                | SALT LAKE CITY     | \$15 PLUS                                  | 4  | 90 to 130                       |
| 21           | CORT PARTY RENTAL                                       | SEATTLE            | \$15 <i>Special Events</i><br>estimate     | 2  | 100 to 200                      |
| 22           | PEERLESS EVENTS AND TENTS                               | DALLAS             | \$14                                       | 5  | 150 to 200                      |
| 23           | STUART RENTAL CO.                                       | MILPITAS, CALIF.   | \$13.7                                     | 3  | 140 to 165                      |
| 24           | MARQUEE EVENT GROUP                                     | AUSTIN, TEXAS      | \$10.5                                     | 2  | 100 to 150                      |
| 25           | A1 PARTY  | COVINA, CALIF.     | \$10.1                                     | 1  | 115                             |
| 26           | THORNS GROUP  | LONDON             | \$9.75                                     | 3  | 100 to 125                      |
| 27           | APRES PARTY AND TENT RENTAL                             | MINNEAPOLIS        | \$8.75                                     | 1  | 75 to 125                       |
| 28           | PREMIERE EVENTS   | AUSTIN, TEXAS      | \$8.75                                     | 5  | 50 to 65                        |
| 29           | BUTLER RENTS  | DENVER             | \$8.5 to \$8.8                             | 1  | 70 to 90                        |
| 30           | ALL OCCASIONS PARTY RENTAL/<br>MARBELLA EVENT FURNITURE | PITTSBURGH         | \$8  | 3  | 110                             |





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, numerous PGA and LPGA tournaments, Ultra Music Festival, 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 or 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](http://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." The Thorns draping division "provides truly exclusive theater solutions for trade and consumer show organizers looking to create seminar theaters, conference rooms, divide up large areas or to simply wall off areas within exhibition venues or large empty spaces."

**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 also supplies 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 into 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** "We are getting involved in the client brief right from the start," they say. "Customers are increasingly inspired by Instagram and Pinterest, so we're working more closely with them than ever before to deliver their ideas. Clients are looking for functional that comes with purpose. We have to meet the brief but at the same time be as creative and inspirational as possible."

#### TOWN AND COUNTRY EVENT RENTALS

Van Nuys, Calif.

[www.tacer.biz](http://www.tacer.biz)

**TOP OFFICER** Richard LoGuercio

**COMPANY BASICS** Going on 12 years, Town and Country

"continues its tremendous growth by virtue of a continuous rollout of unique and exciting products and adapting to its success by implementing technology and state-of-the-art operational policies," management says. Big growth demands a big investment in inventory: "So far, over \$4 million dollars has been spent on additional tabletop items, furniture and a major expansion of tent and structure inventory, scaffolding and flooring." Due to the demand for its broad range of product offerings and capabilities, "T&C is often called upon to lend its expertise to large projects that take the company out of state," they say.

**CURRENT EVENTS** The company continues to support major Hollywood industry events and awards shows including the Golden Globes, Grammy Awards, Emmy parties and the SAG Awards. Social and fundraising events including notable museum galas and high-end weddings continue to see growth, along with large-scale projects that include the Breeder's Cup and KAABOO music festival.

**WHAT'S RENTING** To keep up with demand, T&C has made a major investment this year in expanding its tenting and flooring divisions, they say. "Another emphasis on purchasing was directed at eight new china patterns along with new offerings of flatware and stemware."

**WHAT'S NEXT** Going up: costs. "Due to increased regulations and the rising minimum wages across the country, it's a challenge to offset these skyrocketing costs," management notes. "Event rental companies across the [U.S.] will have to work extremely hard to compensate by implementing operational efficiencies and cost-cutting policies to avoid raising prices that will hurt our clients and the entire industry." ●

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](mailto:info@specialevents.com).

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# Foodies, Festivals and Philanthropy

**Jackie Eisen Nathan and her NYCWFF team create big events that yield big benefits**  
By Lisa Hurley

## CAMP AND CAREER

"I grew up as a camper and counselor in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania. Being a camper for eight summers and a counselor for four summers probably taught me the most about life, relationships, and personal and team growth."

