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ASIA PACIFIC'S ROLE IN RECASTING THE GLOBAL MICE SECTOR

STRATEGIC INSIGHTS PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED AT ASIA PACIFIC'S LEADING MICE INDUSTRY CONFERENCE



In Partnership with



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1.1. About Snapsight

Snapsight is an Al-powered insights platform that transforms your organization's content into actionable insights. We analyze event sessions, surveys, industry reports, internal documents, and more, empowering your organization to make data-driven decisions that drive growth and innovation.

Insights-as-a-Service: Your Affordable Insights Solution

Our team of experts partners with you to analyze your data and deliver customized reports that answer your most critical questions. We help you:

- **Identify Emerging Trends:** Uncover key themes, competitor strategies, and market shifts before your rivals.
- Understand Stakeholder Sentiment: Gauge member needs, public perception, or internal sentiment to inform your strategies.
- Make Data-Driven Decisions: Move beyond guesswork and base your choices on insights derived from your own data.
- Save Time and Resources: Let our Al and experienced analysts handle the heavy lifting, freeing your team to take action.

Experience the power of Snapsight

Visit <u>www.snapsight.com</u> or contact us today to see how we can transform your data into a competitive edge.

2. Executive Summary

The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024 painted a vivid picture of an events industry at a critical inflection point. As the world emerges from the shadow of the pandemic, the industry faces a complex landscape of challenges and opportunities, from the imperative of sustainability to the disruptive power of technology, the evolving expectations of attendees, and the need for visionary leadership.

The central narrative that emerged from the sessions was one of transformation and resilience. Speakers emphasized that the industry is not merely seeking to bounce back to pre-pandemic norms, but to leap forward into a new era of purpose-driven, technology-enhanced, and human-centric events. This transformation is being driven by a powerful confluence of forces, including the urgent need to address climate change, the exponential growth of digital technologies, and the shifting demographics and psychographics of a global audience.

In navigating this transformation, the industry must confront difficult questions and trade-offs. How can we balance the desire for in-person connection with the reach and accessibility of virtual formats? How can we harness the power of data and AI while safeguarding privacy and ethics? How can we create experiences that are both deeply personalized and broadly inclusive? The answers to these questions will not be easy, but the collective wisdom and creativity of the industry, as showcased at **The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024**, provide a strong foundation for progress.

Perhaps most importantly, the sessions underscored the enduring power and relevance of events in a world hungry for human connection and shared experiences. Even as the form and format of events evolve, their fundamental purpose remains constant: to bring people together, to spark ideas and ignite action, to foster understanding and build community. In a time of unprecedented change and uncertainty, this purpose has never been more vital.

As the industry looks ahead to the future, the path forward is clear. We must embrace sustainability not as a trend but as a core value, weaving it into every aspect of our events and our organizations. We must harness the power of technology not for its own sake, but in service of our attendees and our strategic goals. We must foster a culture of innovation and inclusion, empowering diverse voices and perspectives to shape the future of events. And we must cultivate the leadership and talent necessary to navigate the complexities of a rapidly evolving landscape.

The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024 provided not just a snapshot of the industry today, but a roadmap for its future. By embracing the insights, strategies, and spirit of collaboration showcased at the event, the events community in the Asia Pacific region and beyond can not only survive but thrive in the face of change, delivering experiences that are more impactful, more innovative, and more deeply human than ever before. The future of events is bright – and it starts now.

3. Industry Outlook

3.1. Asia Pacific Trends

3.1.1. Recovery and Growth Projections for Inbound and Outbound Travel

The sessions at **The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024** painted a nuanced picture of the recovery trajectory for inbound travel to the Asia Pacific (APAC) region. According to the data presented, inbound travel to APAC destinations is recovering more slowly compared to other parts of the world.

"Inbound travel to APAC destinations is recovering more slowly in the near term because they were generally subject to tighter restrictions, which took longer to lift," explained Michael Shoory, Head of APAC Tourism Analysis at Tourism Economics.

This trend is being driven primarily by the delayed reopening of key source markets like China and Japan. The longer-term strength of the APAC inbound travel outlook reflects factors like demographics, economics, and the composition of source markets, Shoory noted.

On the domestic front, there's robust recovery in APAC's business travel segment. Speakers shared that domestic business travel spending in the region is expected to return to 2019 levels this year, outpacing the rebound in domestic leisure travel.

3.1.2. Key Markets and Segments Driving Growth

China's Outbound Travel: China was emphasized as a critical source market for inbound travel to APAC, though its outbound travel recovery is lagging other major markets. According to the data presented, Chinese outbound travel is forecast to recover to pre-pandemic volumes around 2025 or 2026, slower than the global average. However, from 2027 or 2028 onwards, outbound visits from China are expected to grow more quickly than outbound visits from other source markets combined.

"Destinations that are more highly exposed to China as a source market will likely benefit in the longer term, despite some near-term weakness," noted Shoory.

