As I anticipate you’ve experienced, attendees and senior leadership have a higher level of Expectation for meetings and programs than in recent years. As I’ve mentioned before, not only has the “Experience Economy” stormed back for some time now – where attendees are expecting an “experience” that is motivating, rich and compelling – but the bar has been raised even higher on planners.

“Memorable,” “Unique,” “Authentic,” “Inspiring,” “Genuine” and “Distinctive” are now part of the equation, in addition to the content being delivered.

So, how do we reach these summits? By aiming to exceed expectations, going one step further, and concentrating on “the small stuff” that often makes the BIG difference. In a nutshell, I suggest the goal for meetings and programs, any work projects and important activities in life should be to “Exceed Expectations + 1,” or “EE+1.”

Note that this does not necessarily mean that you can always top each of your previous endeavors. But having that as a goal, with a passion for excellence, can serve as motivation to “elevate your game” – and your team’s mindset – to the next level. And from my experience, the extra effort shows and is definitely worth the payoff.

While it can be a challenge to keep reaching new heights, I’ve found that it can be beneficial to “Think Outside of the Norm” when planning special meetings and programs. Also called “lateral thinking,” as coined by Edward de Bono, it is about “ideas that may not be obtainable by just using traditional step-by-step logic,” such as simply pulling out last year’s Program Agenda to start.

I’ve found many helpful tactics, such as those provided by Rollins College’s Center for Lifelong Learning. Their list of “25 Ways to Stimulate Creative Thinking” includes such suggestions as “look for the second right answer,” “think backwards, upside down, and sideways,” “avoid falling in love with an idea,” “use mistakes as stepping stones to new ideas” and “ask what-if questions.”

The list also advises that “the answers you get may depend on the questions you ask, so change the questions.”

So, it may be beneficial to look at your next program in a new light. Doing things differently, or doing different things, could help elevate your programs to an even higher level.

Another way to exceed expectations is to be a life-long learner. Continually seeking new ideas and beneficial tools can contribute tremendously to enhancing your programs and the experience of your attendees.

Also, I would be remiss if I did not mention that choosing the right venue that reflects the quality and character of your organization also is vital to elevating your programs and meeting EE+1. As we’ve seen, particularly in the last few years, most attendees prefer authentic, independent, luxury-level life-enriching hotels and resorts because they enable a unique experience that reflects the destination, local culture and independent thinking. These venues are prized for their authenticity, personality, attentiveness, and for providing inspiring experiences to complement a program. The benefits of choosing an environment where your message and the experience is well-received, memorable and original cannot be overstated.

So, THINK INDEPENDENTLY. There are many appealing destinations, hotels, resorts, and variety of experiences available throughout North America and around the world that are well-suited for elevating your programs, to exceed the rising Expectations of today’s attendees and senior leadership. Providing a rich and invigorating “EE+1” experience at your meetings and programs can undoubtedly reap the greatest reward for your attendees and your organization.
First -- Thank you to our Advisory Committee for aiding us in completing a comprehensive resource for your luxury-level meetings, conventions and incentive travel programs, as a one-stop resource. Supported, of course, by the personal touch of our trusted ALHI Global Sales professionals to guide your organization and programs towards ultimate success.

Your resources just got even better with the recent launch of ALHI’s all-new website as the place to go online when you start planning your upcoming meetings and program venues. The new user-friendly website also is a great resource when talking and working with your ALHI Global Sales professional as they provide personal guidance and insight on why one or more ALHI Member hotels and resorts might be the precise solution for a particular meeting or program.

Featuring the same alhi.com address as our previous website, this new site was designed with valuable input from our Industry Advisory Council members; insightful association executives and incentive specialists via focus groups; and with very helpful input from many of our ALHI Member hotels and resorts, valued accounts, and knowledgeable ALHI Global Sales professionals.

