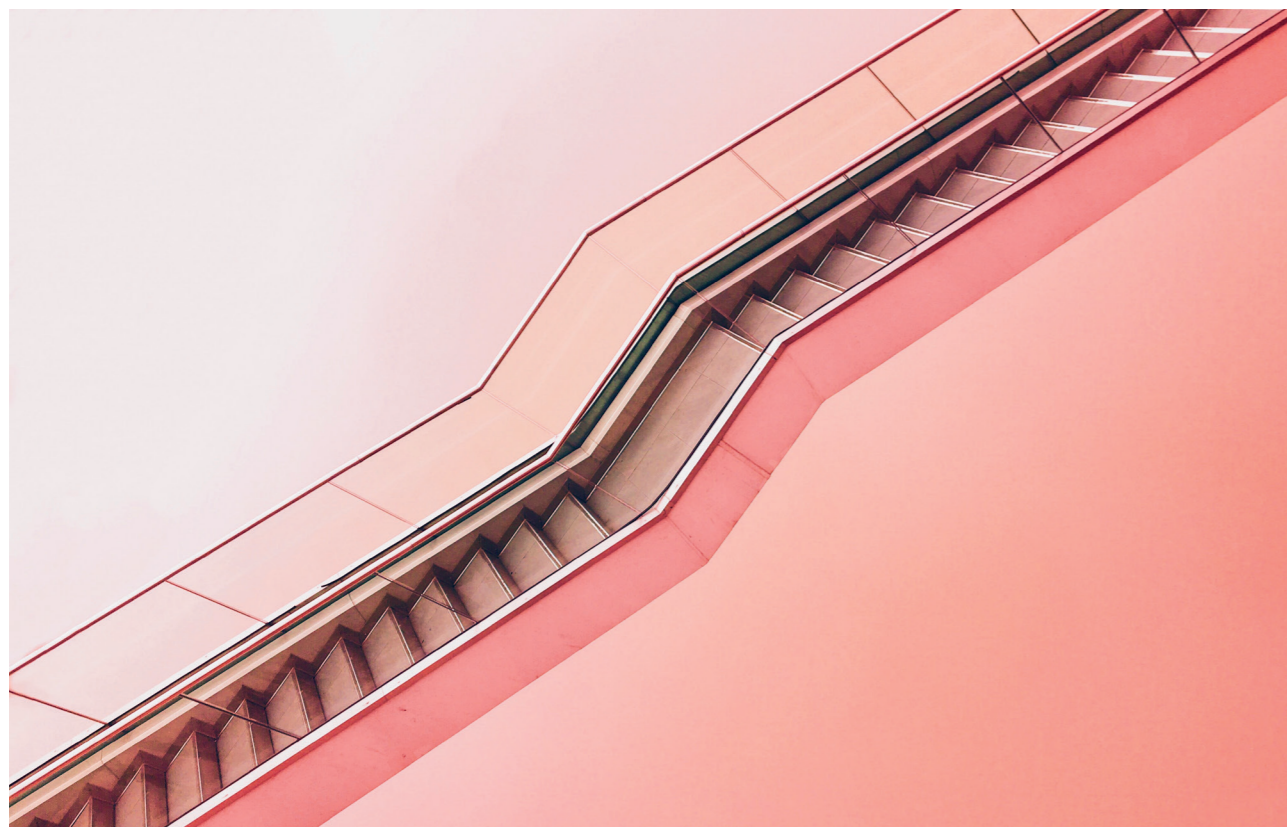


Centres and Association Partnerships in Washington DC

Both centres and event organizers have a shared stake in a successful outcome for any given event since whatever satisfies attendees is the best guarantee for future participation. Working together – using a centre’s unique knowledge of what works best in their facilities combined with the organizers in-depth understanding of what their delegates most want and need – is the best way to achieve this, but requires a commitment by both parties to cooperation and keeping an open mind to a range of possibilities.

