

FUTURE FOCUS: 2020 VISION



Payne School's 2020 Forecast



CARL WINSTON
Director, L. Robert Payne
School of Hospitality &
Tourism Management

In our recent work on the curricula for our degree programs, I challenged our team to develop both timeless and timely principles to embed in our courses and extracurricular work. As part of that process, we needed to learn from our constituents to ensure we got this right. Boy, did we unleash some passionate, provocative, and informed responses!

In this issue of our annual newsletter, we decided to go bold and make some of their feedback public for you. Given the incredibly fast pace of change we're all experiencing, as we crafted this issue, we decided to focus our participants' "future vision" on the year 2020. We saw both common themes and some pretty radical "one-offs." I hope you're as fascinated by these predictions as I am.

In light of embracing whatever the future has in store, we've abandoned our familiar, "easy to do" newsletter format for something out of our comfort zone — even a bit risky. In this issue, you'll get perspectives from industry leaders and CEOs, current students and faculty — even the Mayor of San Diego! The overwhelming support these thought leaders freely gave us speaks volumes to the comprehensive support we receive both locally and globally.



The Hotel Experience 2016 trip — NYC



The Hotel Experience 2016 trip — NYC

None of the "timeless" principles you'll read about should surprise you. They include things like networking, working smart, working hard and being nice to others! (And yes, these all have multiple spots in our curriculum.) As to the future predictions? Some are rather far-flung (but so was Airbnb, Uber and Alibaba just a few years ago!) and will be more of a challenge for us to keep pace with. But with your help, we'll meet whatever challenges and opportunities the future brings — and continue to graduate some of the best-prepared people anywhere. That's our promise to you.

Lastly, we want your feedback — both positive and constructive. Our best ideas come from outside our campus. So I encourage you to please call or email me with your thoughts.



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Innovation Education



JOYCE GATTAS
SDSU Dean of Professional
Studies and Fine Arts

Joyce Gattas, SDSU Dean of Professional Studies and Fine Arts, is the epitome of a well-educated, highly respected professor and school administrator. She's checked some of the most prestigious boxes in education, with a Master's from the University of New Mexico and a PhD from Berkeley. So why does she want to almost completely disrupt what she learned — and how she learned it?

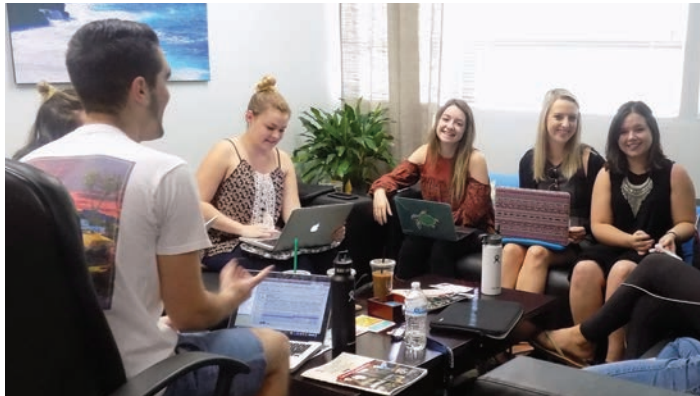
Flip...or Flop

If it were up to Dean Joyce Gattas, she'd throw it all out: Waiting until junior year to focus on your major. General Ed requirements. Learning a little bit about a lot of things. The Dean says to really prepare students for the roller coaster realities of the 21st century workplace, "we need to flip it all around."

"General education is supposed to prepare creative and innovative thinkers," she explains. "But it's just a series of classes to check off. I'd prepare courses that really enhance critical thinking, maybe through theme-based learning. For example, a student could focus on homelessness or sustainability...and everything they learn in the humanities, arts and sciences is tied to that theme." She adds, "I'd also have students focus on their majors right from the start. And they'd be structured to be far more collaborative than interdisciplinary."

Say Goodbye to Old School

The all-knowing teacher standing in front of a chalkboard, while dutiful students take pen and paper notes. This time-honored tableau is on the way out. What's changing education now? Dean



The HTM couch

Gattas says it's a combination of technology, the need for entrepreneurial skills, and innovative learning.

"The notion of education happening in one or three hour blocks is outdated," she explains. "Learning happens in non-traditional times in non-traditional ways. It's much more interactive now. We need to teach our students how to use their tech skills to enhance learning."

She says that means students working in small groups to hone collaborative skills, learning to problem solve rather than memorize, and enhancing creative thinking to deal with the complexities of rapidly-changing world.

"We need to teach our students how to use their tech skills to enhance learning."

"The HTM/RTM student is on the front lines of these changes," she says. "It's different than other majors, because they're dealing with people and need hands-on professional skills. Our students need to be workforce ready in different ways."

The Dean believes students have a far different view of the future than most faculty. "I hear professors saying things like 'There will always be a need for the easel and the paint brush'... but students might not agree. They will bring in the tech skills they already have, and we need to offer them an education that helps them manage, lead, and use those learning skills in a way that's productive when they graduate."

"The Most Employable Students on Campus"

"When I need someone to represent the college, I go straight to our HTM/RTM students," Dean Gattas says. "Even as undergrads, they have an enormous amount of experience — confidence, people skills, professionally active, engaged in the community. They meet a standard that's at the forefront of education."



Kimberly Robles, Ecuador

She says the L. Robert Payne School of HTM works well because it was created by "listening to people in the real world. Everything about this program is pushing the envelope and leading the way in education. Even hiring Carl Winston, Director of the L. Robert Payne School of HTM and the Managing Director of our China Hospitality Education Initiative, went against the traditional grain of academic administrators." She adds, "We're not followers. We're a model for other programs worldwide. We're living in an increasingly global society, so we require our students to spend time abroad. Our small, customizable programs produce the most employable graduates on campus."

High Tech Humans

"We'll always be social creatures," Dean Gattas says. "Our need for human interaction will never go away. It may happen in different ways, but it'll always be there. The need will stay the same, but how we manage that will change."

She feels the possibilities for learning in a high tech world are both exciting — and scary. "The more information students have at their disposal, the more able they are to bring a vast set of skills to solve problems and create new projects."

But, she warns, "the changes are happening so rapidly, we don't have the people power, the faculty, or the resources to meet them. Just as this huge sea change is going on, more people are leaving the (teaching) profession. There's a real push to figure out how to best serve our students, who are coming in with a lot of different skills than the student of 20 years ago."

"The changing global environment is impacting both how we do business — and how we learn."

The Dean says SDSU's innovative HTM/RTM programs offer students a safe, engaging "laboratory of learning" where collaboration and problem solving is key.

Her best advice to this new wave of tech-savvy, 21st century students? "Reach out. Talk to a lot of people. Find out how they think, how they handle their business. Immerse yourself in as many practical experiences as you can: field opportunities, research, getting out in the community."

"The world is much smaller now," she says. "The changing global environment is impacting both how we do business — and how we learn."



Monica Bolanos, Berlin, Germany

Beyond Borders



BRIAN BLAKE
Director, Student Center for
Professional Development, SDSU

To many, the world seems a little scary right now. We talk of walls, not bridges. Brexit is becoming a reality. Terrorism isn't suddenly going to cease. New travel restrictions on people from certain countries have experts predicting a decline in international visitors to America.

Despite those very real concerns, I still think the future is bright — and global.

I've spent my life developing a world perspective. I was born in the U.K., interned in Amsterdam for a Japanese luxury hotel company, worked in Greece...and then, thirty years ago, moved to America. To me, the world is truly an amazing place. Having experienced the multiculturalism of both Europe and the United States has given me opportunities our ancestors could only dream of.

So what do I see as I look ahead to 2020? First and foremost, our continued commitment to developing smart, savvy, worldly students through our wide array of international programs. As Director of our Student Center for Professional Development, creating these study abroad opportunities is one of my greatest joys. Travel truly changes the traveler — and one of my greatest hopes for future peace is through our well-traveled students.

These programs allow us to witness an incredible transformation. First, we watch our students start their adventures abroad with excitement, a healthy touch of anxiety, and a whole lot of questions about the world outside our own borders. Then we see them come back as true global citizens: confident, optimistic and enthusiastically open to new experiences and different ways of doing business.

Brianna Moore, HTM Class of 2013, says our study abroad programs have made her better prepared for a successful career — and a fulfilling life.

