

Exclusive: 17th Annual 50 Top Event Companies
Fit for a Pharaoh: The California Science Center Ball Honors King Tut

SPECIAL EVENTS[®]

FALL 2018

COVER STORY

THE BALLROOM *and* BEYOND

**Besides beautiful ballrooms,
top hotels share their oh-so-special
event spaces**

**BIG PLAYERS IN
EVENT RENTAL**
P. 23

**LET'S BE BAD:
COCKTAIL AND
DESSERT TRENDS**
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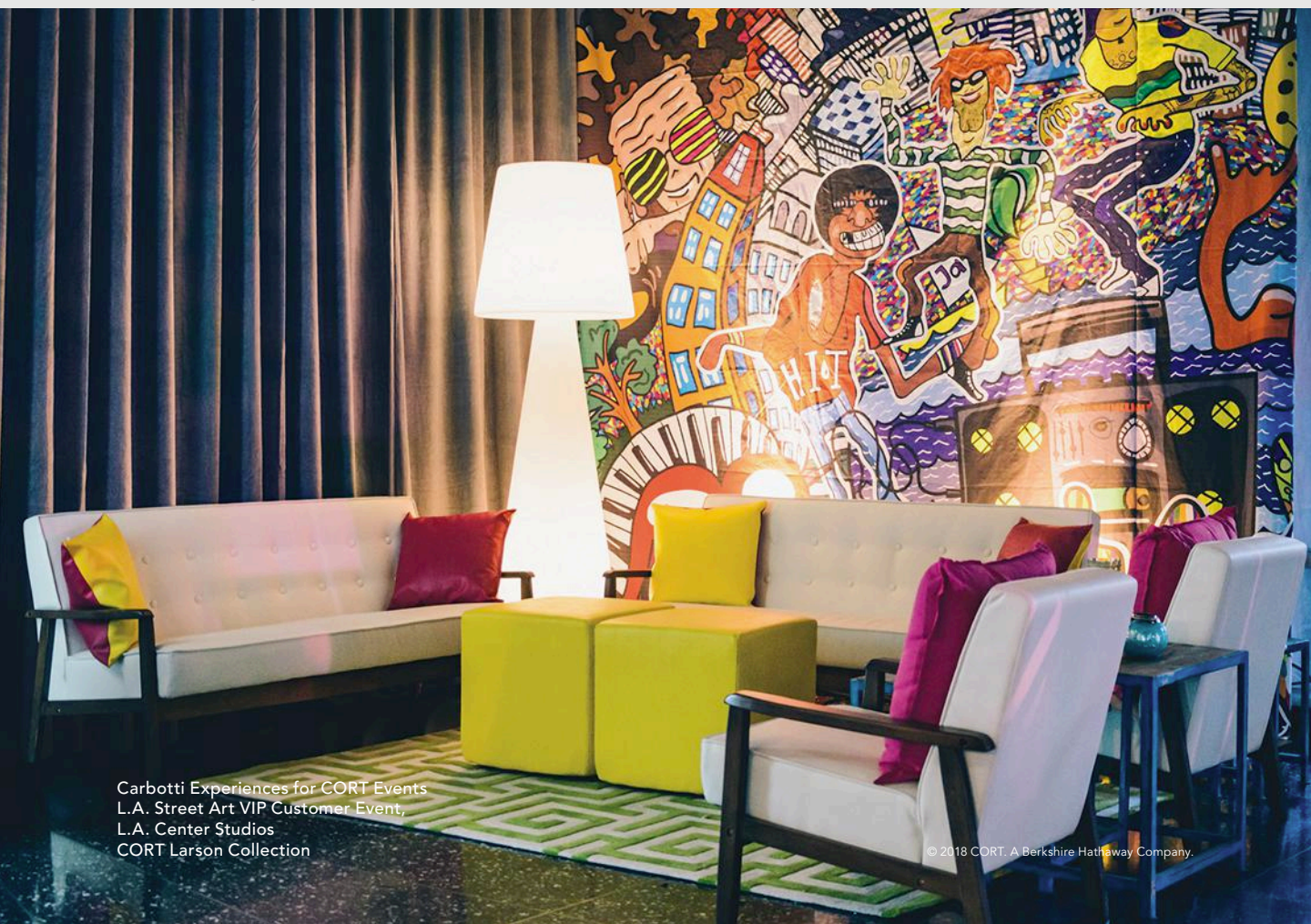
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On the cover: Photo by Aydinynr/iStock/Getty Images Plus. Photo at top courtesy Westin Verasa Napa.

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CONTRIBUTORS



Contributing editor **Susan Cuadrado** shares the trends for the best part of the meal—cocktails and dessert.



Contributing editor **Kelly Rehan** shows how top gala designers are making the traditional format work for the modern guest.



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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Editorial Office: 30501 Agoura Road, Second Floor
Agoura Hills, California 91301 USA
phone 818/871-2204 • fax 913/514-3753

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

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Director of Content Lisa Hurley, lhurley@specialevents.com

Art Director Cheryl Prats, cprats@mac.com

Contributing Editors Susan Cuadrado, Kelly Rehan

Managing Director Melissa Fromento, melissa.fromento@knect365.com

Sales Account Executive Kevin Hacke, kevin.hacke@knect365.com

Sales Account Executive Lisa Perrin, lisa.kayperrin@gmail.com

Principal Operations Director Tracy Feinsilver, tracy.feinsilver@knect365.com

Show Director Tara Melingonis, tara.melingonis@knect365.com

Show Manager Jesse Parziale, jesse.parziale@knect365.com

Sponsorship Coordinator Marie Smith, mariep.smith@knect365.com

Marketing Director Jesse Yeung, jesse.yeung@knect365.com

Senior Director, Production Carlos Lugo, carlos.lugo@informa.com

Production Manager Denise Walde, denise.walde@informa.com

Classified Production Supervisor Greg Araujo, greg.araujo@informa.com

Classified Production Coordinator Terry Gann, terry.gann@informa.com

Digital Marketing Strategist Erica Bengall, erica.bengall@informa.com

Senior Director, User Marketing Desiree Torres, desiree.torres@informa.com

Customer Service 866/505-7173 (USA) or 847/763-9504 (outside USA)

Customer Service List Rental Rosalie Garcia, rosalie.garcia@informa.com; 212/204-4358

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EDITOR'S PAGE

ALL GOOD

The Fontainebleau in Miami. The Dorchester in London. The Peabody in Memphis. The Madinat Jumeirah in Dubai.

Working in special events has, first, enabled me to meet some of the smartest, most creative, and most generous people I have ever known. But second, it has allowed me to travel to wonderful cities and stay in wonderful hotels. Keep your Airbnbs—I want a doorman, a chic lobby bar and better towels than I have at home.

And so it was a pleasure to develop our cover story, which showcases properties that offer not just beautiful ballrooms but also unique event spaces. A party in a penthouse suite? A soiree in a shark aquarium? Some outstanding options are available to you; turn to page 16 to learn more.

And we're 21—at least, our list of the 30 biggest players in event rental just turned 21.

Special Events got its start back in 1982 covering the “party rental” business exclusively. In my mind, rental is the soul of our industry. No other segment knows better who is doing what for which client, whose events perform well, and who is—or is not—paying the bills.

For the majority of companies listed this year, business is brisk. Revenues are strong, and clients are in love with high-end looks. (Velvet is king, and there's a gold rush for tabletop design.) See the full story starting on page 23.

This issue also brings you our annual list of the 50 biggest event planning companies, starting on page 9.

Special events are often—too often—dismissed as frivolous fun. And, honestly, they are fun. They usually offer exciting design, great entertainment and fabulous food. But these elements are only part of a toolkit engineered to create an irresistible experience. Special events are engaging. If they are done right, they draw us in, hitting us with a message before we even realize what's going on.

Looking at the big companies we profile this year, it's impossible to miss the messages that so many event producers are sharing on behalf of their clients. Often, our big companies told us that they are designing events that give a nod to the #MeToo movement. The theme that they promote with their events is one of inclusion. It's a sign of the times, and—I think—a message that special events are uniquely positioned to convey.

Oh, and yes, our Food for Fêtes feature (page 33) covers the best part of the meal: cocktails and dessert. Yes, this issue is all good!

Lisa Henley

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CONFETTI



Endeavour goes Egyptian: The Space Shuttle Endeavour is video-mapped to resemble Tut's tomb; the after-party is themed to 'Carter's Castle'; cocktail hour resembles the dig's camp; entertainers get their Egyptian on (clockwise from top). Photos by Nadine Froger Photography.



Fit for a Pharaoh

L.A.'s California Science Center hits a fundraising gold mine with the Discovery Ball honoring Golden Pharaoh King Tut.

The “King Tut: Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh” exhibit at the California Science Center is a landmark, the largest assembly of artifacts and gold from Tutankhamen’s tomb ever on public display outside Egypt. This inspiring exhibition served as design inspiration for the center’s 20th anniversary Discovery Ball, which brought in a record \$1.6 million. How did the CSC event team pull it off? By taking guests on their own expedition.

WALK THIS WAY The event, which drew some 900 guests, made the most of the center’s multiple levels, leading guests on an expedition akin to the journey undertaken by explorer Howard Carter, the legendary archeologist who discovered Tut’s tomb some 100 years ago.

The progressive party started with cocktails and hors d’oeuvre on the first and second floors of the center. The mood featured a 1920s spin, saluting the era of the quest to

find Tut’s tomb. The “Valley of the Kings” area showcased the contrast between the elegant settings provided by Carter’s wealthy patron, Lord Carnarvon, at the dig in Egypt, with cut-crystal glasses and fine linen. These were set against the dusty scaffolds and canvas field tents used by the explorers. Camels from Windswept Ranch added extra atmosphere.

Guests proceeded to dinner via a passage to the “tomb,” illuminated with gobos that quoted Lord



The big reveal: The gala takes guests on their own expedition to discover Tut's tomb, including the dramatic moment when Carter enters the tomb and says he sees 'wonderful things.' Photo by Nadine Froger Photography.

Carnarvon, asking as the team entered, "Can you see anything?" with Carter's famous reply, "Yes, wonderful things." Images by Lighting designed the dramatic lighting.

KING-SIZE SALUTE From there, guests walked to the Samuel Oschin Pavilion for dinner, catered by Kensington Caterers. Attendees dined on English garden pea soup with poached shrimp and minted yogurt tahini, braised lamb shanks with sumac, tomatoes, root vegetables and garlic herb dust, and a dessert of rose water rice pudding with dates, apricots, fruit coulis and pistachios.

The center's signature installation—the Space Shuttle Endeavour—was video-mapped to the Tut theme with stunning images from BartKresa Studio. CJ Matsumoto and Sons oversaw floral for the event, with a decor team including Jackson Plant Rentals, JC Backings and Premiere Props.

The after-party was themed to the building that Lord Carnarvon built near the dig site in the Valley of the Kings, later dubbed "Carter's Castle." Here, guests enjoyed a Roaring '20s themed evening, with saucy dancing flappers. In all, it was evening of treasures to be treasured. ●

California Science Center 700 Exposition Park Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90037; 323/724-3623; californiasciencecenter.org



LET'S GO GLAMPING

Creating that perfect blend of great outdoors and great style, Shelter Co. offers tents, lounge furniture and accessories for rent to create a gorgeous glamping site. All pieces are designed to work indoors and out, and are available for a one- to three-day rental with a flat-rate delivery fee, the company says. The Shelter team can also create a glamping site despite zero existing infrastructure, managing vendors from catering to entertainment to restrooms. The company also sets up fun excursions such as private winery tours and spa treatments. Need a few butlers on-site as well? They will handle it. **Visit shelter-co.com.**

50 TOP ^{17TH ANNUAL} EVENT COMPANIES

The biggest players share the top trends: client customization, extending the event, and insisting on inclusion.

