



# Programme agenda

IMEX-MPI-MCI Future Leaders Forum  
IMEX America 2023



# Programme agenda

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023

South Pacific GH - Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas

*Moderated by Thuy Diep, Senior Meeting Planner, CWT Meetings & Events*

09:30 – 10:00am

**Arrival & registration**

10:00 – 10:15am

**Welcome to the IMEX-MPI-MCI Future Leaders Forum at IMEX America 2023**

Meet the organisers behind the Forum and get prepared for the next few days! We will also tell you more about the Future Leaders community and how to make the most out of your experience.

*Thuy Diep, Senior Meeting Planner, CWT Meetings & Events*

*Drew Holmgreen, Chief Brand Officer, Meeting Professionals International (MPI)*

*Juliano Lissoni, Managing Director, MCI Canada*

*Heidi Nizowitz, Director Convention Services, Mandalay Bay*

10:15 – 10:30am

**Icebreaker game – FLIGHT RISK™**

*Bree Nidds, Chief Operating Officer, Discover Lehigh Valley & Creator of FLIGHT RISK™*

Get to know your fellow Future Leaders through a brand-new icebreaker game. FLIGHT RISK™ illuminates travel compatibility in a fun and sometimes hilarious way. Prepare to take a social trip with your fellow Future Leaders and discover who you are most compatible with to take on your next adventure!

10:30 – 11:15am

**Navigating your journey in event planning**

*Heidi Bianchi, Founder and CEO, The Bridge Event Academy*

During this engaging session, Heidi will provide tips on best practices, vendor management and on-site execution. Drawing on her experience, she'll offer practical tips and tricks for success and share some stories along the way.

With Heidi as your guide, you will gain valuable knowledge that will help you chart your own career journey toward success. Whether you're just starting out or looking to enhance existing skills, this session has it all.

11:15 – 11:30am

**Break**

11:30am – 12:15pm

**It takes a team: IMEX America event sustainability and opportunities on the journey to a sustainable event future**

*Eric Wallinger, Director of Sustainability, MeetGreen*

*Cassie Snow, Sustainability Manager, MGM Resorts International*

Meet key representatives from teams working to support IMEX's event sustainability and gain a look behind the scenes at the green initiatives happening at IMEX America 2023!

12:15 – 12:45pm

**The meetings and events industry - How did we get here?!**

*Sam McNeill, General Manager – UK & Europe, SongDivision*

*Karen Small, Relationship Director, Sleek Events*

*Michael Gulich, VP of Environmental Sustainability, MGM Resorts International*

Explore the different sides of the industry and all the opportunities that lie ahead of you! Sam, Karen and Michael will share their individual experiences and backgrounds of working across various sectors and business – including being a supplier, working at in-house agencies, hotelier life and more. You will learn more about growing your careers and navigating the twists and turns in the world of meetings and events.

12:50 – 2:00pm

Lunch break

Enjoy lunch with other Future Leaders at the Mandalay Bay food court! Don't forget your vouchers provided by IMEX (one-time use only – no change given).

2:00 – 2:05pm

**Welcome back!**

*Ray Bloom, Chairman, IMEX Group*

2:05 – 2:45pm

**Getting noticed in the world of events**

*DJ Graffiti – DJ, Producer & Manager*

Want to know how to build your personal brand and stand out for your competition? Learn from Detroit's go-to DJ for concerts, clubs and corporate events who has performed in front of audiences awaiting artists such as Jay-Z, Beyoncé and Eminem. DJ Graffiti will share his experiences of the industry, how he has built himself a global platform and how he positioned himself as a leader.

2:45 – 3:00pm

Coffee break

3:00 – 4:30pm

**Roundtables session: Meet the experts**

Get first-hand industry insights, hear personal stories, discover potential career opportunities and network with some of the best in the business! Ask all your burning questions to a group of industry experts – such as their job responsibilities and how they progressed in their career.

After a short introduction to the experts involved, we will run 4 discussion rounds of 20 minutes each – you will get to meet with 4 industry professionals of your choice in smaller groups.

**Participating industry professionals:**

**Joost de Meyer**, Chairman & CEO, First Incentive Travel

**Devon Pasha**, Director, Event Design Collective

**Cassie Snow**, Sustainability Manager, MGM Resorts International

**Taylor Smith**, Content Developer – Destinations & Features, Meetings Today

**Nikki Gonzales**, Chief of Staff, Soundings

**Charles Chan Massey**, Founder and CEO, SYNAXIS Meetings & Events, Inc & Past President, Meeting Professionals International – Southern California Chapter

**Robyn Davis**, Trade Show Trainer/Consultant, Exhibitors WINH LLC

**Lenny Talarico**, Owner, Lenny Talarico Events

**Kate Patay**, Vice President of Engagement, Terramar DMC

*Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023*

*IMEX show floor – Ideas Theater, Inspiration Hub*

*Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas*

*Moderated by Jen Salerno, CMP, DES, Host & Moderator, [JTS Connect, LLC](#)*

9:30 – 10:00am

**Welcome back & networking**

Start day 2 of the Forum by networking with your fellow Future Leaders and lecturers participating in the co-located Faculty Engagement Program.

10:00 – 10:45am

**LinkedIn fundamentals for tomorrow's meetings & events leaders**

*Leanne Calderwood, VP Global Accounts, Conference Direct & LinkedIn and Personal Branding Trainer*

Unlock the power of LinkedIn to elevate your professional presence in the meetings and events industry. Embrace platform best practices – including how to build a magnetic profile and how to build your network with purpose. Your leadership journey starts here!

10:45 – 11:05am

**IAEE / Trade show introduction**

*Marsha Flanagan, M.Ed, CEM, Senior Vice President of Events and Learning Experiences, IAEE*

**IMEX America show floor experience briefing**

*M.T. Hickman, CMP, CPECP, Senior Lecturer – College of Merchandise, Hospitality & Tourism, University of North Texas*

11:30am – 12:30pm

**IMEX America show floor experience**

Discover the world of meetings and events! After a short introduction to the IMEX show floor, you will gather in groups to explore yourself and meet with exhibitors through pre-arranged appointments.

12:30 – 2:30pm

**Show floor visit – Own time & Lunch**

You can plan this time on the show floor entirely to your own preferences and interests. Visit any exhibitors you are interested in, attend an educational session on the Inspiration Hub, catch up with exhibitors that you met earlier or just familiarize yourself with the industry.

2:30 pm – 3:00pm

**Presentation of show floor findings**

*Jen Salerno, CMP, DES, Host & Moderator, JTS Connect, LLC*

We will gather together after lunch to present back and reflect on your finds from the show floor experience.

3:00 pm – 3:15pm

**SongDivision performance & Closing remarks**

*Sam McNeill, General Manager – UK & Europe, SongDivision*

*Jen Salerno, CMP, DES, Host & Moderator, JTS Connect, LLC*

We will hear the song that SongDivision have created for you all and wrap up your IMEX America experience!