

## HOW TO:

# Work With DMCs\*

\*That's "destination management companies," and if you didn't already know that, you should definitely read this story.

YOU KNOW HOW TO pull off a successful event in your own backyard. But when you need to hit the road, staging events in an unfamiliar market can be more time-consuming, stressful, and filled with unexpected costs and problems. That's why hiring a destination management company (DMC)—a firm that specializes in planning events for out-of-



towners—to serve as your local representative and help make arrangements can be a worthwhile investment.

### When It's Worth It

DMCs will plan as much or as little as you need, from booking hotels and arranging airport transfers to planning gala dinners and activities such as batting practice with the local major league baseball team. So what do you outsource?

**Steven Cutler**, vice president for travel and incentives at the **Regis Corporation**, operator of 10,000 hair salons around the world, says he books hotels himself if Regis has negotiated rates. Last year, he booked the **Westin** in Times Square for 400 top salon managers at a discount. But when he was planning a meeting in a European capital for 850 managers on short notice this spring, he used a DMC to arrange lodging. "I don't know the city that well," he explains. "If you're totally unfamiliar with a market and you don't want to do the legwork, a lot of times if [DMCs] are strong in a location, they can purchase it more cheaply than you can."

**Rena Crisp**, director of national accounts for New York-based **EGR International**, an incentive travel firm that stages events for Fortune 500 companies, says you don't need a DMC if the event is a straightforward meeting with one off-site event at a restaurant. But if that event has lots of different elements that need to make a big statement, use a DMC just for that. Crisp used a DMC to plan a gala in San Francisco. Instead of booking fancy restaurants, "they got us into City Hall with a staircase filled with violin players," she says. "We don't have that kind of entry."

### Minding the Details

You can book the **San Diego Zoo** yourself, but unless you know its myriad restrictions, you might place the band too close to the animals and be forced to turn the music off. "You can design an event in your mind, but when you get to the zoo, they'll tell you all the reasons you can't do it," says **Fabienne Hanks** of **Meeting Manager**, a San Diego-based DMC. "We offer our expertise and our relationships."

DMCs usually get better deals and treatment than onetime visitors. "We can make a planner's life so much easier," says **Anthony Napoli**, president of **Briggs Inc.**, a New York DMC that has worked with Regis as well as clients including **GE**, **Ford**, and **Frito-Lay**. "We have relationships with venues," he says. "If anything needs to be added to or accommodated, they will [do it for us]."

Napoli arranged for Regis salon managers to see the Broadway production of **Hairspray** and meet the cast. "The broker I used happened to know the spouse of one of the producers," he explains. "We have connections that money can't buy."

### Ask Around

Word of mouth is typically the best way to find a DMC. Travel agents or hotel sales reps will often have recommendations; most convention bureaus provide lists of DMCs, and many are part of referral networks. **Kitt Garrett**, founder of **Discover New York With Kitt Garrett**, who plans events for foreign dignitaries and corporate boards, frequently refers local planners to her counterparts in other cities, and they do the same for her.

The **Association of Destination Managers** has a certification program. Planners with a DMCP

credential have met various professional requirements, including planning experience and continuing education, and have passed a test that measures knowledge ranging from proper tablecloth sizes to adhering to Americans With Disabilities Act requirements.

### Paying the Bills

DMCs may charge a flat fee, a percentage of each service they book, or a per-person fee; their typical markup is about 20 to 25 percent of the services they book. Planners suggest getting proposals from a few DMCs. If you are wowed by one firm's suggestions but its figures are too high, most will negotiate a better price, says **Susan Henderson**, president of DMC **Atlanta Arrangements**.

**Deirdre Feeney**, director of special events for New York-based trade magazine publisher **Lebhar-Friedman**, prefers paying a flat fee. She starts with a budget and asks for a cost breakdown for each item so she can pick and choose which parts are worth the money. For a recent banquet, she nixed chair covers and saved \$500. "I don't need to spend that if no one is going to notice," she says.

### Hold Some Back

Most DMCs require deposits to hold venues, buy tickets, and engage subcontractors. "We never pay 100 percent before an event," Cutler says. "We always hold back 10 percent [until after the event]."

After all Lebhar-Freedman events, if a vendor has not met her expectations, Feeney will dispute the charge. At one banquet at a conference in Southern California, she was disappointed with the linens—for an elegant dinner the DMC had ordered short tablecloths that didn't cover the table legs. Feeney had replacements rushed in from Chicago and paid the bill herself. "I took the tablecloths off the DMC's bill," she said.