Make it a “Favorite!”
The new website is now a “one-stop” online resource that is very mobile-friendly, and offers many more search functions and features that will be of great assistance in your planning. Among the many new features:

- The new site features an interactive world map showing all of ALHI’s 250+ hotels and resorts in 63 countries.
- The search function includes the ability to search by:
  - destination (city, state or country)
  - ALHI Luxury Brand Collection (i.e. Big Box, Level 5, City Solutions, Beach and Island, Golf Collection, Ocean Line, Resorts or Passport Collection)
  - the number of guest rooms
  - the amount of meeting space
  - Or, you can simply enter the name of a specific hotel or resort, and go directly to complete at-your-fingertips information on that property.
- The new “Search” function also enables you to search an ALHI Luxury Brand Collection or destination, and then filter the results down by the number of guest rooms, the number of meeting rooms, the size of the largest meeting room, and/or the total square feet of meeting space.
- You can now compare properties you are considering, with the “Add to Compare” button.
- Each Member hotel’s or resort’s page now features:
  - A colorful printable Fact Sheet PDF
  - Printable Floor Plans PDF
  - Printable Capacity Chart PDF
  - Google Map location.
- Each hotel’s or resort’s page features useful “Fast Facts” information presented in a concise manner, including:
  - the number of guest rooms
  - largest meeting room
  - 2nd largest meeting room
  - total meeting space
  - the number of meeting rooms
  - closest airport
  - meeting facilities description
  - a capacity chart (which can be viewed in feet or meters)
  - accommodations overview
  - dining and recreation information
  - a beautiful photo gallery.
- The new website features larger images and a cleaner home page, with the ability to scroll down on the home page for current news and ALHI Member Updates (such as renovation details or new offerings) at ALHI’s distinguished hotels and resorts.
- Additional information on the ALHI Global Luxury Alliance members, which includes 23 luxury cruise ships appropriate for M&I programs, and Destination Management Companies (DMCs) in 100-plus locations worldwide.

Go ahead. Get online and try it.
Experience the quick and easy access to luxury-level and upper-upscale hotels and resorts around the world, each specifically designed and operated for M.I.C.E. programs. Be sure to check it out -- and remember to save as a “Favorite” -- as a wonderful new resource.
ROYAL SONESTA NEW ORLEANS
Meet Like a VIP in the Heart of the French Quarter

Royal Sonesta New Orleans is a AAA Four-Diamond-rated hub of authentic jazz, vibrant night life and refined southern design. Its 483 newly renovated guest rooms and ballroom, Food is Art philosophy, lush courtyard, wrought-iron balconies and uncompromising service all combine to create an experience unlike any other in the heart of the French Quarter.

Fast Facts

- 483 newly renovated guest rooms, including 36 suites and 58 R Club Concierge Level rooms
- 20,000 sq. ft. of event space, including 5,000-sq.-ft. newly renovated Ballroom, and unique rooms with access to outdoor venues, like a 3,400-sq.-ft. courtyard
- Bourbon Balcony Hospitality Suites - VIP box seat to the French Quarter
- 5 on-site dining and entertainment options. Outlet Collection includes: fine dining at Restaurant R’evolution, world famous Desire Oyster Bar, live music nightly at The Jazz Playhouse, Le Booze and PJ’s Coffee Café.
- Complimentary WiFi in guest room and meeting space
- ConventionSouth – Top New & Renovated Meeting Site Award 2017 & 2016
- Meetings Today – Best Of Award 2016
- 2016 U.S. News & World Report – #6 Best Hotel in New Orleans

Testimonials

“Those that attended are still talking about the attention paid to every detail, the level of hospitality, and the outstanding meals served during our time with you. From the moment my staff arrived until our banquet on the last evening and departure, we received nothing but the highest level of service.”

~ A Fortune 500 Fast Food Restaurant Company

“Some of my guys informed me that the food at the Royal Sonesta was surprisingly better than a 5-star restaurant they had dinner at one night. They said the variety of the items served as well as the quality of the items was unbelievably good… Royal Sonesta made sure that the variety of food served would satisfy everyone.”

