

34TH ANNUAL SOUTHEASTERN CLASSIC
CONNECT & COLLABORATE
Building Tomorrow Together



JULY 17 - 18, 2025
ATHENS, GA



The SE Chapter is excited to invite you to attend the 34th anniversary of our Southeastern Classic, an educational and networking event. This year's SE Classic will be held in-person on July 17- 18, 2025 in Athens, GA.

Connect and Collaborate with us this year at the SE Classic, and learn about emerging trends and technology from industry experts, have fun, and spend time with friends and peers.

SE CLASSIC SCHEDULE

34th ANNUAL SOUTHEASTERN CLASSIC
Athens, Georgia
JULY 17 - 18, 2025

The Classic is held in the Olympia Room on the
Upper Level of the Classic Center

THURSDAY, JULY 17TH

7:30 AM – 8:00 AM
Breakfast

8:00 AM – 9:15 AM
Welcome and Opening Keynote
"How to Create a Winning Mindset"
Jack Bauerle, Former Olympic &
UGA Head Swim Coach

SPONSORED BY GES

9:15 AM – 9:30 AM
Break

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM
"Fuel the Team: Powering Collaboration
with Energy, Emotion and Mindset"
Freddie Broome, Georgia Municipal Association

10:30 AM – 10:45 AM
Break

10:45 AM – 11:45 AM
"How To Deepen Exhibitor Relationships
& Grow Event Revenue"
Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge

11:45 AM – 12:00 PM
Photos

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM
Lunch and Learn
"Meetings Matter: Panel Discussion"
Moderated by: Gwen Venable, US Poultry
Tara Brashear, Shepard
Deb Ferbrache, NürnbergMesse North America
Katherine Puckett, The Classic Center
Elyse Worthey-Harris, Visit Athens

SPONSORED BY PROJECTION

1:30 PM – 1:45 PM
Break

1:45 PM – 2:45 PM
"Greener Events: Driving Sustainability in the
Meetings and Exhibitions Industry"
Denise Young, Athens-Clarke County Economic
Development Department

2:45 PM – 3:00 PM
Break

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM
"Clarity-Driven Communication: How To
Communicate With Anyone"
Debbie Peterson, Speaker/Impact Strategist
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4:00 PM – 4:15 PM
Announcements

4:15 PM – 5:00 PM
Community Service Event
"Clean the World"

5:00 PM – 5:15 PM
Break

6:00 – 9:00 PM
34th Annual Celebration Dinner
at the tour of the Georgia Music Collection

FRIDAY, JULY 18TH

7:30 AM – 8:00 AM
Breakfast

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM
"Rooted in Community: Connecting Hospitality
Education with Industry Impact"
Dr. John Salazar, PhD, CHE, University of Georgia

9:00 AM – 9:15 AM
Break

10

**CE
CREDITS**

For those seeking certification or recertification, participating in the IAEE SE Classic could result in up to 10 clock hours towards CEM certification/recertification.

REGISTRATION & LOCATION

All registrations must be made online. To register online, go to the Events tab at www.iaeese.org and click the "Register" link under the CLASSIC event.

Additional attendee registration from the same company should be submitted with payment at the same time. Online registration will close on Thursday, July 10th, 2025 at 12 noon ET.

Registration fees may be paid by credit card. You should receive confirmation of your conference registration by email immediately after your registration is completed. If confirmation is not received, please call the IAEE SE Executive Office at 404-474-0944 or send an email to: info@iaeese.org

FEES

Full Conference

Members: \$500

Guests: \$650

Students: \$200

One Day Only (Thursday July 17th)

Members: \$350

Guests: \$425

9:15 AM – 10:15 AM
"Cash In, Cut Costs: Winning Revenue Tactics for Your Expo and Sponsorship Programs"
Michelle Mobley, American Society of Landscape Architects & Rich Vallaster, Personify
SPONSORED BY IAEE EDUCATION FUND