### Cede Some Control

You should always be in charge of your events, of course, but rely on your DMC's representative to handle snafus if they arise. Before the guests arrive, establish a chain of command so you and your staff are all speaking to the same person rather than the subcontractors at the venue. Napoli says he—not his client—communicates with the manager and chef at a venue to prevent mixed signals. "The planner can then deal with their C.E.O. and V.I.P.s," he says, "while we run the event behind the scenes." —*Louise Kramer*

**5 TIPS FOR**

# Teambuilding

## 1. Make Sure You're Actually Doing It

People often confuse teambuilding with simply taking a group out of the office. "A lot of people say, 'Let's just go out bowling and have a drink,' and think of that as teambuilding," says **Bruce Honig**, executive director of **Honig IdeaGuides**, a meeting and retreat facilitation company. "That's just assembling the team in an outside context."

Teambuilding focuses on unifying a group through activities that make them work together and strengthen their relationships. That requires matching an activity with the group's personality, and its particular challenges—not necessarily putting together the standard whitewater rafting or rock climbing trip.

## 2. Make It Regular

Real camaraderie requires more than an annual pool game. The e-business group at **Metropolitan Life** holds quarterly teambuilding activities, half of them smaller gatherings around the office, half of them more elaborate outside events. "It's definitely built into our schedule," says **Eric Goldberg**, one of the department's directors. "Our team has to work very closely together. A lot of collaboration is required." When Goldberg coordinated a two-day planning meeting for 40 of his coworkers in April, he included built-in activities like a bingo-inspired game called "Lingo," where everyone received cards with oft-used business words like "interface" and "status" they could cross off as coworkers said them at the meeting. And the cap-off was a collaborative cooking experience at **Cooking by the Book**, which runs culinary classes for groups in TriBeCa.

## 3. Get Them Guessing

Getting people actively involved in learning about each other, rather than just telling them facts, is a great way to connect people, according to **Carrie Smith** of teambuilding firm **Barkley Kalpak**. A favorite activity of hers—which recently brought together staffers from *The New York Times*—is the game "Two Truths and a Lie," in which everyone has to guess which of three potential facts is actually a lie (a good game for *The Times*, no?). **Tracy Hook**, from the special events department of the **Whitney Museum of American Art**, played a similar game at a recent teambuilding lunch, where people wrote down a random fact about themselves, put it in a hat, and everyone guessed matches.

## 4. Keep It Related

Part of the effectiveness of an out-of-the-office jaunt stems from working together in a different environment. But **Colette Ellis**, founder of **InStep Consulting**, suggests keeping a group's location at least loosely related to their jobs, so they keep the work-related purpose in mind. She recently took the technology department of a nonprofit to the **Sony Wonder Technology Lab** to check out some new products in their industry. "They could think about innovative ways to use technology and then bring some of these concepts back into the office,"



As part of its quarterly teambuilding activities, the e-business group at Metropolitan Life took a cooking class in April at **Cooking by the Book**, which runs culinary experiences for groups in TriBeCa.

she says. "Even though there's lots of high-end stuff that they'd never use there, it makes them see how they can innovate in their jobs."

## 5. Teach Them About the Other Side

Employees don't often get the chance to learn about people in other departments—or their jobs—making it easier for them to misunderstand each other when they have to work together. Teambuilding activities that foster understanding between different groups can help. The Whitney's development department is working on that issue with an initiative called Leap Lunches where, **Hook** explains, "someone from another department comes in and speaks about their work." Her team also took a trip to the Whitney's storage facilities so they could learn about shipping and crating, and a crash course in art history.

—Eva Hagberg

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## ASK AN EXPERT

### Creating a Successful Launch



**KARINE BAKHOUM** is the founder of **KB Network News**, a public relations and event firm that specializes in the restaurant, food, and hospitality industries. She helped launch **Wynn Las Vegas** casino and resort this past April, and her New York restaurant clients include **Koi**, **Ono**, and **English Is Italian**. You may have also seen her as a judge on the **Food Network's Iron Chef America**.

**How do you get the press and the public to pay attention to your launch?**

First we find out the who, what, when, and where [of the new restaurant], and let all our long-lead media contacts [such as monthly magazines] know this is coming so they'll know to make space.

We keep a constant dialogue with the press. We're very careful about who to give exclusives to and we make sure everybody's getting a piece of information. And we also don't want everything to come out at the same time, so we strategize beforehand what's going to be most beneficial for the client. It's about getting widespread, but consistent, coverage.

After the opening, it's about consistency and keeping people going. If it's a restaurant, we like to do a dinner. We want the press to get a real feel for the restaurant. Inviting them to a cocktail party and having them try to fight for passed hors d'oeuvres isn't going to give them an idea of what the restaurant does.

Basically we look at the end result before we plan it. We ask: What is our objective? Who do we want talking about this place? Who do we want to reach?