EDITED BY LISA HURLEY

COMPANY	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR	ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2018 FORECAST)	NOTEWORTHY EVENTS	TOP TRENDS
AgencyEA Chicago www.agencyea.com	Fergus Rooney, Gabrielle Martinez	75 to 85	\$59 million	The team has been busy with the MillerCoors' Distributor Conference brand showcase in Austin, Texas; Hilton's Global Owners Conference; the grand opening of the Tru by Hilton Hotel; Intuit's QuickBooks Connect events; and "Client: Citizen" in association with the Obama Foundation.	AgencyEA's new "State of Experiential" study shows that 90 percent of industry pros say that live event are "critical" to a brand's success; one in three marketers anticipates growth in experiential budgets in the next 18 months; and more than 80 percent of pros say that data provides insights to create more personalized experiences.
Allied Experiential New York www.alliedexperiential.com	Matthew Glass	500	\$10 million	The agency created the Amazon Alexa tour, which is now beginning its second year in the U.S. and has expanded to the U.K. More than 11,000 demos have been given to consumers throughout the tour. The agency has also worked with charities including March of Dimes, UNICEF and Women's Equality Center.	"In the wake of events such as the Women's March and #MeToo movement, more brands and events are taking steps to empower and accommodate women," management says. "The marketing industry is looking for ways to not just create engaging experiences for people, but to impact change in their lives."
Ashfield Meetings and Events Ivyland, Pa. www.ashfieldmeetings.com	Gavin Houston	960 to 1,150	\$125 million to \$160 million	Highlights from the past year have included hosting a private event at Disney's Animal Kingdom for nearly 2,000 attendees.	"Technological innovations are taking a back seat to human-centered design," management says. "The industry is focusing more on using what we know about human behavior, neuroscience and perception to lead the event experience, and technology is becoming more of a supporting function to execute the experience."
Balich Worldwide Shows Milan, Italy www.balichws.com	Gianmaria Serra	7	\$60 million	BWS started the year with its first show in China—"Fang Fu. Forever"—at Beijing's Water Cube with a stage built on the floor of the swimming pool. March saw the debut of "Giudizio Universale: Michelangelo and the Secrets of the Sistine Chapel."	"After the years of consolidation and stabilization, we, as the first Italian company in the market, are undertaking a process of profound transformation through investment in a new market, more stable as the intellectual properties' one," says CEO Gianmaria Serra. "To bring together the know-how of many years of complex events such as the Olympic Ceremonies in a long-term show is a natural and necessary evolution."
Broadstreet New York www.broadstreet.com	Mark Baltazar	32	\$16.5 million	This year Broadstreet changed its tagline from "Exceptional Experiences" to "Provoke. Collaborate. Lead."	"While we still provide exceptional experiences for our clients and their audiences, clients told us our unique differentiator is the ability to help brands tell compelling and memorable stories that move people both intellectually and emotionally," management says.
Bucom International Chicago www.bucom.com	Darlene Krammer	25 to 30	\$10 million	Bucom marks its 31st year in business; "We are grateful to our clients and partners for this success, and we are energized and enthused for the future," management says.	Their 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."
Cerbelli Creative New York www.cerbellcreative.com	Michael Cerbelli	100	\$6 million	A highlight for the team: producing the 25th anniversary gala for Seeds of Peace at New York's Chelsea Piers, featuring former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden.	"Advances in technology are opening up new opportunities for unique, immersive dining experiences," management says, such as the Edible Selfie Photo Booth, which laser-etches guest photos onto cookies, or Cocktails with Drones
CMS Communications Los Angeles www.cmsbiz.com	Diana Zimmerman	8 to 12	\$6 million	While CMS has been busy with events for clients including Firestone, Varian Medical Systems and Shaklee, "We are doing far more consulting," management says, "especially in the area of social marketing and brand strategy."	"Companies remain cost-conscious and not wanting to look as though they are producing extravagant events," management says. "Budgets overall seem to be stabilizing, but not growing."
Corporate Magic Dallas www.corporatemagicinc.com	Jim Kirk	15 to 20	\$30 million to \$35 million	In addition to ongoing work for major companies, Corporate Magic produced the Dallas Cowboys Thanksgiving halftime performance featuring Thomas Rhett on Fox, the Cowboys Christmas at The Star, the production of the opening and closing of the Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif. (including the national TV video-pool feed), and the Academy Sports + Outdoor Store director meeting.	"It's not just about the spectacle," says COO Jeff Kirk. "It's about delivering the right messages through creativity and technology in ways that audiences will remember. We want passive audience members to become active participants. The ability to have a real-time Q&A, with the audience using their smartphones and polling with live results, has been extremely valuable to our clients."

17TH ANNUAL 50 TOP EVENT COMPANIES

COMPANY	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR	ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2018 FORECAST)	NOTEWORTHY EVENTS	TOP TRENDS
CSM Harrisburg, N.C. www.csm.com	Jay Howard	300	\$18 million	CSM continues to diversify in 2018 by adding events such as the Rugby World Cup Sevens, WWE, American Flag Football League, and Final X Wrestling to its resume, while still producing all entertainment "at every major motorsports event in the U.S.," they say. This year has also included work with the USOC, Diet Coke, Fox Sports and NBC Sports.	Event design has evolved over the years as social media continues to change and grow, they say. "When designing events and activations, we not only take into consideration the audience at the event and the audience watching on TV, but also the audience following on social media. Designing assets and interactive elements that are socially shareable is a must at every event we produce."
Departament Moscow www.departament.com	Pavel Nedostoev	70 to 75	\$17.5 million	Events have included the premiere of Lamborghini URUS—an innovative event that was the first Russian interactive show with kinetic projection-mapping, management says. "We also arranged the event YAMAL SPG, which took place above the Arctic Circle. The solemn ceremony of the shipment of the first batch of liquid gas from the Yamal SPG plant was accompanied by an exciting interactive and projection show on the 360 screen."	Big trends in events include moving away from excessive consumption and toward environmental awareness, using Big Data to understand markets, and the need for corporate social responsibility to address inequality in society, management says.
Done Events Dubai, UAE www.doneevents.com	Girish Bhat	8	\$12 million	This year's event roster has included SOLE DBX, RAK National Day, and the Blended Music Festival.	"The biggest trend these days is technology, which is both good and bad in its own way," management says. Although clients are drawn toward high-tech solutions, "This puts away organic and creative thoughts of the good old 'lets have a meeting room in a foam pit!'"
Drury Design Dynamics New York www.drurydesign.com	Jill Drury	25	\$10 million to \$12 million	Highlights of the year ranged from the high-tech "Datatopia" event to a "Sunset Garden Party." The garden party, themed to transport attendees back to a 1960s political campaign, included handmade customized pins, a signature drink, and snapshots of the honoree's career alongside iconic figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. and John F. Kennedy. On the other end of the spectrum, "Datatopia" sucked attendees into a 3-D pop-up comic book world where Good Data battled Bad Data.	"We have noticed a shift towards immersion," management says. "There has been a deeper breaking down of the walls between main tent sessions, keynote sessions, business partner expo space, and networking areas, incorporating TED-like talks in hallways to elevate the experience. Audiences want to feel captivated, exploring multifaceted events that seem as if they were crafted with each attendee in mind."
E=MC2 Events Calgary, Alberta www.emc2events.com	Jocelyn Flanagan	115	\$14 million	This year's event roster has included Energy Disruptors Unite, Music under the Stars, and VGH-UBC Night of a Thousand Stars gala.	Management points to three big trends: the "unconventional conference" featuring immersive experiences that blur the lines between education, inspiration and networking; the influence of Cuban looks in event design; and a growing focus on health and safety.
Elite Productions International Laguna Niguel, Calif. www.eliteproductionsintl.com	Lili Shadab	18 to 25	\$5.75 million	The Elite team points with pride to its transformation of a public parking lot into an event space for three nights of fun, including a "Chinatown" complete with neon signs and street-food vendors; a 1980s "downtown" with "Heartbreaker" songbird Pat Benatar; and finally an all-American "backyard barbecue."	The big trend: technology being used as decor, management says.
Enterprise Events Group San Rafael, Calif. www.eeginc.com	Richard Calcaterra, Matthew Gillam	113	\$46.4 million	EEG solidified its presence in the production market with its work on the Apttus annual user conference, "Accelerate," coinciding with the launch of the company's new OMNI platform. "The story of OMNI is monumental, on par with CRM and ERP, so EEG created a colossal 220-foot-wide canvas to tell the story," management says. "Attendees were rapt with the visuals for the entire journey of human evolution, which tied into the OMNI technology story."	Management points to three big trends: the continued need for networking "brain breaks" even in tech-heavy events; a push toward sustainable food offerings at hotels and venues; and the addition of ancillary events and content in order to create a custom experience for attendees at big events.
Entire Productions San Francisco entireproductions.com	Natasha Miller	800	\$5 million	The team has been busy with the Vernal Equinox Experience, Salesforce Philanthropy Cloud launch, AAA's leadership summit, and a concert for Microsoft.	"Trends are tending to go toward technology, and sometimes it works beautifully, sometimes it takes a bit more work—such as fitting VR goggles on your head—but it always results in big payoffs," management says. "Design is getting more sophisticated; even balloons are looking more architectural and pushing the design envelope."
Eventmakers Toluca Lake, Calif. www.eventmakers.com	Guy Genis, Mark Genis	50 to 75	\$17 million	Notable events have included producing the E3 exhibits for the new "Walking Dead" videogame and AKRacing, a videogame seat company. "We are producing a touring Oculus VR experience that will open in major cities including Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Montreal and London," management adds. The team is currently producing meetings for 12 regions of McDonald's, and just wrapped the Sports Humanitarian Awards, which is telecast during the ESPY awards.	Augmented reality and virtual reality continue to lead trends in events and exhibits, management says. Eventmakers is partnering with cutting-edge graphics houses to build the infrastructure to show off VR experiences.
Eventum Premo Moscow eventum-premo.ru	Alexey Berlov, Alexander Shumovich	65	\$13.5 million	Noteworthy events have included meetings for Sanofi and Takeda in Moscow and Sochi, Russia; presentation of the new Jaguar E-Pace for 400 guests; a SAP Form at which the opening show used AR technology for the first time in Russia; Acer Brand Day; and integrations at festivals in Moscow and St. Petersburg for brands including MeganFon, Tinkoff Bank, S7 Airlines, and Smart.	Management notes how powerful the digital extension of an event can be: "For example, you hold a marketing event for a limited group of VIP audiences/specially selected lucky people. But the event is so interesting that the broadcast of the event is watched by hundreds of thousands of people; reporting and teaser rolls are gaining millions of views. Digital leaving the project leads to explosive growth of the audience."

17TH ANNUAL 50 TOP EVENT COMPANIES

COMPANY	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR	ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2018 FORECAST)	NOTEWORTHY EVENTS	TOP TRENDS
EventWorks Los Angeles www.eventworks.com	Ted Bowers, Janet Elkins	125	\$7.5 million	"EventWorks excelled at creating concepts that successfully integrated iconic American experiences in various aspects for a large variety of international clients," management says. An example: The team took over a rooftop in downtown L.A., where the Chinese guests of a European auto-maker enjoyed classic American songs, with a few popular Chinese songs thrown in.	Food takes center stage at events today, they say. "Food is no longer an afterthought but now needs to be at the forefront of the experience. People are craving to be wowed—new tastes, new visuals, new presentation."
Extraordinary Events Sherman Oaks, Calif. www.extraordinaryevents.com	Andrea Michaels	40 to 50	\$10 million to \$12 million	The EE team is proud of its ongoing relationships with longtime clients, including shareholder meetings for CEMEX and branded marketing events for Mary Kay, Kaplan Trucking, a medical device company, and Mueller Corp. Another focus: "Events with meaning," included L.A. Promise Fund and Girls Day L.A., they say.	"Strategy is driving our events," management says. "Consciousness of what the word 'experiential' really means affects the delivery of any project. The end goal and measuring its success through data are the ultimate differentiators in planning an event."
Filmmaster Events Dubai, London, Milan, Rio, Rome www.filmmasterevents.com	Andrea Varnier	80	\$70 million	The event roster this year has included E-Prix in Rome, Turkmenbashi International Seaport opening, Saudi Arabia Camel Festival, Campari Red Diaries 2018 international launch, and Costa Smeralda Waterfront debut.	The event industry is constantly becoming more relevant in the consumer experience, management says. "Today, more than ever, the focus of our projects is on the 'content.' Large sports events remain one of our focal points; however, live entertainment remains the essence of our business, and many projects are developed around it."
FIRST Global Events Agency New York www.firstagency.com	Maureen Ryan Fable	250 plus	\$45 million	A year of growth for the team, including the acquisition of U.K.-based event agency Clive. The event roster has included the Oath Digital Content NewFront, Univision Communications upfront, Prudential investor conference, and Yahoo Mail's "Out of Office" activation.	Management points to three big trends: the melding of technology and design to create immersive installations; a move away from digital events to stress the live experience, which can be more unifying; and the requirements imposed by the General Data Protection Regulation, which impacts data handling.
Freeman Dallas www.freeman.com	Chris Cavanaugh	5,000 plus	\$330 million	Freeman "continues to expand global agency operations and capabilities," management says. "We enhanced our creative and digital services with the acquisitions of Fusion Brand Experiences and Helios Interactive. BaAM Productions is also now part of Freeman, specializing in sports and entertainment experience marketing."	The art of heightened digital experiences is essential in the event marketplace today, Freeman says. "The big trends in special events are activations that include AI, digital engagements, health and wellness, 'wow factors,' and data capture and tracking. Attendees expect to be blown away and are intrigued by engaging with digital in new ways."
George P. Johnson Experience Marketing Auburn Hills, Mich. www.gpj.com	Chris Meyer	2,500	\$333 million (Special Events estimate)	The GPJ team continues to invest in digital tools, data analytics, and production talent, along with bringing in a security expert to lead its safety and security practice. GPJ expanded its role in Google's experiential marketing portfolio, broadened its automotive practice to include Mazda, NIO and Aptiv, and helped IBM consolidate siloed business unit events into the flagship conference "Think."	The good: Brands are recognizing the power of digital integration and live production theatrics, both to the immediate attendee group as well as to the broadened audience that can be acquired through sharing live and captured digital content from the event. The bad: Many clients still struggle with integrating their event data insights into their other marketing channels, management says.
Go West Creative Nashville, Tenn. www.gwgc.com	David Fischette	100	\$9.5 million	New from Go West: the 3-D "Dinner Time Stories" show, featuring a 4-inch animated chef. The first pop-up restaurant debuted in the U.S. in Nashville, Tenn.; new locations will open in Toronto and Mexico this year.	The team sees a continued role for its "Spoken Cinema" presentation as a valuable way for brands to present their message.
Hargrove Lanham, Md. www.hargroveinc.com	Tim McGill	600	\$80 million	Annual events, such as the large national conferences hosted by AIPAC, CBCF, WBENC and NEA, continued to grow and evolve in 2018, management says. "With November 2017 being an off-year election, our inaugural activity this year focused on gubernatorial events, such as those for Virginia's Governor Northam." Hargrove also oversaw the Washington Capitals Stanley Cup parade.	"With the explosion of XM [experiential marketing], we have seen an uptick in the move toward more holistic brand experiences—not only in the corporate event market but also with associations, not-for-profits and governmental agencies," management says. "Increasingly, we are working with our clients to define the 'why' of an event before diving into the 'what and how.'"
Henry V Events Portland, Ore. www.henryvevents.com	Katja Asaro	150 plus	\$22 million to \$24 million	The Henry V team has had its busiest year to date, management says, executing noteworthy activations for its marquee clients including the Adidas Easter Bowl players reception; the Tillamook Road Trip, the iconic Oregon dairy brand's mobile tour through the Midwest and South; and the Daimler Trucks North America's Dealer Meeting at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans.	"A trend we are seeing is event integration into a multichannel marketing mix," Henry V says. "Our clients are not only looking for experiences that resonate with attendees, but experiences that also create content for their other marketing channels."
Index Bangkok www.indexcreativevillage.com	Kreirngkarn Kanjanapokin, Kreirngkrai Kanjanapokin	85	\$69 million	The year started off with a bang for Index, as it produced the "countdown to 2018" New Year's Eve celebration at Central World in Bangkok. Coming up next: the grand opening of Icon Siam, the "mother of all shopping malls," in Bangkok.	The big trend: "The move into digital marketing and online marketing, which is a good chance for us to turn crisis into opportunity," management says. "Our main aim to succeed in each project, that we create new experiences to touch customers' emotions."
InVision Communications San Francisco www.iv.com	Rod Mickels	175 to 190	\$71 million	The past 12 months of events have included Genentech NSM 2018, Treasure Wine Estate Wine Launch, Dell EMC World 2018, ServiceNow Knowledge18, ServiceNow SKO 2018, Oracle OpenWorld 2017, Oracle HCM World 2018, Amway Achievers 2017, NetApp Converge 2018, Siemens PLM World Connections 2018, and Siemens Innovation Leadership Summit 2018, among others.	Stay close: Storytelling and personalization continue to be the top trends influencing the marketplace today, management says. "Crafting a story around messaging is more influential and impactful than traditional forms of communication," they explain. "More companies are going the extra mile to instill moments of delight and surprise into their events, so that attendees feel more appreciated and closer to the brand."



