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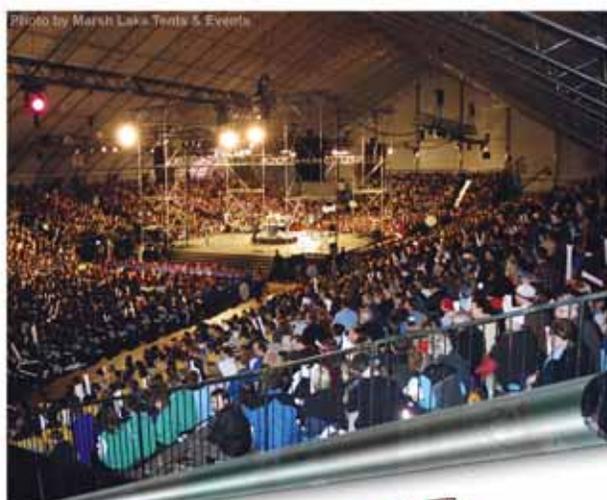
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by Julie Young

ON THE COVER

Infinite Designs LLC, Atlanta, Ga., used lighting to set a casual, funky mood in this "after-hours" lounge—an area where guests were free to let their hair down and party at an otherwise elegant, formal wedding on Daufuskie Island, S.C. The overall lighting featured Chinese lanterns in chartreuse green, hot pink and white in round and square shapes. The Plexiglas® tables by Bill Whidden Designs were internally uplit with wireless LED cubes, and the side poles featured an uplight in bright cherry pink. See "Trends" on page 8. Photo courtesy of Infinite Designs LLC.



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Be smart, stay safe

Underestimating the power of storms can be a business disaster.

It's officially spring here in Minnesota, and the weather is taking us for the usual ride: sunny and 45 degrees one day; 20 degrees and icy the next; piles of wet snow the week after that. At best, springtime storms can mean flooded city gutters, as rains combine with melting snow to create a soggy chaos. At worst, people can be displaced or injured as storms fill their homes with muddy water or strike down trees and telephone poles.

Natural disasters, though they are an undisputed fact of life, can send shock waves through communities. In a post-Tsunami, post-Katrina world, disaster planning and accountability have taken on new meaning. Tent rental companies are subject to extreme liability when it comes to protecting the public underneath their tents. No matter how thoroughly a tent is staked, a strong enough storm can bring those towering poles straight to the ground.

Taking storms seriously is smart business for tented event experts. For our article "Disaster strikes" (page 26), Brian Richardson of L&A Tent Rentals told our writer that if you can't remember an instance when a tent went down, then you haven't been in the industry long enough. And although many companies shy away from the topic (not wanting to be pegged as "the ones

whose tents go down"), they must still spend time and money behind the scenes, planning for high winds, pouring rain and even snow.

Ignoring the potential for inclement weather might seem like an OK idea in the short run, when it seems to make things simpler. And it might be frustrating to lose a tent job to a competitor simply because you've costed in the necessary precautions. But when disaster does strike, the companies that have carefully considered the safety of their clients and the public will weather the storm—and, ultimately, stay in business longer.

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THE BUZZ

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This client wanted a lounge for after-hours partying, so Infinite Designs used creative lighting and Bill Whidden tables uplift with LED cubes to set a funky mood. Photo courtesy of Infinite Designs.

Cool lighting

Well-designed lighting can set the mood for a tented event—from whimsical to romantic to dramatic. “People are realizing what an impact or component lighting can bring to an event to establish the overall ambience,” says Doc Waldrop of Infinite Designs LLC, Atlanta, Ga. “Say you have a seated dinner for 200 people with 20 tables and you’re spending \$125 per table on the florals. If you don’t light it, you’ve wasted your money.”

Technical advances are making LED fixtures a popular choice. “There used to be a slight problem with them on intensity, but now they are working out intensity issues so that you can effectively light portable structures with them,” Waldrop says. “I think its main drawback is it’s not as subtle as I would like it to light up tables and that sort of thing, but as far as lighting up the interior of a tent, it’s a great way to go.”

LED fixtures consume low amounts of energy, which has a positive effect on an event’s bottom line for multiple reasons.

“You don’t need near as large a generator,” Waldrop says. “Your power distribution is a lot simpler. You’re

talking about running one cable vs. six. And the labor component goes drastically down.”

Most tent rental businesses will want to form strategic alliances with event lighting companies because the cost of putting specialized fixtures into inventory may not be returned in rental use.

“The [LED] units themselves are about \$1,600 apiece, and to light up even a reasonably sized tent, you are looking at 12 of them. So that’s a significant amount of money that really only the specialized people would feel comfortable getting into,” he says.

Also, a lighting expert can help clients envision how different lighting options can create a unique event.

“You need someone who can ... paint those pretty pictures,” Waldrop says. ■

[By Jill C. Lafferty, a freelance writer based in Burnsville, Minn.]

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SPOTLIGHT

Army deploys new tents

Tent innovations help protect U.S. soldiers in the field.

With U.S. soldiers in harm's way, efforts are ongoing to make their tented living quarters as safe as possible. One program is designing tent panels that can withstand mortar blasts; a second is insulating tents with a spray-on foam, thereby reducing fuel needs, which in turn reduces the number of dangerous fuel convoys.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has awarded \$2.5 million to the Advanced Engineered Wood Composite Center at the University of Maine to continue its development of a panel designed for use in tents and other portable structures, according to the *Maine Campus* newspaper.



The Modular Ballistic Protection System (MBPS) panels act as a lightweight, easily deployed liner for large tents. In tests the system has withstood blasts from 75 feet, 33 feet, and 21 feet with no failures in the structure, anchoring or the panels themselves. The panels have a wood core and multiple layers of fiber and resin around the core. They can be assembled by just a few soldiers without tools, are ultraviolet and scratch-resistant, and are completely recyclable.

While prototypes are already in use in Iraq and Afghanistan, center director Habib Dahger hopes that the system is close to large-scale manufacture and deployment.

The Rapid Equipping Force, a 5-year-old Army think tank, has partnered with Glencoe Insulation and Roofing of Oklahoma to spray foam insulation on 81 tents and several gyms in Iraq at a cost of \$2.6 million. While the insulation provides a more comfortable living environment, the true life-saving result is in reducing the need for fuel convoys that are exposed to roadside bombs. Dan Nolan, REF chief of the power task force, told the *Los Angeles Times* that insulating tents can cut a base's fuel use by 40 percent.

Smoking tents snuffed out

Smoking tents purchased in response to a smoking ban in the Canadian province of Alberta have been declared illegal by bylaw officials, according to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).

The ban went into effect Jan. 1, but owners of casino and bingo parlors believed that the tents would be in compliance with the new law. Players Choice Bingo in Calgary spent \$600 on a tent to shelter customers who smoke, but was forced to take it down in early January.

"People were told the tents were valid," Frank Sisson, owner of Calgary's Silver Dollar Casino, told the CBC. "Now they're not valid. Those things are not cheap, so I really think they should make up their mind."

Bill Bruce, director of bylaw services, explained that the law defines a public premise as any structure or enclosure where the public is allowed by either expressed or implied invitation. That would include tents,

according to officials. Businesses that don't comply with the law can be fined \$100 to \$300 for the first offense, although bylaw officials said that action against the tents would be taken only if someone complained.



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Perspectives: Family matters

What advice would you give to a family member interested in joining the tent rental and event industry? Lara McCulloch (pictured) of Regal Tent Productions Ltd., Stoney Creek, Ontario, is an expert on this topic, having joined the family business after a 12-year career in branding and marketing. She says:



“It was a tough decision to leave part of my identity behind to join an industry I knew very little about. But it has actually become one of the best decisions of my life. The temporary-structure industry is fast-paced, customer-service focused, demanding and highly competitive—but what industry isn’t these days? The reality is that when you’re a tent rental company, you’re in the business of ‘making it happen.’ ... When you’re providing the venue or the protection for an event you have to pull out all the stops to make sure it goes up on time. If you’re not comfortable in a service industry, if you’re not comfortable working until all hours to get the job done—then your job should not be in this industry. In the end, what makes it all worthwhile is supporting world-class events and seeing the looks on the guests’ faces as they truly enjoy the event (totally oblivious to all of the hard work that went into making it happen).

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■ New faces

Anchor Industries Inc., Evansville, Ind., has promoted Mark Winchester to vice president/national sales manager. Joey Ruffin has been promoted to vice president of engineering. Mike Post was hired as regional sales manager in the Special Events division. Tim Lillpop was hired as general manager of sales in the Custom Products division. Visit www.anchorinc.com.

Aztec Tents of Torrance, Calif., has hired Eric Christensen and Cory Scott to oversee the company’s sales and distribution services throughout the Northeast and Southeast United States, respectively. Matt Pare has been hired as regional account manager for the mid-Atlantic territory. Visit www.aztectent.com.

Classic Party Rentals, Los Angeles, has hired Cathy Montez as senior event consultant. Kathy A. Newby has been hired as senior event consultant and James T. Newby III as tenting manager at Classic’s Napa, Calif., location. Visit www.classicpartyrentals.com.

■ M&A activity

Aztec Tents and Events and **Shaffer Sports Events**, Houston, Texas, have acquired the assets of **Colonnade Events** and **Events ala Carte** of Houston. Visit www.aztecusa.com and www.shaffersports.com.

Classic Party Rentals of Los Angeles has acquired **TriServe Party Rentals** of New York and **Chicago Party Rental** of McCook, Ill. Business at both companies will continue at existing locations but will be rebranded as Classic Party Rentals. Visit www.classicpartyrentals.com.

Classic Tent Rentals, New Britain, Conn., has been purchased by **Abbey Tent and Party Rentals**, Fairfield, Conn. Visit www.abbeytent.com.

■ Notables

Acme Party and Tent Rental of Houston, Texas, is celebrating 10 years of service under the ownership of Lure Capital Corporation. Visit www.acmerental.net.

Anchor Industries Inc. has launched its new Web site, www.anchorinc.com. The site features every Anchor product with a photo gallery, descriptions, downloadable information and installation instructions; an employment section; and a sales representative locator.

Jeffrey W. Kirk, president and COO of the newly created distribution division of Glen Raven (**Tri Vantage**)



has retired. Kirk served as chair of the Industrial Fabrics Association International (IFAI) board from Oct. 2005 to Oct. 2007, and served an additional 12 years on the IFAI board.

Glen Raven Inc. unveiled the name for its new distribution division: Tri Vantage LLC. Last May Glen Raven acquired The Astrup Co. and John Boyle & Co., two of the nation's largest distributors of products for the awning, marine, sign and casual furniture industries. Visit www.trivantage.com.

Q² Sales Company LLC, Burnsville, Minn., distributor for FLAGRO construction heaters, indirect fired heaters, radiant heaters and box heaters, is changing its name to Flagro USA Inc. as part of an ownership change. Visit www.flagrousa.com.

■ Correction

We regret that we did not include credit for the cover photo in the Oct./Nov. 2007 issue of *InTents*. The photo is by Natalie Sigler Domka, Bright Star



Versatile Images, and the centerpiece pictured was designed by Alice-Lynne Olson, owner of The Late Bloomer Floral Design Studio of St. Louis Park, Minn.

In the 2008 *InTents* Buyer's Guide, the e-mail address for Armbruster Manufacturing Co. is incorrect. The correct e-mail address is armbruster@springnet1.com. *InTents* regrets the error.

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Ontario and Quebec

Canadians are proud of their multicultural heritage, but their cultural celebrations can be challenging for tent rental companies. For example, June 24 is *Fête nationale du Québec*—the Quebec national holiday—and July 1 is Canada Day.