**What do you consider a successful launch? Something with lots of press?**

It's not quantity, it's quality. I've been to a lot of other people's press events where there's too many freaking people—that's not advantageous to the client. The press doesn't like that. They're there to work. I don't need them to leave saying, "Thanks, when can I come back to try the food?" That's just a waste of money.

If it went well, and everyone showed up, we see a flood of emails the next morning asking for more information. Then it's a matter of the press results: our press dinners usually translate into 80 to 90 percent of guests writing about the dinner.

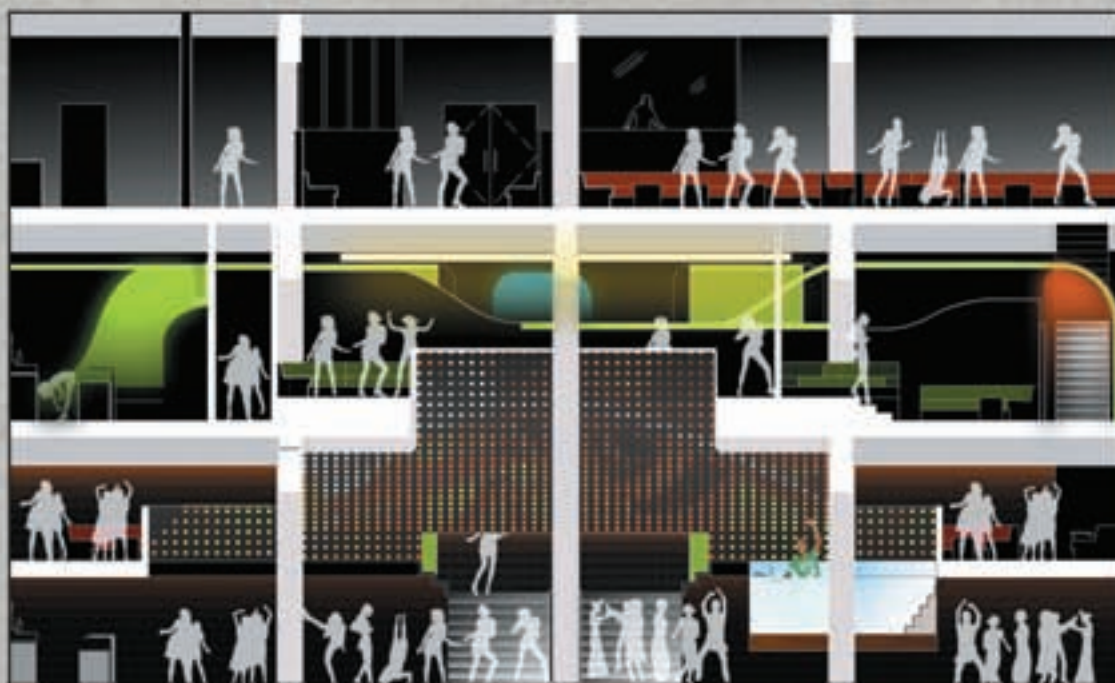
**What's an example of the kind of press that can follow a year after a launch?**

After all the reviews have come out, we use the press that's already out to pitch international press or in-flight press to go after business travelers and tourists. We can then get stories about the chef as an established person at a restaurant, and start pitching him to do more appearances and cooking classes, and meet his public. The more mediagenic the chef becomes, the better it is for the restaurant. —Suzanne Ito

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# Notice of New State of the Art Event Space Coming Fall 2005

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An artist's rendering of the new space.

Opening in September 2005 at 618 West 46th Street, across the street from the Intrepid Museum, a new 30,000 square foot state of the art event space and nightclub.

The new space is being designed by Lionel O Hayon of ICRAVE Design Studio whose recent projects included Crobar and AER Lounge.

This new space will accommodate 2,000 people for a cocktail reception and will have the latest technology including being wired for T1 through out the entire space.

"In the designing of this space, icrave will reinvent the very notion of what a nightclub and event space can be. Through the integration of light, video and sound as the predominant architectural features, our intention is to create a space that can be forever re-invented and immerse the patron into the spectacle whereby all expectations have been exceeded."

— Lionel O Hayon

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**A few preview  
dates will be  
available in  
August for pre-  
opening parties.**

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## ROUNDTABLE

## Menu Tastings

**DAVID BOWEN** is the former managing director at Lisa Lori Communications, a marketing and event company. “There is a perception that tastings are fun, but the reality is that it’s business, and there’s an agenda to accomplish. It’s the last time for everyone to get together for the sign-off. We usually hit the ‘fun’ elements—ticket sales, attendance, centerpieces, linens, music. I schedule tastings only a couple of weeks in advance of the event. It gives us time to change elements or have a follow-up tasting if something changes. **Early in my career, a socialite came in and talked about the veal Milanese she’d had in a restaurant. She insisted on having it for a dinner for 500 people.** That’s hard to pull off! She ended up being disappointed, and the caterer got fired. You have to be sensitive to the client’s needs, but steer them in the right direction.”

