

Upper Midwest Convention & Visitors Bureaus 2017 Fall Conference Speaker Bios

Mark Lynch - As Tempest's Chief Business Development Officer, Mark has more than 20 years of experience working in destination marketing and events both on the meetings/event side and the DMO side. His background experience and constant communication with iDSS users inspires him to continually evolve the product and help iDSS users to work efficiently and effectively.

Jack Johnson, Chief Advocacy Officer, manages the overall public policy operations at Destinations International including member advocacy education and training, development of destination tools and best practices, coalition work with peer organizations, industry research and related public affairs activities. Johnson brings unrivaled experience developing innovative strategies, policy solutions and civic consensus for government, not-for-profits and small businesses.

During his previous tenure with Choose Chicago, Johnson oversaw the public policy, research, membership and strategic partnership efforts. He played a leading role in the extensive reforms of the McCormick Place Convention Center and the Chicago Convention & Tourism Bureau, resulting in a new convention center operating model with both a travel industry and a citywide civic perspective. Johnson was integrally involved in the merger of the Chicago Convention & Tourism Bureau and the Chicago Office of Tourism, resulting in maximizing their resources, unifying the message and embedding the organization into the city's economic development strategy. In addition, in his final year at Choose Chicago, Johnson also served as Choose Chicago's Chief Administrative Officer.

Heather Hansen O'Neill is an award-winning speaker and author presenting to organizations and corporations on leadership, team development, and change management.

For over 18 years Heather's company has helped clients from entrepreneurs of new businesses to Fortune 100 companies improve their relationships and lead more effectively in a rapidly changing corporate environment. She has helped her clients create deeper more meaningful relationships in sales and customer service resulting in increased customer loyalty and overall profit. In addition, the work she does to enhance understanding within and between departments has shown a better flow of productivity as well as higher ratings in employee satisfaction.

Heather is a:

- Certified DiSC facilitator
- Author of *Find Your Fire* (Morgan James, 2011)
- Author of *Teams On Fire!* (Rock Star Publishing House, 2013)
- Certified Corporate Success Coach
- Host of Community Forum TV show
- Guest expert on NBC, ABC, the CW, and FOX
- Columnist and feature article writer for several regional and national papers and magazines
- Co-host of *The Inspired Team Leader* radio show
- Producer of *Leading the Change: 21 Insights from the Experts*

Heather runs a successful business transforming lives and companies while making plenty of quality time for raising her three high-energy boys. More info at <http://www.innovativeteamdevelopment.com/>

Liz Mabe is the Director of Digital Marketing for The Branson Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. A self-proclaimed social media enthusiast and compulsive phone-checker, she sets the strategy and direction on all of the CVB's digital efforts. In 2014, she was selected from an international pool of candidates for Destination Marketing Association International's 30 under 30. In 2015, Liz and her team achieved a 2,566% return on investment for social media advertising. Liz graduated from Drury University with a degree in Public Relations and has worked in the Branson area for 10 years. Liz loves to read and is a huge fan of the St. Louis (her hometown) Cardinals, but her favorite extra-curricular activity is chasing around her five-year-old son Phoenix.

Al Kidd was appointed President & CEO of the National Association of Sports Commissions in April 2017. A graduate of Euclid High School near Cleveland, Ohio, Kidd attended Bowling Green State University with

majors in math and physical education. He taught in Ohio and in Utah before entering the advertising world. His career eventually led him to San Diego, with several positions in advertising and venture capital investing. In 2003, Kidd helped with the financial turnaround of the San Diego Hall of Champions sports museum. As president of the San Diego Sports Commission, he led a merger effort to consolidate a number of non-profit sports organizations. Most recently, he was with BoldPointe Partners, a private equity firm specializing in middle market companies.

Mike Gamble is the President/CEO and Co-Founder of SearchWide. Since co-founding SearchWide in 1999, Mike's primary focus has been to ensure that SearchWide exceeds client and candidate expectations every day. While striving to add value and develop new opportunities for SearchWide™, Mike keeps the team focused on our core mission. Through his cooperative leadership style he creates a secure and productive environment for the team's success. In addition, Mike handles "C" level searches across all sectors of business and often assists other recruiters with their assignments.

Prior to serving as President & CEO of SearchWide, Mike served as Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing for the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau (PCVB). During that time, the Philadelphia Business Journal, named him one of the city's most successful business leaders under the age of 40. While at the PCVB, he was integral in recruiting the sales team that worked with him to attract nearly every major convention in the hospitality industry, including Meeting Professionals International (MPI), American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) and the 2000 Republican National Convention. Previously, Mike spent 9 years with Marriott International in various sales leadership positions in Dallas, San Antonio and Chicago. He is active in all of the industry associations and has served on the DMAI Foundation Board of Trustees, the MPI Foundation Board of Trustees, and on the Professional Convention Management Association Foundation Board. He is currently a board member for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities. Mike's extensive career in the hospitality industry began when he earned a BS degree from the University of Wisconsin-Stout in Hotel and Restaurant Management. He is based in our Stillwater, MN headquarters and resides in the Twin Cities area with his wife and four children.

