



**MONTEGO BAY
CONVENTION CENTRE
JAMAICA**

Personal Touch
in Paradise





There is something new and different happening around Seattle, Washington. In a city known for innovation, imagination and inventiveness, Ichijo USA is challenging convention and the notion of what a custom home is all about.

Photograph by Kenneth Q. Williams

Surrounded by crystal clear waters and platinum sand, the Montego Bay Convention Centre offers a new way to do enjoy island hospitality and heritage. Built by the Urban Development Corporation and owned by the Jamaican Government, the Montego Bay Convention Centre was erected in 2011 to combat a loss in hotel market shares on bigger conventions; Montego Bay is the first of its kind in the English-speaking Carib-

bean to offer state-of-the-art facilities spread across 35 acres.

Vastly spacious, the 135,000 square feet is an accommodating and attractive space for everything from business meetings to trade shows and even weddings. The Montego Bay Convention Centre's ability to offer such a wide array of services comes down its commitment to client services and ensuring that



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the client receives individual attention for whatever their needs may be. For General Manager Dittie Guise, it's all about a team effort.

“It starts from the sales process,” she said. “Once the salesperson has sold the piece of business and ironed out all the particulars, then we pass the client over to an event manager. This event manager holds the hand of

the client all the way through to the final process. The event manager then creates a document which covers all the departments and then they are all notified about what exactly needs to happen.”

Known for its ethnic and culturally diverse cuisine, Montego Bay Convention Centre understands how important offering an exceptional dining experience can be.



Photograph by Kenneth Q. Williams

“We also have a dedicated food and beverage manager who would also get with the client and we’d like this person to get real close with the client because as you know food is a very important part of what we deliver,” Guise said. “Knowing exactly what the client needs - if there are any push buttons, if there is anyone that’s vegetarian or any special meals, than we get all of that up front beforehand.”

The specific care and preparation that goes into the dining experience as a whole has not gone unnoticed by the clients, who have

rated the Montego Bay Convention Centre’s food and beverage division 4.5/5 star rating, praising the chefs and the Centre’s attention to detail.

ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

Being a tourist-heavy destination, Montego Bay Convention Centre relies on its close relationships with its vendors to offer their clients - especially the international ones - a further sense of comfort and peace of mind.

“It is important for the Convention Centre

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to be closely involved with the vendors. Being that other vendors are in Jamaica, and our clients are coming internationally, if they can get a one-stop shop, the Convention Centre then becomes an intermediary between them and the vendor,” Guise said. “We have established a lot of relationships with the audio visual vendors, the set-up vendors and the registration vendors so we can reach out to them and offer the client - especially the international ones, a one-stop shop scenario.”

The relationships that Montego Bay Convention Centre has established with these



vendors gives the clients a competitive advantage when it comes to securing what they need, hassle-free.

“If the client lets us know what they want, we can do all the running around for them. We do keep a close-eye and we try and see if

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we can help them get a better deal for what they want to bring in,” she said. “Especially with vendors who know the facility, they’re more inclined to want to give a better price because they know what they’re up against.”

WORLD-CLASS SERVICE

Montego Bay Convention Centre’s commitment to providing a unique, one-of-a-kind experience extends beyond the client base. Managed by the US-based SMG Group, who has over 225 facilities in the United States, the Convention Centre has a long-

list of dedicated counterparts who work cohesively to help its staff succeed.

“We have the opportunity to reach out to a lot of different convention centres,” she said. “What is good for the staff here in Montego Bay is that if they come across a challenge in any way, they can pick up the phone and speak to a counterpart in another city or country and say: ‘this is what I’m experiencing, how do you handle it?’”

Reaching out to their counterparts is also

beneficial when it comes to better serving the needs of a client and understanding on what Montego Bay Convention Centre can do to make their experience even better.

“If we have a client who has used a similar facility, we can reach out and say: ‘What are their push buttons, what is it that I need to look out for?’”