“Because only seven days separate those holidays, we must plan and hire more employees for that time and pay double rate, too,” says Martin St. Hilaire, president of Location de Tentes M&M Tent Rental Inc., Ville St. Georges, Quebec.

And those holidays aren’t the only peculiarity about doing business in Quebec—the French-speaking province legislates a “construction holiday” during the last two weeks in July, when the construction industry and many others take a vacation.

“Not only does this create many issues with regard to supply of materials, but this also coincides with a noticeable reduction in tent rental activities,” says Alexandre Renaud, international sales manager with Fiesta Tents Ltd., Lachine, Quebec.

Several tent experts from the provinces report that clearspan tents are increasingly popular. “Clients are becoming more and more knowledgeable about the different tent models that exist and are requesting more elaborate concepts,” Renaud says.

Low unemployment and the seasonality of the tent rental business in the provinces make labor retention difficult. Location de Tentes offers a productivity bonus to combat high turnover.

Barrie Tent & Awning Co. Ltd. of Barrie, Ontario, boasts employees who have been on the payroll for decades. But the company depends on student labor for the summer months.

“We have had high school students work two or three years, go on to university and work summers for four or five years and then come back and work for us until they



This issue: Ontario & Quebec, Canada
June/July 2008: Australia



Parabris Inc. installed this TopTent for the Francofolies Festival, an international gathering of French-speaking musicians held every summer in Montreal. Photo courtesy of Parabris Inc.

get a teaching position [or become a] police officer, security guard, etc.,” owner Bill O’Brien says.

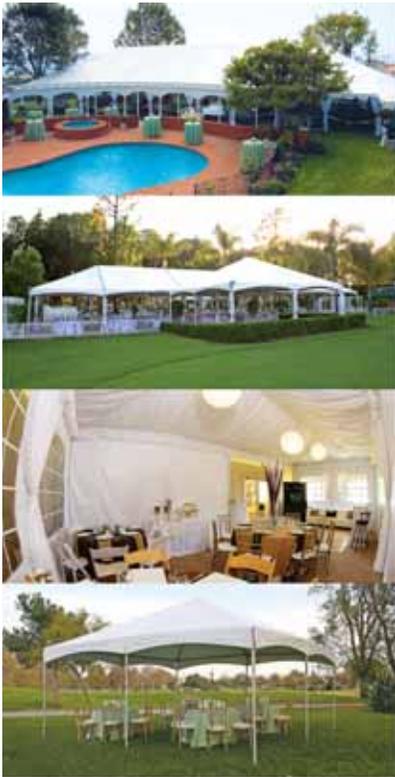
Parabris Inc., Outremont-Montreal, Quebec, specializes in TopTent—an automated, rapid-deployment tent—which helps to keep its labor needs minimal. The tent requires only one operator and one assistant for setup.

“We don’t need the same type of employees as traditional tent companies,” Parabris marketing coordinator Nathalie Lastrade says. “It is not necessary to have experience in tent installation to work with TopTent. We are looking for employees with a technical background.”

Renaud and Lastrade believe that branding and customizing tents will be the “next big thing” for the tent industry in their markets.

“We would like to see the day where sponsorship visibility will have a higher value than the rental itself,” Lastrade says. ■

[By Jill C. Lafferty, a freelance writer based in Burnsville, Minn.]



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Photo courtesy of
 Sugarplum Tent Co.

Creative and entrepreneurial

Rain or shine, event planner Allison Jackson gives her clients their dream celebrations.

As a Capitol Hill staffer, Allison Jackson gained valuable experience in protocol, scheduling and operations. But she wanted the opportunity to be creative and entrepreneurial as well, so she parlayed her political skills into event planning.

“The one thing I did not anticipate is how much I would enjoy working with families,” she says. “Most of my clients are planning social celebrations, meaning they are families, not corporations, not political organizations. It’s been very gratifying for me.”

Jackson left behind a Senate office for a catering company, where she learned more about the hospitality industry and began to plan large-scale tented celebrations. Then she launched her own event planning company, Pineapple Productions.

“Most of the tented events that I’m involved with are taking place in unique settings, like private properties or historic homes, and I really like the charm and personality of [these] events....At least with my clients, the tent often becomes the canvas for creating a look that the client has always dreamed of.”

Most of her clients for tented celebrations intend to hold their event in a tent when they hire her, but many don’t know what the options are or understand tenting requirements. She’s able to advise her clients because of the education and assistance she has received from tent rental experts.

“Davis [Richardson, Sugarplum Tent Co., Boyds, Md.] really took me under his wing and taught me about tenting,” Jackson says. “The time he put into [explaining to me] the logistics of installation and the equipment involved was just so generous of him.”

Without question, the biggest challenge she faces with tented events is weather. “The way I deal with that is to create a rain plan that a client can love as much as a good weather plan,” she says. ■

[By Jill C. Lafferty, a freelance writer based in Burnsville, Minn.]



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Graduation down to a science

Two tent rental companies resolve site challenges to stage successful graduation ceremonies.

Clifton Park Rental Center, Clifton Park, N.Y.

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's football field—surrounded by fencing in the center of the Troy, N.Y., campus—posed some challenges as a site for a graduation party.

“We were the first company they allowed to put tents on their football field,” says Mike Frodey, operations manager of Clifton Park Rental Center, which is in its fifth year of providing services for the institute's graduation. “Putting tents on the football field is a big deal. It's sacred. They trusted us because we've been doing business with RPI for at least eight years.”

In addition to the tents for the after-commencement party, Clifton Park sets up chairs for 10,000 for the outdoor commencement on the school's practice field. The graduation party takes place on the regular grass football field, with only one access point because of its fenced enclosure. “That requires much hand carrying of equipment, and we have to be careful of fiber-optic cable going through the ground,” Frodey says. Clifton Park relies on its two PiggyBack® forklifts, which are turf-friendly for setups over football fields.

Past setups have used a Eureka! Genesis® 40-by-130-foot tent and a 40-by-180-foot tent; behind them were 20-by-80-foot and 20-by-40-foot Eureka! Twin Tube® tents. In the middle field were two 50-by-90-foot Eureka! Genesis tents with tables and chairs underneath. Clifton Park delivers and sets up about 450 60-inch round tables in the middle of the field. Most of the tents

Tents on Rensselaer's football field, erected by Clifton Park Rental Center, were mostly used for shade and food service. Tables and chairs were set up nearby. Photo courtesy of Rensselaer/Kris Qua.



are used for food service and buffet lines. Setup and takedown require eight days using a crew of seven for the commencement picnic and a crew of five for the commencement itself.

For this annual event, Frodey attends institute planning meetings and presents detailed proposals and designs. “They always have to go out for bid and I never come in as low cost, but they keep using us because of the comfort level,” he says.

The rental center has Rensselaer’s graduation down to a science now, so he wouldn’t approach it differently, Frodey says. “It’s one of the events where it’s important to preplan. Everything has to come together. It gave us the confidence that we could do large-scale events.”

Special Events Tent & Party Rentals, Bangor, Pa.

Washington and Jefferson College has a large, grassy mall for enjoying the sunshine at the Washington, Pa., campus. But it’s low ground and tends to collect water, a problem confronted by Special Events Tent & Party Rentals three years ago when it covered the mall with a tent for commencement. “The second year we worked on the event, the problem was with the bowl,” says Butch Ruggiero, president and general manager of the Bangor, Pa., company. “The problem was constant rain.” The college worked on the drainage problem that year and made a permanent fix the following year. The fix included installation of French drains along both long sides of the tent. “Now any water draining from the tent or from the surrounding buildings is directed to the drains before it can make the lawn too soft to use,” Ruggiero says.

For this commencement event, the company does tent setup and lighting, and partners with RMC Rental Enterprises of Washington, Pa., the primary contractor on this job, to do chair and stage setup for 2,500 attendees.

Special concerns include staking; there are 256 stakes around the 80-by-260-foot Anchor Century® tent because the ground is soft. The tent slides into a slope with custom heights on one end to accommodate the slope. “It fits like a shoe,” Ruggiero says.

The commencement was a major event for the company the first year. “The tent was 80 feet wide by 240



The tent for the Washington and Jefferson College commencement “fits like a shoe” on the narrow, sloped site, says Butch Ruggiero, president of Special Events Tent and Party Rentals. Photo courtesy of Special Events Tent and Party Rentals.

feet long and represented the largest individual tent we had erected at that time,” he says. In addition, the college is 600 miles round-trip from the company’s home base, which meant transporting employees and equipment. “The rising cost of fuel and associated transportation keeps us constantly searching for the most economical method of moving equipment.”

Because the job can require an overnight stay, Ruggiero tries to replace labor with mechanical solutions. “For example, we can erect an 80-by-260 tent with as few as six men. Very little is done by hand.”

The job has taught Special Events how few people it can take to pull off an event of this size—with the right equipment. “It led us to clearly look at the cost of travel in this market. We only sent out four men last year. RMC provided two who worked with our equipment. This year we’ll attempt to do it with three and three of their men, plus equipment.” ■

[Putting tents on the football field is a big deal. It’s sacred.]

Mike Frodey

[By Terry Monahan, a freelance writer based in Minneapolis, Minn.]

Animated solutions

Regal Tent Productions uses 3D AutoCAD® technology to win a job and solve site challenges.

International Special Events Society Esprit award winner Regal Tent Productions Ltd. met challenges with innovation in 2007 when it was hired by the University of Pennsylvania to install tent structures for a fundraising gala.

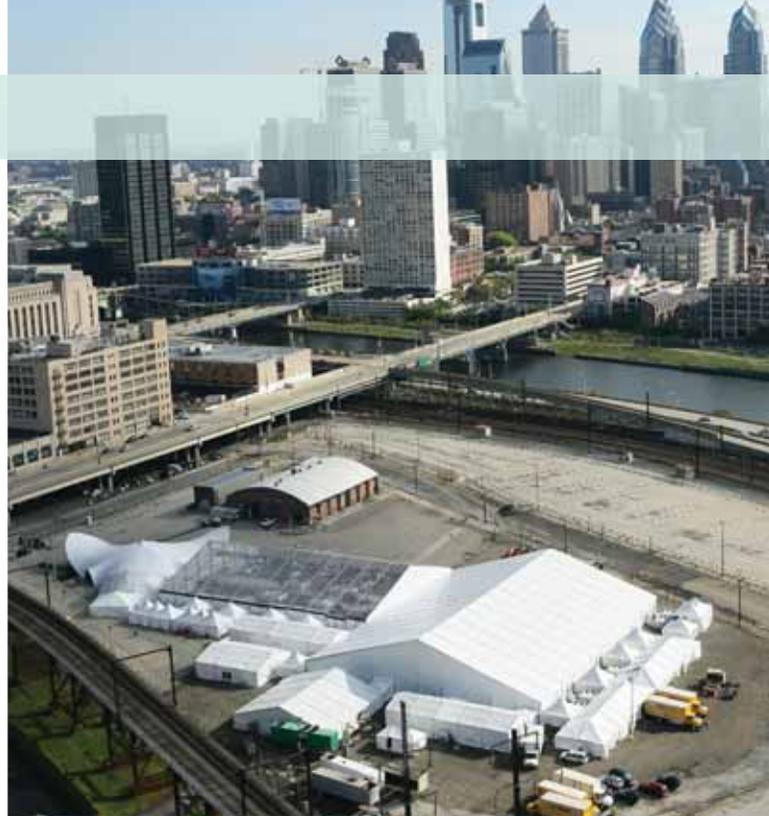
The first challenge for the Stoney Creek, Ontario, Canada, event company was pitching an idea that organizers would favor over the event's previous tent supplier and other well-known rental companies. The client wanted 100,000 square feet of tenting on the Ivy League university grounds that would allow 1,800 guests to enjoy breathtaking views of the Schuylkill River. "Winning this business would require impact, creativity and innovated thinking," Regal marketing director Lara McCulloch says.

