

SUSTAINABLE  
EVENTS

MEETING  
TECHNOLOGY

PROFESSIONAL  
AFFILIATIONS

A COASTAL COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION PUBLICATION

APRIL 2019 VOL. 37 NO. 4 \$12.00

# CORPORATE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

THE MAGAZINE FOR GLOBAL MEETING AND INCENTIVE TRAVEL PLANNERS

## CVB *Leaders*

Remarkable Women  
Share Their Insights  
and Wisdom



ARMENTA



BLOUNT-CANAVAN



CALVERT



COKER GRAHAM



GAST



MATEJ



RATCLIFFE



SACCO



SHERIDAN



WESTERGARD



WINCHESTER



ZALDUA



Food &  
Beverage  
Trends

**CLICK HERE TO  
DOWNLOAD/VIEW  
TABLET VERSION**

Destinations

Canada & Miami

Global Meetings

Attractive Locations From  
Around the World

## CVB Leaders Remarkable Women Share Insights and Wisdom on Leading a CVB

By Christine Loomis

### Tammy Blount-Canavan, FCDME

President & CEO, Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau



An early career in hotel sales and operations gave Tammy Blount-Canavan the foundation to succeed in the industry she's been part of for 30 years.

"I started in hotel sales and operations and then was recruited into the CVB arena, where I started in an entry-level position and worked my way around different departments and levels of responsibility. It was a good path in that I had an excellent understanding of our primary stakeholders before venturing into the CVB world, and I have walked in the shoes of nearly all the team members I now ask [them] to walk in themselves."

The way she sees challenges in her career says a lot about her. "The

primary challenges were probably that there are more opportunities to do meaningful, cool things than there is time to do them all properly."

Like others, she's faced some "resistance" as a woman in the industry, but that has done little to diminish her and perhaps even made her stronger and more resilient. "Certainly there are some circles that are male dominant and female resistant," she says, "but those circles have reduced considerably over the span of my career. At first I asked for help to open conversations from established men in those circles. Now that I'm more established myself, I feel quite comfortable bringing attention to such situations. At that point, if they're not remedied or interested in my contributions, I simply make them elsewhere."

In terms of her own success, Blount-Canavan thinks she owes it primarily to three critical traits: "Being a good listener, empathy and the power of persuasion."

She sees differences in how men and women may lead a DMO, but says good leadership isn't about gender. "I think women and men are very different, but I don't think leadership styles are gender specific. We all want to operate in an environment of respect regardless of gender, sexual

orientation, race or other factors that people sometimes think are more differentiating than they truly are."

Her advice to the young women who may eventually walk in her shoes is straightforward: "Be patient, persistent, understanding and claim mentors. Even the most powerful of people will often take time to help someone who respectfully asks for it."

A native of Vancouver, British Columbia, Blount-Canavan has been president and CEO of the Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau for the past seven years. She served on the executive committee of Destinations International, and in 2017 became the fifth woman in 100 years to become Destinations International's chair.

She has been recognized as one of the 25 Most Influential People in the meetings industry and as one of the Top-25 Most Influential Women in the industry. In 2015, she was named CEO of the Year. Her background includes the executive leadership position as CEO of the Tacoma Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau, where she was also the architect and inaugural chair of the Washington Tourism Alliance. Additionally, she was on the leadership team of Tourism Vancouver for more than a decade.

Corporate & Incentive Travel magazine is proud to recognize and honor some of the amazing women who lead CVBs across the country. These 12 women are highly successful in the tourism industry and highly valued as outstanding members of their communities. Congratulations to all!

### Tania Armenta

President & CEO, Visit Albuquerque



Tania Armenta's road to the CVB began in hospitality while still a student at the University of Nebraska.

"I worked in the hotel industry throughout college, which gave me a great introduction to the hospitality industry. Then, early in my career, I decided to move back to my home state of New Mexico. I had a background in marketing and public relations and was just about to go to work for an agency when someone mentioned that the Albuquerque CVB was looking to create a new public relations division. I had no idea what a CVB was, but I loved the concept of getting PR experience while promoting my home state. I thought I'd be here two or three years, but I fell in love with the industry, our organization, mission and the team."

It's creating successful teams that Armenta lists as one of her most significant accomplishments and a measure of her success. "I am very proud of the team we've assembled here. It's a combination of veterans and new industry professionals. Their determination is undeniable, and Albuquerque and our organization are prospering due to their passion and perseverance."

Like other jobs, she says this one comes with some challenges. "The DMO world is one of many, many stakeholders and I had to learn early on not to let the

sometimes negative voices and opinions of the minority influence me too much. To stay in this industry, you definitely need resiliency and thick skin. Many of our stakeholders benefit directly from our work, so at times the lines are blurred between what is good for them and what is good for the destination."

Armenta doesn't see her gender as a critical factor in her career. "I've had moments where I've felt that I was not being taken as seriously as the men in the room. I think it was a combination of being female and typically the youngest in the room as well. However, I have also been fortunate to have some amazing and generous male mentors who believed in me and opened doors for me."

While she thinks women in leadership may more readily bring inclusivity to the table, she says the core traits of leadership are the same for men and women.

"I think the best leaders, regardless of gender, know their audience, speak the kind truth, are persuasive, adaptable, team-oriented and have tremendous grit and strength," Armenta says. "At Visit Albuquerque, we have a core set of values that we strive to exhibit and share each day."

To young women she offers this advice: "Believe in yourself, identify great mentors, stay focused and prioritize work to make the greatest impact."

Armenta has been with Visit Albuquerque for 20 years and has led the organization for the past three. She also serves on the board of U.S. Travel Association's Destinations Council, the Destinations International DMAP Board and the Jennifer Riordan Foundation Advisory Board, and she chairs the New Mexico Hospitality Association.

In 2012 she was named Tourism Professional of the Year in New Mexico and is a former recipient of the 40 Under Forty awards by Albuquerque Business First. She has a BA in journalism and mass communication with an emphasis in advertising and public relations and a minor in Spanish from the University of Nebraska.