**SEAN DRISCOLL** is a partner at high-end catering firm Glorious Food. “Two people at a tasting is enough. You can’t please three or four people. They all have idiosyncrasies about food. **It’s like a group therapy session because it’s what they think the guests would want.** Clients and caterers must walk through the event space before the tasting, too. You have to see what the kitchen situation is going to be—it could be in a hallway under the stairs—and work all those problems out ahead of time.”

**JANE EMERSON** is an independent planner who works on nonprofit events for clients including the American Ballet Theater, the Breast Cancer Research Foundation, and God’s Love We Deliver. “Caterers sometimes like to get fancy, but simple is often better. You have to consider whether the caterer can reproduce the food in the middle of the night in a tent for 1,400 people. You also have to think about what large crowds actually like to eat—what do people object to, and what is socially acceptable? And you have to look for what is difficult to eat. **Do people really want to cut apart a pheasant? No, they don’t.** Presentation matters, too. I recently tasted a salad in a martini glass. The waiters couldn’t manage it, and people would knock it over.”



**CATHY MORRELL** is a partner at Match Catering and Eventstyles. “A menu tasting can be used to establish a foundation of trust between the planner and client. [The planner] can show the client that they’re sensitive to their needs, that they’ve been paying attention to what the client has said so far and know what the goals are. **Do the tasting in the venue when possible. The environment is a factor in how the food is chosen and presented.** Being in the venue can give a better sense of food presentation, and the planner can better understand the limitations for food prep, or if it really makes sense to use china, flatware, and glassware or if

plastic is more practical. You can’t appreciate the logistics unless you see the hoops caterers go through to pull things off at the tasting.”

**JANE KATCHER** is vice chairman of the board of directors of the Museum for African Art and co-chair of the museum’s gala benefit. “It’s hard, as a person not involved in the food industry, to make decisions for 500 people. **For years, I picked chicken because I was petrified of serving fish, red meat, or something adventurous.** I have learned to not be so worried about serving something slightly different—an interesting soup, something a little spicy, Cornish hen. If people don’t like it, we always have back-ups of fish, chicken, or just vegetables.”

**JOSÉ FONG** is director of catering for Restaurant Associates at Lincoln Center. “I usually hold tastings at 1 PM. People are hungry then and have lots of energy and focus. The tasting should not last longer than two hours. People’s attention span isn’t that long. **I always limit the tasting to three options per course to keep confusion to a minimum.** And I try to teach planners about the rationale behind the platings, and try to explain to them about balancing the colors and shapes of items on the plate and the compatibility of flavors. You advise them of that, try to give them options, warn them of problems. But if they insist, you have to do it.”

—Ellen Sturm Niz

## IT HAPPENED TO ME

## A Bomb Scare

SEPTEMBER 4, 2004, was a memorable day for **Paint the Town Red** president **Howard Givner**—and not just because it was his 39th birthday. His staff was overseeing the load-in for an employee appreciation event for a large health care company at **Bridgewater** for 1,000 guests, scheduled for a 7 PM start time. At 1:30 that afternoon, the client informed Paint the Town Red staffers that the company had received a call threatening a bomb explosion during the event. (They speculated a recently terminated employee was responsible.) Staffers called the police, and the **NYPD** sent two officers, who dismissed the threat as not credible and declined to send a bomb squad to the scene. (A spokesman for the NYPD tells us it’s up to the responding officers’ judgment whether to send the squad.) The facility’s staff was satisfied with the NYPD’s recommendation, but Givner felt compelled to take additional security measures.

“The police deal with this stuff all the time, but when you actually get a phone call that says, ‘I’m going to blow up the party tonight and everyone’s going to die,’ it’s bone-chilling,” Givner recalls. “We reacted immediately with a plan, while [the police] were laissez-faire about it.”

Here’s where it helps to have friends in the business: Calling on a security company with which his firm has worked for years, Givner arranged for a bomb-sniffing dog to sweep the area. He also doubled the number of security officers assigned to the event, arranged for two metal-detecting wands to check all guests, and extended the registration area by 15 feet to keep potential problems farther outside the facility—all in the few hours before the doors opened.

“There were additional costs of about \$2,500, which the client was happy to pay,” Givner says. “If they didn’t want to pay for it, I would have pulled my staff from the venue; there’s a point at which my team’s safety overrides a client’s event. Fortunately, in this case, we were all on the same page.”