Sam Richter is an internationally recognized expert on sales intelligence and online reputation management. He has been named one of the world's Top 25 Most Influential Sales Leaders and his best-selling book, "Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling" is in multiple editions and was named Sales Book of the Year. Through his Know More! business improvement programs, Sam has trained leading organizations and entertained tens of thousands of persons around the globe. Sam's proven techniques for leveraging online information to grow sales has directly resulted in millions of dollars of new business for his clients and program attendees. Sam has been featured in thousands of newspaper, magazines, television and radio programs and websites and he has won numerous awards including a Gold Award at the International Film Festival and a Codie Award, the Oscars of the software industry. He serves on the boards of directors for numerous technology companies, and he is a past finalist for Inc. Magazine Entrepreneur of the Year.

Bill Baker is recognized internationally as a successful practitioner and best-selling author with a track record of success in marketing and branding hundreds of small city and regional destinations – as well as a few nations. He draws praise for the ways that he simplifies the concepts of destination marketing and branding. Bill is also widely published and his book, '*Destination Branding for Small Cities*' is regarded internationally as a classic on the subject.

Greg Edwards is the President & CEO of Catch Des Moines. Many people know Greg for his dedication and tireless efforts to promote and enhance the travel and tourism industry in Greater Des Moines and the State of Iowa. He is a former chair of Destinations International (formerly DMAI) and involved in many local, regional and national boards. Greg has lead the efforts in bringing events like the 2016 & 2019 NCAA DI Men's Basketball Tournament and the LPGA Solheim Cup to Greater Des Moines. Since 2000, his leadership has generated more than \$1.4 billion in estimated economic impact to Greater Des Moines. It is the partnerships he has built that has helped him and his team continue to excel in the sports arena.

John Groh has been president/CEO of the Rockford (IL) Area Convention & Visitors Bureau since 2009. Prior to that he worked at the Rockford Chamber of Commerce as executive vice president. He began his career working his way through college serving tables at restaurants and staffing a hotel front desk. John can be described as a husband, father, marketer, civic entrepreneur, idea generator, destination developer, agitator and Gen X leader. Within his industry, he is a board member of The Destination & Travel Foundation and serves as vice chairman of the Illinois Council of Convention & Visitors Bureaus. Locally, he

serves on the boards of the Rockford Chamber of Commerce and the Rockford Area Economic Development Council.

Mark Roth is Omaha's sports event expert with more than 25 years of management experience in hospitality sales and tourism marketing. Mark's proven success in hosting multi-venue sporting events helps him understand the importance of building solid community partnerships. He understands how to enhance key relationships with major rights holders, and effectively works with city government officials and community leaders to produce a variety of successful sporting events.

Ray Hoyt joined the Tulsa Sports Commission in September of 2010 as the Executive Director but quickly assumed senior leadership with the Tulsa Regional Chamber as the Senior Vice President of both Visit Tulsa and the Tulsa Sports Commission. Within his first year in this expanded role, Ray succeeded in raising over \$3.5 million in private monies, under a campaign known as "VisitTulsa 1.0." That campaign's success led to VisitTulsa 2.0, in which investors "doubled-down" an additional \$6.4 million for an event closing fund. In late 2014 Ray worked with the VisitTulsa and Tulsa Sports Commission Boards to consolidate into one Regional Tourism Board. Now President of Regional Tourism, Ray recently led the Board to secure \$1.2 million in additional lodging tax annually through a change in a city ordinance.

Prior to his arrival in Tulsa, Ray served as the Director of National Games for the National Senior Games Association, an organization with whom he had been associated since serving as inaugural Executive Director for the Tucson Sports Commission 1994-1997.

The convention and tourism leader, the Walt Disney Company, recognized Ray's success in Tucson. Subsequently, he joined the Disney's Wide World of Sports team in 1997 ultimately leading the event management team, which ran over 40 AAU National Championships, the USTA National Clay Court Championships, Disney's Indy 200, the Walt Disney World Marathon, POP Warner Super Bowl Championships and more - totaling to over 200 separate events annually. Ray's impact led to more profitable events as defined by higher per-athlete spending and increased room nights sold per event.

Ray graduated from Illinois State University, with a BS degree in Parks and Recreation Administration and is an active member of both the National Association of Sports Commissions and Destination Marketing Association International, among other organizations.

Away from the office, Ray enjoys golf, cycling, and spending time with his family. Ray lives with his wife Tricia and their two children, Riley and Regan; Ray's elder daughter, Alyssa, resides in Tucson, Arizona with her husband.

Janet Sperstad's professional history reflects her lifelong vocation: driving excellence in meeting and event management execution and education. She has dedicated her career to defining the competencies and career pathways that articulate meeting planning as a design discipline requiring skills in the social sciences, executive leadership, and the cognitive sciences. Her contributions are global in scope and rooted in over 25 years as a meeting professional and executive leader in the corporate and non-profit sectors. Ms. Sperstad has been employed by a Fortune 500 global company, a statewide association, and owned a professional event management firm.