Site snags

Regal discovered two obstacles with the site: the 7-inch difference between the lowest and highest levels of ground, and a freshly finished landscaping job including a concrete path, lined with permanent benches and lanterns, that ran directly through the site.

To address these challenges and help the client experience the event from the eyes of a guest, Regal hired Byrne Engineering Inc. of Burlington, Ontario, to create animated 3D AutoCAD® files. Regal provided Byrne with topographical CAD layouts of the site and CAD drawings for the structures and Byrne created the animated movie.

The proposed solution involved a scaffolding system that would enable adjustable legs to fit in the various points of terrain and support a level floor. The floor would be built over the benches and around the lanterns with the lanterns used as décor. The final AutoCAD animation contributed to a comprehensive and detailed



Event: University of Pennsylvania fundraising gala

Company: Regal Tent Productions Ltd.

Setup: 100,000 square feet of tent structures

Attendees: 1,800

Photo courtesy of Regal Tent Productions Ltd.

presentation that allowed the 17 meeting attendees to both hear and see how each individual concern would be addressed.

"The 3D AutoCAD video showcased the challenges of the location and highlighted how complex and costly the setup could be," McCulloch says. In response, the client decided to change the site's location to offer space for larger tents.

The night before the gala, a storm hit Philadelphia. "The large storm brought high winds and heavy rain, which made water rise so high it went over the floor's edges," McCulloch says. A 12-person crew spent the following day using large vacuums to dry the floor, and was on site until 2 a.m. fixing gutters and tightening walls. By nightfall, the team had successfully installed eight tent structures. ■

[By Dionne Cordell, IFAI editorial intern.]

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Down to details

A chandelier prototype will ensure that the florist, the client and tent installers are on the same page.

A long, cold Minnesota winter hasn't slowed planning for the June garden-themed wedding at the Oehler property on Lake Minnetonka.

"During the winter months we like to have clients come into our office to do tabletop demonstrations of the linen choices they want, their final table settings, look at their china, their glassware, their flatware, see what new items we're bringing in," Jim Bach, *Après Party and Tent Rental*, says.

In March, Bach received bride Sara Oehler and her mother Lynn at *Après'* store in Edina to do just that. For the meeting, florist Martha Lunde, of *Martha's Gardens* in St. Paul, created samples of the lush florals that will complement Oehler's garden, and the group discussed how to make the 80-by-70-foot pole tent seem more intimate.

The bride said she might like leafy garlands in and around the tent. Bach pointed out some challenges (for example, garlands around the perimeter can block the Italian bulb lights), and suggested that the florist could visit a similar tent setup to get a feel for the possibilities and limitations.

The group discussed everything from portable toilets to twinkle lights, hammering out details and looking at *Après'* photo books. Bach and Lynn Oehler have worked with Lunde to devise a tiered, chandelier-like floral centerpiece that will hang from the center of the reception tent. The chandelier will provide lighting by way of flickering LED lights, which *Après* will hand-paint to mimic real flame.

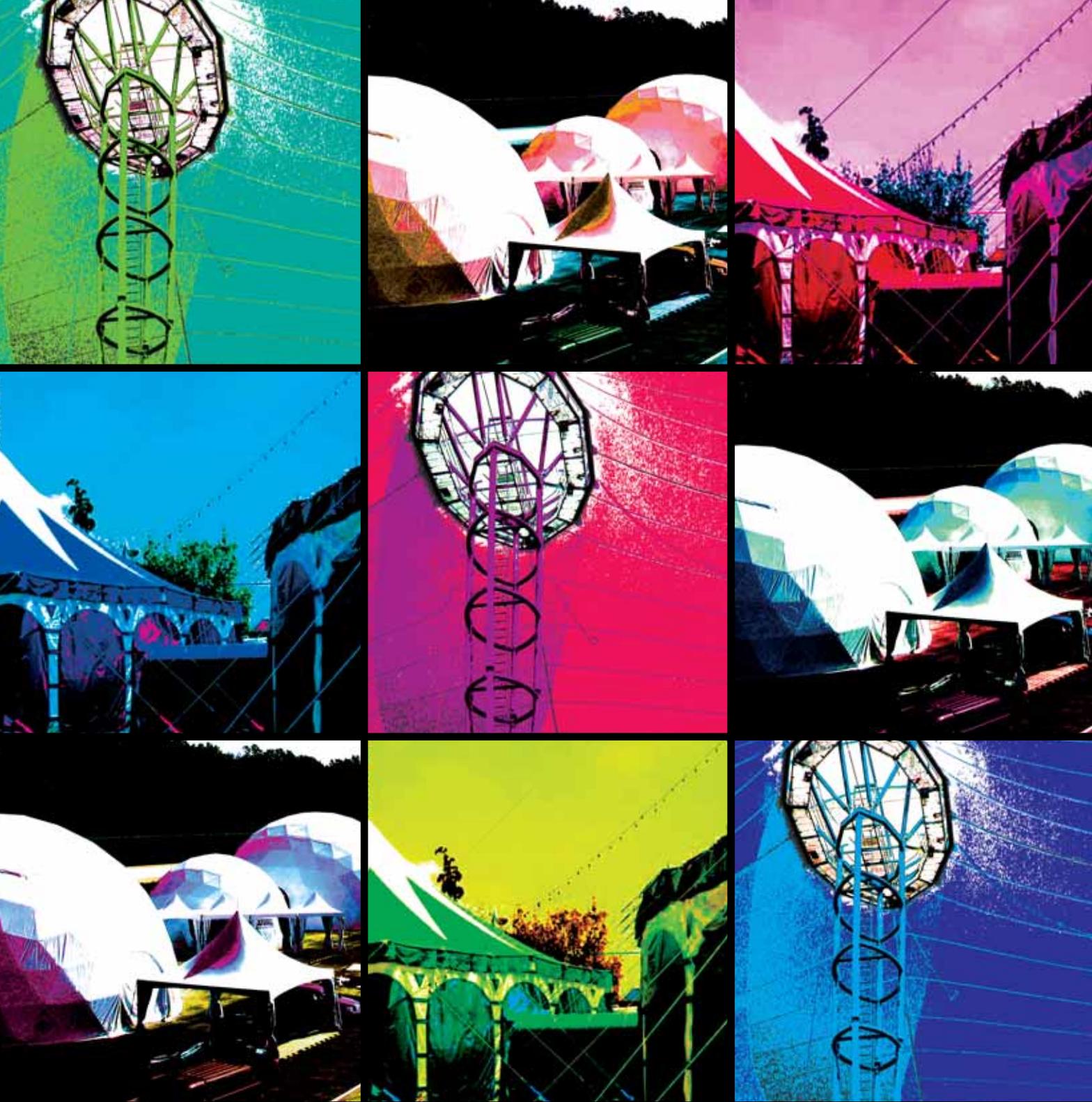


TOP Bach shows tent photos he captured on his phone to the bride, her mother and their friend. ABOVE The couple had a custom monogram designed for their wedding, which will be printed on paper and placed under each charger. BELOW LEFT The décor will be decidedly romantic, with soft pink, purple, yellow and green florals in varying antique-style silver and glass holders. Photos by Juliana Wallace.

The challenge of the chandelier, Bach says, is making sure that the florist's vision for the centerpiece works with the specifications of the tent. To make sure that all parties are on the same page, Lunde will build a prototype in the coming weeks for Bach to inspect and adjust as necessary.

"I think we're pretty close to her understanding what I need done and me understanding what she needs done," he says. ■

In June 2008, *Après Party & Tent Rental* will provide tents and other rental items for a 240-guest wedding in Wayzata, MN. In this section each issue, *InTents* will highlight a different aspect of planning the event.



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DISASTER STRIKES

You can't control Mother Nature, but you can control your response.

With winds estimated at 80 to 100 mph uprooting a 30-foot-tall pine and an oak tree with a trunk 3 feet around, tents set up for the 2007 Minnesota State Fair didn't stand a chance. Fortunately, the winds of ill fortune swept through the scene two weeks before Minnesotans were due to hit the midway.

"One of the tents was lifted right up out of the floor and turned upside down on top of the other," recalls David Mikelson, production manager for Minneapolis-based Skyway Event Services, the tent rental company that set up a 66-by-66-foot clearspan tent and another 40-by-60-foot tent for two vendors. "Both tents were completely destroyed."

Mikelson was one of the first Skyway representatives on the scene. The CEO and general manager (who had been out of town) were there the following morning. A representative of Skyway's insurance company also visited the scene.

Like anyone in the business, Mikelson wishes he could predict when a storm will blow down a tent.

"In this case, there was nothing we could have done, and that was all verified by the insurance company,"

he says. Skyway's insurer not only paid for tent damage, but also for labor to clean up the area so new tents could be installed right away.

"We brought in temporary labor to work with our guys," Mikelson says. Skyway also pulled its employees off other sites for a week and was fortunate enough to have inventory available to replace the destroyed tents.

Gone with the wind

If you're in the tent rental business and can't recall an instance when a tent went down, then you haven't



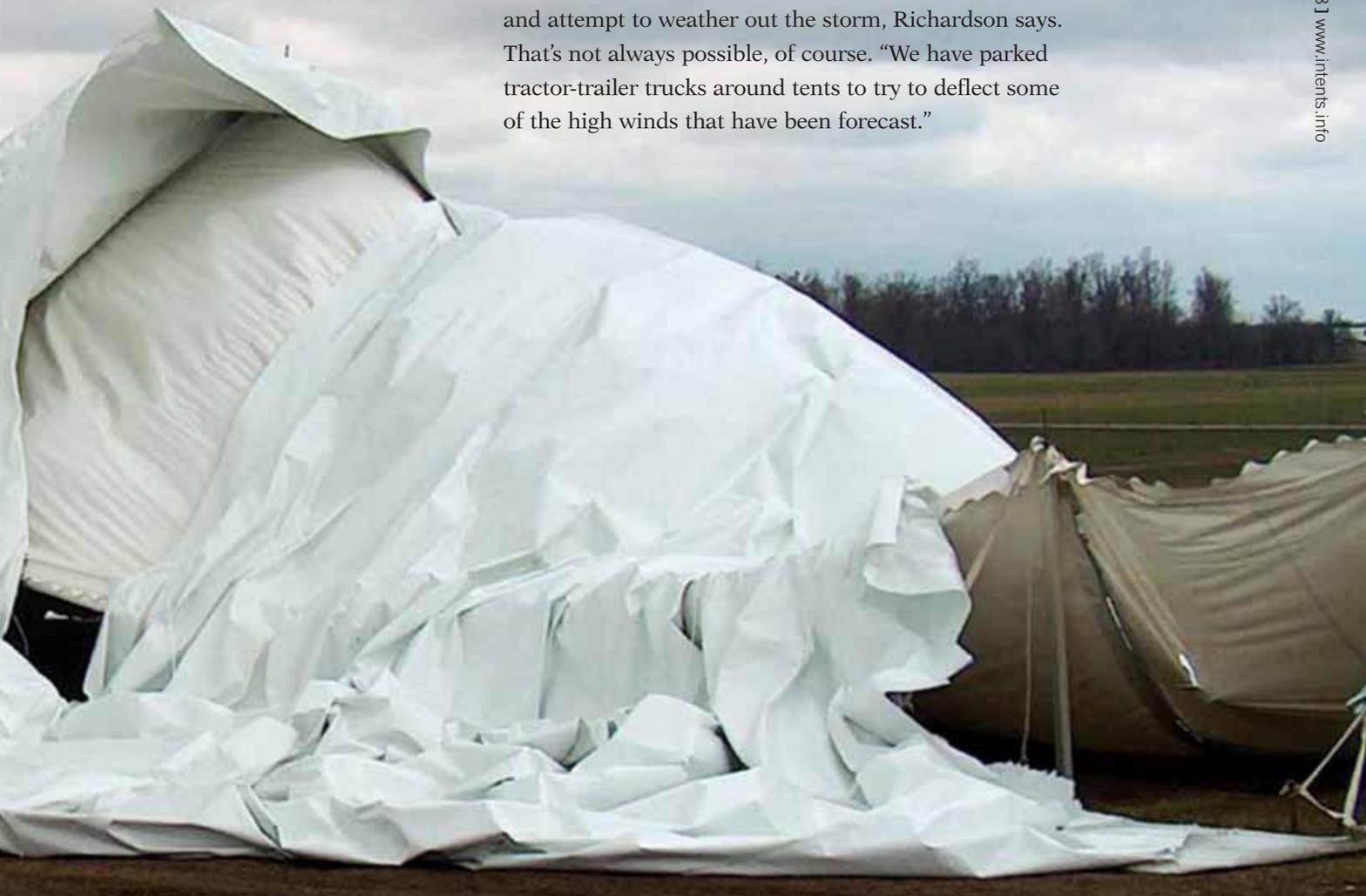
] The first thing you have to do is assess the situation and worry about injured persons. The equipment can be replaced easily. *Brian Richardson*]