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17TH ANNUAL 50 TOP EVENT COMPANIES

COMPANY	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR	ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2018 FORECAST)	NOTEWORTHY EVENTS	TOP TRENDS
Jack Morton Worldwide Boston www.jackmorton.com	Josh McCall	2,500 plus (Special Events estimate)	\$100 million (Special Events estimate)	The big house that Jack built: "In the last year, the offices in our global network added a total of 111 new clients to our agency roster including brands such as Google, Netflix and Royal Caribbean," management says. The team is also committed to increasing diversity and inclusion: "We were also proud signatories of the Time's Up/Advertising movement—locking arms with female creatives across the industry to advance the policies, practices and decisions to inspire a more diverse, balanced and accountable leadership."	"At Jack Morton, we believe in the power of experiences, and it is extraordinary experiences that strengthen relationships," they say. "In today's era of digital everywhere, there is no division between digital and physical experiences. You can use technology to create more immersive, interconnected and intelligent experiences, but this is only when it should be used—not just to be flashy or trendy. Technology needs to add value to the brand experience—not the other way around."
LEO Events Memphis, Tenn. www.leoevents.com	Cindy Brewer	150	\$28 million	The LEO team roars over the past year with work including the KAABOO music festival (which will add two new locations in 2019) and events for ExxonMobil, Walmart, AutoZone and emerging Fortune 1000 companies, including Mid-America Apartment Communities, Kowa Pharmaceuticals and Asurion. LEO also produced the National Civil Rights Museum's MLK50 anniversary event honoring the life of Martin Luther King Jr.	The LEO team sees three big trends: the rise of internal meetings, including diversity training events; larger face-to-face meetings to build connections; and the need to take the initiative to forecast and plan for tighter budgets from corporate clients in 2019 and 2020.
Linkviva Dubai www.linkviva.com	Niousha Ehsan	50 to 100	\$22 million	Highlights of the year have included the Dubai Marina Music Festival, Uber event at the Middle East Film and Comic-Con, Mercedes-Benz S-Class launch, the marketing, activation, decor and brand campaign for the Dubai Mall, and UAE Innovation Hub.	In a region that "goes inside" for at least six months of the year due to the heat, malls and retail spaces that are among the main drivers for tourism are turning to art and culture in order to create experiences outside of the usual shopping activities of those coming to their locations, management says; "The government sector is also looking outside of the norm and expecting more human experiences and innovative solutions within their highly prestigious events."
Live Marketing Chicago www.livemarketing.com	Anne Trompeter	25 to 50	\$10 million	The Live Marketing team conceived, designed and activated a VR and HoloLens experience for a leading Fortune 50 technology company that boosted attendee engagement at trade shows and an 1,800-attendee, large-scale consumer-based event. The team also produced an intimate, innovative event for 100 attendees for a Fortune 500 health-care company, which brought together customers and company executives for idea sharing through unique content-delivery formats including a bare-bones, journalist-style host interview.	"Technology for the sake of technology won't drive results at face-to-face events," management says. Instead, "Digital activations need to be simple, targeted and facilitated with a human touch for maximum engagement."
MarketEmotion Moscow www.marketemotion.ru	Ilya Gorbachev	65	\$8.8 million	This year's event roster has included "The Day of the Moscow Students"—a big concert for Gen Z; "Entrepreneur's Day," a concert program for Russian entrepreneurs; and "Person of the Year," honoring employees in the nuclear energy industry.	Today's event world brings both good and bad. It's hard to forecast future business, but purchasing departments have made the market "cleaner," management says.
MGM Resorts Event Productions Las Vegas www.mgmresorts-events.com	Jim Murren	1,700	\$18.5 million	The year 2018 has brought the opening of the new MGM Springfield [Mass.]; the rebranding and reopening of Monte Carlo to Park MGM in Las Vegas; an incentive travel awards gala with 2,200 guests in Chicago; and "significant growth in event business," management says.	Las Vegas continues to be a strong destination, and MGM Resorts International captures the lion's share of that market, says management. But, planning windows continue to get shorter, expectations are high, and a percentage of new-to-the-industry planners can complicate the process, adding to high stress, they say.
Next Group Milan, Rome www.nextgroup.eu	Marco Jannarelli	70	\$24 million	Highlights of the past 12 months have included the launch of a new luxury car held in the famous Italian seaside town of Portofino; the 2018 Sanpellegrino Young Chef competition; and the naming ceremony of the new Viking Orion cruise ship for an audience of 400 international journalists and 160 NASA guests, including a scientific exhibition and storytelling combining Nordic fairy tales, "ultra-technology" and fireworks.	Big data and technology are shaping the future of the events marketing industry, management says: "Data should be used to determine your objectives and your target audience, and to define the event strategy. Cutting-edge technology shouldn't be an end in itself; it should be used to improve attendee experience, to turn attendees from passive to engaged, and even to generate emotions, in order to drive a change in the consumers' behavior."
Opus Agency Beaverton, Ore. www.opusagency.com	Monte Wood	740	\$67.8 million	In the last six months, Opus has completed three acquisitions: CRG Events, MAS Event and Design, and Level 2 Design. "This [third] acquisition demonstrates our commitment to creating a best-in-class experiential agency," management says. "The addition of these agencies gives Opus a unique competitive edge and expands the agency's client pool considerably."	"Event portfolio strategy is becoming less of a luxury and more of a necessity; more brands are taking a hard look at the purpose and goal of each event they execute," management says. "Marketers with a proper event strategy in place are reaping the benefit in a number of key areas. These companies tend to receive bigger budgets and measure their programs more effectively than brands without a corporate-wide event strategy."
Pacific Event Productions/ PEP Creative San Diego www.pacificevents.com	Joanne Mera	850	\$10.5 million	A highlight this year: A global racing series called Extreme Sailing had its American debut in October in San Diego. PEP Creative worked closely with the international organizing committee to create a positive experience for the public and the world-wide racing teams.	Corporate meeting planners see the value in using a single production company to provide service as part of their "in-house" management team, the Pacific team says: "It's become a more collaborative effort to fulfill the client's objective, and they have been able to be more transparent with budgets and collective goals."
Party Planners West Culver City, Calif. www.ppwin.com	Patricia K. Ryan	25 plus	\$28 million	Party Planners West has been a major force in the ever-expanding field of special events for more than 30 years. A big ongoing project: the Super Bowl Experience.	

17TH ANNUAL 50 TOP EVENT COMPANIES

COMPANY	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS PER YEAR	ANNUAL REVENUE FROM SPECIAL EVENTS (2018 FORECAST)	NOTEWORTHY EVENTS	TOP TRENDS
Paulette Wolf Events Chicago www.paulettewolf-events.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 Mercer, Samsung, Google, the Chicago Cubs, NetApp and CDW, multiple product-launch events for HMSHost, grand opening events for Rivers Casino and various mall developers, private anniversary events featuring former U.S. President Bill Clinton, Sting, and Stevie Wonder, as well as many charity galas, including a nontraditional gala for the Nature Conservancy's 60th anniversary.	The big trend for 2018 is to get back to the basics. "While technology and the 'wow factor' will still play a role in creating personalized and unique experiences for guests, they will more likely play a lesser role, with many events going back to important event basics, specifically with event safety and security," management says. "After the tragic events in Las Vegas, more clients are focusing on these aspects."
Pico Group Hong Kong www.pico.com	Lawrence Chia	360	\$385 million	Pico has had an "excellent year" in its markets around the world, activating large-scale national events such as Bahrain National Day, Singapore National Day, UAE National Day and the month-long Expo Negaraku in Malaysia. "Our strengths in the worlds of sports and arts continued to flourish, as we helped Worldwide Olympic Partner Procter and Gamble create the P&G Family Home at the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympics; provided total brand activation services for several corporate sponsors at the 2018 FIFA World Cup; and delivered the stunning Art Central in Hong Kong and i Light Marina Bay in Singapore," they say.	Technology has the power to enhance every part of every event, the Pico team says. "Companies that can harness this power will not only delight audiences and deliver personalized and immersive experiences through AR, VR, and facial and voice recognition tech, as well as the incredible promise offered by the application of artificial intelligence—these companies will create results for organizers through enhanced security, better communication, a wider reach and greater ROI."
Podegiki Moscow www.podegiki.ru	Sergey Gorbachev	164	\$15.2 million	The year's event roster has included big events for Janssen, Johnson & Johnson, Oriflame, Avon, S7 Airlines, KIA, L'Oréal, Chanel, E&Y, Mars, Utair, Nivea, Gett Taxi, PepsiCo and Atlases Business Forum, management says.	Today, "Technologies are developing at an incredible speed and to meet current trends, it is necessary to spend more resources on new solutions," management says. "Therefore, the issue of the effectiveness of measures becomes more acute than ever."
Ruby J Events London, New York www.rubyjevents.com	Joanna Greenfield, Lucie Robins	20 to 25	\$6 million	The team's New York office has been busy taking clients to major sporting events including the World Cup, Super Bowl and Winter Olympics. The London team oversees both corporate and social events.	"Social media is having a huge impact on how events are styled this year," management says, "from wedding design ideas online to brand activation ideas. The internet is a world of inspiration."
Sequence New York www.sequence-events.com	Adam Sloyer	50	\$5 million	Notable projects this year include employee engagement events for LinkedIn in New York and Chicago, the multi-city #BeYou Empowerment Series for the WNBA, Global Alumni Forum for the Wharton School, and "a slew" of activations and media events for LEGO.	"In the midst of #MeToo and some of the other large social movements, there's an increased sensitivity to diversity, authenticity and inclusion," management says, "in particular, cultivating content centered around sincere interactions and building trust."
Sequoia Productions Los Angeles www.sequoiaprod.com	Cheryl Cecchetto	30 to 45	\$12 million to \$20 million	This year's event roster has included the Academy Awards Governors Ball, Primetime Emmys Governors Ball, G'Day USA Gala, AMPAS Governors Awards, and events for the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. and Goldman Sachs.	Social media activities incorporated into corporate and entertainment industry events remain relevant, management says. Clients clamor for innovative food presentation and drink recipes that offer unusual taste combinations. And on Sequoia's wish list: "We continue to be starved for good variety in furniture styles and looks to make sure events are varied."
Tamar Productions Chicago www.tamarproductions-inc.com	Mary Ann Rose	150 to 200	\$15 million	The team has been busy this year with the Magnificent Mile Lights Festival, Eversight Gala, and Face the Future Motown Magic, along with events for McDonald's, Riverside Medical Center, Warranty Group Award's Presentation, Illinois Governor's Conference, and the National Association of Government Guarantee Lenders.	Challenges include the need to go on working with limited budgets and "nonprofessionals entering the fray with no insurance and no experience, but offering lower pricing," management says. To cope, the Tamar team is "developing 'out of the box' experiences for older clients who want to see something new and exciting."
The Special Event Company Raleigh, N.C. www.specialeventco.com	Sally Webb Berry, CSEP	85	\$8.5 million	The event roster this year has included Boy Scouts of America Office of Philanthropy events, annual meeting for Pepsi Bottling Ventures, software launches in Australia, groundbreaking for Credit Suisse new headquarters, management of the Enterprising Woman Conference and the North Carolina CEO Forum, and delivering the 12th annual Academic Event Professional Conference in New Orleans. And the cherry on top: "We celebrated our 30th anniversary at our new headquarters in Raleigh, N.C."	"Redefining special events as live communications and brand engagement are key components in delivering attendee experiences," management says. "Physical interaction and session participation of guests are necessary components in planning meetings. The 'un-conference' method of delivering content is very popular and highly effective."
Viola Communications Abu Dhabi, UAE www.viola.ae	Ammar Hani Sharaf	70	\$15 million	This year's event roster has included the Morocco in Abu Dhabi festival; Innovator UAE and Abu Dhabi Science Festival 2018; the ADSSA 2018 GITEX pavilion; Tawteen Awards for Emiratisation; and the Khalifa Fund Pitch@Palace in coordination with HRH Prince Andrew.	Market conditions in place last year are still in force, management says, including a focus on digital support, consumer engagement and cost-effectiveness.
VOK DAMS Worldwide Wuppertal, Germany www.vokdams.de	Colja M. Dams	450 plus	\$252 million	This international powerhouse has been seen "a great year," management says. "Beside noteworthy events for our key accounts such as BMW, IBM, Porsche, Bayer, Adidas, Montblanc and HERE Technologies, we won new clients including Ujet, SAP, Philip Morris, PepsiCo and L'Oréal."	Think fast: "The latest trend in live marketing concerns the way companies and agencies work," management says. "Agile event management is the order of the day. Agile project or event management means the implementation of efficient and complex communication strategies. The more traditional working method has changed to more initiative and responsibility, with adaptive planning, quick coordination and the courage to change when required."

