



# 'AHEAD OF THE CURVE ON THE COOLNESS FACTOR'

TED — *Long Beach, Calif.*

▼

If you're among the millions of people who watch TEDTalks on YouTube, you've most likely seen the stage at the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center. That's where some of the world's most celebrated thinkers have stood to present their 18-minute talks since 2009, when the annual TED conference moved to Long Beach from Monterey, Calif.

But the conference — TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, and Design — has brought more than the Internet

spotlight to the convention center, said Steve Goodling, president and CEO of the Long Beach CVB. Since design thinking is a core TED value, the way that conference organizers "use physical space for meetings and for conveying information

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## The way TED's organizers "use physical space for meetings and for conveying information is very creative."

is very creative," he said. As a result, Long Beach has adopted several of TED's ideas to make its venue offerings more attractive to a greater variety of groups.

TED participants, who must apply to attend, come as much to talk to each other as to listen to presentations. Conference organizers bring in living-room-style furniture — picture big, round sofas and comfy chairs — to create a variety of spaces that support conversation and dialogue between attendees.

"We loved the concept of mini-meeting spots," Goodling said, and followed in TED's footsteps by rethinking the use of space in the convention center's Promenade, a long, light-filled area that connects meeting rooms. The Promenade was beautiful, Goodling said, but had all the coziness of an airline terminal. Now it's furnished with sofas, tables, chairs, and a line of palm trees, dividing the space into a series of intimate conversation areas. The seating areas also are equipped to serve as recharging stations for the smartphones and other devices that attendees may be using.

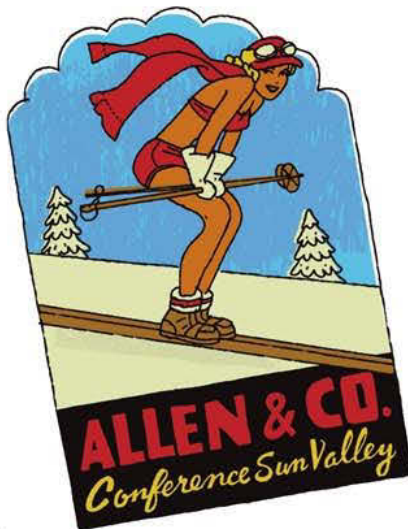
TED also ramps up the glamour for its celebrity-studded dinners and receptions, using lights, draping, and color to drop the ceiling, hide the rows of seats, and otherwise transform the center's 13,500-seat Arena into what Goodling calls an edgy "loft-style" environment. A proposal for funding that would permanently add the equipment — including a truss, curtains, and a stage-lighting system — that would allow other groups to more easily create similarly sophisticated effects is expected to be approved by the city.

"What I am hearing from associations and corporations is a desire to create a more theatrical and 'wow!' experience," Goodling said. And TED, he added, "is definitely ahead of the curve on the coolness factor." ■

— Barbara Palmer

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Each summer, following the Fourth of July, approximately 500 media and tech titans and their families — including, in years past, marquee names such as Bill Gates, Rupert Murdoch, Michael Eisner, and Mark Zuckerberg — descend on Idaho's Sun Valley Resort for what's become known as "summer camp for moguls."

The conference, which next July will turn 30, is organized by the boutique but heavyweight New York City investment bank Allen & Co., which is so private it doesn't even have a

## 'SUMMER CAMP FOR MOGULS'

### The Allen & Company Sun Valley Conference — *Sun Valley, Idaho*

website. And the weeklong meeting, which traditionally has been a place where big deals and mergers are hammered out, is closed except in the most perfunctory way to the media. As a result, very little is known about what goes on during the conference, except to the participants themselves.

What is clear is that Sun Valley itself is integral to the conference's summer-camp ambiance. "I think the destination is one of the reasons they come here," Jack Sibbach, Sun Valley Resort's director of marketing and PR, said in a recent interview with *Convene*. "They could stay in New York City, they could be all over the country and have big convention centers. But with the