been in the business long enough, says Brian Richardson, president of L&A Tent Rentals Inc., Hamilton, N.J. His own experience with a major tent “blow-down” dates back to Hurricane Gloria in 1985. L&A had tents at four events on Long Island—and, fortunately, enough manpower to take down three of them. The fourth succumbed to hurricane-force winds, but L&A was able to bring in and install new equipment in time for the event.

Recent improvements in equipment have reduced the frequency of tent blow-downs. “Twenty years ago, we would be up all night panicked if we heard winds were going to be 30 to 35 miles an hour,” Richardson says. “Now if it’s not going to be above 50, we are not even worried.”

The best thing anyone can do, he says, is to be prepared. “We have so much notice [of imminent storms] because of the Internet. We know when bad weather is going to strike, so we are pretty proactive in making sure we take every precaution that there’s no injury to persons.”

If they know that high winds are coming, L&A employees will get the equipment down on the ground and attempt to weather out the storm, Richardson says. That’s not always possible, of course. “We have parked tractor-trailer trucks around tents to try to deflect some of the high winds that have been forecast.”



The last major blow-down that Richardson recalls his company experiencing was in 1996 when a microburst hit Princeton, N.J., two hours before 350 guests were scheduled to arrive for a black-tie fundraiser.

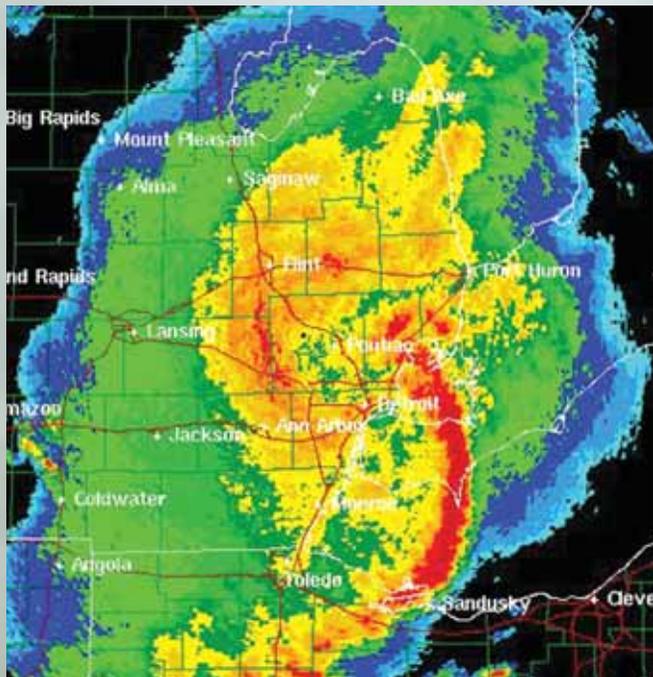
“It happened in less than 20 seconds, according to eyewitnesses,” he says. “The only people under [the tent] were catering staff and florists. Everyone was able to get out, but one person was hit by a side pole.”

As soon as a weather alert went out, L&A dispatched a crew to the site. Although those who had been on the scene indicated that no one was under the collapsed tent, the volunteer fire department took no chances and started “hacking” the tent with knives. With the tent a total loss, L&A contacted a local hotel, which agreed to host the event with only a 90-minute notice. L&A and various vendors worked with their insurance companies on property damage; the worker requiring medical attention was covered under the caterer’s workers’ compensation policy.

“The first thing you have to do is assess the situation and worry about injured persons. The equipment can be replaced easily,” Richardson says. “When we get a contract, we also send an information packet on safe use of tenting. In severe weather, we ask clients to evacuate all tents in 30-mph winds—not to say that a tent would go down in 30 mph, but that’s what we recommend.”

Assume a storm will hit

“We keep a constant eye on weather throughout the season, and when we are working long distance, we program our cell phones to a weather service that gives us weather alerts in that particular market,” says



BELOW LEFT Radar capture of the 2004 Michigan storm that downed tents. ABOVE AND OPPOSITE PAGE In 2004, high winds blew down tents in a Michigan parking lot and even blew one tent over the fence, where part of it rested on a streetlight. Photos for this article were collected by Peter McVey of McVey Tent & Expo Inc. These are not photos of tents installed by McVey Tent & Expo.

DODGE DISASTER

- Ensure tent components are in good condition and the tent is installed according to manufacturer’s instructions.
- Do not allow customers to assist in installing tents. They are less familiar than your employees with the equipment and installation process. And if they are injured in the process, you will be held liable.
- Include a hold-harmless condition in your rental contract, stating that the renter agrees not to hold you responsible for damage or injury resulting from the rented tent.
- Ask subcontractors for certificates of liability insurance naming you as an additional insured for the job.
- Warn the renter that a tent is a temporary structure that does not provide adequate protection from storms.
- Recommend that the renter have an evacuation plan and that people be evacuated from the tent in high-wind conditions.
- Check on tents that have been up for several days to ensure they are still secure. Keep records indicating such checks and any adjustments made.
- Keep an eye on weather patterns leading up to and during the rental period. If a big storm is predicted, cancel the job or, if the tent has already been installed, take it down. Compare the loss of revenue to the potential loss of damage to property or injury to people.

[Sidebar contributed by Maura Paternoster, ARA Insurance Services]



Peter McVey, owner of McVey Tent & Expo Inc. in Appleton, Wis. “The best thing I can say is we install tents pretending that a storm is going to hit it, regardless of the weather forecast.”

Michael Clawson, president and CEO of Diamond Rental in Salt Lake City, Utah, says there are times when you have to err on the side of safety, even if it means losing a customer.

“There have been circumstances where we bid putting up a snow-load structure [i.e., a tire store’s March tent sale] and we lost [the job] to another competitor that basically rolled the dice and just put up a frame canopy. I think owners of companies have to make a choice.”

Clawson says part of a tent rental company’s job is to educate customers so they understand the risks. The “painful thing,” he says, is that customers often are more interested in saving money than minimizing risk.

Maura Paternoster, risk manager for ARA (American Rental Association) Insurance Services in Kansas City, Mo., has seen the results of that attitude. She says a typical claim is damage to cars when winds blow down a tent sale at a car dealership because the dealership doesn’t want stakes pounded into its asphalt.

Paternoster advises tent renters to call their insurers “anytime something happens where they anticipate a claim coming out of it, whether it is their own property or somebody else’s.”

“If the tent is damaged to the point where they can’t use that same tent, then if the only claim they will be turning in is for damage to their own property, we recommend that they take photographs of the setup and damage,” she says. “And if they need to tear down the tent for the event, then that is OK, because it’s a claim under their own coverage.”

But if property damaged is involved, it’s always better to leave it where it is, Paternoster says.

“If ... the show must go on, and you need to clean up but property under the tent was damaged, that diminishes our ability to adequately and quickly determine what happened. Because if there was something that the installers did wrong, once they remove the tent, you might not be able to see that anymore. You have to rely on what people did or what they saw or think they saw happen.” ARA sends clients Industrial Fabric

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Association International's 2004 staking study on CD (ssl.blueearth.net/ifaibookstore/description.php?GR=16&CA=76&II=250).

As quickly as Mother Nature strikes with fury, she leaves a wake of calm, so savvy tent rental companies can rebound. Skyway took the right actions before last

year's Minnesota State Fair. "Both tents were at 100 percent by the time the fair started, and the fair went without a hitch," Mikelson says.

And *that* is the ultimate result every tent company wants. ■

[Janice Kleinschmidt is a freelance writer and editor based in Palm Springs, Calif.]

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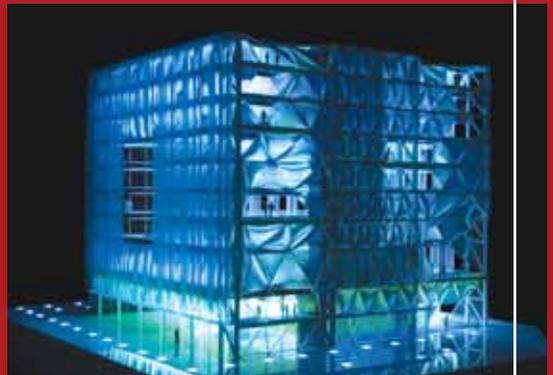
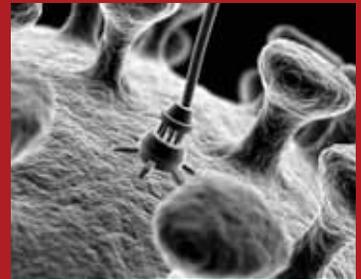
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Stylish tent solutions

RÖDER Zelt-und Veranstaltungsservice has introduced four new tent types:

The RÖDER party tent series **Bodega**® includes curved roof beams that give the tents a weightless easiness and attractive look. A special version, **Bodega**® SP, creates an imposing walkway.

New event tent RÖDER **Solution** can be arranged with a span width of 20 meters (65.6 feet) or 30 meters (98.4 feet). With a light roof pitch of 5 degrees, a molded depth of 6 meters (19.7 feet) and an inflated textile iso-roof, this tent makes any event a special occasion.

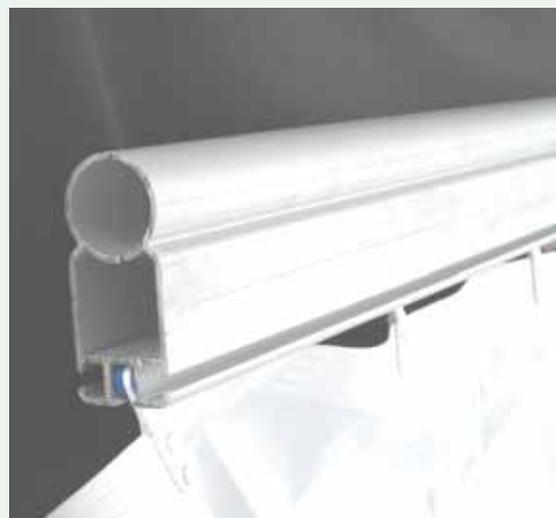
The RÖDER **Smoker's Tent** is the perfect answer to smoking bans. It is equipped with ventilation by four fans in the top of the roof and lattice at the bottom of the tent covers. With this, the air inside the tent can be changed completely in the space of five minutes.

