

# Integrating Wellness Into Meetings & Events

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The second-annual Meet Well Summit, organized by Prevue and the Incentive Research Foundation and held in January 2018 at the MGM Grand Las Vegas Stay Well Conference Center, focused on integrating wellness options into F&B and designing meeting spaces and formats that inspire engagement, creativity and well-being.

The wellness trend has reached a tipping point in its relation to meetings and events. In the IRF's "2018 Trends Survey," the largest number of net increases reported by respondents was the inclusion of wellness and well-being components (38 percent) in their programs.

"As a backlash to the exhausting and relentless nonstop business environment created by e-mail and social media," the report found, "participants are expecting more fitness-focused items and experiences in their programs. This extends to food trends as well. Across the board, the reduction of anxiety and a feeling of comfort will reign in 2018."

## Partner With Your Hotel to Create Healthy F&B

**Advice from a pro for creating more nutritious options than you'll find on a standard banquet menu.**

Most planners don't look at their menus or meet with chefs until long after a hotel is contracted, but Meet Well speaker Tracy Stuckrath of Thrive! Meetings & Events, begins her quest for healthy food at the RFP stage.

"Putting your F&B needs up front, saying you want locally grown, for example, or sharing your history ("We have 25 vegans, 10 gluten-frees") is important. You need to let the CSM and the chef know that you have those expectations, and seeing how they respond helps you pick the best property."

The setting for this session—the MGM Grand Stay Well Conference Center—could not have been more appropriate. The Stay Well conference menu served throughout the event was approved by leading nutritionists at Cleveland Clinic Wellness and met these nutritional criteria: less than or equal to 4 g of saturated fat, less than or equal to 4 g of added sugar, 600 mg or less of sodium, 0 g trans fat and 100 percent whole grains.

While the Stay Well menu is the benchmark, there are ways of mixing and matching using standard banquet menus to create a more nutritious selection. As an exercise, Stuckrath used a standard banquet menu from a hotel in the Washington, DC, area and circled items with various "issues" in different colors before re-creating it with the help of the group.



From one break offering, she picked out the frozen juice bar and the chocolate-covered strawberries. A single menu item can be broken apart, such as beef fillet and butter-poached Maine lobster with ricotta ravioli, asparagus and baby potatoes. "Everyone likes dual entrees but they can be an issue because of portion sizes," says Stuckrath.

**"Dieticians are not taught how to cook when they go to school, and chefs are not taught nutrition in culinary school. So meeting planners have to come to the table with our own knowledge."**

—Tracy Stuckrath, Thrive! Meetings & Events

# Allergies? Be Careful About...

**Smoothies.** They often contain almond or other nut milks, which is an issue for attendees with nut allergies. (However, smoothies are a better choice than freshly squeezed juices. Juice extracts all the fiber from a vegetable or a fruit and leaves just the sugar, while smoothies keep the fiber and help people feel full.)

**Chocolate desserts.** Milk chocolate items are not acceptable with vegans and attendees with lactose intolerance.

**Twizzlers.** Often found in candy bars at snack time. The first ingredient in this licorice candy is whey.

**Au gratin, risotto, puree.** Though they seem harmless, all are sources of dairy.

**Au jus, demi-glace, Worcestershire.** Beware of sauces, says Stuckrath. Any sauce is a potential source of allergens, so you need to clarify what is in them.

**Caesar salad.** The dressing is made with sardines.

**Miso.** Contains soy.

## Tips for Healthier F&B

**Ask hotels for nutritional information and signage.** At Meet Well's opening reception at The Mansion, the hosts prepared elegant signs displayed next to each item.

**Hydrate attendees often.** 75 percent of people are dehydrated. Have hydration stations available all the time. Fruit-infused water allows attendees to take in the benefits of the fruit, but also tastes better than plain water so they drink more.

**Make it clear right up front that you don't want sugar.** There are 57 different terms for sugar, basically everything with "ose" at the end. Avoid prepackaged hotel breaks, which are loaded with sugary snacks, and start from scratch.

**Ask the chef to use local and sustainable foods.** Ask about the source of the food, how it's grown or raised. Hyatt, for example, has given their chefs the autonomy to order their meats locally.

**Incorporate superfoods into your banquet menus.** Whether walnuts, almonds, dark berries or broccoli, superfoods are changing the way people eat.

**Add a little more time to mealtime and breaks.** Allow attendees time to slow down and actually enjoy the food, digest and get to know the people around them.

**Add tastings as a healthy activity.** Olive oil, salt, vinegar, dark chocolate and mustard are examples.

**When appropriate, ask for pre-set portion sizes in small bowls.** The Stay Well menu serves most items individually, rather than allowing people to serve themselves. It might cost a little more, but it is much healthier.



## HYGGE

ATTENDEES CRAVE MEETING DESIGN THAT EXUDES COZINESS, OR WHAT THE DANISH CALL HYGGE (PRONOUNCED HOOGA)  
— IRF 2018 TRENDS SURVEY

# 75%

OF US WALK AROUND DEHYDRATED MOST OF THE TIME."  
— TRACY STUCKRATH, SPEAKER

# 38%

OF RESPONDENTS TO THE IRF'S 2018 TRENDS SURVEY INCLUDE WELLNESS/WELL-BEING COMPONENTS IN THEIR MEETING PROGRAMS

# Intentional Meeting Design

With all the talk about physical wellness, how do you design an event to nurture attendees' emotional wellness?