"You always supported my passion to travel, and encouraged me to study abroad the full year in Germany, when no one else did," she tells us. "That year was easily the best of my life. Now, I am so excited for my next adventure in Ireland! I really don't know if I would have had the confidence to go through with it without you. So THANK YOU! You've influenced the course of my life in all the best ways possible."



Brian Blake at dinner with Japan alumni

Our students choose from work/study programs all around the world, from Europe to the Middle East to Asia. They immerse themselves in tremendous opportunities, including world-class properties like the Park Hyatt in Dubai and the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Edinburgh. Thanks to a generous donor, our students can study abroad for little to no cost for an entire semester. Because of this endowment, the program will continue into 2020 and for many years to come.

These work/study programs are instrumental in preparing our students for an increasingly borderless future. These days, a global perspective and open attitude aren't just optional in the business world — they're absolutely mandatory.

"We're not just awarding degrees to students. We're changing their lives."

Even better? Our international programs are an undeniable success. For example, Manabu Ozeki, a former HTM student from Japan, did an internship

at the Westin Gaslamp in San Diego. He's now an executive in human resources at the legendary Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. Another former HTM student, Haruka Matsuno, also works at the Westin Gaslamp, and is now in charge of producing events all over the world. So for 2020 and beyond? I see our international programs growing stronger than ever.

Despite the whirlwind of changes brought on by technology and globalization, some things are truly timeless — and borderless, such as our shared human reaction to profound change. Our international students, like their American counterparts, also feel that heady blend of excitement and trepidation when they leave all that's familiar to come study at the L. Robert Payne School of HTM.



Brian Blake and Richard Greaves, GM of Hyatt Regency Shanghai, with former SDSU international students at an alumni mixer

The first thing they notice? A completely different way of teaching and learning. For example, they frequently find industry professionals guest teaching a class, something they rarely, if ever, experience in their home country. These "Professors for a Day" give students the real deal — an honest, in-depth view of what it's like to work in the industry and what it takes to build a successful career.

Our international students also participate in a variety of group activities, both inside and outside the classroom. Through our international programs, we've welcomed over 600 students to SDSU since 2010. You'll find many of them working all over the world in a variety of hospitality careers — and I couldn't be prouder!

The influence and reach of the school of HTM extends across the globe. Through the J.W. and Alice S. Marriott Foundation, we are the lead academic advisor for a hospitality education initiative program in China (www.chei.org) that teaches and trains industry professionals how to cultivate and grow their own 21st century workers. Using the same groundbreaking techniques that are so successful at our San Diego campus, we're helping China's best and brightest create a new wave of professionals in their own country. The result? China's rising status on the world HTM stage.

So when you ask me about the year 2020, I see a continuation of our core commitment here at the L. Robert Payne School of HTM. We're not just awarding degrees to students. We're changing their lives. Through an innovative and powerful program that fully prepares students for a rapidly-changing world — in an industry with profound global impact.

Because in our day-to-day service to our clients and customers, we're not just giving them a great meal, or a wonderful room, or a memorable event. We're reminding them that all around the world, no matter where they are, people everywhere want the same things: respect, inclusion, and appreciation. And that, I believe, will never change.

Till next year...

"These days, a global perspective and open attitude aren't just optional in the business world — they're absolutely mandatory. "



First Marriott Group



A View from the Top



KEVIN FAULCONER
Mayor, San Diego

When it comes to tourism in San Diego, business is booming. What’s not to love? Renowned weather, world-class beaches, a vibrant downtown, a wide array of attractions including Balboa Park and our world-famous Zoo. They’re all drawing visitors from Chicago to Shanghai. And let’s not forget those famous fish tacos! But as good as things are, San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer says as we head toward 2020, the best is yet to come.

Payne School of HTM:
So what are the top things you see happening to San Diego’s tourism and hospitality industry by the year 2020?

Mayor Kevin Faulconer:
The San Diego tourism economy is STRONG. We saw another record-breaking year, and our tourism economy is only getting stronger. Our hotels and motels in San Diego host more than 30 million visitors every year — that’s more people than the population of America’s 10 largest cities combined. These visitors produce an estimated economic impact of 17 billion dollars every year. That’s millions of dollars that goes toward city services.

To further this growth, the most important thing for the tourism and hospitality industry in the coming years will

be the contiguous expansion of the San Diego Convention Center. During my State of the City Address in January 2017, I proposed a ballot measure to increase the Transient Occupancy Tax to address three of San Diego’s most critical issues — the Contiguous Phase III Convention Center Expansion, road repairs, and homelessness. This proposed measure is expected to be on the ballot in 2018.

Payne School of HTM:
What will those changes mean for our tourists and our business people?

Mayor Faulconer:
The Convention Center has reached maximum occupancy and a lack of available space is the number one reason clients are not able to bring business to San Diego. As a result, these conventions go to other cities and San Diego loses significant economic benefit. The expansion will help the city keep large conventions like Comic-Con, attract new and larger conventions, and create thousands of jobs and millions in new tax revenue to help pay for core City services like parks, libraries and public safety.

Payne School of HTM:
What’s happening right now in local tourism that you never would’ve predicted just a few years ago?

Mayor Faulconer:
The industry has really come together as a unified voice this year in support of my proposal to raise the TOT — or tourism taxes — to fund the Convention Center expansion and two of San Diego’s most pressing issues, homelessness and road repair. It’s extremely rare to have a group of stakeholders saying “tax me,” but they understand that this is the right thing to do for the City as a whole, for our residents and visitors alike.





Payne School of HTM:

In what ways is San Diego best positioned to grow this vital part of our economy? What are our advantages, as well as some of our challenges?

Mayor Faulconer:

San Diego deserves to be the envy of the tourism world with all of our tremendous advantages and assets, including our endless beaches and bays, our world-class attractions like Balboa Park, our thriving culinary and brewery scene, and our unparalleled climate and quality of life.

However, it's a competitive market, and cities like Anaheim, Los Angeles and Orlando are spending a lot of money to lure visitors. According to the San Diego Tourism Marketing District's Destination Master Plan, San Diego lags recent peer growth in both visitor spending and subsequent tourism tax growth. That is why it is so important that we expand our Convention Center — to remain competitive and make sure we don't start losing business, and precious tourism dollars, to other cities.

Payne School of HTM:

What are some of the most promising trends you see?

Mayor Faulconer:

San Diego continues to gain recognition on the national and international stage. San Diego's visitor industry has had incredible success in recent years in attracting world-class events like the Major League Baseball All-Star Week, the Farmers Insurance Open, the Red Bull Air Races, the 2021 U.S. Open and many more. And, we've earned international acclaim among top publications like National Geographic. The trend remains positive, and as Mayor I am committed to keeping us at the forefront of these opportunities, and bringing more top opportunities to our world-class City.

Payne School of HTM:

If you ruled the Universe, what are the ideal changes you'd make to San Diego's tourism and hospitality industry right now?

Mayor Faulconer:

There are still some access opportunities that could further support San Diego's tourism. While international flight service in San Diego has grown aggressively over the past few years, San Diego's share of international seats arriving in San Diego is relatively low compared to other major cities in the U.S. I am committed to working with our industry leaders to attract more international nonstop routes to San Diego International Airport, which will help grow our tourism industry exponentially. For example, the London-San Diego flight is estimated to have resulted in more than \$110 million in direct and indirect impact for the city. But it doesn't stop there, and we've got to keep working toward more routes. As another example, China is now the number one overseas market to California, and San Diego needs a direct air service to attract a greater share of visitors from China.

"Every year, our hotels and motels in San Diego host more than the population of America's 10 largest cities combined."

Payne School of HTM:

What's your "elevator pitch" to the world for San Diego tourism?

Mayor Faulconer:

Beaches. Bays. Sunny skies. Birthplace of California. Craft beer. Great restaurants. Diverse cultures. Historic Balboa Park. Surfing. Hiking. Gateway to Mexico and the Pacific. And, of course, California burritos. Do I really need to keep going?



“Culture is the Driver of our Business... and it’s Often Overlooked.”



DAVID PECKINPAUGH
President, Maritz Global Events

“Yes, I was a ski bum.” Not exactly what you expect to hear from the head of one of the biggest events firms in the world! Like many of today’s industry leaders, David Peckinpaugh, President of Maritz Global Events, started small. His first job as a desk clerk (and admitted ski bum) at the Sitzmark Lodge in Vail, Colorado put him on the front lines of customer service – and gave him the valuable, lifelong lessons that are still at the core of his highly-successful career.