For more information, contact **RÖDER Zelt-und Veranstaltungsservice**, www.r-zs.com.

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The **Roller Sidewall**, available from Olympic Tent and The SEC Group, replaces hooks on tent sidewall, elevating fabric structures to a new level of professional appearance and efficient installation. The rollers move smoothly along the eave tube, unlike hooks that catch and snag on sidewall rope. There is no sagging sidewall rope, and no hooks or Velcro to come loose. The top of the wall is closer to the eave tubing, keeping weather outside and valuable HVAC air inside the tent. The function of two-piece sidewall is also simplified, as roller wheels allow for easy movement along the track to zip or unzip the sidewall. Roller Sidewall is available in translucent, blackout, clear and window wall.

For more information, contact the **SEC Group**, www.theseigroup.com or www.olympictent.com.



Artistic and refined

The Sprech company introduces the **Liberty** tent, inspired by the decorative taste of the artistic movement from which it takes its name.

The standard structure of this tent is hot-dip galvanized steel, anthracite grey powder coated with some hand-forged decorative details. The covering is made of polyester fabric coated on both sides with PVC, assuring a high resistance to the elements. Carefully made in its details, simple in its shape and easy to assemble, the Liberty tent gives a touch of refined elegance to its surroundings.

For more information, contact **Sprech Tendocopture**, www.sprech.com.



Revolutionary tents

A new range of freeform tents and outdoor coverings is available from Bedouin Freeform Tents and Canopies. Unlike traditional marquees, freeform tents can be installed to fit almost any space and can be easily integrated around obstructions such as buildings, trees or stairs. The revolutionary fabric is water-proof, easy to transport and can be erected relatively quickly.

For more information, contact **Bedouin Freeform Tents and Canopies**, www.bedouintents.com.au.



Sunbrella for tent-like applications

Sunbrella® fabrics are an increasingly popular choice for tent-like applications, ranging from poolside cabanas to outdoor showers. Sunbrella awning fabrics are available in a variety of widths, including 46, 60, and 80-inch versions.

New Sunbrella fabric constructions include **Sunbrella Sheers** and **Sunbrella Shade**. Sunbrella Sheers are available in three versions that range from the wispy to the luxurious, each offering fade resistance, durability and ease of cleaning. Sunbrella Sheers are designed for use as architectural embellishments as well as privacy protection, perfect for bringing a romantic touch to a tent structure.

Sunbrella Shade is an open weave fabric, available in 15 colors, that can be used for draperies when a homeowner wants privacy along with color and a touch of elegance in an outdoor structure.

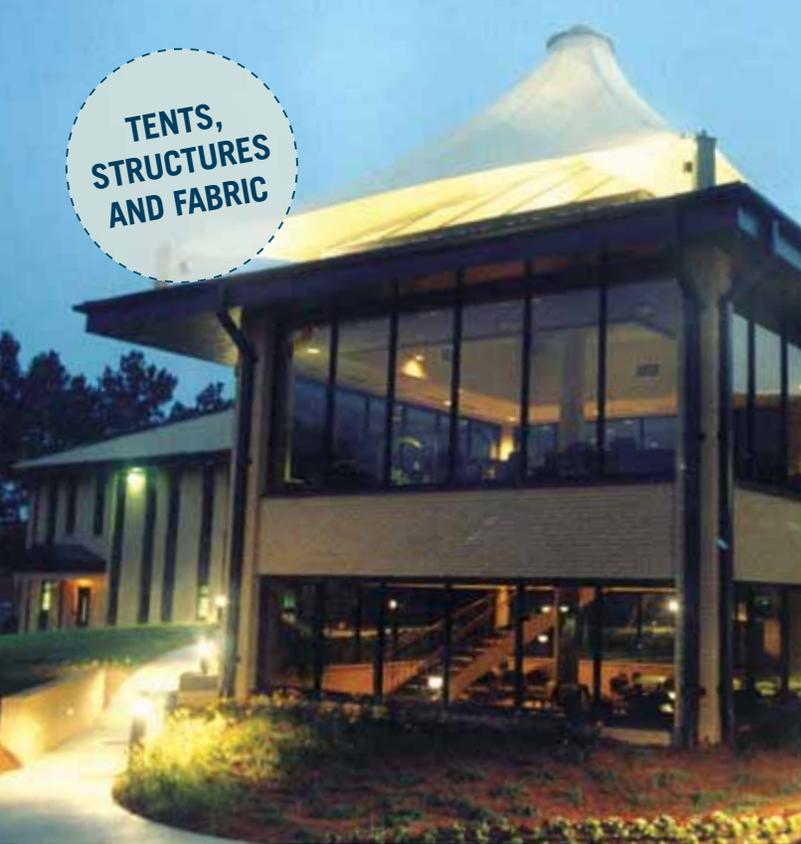
For more information, contact **Glen Raven**, www.sunbrella.com.



Editor's note: The companies in this section submitted their product information by the specified deadline. This section is organized by three product categories: tents, structures and fabric; event accessories; and tools and equipment. *InTents* features a regular New Products section in each issue. To have your new products included, please direct

your product information to the editor, Juliana Wallace, by e-mail at jwallace@ifai.com, by fax at +1 651 225 6966 or by mail at 1801 County Rd. B West, Roseville, MN 55113, U.S.A. Digital photos submitted by e-mail must be high-resolution (at least 300 dpi at four by five inches, or at least 1-2MB in file size).

TENTS, STRUCTURES AND FABRIC



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The new Glen Raven division Tri Vantage LLC is introducing two of the latest fabrics from Dickson, designed for large structures, clearspan and tents.

SunBlock is a 25-ounce-per-square-yard PVC-coated blackout structure fabric. Its coating increases weatherability and creates durability. SunBlock is a white fabric, available in 61, 98 and 118-inch widths.

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For more information, contact **Tri Vantage LLC**, www.trivantage.com.

Unique and aesthetically appealing

Three new tent designs in Losberger's **Energie Series** redefine creativity in tent designs.

The **Volcan** tent steals its design from the look of a volcano. A clear elliptical skylight in the high-peaked, curved roof covering lets in daylight or a view of the night sky. The **Cumulus** tent features a tri-dimensional, low-profile roof and optional circular skylights in the outer and inner roof panels. Four **Cyclone** units can be grouped together to collect rainwater, which will disappear into the middle of the tent pod, under the floor.

For more information, contact **Losberger US**, www.losbergerus.com.



An elegant look

Economy Tent International (ETI) announces a new line of fully pleated frame tent liners at an affordable price.

Elegant™ Tent Liners are manufactured with the highest quality flame retardant true white polyester material. The liners meet the California Fire Marshall Title 19, as well as NFPA-701 standards. The liners are fully expandable for unlimited versatility and are designed for easy installation. A choice of 7, 8 and 9-foot leg drapes with tie backs are also available. A fully pleated sidewall liner, available in 7, 8, and 9-foot options, rounds out the line. Elegant Tent Liners fit most frame tent systems.

For more information, contact **Economy Tent International**, www.economytent.com.

Quality and value

Heytent® laminate fabrics for tents from the Julius Heywinkel Group are a good and cost-effective alternative to the well-known and tested **Heytex®** fabrics. Heytent is available in widths of 61 and 126 inches, with a weight of about 12.5-16.5 ounces per square meter. In contrast, Heytex fabrics for tents are available in widths of 61, 86, 98, 118 and 197 inches with a weight of about 19 ounces per square meter. Both Heytent and Heytex fabrics are available in blackout versions.

For more information, contact **Julius Heywinkel GmbH**, www.heytex.com.

Color is in

Baytex USA is offering 12 new color options. The new fabric colors include hues for every season and holiday theme: Atomic Red, Purple, Burgundy, Seaside Green, Kelly Green, Light Jade, Alps Blue, Bright Blue, Ballet (pink), Yellow Chiffer, Summerset and Cognac. These colors are an addition to the **Baytex Silkline** white, champagne and black standard options.

The new colors are made to order and require about a 4- to 6-week lead time. The fabric is flame retardant and passes NFPA-701 Small Scale and California Reg. #F-50001 requirements. Like the original Baytex Silkline fabric, the new colors are washable and colorfast for years of simply gorgeous tent transformations.

For more information, contact The **SEC Group**, www.theseccgroup.com.



Pole covers and tent liners for special occasions

Charnecke Tents Inc. has introduced tent liners and pole covers that give an elegant look to any special occasion. They are constructed using flame retardant, 100 percent polyester material and are washable. The liners are easy to install and come in various sizes.

For more information, contact **Charnecke Tents Inc.**, www.charnecketents.com.

Full opacity

Bruin Plastics Company Inc. announces **Mardi-Gras™** 14-ounce white opaque tent top fabric, joining the company's line of 16 and 18-ounce opaque tent fabrics. This fabric is able to obtain full opacity at only 14 ounces per square yard. Bruin is also introducing a wide 98.5-inch, 16-ounce white opaque sidewall fabric, along with a translucent 10-ounce white sidewall available in 62-inch and 85-inch widths. The complete line of fabrics features high tear and tensile strength, rot resistance, superior cleanability and flame retardancy, all at a competitive price.

For more information, contact **Bruin Plastics**, www.bruinplastics.com.

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EVENT
ACCESSORIES

New event line from Moss

Moss Inc. has launched a new product line designed specifically for the event market. The new **Moss Events** line includes columns, walls, arches, themed backdrops and functional décor.

Themed photographic backdrops, available in 26 different graphics—from beach scenes to cityscapes—are printed on wrinkle-resistant recycled Moss Green Knit fabric using a high-quality digital photo fabric process.

Moss Mosaics are modular shapes designed to clip together to create small or large backdrops. A multitude of patterns and designs can be achieved with these simple panels.

Moss has also added wireless and battery-operated **LED lighting fixtures** to its line of lighting offerings. Many of the columns and towers in the Moss Events line have been designed to work with these lights.

For more information, contact **Moss Inc.**, www.mossinc.com.

Far-out seating

The new **Qar-Couch™** from Bubble Collection is made of Arpro, a wonderful new foam material that makes furnishings more convenient and enjoyable. This material is incredibly light and strong, and can support 300 pounds per “slice.” To clean, just wipe with a damp cloth, or sterilize it with steam. The Qar-Couch pieces can be put together to provide an endless amount of seating in colors including black, gold, green, magenta, orange, silver, white and blue. Five sections are the equivalent of one seat.

For more information, contact **Bubble**, www.bubblemiami.com.





Improved folding chair

The "Max" Series Poly Performance chair delivers a new level of quality never before manufactured in a poly fold chair. Although it looks like a regular poly fold chair, the "Max" outperforms with a static load of more than 1,000 pounds, whereas the average poly fold chair fails with a static load of 300 to 500 pounds. This totally redesigned chair utilizes double tubing in key areas of the frame, metal rivets on the seat glide, and extended seat hinges for additional support attaching to the metal seat insert, which prevents collapse and seat breakage even under the harshest conditions. The innovative safeguards will help eliminate liabilities and increase your return on investment.

For more information, contact **The SEC Group**, www.theseigroup.com.

Light your decor

Set your next event apart with new submersible, reusable **Floralytes**. Whether you have floral arrangements or water centerpieces you can show them off with these beautiful lights. Just twist to activate and place them into the water. Choose from white, amber or a color changing light that rotates through a rainbow of colors. When finished, twist them to the off position and save them for your next event. What a beautiful way to decorate.

For more information, contact **Tentwares Accessory Catalog**, www.tentwares.com.



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TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Solution for ground protection

Signature Flooring Systems introduces **DuraDeck™**, a line of heavy-duty ground protection and access mats that create a protective roadway, walkway or working platform over several types of terrains and surfaces. DuraDeck protects valuable lawns and landscaped areas from vehicle and equipment damage; provides traction for vehicles operating in mud, sand or soft terrain; and provides a safe and attractive pedestrian walkway or working platform.

