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2026 HOSPITALITY CONFERENCE



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EVENTS

HILTON DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
September 27 - 29, 2026

2026

HOSPITALITY
CONFERENCE

HILTON MINNEAPOLIS DOWNTOWN | SEPTEMBER 27-29

SUNDAY

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026

4:00 - 6:00 PM • Symphony Ballroom
Registration Opens

Get in early, get settled, and skip the Monday morning line.

Registration opens Sunday for early arrivals: pick up your lanyard and conference materials, meet the HM staff and events team, and get the lay of the land before things get busy.

It's a low-key start to a full few days — and a good chance to say hello before the room fills up.



6:00 - 8:00 PM • Clubhouse Social
Opening Welcome Reception

- Brought to You by TPI Hospitality

Kick off the conference where our industry does its best work: over good food, a good drink, and a little friendly competition.

Our thanks to TPI for sponsoring and hosting the evening at Clubhouse Social, right off the hotel lobby, where four golf simulator bays and a dedicated bar come with a curated menu built for the occasion.

Take a swing, catch up with old colleagues, and meet the people you'll be sitting next to all week. No tee time required — just show up.

MONDAY

SEPTEMBER 28, 2026

8:00 - 8:45 AM • Symphony Ballroom
Registration, Breakfast and Vendor Visits

Pick up your lanyard and materials and say hello to the HM team. Our vendor partners will be set up and ready to talk.

8:45 - 9:00 AM • Symphony Ballroom
Welcome Remarks

- SPEAKER:** Hospitality MN President & CEO Angie Whitcomb

9:00 - 9:30 AM • Symphony Ballroom
The Art & Craft of Hospitality

- SPEAKER:** John Cosgrove - Founder, VoiceHive / Cosgrove Presents

What does it truly mean to be hospitable? This session breaks down genuine hospitality into something you can see, hear, and practice.

It will show that once you know what to look for, the opportunities to apply it are everywhere. Expect stories, a few laughs, and a fresh lens for the conference ahead.

9:30 - 10:30 AM • Symphony Ballroom
YES Leadership 101

- KEYNOTE SPEAKER:** Christine Trippi - Founder, YES Leadership Movement, The YES Show

Christine Trippi has spent more than three decades in hotel operations, and she's built a simple, teachable framework: the idea of yes.

The framework is centered around one idea: yes is almost always the answer. Not blind agreement — a trained mindset, real empowerment, and clear boundaries that let your front line say yes with confidence.

Join Christine for an impactful keynote on how to harness the power of YES across whatever sector of hospitality you call home.

10:30 - 10:50 AM • Symphony Ballroom
Break & Vendor Visits

- Brought to you by KLB Insurance

10:50 - 11:40 AM • Conrads A, B and C
Morning Breakout Sessions

Attendees will choose one of three Morning Breakout Sessions

MONDAY

(CONTINUED)

Morning Breakout Session 1: Conrad A
From the First Purchase to the Last Dish: Sustainability Strategies for Commercial Kitchens

- SPEAKER:** Alex Christensen - Program Manager, Energy Smart; Andrew Hilger - Program Manager, Waste Wise

From equipment purchasing to plate waste, every choice in your kitchen has an environmental and financial impact.

This session covers selecting energy-efficient equipment, waste reduction opportunities, strategies for overcoming organics recycling barriers, and smart food management methods to cut food waste.

Morning Breakout Session 2: Conrad B
Coaching from the Heart

- SPEAKER:** Christine Trippi - Founder, YES Leadership Movement, The YES Show

Discover how to approach critical conversations with a new mindset. You'll uncover two common coaching methods that can derail your culture and learn seven better ways to coach so people feel supported, valued, and invested in.

You'll leave knowing how to influence rather than tell, turn tough conversations into growth opportunities, and build a team that wants to stay and grow. Plus, you'll receive a practical toolkit to help you put it all into action.

Morning Breakout Session 3: Conrad C
From AI Hype to Restaurant Results: Practical AI for Operators

- SPEAKER:** Ken Baker - CEO, Roasted Data

AI is moving fast, but restaurant operators do not need another presentation about what might happen someday. They need to know what they can actually use now.

In this practical session, Ken Baker will share real examples of how restaurant leaders can use AI today to save time, improve decision-making, and identify opportunities to improve profitability.

Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of where AI can realistically help their business today and several practical ideas they can begin applying immediately.

11:45 AM - 12:45 PM • Symphony Ballroom
Lunch & Vendor Visits

- Brought to you by Ecolab

MONDAY

(CONTINUED)

12:45 - 1:45 PM • Symphony Ballroom
The Courage Advantage: Leading Through Uncertainty

- SPEAKER:** Steve Fredlund - Author of Do the Unright Thing, Memoir of a People Pleaser

Hospitality leaders are navigating constant change, workforce challenges, and uncertainty while still being expected to engage teams and deliver exceptional experiences.