And while he feels the term “glocal” (a corporate strategy to think global, but act local) is overused, David says it will continue to be highly relevant – and a constant opportunity. “We have the need to design and execute events of all types anywhere in the world, with local assets and cultural sensitivities.”

Bottom line? David says it’s all about the people, both in the communities a company serves and in the employees it hires. “The importance and value of culture,” David explains. “To me, that’s the driver of business and it’s often overlooked. The organizations who realize that will attract the talent, have long-term growth, and make an impact on the world. “

The Push and Pull of Change

While the pace of change is happening at “breakneck speed,” David says there are still a lot of business practices that are lagging behind.

One such area is how companies plan for the future. “Traditional strategic planning is looking three to five years out,” he says. “The reality is that businesses need to develop speed and flexibility in everything they do to be able to adapt. That means planning will happen in much smaller increments.”

What’s also here for the long haul? Good old-fashioned manners. “I think the basics are timeless,” he says. “Face-to-face interactions like networking and sales calls, handwritten thank you notes, picking up and using the phone instead of email or texting – and a focus on the people you serve.”

Of particular note to today’s students, David raises a red flag about social media. “I have two young adult children, and I continue to harp on them to be careful in anything they post,” he says. “No matter what people think, what they post reflects on their personal brand – as well as the brand they work for.”

“The impact of artificial intelligence and augmented reality [will] truly take hold of our industry in the very near future.”

What’s taken David by surprise? The growing push for simplicity. “As the complexity of our lives continues, one would think the addiction would continue to grow,” he says. “Instead, we see a significant trend to simplify our lives in every way.”

Rising Expectations

As we approach 2020, good just isn’t good enough. “I think client expectations will continue to rise,” David says. “They’ll expect us to be a strategic advisor to their business and not just a vendor.” The good news for HTM grads? “Clients will expect us to have the best people in the industry – and to give them the training and resources they need to be successful.”

How can students best prepare for the future? David says, “Language skills will become more important; technology fluency will be in demand and exposure to international markets and experiences will gain importance,” he says. “Roles like Global Event Strategist will gain acceptance. The future will be about strategic relevance in whatever role they serve.”

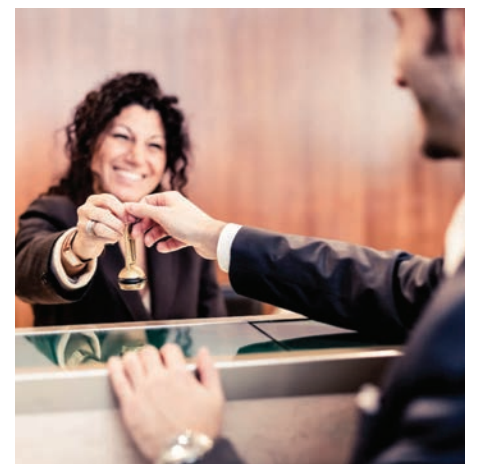
Labor of Love

Like the young man who fell in love with the hospitality industry decades ago, David remains intensely committed and optimistic about his industry’s future. “We’re currently the market leader and we have all the right elements in our business for long term sustainable growth,” he says. “Most importantly, I believe we have the best people in the business and a strong culture that supports them.”



Despite the whirlwind of changes ahead, David has some timeless advice to new grads: “Make sure you treat everyone you work with the way you want to be treated,” he advises. “In this industry, you will inevitably work with, work for, and manage people along the way. So always take a long-term view on relationships.”

“Make sure you treat everyone you work with the way you want to be treated.”



When David Peckinpaugh says get ready for more of the same – he’s not talking about going on cruise control. “The next three years will be one of flux and consistent change... just like the last three years,” he says. The key trends he’s watching?

“The impact of artificial intelligence and augmented reality,” he says. “They will truly take hold of our industry in the very near future. The focus will be on how to bring greater and enhanced experiences to our face to face audiences.” He adds, “Data driven insights will also continue to grow in importance.”



At the core of the events industry? “The continued growth of Experience Design and how intentional and value-based design can transform events,” he says.

The End of the Passive Customer



JIM UNGER
VP, Hornblower Cruises & Events

Jim Unger started his hospitality career at one of San Diego's most iconic resort hotels: Paradise Point on San Diego's Mission Bay. He then made the switch to travel and transportation by joining Coast Management Services, a group of travel agencies, limousine and charter yacht services. That led to Jim's biggest career leap in 1984: the startup of Hornblower Cruises & Events on the famous San Diego Bay, where he now serves as VP.

Jim Unger strongly believes the customer experience of today will be gone by 2020. "Experience elements valued today will change substantially," he predicts. "Formally planned passive activities will be replaced by very individual 'a la carte' active participation."

Customers will also expect more — in a lot less time. "There's an expectation of substantially more automation in all booking processes, including website and onsite," he says. Which leads to the change that surprises him the most. "The speed of client request, from concept to delivery, is faster than imagined in the analog world where I began. The vast information share, now so available, can be daunting to deal with."

Jim says the pros of the future will have to think out of the box if they want to survive. "Creativity and flexibility of deliverables will be central to success," he explains. "Technology will not only facilitate or record the experience, it will often be central to the experience. Both the event manager and producer will evolve with customer preferences, familiarity with technology and preferred experience delivery." Despite the rapid-fire pace of change, Jim remains confident. "No worries, because these changes happen over time as both client and supplier are enlightened at similar rates."

By 2020 Jim says, "Obviously, there will be less and less in-person interaction, because the electronic share will take over even more communication, especially in planning." But don't count the human touch out.

"In-person interactive events will not go away," he believes. "Even with technology growing at warp speed, there's proof out there of the human need to interact in person." He adds, "It's almost a genetic wiring and an emotional need. People are still people, who wish for human contact to share ideas, beliefs, feelings and fun."

This need for interaction will also fuel the continued rise of social media — and an increased "Big Brother" presence in personal lives. Jim says, "Social media will rule bigger than ever, with AI looking into user buying habits and preferences in very invasive ways."

Another surprising trend? "The reduced need for high-end production in marketing," he says. "Apart from the major campaigns which still require very high production qualities, much of the outreach, especially with social media, can be quirky and rough cut, as long as it's engaging."

Conversely, "the most disturbing trend is a never-ending addition of marketing channels, which collectively can dilute messaging effectiveness," he says. "On the other hand, this is also promising, when the new channels are tapped successfully and affordably."

What's never going to change? "Customers always rule!" Jim states. "And tastes and trends will continue to change as they always have. Nothing new here... except the speed at which the changes take place."

Jim says he wouldn't change the industry much even if he could. "Travel, Tourism, and Meetings are actually produced in response to the guest/client needs," he explains. "The client makes the calls, not me or our company. It's essential to be slightly ahead of trends, which means our company is in continual, faster-than-ever change."



Jim's very optimistic about the future of his business, "mostly after seeing continued growth over 36 years." He's also very passionate. "Water travel is adventurous, relaxing, facilitates communication and celebration, feeds dreams, rewards hard work, and is inspiring," he says. "When combined with our truly personalized, caring service, it will remain a top client choice."

His best advice to students and new professionals? "Be extremely flexible to accommodate any client wish," he advises. "Be innovative, just ahead of the curve." Most important, he says? "Even with the speed of technology, never, ever forget that clients are people. They crave personal contact and communication that's effective and resonates with them in a meaningful way."

"Isolation is Not the Answer."



VINCE LA RUFFA
Vice President of Resort Marketing
Universal Orlando Resorts
HTM Master's Grad '15

Vince La Ruffa is living proof that when it comes to your career, you need to listen to your gut and follow your heart. Originally a Speech Pathology/Audiology major at Bloomsburg University in central Pennsylvania, he realized it just wasn't a good fit — and made the change to Marketing. His first post-grad job? Selling electronic typewriters and word processors as a Sales Rep for a division of Exxon. Now? He's Vice President of Resort Marketing for Universal Orlando Resorts, one of the most well-known

brands in the industry. See why Vince says the future of business will be more intuitive, empathetic, and surprisingly, even easier.