DuraDeck1 (DD1) is a heavy-duty one-half-inch-thick recycled polyethylene plastic mat for protecting valuable lawns and surfaces from damage by vehicles and equipment.

DuraDeck2 (DD2) shares all the features of DD1, but offers a more attractive and pedestrian-friendly surface on one side and the same rugged traction design on the other side.

DuraDeck3 (DD3) is ideal for pedestrian use and where a more gentle tread pattern is required for the underside.

For more information, contact **Signature Fencing & Flooring Systems LLC**, www.duradeckmats.com.

Unique fastening system

APLIX Inter-mold® technology—an innovative new method of integrally molding a field of hooks (for self-gripping fastening) within an injection molded component—sets a new standard for closure systems in the tent manufacturing industry.

APLIX has introduced the inter-mold fastener that has the hooks integrally molded in the form of a stick, washer or directly onto a plastic part associated with the tent structure. The field of hooks can be designed in any shape and size in virtually any location on a component.

In addition to the inter-mold technology, APLIX offers a wide range of self-gripping fasteners designed for the tent and shelter market.

For more information, contact **APLIX Inc.**, www.aplix.com.

Boom innovation

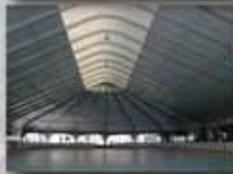
The Haulotte Group has introduced the innovative **Telescopic Big Boom HB86 TJ+ (H28 TJ+)**. The new Big Boom has a telescopic jib that offers a 16-foot-5-inch additional reach to work in the most challenging environments. It features an outreach of 75 feet, 6 inches; simultaneous movements; an 8-foot platform; and a capacity to rapidly lift heavy loads (up to 772 pounds). The boom and the jib, with its hexagonal cross section in high elastic modulus steel, are exceptionally rigid, providing greater stability to the HB86 TJ+ (H28 TJ+) for improved operator comfort.

For more information, contact the **Haulotte Group**, www.haulotte.com.

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Clean Awn® knows that its signature line of fabric cleaning products are good because it uses those products daily in its own awning and tent cleaning business. All of the cleaners are safe to use on solution-dyed acrylic and PVC/vinyl fabrics. The formula was designed to create a mid-range PH cleaner that will not damage, stain or leave a chemical residue on fabric. Clean Awn provides an array of services in addition to cleaning products—if you don't have the time or manpower to clean your tents yourself, ship your fabrics to its Southern California warehouse to be cleaned.



When you use Clean Awn, you are protected by years of experience.

For information contact Clean Awn, www.cleanawn.com.

New electronic foot press

DOT Fasteners has added the **M200 Electric Foot Press** to its attaching machine offerings. The M200 is capable of setting various types of fasteners, as well as grommets and washers, with a simple die change. Engineered for efficiency and operator convenience, the M200 operates at a low noise level and includes a target light, safety guard, side trays and an automatic compensation unit that allows fasteners to be fitted to materials with varying thicknesses without adjusting the die height.

For more information, contact **DOT Fasteners**, www.dotfastenersdirect.com.



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TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT



Safe and efficient

Teeco **Stackable Stake Bins** are the safe and efficient method to store and transport tent stakes. Each bin has a capacity to hold ninety 42-inch tent stakes. Safety stacking cups around each leg prevent the bins from sliding during loading, unloading and transport to the job site. Additional safety is provided with fork lift channels welded to the bottom of each bin. These channels prevent side-to-side sliding when the

bins are being transported using a fork lift. Stackable stake bins help keep your shop clean by neatly storing your inventory of tent stakes; the bins reduce labor needs by making it much quicker and easier to load, unload and transport tent stakes to the job site; and they increase efficiency during the tent setup process by helping to safely transport stakes.

For more information, contact **Teeco Solutions**, www.teecosolutions.com.

Enhanced management

Dashboard Version 2.0 software from Systematic (Texada) uses a wide variety of intuitive, multi-colored charts to accurately measure the key performance indicators of the rental business and to highlight problems. Automated pop-up and e-mail alerts provide instant feedback.

The software offers metrics such as revenue by product class and group, average value per contract and corporate revenue by store location. Utilization can be viewed in general, annualized terms or by specific units.

Systematic Dashboard Version 2.0 is fully integratable with other applications or can be used as an additional module to Systematic Rental Management Version 6.0.

For more information, contact **Texada**, www.texadasoftware.com.



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For more information, contact **303 PRODUCTS Inc.**, www.303products.com.



Green Monster upgrades

Green Monster Manufacturing announces the **Series 1000 LS**—the company's biggest overhaul yet on the green machine since the **Green Monster Hydraulic Stake Puller** debuted in 2002. Along with important improved features on the stake puller, tent installers can now choose from two models of the stake puller and two styles of jaws.

The self-propelled model of the stake puller is a significant, if more expensive new piece of equipment available to professional tent installers; also added are new jaw options making the monster more universal—you can now pull stakes for every frame and pole tent and every structure in your inventory. The redesigned, reinforced handle and grip give the Green Monster added strength and durability; and keeping the Monster in top shape is easier with the oil drain in the frame feature. As a bonus, the heavier grab hook can hold a meatier chain for those tough situations.

For more information, contact **Green Monster Manufacturing**, www.greenmonsterinc.com.

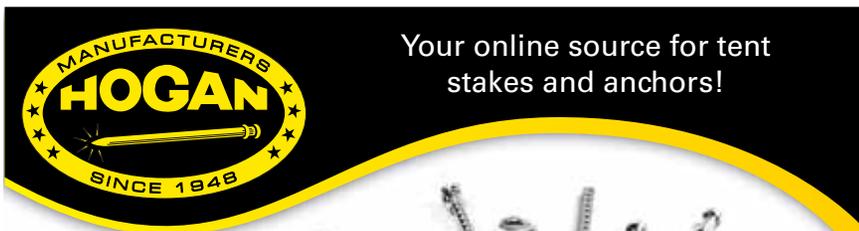
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TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Innovative fabric puller

The new and innovative **Fiesta Fabric Puller** machine is made to pull tent tops on any and all clearspan structures. This innovative piece of machinery will not only significantly reduce labor requirements related to pulling tent tops, but it will also dramatically reduce the time needed to perform this necessary task. The most significant feature of this product is the pulling sensitivity. As opposed to pulling with trucks or forklifts, this machine gives the operator a sense of the resistance offered when pulling the fabric. This feature allows the operator to stop the process and maintain the top in place while another technician clears any obstructions. This prevents overstressing the tent tops and/or ripping the fabric. It's portable, lightweight and easy to use.

For more information, contact **Fiesta Tents Ltd.**, www.fiesta.ca.



The right tool for the job

The Drill-Right Fixture from The SEC Group allows 2-inch aluminum tube that has been purchased from different sources or cut down to their current size to be drilled for proper hole alignment with tent fittings. Using a drill press and any twin tube to create a bed for the tube being drilled, the fixture aligns both ends of the 2-inch tube, and allows for accurate, 3-inch indexing from the end of the tube and a perfectly vertical hole.

The SEC Group has updated its **Maximizer Keder Bullet Install Kit, Keder Repair Kit, and Vinyl Repair Kit** to be even more useful for maintenance projects or field repairs. The Keder Bullet Install Kit has everything you need to install keder bullets using a standard drill. Included are a steel drilling guide for either 11-millimeter (.43-inch) or 13-millimeter (.51-inch) keder, a drill bit, an allen wrench and 50 keder bullets.

The Keder Repair Kit includes everything you need to repair torn keder on slide-in tops. The kit includes a roll of keder wrapper, vinyl glue, a silicon roller, a keder bullet drilling guide with drill bit, and 50 keder bullets to help prevent future damage.

Perfect for field repairs, the Vinyl Repair Kit includes 2-inch and 4-inch adhesive patching circles, a roll of adhesive patch strip, vinyl glue, vinyl fabric, a vinyl drilling tool, sidewall hooks and powder.

For more information, contact The **SEC Group**, www.theseccgroup.com.

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For more information, contact **Sinclair Equipment Co.**, www.sineqco.com.



Save money and avoid injuries

The **Tent Crew Center Pole Hoist** was developed to assist the tent rental industry by lowering setup costs and saving on medical costs due to back injuries. For 40-foot-wide tents, a crew of two can erect the center pole with little effort, and on larger tents the crew typically can be reduced by half. The **model 1700** is for tents up to 40 feet wide, and the

model 3700 is for tents up to 100 feet wide. The kit comes with two carts: a pole cart that will cradle 4, 5, or 6-inch center poles, and a winch cart with winch, battery box and easy tote handle.

For more information, contact **L.B. Breck Sales Group**, 866 966 9333; **R.A. Markert & Associates**, 800 295 7955, and **Gecko Sports**, 866 424 3256.

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The fine art OF JOB COSTING

How to avoid surprises that could hurt your bottom line.

There's no such thing as a free lunch. No matter where a tented luncheon or special event takes place, you can be sure that every tent, chair, table, glass and fork has been accounted for and assigned a price. Every minor detail that goes into creating a memorable event has costs associated with it, and rental companies that don't figure those costs correctly don't stay in business for long.

Time is money

Installing and tearing down a tent efficiently is the key to keeping labor costs at a minimum. When putting together a costing model, companies often track every aspect of the job to make sure every minute counts. This allows companies to factor in direct and overhead costs, track expenditures and have more control over the bottom line.

Steve Frost, president of Stamford Tent & Event Services in Stamford, Conn., says he costs about 90 percent of the company's jobs because he knows that administrative work, insurance and labor play a part in the big picture. He tracks the number of hours in pulling and preparing the truck for installation, then reverses

the process for teardown. He doesn't stop examining costs until the tent is washed and put back in storage.

"We take all of that into account to find the ideal job cost," Frost says. "We have standard rental rates and we know how to adjust those costs when it comes to extraordinary installation costs."

Dennis Birdsall, general manager of Premier Party Rentals Inc. in Stuart, Fla., says he works backward when pricing out the job in

[Sometimes the smallest thing can make or break the profit.

Dennis Birdsall]



order to determine the bottom line for every variable. Can the truck be driven into the job site? Will installers have to haul the tent 200 yards to the site? Are they going over trees and bushes? Is it winter, making the ground difficult to work with?

“We don’t think about how much time it should take, because every job is different,” he says, noting that unforeseen circumstances can greatly change the way the job is configured. “Sometimes the smallest thing can make or break the profit. Sometimes the sales department misinforms us about the job, which can waste time on some of the more complicated jobs.”