10:15 AM – 10:30 AM
Break

10:30 AM – 11:45 AM
"From Scenarios to Strategies: Crafting Event Success with AI"
Rich Vallaster, Personify
SPONSORED BY US POULTRY

11:45 AM
Closing Remarks

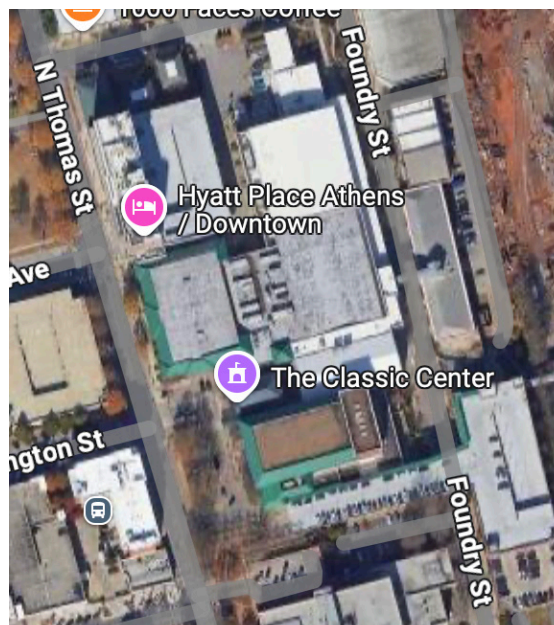
LODGING

The Hyatt Place is attached to the Classic Center

Price: \$185+ (Room block closes 6/25. Contact the hotel directly after that date.)

Hyatt Place Athens/Downtown
412 N Thomas St,
Athens, GA 30601

Booking link:
[CLICK HERE](#)



SE CLASSIC LOCATION

CLASSIC CENTER

Olympia Room
300 N Thomas St.
Athens, GA 30601

Parking: Parking is available for \$10/day in The Classic Center Parking Deck to the extent available. Parking is also available at the Hyatt for hotel guests.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS & SESSIONS

"Welcome and Opening Keynote: How to Create a Winning Mindset"

Jack Bauerle, former UGA Head Swim Coach

Join us for an inspiring session with Jack Bauerle, the former head coach of the University of Georgia Swimming & Diving program and one of the most respected figures in collegiate athletics. With a career spanning over four decades, Coach Bauerle led his teams to multiple national championships and coached Olympic athletes to international success. In this motivational talk, he'll share powerful insights on leadership, perseverance, and building a winning mindset—both in and out of the pool.

Jack Bauerle is a highly accomplished former Head Coach of the University of Georgia (UGA) men's and women's swimming and diving teams. His career at UGA spanned over 50 years, beginning as a student-athlete and extending for 46 years as a coach, with 43 as a head coach. He retired in June 2022 as the longest-tenured coach in UGA athletics and in the SEC. He achieved 7 NCAA titles, 12 SEC Team Titles and named SEC Coach of the Year 18 times. Jack received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the College Swimming & Diving Coaches Association of America (CSCAA) in 2023.



"Fuel the Team: Powering Collaboration with Energy, Emotion and Mindset"

Freddie Broome, Director of Community and Workplace Culture, Georgia Municipal Association

Great teams don't just happen—they're fueled by awareness, adaptability, and shared purpose. In this interactive session, participants will explore how core energy levels, a growth mindset, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs shape the way teams communicate, build trust, and perform. You'll learn how emotional intelligence helps navigate challenges and energizes collaboration, and you'll walk away with practical tools to help yourself and your team stay connected, creative, and resilient.