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 address such errors promptly. All figures are in U.S. dollars. **Should you be on this list? Tell us at info@specialevents.com.**

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Beauty at the beach: The Hilton Santa Barbara offers its elegant Grand Ballroom (below) along with the Plaza Del Sol outdoors (here).

The Ballroom and Beyond

As a special event venue, a hotel ballroom is a given. But let's go beyond the ballroom. Here, we look at hotels that offer both beautiful ballrooms and enticing specialty spaces. Enjoy! — The Editors

BY THE SEA

Hilton Santa Barbara Beachfront Resort, Santa Barbara, Calif.

www3.hilton.com/en/hotels/california/hilton-santa-barbara-beachfront-resort-SBAFPHH/index.html

This newly renovated property offers eight villa-style buildings with beautiful views from every room, along with 40,000 square feet of flexible indoor and outdoor event space.

The ballroom: The nearly 12,000-square-foot Grand Ballroom accommodates up to 1,000 guests. The newly remodeled ballroom offers chic new lighting fixtures, coastal-inspired carpeting, and rigging points. It can be divided into smaller sections.



And beyond: The 20,000-square-foot Plaza Del Sol hosts up to 1,000 in a 360-degree outdoor event space with panoramic views of the Santa Barbara coast and Santa Ynez Mountains. Also available: the Rotunda, a 5,000-square-foot event space directly above the Plaza that connects via a dramatic curved staircase.



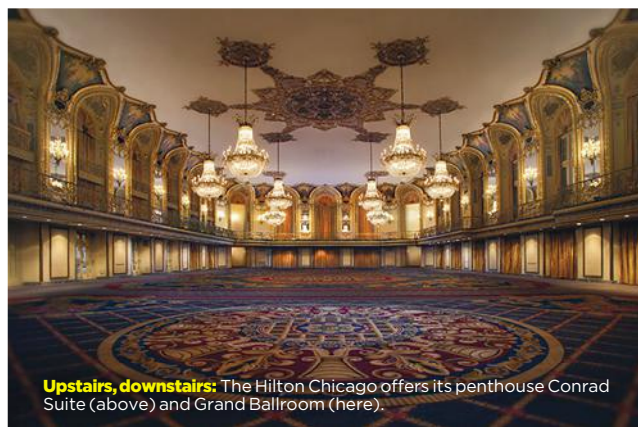
Enchanting estate: Famed Gleneagles (here) offers both formal event spaces along with the fun of the newly opened Ochil House (left).

ALL ROADS LEAD TO SCOTLAND Gleneagles, Perthshire, Scotland www.gleneagles.com

When it first opened its doors in 1924, this magnificent estate in the heart of Scotland was described as a “Riviera in the Highlands.” Today, Gleneagles continues to offer an array of attractions including a five-star luxury hotel, three championship golf courses, an award-winning spa, and the only restaurant in Scotland to hold two Michelin stars. Guests can enjoy activities ranging from fishing to gun-dog handling.

The ballroom: Ideal for larger celebrations, launches and conferences, the Gleneagles Ballroom can host up to 260 guests for meetings, conferences or dining, and up to 360 for cocktails.

And beyond: The newly renovated Ochil House on the grounds of Gleneagles offers distinctive event rooms housed in a 4,000-square-foot building. The entire house can be booked for events, but individual spaces are available as well, including the Broadcasting Room (for seated dinners up to 14), the Pantry (20 for receptions) and the Bar (above left).



Upstairs, downstairs: The Hilton Chicago offers its penthouse Conrad Suite (above) and Grand Ballroom (here).

HOT IN CHICAGO Hilton Chicago, Chicago www.hilton.com/official_site/chicago

Conveniently located on iconic Michigan Avenue across from Grant Park, the recently renovated Hilton Chicago boasts more than 234,000 square feet of event space.

The ballroom: Steeped in history, the 12,640-square-foot Grand Ballroom features 34-foot ceilings and the original 1927 French-crafted fixtures, Czechoslovakian crystal chandeliers, and fresco-style oil paintings. Completely free of pillars—an architectural ingenuity at its time—the ballroom offers banquet seating for up to 1,100.

And beyond: Named after the Hilton Chicago’s founder, Conrad Hilton, the hotel offers its two-story, 5,000-square-foot penthouse Conrad Suite, a converted rooftop ballroom. Ideal for private events of up to 150 people, the suite features views of Lake Michigan along with a stunning spiral staircase leading up to the Grand Space, complete with a lounge, a dining table seating up to 14, a billiards room, a bar, three bedrooms with freestanding bathtubs, and a kitchen. ▶

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Good deal: The Ace Hotel offers Liberty Hall (top) and its 'chef's table' (above).

ALL ACES

Ace Hotel, New York
www.acehotel.com

Perched in an historic 1900s-era building in midtown Manhattan, the Ace Hotel prides itself on its central location with easy access to museums, shops, theaters and bars, along with its hip vibe.

The ballroom: Liberty Hall is a flexible, 2,700-square-foot space featuring parquet floors, 10-foot ceilings, and state-of-the-art electronic capabilities. The space can host events ranging from receptions and cocktail parties to fashion shows, corporate meetings and concerts.

And beyond: The hotel offers a "chef's table" located in the kitchen of the John Dory Oyster Bar restaurant. Seating 10 lucky guests and offering family-style service, the setting provides a behind-the-scenes view of the inner workings of a bustling restaurant.

Also, the Boardroom offers a 20-seat walnut meeting table and high-end tech capabilities. ►



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Elegant era: The Viennese Ballroom at the Langham Huntington (here) and the hotel's Horseshoe Garden (right).



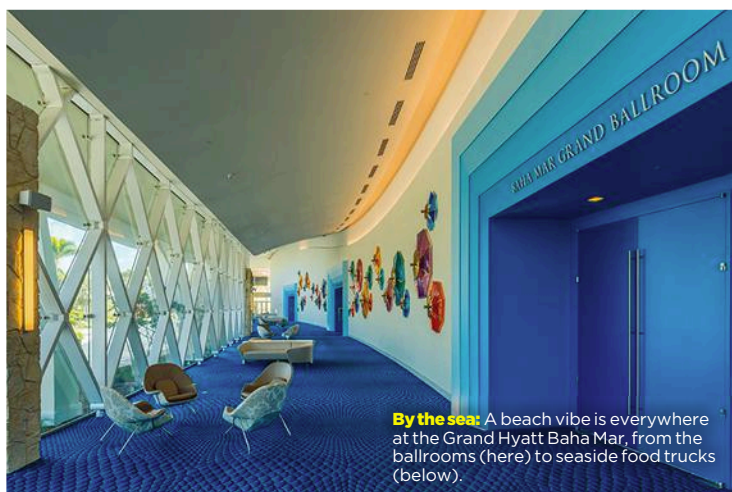
POLISHED IN PASADENA

The Langham Huntington, Pasadena, Calif.
www.langhamhotels.com/en/the-langham/pasadena

This landmark hotel—a fixture in Pasadena for more than 100 years—offers 379 elegantly furnished rooms, suites and cottages, all with expansive views of the surrounding landscape and nearby mountains.

The ballroom: The 4,085-square-foot Viennese Ballroom features high-arch ceilings and an adjoining terrace for alfresco meals with a view of the hotel pool. It can host 270 for banquets and 450 for receptions.

And beyond: Originally the hotel's main entrance, the Horseshoe Garden is a park-like enclave behind the hotel, dotted with flowers, palm trees and lush greenery. It can host up to 600 for banquets and 800 for receptions.



By the sea: A beach vibe is everywhere at the Grand Hyatt Baha Mar, from the ballrooms (here) to seaside food trucks (below).

ISLAND TIME

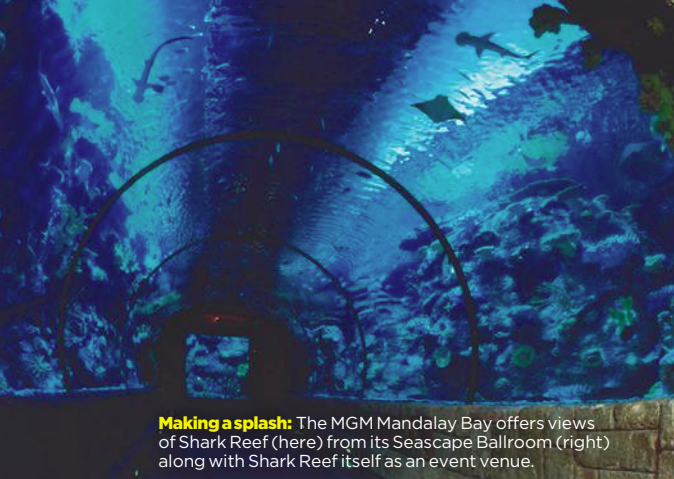
Grand Hyatt Baha Mar, Nassau, Bahamas
bahamar.grand.hyatt.com

Managed by Grand Hyatt Baha Mar, the Baha Mar Convention, Arts and Entertainment Center in Nassau offers 200,000 square feet of flexible indoor and outdoor space and is among the Caribbean's largest facilities. The facility offers 82,000 square feet of meeting space; the 100,000 square feet of outdoor space can be broken up into five separate garden areas. Groups can customize elaborate fountain shows using their own images, music and graphics.

The ballroom: The property offers not one but three nautical-inspired ballrooms, 16 breakout rooms, and a 2,000-seat entertainment venue, all featuring island themed decor.

And beyond: The property's three Airstream food trucks—Sandy Dog, El Jefe and Blue Smoke—can park along Cable Beach to offer a fun dining experience for private events.





Making a splash: The MGM Mandalay Bay offers views of Shark Reef (here) from its Seascape Ballroom (right) along with Shark Reef itself as an event venue.



HIT THE BEACH

MGM Mandalay Bay,
Las Vegas

www.mandalaybay.com

This destination resort set on 120 lush acres features more than 3,000 rooms and an 11-acre "pool paradise" with real sand and a wave pool. Property highlights include the 12,000-seat Mandalay Bay Events Center and the 1.7-million-square-foot Mandalay Bay Convention Center.

The ballroom: The Seascape Ballroom offers 1,675 square feet of space, including a 175-square-foot outdoor patio and lounge. Its four floor-to-ceiling windows offer a living seascape for cocktail receptions of up to 100 guests; additional Shark Reef event space is available for larger groups.

The Beachside Ballroom offers views of the property's Beach. Available year-round, the ballroom can host seated dinners for 80 and receptions for 150; planners can also book the Beach and the Villas Soleil, located atop the ballroom.

And beyond: Shark Reef—the property's \$60 million aquarium—is available for buy-out for groups of up to 1,500 guests. And if the bride and groom want an early-morning ceremony, the venue is available for weddings, too. Now, that's really taking the plunge! ▶

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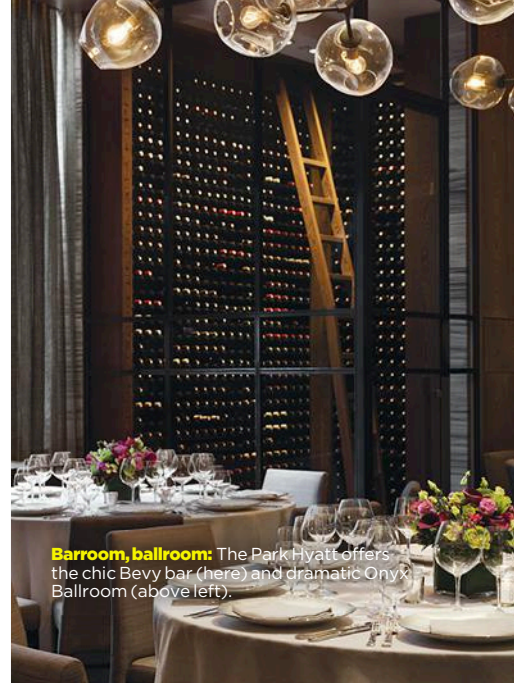


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Barroom, ballroom: The Park Hyatt offers the chic Bevy bar (here) and dramatic Onyx Ballroom (above left).