So what happened? The event went off without incident. “I wasn’t nervous after all the things we did, and I felt confident we had a secure facility—no one was getting in there.” —*Alesandra Dubin*

## QuickTip

“When determining the amount of ice needed for an event...consider the length of the party, the need for chilling wines, beers, and Champagne, the necessity to fill water glasses, and the temperature of the party site. A five-hour outdoor [event] with temperatures in the 80s can require as much as five pounds of ice per person!”

**Bill Hansen and Chris Thomas**

*Off-Premise Catering Management* (Wiley, March 2005)





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# Awards Honor Best Event Ideas

BiZBash Media's Event Style Awards ceremony • B.B. King Blues Club & Grill • Tuesday, 04.12.05, 6 PM to 9 PM

THE BiZBASH EVENT STYLE AWARDS ceremony honored the most creative and innovative ideas in special events, meetings, conferences, and trade shows at the **B. B. King Blues Club & Grill**. More than 550 special event and meeting industry members gathered for the awards, which were presented to winners in 16 categories—six more than last year's awards. The **Experiential Agency/XA's Alice Turner, Mark Musters, and Jessie Lomma** produced the event, which was sponsored by **American Express**.

Kicking off this year's event was a special reception for nearly 200 finalists, event planners, and advertisers in the **Lucille's Bar & Grill** room within **B. B. King**. Blues-soul act **Gary Lovett** and his band, booked through **Harbor Lights Music**, performed in front of a constantly changing slide show of awards submissions images. In a nod to the night's BiZBash Event Style Hall of Fame inductees, **Hugh McMahon** carved an upright watermelon with caricatures of **Julian Niccolini** and **Alex von Bidder** of the **Four Seasons** restaurant. Another touch of decor was a large ice sculpture by **Okamoto Studio** branded with liquor sponsor **Absolut's** logo and a row of upturned dancers' legs and heels.

Magician **Mal Cross** strolled amidst the crowd, and **Ami Goodheart** and her Las Vegas-style showgirls, booked through **Bongarbiz Acts & Artists**, culminated the reception with a performance that proceeded down the room's curving staircase.

A cabaret-style set-up inside the Showcase Room set the stage for the awards show. Iridescent red-orange linens from **White Plains Linens** covered the tables, which were

topped with silver champagne buckets. Table decor alternated between candle lamps decorated with a fringe of red feathers, squat square vases filled with red gel and tealights, and small lamps with glass bead shades, all from **TriServe Party Rentals**. Models from **Eye5** passed out Absolut drinks from **Okamoto Studio's** tornado-shaped ice sculpture, which doubled as a cocktail slide. A bright, eye-grabbing LED wall from **Scharff Weisberg** served as a constantly changing backdrop on the stage.

As guests streamed into the main event space, jazz singer **Vanessa Trouble** sang and scatted, accompanied by a band from **Empire Entertainment**. **Screaming Queens Entertainment** provided its signature strolling dessert table, a cigarette girl, and a man with a candelabra on his head who offered drinks to guests entering the space. Goodheart and the



A cabaret-style set-up inside the **B. B. King Blues Club & Grill** set the stage for the BiZBash Event Style Awards show. Iridescent red-orange linens from **White Plains Linens** covered the tables, which were topped with silver champagne buckets and candle lamps.



*Movin' Out* star **Michael Cavanaugh**, represented by **Empire Entertainment**, performed to start the award show.

showgirls performed a dance number as guests sat down, and *Movin' Out* star **Michael Cavanaugh** (represented by **Empire Entertainment**) opened the show with a few songs.

Next, BiZBash Media president **Richard Aaron** welcomed the crowd, and he and BiZBash editor in chief **Chad Kaydo**; editors **Suzanne Ito, Alesandra Dubin, and Mark Mavrigian**; and event manager **Dana Bertotti** presented the B-shaped trophies designed by the **Award Group**. The winners included **EventQuest**, which took home two awards—as the company did last year—this



**Julian Niccolini** (left) and **Alex von Bidder** of the **Four Seasons** restaurant were inducted into the BiZBash Event Style Hall of Fame.



**Ami Goodheart** and her showgirls culminated a reception with a cabaret performance that proceeded down the room's curving staircase.

time for **Best Use of Tent Design** and **Best Fresh Idea**. Another big winner was **Dalzell Productions**, which picked up prizes for **Best Tabletop Design** and **Best Staging/Set Design**. Mid-way through the presentation—which lasted a brisk 35 minutes—BiZBash C.E.O. **David Adler** inducted **Niccolini** and **von Bidder** into the **Event Style Hall of Fame**.

Following the awards presentation, **Todd Londagin** and his band performed standards as guests mingled for the rest of the party.