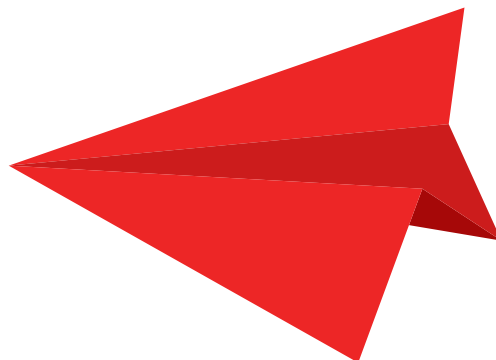
Learning Objectives:

- Explore how core energy and emotional intelligence affect team communication, trust, and motivation.
- Utilize Maslow's Hierarchy to identify and address the underlying needs that impact team dynamics.
- Learn to transition from a fixed to a growth mindset and from low to high energy to enhance collaboration and resilience.



Freddie D. Broome brings more than 25 years of experience in local government and fire service leadership. He began his career with the Winston-Salem (NC) Fire Department and later served as Fire Chief for the cities of Valdosta and South Fulton, Georgia. In 2019, his leadership was recognized statewide when he was named Georgia Fire Chief of the Year by the Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs. He currently serves as the Director of Community and Workplace Culture at the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), where he partners with municipal leaders to cultivate inclusive, thriving communities that are great places to live,

work, and play. Freddie holds a Master of Public Administration in Local Government Management from Appalachian State University and a Master of Science in Conflict Management from Kennesaw State University. He is currently completing a Ph.D. in Change Leadership at the University of Central Arkansas. He is a Certified Public Manager (CPM), Certified Professional Coach (CPC), and a registered mediator. Passionate about leadership and professional growth, Freddie is committed to helping individuals and organizations reach their highest potential.



"How to Deepen Exhibitor Relationships and Grow Event Revenue" **Jefferson Davis, President, Competitive Edge**

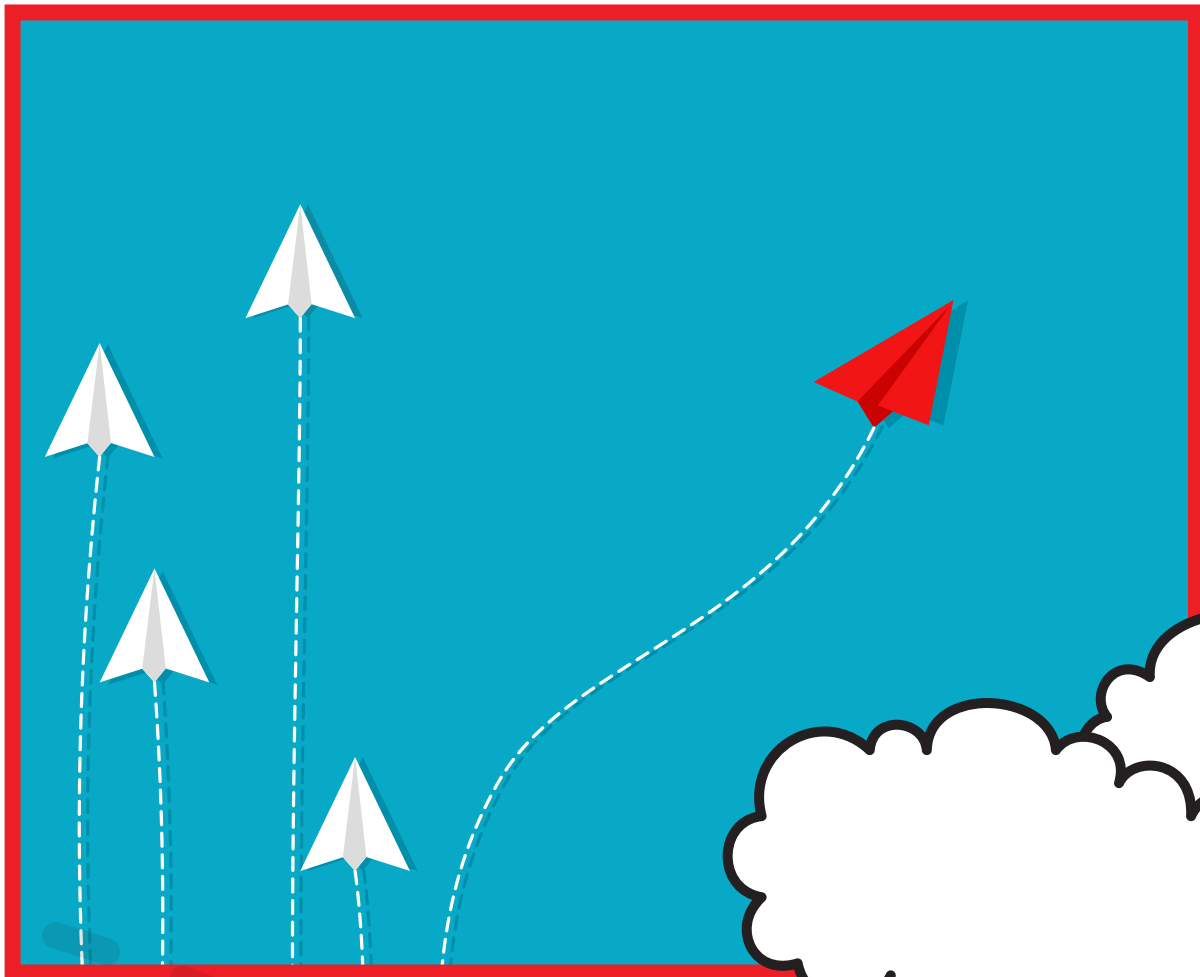
Because of increased costs to exhibit, concerns about the impact of tariffs, and exhibitors voicing pain points and concerns about relationships with show producers and suppliers, growing exhibitor event revenue is a big challenge for most show producers right now. This high-content, eye-opening session will discuss why continuing to use a "transactional/efficiency" sales model will make growing event revenue even more difficult. You will learn about the why's and how's to begin implementing a "consultative/relational" sales model that will deepen relationships with your exhibiting clients and lead to event revenue growth.

