



## **Destination matters when selecting an event venue**

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### **A Q&A with Niagara Falls Business Events**

You can book the largest venue with the most impressive specs, but if its location is lacking, your event may not draw the attendance it deserves.

“As a venue, we can offer a fantastic facility that supports large conventions and events with great service and exceptional food and beverage, but at the end of the day it's the destination that brings everything to life,” says Jeff Dixon, Vice President of Sales at Scotiabank Convention Centre and Niagara Falls Business Events.

Without a doubt, a venue's location matters. For more insight, we spoke with Paula Racher, Account Director with Niagara Falls Business Events...

#### **Why is a venue's location an important consideration when planning an event?**

Conference and event planners want a strong attendance for many reasons, and having an attractive destination certainly helps with that. Of course, a strong attendance also supports exhibitors who will, in turn, be more successful and, therefore, more inclined to continue booking with the event year after year. That feeds into everyone's bottom line, so it's all very circular. Also, conferences tend to gravitate to the same scheduled events year after year. It's beneficial to talk with someone like myself who can suggest local hotspots and activities that will breathe new life into a conference program. It's those unique destination experiences that add value to an event.

#### **Being in Niagara Falls, you can probably attest to the “value” of a destination...**

Absolutely. The Falls are a huge attraction; if they weren't there, we'd be just another city along the highway. I think our success, however, has come down to the fact that we not only use the Falls as a backdrop, but we've expanded on this location with restaurants, hotels, attractions,

and more. We're not just a town with a natural wonder, we're a full-service destination that offers a lot of activities that can help create a well-rounded conference program.

**How do you determine what destination venues / attractions fit best with individual groups?**

Planners are ultimately the experts on their conferences, so it's very important that we work with them to find out their group's demographics, their history, and what types of events have been successful for them in the past. We may also suggest a site inspection when they're in the process of selecting a venue and take that opportunity to sit down with them and pick up additional information. Personally, I find meeting with them in person and brainstorming potential Niagara Falls venues and experiences really helps to enrich their programs.

**Are there any attractions or venues that don't typically work for groups?**

Not really, but then the places we recommend are all members of Niagara Falls Tourism's Business Events program, so they're all meeting and event focused to begin with. The only time a place or activity might not work well for a group is if it's consumer-oriented and not really set- up to handle a crowd. What I mean by that is they could be very skilled in working with visitors who come in off the street in small numbers but have difficulty taking care of larger conference groups.

**It must be a challenge staying up to date on everything that's going on ...**

It is, but that's why it's important that the Niagara Falls Business Events team make the effort to go out and learn what's available in Niagara Falls and its surrounding communities so we can bring fresh ideas to the planning table. We even try to have monthly sales meetings at each of our member locations so we have all the answers for planners when they come to visit.

That said, it can be hard to stay updated because operators might be too busy on a renovation or upgrade to inform us as to what they're doing. That's why we're always communicating, reading the newspapers, and scanning the websites to make sure we're as up to date as possible on what Niagara Falls can offer to potential visitors.

Paula Racher and Jeff Dixon are with Scotiabank Convention Centre and Niagara Falls Business Events. For more, visit [www.fallsconventions.com](http://www.fallsconventions.com) and [www.fallsm meetings.com](http://www.fallsm meetings.com).

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