Nonverbal languages speak to us more than words. We remember 15 percent of what we hear and 85 percent of what we feel. At Meet Well, Dianne Devitt of The DND Group spoke about the various underlying dynamics of engagement and how they affect attendees' emotional wellness.

## Maslow's hierarchy of needs

As audiences have grown more sophisticated and evolved, they are looking to events for fulfillment of their higher needs. At the end of the day, attendees leave with contentment and self-esteem because they have learned something new. They've bonded with others and made connections. They feel better about themselves. That's the new responsibility of planners.

## The power of play

At the top of the hierarchy of needs is play. Attendees are ready to lighten up and have some fun.

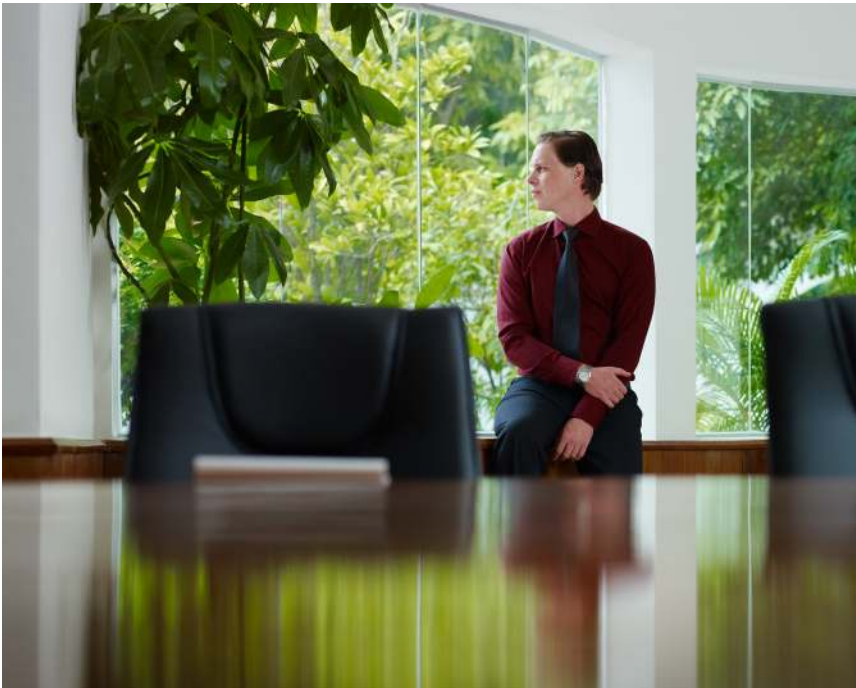
"The female energy of collaboration, of getting together and working things out, is prominent everywhere. We are doing new, creative things with our meetings that are innate, because we have the courage and the intuition to take that step forward."

Devitt uses play to spark creativity at her events, freely handing out props that reflect the message of the meeting. Boas are for fun, sunglasses for shared vision. For a sales kickoff or a financial meeting, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing offers 5 lb bags of shredded US currency for just \$45 (can be purchased online).



**“Creativity is power, listening to that little voice in your head when you have an idea, not understanding why, but trusting yourself and having faith in yourself that the idea will work. There isn't anything more fearful than having a creative idea and being the one to execute it.”**

—Dianne Devitt, The DND Group



## Creating touchpoints

The marketing concept of touchpoints, the concept of literally touching that person, applies to meetings as well. The average person receives 200 advertising touchpoints a day. The more distracted people are, the more effort it takes to market events and to make them memorable.

Planners should be creating seven to 11 touchpoints in a meeting that drive home the branding and the message.

Devitt helped design Meet Well's touchpoints, which reinforced the wellness mission of the meeting:

- Yoga to start the day
- Healthy meals and snacks from the Stay Well menu, designed by the Cleveland Clinic
- Speakers who specialized in wellness
- Soft seating on white leather sofas vs. traditional rounds
- Slippers for people to wear at the meeting
- An aromatherapy icebreaker exercise, where attendees were given a vial as they entered the room along with a card describing a different scent from what they had, and had to find the person with the card that matched their scent
- The use of the color turquoise, which represents transition
- Amenities focused on wellness, such as Olukai sandals at the opening reception and yoga mats and water bottles as room gifts

## Food for thought

Integrating wellness into a meeting involves the balance of the decor and the F&B. When attendees are sitting in a room that's blue and calming, you need to serve an appropriate dish, such as a fresh fish. A bright and colorful Mexican dish would be jarring. In another example, Devitt has one client who wanted to design an event for four divisions of his company, each of which operated in its own silo. His goal was to illustrate how to get red, blue, green and yellow work together, "so he could put red and blue together to make purple." She chose to color block every break and meal function. One breakfast, for example, had red linens on the tables, and served red velvet muffins, berry juices, apples, pomegranates and strawberry pancakes. The culmination was a technicolor climax.