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I'LL TAKE MANHATTAN

Park Hyatt, New York
www.hyatt.com/en-US/hotel/new-york/park-hyatt-new-york/nycph

Located just steps from Manhattan's Central Park, Hyatt's global flagship hotel features 210 oversize rooms. All told, more than 8,000 square feet of event space is available.

The ballroom: The 3,100-square-foot Onyx Room offers backlit white Italian onyx walls for a striking look. The ballroom can accommodate 220 for banquets and 450 for receptions, boosted by an additional 1,300 square feet of pre-function space.

The foyer features washed oak paneling, hand-painted watercolor panels, and carpeting that was digitally created to replicate an aerial view of Central Park foliage.

And beyond: Bevy is a chic event space that features a dramatic art installation at the center of a contemporary cocktail bar. It can host 110 for banquets and 140 for receptions.

The space features natural daylight, wood-paneled walls, and a custom light art installation from London-based studio Random International. ●

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30 TOP RENTAL COMPANIES

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

These are heady days for the rental business, with strong business and a luxe look (think gold and velvet). If only we could get over our labor woes!

EDITED BY LISA HURLEY

204 EVENTS

Los Angeles
204events.com

TOP OFFICER Alton Butler

COMPANY BASICS Founded in 2010, this full-line rental company operates out of a 115,000-square-foot warehouse. The company also owns Skyline 204, an 8,000-square-foot event space in Hollywood.

CURRENT EVENTS This year's event roster has included Strong Black Lead for Netflix, I.Am.Angel Foundation's Trans4m Gala, Make-a-Wish Foundation's Annual Wish Gala, and the L.A. Zoo's Beastly Ball.

WHAT'S RENTING "Decor and furniture that involve mixed metals or have a rustic-chic vibe are hot right now," management says. "There's also a trend of mixing modern with midcentury pieces. With the trend of mixed metals, our rose gold and Donatella lines are quite popular." And 204 will have big news soon: The company plans to debut a new soundstage complex within the next two years, offering facilities for special events and film shoots.

WHAT'S NEXT So social: "Social media helps us keep our customers engaged while also useful as a platform to gather our customers' opinions and feedback," management says, "in addition to keeping us up to date on what is trending in the industry based on what our followers like and seeing what our competitors are doing." Further, "It's a great tool for our branding."

AI PARTY

Covina, Calif.
aipartyrental.com

TOP OFFICERS Chet Fortney, CEO; Rene Martinez, COO
COMPANY BASICS In business more than 20 years, management takes pride in being "more than just another rental company," they say. AI offers a big, diverse inventory of structures, flooring, electrical, lighting, staging, furniture, tabletop items and decor, along with services including event design, branding and custom fabrication: "Our 65,000 square feet of warehouse space on four-plus acres of land is strategically located in the center of southern California to serve all of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties."

CURRENT EVENTS Event highlights of the past year have included the Breeders' Cup, Fashion Week El Paseo, Palm Desert Food and Wine Festival, Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, World Police and Fire Games, Hard Summer Music Festival, Electric Daisy Carnival Las Vegas, Kaskade

Sun Soaked Beach Festival, iHeartRadio Music Awards, MTV Movie and TV Awards, Kaya Fest, Surf City Marathon and Amgen Tour of California.

WHAT'S RENTING The company's big business in big outdoor festivals has led to a focus on structures. "Our largest A-frame structure can span 50,000 square feet, or an area equivalent to 12 NBA basketball courts, with our total structure inventory covering 300,000 square feet, or six NFL football fields," managements says. "By adding glass, hard walls, doors, flooring and other accessories, these spaces are transformed into a significant event space."

WHAT'S NEXT Event design is trending to Bohemian and midcentury modern, AI says: "It's an artsy, carefree look pulled off by layering colors, patterns and textures, an eclectic style that combines some functional teak pieces, geometric shapes, soothing clean lines, and some warm tones to add depth to the event." The company is proud of its fabrication shop: "Our team of custom fabricators consists of seamstresses, finish carpenters, welders and upholsterers that play a huge role in being able to execute the design work and keep it within budget; this sets us apart from everyone else in the industry."

ALL OCCASIONS PARTY RENTAL

Pittsburgh
www.allparty.com

TOP OFFICERS Arthur Brown, president-CEO; Jason Brown, COO

COMPANY BASICS For 40 years, All Occasions has provided an extensive range of rental items including tabletop, chairs, tenting, serving and foodservice equipment, and more. Sister company Marbella Event Furniture and Decor Rental features one-of-a-kind inventory in bars, event furniture, tables, chairs, decor, lighting and branding elements. Both companies serve the Maryland, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia markets.

CURRENT EVENTS Busy over the past year with Dick's Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon, Spring Hat Luncheon for Pittsburgh's parks, Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix, Hillman Cancer Center Gala, and a wide range of private social events. New: a state-of-the-art showroom in downtown Cleveland.

WHAT'S RENTING The gold rush goes on: "We upgraded almost all product to have a gold option in the last two years to accommodate our clients' need for the soaring trend," they say. Another luxe look: "Velvet has taken

over the event furniture world in 2018, for plush lounge settings in weddings and social events. This year we offer velvet modular furniture pieces alongside velvet chair pads to pull the velvet texture throughout the entire event."

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 note, pointing to the popularity of "printed windows, mirrors, tent windows, floors, bars, tables and chandelier shades."

APRES EVENT DECOR AND TENT RENTAL

Minneapolis
www.aprespary.com

TOP OFFICERS Charlie Feldbaum, Michael Feldbaum
COMPANY BASICS Located in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Apres is a "family-grown" business now celebrating 31 years as a premier provider of event rental services, specializing in the upper Midwest.

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

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

WHAT'S NEXT The tight labor market still pinches operations: "The demand for our services are at a record high, and skilled labor is more difficult to find than ever," management says. "This combination requires us to continually work harder and smarter for our customers. People aren't only looking for a great value, but they are looking for top-notch service, which we pride ourselves on offering our clients every time." The good news: "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 GROUP**London****www.arenagroup.com****TOP OFFICER** Greg Lawless

COMPANY BASICS From its origins in the 1800s in the U.K., today's entity was founded in 2007 and operates in seven countries, providing "turnkey comprehensive event solutions for the most prestigious events and brands around the world," management says.

CURRENT EVENTS This year's event roster has included projects for Wimbledon, PGA Championship, Royal Ascot, Met Gala, ITV "Dancing on Ice" show, Hong Kong Sevens, HSBC Golf Championship, ATP Tennis Finals, and the Frieze New York art fair.

WHAT'S RENTING In-demand products and services vary by region, with exhibition services biggest in MEA countries, while it's seating in the U.S. and refrigeration services in the U.K.

WHAT'S NEXT "Labor is always a hot topic" in the U.S., management says.

ATLAS EVENT RENTAL**Boynton Beach, Fla.****www.atlaseventrental.com****TOP OFFICER** Eric Wechsler

COMPANY BASICS Family-owned and -operated for more than three decades, Atlas Event Rental serves south Florida as the "premier full-service event rental company in the region," they say. Handling corporate, social and wedding events, the company prides itself on its extensive collection of inventory, as well as its "unmatched" customer service.

CURRENT EVENTS This year has been bustling, with the team averaging 50 orders a weekend during season. Highlights have included Art Basel, Lynn University graduation, and the launch of a new Norwegian cruise ship, management says.

WHAT'S RENTING Unique dance floors—including a white round, black and white patterns, and smoked oak—are favorites with clients. "This season, we also note that it's been all about the tableware, with colored goblets and china featuring unique prints flying off of the shelves," they say.

WHAT'S NEXT "Tabletop items are finally getting their due in 2018, with bold china and serving pieces really making an impact on the overall tablescape," management says. "Clients are giving as much notice to these elements as they would the linens and centerpieces. Unique furniture is making its way into layouts—we're seeing linen-less tables as well as stools in place of low seating at long tables."

BRIGHT EVENT RENTALS**Los Angeles****bright.com****TOP OFFICER** Michael Bjornstad

COMPANY BASICS Bright provides full-service event rentals throughout California and Arizona, focusing on high-quality, innovative products combined with "exceptional service and unmatched event expertise," management says.

CURRENT EVENTS This year has seen Bright execute galas, weddings, corporate events, industry celebrations, milestone events, food festivals, sporting events, and "a wine tasting or two," management says. "The year ahead includes more of those plus innovative new ways to plan, prepare and execute events using new tools and technology."

WHAT'S RENTING What's renting? You'd have to ask "Which market, which season, which week?" Bright says. "The creativity within the industry and within our organization is incredible." From vivid colors to

midcentury modern to contemporary white, "Creativity is what is hot."

WHAT'S NEXT The California and Arizona event markets remain robust, with individuals, organizations, companies and communities creating some incredible event experiences, management says. "Bright is proud to support and drive these trends with many incredible partners. It has been terrific to see professionalism in the industry continue to rise, and it remains more important than ever to the industry that we continue to invest and run our businesses responsibly and ethically."

CE RENTAL**Raleigh, N.C.****www.cerental.com****TOP OFFICER** John O'Brien

COMPANY BASICS This growing company consists of five different event rental brands: CE Rental, Skyline Tent Co., Capital Party Rentals, Festive Fare Rentals and Liberty Party Rental, serving the Washington metro area; Nashville, Tenn.; Raleigh and Charlotte, N.C.; Charlottesville, Va; and Charleston, S.C. Each of the locations has been in business for 20-plus years.

CURRENT EVENTS The various locations handle weddings, private and public events, and corporate events.

WHAT'S RENTING The big trends include velvet linens, sailcloth tents, rustic furniture, gold flatware, colored glassware, and "an eclectic array of colors."

WHAT'S NEXT Management plans "continued strategic expansion in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast markets."

CHAIR-MAN MILLS CORP.**Toronto****www.chairmanmills.com****TOP OFFICER** John Van Schepchen

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

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

WHAT'S RENTING Metal is magic: "Our extensive lines of gold and gold-trimmed tableware continue to be very popular," they say, as are the company's new copper flatware and glassware. Also hot: marble plates and chargers. "Mixing vintage and rustic products with new, contemporary pieces continues to be a popular trend," they note.

WHAT'S NEXT "We see continued growth in the exciting and rapidly developing Toronto event industry," they say.

CORT PARTY RENTAL**Seattle****www.cortpartyrental.com****TOP OFFICER** Phil Heidt

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

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

WHAT'S RENTING "In our market, our clients are responding to a greater variety in tabletop items," management says. "Dipped flatware, specialty linens and cut-crystal glassware lines are entering the scene in a big way. The natural look of the Pacific Northwest continues to enthrall local brides, with natural fabrics, neutral colors and farm-style tables and chairs."

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

DC RENTAL**Arlington, Va.****www.dcrental.com****TOP OFFICER** Mark Tempel

COMPANY BASICS In its 32 years, DC Rental has become a fixture in local Washington-area special events.

"Offering the finest in party equipment, unique linens and exceptional service, the company has grown to serve additional markets throughout the East Coast and beyond," management says.

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

WHAT'S RENTING The "urban farmhouse" look remains a favorite design style, management says. Matte flatware in various metals and concrete textures on china are softened with bistro napkins and linens with open weaves or slubs.

WHAT'S NEXT Looking blurry: "2018 is all about blurring the lines in table design," they say. "Watercolor floral linens juxtapose modern shapes in china, flatware and stemware. Abstract patterns in linens depart from the sharp geometrics of recent years. And metallics continue to reign on tabletops!"

DIAMOND EVENT AND TENT**Salt Lake City****diamondevent.com****TOP OFFICER** Mark Clawson

COMPANY BASICS The event side of the company has rebranded from Diamond Rental to Diamond Event and Tent.

CURRENT EVENTS Diamond shines with social and corporate events, fairs and festivals, galas, and sporting events. Coming up soon: Work on the 2019 World Ag Expo, the largest annual outdoor agricultural exposition featuring 1,450-plus exhibitors and more than 100,000 attendees each year.

WHAT'S NEXT Good news: "2018 has been a very good year for us, like everyone else," management says. "Our national event business has been strong. We see good things ahead."

HALL'S RENTAL SERVICE**Niles, Ill.****www.hallsrental.com****TOP OFFICERS** Jack Luft, Tom Luft

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

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

WHAT'S RENTING The textured look in flatware, cushions and all tabletop items is a client favorite, management says. The "wine country" look is still in demand,

especially wine-barrel and other vintage bars, often mixed with modern and industrial-style tables, chairs and accessories.

WHAT'S NEXT Guest counts and budgets have increased for all social events, especially weddings, management says. Corporate events are steady "but with shorter lead times." Overall, the team is "looking forward to a stronger second half of 2018."

KIRBY RENTALS

Orlando, Fla.

www.kirbytent.com

TOP OFFICER Jeff Frame

COMPANY BASICS In business more than 50 years, Kirby serves the southeastern U.S. but also travels nationwide and internationally.

