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LUNCH N LEARN

Growing Brands Through Better Events

10 Trends to Watch

Presented by **Mary O'Connor**, President & CEO, and **Andrea Honan**, Account Director

We Grow Brands and Advance People

MEET YOUR PRESENTERS



Mary O'Connor

President & CEO

- I founded MOC&CO in 1995 after 16 years in management at Hyatt Hotels and Resorts
- As Hyatt's Assistant VP of Catering and Conventions, I directed 550+ field managers and directors
- Today I lead our event work for Fortune 500 companies and associations, building every event around the client's business goals

30+ years
owning MOC&CO

IFA
Partner since 2020

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MEET YOUR PRESENTERS



Andrea Honan

Account Director

- I started my career at MOC&CO in 1998, then spent 12 years in leadership at Hyatt Hotels, helping open Hyatt Regency Clearwater Beach
- I owned and operated my own wine bar for seven years before coming back to MOC&CO in 2024
- Today I lead strategic client relationships and domestic and international programs, and I hold an MBA in Organizational Leadership

~30 years
in hospitality and events

12 years
in leadership at Hyatt

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THE ROADMAP

10 Trends to Watch

01 AI at the planning table

02 Live trust is the premium asset

03 Wellness is now expected

04 Generic content doesn't land

05 The small table beats the big room

06 Sustainability is a checklist item

07 Keynotes shrink, workshops win

08 Proving value is way up

09 Food becomes the networking tool

10 Attendees want the spotlight

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TREND 01

AI Has Moved From the Sidelines to the Planning Table

01

The teams pulling ahead use AI every day for the unglamorous heavy lifting, not for one flashy moment.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Add an AI chatbot to the event app, loaded with the agenda, maps, Wi-Fi details, and FAQs
2. Send a day-one push notification inviting every attendee to try it
3. Review the most-asked questions each evening and fix signage or announcements by morning
4. Use the full question log after the event to see what attendees cared about most
5. Use AI to speed up menu planning and build the event budget
6. Let AI help curate agendas and draft speaker bios and session descriptions

TREND 02

Live Trust Is the Premium Asset

02

Anyone can generate a polished video in seconds. A well-run room of real people can't be faked, and attendees read it as proof the organization is dependable.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Offer QR-code self check-in so no one waits more than a couple of minutes
2. Run a full tech rehearsal the night before
3. Hold every general session to a hard start time with a visible countdown clock
4. Give each leader a short list of attendees to personally greet and sit with at one meal
5. Turn the registration team into "vibe hosts" who welcome attendees, spark connections, and shape the experience

TREND 03

Attendees Now Expect Wellness at Events

03

Healthy options and real breaks used to be a nice extra. Now attendees expect them as a normal part of the event.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Offer mocktails that are as good as the cocktails, including two or three signature drinks
2. Reserve a small quiet room near the general session space and mark it on the agenda map
3. Add a 10-minute stretch or walking break after every 90 minutes of sessions
4. Wrap the program day by 5:00 p.m. so attendees have time to recharge before evening events
5. Offer an optional early-morning group walk or yoga session before the program starts
6. Set up hydration stations and healthy grab-and-go snacks at every break

TREND 04

Generic Content Doesn't Land Anymore

04

If a session doesn't feel relevant to their role or goals, attendees mentally check out, especially younger professionals.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Ask each attendee's role, experience level, and top goal at registration
2. Build two or three tracks by experience level, such as New, Growing, and Seasoned
3. Color-code badges or lanyards by track so staff can steer people to the right room and create networking opportunities
4. Send a "choose your path" agenda email where attendees pick sessions by goal

TREND 05

The Big Room Is Giving Way to the Small Table

05

The measure of a great event is shifting from production value to the depth of the relationships built in the room.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Host a private advisory dinner for the top 10–12 performers the night before
2. Bring one or two specific questions leadership wants their input on
3. Replace one general-session hour with facilitated roundtables of eight to ten people
4. Pilot half-day regional meetups between annual conventions
5. Tap into AI for attendee matchmaking and seating charts

TREND 06

Sustainability Has Become a Checklist Item

06

Planners now measure sustainability, and venues have to back up their claims with real systems, not website language.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Add sustainability questions to the venue RFP (request for proposal) and ask for proof
2. Move the printed program, maps, and speaker bios into the event app
3. Design signage without dates or the year so it can be reused
4. Have attendees confirm meals at registration so food orders match who's coming
5. Check with the venue about donating leftover food to a local food bank or pantry
6. Swap plastic utensils for eco-friendly options, like bamboo silverware
7. Set up water refill stations and hand out reusable bottles instead of plastic ones
8. Build menus around local, in-season ingredients to cut shipping and waste

TREND 07

Keynotes Are Shrinking, and Workshops Are Winning

07

Attendees want to do something in a session, not just sit and listen. Shorter talks and hands-on formats are replacing the long keynote.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Cap keynotes at 30 minutes and use the time saved for discussion
2. Turn one breakout into a hands-on workshop where attendees leave with a finished 90-day plan
3. Swap one paid speaker for a rehearsed fireside chat with a top performer from the audience
4. List "You'll leave with…" under every session in the agenda
5. Drop the traditional panel discussion and give that time to a workshop, case studies, or open Q&A

TREND 08

Budgets Are Cautious, but Proving Value Is Way Up

08

Budgets are holding flat, but teams are far better at proving what the money did. The real return shows up in the months after the event.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Choose two or three business outcomes to track before the event
2. Measure where attendees stand on those outcomes before the event
3. Send short follow-up surveys at 30 and 90 days
4. Compare before-and-after results to show leadership what changed
5. MOC&CO case study

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TREND 09

Food Is Becoming the Networking Tool

09

Plated dinners are giving way to stations and small bites that get people moving and talking. The food budget is being spent on connection, not just a meal.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Replace one or more plated meals with chef-attended food stations
2. Use mostly high-top tables, with some seating, so people mix during meals
3. Label every station with dietary info, such as gluten-free and vegetarian
4. Build one meal around local food from the host city

TREND 10

Attendees Want the Spotlight, Not Just a Seat

10

Events have become career moments. People come to build their reputation and their network, not only to listen and learn.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Invite standout attendees to co-lead breakouts alongside staff
2. Add a "peer spotlight" where three attendees share a quick win on the main stage
3. Set up a free professional headshot station
4. Recognize achievements throughout the event, not just at the awards dinner

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Thank You

Let's keep the conversation going.

Mary O'Connor
moconnor@mocandco.com

Andrea Honan
ahonan@mocandco.com

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Questions?

Which of these ideas could you try at your next event?

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