# JUST BREATHE

A GRAPEFRUIT-LEMON-CITRUS  
AROMATHERAPY BLEND  
CAN ENERGIZE ATTENDEES

## SCENT IS 85-90%

ACCURATE IN ITS INFLUENCE  
ON OUR BODIES



# STRETCH IT OUT

## HOW TO INCORPORATE YOGA THROUGHOUT THE DAY

1

AN EARLY MORNING  
YOGA CLASS

2

"YOGA POLICE" —  
TEAMS OF YOGA TEACHERS  
WHO ROAM THE EXHIBIT  
HALL AND HELP ATTENDEES  
WITH THEIR POSTURE  
AND BREATHING

3

DESIGNATED AREAS FOR  
"YOGA CHARGEUPS,"  
WHERE AN INSTRUCTOR  
LEADS 5-MINUTE STRETCHES  
OR BREATHING EXERCISES  
(SOURCE: BRAINSPROUTS,  
DIANNE DEVITT)

# What Does Feng Shui Have To Do With Meetings?

In her session at Meet Well, speaker Debra Duneier of Eco Chi shared the techniques she used to design room sets for the 2017 Global Wellness Summit at The Breakers in Palm Beach. By taking readings of the conference center and individual meeting rooms and using feng shui principles to guide her, she was able to create a beautiful space that encouraged engagement and instilled well-being in participants.

## 6 feng shui principles to apply to your seating arrangement and layout

1

### Function

Seating arrangements play an important role in how we experience an event, as well as how we remember it for years to come. It is important to think about attendees, and how they are going to be participating in a space. Will they be listening, observing, discussing or actively contributing? Also at what time of day, or point of the event will they be in this seating area?

2

### Facing Direction

Another aspect to consider when designing a layout is the facing direction for attendees. Is everyone able to see the speaker? However, this is about more than just visibility. An attendee's facing direction can create a feeling of empowerment and inclusiveness. This lays the groundwork for a unique experience for all and will directly impact the success of your event.

3

### Energies of the Space

What are the existing energies of the space? What feeling would you like for the room to deliver during the event? In the art of feng shui, an on-site energy reading shows the energies that exist in various areas (compass directions) of the room. When performing an energy analysis, the information from the reading is studied and it is then determined which elements are essential to either remedy or enhance the experience of the space.

4

### Colors, Shape & Form

Think of your event in terms of being part of someone's life memories. Even at a corporate conference, the way a meeting space is designed can initiate a series of enjoyable experiences and unforgettable memories for your attendees. Environmental psychology teaches us that each color, shape, texture, as well as accessories and art can evoke a certain emotion or feeling for an individual.

5

### Nature & Health

Conferences are often held in beautiful places, but attendees are usually indoors for long periods of time. It is important to make sure the indoor environments don't create a disconnect between attendees and the outside world. Bringing nature indoors is a great way to expose attendees to natural elements, which studies show can often revitalize the brain and critical thinking. Looking at outdoor views, live green plants, a living green wall or even art that represents nature, fires up our brain and can make us feel more optimistic, focused and lower our stress and blood pressure.

6

### Circadian Rhythms

Light can cheer us up, create a relaxed mood or stress us out. It can intensify our experience, focus our attention, create a decision-making environment and more. Light also influences our circadian rhythm: a repetitious pattern based on the natural cycles of day turning to night, night to day. The way a space feels can be shaped by how the lighting is intentionally installed.



**“Every space has a life of its own, it has bones, it breathes, there’s a history and it even has a memory.”**

—Debra Duneier, EcoChi



**FENG  
SHUI**

**“A MEETING SPACE IN THE SOUTHERN PORTION OF A PROPERTY, OR MAGNETIC NORTH, SIGNIFIES WELLNESS. THIS IS WHERE THE MAGIC STARTS TO HAPPEN; WHERE THE STORY OF YOUR MEETING UNFOLDS.”**



## AWE-INCLUSIVE™

Wellness meets the wow factor at 10 spectacular beachfront locations in Mexico and Jamaica. The mission at Palace Resorts and Le Blanc Spa Resorts is creating Awe-Inclusive Meeting experiences that harmonize luxurious amenities with attractive healthful options.

The resorts offer high-tech fitness centers, stunning pools and full-service spas to enhance their tropical settings, where outdoor sports like golf, snorkeling and swimming are available year-round. On-site fitness classes range from Pilates and glow yoga to aqua spinning. The culinary stars of Palace's wellness program include Certified Angus Beef® and abundant fresh fruits and vegetables, which play a tasty role in the exotic concoctions made at their juice bars. And, at Moon Palace Cancun, guests can book exclusive Wellness Suites, which are lavishly stocked with healthful amenities and feature direct terrace access to a private pool.

"Our goal is redefining the all-inclusive meeting to reflect a more relaxed, healthy lifestyle that allows groups to indulge without feeling guilty," explains Alan Doyle, Vice President of Sales, MICE. Case in point: the resorts' amazing pastries inspired by award-winning chef Antonio Bachour are offered in bite-sized servings. That's the Palace wellness mindset—all things in moderation but everything must be awesome!