Words Greg O'Dell, President and CEO, Walter E. Washington Convention Center and Events DC



I can best illustrate this via a specific example drawn from our own experiences at Events DC, which hosts hundreds of events annually in its venues, including the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. Over the years, the Center has established itself as a strong partner and resource for associations looking to increase attendance and enhance the overall event experience in Washington, DC – all while building innovative revenue opportunities.

ENHANCING THE ATTENDEE EXPERIENCE IN DC

The Center has partnered with the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington (RAMW) since 2012. RAMW uses our annual investment to enhance its local marketing spending and to develop select national promotions showcasing District restaurants and the District’s growing culinary experiences to national media, entrepreneurs and event organizers.

RAMW creates customized marketing campaigns for citywide and major Center events and promotes these events to its member restaurants, encouraging them to offer event-related discounts, incentive and welcoming opportunities. This gives event patrons a wider selection of restaurant options. This is a member benefit for RAMW members, driving thousands of new patrons looking for memorable dining experiences to restaurants throughout the city each week. The promotions particularly benefit newer, smaller restaurants with limited promotional budgets.

RAMW also provides the Center with enhanced client hospitality opportunities during quarterly Chef’s Table food showcase events.

The Center hosts RAMW’s annual awards gala to showcase our venue and food offerings to the restaurant community; Events DC is designated as the gala’s primary sponsor.

RAMW’s promotion of the District as a significant culinary destination creates a unique value proposition for leisure, business and

convention travelers, as well as increasing the city’s appeal to tour operators, business developers and event organizers. It also significantly expands its member restaurants’ customer base at no additional marketing cost to its members through advance alerts of the convention business opportunities, creating a significant and valuable member benefit.

GROWING THE AUTO SHOW’S IMPACT IN DC

With the Center growing its citywide convention and trade show business to fill hotels’ mid-winter need periods, it had become increasingly challenging to host a building-wide event over consistent dates during the winter season. This was the case until the Center repositioned the Washington Area New Car Dealer Association’s (WANADA) Washington Auto Show dates for early 2012, repositioning the show dates from the December-January dates it had held since 1983 to early February.

Prior to the partnership, the Auto Show was perceived strictly as a gate show without consistent or reliable tracking of its impact on hotel room nights or restaurant visits. Additionally, the Auto Show faced challenges to grow the auto manufacturers’ participation without a consistent show schedule that accommodated the transfer of major exhibits around established major United States auto show dates.

The partnership has resulted in the following changes to the basic Auto Show package:

- An enhanced pre-show program, in cooperation with the Society of Automotive Engineers, that present technical product development and legislative tracks for dealers, as well as for Congressional and federal government attendees looking to meet with manufacturers’ representatives.
- An expanded preview night program featuring luxury and lifestyle vehicles geared towards high-end buyers.

➤ The Auto Show has engaged a third-party housing vendor to coordinate and manage all show-related lodging, credibly establishing the Auto Show’s value to the local hotel community.

For its part WANADA has assisted the Center to refine its Auto Show crowd management program to allow 100% screening of all bags brought into the facility through three main show entrances; significantly improve queue management, so that guests may quickly be brought into the building; improve ticket sales processing through enabled card readers and scanners with the majority of ticket sales driven online rather than on-site.

These optimizations have contributed to the growth of the Auto Show, which brings thousands of regional guests downtown and generates significant and consistent operating revenue for the Convention Center. Simultaneously, the Auto Show demonstrates its benefits to the local hospitality community and increase sits value to buyers in new markets and member dealers with the new show programs.

With these and other event and marketing partnerships with local organizations, the Center builds revenue opportunities by enhancing the overall event experience, creating a successful and sustainable model for the future.

In addition to his role as AIPC Board Member, Greg O’Dell is President and CEO at Walter E. Washington Convention Center and Events DC. AIPC, the International Association of Convention Centres, represents a global network of over 180 leading centres in 57 countries with the active involvement of more than 900 management-level professionals worldwide.
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