~ A Leading Specialty Chemicals Company

For more information on Royal Sonesta New Orleans visit ALHI.com/RoyalSonestaNewOrleans
Situated amid stunning scenery and hushed seclusion in Central Florida, Streamsong is a new meetings and incentive destination intentionally designed in harmony with its natural surroundings and intensely committed to the highest aspirations of today’s corporate elite. Discover 16,000 distraction-free acres featuring a modern lakeside lodge, a conference center and two nationally ranked golf courses. From an intimate executive retreat to a grand international gathering, Streamsong is a place to accomplish things of value and return renewed.

Testimonials

“Streamsong has redefined the Florida destination resort in a remarkable and refreshing fashion. The distraction-free environment allowed us to take our meeting and message far beyond the four walls of a meeting room.”  
A Fortune 500 Medical Device Company

“By all accounts, our Executive Leadership Retreat was a big success. The elevated level of our participants required not only a five-star quality facility and golf experience but, equally important, professional and highly-personalized service. It is my great pleasure to tell you that you succeeded at every turn.”

A Top Ten Financial Services Company

Fast Facts

- Modern, sophisticated and meticulous in detail
- Lakeside Lodge featuring 228 spacious guestrooms and suites
- 25,000 sq. ft. of meeting space
- On-site audio visual capabilities
- Dramatic indoor and outdoor special event venues
- Four casual and fine dining restaurants
- Two nationally ranked golf courses: Streamsong® Red, Streamsong® Blue
- A third golf course Streamsong Black debuting in fall 2017
- Golf Magazine’s Top 100 Courses You Can Play in the U.S.A. #10 and #14
- Grotto style AcquaPietra Spa
- Sporting clays
- Guided bass fishing
- A 16,000-acre distraction-free destination convenient to Tampa and Orlando

For more information on Streamsong Resort visit ALHI.com/Streamsong
For more information on Rosen Shingle Creek
visit ALHI.com/RosenShingleCreek

For more information on Salamander Resort & Spa
visit ALHI.com/SalamanderResort
RESTAURANT BRIEFS
NEW CULINARY DISCOVERIES...

San Antonio, TX – Rudy’s Bar-B-Q
I recently had the opportunity to dine – or maybe that sounds too fancy and I should just say “eat” – at the original Rudy’s Bar-B-Q with great friends and family. What a fun “down home” experience, complete with picnic tables. Located just north of San Antonio in Leon Springs, not far from the extraordinary and new La Cantera Resort & Spa in the scenic Texas Hill Country, this is a great place to relax, be casual, be yourself and enjoy unbelievably good barbecue. Due to its mouthwatering food, there are now quite a few additional Rudy locations throughout the Southwest, but I recommend experiencing the original when you have the chance. Using pits wood-fired with oak, Rudy’s serves some of the best barbecue I’ve ever had. I do not think you can go wrong with any of the selections, but I opted for the Baby Back Ribs, and also was able to try the Chicken. Terrific! Pair the meal with Rudy’s Beans or opt for the Baby Back Ribs, and also was able to try the Peach Cobbler, and you will not be disappointed. I can’t wait to go back!

RudysBBQ.com
(210) 638-2141

Rome, Italy – Ristorante Antica Pesa
While there are many fine restaurants in Rome, I have one in particular to recommend. Established in 1922 in the Trastevere neighborhood on Via Garibaldi, this elegant hillside establishment features beautiful indoor walls painted by the renowned artists who frescoed the room, and a scenic terrace garden. Highly regarded by locals and visitors alike, this is one spectacular restaurant. Among its offerings are an 1,100-label wine cellar, offering the best Italian and other world-class labels, which also is ideal for events for up to 12 people. As you likely anticipate, the menu offers classic Roman dishes, plus many tantalizing modern options. I started with the Amatrice Ham with Hot Buffalo Mozzarella and Crispy Pastry, which was oh-so-good. For the entrée I selected the Schiaffoni Pasta with bacon, onion, pepper, cheese and tomato sauce, which was great. If you have room, consider the Matcha and Pistachio Tiramisu for dessert. A “must” for your Rome itinerary. Go early to enjoy the ride and views from “above” Rome.

