

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Ritz-Carlton blurs lines between business and pleasure for corporate events

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Image courtesy of Ritz-Carlton

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The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company is innovating in the meetings and events space by encouraging organizers to book with its new sensory-stimulating conference program.

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Combing through Pinterest, online platforms and onsite holiday window displays are just a few of the methods in which experts are gleaning inspiration for creative event experiences designed to motivate attendees. **Ritz-Carlton's** new A Meeting of the Senses program selects all details of events, such as food, cocktails, individualized itinerary and wellness breaks, to fully immerse participants.

"Meetings and events are a significant revenue generator for hotels, especially during the shoulder and off seasons," said Taylor Rains, managing partner at Flugel Consulting, Charleston, SC. "The "A Meeting of the Senses" program effectively takes all aspects of meeting planning in house, allowing Ritz-Carlton to exercise tight control of the output.

"This helps to ensure that all on-property events are consistent with the brand's trademark level of luxury and service," he said. "Planners are able to cultivate an event unique to the property that houses it, which is certainly an appealing offer to corporations scouting a host location.

"The "A Meeting of the Senses" also limits the number of party's involved in the planning process making it a more manageable process for corporate clients."

Sensory stimulants

Up to 60 **Ritz-Carlton** locations worldwide are implementing the program, allowing event planners to sign up for a specialty meeting experience that focus on sense stimulation. The program hopes to make luxury meetings more invigorating and immersive for attendees.

The Kapalua, HI location is one of the hotels participating in the program and is leveraging its beautiful landscape to help cultivate a memorable event experience. For instance, the hotel screened a film on its rolling Plantation Lawn

where attendees were treated to a picnic basket for its Picnic Under the Stars.



Ritz-Carlton Kapalua's Picnic Under the Stars

Each participating hotel will incorporate experiences that relate to the specific location, such as Kapalua's Picnic Under the Stars. For example, the Ritz-Carlton New York allows direct access to an express shopping program offered by Saks Fifth Avenue within breaks.

Ritz-Carlton is hoping to capitalize on the growing interest of merging business and leisure through its A Meeting of the Sense program. Events organized under the program will feature a wide range of evening and daily activities that balance pleasure and work for a better experience that leaves attendees interested and excited.

Many of the experiences to be introduced are designed with wellness and productivity stimulation in mind. For instance, the Kapalua location features its Green Smoothie Station, Vienna, Austria provides personal trainer sessions for workouts during breaks and Aruba includes an oxygen station for relaxation.



A Meeting of the Senses shares unique cocktails

Team members at individual locations who are a part of the A Meeting of the Senses program are taking inventory from a wide range of platforms to draw inspiration. The New York team is taking ideas from holiday window displays, while those in St. Louis, MO are tapping into Pinterest to look for trends.

Localized experiences

The hotel brand focuses on providing localized services that coincide with local culture.

For instance, Ritz-Carlton Toronto encouraged guests to "wine down" in a recent experiential package.

Canada emerged as a winemaking stronghold in North America, with world-renowned wineries producing cool climate Chardonnays and earthy Pinot Noirs. The guest package aimed to showcase what Canadian vineyards have to offer through one-of-a-kind experiences ([see more](#)).

The Hotel Company also aimed to leverage online and social media services to better connect to national and global consumers. The brand provided enthusiasts with a one-stop shop online by establishing itself on Flipboard.

Flipboard was an addition to Ritz-Carlton's social media portfolio and features 12 different branded magazines covering a range of topics. Social media serves as the primary liaison between consumers and online content, so venturing to new platforms and finding new ways to package material will grant the brand more visibility ([see more](#)).

"Typically, hotels have a dedicated corporate meetings and events staff to manage planning for this segment," Mr. Rain said. "For a great number of property's, however, these individuals are working with third-party planners and not with the clients themselves.

"By establishing a strong planning and event design in-house, hotels are able to increase client-facing exposure and develop direct relationships with the company's they serve, increasing the likelihood of repeat business," he said. "Pending success of the program, I would imagine that a number of large hotel brands will make similar moves to establish an in-house planning and design service for corporate clients in the future."

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