In this practical and engaging keynote, Steve Fredlund shares The Courage Advantage, a simple framework to help leaders build trust, strengthen connection, and create the conditions for people and organizations to move forward together.

1:45 - 2:00 PM
Passing Time

2:00 - 2:45 PM • Conrads A, B and C
Afternoon Breakout Sessions

Attendees will choose one of three Morning Breakout Sessions

Afternoon Breakout Session 1: Conrad A
The Power of Intentional Training

- SPEAKERS:** Meaghan Sabyan & Caitlyn English - Chowgirls Catering

Hospitality runs on people - yet the industry loses them at a staggering rate, with retention hovering between 10-20%. At Chowgirls, leaders decided to stop accepting that as inevitable. By rebuilding a training program from the ground up, Chowgirls achieved an average staff retention rate of 65% - and the results go far beyond the numbers.

Afternoon Breakout Session 2: Conrad B
It Starts with You: Workplace Wellness from Self, to Employee, to Client

- SPEAKER:** JC Lippold - Wellness Expert and Advisory Board Chair of Cadre

Join JC Lippold for a conversation on optimizing your workplace to promote wellness for all stakeholders of your business.

Afternoon Breakout Session 3: Conrad C
Marketing Your Brand

- SPEAKER:** J. Marie Fieger & Michele Roy, Nemer Fieger

Marketing hospitality brands have never been more crucial than it is now. Join J. Marie Fieger of Nemer Fieger to discuss best marketing practices that will attract the customers you want without draining the resources you have.

2:45 - 3:15 PM • Symphony Ballroom
Break & Vendor Visits

- Brought to you by Horizon Commercial Pools

MONDAY

(CONTINUED)

3:15 - 4:15 PM • Symphony Ballroom
Panel Discussion: Lessons in Resiliency, The Next Disruption Will Come

- MODERATOR:** Nate Lindesmith, Performance Foodservice Minnesota

- PANELISTS:**
 - Edie Renner - Owner, Motel Ely
 - Eric Thieling - General Manager, Hilton Minneapolis
 - Tammy Wong - Owner, Rainbow Chinese

Join hospitality operators and industry leaders for a practical discussion built around one certainty in this business: uncertainty itself.

Our panelists will share real-world experiences and how their teams are preparing for whatever disruption comes next.

4:15 - 4:30 PM
Closing Remarks

As Monday's programming wraps, join us for a quick recap of the day's biggest takeaways and a look ahead to Tuesday's policy-focused sessions.

We'll also share a few final reminders before heading into the evening's Offsite Dinner & Lawn Bowling at Brit's Pub.



6:00 - 9:00 PM • Brit's Pub
Offsite Dinner & Lawn Bowling

Unwind from a day loaded with programming at a Downtown Minneapolis staple, Brit's Pub. Enjoy lawn bowling with industry leaders and prepare for a policy-centric finale to the 2026 Hospitality Conference.

TUESDAY

SEPTEMBER 29, 2026

8:00 - 8:30 AM • Symphony Ballroom
Registration, Breakfast and Vendor Visits

Pick up your lanyard and materials and say hello to the HM team. Our vendor partners will be set up and ready to talk.

8:30 - 8:45 AM • Symphony Ballroom
Opening Remarks

- SPEAKER:** Hospitality MN President & CEO Angie Whitcomb

8:45 - 10:15 AM • Symphony Ballroom
Federal Updates From National Partners

- SPEAKERS:** Bianca Castillo - American Hotel & Lodging Association, David Massey - National Restaurant Association

Hear from National Partners about the state of the industry from a national perspective. As federal policy, workforce trends, and economic pressures continue to shape hospitality nationwide, this session offers a timely look at the issues affecting operators from coast to coast.

Gain insight into what's happening at the national level and how it may impact your business here in Minnesota.

10:15 - 10:30 AM • Symphony Ballroom
Break & Vendor Visits

- Brought to you by American Hotel & Lodging Association

10:30 - 11:30 AM • Symphony Ballroom
Fluence Media - Signals vs. Noise

- SPEAKER:** Blois Olson - Founder, Fluence Media

Join Blois Olson of Fluence Media for a conversation on how you and your business can distinguish fact from fiction in times of unrest and political uncertainty.

In an era of rapid news cycles, shifting narratives, and information overload, cutting through the noise has never been more critical for hospitality leaders.

Blois will share practical strategies for staying grounded, informed, and confident in your decision-making — even when the headlines are anything but clear.

11:30 - 11:45 AM • Symphony Ballroom
Closing Remarks

As the 2026 Hospitality Conference comes to a close, join us for final thoughts on the discussions, connections, and insights from the past three days.

We'll send you off with key takeaways to bring back to your teams and a thank-you to everyone who made this year's conference possible.

