

+ INCENTIVE TRAVEL meetings

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Learn best practices from Niesa Silzer (pictured) and the award-winning Travel Alberta team **P.27**

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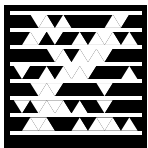


Best Meeting — in — Canada

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written by **STEPHEN T. DEMPSEY, DON DOULOFF and CHRISTINE OTSUKA**



For information on the Best Meeting in Canada jury members and list of finalists, snap here (see page 7 for instructions) or visit bestmeetingincanada.com

The Best Meeting in Canada awards — an industry first — were developed to reward and recognize organizations that are investing in, and can demonstrate, the value of meetings. To be recognized as a Best Meeting in Canada, your event must be professionally produced, including content, networking, audiovisual, decor, registration, attendee marketing and all the elements that comprise a professional meeting. However, it is not enough just to produce a good event. To plan and execute a great event, the meeting must have clear objectives and must be measured against those goals afterwards. It is this combination of professional planning and strategic implementation that comprised the criteria of the Best Meeting in Canada winners. Meetings are a vital part of an organization's quantitative and qualitative success. The Best Meeting in Canada awards recognize those organizations that can best demonstrate their meetings' value.

Travel Alberta



INDUSTRY CONFERENCE 2009

Oct. 25-27, 2009, the Fairmont Banff Springs hosted the ninth annual Travel Alberta Industry Conference, offering networking opportunities and education sessions focused on specialized areas of the industry. Last year's conference attracted over 700 attendees, representing tour operators, attractions, hotels, motels, DMCs and town officials. Capping the two-day meeting were the Alberta Tourism ('Alto') Awards.



The Travel Alberta Industry Conference demonstrated the importance of incorporating strong programme elements: relevant and timely education content; a strong roster of industry-expert speakers; and interactivity (the Travel Alberta Marketplace networking session). Furthermore, an awards element, such as the Altos, fostered a sense of industry cooperation and community, key to any programme.

Everything was in sync: the right mix of programme elements, developed against a specific set of goals, executed professionally and measured against those goals after the event.

It's crucial to align programme elements strategically with clearly articulated objectives and then measure attendees' reaction, post-event. Otherwise, you have no way of knowing if your event was effective.

HOW TO PLAN YOUR BEST MEETING



Jean Silzer (left), Don Boynton, of Travel Alberta and Niesa Silzer planned the winning Travel Alberta Industry Conference 2009.



PLANNING PRIMER

Lead Planners: Don Boynton, Travel Alberta; Jean Silzer and Niesa Silzer, Details Convention & Event Management
Host Venue, Food & Beverage: The Fairmont Banff Springs **AV, Staging & Production:** Mediaco, The Presentation Company **Creative Design & Printing:** Foundry Creative **Photography:** Banff Photography **Delegate Packages:** Pinnacle Promotions **Awards:** Media Marketing **Centrepieces:** Details Convention & Event Management **Florals:** Nosegay Florist **Speaker Gifts:** Mountain Galleries **Band:** Soulah Fyah **Speakers:** The Lavin Agency & Agenda Sport Marketing

PHOTO Jason Dziner

event details

MANDATE: The conference has become the premier learning opportunity for the tourism industry and is now integrated into Travel Alberta's stakeholder-engagement strategy. The meeting's purpose: increase industry awareness and knowledge of industry products and market growth opportunities; continue to develop pride and unity in the industry; deliver an opportunity for education, networking and relationship development among the industry and relevant stakeholders. Plenary sessions are designed to be of the broadest interest and provide new, relevant industry knowledge.

NETWORKING COMPONENT: During opening reception, five-hour Travel Alberta Marketplace provided opportunities for attendees to network with staff reps from Travel Alberta and Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

PROGRAMME CONTENT: Presentations included timely subjects: Going for Gold in a Shifting Marketplace; Making the Most of Your Marketing Budget; Marketing to Different Cultures; Time Management; Developing and Maintaining Tourism Destinations; Alberta's New Brand.

WHY THIS EVENT WON: Education sessions were "focused and geared to attendees"; programme was "diversified and up-to-date," and "inspired and relevant" and noteworthy for "interactivity and contemporary content." High attendee-satisfaction results (the satisfaction rating for the 2009 meeting was the highest ever recorded by the conference). Conference notable for "multiple dimensions — concurrent (complexity of organization)." Alto awards are "unifying" and "create a sense of organizations working together."



Shnier Summit



June 10-12, 2009, the Quebec City Convention Centre hosted floorcovering specialist Shnier, Gesco's annual Shnier Summit convention. In 10 years, the event has grown from a small dealer convention to a major meeting of 450 key industry players. The 2009 edition attracted 327 independent retail reps from across Canada, as well as Shnier associates and supplier partners, who were treated to education sessions, a customer-awards luncheon, local cultural experiences and entertainment.