Anticasesa.it
+39 06 5809236

Rockland, ME -- Primo
If you are looking for an authentic “farm to table” experience, look no further than Primo. And I mean authentic! The restaurant is actually located on a farm. The produce is grown in their lush gardens and greenhouses, and the animals are raised on the property. What is not grown there comes from other local farms. The menu changes daily to ensure the highest quality in-season ingredients are used. Talk about fresh and delicious food… We dined at Primo Downstairs, which was delightful. Or, you can opt for the more casual Upstairs at Primo, or The Barn, which is super for group functions. For the appetizer I enjoyed the Apple and Chicory Salad, which featured Walnuts, Cheddar, and a very tasty Sweet and Spicy Mustard Vinaigrette. I followed with the Primo Pork Chop, served with Sweet Potato puree. For dessert I recommend the House Made Cannoli or the Zeppole (made-to-order Doughnuts tossed in cinnamon and sugar). Need I say more? (Note the restaurant closes in the winter and will reopen in May.)

PrimoRestaurant.Squarespace.com
(207) 596-0770

FAQs

Q: What are there “deals” for last-minute 2017 programs?
A: Good question! ALHI just launched the “2017 ALHI Private Sale” with extra VALUE on short-term business to stretch 2017 programs’ dollars. Available exclusively through ALHI Global Sales offices, the SALE provides to new meetings one complimentary room for every 30 rooms booked at more than 55 participating ALHI Member hotels and resorts. This includes nine options in the East U.S., 18 choices in the South, 5 choices in the Midwest, 17 options in the West, and seven choices outside of the U.S. Note the “Private Sale” promotion must be booked through ALHI before April 30, 2017, and actualized by December 31, 2017, with a minimum of a three-night stay, and a minimum of 30 rooms or more on the peak night to qualify.

But there is more. The ALHI GSO team is provided information from our Members where a “hole” may exist or a change/cancellation has occurred. We call that “Luxury On Sale.” To find out about the “Private Sale” or “Luxury On Sale,” make a call to your nearest ALHI Global Sales office. Visit alhi.com for contact info. Our ALHI Global Sales professionals look forward to sharing the details.

Q: What is in your collection of hotels and resorts in Puerto Rico?
A: Much more. Our portfolio includes two GEMS in Puerto Rico. The beautiful Condado Vanderbilt has been extremely popular with our accounts we serve, based on service, beautiful facilities, access and management’s commitment to making every program a fabulous success. Further, we have recently added the redesigned El San Juan Hotel, as another spectacular ALHI venue in Puerto Rico to serve the M&B marketplace. The El San Juan Hotel has recently undergone a complete makeover. Both are conveniently nearby to Puerto Rico’s International Airport that provides extraordinary air access from throughout North America as the “Hub of the Caribbean”; plus, close to all of the attractions, dining, entertainment and vibe that makes San Juan so popular.

Thanks for asking!

David G. Galbraith, Chairman

ALHI’S NEWEST DISTINGUISHED MEMBER:

EL SAN JUAN HOTEL,
PUERTO RICO

Since 1986 Associated Luxury Hotels International (ALHI) has been providing corporations and organizations reliable, regionally based Global Sales services for their meeting and incentive programs with our Membership of over 250 luxury level hotels and resorts, plus an alliance of 23 luxury cruise ships and DMCs in over 100 destinations worldwide.

Visit ALHI.com and contact your local ALHI Sales Professional or call our Luxury Group Desk at 866-303-2544.