ASEAN's Rising Middle Class: The burgeoning middle class in Southeast Asian nations like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam represents a significant opportunity for the events industry. With increasing disposable incomes and a thirst for experiences, this segment is driving demand for both business and leisure events across the region.

India's Emergence: India's rapidly growing economy, coupled with its young and aspirational population, is fueling the country's rise as a key source market for APAC events. From

corporate meetings and incentive travel to cultural festivals and exhibitions, India's influence on the region's events landscape is set to grow.

Luxury and Experiential Travel: The affluent and high-net-worth segments in APAC are increasingly seeking out luxury and experiential travel offerings, creating opportunities for highend events, incentive programs, and exclusive experiences.

"62% of event organizers surveyed cited cultural group sightseeing experiences as one of the most important factors for successful programs," shared Shoory, underscoring the demand for immersive, authentic experiences.

3.1.3. Challenges

- Infrastructure Gaps: Many APAC destinations lack the necessary infrastructure, such as world-class convention centers, transportation networks, and accommodation options, to support large-scale events.
- Sustainability Imperative: The need to prioritize sustainability and adopt eco-friendly practices to meet growing demand for responsible tourism.
- Geopolitical Tensions: Ongoing geopolitical tensions and trade disputes in the region that could impact travel patterns and event locations.

3.1.4. Opportunities

 Technology Adoption: The rapid adoption of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, and data analytics, presents opportunities for enhanced attendee experiences and operational efficiencies.

3.2. Global MICE Trends

3.2.1. Macro Trends Shaping the Global Events Industry

Sustainability and Social Responsibility: A dominant theme across the sessions was the increasing focus on sustainability and social responsibility in the events industry. Speakers emphasized that events are now expected to demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles, driving demand for sustainable event design, carbon offsetting, and community engagement initiatives.

"We all know sustainability is a way of life now, not just something optional," said Wee Min Ong, Vice President of Sales and MICE at Marina Bay Sands.

Technological Disruption: The rapid advancement of technologies like artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, and data analytics was cited as a major disruptive force transforming every aspect of the events industry - from event planning and marketing to attendee engagement and experience design.

"Technology is here to stay, but we must be careful about how we design experiences so that AI is really complementary and not a distraction," cautioned Darren Chuckry, Executive Director of Content Innovation at Tag.

Changing Workforce Dynamics: The rise of remote work, the gig economy, and the need for continuous upskilling were highlighted as reshaping the way events are organized and delivered, requiring new models of collaboration and talent management.

3.2.2. Evolving Attendee Expectations and Preferences

Personalization and Customization: Speakers emphasized that attendees increasingly expect tailored experiences that cater to their individual preferences, interests, and learning styles, driving the need for personalized content, interactive formats, and data-driven attendee journeys.

Wellness and Mindfulness: The growing focus on holistic well-being was noted as a key trend, with events incorporating wellness elements like mindfulness sessions, healthy food options, and opportunities for physical activity to enhance the attendee experience.

Hybrid and Virtual Experiences: While in-person events remain highly valued, the pandemic has accelerated the adoption of hybrid and virtual event formats, enabling greater reach, flexibility, and accessibility for attendees.

3.2.3. Emerging Business Models and Revenue Streams

Subscription and Membership Models: Some event organizers are exploring subscription-based models, offering attendees access to a curated portfolio of events, content, and networking opportunities for an annual fee.

Monetization of Data and Insights: The wealth of data generated by events presents opportunities for event organizers to monetize attendee insights, behavioral data, and content through data licensing and analytics services.

Partnerships and Collaborations: Forming strategic partnerships with complementary businesses, such as technology providers, content creators, and influencers, was highlighted as a way to unlock new revenue streams and enhance the overall event experience.

By understanding these global trends, event professionals in APAC can better position themselves to navigate the industry's transformation and capitalize on emerging opportunities in the years ahead.

4. Key Themes and Insights

The sessions at **The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024** covered a range of critical themes and insights that are shaping the events industry in the region and globally. From sustainability and social impact to technology and innovation, attendee engagement and experience design, and leadership and organizational culture, these key focus areas provide a comprehensive view of the challenges, opportunities, and best practices emerging across the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions) sector.

4.1. Sustainability and Social Impact in MICE Industry

Sustainability and social impact took center stage at **The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024** sessions, highlighting the industry's growing urgency to address Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations.

4.1.1. Implementing Sustainable Practices in Event Design and Execution

Various best practices were endorsed by speakers to promote sustainable event design and execution:

- Waste Reduction: Measures such as eliminating single-use plastics, advocating
 paperless registration, and urging exhibitors to use reusable or recycled materials for
 booth construction.
- **Energy and Water Optimization:** Utilizing renewable energy sources, implementing efficient lighting and HVAC systems, and deploying water conservation strategies.
- Sustainable Food and Beverage Practices: Sourcing locally, reducing meat consumption, and minimizing food waste.
- **Sustainable Transportation:** Promoting the use of public transit, providing shuttle services, and encouraging low-emission vehicles.