HOW TO PLAN YOUR BEST MEETING



event details

MANDATE: Shnier hosts this event to educate and inform its customers on industry and business topics; inspire them with product introductions and motivational speakers; sell its products and programmes; and strengthen working relationships between and among Shnier's customers and suppliers.

PROGRAMME ELEMENTS: Product showcase and sale; customer awards luncheon; Summit sale prize draws. Workshop sessions included a Finance Workshop; Strategies for Surviving & Thriving in a Down Economy; Managing in Volatile Times: Lessons from Canada's Best Managed Companies; and Flooring Market Trends. Cultural/leisure activities: Shnier's Nuit de Cirque Dinner Theatre; cooking class; historical city tour; countryside tour; tree-to-tree adventure; organized walk to Le Capitoile Theatre for dinner. Speakers included Ken Wong, professor, Queen's University School of Business; John Hughes, private company services, Deloitte; and Santo Torcivia, president, Market Insights/Torcivia.

WHY THIS EVENT WON: Outstanding elements included "high production" and "diversity of programme." Content was "clearly thought out" and attendee satisfaction was "high" ("the speakers were motivational and understandable; their strategies were easily digested"). In addition, the event provided "good networking opportunities." Moreover, "the inclusion of an awards element...makes it a more multi-dimensional event." Plus, the organizers "know [their] target group" and demonstrate a "commitment to grow the event" (the 2009 event drew 327 attendees, versus 222 for the 2008 Summit, a 47-per-cent increase).



Strategic Questions to Ask: It's key to design each event programme carefully. Do you have too many (or too few) programme elements? Which ones are necessary (education content? awards? product showcase? gala dinner? networking?) Do the number and nature of the programme elements satisfy your event's objectives? Is it appropriate to add a charitable component — silent auction or community service, for instance? Is the education content strong and relevant to your audience? If you're considering a charitable element, does it serve your overall event objective(s)? It's crucial to know your audience and their specific language needs. With that in mind, is bilingual content necessary or appropriate?



PHOTOS Andrew Midwinter, Ryan Gallick

PLANNING PRIMER

Lead Planner: Kristi Contini, Shnier, Gesco
Production: Kristi Contini and Shnier, Gesco's marketing and merchandising team
Host Venue: Quebec City Convention Centre
Catering: Capital HRS
AV: AVW Telav
Decor, Transportation, Rentals: Octopus DMC
Hotel Accommodations: Hilton Quebec, Quebec City
Offsite Dinner Venue: Le Capitoile Theatre
Speakers, Entertainment: Speakers' Spotlight & Atmosphere Design
Printers: Atlantis Graphic Management, Transcontinental Printing, EPingo.com
Gifts, Premium Giveaways: Golf Town Corporate Sales
Video Production: The Digitalist

Co-op Atlantic

AUGUST BOARD TOUR



In mid-August, 2009, Co-op Atlantic's board of directors and executive management team embarked on a six-day bus trip to nine communities across Nova Scotia's mainland, to meet the members of local boards and learn about the communities they represent. The August Board Tour, which ran from Aug. 16 through Aug. 21, saw 33 participants — including spouses and children — travel 1,600 km.



Cape Forchu, Yarmouth

PLANNING PRIMER

Lead Planners: Murielle DiDomenicantonio and Christine Savoie, Co-op Atlantic **Transportation:** Ambassatours Gray Line **Accommodation:** Oak Island Resort; Rodd's Yarmouth; Super 8 Windsor; Liscombe Lodge **Food & Beverage:** Oak Island Resort; Rodd's Yarmouth; Super 8 Windsor; Liscombe Lodge; Red Cap Restaurant; Mike Howell; J&J Country Grill **Delegate Packages:** Co-op Atlantic **Additional Stops:** Mahone Bay; Pubnico; Acadian Museum; St. Mary's Church Museum; Grand Pré Winery; Grand Pré Historical Site; Coady International Institute

