

# Smartmeetings

March 2018 • \$5.00



VISIONARIES

100

WOMEN WHO INSPIRE US



TRAIL-BLAZERS

INDUSTRY LEADERS



INNOVATORS

RISING STARS

ENTREPRENEURS

# 100 WOMEN WHO INSPIRE US

The 2018 Smart Women winners share  
their inner flame

**I**nspiration is the spark that ignites life-changing transformations. Luckily, the event industry is on fire with women and men who have made it their business to strike such sparks by bringing people and ideas together—and in so doing, improve the world.

In this landmark, third-annual Smart Women issue, we celebrate the women who work tirelessly, breaking barriers, overcoming obstacles and inventing new ways to set the stage for amazing transformations. We include Visionary women who make up our hall of fame, and serve as examples of working and living at the highest levels. The same is true of this year's Industry Leaders, who incite us to do more and better every day, and the Trailblazers who make it all happen so artfully, it looks easy.

Where would we be without our Innovators, the women who say, "Why not?"—and then make it happen—and

the Entrepreneurs, those risk-takers who put something into the world that wasn't there before?

The good news is, the future looks even brighter. Our Rising Stars are proof that, at this pivotal moment in time, the progress we have made to be more inclusive, more focused on making every meeting personally meaningful, and goal-facing, will continue for years to come.

We asked these professional role models to name their inspiration and the secret skill that allow them to work their magic each day. Then we asked for their action items—the causes that motivate them and the work they feel still needs to be done. We hope their stories presented here and online at [SmartMeetings.com](http://SmartMeetings.com) will inspire you as they have stirred us. Now it is your turn. Share your superpower and action items with us at [#SmartWomen](https://twitter.com/SmartWomen) and tag us [@smartmeetings](https://twitter.com/smartmeetings).

—JT Long, Smart Meetings Content Chief

Brought to you by  
Fort Worth Convention and Visitors Bureau



# INDUSTRY LEADER



## SUE ALEXANDER

Senior Director of Meetings, Marketing and Membership, American College of Phlebology

**Inspiration:** I am continuously inspired by the amazing evolution that transpires when individuals and groups “shift” to better address problems, situations and challenges. We live in a dynamic and ever-changing world; we need to be equally dynamic and strategically responsive in our solutions and thinking. That inspires me to be a better person.

**Superpower:** Listening beyond spoken words to find the right pearl of wisdom that opens new paths for thinking and creating.

**Action Item:** The meetings industry has a unique opportunity to bring people together. As professionals, our responsibility is to strategically coach our groups to address discord and seek consensus. We must choose to be positive, inclusive and conscientious to stay relevant.



## MELISSA GOGEL

Vice President of Marketing, Tourism and Communications, Visit Phoenix

**Inspiration:** Resiliency inspires me, whether it's from fellow humans or our animal companions. Seeing another being overcome obstacles that often seem insurmountable reminds me of the importance of living in the moment and approaching life one day at a time. I feel lucky to work in the travel industry. It's a gratifying business. We get to help people live their best moments and find new sources of motivation.

**Superpower:** Finding solutions. Rather than just saying “No, it can't be done,” I try to look for answers through thoughtful discussion and compromise.

**Action Item:** Kindness and empathy. Hopefully, we're on the cusp of real and permanent change in the world. As far as we've come, there's still much more to do. I believe in treating others with decency and understanding.

“We get to help people live their best moments and find new sources of motivation.”

-Melissa Gogel



## JANINE CHICOURRAT

General Manager, Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay

**Inspiration:** The employees of our hotel inspire me the most. We have been under construction for the past nine years, and our employees never complained. Staff truly stepped up, and I am so appreciative of every one of them.

**Superpower:** A combination of being born with a super-high energy level, being an eternal optimist, and having the support of a wonderful family and husband. Whenever my energy is low, my husband is there to prop me up. To top it off, he has a great sense of humor and never lets me take myself too seriously.

**Action Item:** Run for president...just kidding. I've been fortunate enough to work for an ownership group supportive of our green initiatives and willing to invest in the hotel for us to become LEED-certified. We will continue down this track and contribute in a small way to help the environment.



## WENDY DRAKE

President and CEO, The Webster Group

**Inspiration:** The tireless and selfless efforts of the many charitable organizations I have been honored to support. Over the past 20 years, I have been truly blessed to get to know the wonderful individuals behind the missions of these organizations and causes. Nonprofit volunteers and staff continue to inspire me to be a better version of myself.

**Superpower:** Ability to remain calm in unexpected situations. I believe in maintaining poise and confidence, no matter what. Keeping calm enables me to thoughtfully address the emerging situation. Leading by example teaches and encourages my team to act similarly.

**Action Item:** I will continue to engage and encourage my family, colleagues and others to understand the importance of continued growth through learning, whether through education or volunteerism.



## ALEX CARVALHO LUKACHOVA

Senior Meeting Planner, Kaiser Permanente

**Inspiration:** My team. I am fortunate to work with an amazing group of women who are incredibly talented, creative and supportive.

**Superpower:** Prioritizing. It's not as sexy as moving objects with your mind or seeing into the future, but it is a skill to maintain the kind of schedule we maintain as women in the meetings industry while balancing home life. Regardless of work load, my priority is spending quality time with family.

**Action Item:** These are trying times, and exciting times as well—movements like the Women's March and #MeToo are proof that society has reached a tipping point when it comes to social inequalities towards women and minorities. I am happy that I get to witness this change in my lifetime. I am raising my kids to understand that that equality should be the norm.

**Jorah Anderson**  
Miraval Group Director of Sales  
Miraval Resorts

**Cori Day**  
Vice President of Sales and Services  
Visit Kansas City

**Kieran Donahue**  
Vice President of Brand, Marketing and Digital  
Marriott International

**April Ellerbe**  
Director of Sales  
Durham Convention & Visitor's Bureau

**Lina Farrell**  
Director Citywide Accounts  
Tourism Toronto

**Julie Finn**  
Director of Event Management  
Hilton Denver  
Inverness

**Erica Gibbons**  
Regional President  
Hosts D.C., Hosts Baltimore, Hosts Chicago

**Cheryl Kilday**  
President and CEO  
Visit Spokane

**Desiree Knight**  
Director, Education and Meetings  
Am Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association