# The Winners



## Best Overall Event Decor

**WINNER:** Friends of the High Line Summer Benefit, *Submitted by Van Wyck & Van Wyck*

At this benefit to raise money to preserve the High Line, the elevated rail structure on Manhattan's West Side, designer **Bronson van Wyck** suspended a 700-foot model of the Highline made out of branches above guests' heads, snaking in and out of the

venue's various rooms, to give the event a unifying design element. Then he gave each room its own distinct look inspired by the rail structure. **Travis Bass** projected photos of wildflowers in one room, and constructed a sculpture of tiny LED lights in another.

**FINALIST:** Love Mercedes Ride and Drive Tour, *Submitted by EventQuest*

**FINALIST:** World's Best Awards Party, *Submitted by Travel & Leisure*

## Best Conference/Trade Show

**WINNER:** Chief Information Officer (C.I.O.) Forums, *Submitted by Richmond Events*

Knowing that many conferences are filled with distractions and other hindrances to learning, **Richmond Events** created its **C.I.O. Forum** to isolate attendees in an environment conducive to education: aboard a luxury cruise ship. The two-and-a-half-day conference at sea is filled with workshops, seminars, and keynote speeches on the latest in technology, management strategies, and other business topics. Past keynote speakers have included general **Norman Schwarzkopf**, **Madeleine Albright**, **Andrew Cuomo**, and **Robert Kennedy Jr.**

**FINALIST:** Wedding Salon Consumer Bridal Event, *Submitted by 4PM Events Inc.*

**FINALIST:** Best Companies for Women of Color Multicultural Conference, *Submitted by Working Mother Media*



## Best Event Concept

**WINNER:** Robin Hood Foundation Benefit, *Submitted by Event Resources Inc.*

This blockbuster benefit raised \$24.1 million in 2004 with an evening divided into three distinct components. First was a cocktail hour in a room featuring four-foot-tall flowerpots and a 30-foot-wide mound of pinwheels, creating the feel of a dreamy garden. Next, the 3,600 guests sat down for dinner surrounded by video screens showing testimonials about the nonprofit's work, and bid on a series of once-in-a-lifetime auction lots. The evening ended with a concert from **Rod Stewart** featuring his hits and old standards.

**FINALIST:** Democracy Plaza: the 2004 Presidential Election Promotion, *Submitted by Tishman Speyer Properties*

**FINALIST:** Dom Perignon 1996 Vintage Launch, *Submitted by Susan Magrino Agency*



## Best New Venue

**WINNER:** Tribeca Cinemas, *Submitted by Tribeca Cinemas*

This new space features three floors of open and private lounges, two full-service bars and a full-service kitchen, two screening rooms, and an elegant lobby with restored 40's-style sofas and loveseats. **Tribeca Cinemas'** staff offers event-planning services, and the space is well suited for movie premieres, receptions, parties, readings, and meetings. The venue hosts the **Tribeca Film Festival** and the **Tribeca Theater Festival**, as well as year-round events of the **Tribeca Film Institute**.

**FINALIST:** Terrace at the United Nations, *Submitted by Aramark*



## Best Invitation Design

**WINNER:** AOL's Chief Everything Officer Luncheon, *Submitted by AOL Media Networks*

To invite guests to its **Chief Everything Officer** luncheon, an event that honors parents' multiple roles in the household, **AOL/Media Networks** created a stylish invitation that cleverly defined the event's purpose. Inside a white plastic envelope tied with ribbon, a red leather photo pouch encased four snapshot-size cards of parents washing a car, shopping for groceries, helping with kids' homework, and driving their children in the car, with slogans like "I build strategic alliances," and "I lead by example."

**FINALIST:** *Catwoman* Private Screening, After-Party, and Fashion Show, *Submitted by Creative Intelligence*

**FINALIST:** Swarovski and 7 for All Mankind's Denim Launch, *Submitted by Creative Intelligence*

## Best Press Stunt

**WINNER:** Meow Mix Café Opening, *Submitted by Grand Central Marketing Inc.*

To help promote **Meow Mix's** entry into the wet cat food market, **Grand Central Marketing** rented a Fifth Avenue storefront and created a restaurant for felines and their owners. At the café's grand opening, guests and their cats—including one-time **Catwoman** *Eartha Kitt*—walked along a red carpet. The restaurant served seven flavors of Meow Mix's new line, and the venue also included activities for shoppers—cat-themed games with names like the "Hairball Toss" and "Feeding Time."

**FINALIST:** Bacardi's Mojito Cocktail Marketing Campaign, *Submitted by the Baddish Group*

**FINALIST:** U2 Concert Event in Dumbo, *Submitted by Event Resources Inc.*



## Best Entertainment Program/Concept

**WINNER:** Spatender Product Campaign, *Submitted by SPArty*

When a big-name liquor company wanted to pamper and educate a group of bartenders and waiters from its top nightclub and restaurant accounts, **SPArty** produced a spa-theme party at the fashion district's **Penthouse 15**. When guests arrived they changed into SPArty's monogrammed robes and slippers, and received spa treatments while sipping theme-related cocktails. The event was so successful that the liquor company planned 22 similar events in 11 markets in the following year.