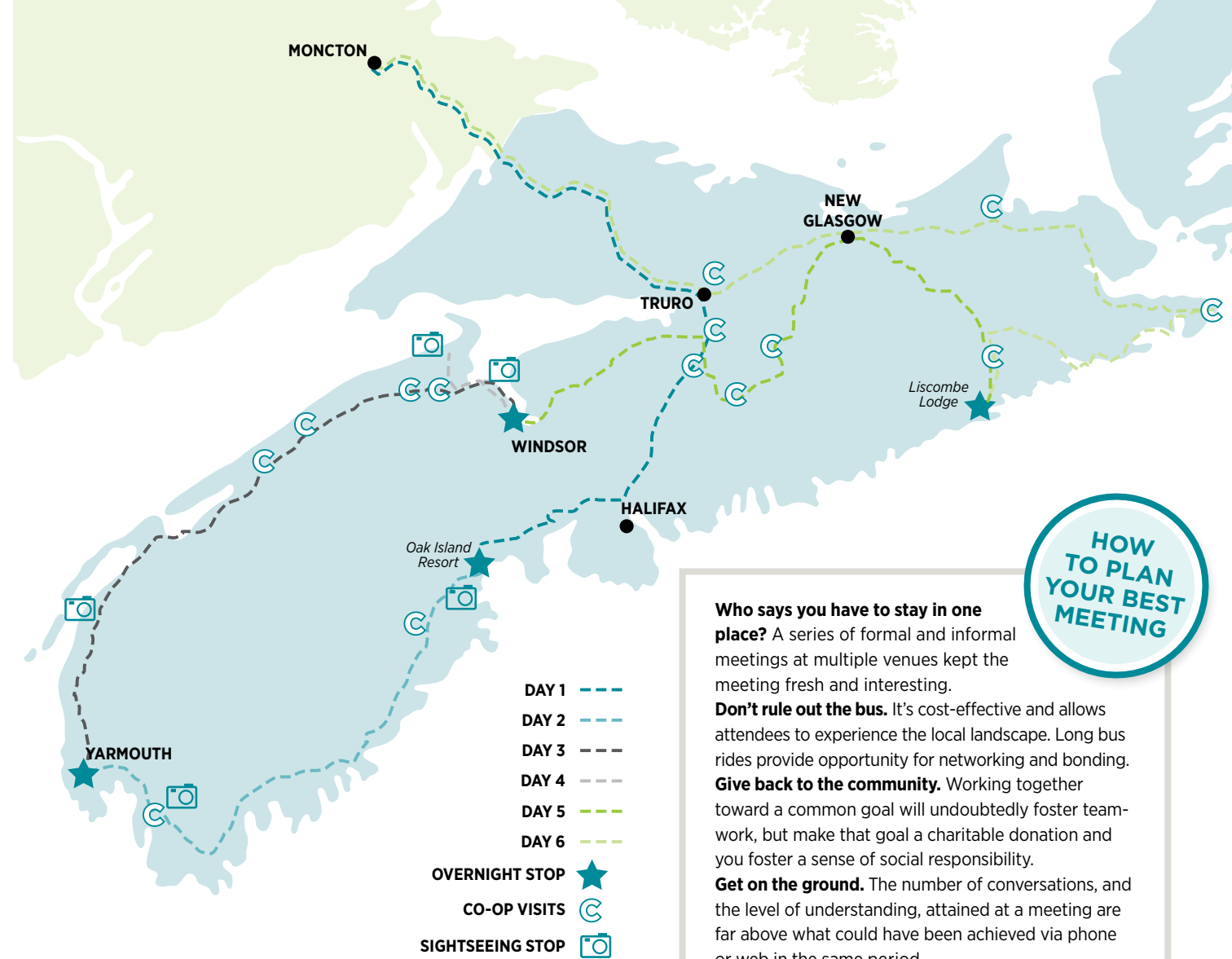
event details

MANDATE: The event gives board members and management the chance to get to know the operations and key people involved in a given region's cooperative movement. It lets customers raise issues with top-level management and provides an occasion for management to get to know each other. Store visits allow the team to meet management and local board members and gain a better understanding of each retail operation.

NETWORKING COMPONENT: The structure of the August Board Tour provided ample opportunity for attendees to meet and network with their customers via formal and informal gatherings. Social activities and long bus rides allowed the group to strategize and discuss what they had seen and heard.

PROGRAMME CONTENT: During the tour, attendees visited 18 stores, from Truro through the Annapolis Valley, down to Yarmouth and back up to Canso. Visits included a fair-trade coffee-roasting cooperative. While on the road, the group knit comfort dolls that were later donated to a local children's hospital.

WHY THIS EVENT WON: The August Board Tour brought together top-level management and regional members and had a direct and immediate impact. Since the meeting was planned for a cooperative, the multi-venue tour "suited the organization" — and tour attendees offered strong testimonials. The time spent in transit was put to good, socially-responsible use.



HOW TO PLAN YOUR BEST MEETING

Who says you have to stay in one place? A series of formal and informal meetings at multiple venues kept the meeting fresh and interesting. **Don't rule out the bus.** It's cost-effective and allows attendees to experience the local landscape. Long bus rides provide opportunity for networking and bonding. **Give back to the community.** Working together toward a common goal will undoubtedly foster teamwork, but make that goal a charitable donation and you foster a sense of social responsibility. **Get on the ground.** The number of conversations, and the level of understanding, attained at a meeting are far above what could have been achieved via phone or web in the same period.



Oak Island Resort



PHOTO Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture and Heritage