Vince La Ruffa's upbeat view of the future begins with a shout-out to millennials. "The most surprising (and promising) trend is the move to simpler, less consumption intensive behaviors," he says. "I'm happy to see the 20-somethings have less interest in 'keeping up with their Baby Boomer neighbors.' This trend is healthy for the individual, socially responsible, and helpful to the community at large, and its ability to sustain itself. "

Vince strongly believes this renewed push toward community and connection are also at the core of the HTM industry. "Real person-to-person relationships built on trust, thoughtful consultation and reliable performance will always be valued," he says.

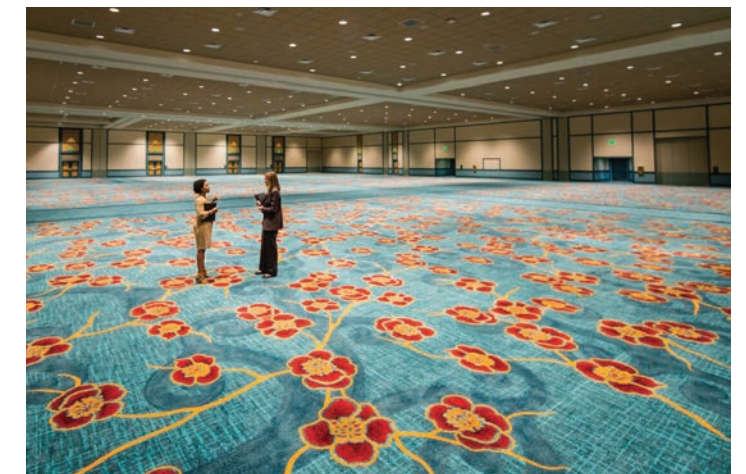
On the way out? "Dictating your processes and procedures to a customer. Any element of your buying experience that is not intuitive and customizable to a customer's reality will be irrelevant — and cause you to be so as well."

As a company that attracts guests from all over the world, the national debate on how to keep our borders safe is a growing concern for Universal Orlando — and the entire HTM industry. "The changes I'd make would be to introduce more judicious methods in securing the safety of our citizens," Vince says. "When overzealously painting with too broad a brush, we limit travel by those who should not have any restrictions imposed on them."

Vince also believes the trend will be toward more local meetings, as international travel becomes more difficult. And while he feels it's critical to ensure the safety of the traveling public and meeting attendees, he also says, "I would pursue a broader messaging campaign that underscores our desire to attract and

enhance those who love and appreciate our way of life and our principles. We are a melting pot. Isolation is not the answer."

Vince says the increasing pressures on busy HTM professionals' time will force other key changes. "Businesses will focus more on being easy to do business with," he says. "As the demand on our time continues to escalate, business partners will have less tolerance for dealings that are unnecessarily complex and time consuming."



The ubiquitous changes in technology will continue to shake up the travel industry — for better and worse.

"Technology will continue to enhance face-to-face Meetings & Event experiences," Vince says. But he strongly believes there will always be a need for the human element — which is great news for HTM grads. "The competition for team members who are effective communicators, and possess the ability to empathize with, and advocate for a customer will become more intense," he says.

The darker side to tech? "The most destructive trend is the full emergence of a "Jerry Springer" American culture," he warns. "Confrontational behavior, the tendency to use social media to attack others, and the apparent lack of interest in understanding other points of view all need to go away. Personal responsibility and mutual respect need to make a return appearance in our popular culture."

And that's where he says his organization, and the continuing professionalism of the Travel and Tourism industry comes in. "Our business is creating great memories for the next generation of families," he explains. "And family composition and the definition of "family" itself is evolving. So, we allow friends and family to connect. And to be able to deliver this platform is truly a privilege. Helping people connect with extraordinary experiences is noble work. For this reason I think our future is very bright!!"

“How Fortunate We are to Not be Crushed by Technology!”



BRIAN HUGHES
San Diego Tourism Marketing District (SDTMD)

From an entry-level start bussing tables in a busy restaurant, to his current high-powered position in the competitive world of hotel marketing, Brian Hughes knows HTM from the ground up. As Executive Director for the San Diego Tourism Marketing District, Brian runs the corporation that receives and distributes money for the city’s TMD (tourism marketing district) — the hotel taxes earmarked to market San Diego hotels. Brian shares the challenges and opportunities in

making America’s Finest City a world-class hotel destination. He also reveals what he calls “an embarrassment to our industry.”

Brian Hughes speaks frankly about the enormous changes rocking the hotel industry — from new political realities, to compensation issues, to the undeniable impact of high tech. But he says there’s one thing technology can never do — and it makes him bullish about the future.

“Humans will always want the stimulation and experience of travel,” he says. “And that will never be replaced by virtual reality, artificial intelligence or anything else. How fortunate for those of us in the hotel industry to not have unexpectedly entered a field that’s been crushed by technology!”



But behind the experiential excitement for the traveler are the unrelenting pressures on the industry. “Hotels have topped out in occupancy, and it’s likely that ADR (average daily rate) increases won’t keep pace with labor cost growth as supply mounts,” Brian explains. “Part of this includes increased centralization of historically on-property functions like accounting, HR, communications and revenue management.” He adds, “Related to this, I think we’ll see the first serious attempt by mid to low-tier hotels to replace workers with technology: check-in kiosks, voice command telephones, self-order restaurants, etc.”

Help Wanted

Despite the increasing automation of traditional industry jobs, finding good employees for entry-level hotel jobs will become more problematic. The biggest impact? The current political climate.

“We’re going to see major labor shortages in jobs that are typically held by first-generation Americans that are very difficult to automate — such as housekeeping and restaurant personnel. This will be the result of the current immigration belt-tightening in Washington,” Brian says.

Brian also believes in transforming the way employees are compensated, from entry-level positions to the company owner. “I’ve always been an advocate for “ownership thinking” on the part of all associates,” he explains. “I’d tie a large portion of every employee’s compensation to profit levels, unrelated to unachievable budgets. Everyone shares in the profit pie prescribed by one’s role. Benchmark against historical profit standards and share the upside. There will be more profit for everyone, including the owner, when everyone has skin in the game.”



Banish the Boring...Stamp Out the Surcharges

Brian’s an advocate of shaking up other traditional areas of hotel revenue, too. “Hotel pricing for events and meetings is unsustainable — and hotel venues are boring. Hotels will also feel greater pressure from outside venues to become innovative in catering/banquets. The industry needs to turn these around, become more nimble and creative.”

He’s also unabashedly critical of the “additional fees” often tacked on to a hotel tab — and says they’ll soon be history. “WiFi charges, whether in the guest room or meeting rooms, will be gone. Hopefully, resort fees will be gone, too! They’re an embarrassment to our industry.”

The hotel sector’s need for fresh, break-out-of-the-box thinking is good news for HTM grads. “Innovators will be rewarded and recently graduated students will be the most capable of generating fresh, creative ideas!” Brian says.

Game Changers

What took this industry pro by surprise? “The lightening-fast impact that Uber/Lyft had on killing parking profit in hotels,” he admits. But that’s not the only threat to hotels from the skyrocketing “sharing economy.”

“Online travel agencies,” he says. “Their power and the absurd commission rates. They are hurting our industry more than Airbnb has...at least so far.” Plus, Brian says, the array of customer choices will only continue to grow, with the expansion of Airbnb, VBRO, and the like.

Looking through the lens of his customers, Brian sees a familiar roadblock. “Americans will not cure their addiction to debt by 2020. So unfortunately for many, price will always be the deciding factor. Service and quality of the asset take a far back seat in so many hotels.”

And something he never would’ve predicted? “The unbelievable tiered branding. How many brands does Hilton, Marriott, etc. have now?” he asks.

Keeping it Real

What does Brian like best about SDSU’s HTM/RTM program? “Everything about the school is real,” he says. “Nothing is sugarcoated — although it’s still a respectful and supportive environment. The idea that you will rocket to fame, glory and wealth is not an expectation of the students.” His advice to new grads? “Be patient. The power, pride and value of longevity shouldn’t be underestimated.”

“Innovators will be rewarded and recently graduated students will be the most capable of generating fresh, creative ideas!”

Brian also sees a unique, uplifting benefit to traveling. “Travel reduces or eliminates ignorance,” he explains. “As more people around the world see their standards of living rise and hence travel more, the power of travel to build understanding, acceptance and ultimately peace, is very real and very powerful.”

