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**Catch Des Moines Customer Advisory Board**

Catch Des Moines via Zoom

Monday, February 7, 2022 | 2:00 p.m.

**MINUTES**

1. Welcome and Introduction
   1. Attendees: Lauren Swanson, National Pork Producers Council; Scott Wunn, National Speech and Debate Association; Bel Hanson, International Society for Computational Biology; David Tharp, International Association for Food Protection; Dan Cataldi, Iowa Soccer Association; Valerie Smith, United Church of Christ; Mary Byrne, Unity Point Health
2. Des Moines Update
   1. Catch Des Moines is seeing higher than projected occupancy for the year.
   2. Sports and Agriculture markets have continued to meet and keep Greater Des Moines active.
   3. Upcoming Events:
      1. World Pork Expo, Principal Charity Classic, State Games of America, Farm Progress Show, NAIA Men’s Volleyball Championship, All Iowa Attack Basketball Tournaments, USA Gymnastics Championship, IRONMAN North American Championship, American Association of Meat Processors Annual Convention, American Meat Science Association Reciprocal Meat Conference, American Quilters Society AQS QuiltWeek, and more in the pipeline.
   4. New Development:
      1. [MidAmerican Energy Company RecPlex](https://www.therecplex.com/)
3. 2022 Update- Around the Room
   1. International Society for Computational Biology: ~60-75% of members are university based, so they have travel restrictions of some sort. They are expecting meetings to be about ~50% of pre-COVID levels.
   2. United Church of Christ: This membership is a little more apprehensive about meeting in person, made up of a higher age demographic. Overall, staff is allowed to travel on a case-by-case basis for business, but most of them have traveled for leisure.
   3. International Association for Food Protection: Of their 25-person board, 22 will meet in person, the other three are under travel restrictions still (Canada, Netherlands, FDA). Last year they met with a hybrid structure, this year their meeting will be fully in person. If they don’t attend and are interested in the content, everything will be recorded and available for purchase. They believe there is an added level of interaction that happens at in-person meetings that is too valuable to miss out on. Staff is travelling for meetings and conventions.
   4. National Speech and Debate Association: So far, all major high school national events have remained virtual. Some local events have been able to meet in person. This year three of five major national events have switched to virtual. For in-person meetings they will be mandating vaccinations and masks. There will be some online components offered as supplemental competition, but per their survey ~80% of their base wants to be in-person.
   5. National Pork Producers Council: They are in the process of planning a ~700-person meeting, there will be no mandates and restrictions and they don’t anticipate much masking aside from some staff. This audience is less concerned about COVID. They are also planning World Pork Expo and they expect slightly higher numbers than 2021 and hope to get back some of their international exhibitors. There will be no mandates or restrictions there either. Some attendees are pressing hard for more meetings, and some refuse to meet if the venue/location mandates vaccines.
   6. Unity Point Health: As a healthcare organization, Unity Point has not been meeting in person since the start of the pandemic. They have space on hold for a meeting this spring that would typically serve ~1,700 people, but this will likely change to a smaller number of attendees, or even just leadership. Their board will meet in Chicago in July, making this their first in-person board meeting since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are not under a formal travel ban but are only doing critical business travel.
   7. Iowa Soccer Association: Iowa Soccer is currently hosting events under a mask recommendation not requirement. Recently they attended the United Soccer Coaches Association in Kansas City with ~8,000 attendees. Vendors were slightly down from pre-COVID years. US Soccer annual meeting was supposed to go fully virtual, but they got a lot of pushback to meet in person since many had just attended this convention, and there is a critical voting component to the meeting. This meeting will now be in-person, with a virtual election (attendees will vote from their hotel rooms). They are requiring all attendees to be vaccinated and have a negative COVID test within 24 hours of the event.
4. Should Catch Des Moines plan to move forward with “business as usual” in 2022?
   1. Lauren Swanson: Her clients have had no hesitation with meeting, so moving forward is exactly what they need.
   2. Valerie Smith: Wants to move forward more aggressively but her membership is older. There is discussion to go hybrid in June, but worried that going hybrid will discourage people from coming in-person, and they need the in-person elements to fulfill their contracts. Some travel budgets are being cut with the idea more things will stay virtual, so that is something for planners to consider as they keep going. They did a virtual event and ended up hiring a production company and needing to extend the event and account for time zones. In-person eliminates some of those concerns.
5. Do virtual meetings draw less participation than in-person?
   1. Bel Hanson: Because they have only been virtual, they have had great participation. Virtual platforms give more equity to an international association to reach lower income countries where travel may not be as feasible.
   2. David Tharp: Has not seen an increase in participation outside of North America even though he is also part of an international organization, and A/V costs for a hybrid meeting are three times as much as A/V for an in-person event.
6. CVB Marketing and Resources
   1. Planner’s Guide- is this something planners use? If so, is it used for sourcing or once the event is booked?
      1. Valerie Smith: Uses planners guide more for service providers after the city has already been selected. Prefers a paper guide.
      2. Mary Byrne: Loves the Catch Planners’ Guide and loves that it is online.
      3. Bel Hanson: If it isn’t digital they won’t use it – they place heavy importance on carbon footprint and prefer not to have printed items. They use ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association) guidelines for trimming down their list of cities to send RFPs and then consult a planners’ guide. The planners’ guide is then used for more servicing aspects.
   2. Catch Des Moines’ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council – what is important to planners as they consider a city, or resources available within that city?
      1. Bel Hanson: They will not use a convention center if there is not at least on gender-neutral bathroom or a bathroom that can be converted to gender-neutral for the event.
      2. Scott Wunn: Will not book if there are not gender-neutral bathrooms. It is also important to see diversity in the vendor lists provided by venues and CVBs, they want to see diversity in their 3rd party contract options.
      3. Valerie Smith: They have a clause about labor strikes and will not cross picket lines, so they look at union contract dates when sourcing sites.