



Forbes Travel Guide **CASE STUDY**



“ We were looking for an Atlanta-based event firm that could support Forbes Travel Guide as we move forward globally, and Right On Pointe met all of our qualifications. ”

MIKE CASCONI

*President and Chief Operating Officer,
Forbes Travel Guide*

CLIENT

Forbes Travel Guide

INDUSTRY

Travel/Hospitality

LOCATION

Atlanta, GA

OBJECTIVES

- Design and execute an exceptional awards experience for 300 executives from the world's premier hospitality companies
- Develop a long-term relationship with a strategic event management company to support global expansion efforts

RIGHT ON POINTE SERVICES

- Strategic event services

KEY SUCCESSES

- Designed, planned, and managed the execution of a five-star event in four months
- Handled all hotel negotiations and provided on-site support for important clients
- Automated critical processes to reduce administrative tasks
- Created a multi-day event to accomplish multiple strategic business purposes
- Co-partnering in planning a truly global awards program event for 2016, with invitees from up to 114 countries

Annual Awards Event Designed to Leave Honorees Star-Struck

As the firm that awards four- and five-star ratings to the world's leading hotels, restaurants, and spas, Forbes Travel Guide **sets the bar high** for recognizing achievement. So when the company holds its annual awards program, it is essential that the three-day event **surprise and delight senior executives** of these premier hospitality companies.

"We have typically run events internally, but we don't have a big company. Historically, we have shouldered the burden of our annual awards program among our department heads," says Michael Cascone, President and Chief Operating Officer, Forbes Travel Guide. "But the event had grown to where we **couldn't handle it ourselves anymore.**"

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Cascone sought to find an Atlanta-based strategic event services firm who could do more than provide event support. “I wanted to develop a **long-term partnership** with a firm who could help us as we move forward globally. We will be extending the Forbes Travel Guide brand and holding **strategic events in countries around the world**,” he says.

Right On Pointe came **highly recommended**. Lisa Ross-Faust, Executive Vice President, had planned strategic events for WebMD, the corporate owner of Forbes Travel Group, including a **spectacular Super Bowl event** with a live performance by **Elton John** and a silent auction of items donated by celebrities.



Luxury Abounds at Forbes Travel Guide Events

That type of experience proved invaluable, as Ross-Faust and Cascone strategized about the awards program Forbes Travel Guide would be hosting at the a five-star beachfront Ritz-Carlton resort in Naples, Florida in February 2015.

“Early in our conversations, we discussed designing an event that would have **grand style and flawless execution** because we are hosting the best of the best – luxury hospitality leaders who know how to design events of this nature. We also discussed the important role of the host hotel, and how critical it would be for Right On Pointe and the Forbes team to work closely with the hotel staff to design this event, because they have as much as stake as we do in ensuring this event’s success,” says Cascone.

While Cascone knew that Right On Pointe had the team, the experience, and the capability to deliver a five-star awards experience, he was also looking for something more: great communicators. Cascone explains: “I liked Right On Pointe’s approach, but what mattered more to us was Lisa and her team’s **ability to work and communicate well across our departments**. This awards event touches every aspect of our company, from client services, to ratings, to content, and marketing. We needed someone who could listen and offer ideas and adapt to our business needs,” says Cascone.

“We don’t charge our honorees for the annual awards event, but they do travel at their own expense. So it’s critical that we as a team provide the **highest levels of service** to our guests,” continues Cascone. “That comes with years of experience, professional maturity, and good communications skills, which is what Lisa and her team brought to the table.”

Once Right On Pointe came on board, **the group got right to work**. Forbes Travel Guide had an ambitious schedule for designing the event, so Lisa immediately implemented weekly planning calls between Forbes Travel Guide department heads, the event staff at the Ritz Carlton, and her team.

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Going Back to the Drawing Board

While the group worked together cohesively, an issue did arise. “About six weeks out from the event, the theme that the host hotel presented just didn’t work for us,” says Cascone. “And so Lisa had to go back to our host and professionally message why we thought a different concept would work better. The hotel staff responded really well and came up with a new theme for the event, which turned out great. But a lot of credit goes to Lisa with going back and re-architecting the theme in a way that really met our needs.”

Automating and Segmenting Registration Processes

Right On Pointe also helped standardize the event registration process, creating a registration website and database. “Lisa implemented a management tool that tracked who was invited, who had RSVP-ed, and whether the guest was from a four-star or five-star property,” says Cascone. “It is a very difficult task to do, because **there’s a lot of sensitivity involved**. If four-star executives get invited to a five-star event it can be offensive, because they didn’t win. So Lisa brought that online registration tool to us. It was the first time that we had used one in the history of our event, and it worked out really well.”



“Right On Pointe brought a positive attitude and a high level of professionalism, handling abrupt changes in course and working collegially with our clients, who are critical to the success of our business. We got glowing reviews from attendees after the event. I would overwhelmingly recommend Right On Pointe to any company who is planning a high-level event with strategically important clients or prospects.”

MIKE CASCONE

President and Chief Operating Officer, Forbes Travel Guide

Setting the Stage for Strategic Networking

“One of the big benefits of working with Right On Pointe was the ability to focus fully on our guests, who are our clients,” says Cascone. “We had 30 Forbes Travel Guide staff there, and historically, they have been involved with event planning, logistics, and crisis management. This year, they didn’t have to do any of that. Lisa and her team at Right On Pointe shouldered the burden of that, which gave us the freedom and the ability to use the event as we had always hoped – **as a way to recognize and connect with the world’s greatest hospitality leaders.**”





Designing an Event with True Star Power

The event featured an exclusive evening event for VIP five-star honorees, a breakfast meeting for the board of directors of the Forbes Travel Guide, a lunch meeting for all attendees to share the company's global expansion news, and a Latin-style party the second evening. Guests who stayed the third day used the hotel spa or participated in scheduled activities.

Everything about the event was **designed to be first-class**. At the welcoming party, LED screens displayed imagery of the star-rated properties, more than 900 hydrangeas scented the air, and an elaborate branded sandcastle delighted guests as they danced on the beach to the music of a live band. Participants enjoyed delicious meals and customized drinks throughout the event. The last night featured a Latin-style party for all guests including fire breathers and interactive dancers. And every guest received custom welcome amenities of a five-star box and a sand globe that featured a lounge chair with a Forbes magazine and Ritz-Carlton umbrella.



Becoming a Global Powerhouse in Hospitality Leadership

Forbes has been expanding rapidly and plans to offer star ratings in 114 countries by the end of 2015, meaning next year's annual awards program will be truly global in scope. "The event architecture and the way we host the 2016 event will probably be somewhat consistent to this year's, but we will double the number of attendees," says Cascone. "So it will be **five times more important to manage communication well globally**, because many of our guests will be receiving a star rating for the first time." Cascone says he is also looking at increasing the number of events Forbes Travel Guide hosts up to four a year.

Right On Pointe will be working with Forbes Travel Guide to design a new awards event that provides honorees with a world-class experience, as well as **expand its sponsorship program to drive greater revenues**. "Forbes Travel Guide events are known for being exceptional," says Lisa Ross-Faust. "We look forward to supporting the company's efforts to create picture-perfect events that are **unexpected and innovative**, while setting new standards for luxury and design."



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