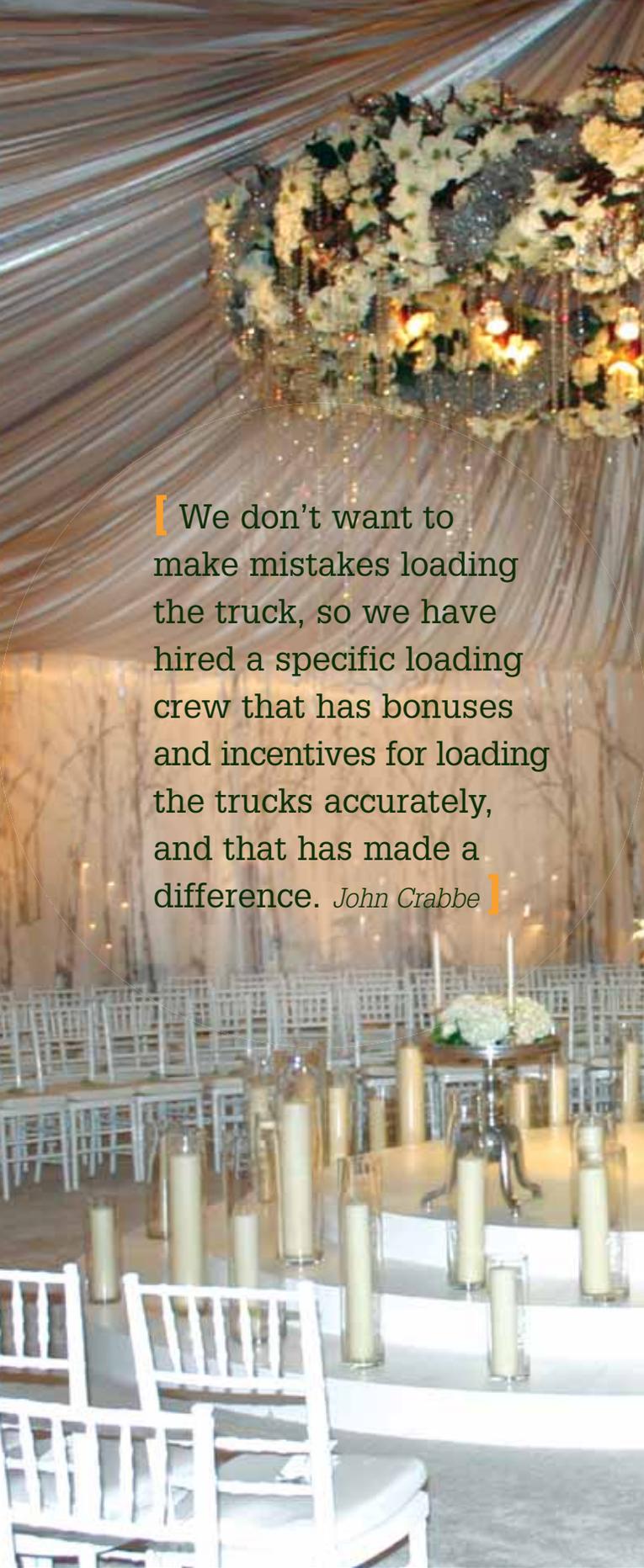
Keeping track of every detail

Rental companies generally know their overhead costs well and factor them into the pricing model effortlessly. “In our job costing, we do break down all of our direct costs because we know our indirect costs and we know



Ken and Jodi Jacobs, Raymond Bros. Ltd., stand with their new 100-by-300-foot tent that was manufactured in-house. Ken Jacobs says it is important to inspect materials yearly. Each new tent at Raymond Bros. is depreciated over a 10-year period. Photos courtesy of Raymond Brothers Ltd.

Raymond Bros. assembled this 100-by-300-foot tent. Owner Ken Jacobs says the London, Ontario, Canada, company installs many tents during the winter months, when it is particularly important to know the type of ground and site conditions in order to price the job accurately.



[We don't want to make mistakes loading the truck, so we have hired a specific loading crew that has bonuses and incentives for loading the trucks accurately, and that has made a difference. *John Crabbe*]

Stamford Tent & Event Services can create a multi-level event with sub-floors, tents, canopies, lighting and carpeting. President Steve Frost says each element is costed so the company can profit on the event. Photo courtesy of Stamford Tent & Event Services.

where our bottom line should be," says John Crabbe, president of Vermont Tent Co. in South Burlington, Vt. "We break down every part of the job from pickup to unloading the truck. Job costing helps to decide how many men should go on each type of job. We know that weddings have more detail work and take longer than a backyard party. We feel it is important to keep track of what we can in order to be able to make adjustments and become more profitable as a company."

Fluctuating fuel costs are a particularly tricky issue for rental companies. Tent rentals are booked months in advance, and it's difficult to predict what fuel prices might do between the time the client locks in a price and the time of the actual event.

Ken Jacobs, owner of Raymond Brothers Ltd. of London, Ontario, Canada, began purchasing fuel 2,000 liters (528 gallons) at a time to keep his fuel costs manageable. "Having onsite refueling is a huge asset," Jacobs says. "We plan on two trips per job, but if we have to make a third trip that we weren't planning on, we have to try and balance it on the jobs where only one trip is needed. You become good at not forgetting stuff."

When onsite refueling isn't an option, some companies increase delivery charges or add a surcharge to balance fluctuating fuel prices. Birdsall says he has had to increase his delivery charges, but he has also taken the extra step to arrange setups geographically to minimize delivery costs.

"One of the things we can control is getting as much equipment on the truck and being as efficient as possible," he says. "If you are making small deliveries, you have to try and cram as many of them on a route as you can. We plan accordingly, and if you have another job nearby, that can help you a lot."

Crabbe says a lot of clients are put off by additional surcharges, so his company has raised its prices to compensate for fluctuating fuel costs, and he has also focused on the truck-loading crew.

"We don't want to make mistakes loading the truck, so we have hired a specific loading crew that has bonuses and incentives for loading the trucks accurately, and that has made a difference," he says.

Controlling inventory

Adding new equipment and depreciating older materials are additional factors in the job-costing model. Software programs that help price out jobs and

MANAGING THE MONEY

Whether they use pencil and paper, a fancy computer software program, or a CFO or accountant, rental companies have a host of options when it comes to setting up their financial infrastructure.

Brian Duncan, a former accountant, helped Ken Jacobs set up his costing model when Jacobs purchased Raymond Brothers Ltd. 10 years ago. Duncan says that by breaking down jobs into segments that examined cost of renting, the lifespan and depreciation of materials, fuel and labor costs, they were able to develop a model that works for them.

“I’m not sure we are perfect at it, but we went into it extensively, and it seems to be working years later,” Duncan says, noting that tiered distance pricing helps manage ever-fluctuating fuel prices along with other labor-related issues.

David G. Cochrane CPA, CFP has been a party rental accountant since 1988 and says an exit strategy needs to be considered early on. Some people want to build a family business that can be passed on, while others may sell at some point.

“Whatever course you choose will affect day-to-day decision making. Investor groups want to see a minimum of 20 percent earnings before interest, taxes, deduction, and amortization (EBITDA). What you choose to buy in order to grow and maintain your business ultimately helps decide the value of the enterprise. If [capital expenditures are] around 8 percent, there is not a whole lot of room to poorly job cost or discount the selling price of the service provided.”

inventory can also help you decide where new materials are needed. Crabbe says he looks at how often they have had plenty of a particular product or have run out and had to sub-rent. After 30 years in the business, he says he knows what his tents earn him per square foot and what kind of return he gets per item. His company also depreciates its materials per IRS standards annually.

Jacobs says he inspects tents yearly for quality purposes and depreciates them over a 10-year period.

“We don’t get rid of too much of our inventory, such as dishes and cutlery. We find that we are adding to it and making sure that anything that is damaged gets repaired so that it is not down for any length of time,” he says.

Loss of items can quickly add up to major financial problems. At any event, tables can be moved or misplaced, so it is important that everything is accounted for. Damage also has to be evaluated. Frost says his foreman analyzes the condition of materials during takedown and notes any repair or cleaning needs for a particular tent. Having an in-house maintenance staff helps with necessary repairs. He plans each year to reinvest 10-12 percent on new equipment, which balances the company’s depreciation figures.

Of course, the best inventory investment is to take care of materials in order to get the most life out of them.

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This tent over a garden courtyard fits snugly on three sides, creating a difficult installation. Dennis Birdsall says that if your sales staff does not charge correctly for a product, nor inform operations of a job's difficulties, you'll lose money on the job and arrive unprepared for the installation. Photo courtesy of Premier Party Rentals Inc.

"I see many companies throw equipment around, and that puts a lot of tear and strain on it," Birdsall says. "Taking the time to lay ground cloths to prevent scratches and stocking materials clean rather than dirty will help you get the most out of your money." ■

[Julie Young is a freelance writer in Indianapolis, Ind.]

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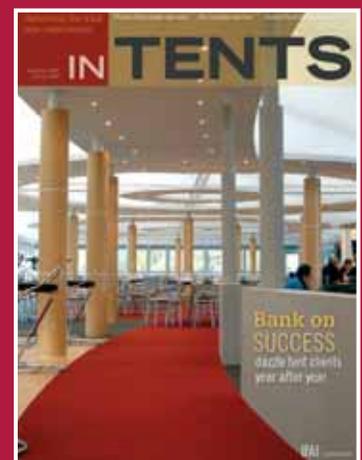
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How to be seen

Use PR strategies to create visibility for your business.

Customers can't choose you if they don't know you exist. So how do you break into their consciousness? One way is to advertise in publications, but another strategy is to get your business onto the editorial pages of those same periodicals. The editorial pages provide that elusive third-party implied endorsement that gets readers' attention—and can translate into more sales, faster.

"Ideally, you want to be mentioned in the publications that your customers are reading when they are thinking about a purchase," says Rob Davis, international public relations consultant.

Bryan DeSena, senior publicist at Roddan Paolucci Roddan, says you have to decide who you are trying to reach with your message. "If it's industry peers, then many of the industry's specialty trade publications—like *InTents*—should be a priority. If your goal is reaching a general consumer audience, then you should look at publications including daily newspapers, business publications or lifestyle magazines, which appeal to a larger readership base."

Be newsworthy

Brad Whalen, vice president of Bonita Springs, Fla.-based Sulk Whalen Public Relations, which represents Creative Events & Rentals of Fort Myers, Fla., recommends that you weigh your information against two questions to determine its newsworthiness:

- Does this news provide a benefit to the general public/potential clients?
- Does it have an economic impact on the community?

"For the first example, we like to do press releases on company personnel any time they have added industry accreditation or additional educational coursework to their resume. Sure, it's a way to get the company name in the newspaper, but it is also indicative of the seriousness that a company places

What makes your news newsworthy?

- Personnel changes
- Promotions
- Growth
- New product advancement
- Interesting events
- Subjects appropriate to the audience
- Topics that fit the editorial calendar
- News that is time-sensitive



in staying on top of the latest industry developments and a sign of an individual employee's eagerness and ambition to provide the best possible service to a client."

On the second question, new hires, new locations, and other kinds of expansion positively affect the local economy and tax base. When Creative Events & Rentals opened a new headquarters, Whalen distributed information addressing how many jobs were created, the business context that prompted the new headquarters and the projected revenue expansion. Two days after the groundbreaking ceremony, Creative Events & Rentals president George Ghanem received a phone call from a potential client who'd seen a newspaper article the previous day.

Make it easy

Provide your information to the media in the easiest-to-use format, and ensure that you are sending your information to the right person. "A few things that will always elicit an appreciative response from the press: easy access to high-resolution photos, a well-spoken company representative who can make himself or herself quickly available for interviews, and well-written event recaps or summaries," DeSena says.

Providing good visuals with your story makes using your information easier for the reporter. "Images that depict fun events or candid expressions and activities are more likely to be used," DeSena says. "A photo of your staff standing in front of a white tent in a green park is probably not going to get the job done."

Davis suggests having a variety of photos on hand—some media outlets want silhouette shots (just the product), some like to have people in the product shots showing how it is used, and some want only CEO headshots.

He also emphasizes the need to keep your promises (if you promise something in 30 minutes, do not miss your deadline) and to provide materials that are honest and well-written. It is also helpful to have customers available and willing to talk about the product.

Finally, be aware that your press release will most likely not be published exactly how you wrote it. You can provide assistance, Davis says, but you cannot edit the story, direct the storyline or otherwise be in complete control. ■

[By Jessica Sellers, marketing specialist at IFAI.]

The rendering of the new headquarters of Creative Events & Rentals was included in a press packet for the groundbreaking ceremony.

