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## SHINING A LIGHT ON BEST PRACTICES

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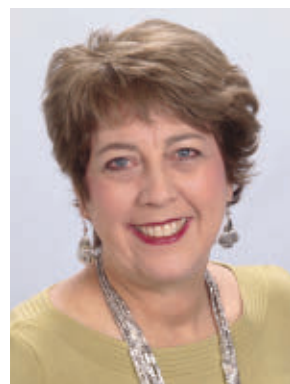
How techniques developed by pharmaceutical planners to comply with the Sunshine Act can benefit meetings in every industry



ATLANTIC CITY  
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companies require eLearning or webinars about risk mitigation that employees must take before meetings and events. For example, TravelTracker is a product that not only helps organizations act immediately during critical events by identifying travelers at risk



Andrea H. Gold, president of Gold Stars Speakers Bureau, says attendees need downtime

but also shows who has participated in preparatory webinars and who has not.

“Meeting planners, as well as those who make decisions to send employees to these events, play a critical role in safeguarding travelers and other VIPs,” says Dr. Quigley. (See some of his best practices for keeping attendees healthy, safe, and secure when planning and executing a meeting on page 42.)

**Health Strategies**

Andrea H. Gold, president of Tucson, AZ-based Gold Stars Speakers Bureau, a company that has provided organizations with

professional presenters, entertainers, and celebrities worldwide for more than 26 years, says health should be kept in mind when planning the hours of a conference. “I am alluding to the fact that some meetings continue to late-night hours, such as ending at 10 p.m. Meetings that continue until late leave no downtime over a period of days. And if you are crossing time zones, that 10 p.m. time can equate to 1 a.m. By the time you get to sleep, you’re lucky to get enough of it,” says Gold.

Most planners have their own strategies for keeping attendees healthy. A common tactic is having hand sanitizer and bacterial wipes on hand. Packets of vitamin mixes like Emergen-C and Airborne are also popular.

Studies have shown that sugar can raise the risk of cold and flu. Healthy food and beverage choices have become a must. “Many times when you go to meetings, all that is available is bagels, pizza, cookies, candy, and soda. Eating too much of this leads to susceptibility to catching colds. I like to put out bags of nuts, fruit trays, veggies, and some cheese and meat platters so attendees can eat as much or as little as they like while still being able to get



**Anticipate Unfavorable Occurrences Before They Happen**

By Andrea Doyle

Yvonne Szikla, founder and president of San Diego-based Affairs with Flair, a full-service event planning firm, says the key to keeping attendees healthy is anticipating unfavorable occurrences before they happen and making sure they are part of an overall risk plan. A former corporate event planner, Szikla has produced executive development programs for top management from the U.S. and abroad. Szikla offers 10 tips to protect the health of your attendees at your next event:

- 1 Know the location and phone numbers for ambulance services, urgent care centers, emergency rooms, and hospitals close to your event.
- 2 Have a list of numbers for taxi and other transportation companies on hand with hours of operation. Don’t assume taxis operate all night — situations vary by city and country and it is worth checking. In some instances, it might be better to have a town car company informed of your event and on standby as a town car is more upscale and generally provides a more comfortable ride.

- 3 Know your attendee demographics and, if possible, collect an emergency medical information card with pertinent information. Be aware of any special needs they may have such as a wheelchair before they arrive.
- 4 Depending on the size, demographics, and location of the event, consider having a nurse or emergency medical technician on site. At the very least, have a first-aid kit with basics such as bandages, sunscreen, and aspirin. It is not uncommon at overseas events to have an ambulance on hand when certain attendees or executives have potentially serious health conditions such as heart issues, which could be fatal.
- 5 Provide signage at food stations noting ingredients in dishes. Allergies, gluten, and lactose intolerance are common issues today and can cause severe reactions needing immediate attention. If a dish has nuts in it, indicate this.
- 6 Alcohol: Make sure bartenders are certified. Certification provides bartenders with training to handle and cut off intoxicated guests. Many a client has been relieved to know that he won’t have to be the one to confront and deal with an intoxicated guest. Have your staff and vendors also keep an eye out during the event for general problems.
- 7 Outdoor events. Keep attendees informed on weather and appropriate attire needed to be comfortable. (Szikla provides a basket of flip-flops, towels, shawls, sunscreen, parasols, hats, and other amenities for outdoor events.) “There is nothing worse to mar an outdoor event than feeling cold from an unexpected breeze or forgetting to bring a hat. And no one wants a sprained ankle from navigating stilettos on sand or soft grass,” she says.
- 8 Have a chain of command for communicating issues. Discuss all of the above points with your client and how each item will be handled.
- 9 Gather your vendors and staff and make sure they are all well briefed on what to do and who to go to with any concerns during the event.
- 10 Communicate closely with the venue and keep them abreast of possible needs and concerns before and during the event. Keeping them in the loop should be part of your strategy for a successful event.