Learning Objectives:

- Hear eye opening research on exhibit/event marketer's perceptions of events and event producers.
- Understand why a "transactional/efficiency" based sales model is limiting relationships and revenue growth.
- Learn how moving toward a "consultative/relational" sales model can deepen relationships and grow event revenue.
- Learn practical strategies to launch your "consultative/relational" sales model.



Jefferson Davis is President of Competitive Edge. Since 1991 he's worked with over 260 Association and for-profit event producers providing exhibitor support programs and sales training to help his clients get, keep and grow exhibitors. Jefferson is a passionate, energetic event industry expert who is process-based and results-focused.



"Meetings Manner Panel"

Moderated by **Gwen Venable**, CEM, Executive Vice President,
Expo & Communication Services, U.S. Poultry & Egg Association

Panelists: **Tara Brashear**, Sales Manager, Shepard - **Deb Ferbrache**, Event and Exhibitions Manager,
NürnbergMesse North America - **Katherine Puckett**, Director of Sales, The Classic Center -
Elyse Worthey-Harris, Director of Sales, Visit Athens

Meetings play a pivotal role in continuing education, driving business success, and fostering meaningful connections. In our panel, "Meetings Matter," we will explore the profound impact that events have on both personal and professional landscapes. Join seasoned show organizers, suppliers, and facility experts as they share their insights on the multifaceted benefits of events.

We'll uncover how meetings serve as powerful catalysts for growth and engagement. Attendees will gain valuable knowledge on planning and executing impactful events, understanding audience dynamics, and measuring event success. Whether you are a planner or supplier, this panel will equip you with the tools and inspiration to leverage the power of events to achieve your goals and leave a lasting impression. Don't miss this opportunity to learn why "Meetings Matter" and how to make the most of them.

