



Innovation team meeting

Ignite brought together a fabulous group of industry pros to talk about what's new, what's innovative and what they are concerned about as we recover from one of the most challenging years the business events and corporate travel management industry has had to endure in recent times. Here are some of their thoughts, beefs and inspirations. You'll see many of these topics tackled on the pages of *Ignite* in the year to come.

Thank you to all of our Innovation Team members who took time out of their busy schedules to break bread and share their thoughts with us! To say it was fun and informative would be an understatement. Thanks to all!



"The new travel norm is something I see very clearly these days. There's a quantum shift from the traditional role of the travel manager towards strategic sourcing. There's a requirement for transparency in the travel budget and accountability. Procurement departments make the decisions and make policy. There's a new landscape and there's a need to understand how these new powers measure savings." - Annemarie Reininger, manager, director Canada, BottomLine Group

"I really see a regional focus in meeting programs going forward. Rather than travelling far away, I see more companies making better use of regional talent, regional properties and regional resources." - Rita Plaskett, president, AGENDUM Inc.

"As an independent planner, I see a strong force towards accountability and transparency in my clients, and as well, commission structures are changing and being taken away and management structures are changing. I'm hoping there's something as meeting professionals that we can do to change that and stop the undercutting as we move into better times." - Lori Heller, president, Heller Productions Inc.



"There's a distinct commoditization of travel and events. Strategic sourcing is pulling us away from the traditional ways we as meeting and event planners make our decisions. It's a new way of doing business and as meeting planners we have to discover how to adapt to this new way of doing things."

- Alissa Hurley, director of events, Maritz Canada Inc.



Front, from left:

Kathy Lind, senior events manager, Sun Life Financial | **Annemarie Reininger**, manager, director Canada, BottomLine Group | **Debbie Grossi**, director, North America, Egencia | **Lynne Gale**, manager, medical education & meetings, Stryker Canada | **Michael Merrithew**, CEO, Merit Travel Group | **Rita Plaskett**, president, AGENDUM Inc. |

Back, from left:

Julie Charles, editor (online + digital), *Ignite* | **Lori Heller**, president, Heller Productions Inc. | **Majda Moustarji**, corporate travel specialist of Ricoh Canada | **Max Carbone**, president, Teamworks | **Janet White Bardwell**, editor, *Ignite* magazine | **Richard Elliott**, co-publisher, *Ignite* | **Alissa Hurley**, director of events, Maritz Canada Inc. | **Debbie van der Beek**, co-publisher, *Ignite* | **Terry Sloan**, director, business development North America, Carlson Wagonlit Meetings & Events |



Thank You!

Thanks goes out to Lori Heller, who owns The Chef Upstairs, for her wonderful venue. This private cooking space provided the perfect ambiance for our discussion. And the food? One word: Yum. Thanks also to our moderator, Max Carbone of Teamworks, who kept our discussion on track and Suzanne Merrett of Amara Studios Corporate + Event Photography, who captured the energy, the special space and the amazing food.

"My concern is about keeping up with the latest technologies while still keeping relationships with our valued suppliers. You value the relationship, but as a very technology forward company, there's a worry that the meetings and corporate travel companies are falling behind or not keeping up with the latest and greatest in that area's technology."

- **Lynne Gale**, manager, medical education & meetings, Stryker Canada

"Optics are still a strong reality for me. My department spends more than \$10 million on events and incentives every year, and we are having meetings with our senior executives more than ever before. They want to know what we are spending and where. They are very aware and concerned. I have to have a paper trail for everything I do and every decision I make."

- **Kathy Lind**, senior events manager, Sun Life Financial

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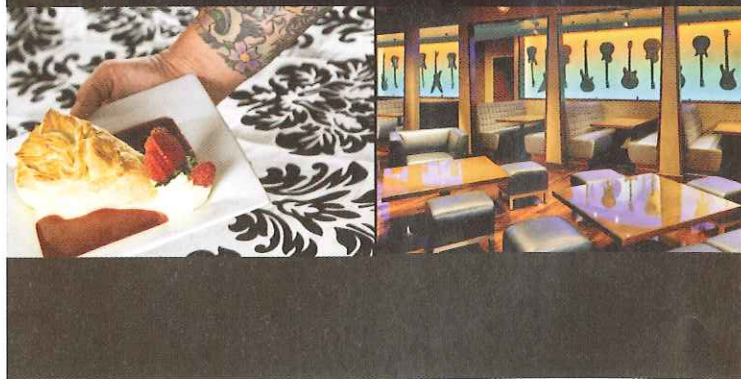


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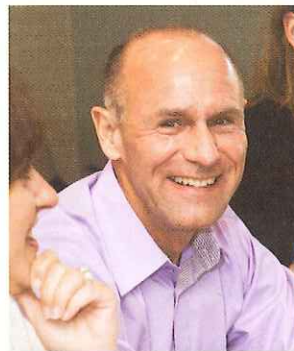


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"We may have just come through a recession during which we were forced to cut back, but I see this cutting back being the new norm. We are still required to realize more savings every year rather than just going back to the way we were purchasing meetings and travel before."

· **Majda Moustarji**, corporate travel specialist of Ricoh Canada



"The latest technology is really an expectation these days. Yes, relationships still hold value, but procurement often makes the decision so there must be that underlying technological quality in order to make the grade."

· **Terry Sloan**, director, business development North America, Carlson Wagonlit Meetings & Events

"Meetings technology is being used more and more to reduce costs, and many wonder if technology is taking the place of tasks. As well, as our economy recovers, hotels really need to get back to realistic rates or the industry will be in trouble if we stay with the low rates that have been offered during the recession."

· **Debbie Grossi**, director, North America, Egencia



"The economic reality has fundamentally changed behaviour: how businesses travel and why they travel. Traveller tracking, safety and security has never been more important and will only get more sophisticated and technologically cutting edge."

· **Michael Merrithew**, CEO, Merit Travel Group