## COMPETITION COMING

"People often say imitation is the best form of flattery, but when similar events are constantly appearing all across the nation, especially in the same region, we have to work harder to make ourselves stand out, make our partners want to come back for more, and sell our tickets, while raising money for our charity partners."

## THANKS, MOM AND DAD!

"Both my parents have been the biggest influences in my career, as they have always taught me to work hard, never give up, give it your all, and be proud of the work you accomplish. They are by far my biggest role models, teachers and friends who have cheered me on every step of the way—and probably spent more money on festival tickets than anyone I know!"

**When big brands** want to make big partnerships to promote philanthropy, they have a friend in Jackie Eisen Nathan. She serves as the sponsorship director for the Food Network & Cooking Channel New York City Wine & Food Festival.

Marquee names such as Bank of America and Delta turn to Nathan and her team to integrate their messages and launch activations in a nearly \$4 million sponsorship portfolio. The four-day festival takes a year of planning, work, dedication and effort, but the event "is one people wait for all year long!" she says.

Nathan has been attracted to events since childhood—she wrote a paper in middle school on her dream job: planning the Grammy Awards. While attending the University of Florida in 2008, she served as an event intern at the South Beach Wine & Food Festival in Miami, giving her "heart and soul" to the job. After her graduation, festival management snapped her up and gave her progressively larger roles with the organization. When her husband's job moved him to the Northeast in 2013, festival management persuaded Nathan to bring her talents to the sister festival in New York, which benefits No Kid Hungry and the Food Bank for New York City.

"I had to learn a whole new operation, and this time the annual income I was responsible for was *much* larger than the auctions I ran in Miami," Nathan says. "On top of

the dollars, the task at hand involved much more than just bringing in funds. I had to manage a team of 10 to 12 people, create and foster relationships with 100-plus *big* companies, work with our fabulous marketing and production team, and learn to write and negotiate contracts. It was a lot, but I accepted the challenge."

Her mammoth job has had its "trying" moments, she says, but the rewards are many.

She singles out partners as the key to her success and career satisfaction. "At the end of the day, I can truly say that the relationships and partnerships have made me fall in love with this industry as I get the opportunity to build custom integration plans with brands, learn about companies' goals, and help execute visions as they come to life after months of planning," Nathan says.

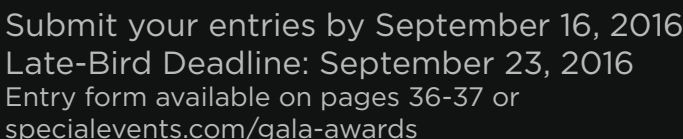
"It is an incredibly exhausting, stressful, emotional—but most importantly, rewarding—job! I am proud of the work I do and the people I have been privileged to work with on a daily basis. In 2016, we have bigger goals to conquer, and we are hard at work in preparation for the 2016 NYCWFF, taking place Oct. 13-16."

And yes, she can sell you a ticket to the festival! ●

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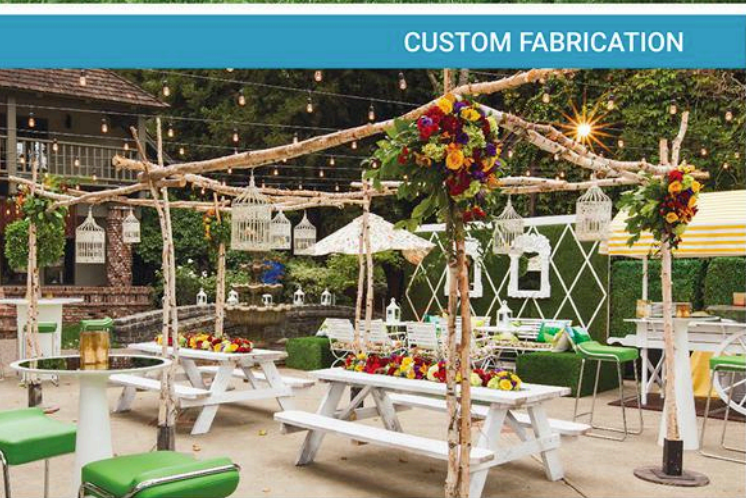
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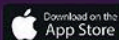




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