



Case study: The Las Vegas super-incentive for 3,000 people

29 April 2020 by Mark Williams

Flight Centre's immense Global Gathering rewarded top-performing employees from around the world.



Every year, more than 20,000 Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) employees from around the world go all-out to secure their spot at the Global Gathering. Held in a different city each time, it is a huge incentive event with education, entertainment and awards taking place in an exciting destination.

For 2019, 3,000 travel professionals from the retail, wholesale and corporate sectors attended the event in Las Vegas where they would be recognised for their achievement during the past year.

The Global Gathering aims to provide informative sessions, celebrate achievements, reward innovation and provide benchmarks for best practice, and reinforce the company's philosophy, all while promoting the host destination.

The celebrations were split into Flight Fest (the welcome night), Global Gathering (conference), Gala Awards Dinner and After Party.

Everything about the event is kept under wraps until the very last minute, so employees who make it there are often completely surprised by the content.

Star-studded entertainment

Held at the MGM Grand, Las Vegas, from 12-14 July, the theme was 'Choose Global – raise your odds'. The phrase 'raise your odds' referenced the gambling aspect of the destination, as well as being a call to action for employees: 'What are you going to do to make sure you're there?'.



The design style for event branding was pop art. There were three main areas this year; poolside in sunny 43°C heat, a theatre (that Aerosmith had recently performed in) and a pillarless ballroom.

There were also 10 sponsor activations and plenty of giveaways, including custom-designed branded board shorts – cievevents worked very closely with the sponsors on their activations and giveaways to make sure they were original and fitted with the theme, while providing ROI.

At Flight Fest, the poolside welcome event, everyone enjoyed glamorous bars, cash-grab machines, Elvis in a chapel, slushies, branded cocktails, a silent disco and more. All while American DJ Diplo played music to accompany the evening. And he wasn't the only special guest, with actor Mark Wahlberg interviewed on stage, comedian Iliza Schlesinger MC-ing and DJ Calvin Harris providing tunes for the after-party.

Many attendees also volunteered at Three Square, an organisation in Nevada that helps feed local children, and spent some time filling 3,000 backpacks with food supplies. This year, 80 top-performing employees from Asia secured their spot at Global Gathering, which generated a high level of engagement and camaraderie among them regionally.



Fast turnaround

A big challenge of managing the Flight Centre Global Gathering is that it is a wholly-managed event for 3,000 people. This includes the management of flights, transfers, accommodation, meals, entertainment, communications and delegate items for everyone.

The event is an incentive, with the qualification period ending on 30 June and the group travels less than two weeks later. It is normal for approximately half the group to register within one to two weeks of the event (and many change their travel requirements due to private extensions). And so, management of flights, accommodation, transfers and communications requires a very focused and tight turnaround.

Other challenges for events of this size are the capacity of planes (there is often a need to charter extra aircraft) and availability of twin share rooms (events can use up to 12 hotels). The hotels need to manage such significant numbers checking in and out on the same day and often have to build remote check-in locations to manage the capacity.

If any of the function venues are off-site, the organisers need to manage the concurrent movement of 80 coaches, which, depending on the venues and location, can be challenging. Weather issues can also cause extensive flight cancellations but in Las Vegas events had effective plans in place and a team focused on managing these.



End-to-end execution

“The desire to be a part of this Global Gathering community is what motivates our people to overachieve and be placed for a spot at our biggest incentive event year after year,” said Kerry-Anne Walker, financial analyst at Flight Centre Travel Group.

“Besides the fun, they make meaningful connections at the event and it provides great opportunities for employees to learn more about the various Flight Centre brands. The camaraderie and blazing spirit we saw over the course of the 2019 event makes a whole year’s planning all worth it.

“From concept development to event logistics, communications and sponsor support, events managed the entire end-to-end event experience of all 3,000 delegates. It is no

mean feat to organise such a large-scale event with delegates coming from all corners of the world. Flights and hotel accommodation alone were very complex to handle.”

Natalie Simmons, global general manager at cievents added: “Our talented team worked hard on a complete end-to-end service for Las Vegas 2019. The all-star line-up and event execution helped secure cievents a near-perfect scorecard, with 95.5% of respondents highly rating the overall event experience.”



FACT FILE

What: Flight Centre's Global Gathering 2019

With: cievents

Who: 3,000 Flight Centre employees

Where: Las Vegas, Nevada

When: 12-14 July 2019

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