She currently leads Madison College's Meeting and Event Management Associate degree program, which she founded in 2002 and recently been selected as Competency Model Champion from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Janet's volunteer service includes high-profile leadership roles that are shaping how our industry defines itself, and how competencies impact education and standards development at every level. Current and most recent volunteer commitments include:

- Chair, Certified Meeting Professional Governance Commission
- Member, US Department of Labor, Hospitality, Tourism and Event Industry Competency Model Task Force
- Co-Chair, Convention Industry Council, Industry Education Task Force

Ms. Sperstad is the recipient of the 2015 Meeting Professionals International Chairman's Award, 2015 Outstanding Achievement in Industry Leadership Award from International Association Exhibitions and Events, as well named as being named one of the top 30 CMP Influencers by the Convention Industry Council. In addition, in 2014 she was the Professional Convention Management Association Professional Achievement Educator Honoree, named as an Event Industry Trendsetter as well as she was the Meeting Professionals International Planner of the Year for 2007-2008. She was recognized by her excellence in

teaching through the Devi Bhargava award in 2010 and as Madison College's Distinguished Teacher of the Year in 2005.

Ms. Sperstad has written for and been featured in a variety of industry publications, white papers, academic journal and is an internationally recognized meeting professional, teacher, and speaker.

Steve Maly is the Founder and Chief Activist of Maly Marketing. Steve has an extensive background in marketing, media production, and helping other people make gobs of money. A firm believer in the power of education in all forms, has lead to his, and thus Maly Marketing's, emphasis on education-based marketing. He has worked with clients in over 42 different industries and tourism clients all over the Midwest. Under Steve's guidance and leadership, Maly Marketing has grown on average over 68% over the last three years. In his free time Steve enjoys losing golf balls, living in a sorority house, "networking", subscription services, and doing anything on earth to avoid shopping. He credits the patience learned from being a parent with helping him take the long view required to build a successful business.

Steve is a regular on the educational speaking circuit, where he speaks on a variety of topics from digital marketing and media tracking to entrepreneurship.

Jon Schmieder has over 20 years of direct experience in the sports tourism industry having held senior leadership roles with three different sports commissions; Phoenix, Tulsa, and Denver. Schmieder brings a wealth of experience in sports tourism and economic development having also served in lead staff positions for the Senior Olympic Games and Pop Warner Football and Cheerleading. Schmieder served as Chairman of the National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC) and was on the organization's Executive Committee for six years. While Schmieder served as the President of the Phoenix Regional Sports Commission, the NASC chose the organization as the 2012 Large Market Sports Commission of the Year. Schmieder was also named 2012 CEO of the Year by the Phoenix Chapter of the Organization of Non-Profit Executives. During his sports industry career, Schmieder and his work teams hosted events that generated over \$1.3 billion in direct visitor spending.

Jon is the Founder and CEO of the Huddle Up Group, LLC. Formed in 2012, the Huddle Up Group is a sports tourism, marketing, and event consulting company made up of experienced award winning executives. Our team has a successful track record of leading non-profit sports tourism organizations through strategic growth and increased community collaboration. We have extensive experience in building cohesive organizations and external relationships while working with volunteer boards, donors, elected officials, hospitality community leaders, and various corporate partners. The Huddle Up Group was selected as the winner of the 2017 NASC Superior Service Award, the highest honor a consulting firm can earn from the National Association of Sports Commissions.

Schmieder holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of Arizona. He also holds a master's degree in higher education leadership from Northern Arizona University.

Unique Fact: Schmieder is one of only two, 2-time Chairmen of the NASC.

Adam Curl, Director of Event Solutions with Conference Technologies, has been in the audio/visual and live events industry for nearly 10 years. Serving the Iowa and Nebraska region, Adam is motivated by the challenges of the industry and the evolution of technology. Adam has a proven track record in event production, sales and customer relations. Customers approve of his innovative solutions, tailored to their vision.

John T. Meyer is co-founder and CEO of [Lemonly](#). Lemonly helps companies tell their story through visuals. Specializing in infographics, videos, and microcontent Lemonly works with brands like Marriott, Major League Baseball, Netflix, Under Armour, the Green Bay Packers, and the United Nations. John was a 2016 Finalist for EY's Midwest Entrepreneur of the Year and in 2013 was named to Entrepreneur Magazine's Top 10 Emerging Entrepreneurs. John loves to cheer on the Minnesota Twins, spend time with his wife Paige and daughter Margot.

Peter J. Pantuso is President and CEO of the American Bus Association (ABA)

The American Bus Association is the largest transportation, travel and tour organization in the United States, with nearly 4,000 member companies and organizations, representing nearly 65 percent of all motorcoaches on the roads.

Pantuso holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh and a master's degree from George Washington University's school of Business and Government.

He serves on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Committee of 100 leading association executives and is on the Boards of the American Highway Users Association, the Roadway Safety Foundation, the Motorcoach Marketing Council, and the Boy Scouts of America – National Capital Area Council. He is also an appointee to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Council and to the National Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourism Infrastructure.