The Growing FOMO Effect



PAUL LANG
Instructional Coordinator at Mission Bay
Aquatic Center (SDSU)

Paul Lang doesn't just live the famous San Diego lifestyle — he teaches it to water-loving sports enthusiasts from around the world. An SDSU grad, he's now SDSU's Instructional Coordinator at San Diego's Mission Bay Aquatic Center. Paul manages a part-time staff of more than 100 people who teach sailing, surfing, windsurfing, wakeboarding, waterskiing, wakesurfing, stand-up paddling, kayaking and rowing. When it comes to the future of his industry — Paul sees a tsunami of changes ahead.

Let's say you're offering a sports or activities class to prospective students. Maybe you'll teach them how to snorkel, or create 3-D watercolors. You've got interesting info and you're a good teacher. But more and more, what students really want to know is — will it make for a great selfie?

SDSU's Paul Lang says the desire to show off on social media is increasingly impacting student choices. He says, "The FOMO (fear of missing out) effect...and the fact that many people are willing to spend time and money on an experience just to get a sharable social media photo" are trends he never would've predicted.

Another trend that's spurred mixed feelings for Paul? Increasing customer reliance on online reviews. "For me, it's surprising, disturbing, and promising...all rolled into one."

While he's optimistic about the future, Paul sees big changes on the horizon. "The demand for getting people on the water and giving them positive experiences will never disappear, so our industry will continue to be strong," he explains. "However, changing consumer demands will be difficult to keep up with, which will create both significant challenges and opportunities."



"Blended learning and electronic classroom aids will improve instructor consistency and the customer experience."

Paul says a big challenge will be "promoting classes and activities to the general public. It'll be more difficult to build and promote programming that satisfies all students' needs and desires."

On the upside, he says, "there will also be strong opportunities to develop new programming for the millennial demographic. Blended learning and electronic classroom aids will improve instructor consistency and the customer experience."

The tide is also turning for the time-honored telephone. Looking ahead to 2020, Paul says, "Voicemails and using phones to make phone calls are on the way out. Businesses will need to shift communication tactics to communicate with customers through the channels they use (text, social media, etc.)."



But that doesn't mean the phone is dead. "Customers will find it easy to sign up for a new class and begin the learning process immediately on their phones without having to wait days or weeks for the class to officially begin," he says.

This growing desire for instant gratification is changing the game in almost every way. "There's an increasing push for on-demand activities that allow customers to book classes and experiences without planning ahead," Paul explains.

What would he like to see banished for good? "I'd like to eliminate the discount mentality that's been reinforced by the large coupon websites," Paul says. "This has strengthened a demographic that values price above all else, including quality and safety."

When asked what advice he'd give his younger self just starting out, he says, "I'd remind myself to listen to those who have been in the industry for decades. There's much to learn from how they dealt with different challenges over the years. Because in a service-based industry, it's all about delivering stellar customer service."

"Partnerships. Not Competition."



SUE RICHARDSON
CPRP, Community Services Director,
City of La Mesa

Sue's a true-blue San Diegan. The self-described "Aztec for life" and College area resident kicked off her career while an undergrad at SDSU — working as a Recreation Aide for the City of El Cajon. After earning her degree in Recreation Administration with a Systems Management emphasis, Sue worked in both military and municipal recreation. Now Director of Community Services for the City of La Mesa, Sue has deep roots in the recreation field. She went on to earn her M.S. in Recreation and Tourism from Cal State East Bay, and is a Certified Park and Recreational Professional (CPRP). See why Sue says these days, park and rec professionals have to be a "jack of all trades."

It's a challenging time for your local Parks and Recreation department, an institution long beloved by communities across America. "Municipal recreation programs are being closed down and turned over to non-profits such as YMCA," Sue Richardson says. "Golf courses are closing, and city-required insurance for contractors and renters are higher." She adds, "There's also the issue of dwindling staff having to provide the same level of service."

The intense economic pressure on government-run entities is dramatically changing the career landscape. Sue says new grads will "have to be a jack of all trades to be competitive." She advises, "Don't get stuck in just one type of program. You'll need to have experience in a number of recreation disciplines."

The smart strategy for students interested in this sector? "You need to be able to audit financials, handle contracts and payments, negotiate and market programs," Sue says. "You also need to pick up a number of computer programs specific to reservations and registration."

Sue says the push will continue for "more outsourcing of recreation programs to contractors instead of City provided staff. There will be an increased need for contract managers, instead of program-mers. More contracted maintenance instead of city employees."

The budget crunch will also generate new opportunities, like "partnership agreements with revenue generating facilities (restaurants and retail) in city parks to offset maintenance costs," Sue explains.



By 2020, a new type of "employee" will be on the rise. "There'll be an increase in volunteers to help maintain parks and operate programs, such as baby boomers who want to keep active," Sue predicts. "We'll also see more reliance on grants and foundations." She believes there will be "a focus on partnerships instead of competition, for example with the library and other agencies."

Customers will get even more demanding. "They'll shop around for best time and price...and where their friends are going," Sue says. "They'll still expect city government to continue to provide low cost programs."

Another strong trend? Convenience, convenience, convenience. "Everything needs to be available online in a phone readable format and all registration and reservations need to be easily made on the computer," Sue explains. "There's also a growing need for activities and social programs geared toward baby boomers — not seniors."

On the way out? "Employee pensions," she says, "but hopefully, health care for part-time workers will become available." Also, "city-run day camps will become contracted businesses."

Sue's both surprised and disturbed by a couple of growing trends. "People wanting to openly carry guns," she says. "And a sense of entitlement...not following rules or laws."

Still, time-honored business traditions will remain strong, such as networking and good customer service. "And please," Sue says, "count the customer's change back to them!"

Sue's best advice for new grads? "Be a better listener, continue to work hard," she advises. "Get a mentor. Be willing to travel to other places. Volunteer for special assignments or roles outside of your department." The trick, she says, is to keep growing. "Keep getting experience, network and education while waiting for opportunities to move up."

“Stop Yelling at Airbnb...and Start Listening to Your Customers.”



JAN FREITAG
Senior V.P., STR

Jan Freitag’s HTM career started nearly 6,000 miles away in his hometown of Bielefeld, Germany. After completing an apprenticeship at the Moevenpick Hotel, Jan’s career skyrocketed half a world away here in the U.S. Now Senior V.P. for STR’s Lodging Insights in the greater Nashville area, Jan says he’s “the friendly face of STR’s hotel data.” Behind the numbers lies valuable information for the HTM/RTM professional – and Jan’s straightforward views on how the industry needs

to move ahead for a successful future.

The biggest driver in global travel by 2020? Jan Freitag says it’s the booming middle-class in India and China. But that’s not the only key factor. “OTA’s (online travel agencies) will get stronger,” he says, “and there will be more consolidation on the owner and management group side.”

That means for operations jobs “the most exciting opportunities are outside of the U.S.,” Jan says.

He urges students to not only understand technology and distribution, but to know “who makes money at what part of the income statement — the brands, the owners, the management companies, the asset managers.”

“Our customers will continue to push us to provide data in easier to use formats.”

When it comes to the future of our industry, Jan’s a total bull. “Travel and tourism is the largest economic force in the world and always will be,” he says. “As more countries get more of a middle class consumer, those people will want to travel and stay in hotels. Hotels will always fill a need.”

“Travel and tourism is the largest economic force in the world and always will be.”

and OTAs and start listening to the customer and providing what they want.”

Jan says 2020 will see the demise of hotel classics like room service, charging for WiFi, in-room pay TV, and maybe even in-room telephones. But he says don’t sound the death knell yet for video conferencing. “We were always told that video conferencing would kill meetings. Turns out that is not true.”

The classics that are here to stay? “Service,” he says. “That matters most.” He adds, “And groups will always want to meet in person, not so much to exchange information, but to break bread and shake hands.”

Despite his optimistic view of the future, Jan warns that, “Travel demand follows the economic cycle...and before 2020 we will have another bust/boom cycle.” Another growing stress on revenue? “Guests will only pay for what they want,” he says.

Customers will also be more demanding about data. “Our customers will continue to push us to provide data in easier to use formats,” he explains. “Our business will expand into other verticals because customers demand it.”

The most disturbing trend Jan sees for 2020? “The rise of nationalism and closed borders — and minds,” he says. But he’s encouraged by increasing globalization, “which allows more people to participate in the economic upside.”

Jan advises new grads to “travel as much as you can. Take a gap year. See countries you’ll never go to again.” And once they start working? “Be “risk takers,” he says. “Join a startup that has a chance to fail. Go on that ride, and if you fail...ah, well, you learned a lot.”