CURRENT EVENTS Kirby's event work includes many projects for high-profile sporting events, including the PGA, PGA, and Champions Tour.

MARQUEE EVENT GROUP

McCook, Ill.

marqueerevents.com

TOP OFFICER Kirk Waldron

COMPANY BASICS In business since 1980, originally serving the event and hospitality industries in the Chicago metro and the DFW Metroplex. And, Marquee expanded through acquisition into Atlanta, Austin, Texas, Kansas City, Nashville and Memphis, Tenn., and San Antonio, as well as growing in its Chicago and Dallas markets.

CURRENT EVENTS Marquee's event roster includes weddings, social events, galas, university events and sporting events, among others. "By combining the talents, products and resources of our acquisitions, we can offer our customers a wide variety of event rental products and services, while continuing to raise the level of customer service that our customers have come to expect and deserve," says CEO Kirk Waldron.

WHAT'S RENTING Clients love gold and rose gold, including bar façades and backbars in gold. "Colors that we are seeing are slate blue, gray, eggplant and anything in the berry family," management says. Mixing styles is also a big trend, such as sleek Arcum tents with all-white liners filled with rustic tables and metal bar stools, as well as rustic tables with a modern bubble chair.

WHAT'S NEXT Look for the company to rebrand its various operations into a single brand over the next few months—"Stay tuned!" they say.

PARTY REFLECTIONS

Charlotte, N.C.

partyreflections.com

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

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

CURRENT EVENTS Highlights have included the 2018 Wyndham PGA Championship, Wells Fargo Championship, Queens Cup Steeplechase, Carolinas Cup Steeplechase, Volvo Cup tennis tournament, Winston-Salem Open Pro tennis tournament, NASCAR Speed Street festival, UltraSwim 18, and many "high profile" weddings and corporate events, management says.

WHAT'S RENTING Hot items include new styles of farm tables in various new sizes and colors, 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 Party Reflections management is

optimistic about future growth, noting that partnering with other vendors and clients leads to greater success. The big challenge ahead: Conquering the labor shortage and covering the new cost of labor will be critical to success, they say. And you heard it here first: "Regional consolidation will continue as more operators want to exit the business."

PARTY RENTAL LTD.

Teterboro, N.J.

www.partyrentalltd.com

TOP OFFICER Gary Halperin

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

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

WHAT'S RENTING "The tables and bars in our furniture collection are as popular as ever, so we've been adding new styles our collections to support that," management says. "Many clients like the linen-less look for its versatility—they can be styled rustic, industrial or formal. For those that like the look of linens, we see many people gravitating towards unique textures and patterns that pop. Decorative tabletop pieces—like patterned chinaware, black flatware and textured votives—add a ton of personality to designs, which our clients have been loving."

WHAT'S NEXT "While the classics never go out of style, we find that many of our clients are looking for unique pieces that really 'wow' their guests and set their designs

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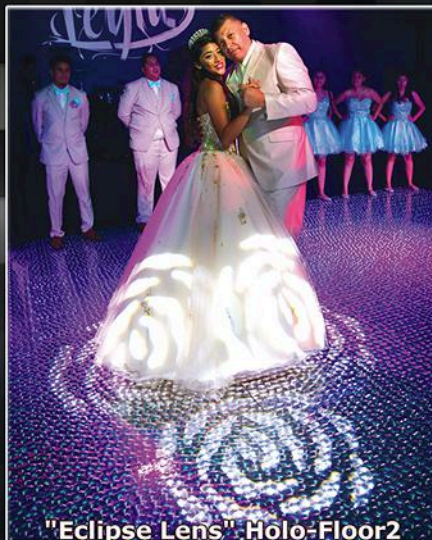


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apart," management says. "We're always looking for fresh products and new ways to support them as they bring their cutting-edge events to life. Embracing technology and innovation will keep pushing our business and the industry forward."

PEACHTREE TENTS AND EVENTS

Atlanta

www.peachtreetents.com

TOP OFFICER Joe Freedman

COMPANY BASICS Peachtree has picked up Eventworks, with operations in Charleston and Myrtle Beach, S.C., and Savannah, Ga. "We have expanded the regional coverage of our party rental businesses and have opened a new 85,000-square-foot downtown location in Atlanta," management says. "This acquisition, coupled with our locations in Atlanta, Nashville, Tenn. and Birmingham, Ala., has strengthened our ability to comfortably service the entire Southeastern region much more efficiently now."

CURRENT EVENTS The team was "instrumental" in providing rentals, flooring, and tent structures for many high-profile events, management says, including the Music Midtown Music Festival in Atlanta, Live on the Green in Nashville, Tenn., the BB&T Atlanta Open tennis tourney, and Nights of A Thousand Candles in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

WHAT'S RENTING Rose gold and metallics are hot in Peachtree's markets right now. "Anything we can accent or get in those colors is being used like crazy," they say. Natural fabrics and simple clean, elegant looks are still all the rage.

WHAT'S NEXT Party rental is solid and growing, management says: "We are seeing expensive weddings make their return. The budgets are continuing to rise, and tents are being used more and more this year. We see the industry continuing to grow and the future looks bright for growth!"

PEAK EVENT SERVICES

Woburn, Mass.

www.peakeventservices.com

TOP OFFICER Brian Bacica

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

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

WHAT'S RENTING Trending this year: "Colored goblets and patterned plates as a creative way to dress up your tabletop," they say. Also big: "Mixing round tables covered in linen with farm tables or long tables to create depth to a space and mix up the floor plan. Linens that have a textural, deep-color palette or patterned element to them—jewel tones, gold, velvets. We offer a variety of lounges, soft seating, and custom bar options that have been extremely popular. These options are an easy and stylish way to carve out intimate spaces throughout events."

WHAT'S NEXT Peak forecasts the future: "Across the industry, we are seeing a resurgence of color with more and more people incorporating bold linens and jewel-toned accents into their events. We are seeing a lot of opportunity in our tenting division. An increase of clients building their events from the ground up, using our tents as their venues once they've found a prime location."

PEERLESS EVENTS AND TENTS

Arlington, Texas

www.peerlesseventsandtents.com

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

COMPANY BASICS "We have continued to shift our emphasis from being primarily a tent company to a full-service event company that is heavy in tabletop, linens and lounge furniture," management says. "While this shift has resulted in a decrease in overall revenues, our profit margins have increased substantially. As we continue to be more recognized for our tabletop selections, we feel confident we will surpass all previous revenues and at higher profitability."

CURRENT EVENTS Close to home: "While we continued to travel throughout the United States installing tenting, we have also become much more involved in our local organizations—ILEA, NACE, etc.—showcasing our new tabletop and furniture selections," management says.

WHAT'S RENTING Upscale is trending: "While we certainly see a shift from the traditional pole-and-frame tent towards structure tenting, we still are seeing rustic themes as being the current trends for weddings and outdoor events," management says. "Indoor events are tending to be more glamorous and demand high-end china, glassware and place settings, set off with a special custom-made linen."

WHAT'S NEXT Business on the rise: "We see trends to stay consistent with 2017, with brides looking for that 'one of a kind' piece of furniture or table setting," management says. "While corporate events seemed to be down for late 2017/early 2018, we already are seeing an increase in corporate business in the latter half of 2018 into 2019."

PERFECT SETTINGS

Landover, Md.

www.perfectsettings.com

TOP OFFICER Peter Grazzini

COMPANY BASICS Founded in 1998, Perfect Settings is celebrating its 20th year as a full-service special events rental company in the Washington metropolitan area. "We partner with caterers and other special event professionals to provide linens, chairs and high-end tabletop," management says.

CURRENT EVENTS Perfect Settings provided linen and equipment to more than 25,000 parties in the last year, supplying more than 12 million items for those events. Among the noteworthy events this year, the team handled the equipment for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) Policy Conference and the United States Golf Association's U.S. Open—both the women's in Alabama and the men's in Long Island, N.Y.

WHAT'S RENTING The company is doing well with its new Princess Lucite chairs, which come in pink and gray. "Bright colors like persimmon, crimson and aubergine are hot as we move into the fall," they note.

WHAT'S NEXT Time for a change: "We made the decision in 2018 to sell the tent division we acquired five years ago and refocus on our core business of linen and tabletop," management says, concluding that the tent side took away from the company's core focus. "This is the year after a [U.S. presidential] inauguration, and typically this is a year that sales slip or are flat. We will take this opportunity to focus on profitability in a number of ways. Overall the economy is very strong, and we feel very optimistic that the changes we are making will make 2019 a record year for us."

RAPHAEL'S PARTY RENTALS

San Diego

www.raphaels.com; www.raphaelseventworks.com

TOP OFFICERS Raphael Silverman, Philip Silverman

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

lounge furniture, tents, and a range of trade show services.

CURRENT EVENTS This year's event roster has included the San Diego Food and Wine Fest, Comic-Con San Diego, KAABOO music festival activations, Miramar Air Show, La Jolla Concours d'Elegance, San Diego Pride Festival, Taste of the Cove, San Diego County Fair, Del Mar Horse Races, Rock N' Roll Marathon, and America's Finest City Half Marathon.

WHAT'S RENTING Clients call for custom-fabricated communal tables, chalkboard tables, market/Edison lighting, rose gold chairs, and specialty chairs in different textures, colors and styles, management says.

WHAT'S NEXT Raphael's will continue to work closely with local hotels reviewing inbound groups and conventions, management says, along with focusing on sporting events and assisting local military branches with their events, which is "is key to our growth and success."

SIGNATURE PARTY RENTALS

Santa Ana, Calif.

www.signatureparty.com

TOP OFFICERS Randy Berg, Valdur Tamme, Jason Davis
COMPANY BASICS For more than 30 years, Signature has been "elevating events" throughout southern California, management says, evolving into a one-stop solution for clients and partners looking for fresh ideas, better service, quality rental equipment, and unique, curated experiences that are "anything but expected."

CURRENT EVENTS After moving into larger, more efficient buildings at both of its locations in 2017, the team has been busy this year supporting events such as USA Swimming Nationals, Fox Studios Spring Screenings, Palm Springs International Film Festival, and the L.A. Rams, among other events.

WHAT'S RENTING The big trend this year: "Creativity! Pinterest boards, social media and interior design continue to move the events market forward. Clients continue to seek tabletop offerings and linens to 'customize' their event," management says.

WHAT'S NEXT Signature has launched a brand refresh, which further positioned the company as the premiere brand in southern California. "We have renewed our commitment to offer to our clients an elevated rental experience, including new inventories in a wide variety of tabletop, innovative table and seating options, along with a continued commitment to offering designing-edge furniture and linen," management says. "We are also forming strategic partnership with some of the leading event designers and visionaries in southern California, which will allow us to meet the most discriminating clients. We continue to see great opportunities in one of the world's largest event markets."

SPECIAL EVENT RENTALS

Edmonton, Alberta

www.specialeventrentals.com

TOP OFFICER Neil Goodkey

COMPANY BASICS Special Event Rentals is the largest event rental company in western Canada, with locations in Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer and Banff, Alberta, with a new location in Regina, Saskatchewan, added this year. 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 team this year have included the Calgary Stampede, ITU World Cup Triathlon, University of Alberta's Week of Welcome, 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 Edmonton's Festival of Trees.

30 TOP RENTAL COMPANIES

RANK IN 2018	COMPANY	HEADQUARTERS	ESTIMATED 2018 RENTAL VOLUME (IN U.S. MILLIONS)	NUMBER OF LOCATIONS
1	ARENA GROUP	LONDON	\$165 MILLION	24
2	BRIGHT EVENT RENTALS	LOS ANGELES	\$110 MILLION	8 PLUS 3 SHOWROOMS
3	PARTY RENTAL LTD.	TETERBORO, N.J.	\$100 MILLION	14 (5 WAREHOUSES, 9 DESIGN STUDIOS)
4	TOWN AND COUNTRY EVENT RENTALS	VAN NUYS, CALIF.	\$85 MILLION	3 (HEADQUARTERS PLUS 2 SHOWROOMS)
5	MARQUEE EVENT GROUP	MCCOOK, ILL.	\$80 MILLION	6
6	PEAK EVENT SERVICES	WOBURN, MASS.	\$56 MILLION	7
7	CE RENTAL	RALEIGH, N.C.	\$47 MILLION	7
8	PEACHTREE TENTS AND EVENTS	ATLANTA	\$30 MILLION TO \$40 MILLION	7
9	RAPHAEL'S PARTY RENTALS	SAN DIEGO	\$34.5 MILLION	1
10	CHAIR-MAN MILLS CORP.	TORONTO	\$32 MILLION	2
11	STANDARD PARTY RENTALS	RICHMOND, CALIF.	\$32 MILLION	3
12	SIGNATURE PARTY RENTALS	SANTA ANA, CALIF.	\$31 MILLION	2
13	TENTLOGIX	FORT PIERCE, FLA.	\$30 MILLION PLUS	1
14	SPECIAL EVENT RENTALS	EDMONTON, ALBERTA	\$23 MILLION	5
15	PARTY REFLECTIONS	CHARLOTTE, N.C.	\$22.5 MILLION	4
16	HALL'S RENTAL SERVICE	NILES, ILL.	\$20 MILLION	1
17	DIAMOND EVENT AND TENT	SALT LAKE CITY	\$17 MILLION TO \$20 MILLION	4
18	A1 PARTY	COVINA, CALIF.	\$18 MILLION	2
19	STAMFORD TENT AND EVENT SERVICES	STAMFORD, CONN.	\$17 MILLION TO \$17.5 MILLION	2
20	PERFECT SETTINGS	LANDOVER, MD.	\$17 MILLION	1
21	CORT PARTY RENTAL	SEATTLE	\$17 MILLION (SPECIAL EVENTS ESTIMATE)	2
22	STUART EVENT RENTALS	MILPITAS, CALIF.	\$16.3 MILLION	3
23	KIRBY RENTALS	ORLANDO, FLA.	\$12 MILLION TO \$15 MILLION	1
24	PEERLESS EVENTS AND TENTS	ARLINGTON, TEXAS	\$13 MILLION	4
25	DC RENTAL	ARLINGTON, VA.	\$12 MILLION	1
26	THORNS GROUP	LONDON	\$11.2 MILLION (SPECIAL EVENTS ESTIMATE)	5
27	204 EVENTS	LOS ANGELES	\$10 MILLION	2
28	APRES EVENT DECOR AND TENT RENTAL	MINNEAPOLIS	\$9.8 MILLION	1
29	ATLAS EVENT RENTAL	BOYNTON BEACH, FLA.	\$9.5 MILLION TO \$10 MILLION	2
30	ALL OCCASIONS PARTY RENTAL	PITTSBURGH	\$8.5 MILLION	3

WHAT'S RENTING "We have seen an increase in requests for specialty bars as well as unique lounge furniture," management says. "We have diversified our inventory with these products, and the strategy is paying off." Also hot: Floral overlays and graphic print linen are increasingly popular, they add.

