

SPIN News

Issue 8

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Hosted Buyer Programs

SPIN is participating in Hosted Buyer Programs all across the U.S. and overseas: [click here](#) to be notified when we head to cities of interest to you.

Featured Poll

Which 3 subjects are of biggest concern for you as a planner over the next 5-10 years?

[Click Here to answer](#)

It's Hatching

SPIN has announced its inaugural North American conference. The conference, called **SPINCon North America**, will take place June 2-4, 2011 at the Crowne Plaza Riverfront in St. Paul. The theme of the conference is **Hatching New Ideas** and every aspect of the meeting will be about showcasing new techniques and thoughts for planning meetings and events for the next decade.

"All of the sessions will be what we call INCubators: Innovative, Next-level, Collaborative and Unique," said Tracey Smith, CMP, CMM, Vice president of programs for SPIN. "We promise no 'talking heads.' The entire program will be experimental, which means some of the ideas we are 'INCubating' could fail. That's okay, because the attendees can directly witness the outcomes without taking the risk at their own events."

All sessions are crowd-sourced, meaning SPIN members themselves are responsible for the content. Throughout the month of March, SPIN members have been meeting in 10 different cities to discuss the evolution of meetings over the next decade. The best ideas will be showcased at SPINCon. An Advisory Board of SPIN members will select the best presentations proposed by outside presenters as well.

A key differentiator to the conference will be its strict limit on the number of supplier participants. "SPIN's motto is 'BY Planners, FOR Planners,' and we will adhere to that focus at SPINCon," said Shawna Suckow, CMP, SPIN Founder and President. "Suppliers can attend only in a sponsor capacity, and we believe a limit of 25% supplier attendance is a great ratio for both suppliers and planners. Although it may be hard to fund a conference this way, it's the right thing to do for our audience, and it's the new type of conference we're striving to achieve."

The conference kicks off with a hosted buyer event for planners to meet with sponsors one-on-one, followed later in the day by a trade show with no booths, just tables. Smith said the idea behind the trade show set-up is that it will facilitate making valuable connections for both planners and suppliers, while minimizing costs to suppliers and impact on the environment. Throughout the trade show, and the entire conference, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in activities to give back to the community of St. Paul and other selected charities.

So, how can you participate?

- **PRESENTERS:** The conference website is accepting proposals for presentations until April 1st.
- **SCHOLARSHIPS:** Apply on the web site for one of several scholarships to attend.
- **HOSTED BUYERS:** Application opening soon!

For more information, please go to spincon.spinplanners.com.

WIN FREE REGISTRATION FOR SPINCon!

Post a discussion on the LinkedIn SPIN board and you could win free SPINCon registration! Post this as your Discussion Title: “Why I’m Excited to Attend SPINCon”, and answer that question the best you can. Your fellow SPIN members will vote to select the winner by posting “I vote for you” as a Reply to their favorite answer. The person with the most votes by May 1 wins!

SPIN Member Pays it Forward!

By Larissa J. Schultz, CMP

As industry veterans, what we have experienced throughout our careers and what we have to share with those new to the industry – our knowledge, our skills, and our insight - is invaluable. You can learn meeting management in classes and through books or seminars – however, hands-on experiences and learning the tips and tricks of how it works in the “real-world” from active industry veterans is priceless.

Almost 3 years in the making and it is finally coming true – my dream and goal of being able to take my skills and knowledge and share with those individuals emerging into the meeting management industry. It is so gratifying to see the research, studies and work I have done over an extended period of time finally reveal itself; but it is an even greater feeling to know I am paying it forward and giving back to an industry that has given me so much.

I recently held a 1.5-day focus group of meeting planners new to the industry and rolled out a new training program I have been working on – Event Planning Basics, based on the book I wrote of the same name. The results were phenomenal, and it was extremely gratifying to see them absorbing all the industry concepts and tools. The goal was to provide them with some education on the basics of meeting planning as they begin their careers, as well as acquire their feedback, insight and response as to how the training program could be better developed and delivered. This collaborative project provided the attendees with CEU credits through the Convention Industry Council, and provided me the opportunity to meet some fantastic new talent, as well as fine-tune and improve the program.