That said, he’s not minimizing the tsunami-like impact of large-scale home rentals. Although he admits he never would’ve predicted this new reality at the start of his career, he says the industry must deal with it. “Stop yelling at Airbnb

“Who Would Have Thought the Rolling Stones Would Still be Playing?”



TIM RIPKE
Director of Viejas Arena and the Cal Coast Credit Union Open Air Theatre

When you first look at Tim Ripke’s background, you might think, wait, this doesn’t add up! After all, the SDSU alum graduated with a B.A. in Liberal Arts & Sciences in Mathematics. But an undergrad stint refereeing basketball games and handling security for concerts sparked his real interests — a career in the exciting, tumultuous world of live entertainment. Now, as Interim Director for SDSU’s

Viejas Arena and Cal Coast Credit Union Open Air Theatre, Tim says live entertainment is here to stay. Though with a profound, permanent change many of us would never have predicted.

Love going to concerts and live sporting events? Get ready to pay up — and hunker down.

“The world is only getting more dangerous for large crowd gatherings,” Tim Ripke says. “Security protocols will tighten. We’re already seeing customers who stay away from large crowds. So we need to provide a safe venue, including consistent policies and procedures. It’s as much a perception as it is a practice.” He also believes, “EDM events (electronic dance music) will shrink or disappear altogether. There’s too much liability.”

Tim says there are sharp generational differences. “Public assembly facilities are a reflection of our society as a whole,” he explains. “This generation is more comfortable with heightened security as it has become a new norm.”

Also a new norm? Increased costs, which Tim says are primarily the result of “(increased) minimum wage, increased liability and venue security.”

Despite the soaring need for more security, he says concert attendance is on the rise. “Concerts and live events are resilient. There are downturns...but there is also recovery.”

It all comes down to the timeless human need for connection. “Times are trying and uncertain with the political and economic turmoil,” Tim believes. “Fans need activities where they can go and enjoy themselves, relieve some stress, and have fun. Coming together for a concert, comedic performance or athletic event is just the ticket.”

But how you get that ticket is completely changing. Say goodbye to that familiar slip of paper which he says “will evolve to digital tickets on your cell phone.” In addition, security-savvy customers “are adjusting to the practice of checking the policies and procedures of each venue prior to arriving.”

What Tim says he never saw coming? “Who would have thought the Ringling Brothers Circus would close down? That a well-known performer would need 26 semi-trucks of equipment to perform a show? That the Rolling Stones would still be playing?”

“People will never stop going to concerts or basketball games. Seeing the event live creates memories that are irreplaceable.”

Despite all the changes, he feels his industry provides something fundamentally human that will never go away. “The live experience. People will never stop going to concerts or basketball games. Seeing the event live creates memories that are irreplaceable.”



Just Say Yes



WESLEY MADDOCKS
County of San Diego Recreation Services
Supervisor

Wesley Maddock has deep roots in Southern California's famous "laid-back" lifestyle. The Bonita Vista High grad first earned two Associate degrees at Southwestern Community College, then a Bachelor's degree from SDSU in Recreation and Tourism Management. She says she loved the chill vibe of her first job as a lifeguard/swim instructor so much, she stayed on for over ten years. Now a Recreation Services Supervisor for the County of San Diego, Wesley oversees the sports complex at 4S

Ranch Sports Park, helping San Diegans of all ages have fun. See why the recreations services sector is skyrocketing — and why that number is poised to explode even more.

Those Baby Boomers. Their sheer numbers mean they don't just participate, they often overtake just about every area they touch. "I believe by the year 2020, the recreation and tourism industry will double in size due to baby boomers retiring," Wesley Maddocks predicts. "They're an active generation that wants to recreate and travel."

But don't count millennials out. "I also believe more people, mostly younger generations, will take recreation and tourism to the extreme," she says. "When I say 'extreme,' I mean that in a multifaceted way. People are eager and willing to find the best deal, take the roads less traveled, and create memories that will last a lifetime."

Technology is also radically transforming the industry. "The recreation and tourism world will become completely reliant on technology," Wesley says. "Not just social media, but new gadgets to make traveling and recreating easier, safer, more enjoyable and more accessible."

It's not enough for students and professionals to keep up with the changes. Wesley insists they need to lead the way. "These changes will bring new information, options, and new course material. So the curriculum must stay current with the overall trends. And the professional will always need to remain one step ahead of the game to remain competitive."

One thing technology can't replace? The in-person interview. "You get so much more out of someone's physical presence than over the phone or via email," she says. "Hiring good people will always be a timeless trait. You're only as good as the people who work for you and with you."

Wesley's surprised by "the sheer number of people participating in recreation. I work at a park where there are thousands of people coming every weekend in the summer for tournaments and for daily events. I don't remember ever seeing those types of numbers when I was a participant."

"[I'd] make recreation and tourism available to anyone. I'd give back and make it sustainable."

Despite the boom in attendance, Wesley feels "the costs are continuing to increase" from the customer's point of view. "Everything's become so expensive. Recreation and tourism is becoming a luxury that only the elite and privileged can afford."

So, as "Ruler of the Universe," she'd make "recreation and tourism available to anyone. I'd give back and make it sustainable. I'd also make sure it only had a positive ecological footprint — and make this world a happier and healthier one."

Wesley firmly believes students should keep a laser focus on making their own lives happy by doing what they truly love. "Try new things," she urges. "Say yes! Go on adventures, get lost, find your way back. Create these life experiences so you know what makes you happy. It's not all about money."



North view of 4S Ranch

The New "Jetsons" Reality



RICHARD AARON, CSEP EMERITUS
President, BizBash
Assistant Professor, NYU Tisch School
of Hospitality

When it comes to keeping folks entertained in just about any kind of live venue, Richard Aaron is a master. After starting out as an entertainer and producer for live events, he's now President of BizBash in the Big Apple. The global trade media platform company provides event venues and resources for industry pros and the "hidden event planner" market, with more than 225,000 monthly users. He's also assistant professor at NYU's Tisch School of Hospitality...and a former Broadway actor. Check out Richard's unique, multi-faceted perspective as he looks ahead to 2020.

C'mon, you think. Where's that darn robot with my food??? This scenario, once strictly the stuff of "space age" shows like The Jetsons, is fast becoming an HTM reality.

"First and foremost for 2020," Richard Aaron says, "is the onset of AI (Artificial Intelligence Systems). They will be fully deployed in all areas of hotels and integrated into event design and audience engagement methods. Robots will be delivering food and doing registration." He adds that customers will enjoy "more online ability to attend conferences and be activity engaged."

He says event delivery will radically change, too. "We'll see multiple screens integration for all attendees at sessions — all built on a dynamic interactive platform that each attendee can hold. It will allow them to react to speakers' content and ideas in the moment."

Even event attendees themselves will become more integrated with emerging technology. Richard says conference goers will be decked out in "wearable tech with items such as Snapchat spectacles. Also, virtual reality will become more developed into content and sponsor information delivery at expos." He adds, "it's all part of the extreme personalization of content and marketing to target and deliver experiences."

That means a big change in the day-to-day reality for new HTM professionals. "There'll be much more thinking on your feet and quick response to running events," Richard explains. New grads need to be ready to "direct attendee engagement and (provide) immersive education for new tech. Student education needs to be focused on algorithms and other digital practices."



As seen on BizBash.com

The most surprising new trend for Richard has some very old roots. "Marijuana meal and menu design in certain legal states that are delighting attendees," he says. Perhaps that new trend might help mitigate another, more disturbing trend he sees. "Attendee addiction to mobiles at meetings that disrespect speakers and distract others."

He'd also "end outlandish charges by CVB's and venues for internet connectivity that punish budgets and limit program design for many small meetings and events." But he's encouraged by "the expansion of sustainable practices in Fortune 100s being adopted to save costs in planning meetings and reducing waste."