Learning Objectives:

- By the end of the panel discussion, participants will be able to articulate the significance of meetings and events in various contexts, including business, social, and cultural impacts.
- Participants will develop the ability to identify and discuss critical factors that contribute to the successful planning and execution of events, including logistical considerations, stakeholder management, and attendee engagement strategies.
- By the conclusion of the panel discussion, participants will be able to identify and analyze emerging trends in the events industry, such as technological advancements, sustainability practices, and changes in attendee expectations.

Gwen Venable is Executive Vice President, Expo & Communication Services for U.S. Poultry & Egg Association and is responsible for the association's International Poultry Expo and the overall management of the International Production & Processing Expo (IPPE). She also leads the strategic communications, public relations, marketing and promotion for the Association's industry services and events, as well as the annual IPPE. Gwen is a Past Chair of the IAAE Southeastern Chapter and served on the Chapter's Board of Directors from 2012 until 2024. In addition to participating on the executive team, she served as chair of the IAAE Southeastern Classic for three years, spearheaded the Chapter's Technology Exchange education program for eight years, and participated in various charity events held by the Chapter. In 2021, she was awarded the national IAAE Chapter Merit Award for her work on behalf of the Chapter. At the national level, Gwen served as an Ex-Officio Director of the IAAE Board of Directors in 2022, representing the Chapter Leaders Council. In 2023, she served on the IAAE Member Engagement Committee. Since 2024, she has served on the IAAE Major American Trade Show Organizers (MATSO) Council. Gwen was recently recognized with the IAAE Cathy Breden Woman of Achievement Award. Gwen holds an BBA and MBA from the University of Georgia, a certification in exhibition management, and has substantial executive-level event management, communications, marketing and association experience through various organizations.



Tara Brashear is a Sales Manager at Shepard. Based in Atlanta, she's been with the company since 2021. Tara started her career in 1986 at Atlanta's Ritz-Carlton, Buckhead (now The Whitley Hotel). Prior to joining Shepard Tara spent 14 years with Freeman, as a Client Solutions Manager, but like many in the industry, her role was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Deb Ferbrache, CEM After spending a significant portion of her career on the supplier side with a general contractor, Deb transitioned to a meeting planner role following the COVID-19 pandemic—and hasn't looked back since. She now serves as Event and Exhibitions Manager at NürnbergMesse North America, where she oversees the company's largest U.S. event, embedded world North America. This leading trade show and conference focuses on the latest innovations in embedded systems, IoT technologies, and industrial automation, bringing together industry professionals, developers, and thought leaders from around the globe.



Katherine Puckett is the Director of Sales at The Classic Center in Athens, Georgia, bringing over 15 years of experience in the event and hospitality industry. A proud University of Georgia graduate with a degree in Interior Design, she blends creativity and strategy to lead a high-performing sales team and attract a wide variety of events, from conventions, conferences and tradeshows to social and community gatherings.

As a strategic leader, Katherine develops innovative sales initiatives, mentors her team toward shared goals, and fosters a culture of collaboration and service. She balances big-picture vision with hands-on leadership to ensure consistent results and exceptional client experiences. Through Katherine's leadership and sales strategies, she is committed to driving economic impact for the city of Athens through purposeful event development and strong industry partnerships.

Elyse Worthey-Harris is a seasoned professional in the hospitality and tourism industry with over a decade of experience. Currently serving as the Director of Sales at Visit Athens, GA, Elyse excels in developing and executing sales strategies that drive economic impact and enhance visitor experiences. Her expertise spans client relationship management, team leadership, and event planning, making her a key player in promoting Athens as a premier destination for meetings, conventions, and sports events. Elyse holds a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from the University of Georgia, where she graduated magna cum laude, and is actively involved in professional organizations like the Georgia Society for Association Executives and the Professional Convention Management Association.