**FINALIST:** AOL Music: Rod Stewart Live Concert, *Submitted by America Online Inc.*

**FINALIST:** SEB Bank Employee Reception and Dinner, *Submitted by Steffan Group*





### Best Lighting Design

**WINNER:** Cartier 100th Anniversary/Santos Wristwatch Launch, Submitted by JKLD Inc.

Luring guests into the 100th anniversary celebration of Cartier's Santos watch, JKLD Inc. used lighting to pave the entry, projecting gobos of the luxury brand's logo every 15 feet. Inside the main event space, the ever-changing lighting included strips of LED lighting on two walls, while the other

two displayed large projections. LED lights were also rigged under the bar and tables. The projection walls eventually came down, revealing a gallery of watches that included floating glass displays that doubled as projection surfaces.

**FINALIST:** Fragrance Foundation's FiFi Awards, Submitted by Bentley Meeker Lighting & Staging

**FINALIST:** Gillette Product Launch, Submitted by Bentley Meeker Lighting & Staging



### Best Incentive Trip or Meeting

**WINNER:** Nextel Agenda Republican National Convention Event, Submitted by Briggs Inc.

During the convention, Briggs coordinated seven days of events and activities for 700 Nextel guests and their families. Briggs supplied transportation between airports, hotels, and event venues, and also staffed hospitality desks, created maps of Manhattan, and arranged restaurant and theater reservations. One highlight was a Nascar-theme family festival at Pier Sixty with checkered linens, a racetrack, a Daytona 500 arcade, and race-car simulators. A professional Nascar driver signed autographs, a nine-piece band entertained, and guests posed for photos dressed in race-car gear.

**FINALIST:** IBM Christmas in New York, Submitted by PRA Destination Management

### Best Gift Bag

**WINNER:** Liberty National Golf Club Announcement Event, Submitted by Karlitz & Company

Two weeks after the announcement of this new golf course, Karlitz & Company sent uniformed brand ambassadors to deliver black leather baskets filled with personal and luxury products, including a thank-you note from the course's primary investor, a pair of Reidel wineglasses etched with the course's logo, two linen napkins in silver rings, a cookbook and food products from Craft, the restaurant that hosted the event, and a bottle of wine—either red or white, based on each guest's personal preference.

**FINALIST:** 1800 Tequila Tastings, Submitted by Lisa Lori Communications

**FINALIST:** Scotch and Steak: the Glenrothes Tasting Dinner, Submitted by Lisa Lori Communications



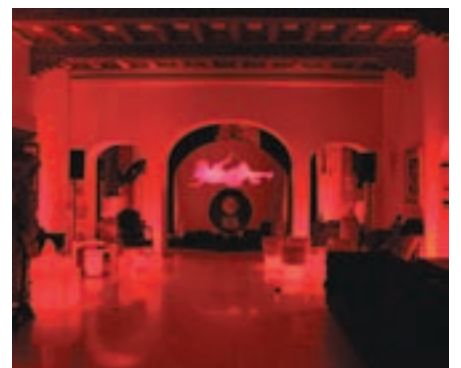
### Best Tabletop Design

**WINNER:** Children's Defense Fund Fall Benefit, Submitted by Dalzell Productions

For this nonprofit dedicated to helping young people, Dalzell Productions gave the fund-raiser a classroom theme that showcased the CDF's educational programs. Using common school supplies, Dalzell created centerpieces with colored pencils, rulers, pink erasers, and plastic scissors wrapped with coiled steel wire and popping out of each piece. The bright, bold arrangements tied the event's purpose to its design, and the leftover materials were donated to a public school.

**FINALIST:** AON Beauty of Winter Employee Holiday Party, Submitted by Impressive Events

**FINALIST:** CosmoGIRL Awards, Submitted by EventQuest



### Best Overall Catering at an Event

**WINNER:** AXE Men's Fragrance Launch, Submitted by Match Catering & Eventstyles

GMR Marketing and Match concocted a creative dining experience in the dark to encourage guests to rely on their senses to promote this new scent. Waiters in night goggles seated guests for meals that didn't require utensils, and everyone relied solely on their sense of touch to find their food. Plates and chargers varied so each person could figure out which was theirs, as everyone tried to discern tastes and textures in the dark—attempting to identify items such as polenta cups with melted Gorgonzola and gazpacho shrimp cocktails.