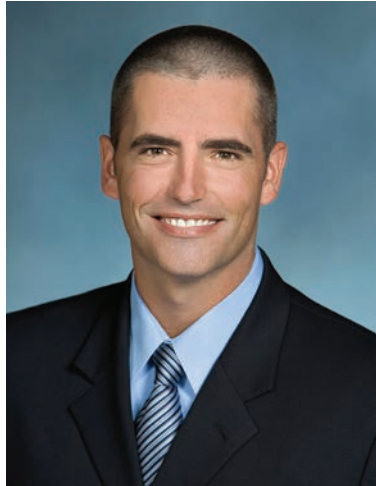


As seen on BizBash.com

So what didn't he see coming? "The needed focus on sustainable practices that are still evolving," Richard says. "The explosion of social methods which are still changing every year to keep up with new ideas to market events and engage attendees."

Whatever your actual major or emphasis, Richard advises students and new grads, "Be sure to get a good business education in your profession — as well as good financial skills."

Game On!



JOHN DINNIUS
GM, Sycuan Casino & Resort

It's definitely not your father's casino. Gambling in the 21st century is a whole new world. From your phone becoming your room key, to the explosion of social gaming, to snagging a "fast pass" to your favorite buffet, changes are happening quicker than you can say "ante up." Hear why gaming executives like John Dinnius, General Manager of Sycuan Casino & Resort, are betting on a golden future.

The Smart Money

John Dinnius believes the gaming industry is on a winning streak — and for the casinos who play their cards right, it'll get even better. "We're in a great time," he says. "Unemployment is low, consumer confidence is high. Discretionary spending is up, which creates a healthy bottom line for gaming. Plus, there are more non-gaming amenities coming online within the next 24 months. That allows us to better serve our current clientele and cast a wider net."

The big winners in 2020? John says it'll be the casinos that are making moves now to take advantages of the opportunities ahead.

"We need to be prepared to leverage technology we can't even imagine today," he explains. "That means laying infrastructure right now to be ready for the next five to ten years — such as robust cabling and infrastructure for flexibility, and pathways to utilize and take advantage of evolving technology." He adds, "In my opinion, societal change is driven by technology. Which means we need to understand the costs of deployment, maintenance and evolution. It's critical to create redundant systems. Because the more we progress, the more dependent we get on technology. And the more smart phones evolve, the more impatient we — and our customers — become."

Social Gaming

Some 98% of smart phone owners keep their devices within arms reach 100% of the time. Which leads to the gaming industry's next big play: engaging customers beyond the four walls of the casino.

"We've been looking at social gaming for several years now," John says, "but we haven't yet found just the right product to enhance brand awareness outside of our physical locations. We envision mobile apps that link to gaming sites; provide virtual or even free money; offer bonus points to be used inside the brick and mortar casino, giving customers an incentive to come in." He adds, "It's so much more cost-effective to instantly push notifications via our customers' smart devices, instead of using traditional snail mail."

Cashing Out

Get ready to say goodbye to those giant buckets of jangling coins. John says the big push is toward e-wallet solutions and electronic funds transfers. The big hurdles still standing in the way of a cashless casino? Safety and security. "Right now, most e-transactions require a pin number," he explains, "and many of our older customers still use pins that are easy to guess, making them vulnerable to fraud." But despite the big issues yet to be resolved, John says e-wallets are the wave of the casino future.

Love...and Money

The ever-present jonesin' for a jackpot...and players praying for a big win. At first glance, it seems like the gaming industry is all about the money. Absolutely not, says John.

"It's all about relationships," he explains. "What you build and develop with your customers. Our team members have deep ties to the community — it's part of the Kumeyaay Nation culture and the cornerstone of our strategy."

Sycuan maintains their focus on their core customers through highly targeted data. "Our most valued customers are rewarded with amenities they won't find at the competition," John says. "We create unique, customized experiences for our players, along with special events like Black Tie night, ziplining, skydiving...compelling, memorable experiences they won't get at other casinos."

The Surprising Demo

With the gaming industry's intense focus on the latest technology, it seems logical that millennials would be the core customers for casinos. Nope. At least not yet.

"There's a misleading focus on millennials," John explains. "But casinos are just not appealing to that younger demo. They'd rather travel and party. They're not spending their discretionary income in a casino. Gaming will be more viable for them later in life, as they settle down, get married and have less time. It's part of the "lifecycle concept" that's so important in our industry."



Expansion is slated for an early 2019 completion date.

So which customers are a winning bet? Women ages 45 to 65. Which means gaming industry pros have to play it both ways — keep the loyalty of their core market, while still appealing to the younger, more tech-savvy set.

"Our big focus is definitely on technology, while continuing to deepen our relationship with our older, loyal customers," John explains. "So we're looking at mobile apps that redefine and enhance the guest experience: for example, being able to see near real-time comp balance and bonus points, where to quickly locate their favorite games on the floor, upcoming concert info, menus, promotions, rapid reservations...apps that give our guests instant notifications and instant gratification."



Sycuan Casino

"It's all about relationships. What you build and develop with your customers."

Tomorrow's Winners

So what should today's HTM student do now to increase their odds of a successful future?

"Don't get overwhelmed with the industry," John advises. "At the start of my career, I thought our industry was so large, but it's not. Because it all goes back to those core relationships. Focus on each one and develop it." He adds, "The best advice I ever got was from an SDSU professor who said, 'the longest journey a man will ever take is 18 inches — from his head to his heart. And the secret to a good life is creating a balance between the two.'"

“Customers Don’t Understand the Cost of Doing Business.”



ANNETTE GREGG, CMM MBA
Senior Vice President, AlliedPRA

When it comes to a successful career, Annette Gregg follows her own advice: jump around and get the most experience you can in different areas of HTM/RTM. The UC Berkeley grad started out selling exhibit booths for a trade association/convention in the supermarket industry. But she didn’t stay on the retail track. Now, she’s Senior Vice President at AlliedPRA, a meetings and events firm that jumped from one local office in San Diego to a global destination management company.



The good news, Annette says, is that companies will help young professionals stay sharp and relevant. “Both junior and part-time meeting planners will have access to training and getting credence.”

“The trend I find most disturbing is the pricing pressure on professional service companies in our industry.”

Annette feels students in the L. Robert Payne School of HTM are especially prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities in 2020 and beyond. “The interaction with active industry professionals and the

internships are key differentiators,” she says. “These graduates are articulate and professional at a very young age.”

And, like all experienced HTM/RTM professionals, Annette urges students and new grads to build real, in-person relationships. “The growing complexity and internationalization of our business makes face to face interaction a necessity,” she says. “Always network and continue to learn.”



Bye-bye binders, printed hotel documents and signed forms. Annette Gregg says that’ll all be on the way out by 2020 — along with docile customers.

“The trend I find most disturbing is the pricing pressure on professional service companies in our industry,” she says. “Customers don’t understand or appreciate the cost of doing business. So there’s downward pressure on pricing.” She adds, “They also want to see increased proof of ROI for programs, meetings and events.”

Another piece of the pricing pie? “Third party site selection companies that have a very low barrier to entry and the relatively low skillset required to start their own business,” Annette says.

One of the top changes she sees by 2020 is a change in the national economy. “There’s going to be a correction and slower growth,” she predicts. “I also see security issues growing as a primary planning concern. Plus, audience engagement via technology will take precedence.”

What’s really surprised her? “Meetings following global trends of security and the economy so closely,” she says. “I didn’t see that direct correlation when I was younger in the industry.”

Annette says these growing, unpredictable trends have a direct impact on today’s HTM/RTM student. “Diversification of talents and versatility is very important for students,” she says. “Jump into different roles...increase your knowledge in a variety of areas of the hospitality industry.”

As Business Speeds Up...Slow Down



VALERIE HANICH
Recreation Services Supervisor for
Casta del Sol Homeowners Association

From her first job as a swim instructor to her current position as Recreation Services Supervisor for Casta del Sol Homeowners Association, a 55+ community in Mission Viejo CA, Valerie Hanich has spent her career helping people have fun. An SDSU alum with a Bachelor’s degree in Recreation Administration and a Master’s in HTM, she specializes in a booming segment of the recreation industry — our rapidly aging population. Valerie oversees the operations of two recreation centers and

more than 45 clubs and activities for residents. While she fully embraces all the technological changes, she fears we’re leaving behind something very important — and very human.

That powerful little device we’re all addicted to. Valerie Hanich says smart phones and tablets are changing everything — and eliminating once standard ways of doing things.

“Right now, people still have to come into our office to sign up for events on paper and pay with a check,” she says. “Today, people rarely use checks, so I know they’ll want that practice eliminated.” She adds, “Customers are expecting more. As a professional, you need to be willing to implement new technology into your business or it will ultimately hurt you.”