Keep in mind

- Publications often work three to five months ahead
- Newspapers want local stories relevant to their readers
- Topics already in the news have a higher chance of getting published
- Topics should relate to their intended audiences

Gear up for safe working

Click It! campaign

Despite it being an ANSI/OSHA requirement, many boom lift operators don't wear a full-body harness and short lanyard. Aerial Work Platform Training Inc. (AWPT) launched the Click It! campaign in 2007 to encourage occupants of boom type lifts of the need to wear this important safety equipment.

The simple message "Click it! Wear a full body harness and short lanyard in boom type platforms" has had great initial support and success. The International Powered Access Federation (IPAF), AWPT's parent organization, reports that more than 165,000 Click It! stickers have been distrib-



Downloadable artwork for printing your own Click It! sticker is available at www.awpt.org/resources/click-it-campaign/.

uted throughout Europe. In North America, AWPT members such as NES Rentals, Sunbelt, Midwest Aerials and Admar Supply agreed to place the stickers on every boom lift in their rental fleets and manufacturer member Skyjack agreed to place them on every new boom lift. Additionally, more than 20,000 stickers have been requested in North America through e-mail (mail@awpt.org). AWPT offers free stickers in quantities up to 30, and they



are available in German, Italian, Dutch, Spanish and French in addition to two English versions—one for North America and one for the U.K.

AWPT will continue to raise awareness throughout 2008 by distributing an additional 200,000 stickers, with the ultimate goal of having a sticker on every boom lift in operation in the world.

Final rule on PPE

Employers must provide all personal protective equipment (PPE), with a few exceptions, to employees at no cost, according to a final rule announced in late 2007 by the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Exceptions include ordinary clothing, weather-related gear, safety-toed footwear, prescription safety eyewear and logging boots.

The final rule also clarifies OSHA's requirements regarding payment for employee-owned PPE and replacement PPE. While these clarifications have added several paragraphs to the regulatory text, the final rule provides employees no less protection than they would have received under the 1999 proposed standard.

The rule also provides an enforcement deadline of six months from the date of publication to allow employers time to change their existing PPE payment policies to accommodate the final rule. For more information, visit www.osha.gov. ■

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[q] Water or cement— which barrel is heavier?

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a Concrete weighs about 2.4 times as much as water for a given volume. Generally accepted values for a cubic foot are 62.4 pounds for water and 148 pounds for concrete. A standard “55-gallon” drum actually holds more than 55 gallons. A reasonable weight estimate for a water-filled barrel is 480 pounds; a concrete-filled barrel is about 1,140 pounds.

Water barrels can tip, leak, freeze, and slide. Sliding is a big issue, as most water barrels are plastic (slippery), and when water leaks around them,

the water acts as a natural lubricant, making the ballast more slippery.

The critical component of this chain of anchorage is the rope. Unless the rope or strap you are using has a breaking strength higher than the ballast, then you have a “weakest link value” of whatever the breaking strength of your rope is. ■

Ken Keberle is a project manager at Prime Event Group in Tucson, Ariz., ken@primeeventgroup.com. For an in-depth look at issues around non-staking installations, see Keberle’s article, “When you can’t stake,” in the Aug./Sept. 2007 issue of *InTents*, available for download at www.ifai.com.



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Tent Conference 2008

An international gathering enjoyed networking opportunities and more.

It never rains in sunny California.” Wrong. But the rain didn’t stop the success of IFAI Tent Conference 2008, held in Long Beach, Calif., in January. More than 155 attendees and 30 vendors from the United States, Germany, Mexico, Canada, and New Zealand benefited from the opportunity to network and learn.

“The warm welcome received from everyone set the tempo for great networking sessions,” says Hartwig Birszwilks, Julius Heywinkel GmbH, Germany. “I look forward to Tent Expo ’09 to continue to develop industry relationships.”

Keynote speaker Rick Barrera explored the cliché, “Under promise and over deliver,” noting that in today’s crowded market, that business adage is a one-way ticket to oblivion. Barrera highlighted a number of innovative firms that are building breakthrough brands in record time and explained why everyone must “over promise and over deliver.”

The awards luncheon recognized past recipients of the Bruce Wodetzki Award, identifying leading industry members who have contributed to the growth and well-being of the tent rental industry. Distinguished recipients included Harry Oppenheimer, HDO Productions LP, Rockville, Md.; Bernard Armbruster, Armbruster Manufacturing Co., Springfield, Ill.; Jerry O’Connell, HDO Productions; and Kevin McBride, P.J. McBride Inc., West Babylon, N.Y. During the annual TRD business meeting, Kathy Schaefer, Glawe Tent & Awning Co., Fairborn, Ohio, began her role as TRD chairman.

Attendees also enjoyed a little fun despite the rain—more than 100 were treated to a beer and wine tasting at the opening reception, and the weather cleared for an evening boat cruise.

“The Tent Conference gave me an opportunity to network with members of the industry and collect solutions to take home and use in our tent rental business,” says Elizabeth Wilson, All Occasions Party Rentals, Knoxville, Tenn. ■

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www.intents.info [April–May 08 INTENTS]



ABOVE Linc Aldershof of Verseidag Seemee U.S., Randolph, N.J., and Jason Billeb of ABC Industries, Warsaw, Ind., discuss the tent fabric market. ABOVE RIGHT Tim Watson of Clean Awn-Tent and Awning Cleaning, Seal Beach, Calif., visits with a tent conference attendee. The Friday afternoon Vendors Fair provided attendees the opportunity to network with their suppliers.

Awards of Excellence

Congratulations to this year’s Award of Excellence winners. During IFAI Tent Conference 2008, members voted for their favorite tent installation projects in several categories.

Party rental

Winner: HDO Productions LP

Project: Wedding in Peoria

Commercial tent rental

Winner: Röder Zelt-und

Veranstaltungsservice GmbH

Project: Home Show ALNO

Tent manufacturing

Winner: TopTec Products LLC

Project: D.C. garage

Best in show

Winner: EventQuip

Project: Timely install

Scholarship application available

The application for Tent Rental Division Scholarship 2008 is available at www.tentexperts.org. This scholarship award provides \$2,500 for tuition expenses at an accredited college, university or technical school for employees and family members of employees of TRD member companies. Financial need, academic achievement, community service and studies related to the specialty fabrics/tent rental industry will be considered in the selection process.



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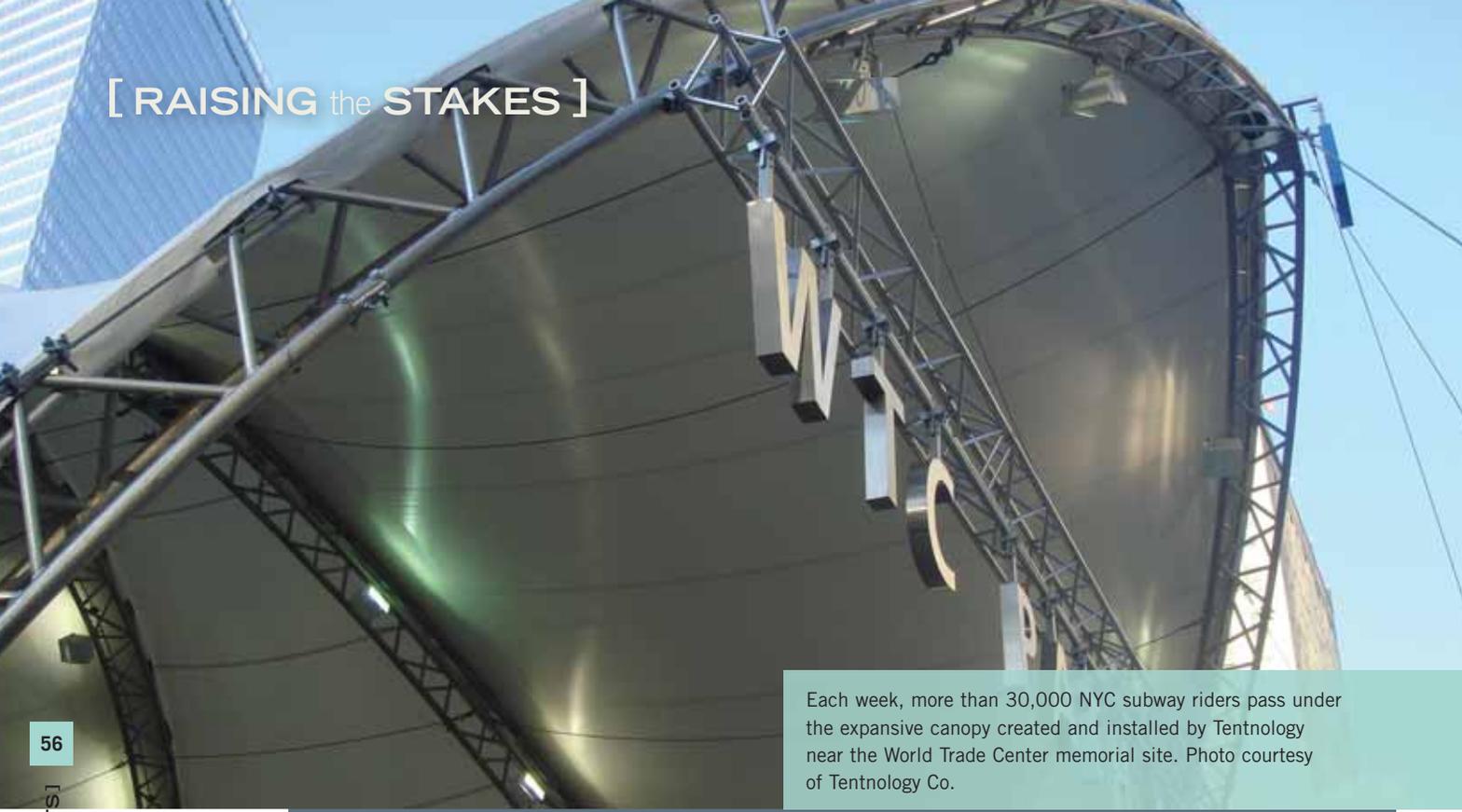
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Each week, more than 30,000 NYC subway riders pass under the expansive canopy created and installed by Tentnology near the World Trade Center memorial site. Photo courtesy of Tentnology Co.

Uplifting arches

Tentnology erects an elegant canopy in front of the World Trade Center memorial site.

Adjacent to Manhattan's most poignant site, a massive white canopy watches over the comings and goings of subway patrons. Tentnology's Saddlespan™ installation over the entrance to the World Trade Center PATH station is helping to foster a sense of hope and restoration to the city's busiest transit center.

The New York Port Authority (NYPA), working through a contractor, chose Tentnology because of the unique and inspiring look of the Surrey, British Columbia, Canada-based company's Saddlespan. With curves reminiscent of the Sydney Opera House, the structure measures 37 feet high, 60 feet wide and 85 feet long. Lights that span the arches provide a welcoming glow for subway riders.

"We wanted people, when they came out of the subway in the morning, to see something uplifting. And the Saddlespan is [uplifting]. It makes a good roof," says Gery Warner, the tent's designer. Warner co-owns Tentnology with his wife, Suzanne.

The original Saddlespan design had to be altered and reinforced so that it could stand up to New York's heavy

snow load. The high-strength aluminum alloy frame had to be thicker and stiffer closer to the base, with additional reinforcements in areas of high stress.

A second challenge was installing the structure at the station. Because of the high volume of foot traffic through the station during the day, the tent had to be installed between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. the night before a 2007 memorial service. First, the tent had to be assembled about 100 yards off-site during the day. Then, with forklifts and a crane, the tent was placed over the subway station in the middle of the night.

"It was challenging, but we got her in there," Gery Warner says. "We had her all tied down by morning." ■

[By Brianna Bowne, IFAI editorial intern.]



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