Guise's internationally-trained background along with her understanding of the make-up of Montego Bay's residents has helped

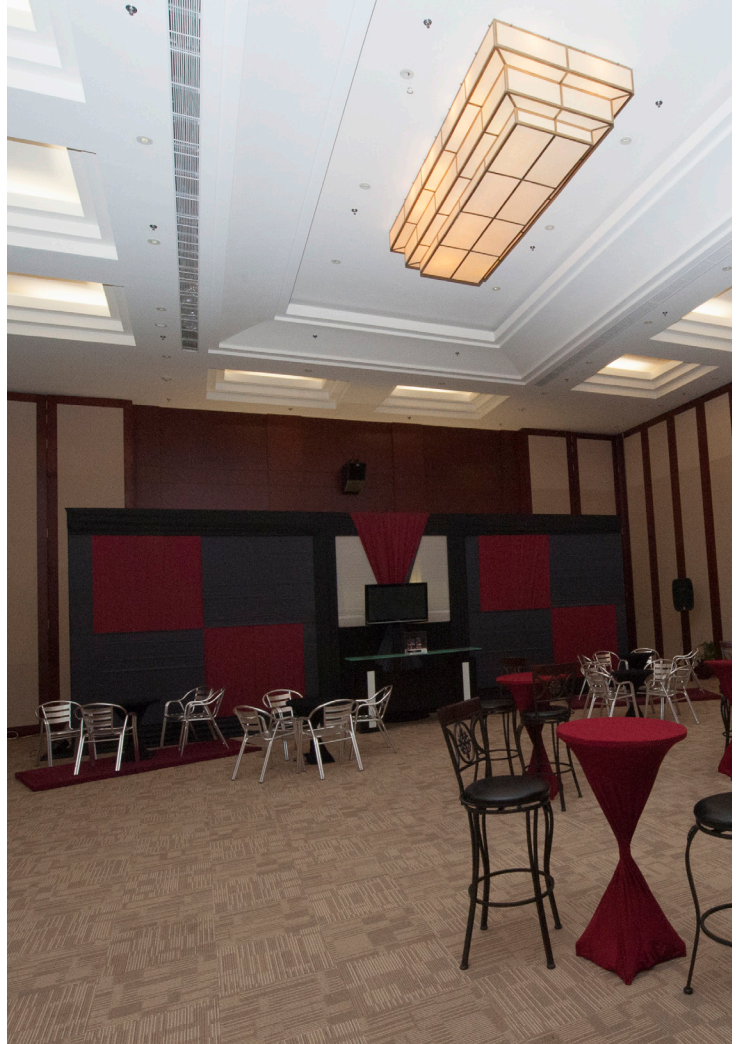
further develop the top class service at the Convention Centre.

“The SMG training that we have been able to give the staff has really helped, and obviously our goal is to always deliver top-class service,” Guise said.

Having been awarded the 2014 World Travel Award for the Caribbean's Leading Meeting and Conference Centre - for the fourth-year in a row, their goal has already been reached

“The staff here is really proud of it because







of all the hard work they put it in to deliver top-class service, to be recognized internationally in that way is very rewarding,” Guise said. “Rewards are not given just for the sake of being given, you have to earn them. We’ve also this year won the Jamaican Hospitality Award for Best Conference Facility, which has been a big deal for us.”

EXPANDING MARKETING EFFORTS

Based in the scenic paradise of the Caribbean undoubtedly has its marketing challenges when you’re surrounded by a host of tropical destinations and looking to cater to international business clients.

“We really have to market very hard because there is always still the perception that if you take a piece of business outside of the United States and into the Caribbean you may lose them to the environment,” Guise said. “We have found that with the Media Planners that have been to the Convention Center is that the complexity of it and the way it is situated - the view and the ambiance - that the attendees when they get here have been so in awe with the facility that they really don’t want to be leaving halfway through a seminar to go surfing or horseback riding.”

Overlooking the Caribbean Sea has led to Montego Bay Convention Centre entering





into surprise markets that they never considered before - weddings.

“The over 30 acres of land and well manicured and well landscaped which has lended itself to many weddings, which is a surprise market that we weren’t looking at in the beginning, but is now developing very well for us.” Guise said.

In an age where digital marketing is heavily used to promote tropical destinations, Montego Bay Convention Centre aims to do things differently.

“There is a lot of show me first before I come. We do a lot of presentations, we send the staff

on the road to the USA and Canada, this is not a thing where you can just stay in your office and market the Centre,” Guise said. “We do a lot of e-blasting and use the website as much as possible, but the personal touch is usually what helps more than anything else. After you’ve made that electronic connection, the personal touch is very important.”

For all the rewards, accolades and positive ratings that Montego Bay Convention Centre has received in the last three years, it is hard to fathom that they are still in their infancy. By continuing to focus on personal touches and delivering exceptional services to their clients, they will surely put many more heads in beds moving forward.



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