"Greener Events: Driving Sustainability in the Meetings and Exhibitions Industry" **Denise Young, Athens-Clarke County Economic Development Department**

Sustainability is no longer a trend—it's an essential part of how modern events must be planned and executed. This dynamic session will explore practical strategies for reducing environmental impact while maintaining attendee engagement and event success. From sustainable sourcing and waste reduction to energy efficiency and carbon footprint tracking, we'll examine how to integrate green practices into every stage of event planning. Attendees will gain actionable insights and tools to help their organizations meet both attendee expectations and corporate sustainability goals. Join us as we reimagine events through the lens of environmental responsibility, collaboration, and innovation.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify key environmental challenges and sustainability trends impacting the events industry.
- Apply practical, cost-effective strategies to reduce waste, conserve energy, and make responsible material choices.
- Evaluate tools and metrics to measure and communicate the environmental impact of events.
- Develop an actionable sustainability checklist tailored for exhibitions, conferences, and meetings.
- Engage stakeholders—including venues, vendors, and attendees—in supporting green initiatives.



Denise Young joined the Recycling Division from the Athens-Clarke County Economic Development Department where she worked with local businesses and helped attract new business to Athens. Denise is passionate about reducing our waste in Athens and is committed to help our businesses do their part in helping us reach our waste reduction goals. Denise graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in Chemistry. She is on the Georgia Recycling Coalition Board of Directors and is a TRUE Certified Advisor.



"Clarity-Driven Communication: How to Communicate with Anyone"
Debbie Peterson, CSP, Getting to Clarity, Keynote Speaker, Impact Strategist, Author

Unlock the power of communication with this interactive program designed for meeting professionals. We'll tackle common communication barriers, explore the habits of top communicators, and give you practical strategies to strengthen relationships and create a more collaborative environment. Discover how to enhance connection, credibility, and influence with clients, vendors, and stakeholders while learning tools to communicate with anyone.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize and overcome common communication challenges that meeting professionals face when coordinating with clients, vendors, and team members to ensure seamless event execution.
- Implement proven habits of top-performing communicators to strengthen professional relationships, streamline planning processes, and enhance team collaboration.
- Increase clarity, credibility, and influence through practical, clarity-driven communication tools that help meeting pros manage expectations, negotiate effectively, and deliver exceptional client experiences.



Debbie Peterson, CSP is a dynamic speaker and consultant who helps her audiences and clients harness the power of their thoughts to make an exponential impact in their careers, businesses, and lives. Through her speaking and consulting business, Debbie travels the country, empowering professionals with the tools and strategies to go all in on who they are, what they do, and how they consistently show up to level up in their leadership and life! As a result of Debbie's programming, participants consistently report being more focused, having increased momentum, and experiencing the motivation to get into action. Debbie is an accomplished author with her book *Clarity: How Smart Professionals Create Career Success on Their Terms* and hosts the *Getting to Clarity Podcast*. She is also a professional member of the National Speakers Association and proudly earned the Certified Speaking Professional Designation in 2023, an achievement earned by 17% of professional speakers worldwide. When she's not empowering others to make a bigger impact on what matters most, Debbie can be found chasing sunshine from Pennsylvania to Florida each year with her husband, Tom.

"Rooted in Community: Connecting Hospitality Education with Industry Impact"
Dr. John Salazar, PhD, CHE, Coordinator, University of Georgia Hospitality
Food Industry Management Major/Associate Professor

This session explores how the University of Georgia's Hospitality and Food Industry Management program builds meaningful bridges between education and the local hospitality industry. Through strategic internship placements at the UGA Georgia Center for Continuing Education & Hotel, UGA Botanical Gardens, UGA Georgia Athletic Hospitality, and the Athens Classic Center, students gain immersive, real-world event management experience while contributing to the region's service excellence. The presentation will also highlight key research partners and projects which help advance the region and state's interests in hospitality and event management. Attendees will gain insights into how academic-industry partnerships can enhance student learning, support workforce development, and inform operational improvements. Join us to discover how hospitality education can thrive through intentional community engagement and data-driven collaboration.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify effective strategies for integrating academic programs with local hospitality industry partners to enhance student learning through immersive, real-world experiences.
- Analyze the impact of strategic internship placements and research collaborations on workforce development, service excellence, and regional economic growth in the hospitality and event management sectors.
- Explore how data-driven, community-engaged approaches to hospitality education can inform operational improvements and strengthen the connection between higher education and industry needs.