**FINALIST:** Cartier 100th Anniversary/Santos Wristwatch Launch, Submitted by Tentation Potel & Chabot

**FINALIST:** Hackensack University Medical Center Gala, Submitted by Great Performances



### Best Staging/Set Design

**WINNER:** Gotham Awards, Submitted by Dalzell Productions

Inspired by punk rock, New York's urban aesthetic, and 70's underground cinema, Dalzell Productions transformed Pier Sixty with scaffolding, graffiti, neon lights, and hot pink accents for the Gotham awards ceremony. Scaffolding and plywood planks created walk-through tunnels for presenters

and winners, while giving the narrow ballroom the illusion of depth. More than 1,000 guests had a perfect view of the ceremony with video screens in the far corners of the room and oversize LCD screens.

**FINALIST:** Disney Dream Desk Product Launch, Submitted by the Experiential Agency/XA New York

**FINALIST:** Royal Bank of Scotland's Annual Awards and Recognition Conference, Submitted by Barkley Kalpak Associates

## Best Food Presentation

**WINNER:** Nobu's 10th Anniversary Event, Submitted by *Confetti Cakes*

Is it sushi, or is it cake? That was the question that confronted guests when **Confetti Cakes** created a tray of sweets that mimicked the famed restaurant's specialty. **Elisa Strauss** created intricate pieces of sushi from yellow cake and vanilla buttercream frosting, and even placed the sweet sushi on a faux wood platform dotted with pink ginger and wasabi made of more frosting. A pair of chopsticks and a small bowl filled with soy sauce completed the faux sushi setup.

**FINALIST:** *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* Prerelease Screening and Reception, Submitted by *Impressive Events*



## Best Use of Tent Design

**WINNER:** Love Mercedes Ride and Drive Tour, Submitted by *EventQuest*

For this mobile marketing campaign, **Mercedes-Benz** constructed a massive tent adjacent to closed courses where guests could test-drive the company's cars. Under the tent, **EventQuest** created a luxury environment where upscale sponsors showed off products that complemented Mercedes' lifestyle message, and offered refreshments and massages for attendees. At the center of the domed tent was a projection theater where guests watched a 360-degree video presentation, and lounge furniture provided comfort around the tent's perimeter.

**FINALIST:** Central Park Conservancy's Halloween Ball, Submitted by *Matthew David Events*

**FINALIST:** Marc Jacobs Fashion Show, Submitted by *Regal Tent Productions*

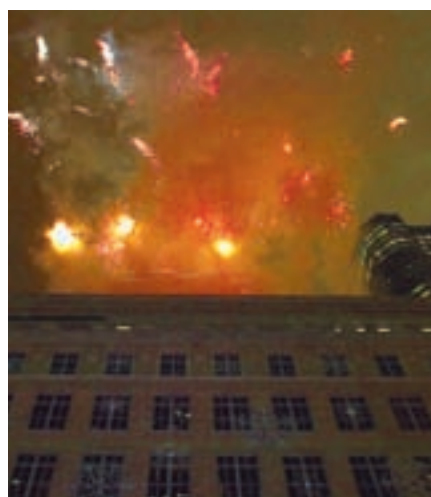
## Best Fresh Idea

**WINNER:** Saks Fifth Avenue Holiday Launch, Submitted by *EventQuest*

**EventQuest** gave the unveiling of **Saks Fifth Avenue's** holiday season window display Christmas sparkle with snowflakes. During the 15 minutes Fifth Avenue was closed to traffic, **EventQuest** provided manmade snow and an LED light show of Saks' giant snowflakes attached to the store's facade. Bleachers decorated with the Saks holiday shopping bag snowflake pattern provided seating for the crowd that included celebrities, media, and V.I.P.s such as **Oscar de la Renta** and Mayor **Michael Bloomberg**.

**FINALIST:** Republican National Convention Media Welcome Party, Submitted by *Matthew David Events*

**FINALIST:** Wyclef Jean's Yele Haiti Benefit, Submitted by *Allure Catering*



## Awards Judges

Laura Aviva, *Travel & Leisure*

Felice Axelrod, Lehman Brothers

Caryl Chinn, *Bon Appétit*

Janet Cohen, UJA-Federation of New York

Alessandra Dubin, BiZBash Media

Robin Hall, Macy's

Joan Horton, The Horton Group

Suzanne Ito, BiZBash Media

Chad Kaydo, BiZBash Media

Martin Lee, Olympus Imaging America

Susan Magrino, Susan Magrino Agency

Mark Mavrigian, BiZBash Media

Mark Musters, The Experiential Agency

Michelle Mutter, CMJ Network

Amy Newman Kaplan, *Maxim*

Liz Sanzo, iStar Financial

Anna Sekula, BiZBash Media

David Shackley, AOL

Carrie Smith, RCA Music Group

To enter next year's awards, watch for information on

[www.BiZBash.com](http://www.BiZBash.com)

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