This would not have been successful without the support of the Renaissance Los Angeles Hotel, who hosted the 1 ½ day program. Not only did they step up to the plate to support this new program, but they were instrumental in providing the attendees with an instructional site inspection of their property – for some attendees it was their first official site inspection ever. They also spent time showcasing and highlighting their award-winning food and beverage department. It was a memory-making opportunity for the attendees and the Renaissance Hotel will forever be remembered by them as they move forward in their individual planning careers.

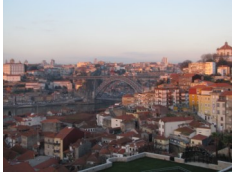
It is those types of memories and hands-on learning which make this training program unique. It is a full immersion into the basics of event planning by placing the participants within a meeting venue and engaging and interacting with their surroundings.

If you think this industry has given you the wonderful life you currently lead as a planner with all the great experiences, memories and friends you have – pay it forward and give this same wonderful life to others. Share.

Larissa J. Schultz, CMP has been in the meeting management industry for over 15 years. She is an active SPIN Member and sits on the Board of Directors for MPI Southern California Chapter. In addition to her meeting management training and consulting business, she still actively plans meetings and events with Elements Meetings and is a published author. To find out more, please log on to her website: www.ljsmeetingstrategies.com

3 Words to Describe Portugal: Stunning, Surprising, Bargain

By Shawna Suckow, Founder of SPIN



I have to admit, I knew very little about Portugal before I traveled there recently on a mini-FAM with a colleague. I could only name Lisbon, and knew they had a wine industry, but that's about it. I can't tell you how surprised I was to discover this gem of a country for the first time. I realized a lot of my friends and colleagues were also in the dark about Portugal. Why do we in North America hear so little about it?! Well, I'm on a mission to change that...

We flew nonstop from Newark to Porto, an easy 5.5 hour flight. Porto is in the north, and is an amazingly picturesque, hilly city by the sea. It's a mix of old-world, red-tiled roofs, laundry-hanging-from-balconies, open-air markets, meandering pathways overlooking beautiful bridges, striking views of the ocean, hidden vineyards and luxury hotels.

After a few days in Porto, we made our way toward Lisbon in the south, stopping along the way to explore the wine country and several villages. Our wonderful guide was Eduarda Neves, the President of Portugal Travel Team – the country's #1 DMC, and with good reason. She took time out of her busy schedule to personally show us her country's best, and her passion for Portugal was both obvious and contagious.

Touring the wine region outside Porto was amazing – I had no idea it rivaled Napa Valley. The drive was picturesque, with rolling hills, farmers harvesting olives, and the road following a winding river. This would be such a great day trip from Porto for an incentive group via either bus or train. We explored wineries both large and small, hotels both high-end and comfy-charming. Many of the wineries have event venues in their cellars, where barrels and barrels of port and wine line the walls. Some allow guests during harvest in the late summer to actually hop in and crush grapes, a la Lucille Ball (this is on my bucket list).



After the wine region, we wound our way south toward Lisbon (only about 3 hours from Porto if you don't stop along the way). We stopped in several villages, including the holy site of Fatima, where we lit candles and watched pilgrims crawl on their knees the length of a cement football field. My favorites were picturesque Guimaraes where I will have a villa when I win the lotto, and the walled village of Obidos, where I will spend all my lotto winnings in its charming markets.

We eventually arrived in Lisbon, where we stayed for two nights. I was shocked at the historical beauty of this city. I would describe it this way: if San Francisco and Prague had a baby, it would be Lisbon. It's got the historic charm and vistas of Prague, mixed with the dramatic hills meeting the ocean like San Francisco. It even has a beautiful spanning bridge designed by the same person as the San Francisco Bay Bridge. Lisbon is a bustling city, but not overcrowded. We toured several hotels, from business-class convention hotels to converted palaces.