WHAT'S NEXT Good news: "2018 has been a year of steady growth within our company," management says. "The local economy is improving, and we are seeing an increase in corporate events, festivals and personal events."

STAMFORD TENT AND EVENT SERVICES

Stamford, Conn.

www.stamfordtent.com

TOP OFFICER Stephen Frost

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

CURRENT EVENTS Noteworthy events this year have included several "very high profile" celebrity weddings, 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.

STANDARD PARTY RENTALS

Richmond, Calif.

www.standardpartyrentals.com

TOP OFFICER Mark Guelfi

COMPANY BASICS Standard has been family-owned and -operated since 1984, with multiple locations and showrooms throughout northern California, including San Francisco, the Central Valley, Sacramento and the South Bay, management says, providing a wide variety of event rentals and decor including dinnerware, flatware, glassware, tables and chairs, furniture, tenting and flooring.

CURRENT EVENTS The team has been busy with an array of notable events, providing event and tent rentals for the Pebble Beach Food and Wine festival, Oracle Open World in San Francisco, and the Golden State Warriors Championship Parade and Rally in Oakland, Calif.

WHAT'S RENTING The Standard team works to keep pace with client demand for custom fabric treatments for venues and tents, unique flooring options, and outdoor structures. Additionally, "There have also been requests for distinctive tabletops with exceptional stoneware, gold finishes, antique pewter flatware, etched glassware and more," management says, "to create extraordinary tablescapes that are always perfect and ready for their close-up!"

WHAT'S NEXT The big push will be for "unique settings and distinctive locations, by mixing different elements and decor pieces that complement each other," management says.

STUART EVENT RENTALS

Milpitas, Calif.

www.stuartrental.com

TOP OFFICERS Michael C. Berman, R. Andrew Sutton

COMPANY BASICS Stuart Event Rentals has been serving the San Francisco Bay Area and northern California for over a century, management says. "Clients rely on Stuart for our commitment to innovation as well as our continually expanding inventory, our staff capabilities and event expertise, and being on the leading edge of the event industry. With one of the most extensive rental product inventories in the region, Stuart provides the tents to

flooring ... and everything in between. For any-sized corporate, social, or nonprofit event and celebration, our experienced staff also offers services including event planning, event design, logistics and guest flow, CAD drawings, and permitting assistance."

CURRENT EVENTS A busy year for the Stuart team: "From Barrett-Jackson, the world's greatest classic car auction in Scottsdale, Ariz., to supporting California's largest New Year's Eve event, SnowGlobe Music Festival in Lake Tahoe, Stuart ensures that all events—big or small—provide meaningful memories to every guest." Also on the roster: weddings and galas, as well as the USGA U.S. Amateur Championship, the Google Cloud conference party and concert, Outside Lands Music Festival in San Francisco, and "lots of Silicon Valley corporate events."

WHAT'S RENTING "Our clients love our tenting capabilities because Stuart structures provide flexibility and customization possibilities that brick-and-mortar event venues don't," management says. "This year we invested a considerable amount in new inventory—event furniture, bars, lighting, linen-less event tables, seating options, communal dining pieces, and more."

WHAT'S NEXT "Our focus will always be on ensuring an excellent customer experience. We show this commitment by consistently providing clients with a responsiveness and personal attention they do not receive anywhere else and being on the leading edge of event inventory, services and production," management says. **NOTE:** At press time, Arena Group and Stuart had just inked a deal for Arena to acquire Stuart, giving Arena a new footprint on the U.S. West Coast.

TENTLOGIX

Fort Pierce, Fla.

www.tentlogix.com

TOP OFFICERS Nate Albers, Dennis Birdsall, Gary Hendry

COMPANY BASICS TentLogix specializes in innovative tenting solutions, event flooring, and event rental products throughout the U.S. and the Caribbean, along with a full line of event rental products including pool covers, staging and dance floors, HVAC, restroom trailers, tables and chairs. Key event segments serviced include professional sporting events, live events, corporate events, celebrity weddings, high-profile social events, and product launches.

CURRENT EVENTS Notable events supported this year include the National Business Aviation Association convention, Art Basel, the 2018 Miami Open, many PGA and PGA tournaments, and "a large number of professional sporting events, corporate events, and celebrity affairs throughout the United States," they say.

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

WHAT'S NEXT Highly customized and fully engineered tenting solutions will continue to be the trend for the high-end event market, they say.

THORNS GROUP

London

www.thorns.co.uk

TOP OFFICER Graham Langley Jones

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

festivals, offices, parties, product launches, seminars and weddings."

CURRENT EVENTS The Thorns team continues to provide services to leading event, exhibition and festival organizers at some of the largest venues in the U.K., including London's ExCel, Birmingham's NEC, Manchester's Central and ACC Liverpool along with leading hotels and conference venues. 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 As Nordic inspiration leads the way in today's furniture trends, the Thorns team is "thrilled to present our Scandinavian-inspired product range. This range has been developed by today's 'warehouse meets industrial' vibe yet still maintains simplistic and unique features inspired by Nordic styling," management says. Also on tap: A very British year thanks to the royal wedding, "which has inspired the launch of our beautifully crafted Vintage Collection. This adds an elegant twist to any occasion and sets our product portfolio apart within the marketplace."

WHAT'S NEXT "Currently, hire furniture is very much up to date with homeware styles; after many years of white furniture dominating the market, we're now seeing pastels and mineral colors influencing trends," management says. "Metal bar furniture and industrial-style pieces also remain popular within the live events industry."

TOWN AND COUNTRY EVENT RENTALS

Van Nuys, Calif.

www.tacer.biz

TOP OFFICER Richard LoGuercio

COMPANY BASICS Going into its 14th year, Town and Country prides itself on "exceptional service along with an incredible selection" of unique product lines, with new inventory items being added weekly that "excite and set the trends within the events industry," management says. T&C has seen a major uptick for demand for its services in northern California as well as Colorado, Idaho, Arizona, Texas and Nevada for larger scale projects and notable events, they say.

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

WHAT'S RENTING To date this year, the company has spent more than \$6 million on new inventory for products that include the addition of six new chair styles, five lines of furniture, three styles of flatware and six new china patterns, along with new linens, glassware and much more, management says.

WHAT'S NEXT "Over the last few years, custom-built items have become a large part of our business," management says. "To answer the demand, we have invested in our capabilities with specialized machinery, equipment, and a lot of talented people who make the magic happen and interpret the visions of our clients."

EDITOR'S 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 address such errors promptly. All figures are in U.S. dollars. **Should your company be on this list? Tell us at info@specialevents.com. THANK YOU!**

DIVINE DECOR



Why we're here: Oversize images of children underscore the theme of an event for UNICEF (above), while an engaging photo booth charms guests (below); both events by Kehoe Designs. Photos courtesy Kehoe Designs.

Black Tie with a Twist: Top Trends in Gala Design

How event designers are tweaking the traditional gala format to work for today's gala guests. By Kelly Rehan

“Black tie” and “galas” are practically synonymous, but today’s black tie is loosening up a bit. With more flexible programming and the addition of more engaging elements, gala designers are forging a stronger bond between donors and the cause they support.

“Whether it’s for socialites or corporate sponsors, these events are about attending with your colleagues and contacts, connecting for a cause,” says Ryan Hanson, CSEP, chief creative producer and designer of Minneapolis-based BeEvents.

“I think people still really love the idea of getting dressed up for something,” Hanson says. “They want to look great and feel great, knowing that their participation in this experience matters.”

JUST RELAX Galas today are shifting toward two new goals for

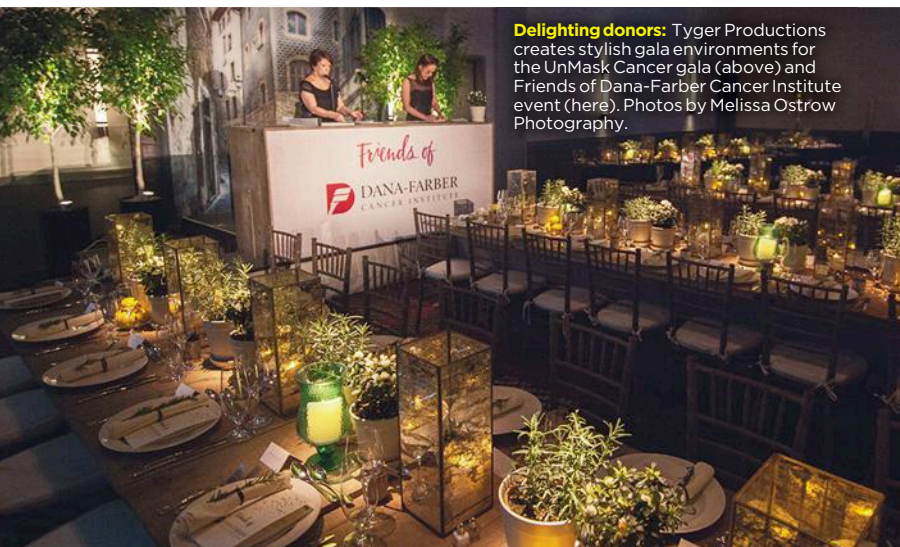


guests: comfort and engagement.

“More than ever, gala guests are interested in being comfortable and entertained, and the stuffy pretense of days past is being replaced by a more relaxed approach,” says Ty Kuppig, principal of Tyger Productions, with offices in Boston and New York. The typical gala

format of a cocktail reception followed by a seated dinner and program remains the most popular model for fundraising events, he says. But he’s noticed that more event organizers and guests are hungry for a new approach.

“While some aim to discard the seated meal completely, I believe



Delighting donors: Tyger Productions creates stylish gala environments for the UnMask Cancer gala (above) and Friends of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute event (here). Photos by Melissa Ostrow Photography.

3 STEPS TO GALA SUCCESS

Ryan Hanson, CSEP,
offers his three rules to design by:

1. Connect your guests. Make time for them to network and mingle.
2. Keep programming short. Articulate the charitable mission clearly and concisely.
3. Remember, a gala is an event. So let the adults celebrate and have fun.

the problem lies not in the gathering of guests around a table but in the time they are shackled to it,” Kuppig says. “The flow of the evening and the program itself are the keys to making the traditional format gala work for today’s guest. If the program can be concise and punctuated by engaging visuals or entertainment, it is possible to hold guests’ attention and create a dynamic experience.”

START EXPERIMENTING

To capture guests’ attention, galas have been compelled to become more experiential to tell a story creatively and connect guests with one another, says Tom Kehoe, president of Chicago-based Kehoe Designs. “Integrated technologies and interactive features bring new levels of engagement to today’s most successful events,” he says.

For example, Hanson shares how his team used technology to spark guest interaction at a gala for a children’s hospital to raise money for a new ambulance. The event featured a custom animation, which colored in a Fund-a-Need ambulance in real time in response to the dollars raised.

Hanson says other popular gala experiences include interactive opportunities to “do something,” bucket-list auction items, and an emphasis on the celebration through lounges, post-dinner food experiences, and games.

STRETCHING THE BUDGET

Giving guests a unique experiences doesn’t come cheap, but gala designers are skilled at stretching their budgets.

“When working on charity galas, there is a very limited budget for decor, since the goal is to raise as much money as possible for the charity,” says Los Angeles-based event designer Billy Butchkavitz.