Valerie says it’s critical for colleges to incorporate technology into their own curriculums. “I hope HTM/RTM programs realize how important technology is and start teaching students what’s out there, and how to implement these systems into their specific industries.” But the most important aspect of a successful business is something deeply human — and Valerie fears it’s on the way out.

“I’d like to see people slow down and take the time to interact with one another,” she says. “Everyone always seems to be in such a hurry or on their phones; people don’t spend as much time getting to know one another. While I know it’s quicker to do things online, you miss out on that personal interaction.”

Even better, she says? “Stop in. Have a cup of coffee. Engage with one another,” she urges. “If people weren’t in such a hurry or expecting things instantly, their irritation levels would be much lower.”

“I’d like to see people take time and interact with one another.”

But Valerie’s very optimistic when it comes to SDSU’s HTM/RTM students. “The program helps prepare students for “real life” because they have instructors who’ve worked or are still currently working in the industry,” she says. “The passion and excitement of these instructors help prepare students to get out there and be successful. They push students to do their best, think outside the box...and not just settle for mediocre.”

Always a loyal Aztec, Valerie adds, “When I first meet a student or recent grad of the HTM/RTM program, I’m always super excited! I love to meet my fellow Aztecs. I think we all share the same passion and enthusiasm for our industry.”



Wine & Cheese mixer along with art created by Casta del Sol residents in the Heritage Garden

“Listen to Payne School Advisors... They Actually Know What They’re Talking About!”



ISABELLA WIDMANN
HTM Student '20

Talk about being under the microscope. Millennials may well be the most analyzed, talked about generation in history. Frequently praised for being open and inclusive, yet often put down by those who say they're entitled and overconfident, millennials are pushing back against the court of public opinion. As we approach 2020, this dynamic, complex generation is on the cusp of incredible changes.

Meet Isabella Widmann, Michael Baudino and Nikki Gonzalez — three students in the L. Robert Payne School who are preparing for a future their parents never could have imagined.

The era of big companies wantonly wasting resources? Most millennials say it's going the way of the dinosaur.

“It’s all about sustainability,” HTM freshman Isabella Widmann says. As she prepares for a career in Meetings and Events, she feels “sustainability will be a large part of event planning...as well as ways of making every aspect of planning more energy efficient and cost effective. I also think outside-of-the-box designs and original artwork will become popular in the event industry.”

Nikki Gonzalez, another HTM freshman with her eye on a career in Hotel Operations and Management, agrees. “There’ll be more emphasis on sustainable travel, stronger social media engagement, and more tech-savvy pieces of equipment making their way into hotels,” she says.

Class of 2017 HTM grad Michael Baudino, with his new degree in Restaurants Operations and Management, focuses on the bottom line. “Clients want more for less,” he says. “Online presence will be the key to obtaining and retaining business.” In addition, he notes, “The overall workforce will continue to become younger as baby boomers retire. We need to learn to manage skill level dissonance.”

New Skill Sets

Ever-changing careers and emerging technologies mean today’s HTM/RTM students also need to manage and grow a complex skill set.

“It’s important for us to always be learning about new products, technologies, and trends that are occurring within the industry,” Isabella says. “Also, technology will be more prominent as a communication method. So being savvy with network apps and social media will lead to benefits in the field.”

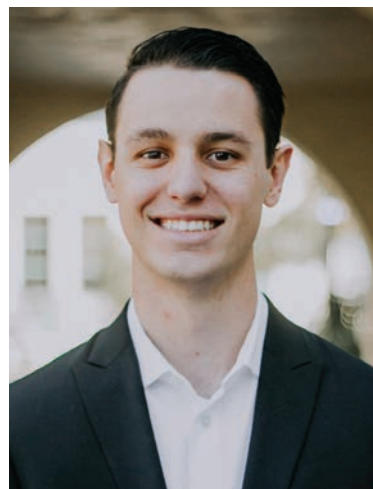
“Students will need to learn how to provide value to the guest,” Michael says. “They need to understand how to monitor online reviews, figure out how to interact with guests through various platforms such as social media, and how to stay relevant on search engines.”

Nikki absolutely agrees. “We live in a world where everyone is plugged in and has their heads in the cloud,” she says. “As an HTM/RTM student, this just adds on to the list of skills we need to maintain a competitive edge in the job market. Then once we have a job, we need to be able to keep up with the trends travelers gravitate towards... and apply it to our job descriptions.”

New Mindsets

Just as important as keeping up their technical skills? Honing those timeless people skills.

“The most positive and powerful trait an HTM/RTM student can have is being extroverted,” Isabella advises. “Networking is a huge part of the job. It’s vital to put yourself out there and meet new people... because this can lead to strong professional relationships.”



MICHAEL BAUDINO
HTM Grad '17

“Passion!” affirms Michael. “It’s an absolute necessity to have. It’s both contagious and inspiring!” And, he insists, “Intellectual curiosity is a must —especially in a rapidly changing industry. Don’t be afraid to admit to failure — it’s a part of the growing process.”

Nikki’s a fan of perseverance. “As a student, we’re still learning the ropes of the industry and life in general. It’s hard to gain the courage to talk



NIKKI GONZALES
HTM Student '20

to industry professionals in the first place, but it’s part of the process.” She adds, “We’re not going to get every single job offer we interview for, but how we continue after the fact shows so much character.”

Changing Priorities

The days of a company focusing solely on the bottom line? That kind of corporate tunnel vision doesn’t fly with most millennials. They hold business and industry to a much higher standard.

“I would definitely change all the negative impacts the tourism industry has on developing countries,” Nikki says. “The industry has so much potential to be something that helps propel their development forward. If we could take out all the obstacles, and any other issues that come up in the process, it shouldn’t be a far off goal! But we’ll start with sustainable travel for now.”

Isabella says, “If I could, I would change the industry in ways to make trainees emphasize customer service. I believe that in the hospitality industry, the standard of customer service should always be high, because essentially, that’s what the business is about: pleasing people.”

Millennials on Millennials

Michael sees the pros and cons of his generation. “The easy access to information and resources is by far one of the greatest benefits to today’s generation,” he says. “But being a millennial could put them at a disadvantage because they might become victim to stereotypes...such as being a snowflake, not being loyal to employers, sense of entitlement, and the list goes on!”

“There’s a degree of negative connotation when you hold the millennial title,” Nikki explains. “People call us overconfident and disillusioned because we grew up with “you’re special” as our mantra. It could hinder us in the way people initially perceive us.” She adds, “But living in this generation, we have so many different mediums to gain information and learn through the development of technology. There’s no reason for any millennial not to work hard and be ready to succeed in their careers. If anything, breaking the norm motivates us to do better.”

Isabella concurs. “As millennials, we’re very open to new innovative ideas and ways of doing things. When applied to hospitality, these traits can yield endless and exciting possibilities. The marketing aspect is also easier because of how well-versed our generation already is with social media and the internet.” Although she does admit, “Something, however, that may hinder today’s HTM students, is the idea of patience. Things do take time and I personally think our generation can be slightly more annoyed having to wait for something. Keeping calm and remaining patient, especially during long business procedures, is important.”

Strategies for Success

Students in the L. Robert Payne School of HTM are already at the top of their game — with strategies that can benefit students of every major.

“Keep up to date with the latest news in the industry,” Nikki recommends. “Read up on what different companies are coming out with. Stay knowledgeable. I honestly check LinkedIn as much as Facebook...and it helps in networking! Being able to go up to a recruiter and have a conversation about a new brand will help you stand out.”

“The most important things I’m learning in the HTM program are the importance of networking and building professional relationships, getting involved in every possible event and activity to gain experience, and learning to accomplish tasks in groups,” Isabella says. “The value of face-to-face interactions can never be replicated, so that type of networking and communication is absolutely “timeless” in business.”

Michael wholeheartedly agrees. “Get involved with the school as soon as possible,” he advises. “Test out different parts of the industry. It’s the only way to know what you like and don’t like.”

He also believes in time-honored classics, such as “face-to-face introductions. The shaking of hands, exchanging of business cards, and personal interactions cannot be duplicated. Put yourself out there — your network will help you accomplish a lot.”

Michael also has a special shout-out. “Listen to Payne School advisors...they actually know what they’re talking about.”



Thank you for the gift of your time and expertise!

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Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past
or present are certain to miss the future.

– John F. Kennedy



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