Our guide throughout Lisbon was Eduarda's team member, Luis Gama, one of my new favorite people. We had dinner one night with several ladies from Eduarda's team, and had a great time. I can't say enough about their team, and how well coordinated our entire trip was – I would trust them with my groups in a heartbeat. Learn more about them here: <http://www.platinumdmc.com/pages/platinum-destinations/portugal.php> or contact Colleen Abernethy, colleen@platinumdmc.com, who serves the North American market for Portugal Travel Team.

A Tsunami, a Helpless Planner, and a Brilliantly Executed Risk Management Plan

By Shawna Suckow, Founder of SPIN

We all have been watching the horrifying news coming out of Japan. I recently read that all of Japan's MPI members are safe and accounted for, which is the first bit of good news I've heard. It doesn't compare at all, but last week I was in Hawai'i on vacation, and experienced a much smaller version of a tsunami and an earthquake. I also was a participant in my first evacuation.

My husband and I were on our first vacation sans kids in four years. I won a trip from Fairmont Hotels at the SITE SoCal event, so we spent four nights on Maui at the beautiful Kea Lani, and then headed to the Big Island to stay at the incredible Orchid for three nights. It was the night that we arrived on the Big Island that we were evacuated.

The tsunami was very minor compared to what hit Japan, but the fear of the unknown was palpable and the evacuation was unnerving to many. What disturbed me the most was the overwhelming feeling of helplessness I felt as "just" a regular hotel guest, without a mission, without a group to lead. As planners, we like to be in charge. We're generally control freaks and like to be in-the-know.

There were two groups in-house at the Fairmont Orchid. It was all I could do to avoid ripping the walkie talkies out of the hands of one of those planners and take charge. They were doing an amazing job, it's not that they needed me one iota. They smartly moved all the elderly and the families with small children to the front of the line to board the buses. They kept their groups calm and informed. I wouldn't have done anything differently or better – it's just that my own anxiety about the situation would have been alleviated had I felt some modicum of control in it all.

I have to commend the Fairmont Orchid as having the smoothest risk management plan I've ever seen. You would have thought they had done an evacuation like this a thousand times, based on how well organized and smoothly it all went, but the truth is that this was only their third evacuation in 10 years. I can't say enough about their entire team, who went sleepless for 24 to 36 hours to take care of all of us and ensure our safety. We were transported by five buses to an elementary school a mile away. Each guest room was given a map to the school, and calm instructions.

We met in the lobby, and it was amazing how calm and quiet everyone was. The hotel staff projected a feeling of calmness, and it was contagious. At the evacuation site, each of three neighboring hotels had delivered all their beach chaise lounge chairs and loads of towels for us to use as blankets. The Fairmont chef was even at the school, providing snacks for the weary (it was about 1:00 in the morning).

After a mostly sleepless night, we were all transported back to the hotel, where they greeted us with complimentary coffee, and offered every guest a free buffet breakfast. One guest commented how she'd never been to a ho-

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tel breakfast in her pajamas, without makeup, but we were all in the same boat, and it was a collective feeling of community at that point.

Another guest commented about how civilized the whole thing was – nobody panicked (outwardly, at least), and we all cleaned up the evacuation site together before departing. I again give credit to the hotel staff for this: their calm leadership and clear plan of action set the tone.

While I'm grateful to have won a trip from Fairmont, I would never had written this article had I not been so overwhelmingly impressed with their staff, their professionalism, and their clear risk management plan. It speaks volumes about a property when they have gone the extra mile to ensure the safety of their guests in the very off-chance that something like this ever happened, and guess what? It did. I would bet 99% of the hotels out there would not have handled this so well, and Fairmont should be commended. There are many beautiful resorts in Hawai'i (including the two stunning Fairmonts), but as planners we have a responsibility to look beyond that to ensure our group's entire experience is successful AND safe.

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If you have a success story that you would like to share in the SPIN News, please send a summary of your story to Shawna at shawna@spinplanners.com.

If you have suggestions on how to make this newsletter more beneficial, please let us know.

Sincerely,
The SPIN Staff