Dr. John Salazar, PhD, CHE is the Coordinator of the University of Georgia Hospitality and Food Industry Management Major and an Associate Professor. Dr. Salazar's research focuses on hospitality human resource management, destination management and marketing, and festival and event management. He has conducted research for companies such as Marriott Hotels and Resorts, Sea Pines Resort, Point Clear Holdings Hotels and Resorts, Radisson Hotels, Country Club of Detroit, and Philadelphia Country Club.



"Cash In, Cut Costs: Winning Revenue Tactics for Your Expo and Sponsorship Programs"
Michelle Mobley, Manager, Exhibits and Sponsorship, American Society of Landscape Architects
Rich Vallaster, CEM, DES, Senior Director of Industry Relations, Personify

Discover innovative ideas to enhance sponsorship revenue, practical methods to cut costs without sacrificing quality, and gain access to a powerful cheat sheet packed with actionable tips you can implement immediately and over the long term. Elevate your event's profitability and efficiency—don't miss this opportunity to take your EXPO and sponsorship program to new heights and increase financial performance!

Learning Objectives:

- Identify key strategies to enhance sponsorship revenue and boost the overall financial performance of your EXPO.
- Immediately equip you with effective cost-reduction techniques that maintain or improve the quality of the show experience.
- Utilize a practical cheat sheet of actionable tips for immediate and long-term improvement, as well as receive a cost/opportunity template to help audit sponsorship programs.

Michelle Mobley is a seasoned professional with 25+ years of experience in the business event industry, specializing in conference marketing, experiential design, sponsorship and exhibit revenue growth, and sponsorship activations. Successfully guided numerous organizations in optimizing their event budgets while maximizing revenue streams. I currently work at ASLA to grow their expo and sponsorship program, build relationships with exhibitors through strategic marketing, and create revenue opportunities.



Rich Vallaster, CEM, DES is the Dir. of Marketing & the Trade Show Work at A2Z Events. Rich has worked on some of the biggest and most well-known tradeshow and conferences. He is the Chair of the CEIR Research Council, CEM commission and actively teaches in the CEM program. Rich's expertise has been recognized in leading publications, including the NYTimes, Associations Now, Trade Show Exec, Skift Meetings, Meetings Today, Convene, and TSNN. He is a regular speaker at events such as ASAE, and Expo! Expo!, PCMA, and others, engaging with associations and event organizers. Visit <https://richvallaster.com>

"From Scenarios to Strategies: Crafting Event Success with AI"
Rich Vallaster, CEM, DES, Senior Director of Industry Relations, Personify

AI is rapidly advancing and making a significant impact on businesses and society. Despite this potential, the events industry has been slow to embrace AI due to various challenges, such as the sheer number of available AI tools, limited staff, and the demanding nature of the profession. It's time to go from theory to action. This learning lab will demonstrate the best-in-class tools (many at low or no cost) specifically tailored to empower event professionals to enhance all aspects of their event organization, data analysis, contracting, conference planning, marketing, and more. Attendees will work with sample event data and documents, facilitating immediate hands-on learning. The final exercise will be a team-based competition, a collaborative challenge to test the various tools.

Learning Objectives:

- Gain practical knowledge and hands-on experience with publicly available AI tools, including event-specific toolsets enabling you to seamlessly integrate AI into your event planning, operations, marketing, and analytics.
 - Equip yourself with actionable insights and skills to build better queries, optimize your prompts, and achieve better results to increase the value of AI tools.
 - Put theory into practice through a moderated exercise and collaborate with your fellow event professionals to brainstorm ideas for practical AI applications in critical areas of event planning and execution.
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