

meetingNOTES

{SUPPLY WISE}

Freeze Frame

Ice is carving a hot niche for events. BY DIANNA STAMPFLER



IN TODAY'S WORLD, consumers are bombarded with thousands of branding messages every day. Planners, exhibitors and promoters need to think outside the cube when choosing a unique element for their event, and the more interactive, the better. Ice may be temporary, but with all the creative ways this old standby is being used, it's sure to leave a lasting impression.

From static to star

Ice sculptures have become much more than stagnant props, notes Randy Finch, aka the Ice Guru. "How often do you see someone stop at a trade show booth to take a picture in front

of a company logo?" Finch says. "But with a logo encased in ice, backlit in color, it becomes a showstopper. Not only do they get excited about getting their picture taken with the ice, through social media channels they're sharing

with friends, family and co-workers, enhancing a company's overall branding message."

Profiled in the Winter 2009 issue of *Michigan Meetings + Events*, Finch and business partner Derek Maxfield, owners of Ice Sculptures Ltd. of Grand Rapids, landed a seven-episode prime time series on the Food Network earlier this year. *Ice Brigade*, based solely in Michigan, followed the team of six around the state to festivals, events and venues where they created frozen interactive masterpieces, including a bowling alley, full-size billiards table, roulette wheel, pinball machine, giant chess set, carousel and an ice lounge.

"We believe these sculptures help energize crowds and spark creative discussions which inspire people to dream about new possibilities," Finch says. "There's nothing ordinary about what we do and we like to think it facilitates extraordinary things for those who experience our work."

Cool entertainment

Earlier this summer, Ice Sculptures Ltd. was commissioned by Whirlpool Corporation for a charity golf outing to benefit the Boys & Girls Club of Benton Harbor. "I thought there was a great correlation between the two Michigan companies," says Amanda Konczal, senior category manager of Whirlpool's ice and speciality refrigeration division. "We sell the perfect clear ice maker for entertaining and Randy uses clear ice to enhance an entertaining experience." A drink luge with Whirlpool's corporate logo was a hit with golfers at the event, which raised \$1.5 million for the charity.

The addition of a fast-paced sculpting demonstration, complete with picks, sanders and chainsaws, takes the ice experience one step further. "The live performance turns the ice into more than just a piece of art," says Finch. "It becomes an experience that touches everyone in the room. The reaction to the live show is powerful, even for us." ❧

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