Butchkavitz’s essential elements for his galas are, he says, a dramatic stage setting and a clearly branded red carpet step-and-repeat for the press that puts the spotlight on the charity. ►

GET INSPIRED TO SHAKE UP YOUR GALA

Event designers share their memorable gala designs:

“For Home Base Program’s ‘Mission: Gratitude’ gala, we created a dramatic cloud-like installation that masked the ceiling of the 160-foot-long tent and shifted in color over the course of the night, from warm sunset tones to a deep-blue night sky.”— **Ty Kuppig, principal, Tyger Productions**

“For the 50th anniversary of a children’s theater, we set a ‘backstage’ event in the theater and lobbies. Building our design by rummaging through the prop shop, pulling out hand-painted backdrops, hanging a ceiling of chandeliers, and using lightbulbs, electrical tools and paint sticks, we celebrated the behind-the-scenes master artists who make shows happen.” — **Ryan Hanson, CSEP, chief creative producer and designer, BeEvents**

“A corporate client wanted to use their industrial products as event decor. We designed a waterfall stage backdrop springing from 18 mop buckets towering atop massive gilded panels, and huge suspended mobiles with the company’s squirt bottles glowing and shimmering from beneath enormous 15-foot custom lamp-style shades.” — **Tom Kehoe, president, Kehoe Designs**

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One look says it all: BeEvents creates a Queen of Hearts bar (here) and a man on a swing for a children's event (below left); photos by Dan Norman. Billy Butchkavitz puts the gala sponsor's logo center stage (lower right); photo courtesy Billy Butchkavitz.



When Stefani Dunn, chief creative officer of Toronto-based Decor and More, needs to shave costs, her first budget cuts are typically ceiling and perimeter decor. These elements won't be missed, she explains, because "lighting and projection have allowed decor an opportunity to exist anywhere."

You don't miss what you haven't seen. Hanson's rule of thumb is that guests are more likely to notice something done cheaply than something not done at all, so he focuses on doing a few things well when decor dollars are hard to come by.

"Pick one to three moments and let the rest fade away," Hanson says. "Make an impact with an installation at the entrance. Blow guests away with a ceiling installation in the pre-function space. Ignore the pre-function decor, but make the dining tables amazing"

VET YOUR VENUE

Kehoe recommends being smart about venue choices. It's critical to understand what they offer in terms of flexibility, furniture, lighting and catering space.

Kehoe adds that clients want gala designers to craft experiences that exemplify their organization's vision. When money is tight, those expectations don't waver—clients still expect designers to pose effective solutions and options for their landmark events.

"Remember, your clients are raising funds and strengthening their organizations by hosting these events," Kehoe says. "They are passionate because they feel their cause is genuinely benefiting humanity, and it is our responsibility to design the most effective environment for their guests to be moved to feel the same." ●

RESOURCES

BEEEVENTS

beeventsdesign.com

BILLY BUTCHKAVITZ DESIGN

818/991-3600

DECOR AND MORE

www.decorandmore.com

KEHOE DESIGNS

kehoedesigns.com

TYGER PRODUCTIONS

www.tygerproductions.com



FOOD FOR FÊTES

Perfect ending: The Royal Park Hotel knows how to end a meal, with its Caramel Chocolate Cake (here) or its Chocolate Financier (below). Photos courtesy the Royal Park Hotel.



Let's Be Bad: Top Trends in Drinks and Desserts

Cool cocktails, hot desserts—top hotels share their innovations in the sinful stuff. By Susan Cuadrado

CRAFTY CLASSICS

"We are noticing a high volume of craft cocktail requests, and presentation is key," says Richard Ragainis, food and beverage director of the Royal Park Hotel in Rochester, Mich. "Fresh herbs, exotic fruit, hand-cut ice, molecular caviar balls filled with fruit puree, a hint of dry ice and color-changing fruit acid are among the ingredients that we regularly use."

Indeed, executive chef Colin Brown's tequila-based Dancing Bee cocktail includes house-made passion fruit syrup, yuzu chamomile, yellow Chartreuse, lime juice and soda water, while the Bourbon combines custom-blended 114-proof Maker's Mark Royal Park Reserve with a fresh white peach infusion, orange peel and a healthy splash of water.



At Minneapolis-based D'Amico Catering, catering design and culinary manager Rachel Bruzak experiments with house-made syrups and sodas as mixers, such as grapefruit soda in their summery Paloma, which is garnished with a brûléed grapefruit wheel. Bourbon is infused with turmeric and ginger.

"Guests love the use of fresh ingredients and products from local craft distilleries," says Daan Smeets, assistant food and beverage manager at the Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa, Sonoma, Calif. "We make our seasonal cocktails with syrups infused with tea leaves and seasonal fruits, as well as house-made bitters," she says, citing her popular Elderflower Sour as example. "Bitter cocktails have been making a comeback, and this one finds the balance between the elderflower liqueur and Aperol perfectly."

Vanessa Boyd, wine director for the Houstonian Hotel, Club and Spa in Houston, infuses cocktails with smoked herbs for a distinctive flavor. The property's signature old fashioned cocktail is made with Whistle Pig 10-year-old rye



Is it hot in here? The Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa gets cooking with its sweet Sammies, Oeufs à la Neige and Hot, Cool and Cold Raspberries (this page, top to bottom). Photos courtesy Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa.



and artisanal maple syrup in lieu of sugar. “We’re experimenting with chocolate and other bitters, and moving away from muddling orange and cherry as the base, she says. The beloved Pisco Sour is made with emulsified egg white and topped with a pomegranate mist instead of the traditional bitters.

HIGH SPIRITS “We have focused in on single-barrel-aged liquors, as our guests are seeking higher quality and specialty spirits for their events,” says Ragainis, noting that rum, gin and tequila are just as popular in this format as are the traditional bourbon and rye. “Using finer spirits in drinks such as Manhattans and old fashioned is front and center,” he says. “These drinks, combined with the culinary molecular garnishes and processes, help tell a story, and merge the food and beverage world together.”

One way Ragainis is combining cocktails with cuisine is in the classic after-dinner drink/dessert realm: “We have just introduced our smoked Nutella Bourbon Coupe that pairs well with our Triple-Layer Chocolate Cake, and our Coconut Crème Martini goes with our Coconut Custard Cream Rum cake.”

In addition to barrel-aged liquors and spirits, the team at the Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa is applying this technique to cocktails.

“Right now we are aging two different cocktails in Napa Distillery



Treat time: A Blueberry and Blackberry Violet Tart (here) and an old fashioned from the Houstonian Hotel, Club and Spa (below). Photos courtesy the Houstonian.

barrels—a Negroni and a smoky old fashioned with scotch,” Smeets says.

MINDFUL MOUTHFULS As for dessert, a variety of small, well-conceived bites is still on trend.

“As complex desserts become increasingly popular, we take the concept of a traditional dessert and find ways to present it in and unusual smaller size,” says pastry chef Veronica Streit of the Royal Park Hotel.

“The goal with the presentation is to incorporate multiple layers and elements in a fun yet elegant way,” adds her culinary teammate, pastry chef Amy Ma. “We want the dessert to not only be visually appealing, but we also want each bite to take you through a journey of flavors.” To that end, the team has transformed the traditional cake pop into a mini, multi-layered bite-sized slice on a stick.

Catherine Rodriguez, pastry chef at the Houstonian, is another fan of the stick as a mode of hand-to-mouth treat transport. “Our Valrhona Dulcey brownie bite covered in Rice Krispies remains a customer favorite,” she says, adding it goes well on desserts stations or as a takeaway treat.

“Our dessert buffets continue to be filled with assorted miniature desserts, but also some full-sized desserts made mini,” says D’Amico Catering’s Rachel Bruzak, citing miniature versions of tres leches cake, tiramisu, Pop-Tarts, and doughnuts iced with hibiscus frosting as examples. “Our salted caramel chocolate cups are little bites of oozing goodness,” she says. (A chocolate cup filled with creamy salted caramel, frosted with chocolate ganache, and topped with a chocolate nib? One would be hard-pressed to argue.) On the more exotic note,



a green tea *financier* topped with sesame brittle, and white chocolate-yuzu truffles dusted with turmeric add depth to the bite-size offerings.

FUNKY FAVORITES

Modern updates on classic desserts such as cheesecake and pie never seem to fall out of favor, or flavor, for that matter. “Cheesecake is a long-standing favorite in our catering and restaurant operations,” Rodriguez says. “We are currently using passion fruit-flavored white chocolate from Valrhona to create our own interpretation of it.” ►

Ashley Wright, pastry chef for the Fairmont Dallas, cites her traditional peach pie as a No. 1 seller. "My nana's recipe is 60 years old, but we put a modern spin on it by pairing it with orange tarragon gelato. It offers just enough familiarity but also introduces unexpected flavor bombs."

Indeed, exotic ingredients are becoming quite popular—if not commonplace—in traditional desserts. At D'Amico Catering, a strawberry tart is enhanced with elderberry flower gelee and fennel-yuzu crème, while baked chocolate mousse is enhanced with brandied sweet dark cherries.

"We've used matcha in our crème brûlée, as well as created a passion fruit curd to complement our coconut mousse," Streit says. "One of the unusual ingredients that we are seeing come to market is ruby chocolate," Ma adds. Though not available in the United States until sometime this fall, according to Ma, the bean is a

pale shade of pink and offers berry notes. Speaking of chocolate, the team's executive pastry chef Mark Slessor's chocolate *financier* with tangerine *cremeux* and chestnut ice cream is an award-winning favorite.

And then there's technique. "We strive for a neo-classical approach to creating desserts where the classic techniques are honored yet we add our unique spin by pairing with unconventional flavors, sauces and molecular gastronomy," says David Blom, pastry chef at the Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa, whose team turns to the dehydrator to create concentrated flavors and crunchy textures for dessert embellishments. "For our oeufs à la neige dessert, we neo-classicize the floating meringue islands and crème anglaise with the addition of dehydrated candied ginger and angel food crumbs," he says. "Paired with Meyer lemon curd and Kishu mandarins, this dessert is a lip-smacking success." ●

RESOURCES

D'AMICO CATERING
damicocatering.com

FAIRMONT DALLAS
www.fairmont.com/dallas

**FAIRMONT SONOMA
MISSION INN AND SPA**
www.fairmont.com/sonoma

**HOUSTONIAN HOTEL,
CLUB AND SPA**
www.houstonian.com

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A Beautiful Business

Warren Dietel followed his parents into the catering business, but he is now setting his own path.

BETTER, WORSE “There is some very cool equipment available, which makes our business better and helps us present more beautifully than we ever have. On the challenging side of things, the amount of competition entering the market has diluted the market quite a bit. We must fight a lot harder today to earn the same business we earned previously.”

NOT JUST CATERING “I am influenced by other industries: for example, how products are made consistently, successfully and profitably across other sectors of the economy. My eyes are open all day, every day.”

ALL ‘NOW,’ ALL THE TIME “People’s knowledge of food is probably impacting us the most, heightening the level of expectation and desire to have everything ‘now.’”

WHAT I WOULD CHANGE “My tenacity helps me the most—if I believe in something, I simply will not give up! This also ties in with my weakness, however, as sometimes I find myself chasing an opportunity I should not.”

You know that off-premise catering is in your blood when you describe it as “a beautiful thing.” And Warren Dietel sees the beauty in catering.

He was born into the family catering business. “My parents started Puff ‘n Stuff Catering in 1980, and for many years, I worked for the family business after school,” he recalls. He joined the team full time in the early 1990s, but then took a break to see more of the hospitality world.

He left for a stint at Walt Disney World. “I didn’t have any formalized training or schooling, per se; I truly ‘learned by doing,’” he says. “Some of my best education came during my six years at Walt Disney World. During my tenure there, I did my best to take advantage of every opportunity given to me in hopes of heightening my business acumen.” He came back to the family business in 2002, and has been “at the helm ever since,” he says.

Today, Puff ‘n Stuff employs a team of 75 full-time employees along with several hundred part-timers. They execute more than 3,000 events a year, everything from “full-service catering to deliveries, couture menus, package offerings, full bar services, exclusive venue management, and more,” Dietel explains.

Changing times have brought changes to Puff ‘n Stuff operations.

“The recession we all experienced in 2008-2009 forced many facilities and restaurants to find alternate ways to generate revenue,” Dietel says. “As such, a great number of these establishments began to offer catering as part of their services. This changed the complexity

of our market, and also changed how we have to compete.”

To adapt, “We fully stepped away from our delivery model for many years, but are now realizing we must begin focusing on it again,” he explains. “Additionally, we have also seen customer expectations for both food and service grow dramatically over the years. With the advent of the internet and celebrity-ism of chefs today, people tend to understand our industry a great deal more, and consequently expect more from us. This can be both positive as well as challenging.”

And an added challenge is the demand for meals customized to each guest’s every requirement.

“There is a tremendous shift in specialty meals as the variety of allergies present in the market today continues to grow,” Dietel notes. “This changes our labeling, food management, procedures and service.

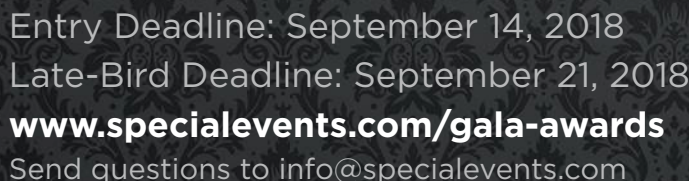
Despite all the changes in the business, Dietel’s enthusiasm for catering stays strong.

“Off-premise catering is a beautiful thing,” he says. “With on-premise catering, a lot is already set up. But in off-premise catering, we truly create environments from start to finish. There are countless unique challenges that come along with this industry, and I think anyone wanting to pursue a career in hospitality in one way, shape or form should work at least one season with a catering company.” ●

Puff ‘n Stuff Orlando and Tampa, Fla.; puffnstuff.com

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