Roger Simons, Director of Sustainability at Marina Bay Sands, emphasized the need for a holistic approach to sustainability, extending beyond mere reduction of plastic usage.

4.1.2. Measuring and Communicating Sustainability Outcomes

A recurring challenge highlighted was the need for robust measurement and reporting of event sustainability outcomes.

- **Measurement:** Bingni Wu, Relationship Manager at EarthCheck, stressed, "Measurement is crucial you can only control what you can measure."
- Communication: Transparent and compelling communication of sustainability stories.

• Standardized Reporting: Introduction of standardized carbon footprint reporting frameworks, such as the one being used by MEET TAIWAN, was recognized as a significant advancement.

4.1.3. Driving Social Change and Community Impact

Beyond environmental sustainability, the potential of events to drive positive social change and community impact was explored.

- Collaboration: Examples were shared of event organizers collaborating with local charities, social enterprises, and marginalized communities to create meaningful, lasting benefits.
- Celebrating Local Cultures: Sherylee Eyles, Director of Business Events at Tourism
 New Zealand, emphasized how events can be used effectively as a platform to celebrate
 local cultures and empower underrepresented groups.
- **Special Initiatives:** Providing specialized accessibility equipment, hosting indigenous cultural exchanges, and donating event materials to local communities were highlighted as ways to amplify the social impact of MICE events.

4.2. Technology and Innovation: A Disruptive Force

The sessions highlighted the role of rapid technological advancement as a key disruptive force shaping the events industry. The discussions touched on both the opportunities and challenges presented by the AI revolution.

4.2.1. Al-Powered Tools: Streamlining Event Planning, Marketing, and Attendee Engagement

The spotlight was on the growing use of Al-powered tools and solutions to streamline various aspects of event planning and execution. Specifically, these tools were discussed in the context of:

- Automated event scheduling
- Personalized marketing and content curation
- Enhanced attendee engagement through features like real-time translation and sentiment analysis

Darren Chuckry, Executive Director of Content Innovation at Tag, emphasized, "We're not just doing content and putting it up on social media anymore."

4.2.2. Hybrid and Virtual Event Strategies: Extending Reach and Impact

The evolution of hybrid and virtual event formats, which gained significant traction during the pandemic, was another key focus. Attendees were urged to:

- Seamlessly integrate virtual and in-person components to extend the reach and impact of events
- Balance technology with human connection

Ong Wee Min of Marina Bay Sands stated, "It's not about choosing between virtual or inperson - it's about finding the right blend to deliver the most value for our attendees."

4.2.3. Emerging Technologies: Enhancing On-site Experiences

The potential of emerging technologies like augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and facial recognition to elevate the on-site attendee experience was also highlighted. These technologies can be used for:

- Interactive venue navigation and content overlays (AR)
- Streamlined registration and personalized attendee journeys (facial recognition)

While the promise of technology is clear, speakers emphasized the importance of striking the right balance, addressing data privacy concerns, and ensuring ethical implementation.

4.3. Attendee Engagement and Experience Design: A Critical Priority

Delivering exceptional, personalized attendee experiences emerged as a critical priority. The discussions highlighted the evolving expectations and preferences of today's (and tomorrow's) event attendees.

4.3.1. Personalization Strategies for Tailored Attendee Journeys

The growing demand for highly personalized event experiences was discussed extensively. Strategies for leveraging data and technology to create customized content, networking opportunities, and touchpoints for each attendee were shared.

As Marina Bay Sands' Ong Wee Min pointed out, "It's not just about the number of followers or likes anymore."

4.3.2. Wellness and Mindfulness Initiatives for Attendee Well-being

The importance of attendee well-being was recognized, with the sessions exploring the incorporation of wellness and mindfulness elements into event programming. Examples included:

- Offering yoga and meditation sessions
- Providing healthy food and beverage options
- Creating dedicated relaxation spaces for attendees

"Wellness isn't just a nice-to-have - it's crucial for helping our attendees stay engaged, energized, and productive throughout the event," noted Mathias Posch, President of International Congress Services (ICS).

4.3.3. Gamification and Interactive Formats to Drive Participation and Networking

The use of gamification and interactive formats to foster deeper attendee engagement and networking was highlighted. This included:

- Integration of mobile apps
- Augmented reality experiences
- Team-building activities to encourage attendee interaction and foster a sense of community

Timothy Glanzer, Founder & CEO of Elevated Meeting Solutions noted, "It's not enough to just have great content anymore. We have to create an environment that's truly immersive and memorable for our attendees."

4.4. Leadership and Organizational Culture in Event Planning

The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024 sessions delved into the pivotal role of leadership and organizational culture in pushing the industry forward, beyond the operational and experiential aspects of event planning.

4.4.1. Cultivating a Culture of Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Promoting a culture that values innovation, experimentation, and continuous improvement was a key emphasis among speakers. This involves:

- Challenging traditional methods
- Empowering teams to take calculated risks
- Creating an environment that encourages new ideas and their implementation

Dylan Sharma, Vice President of Advocacy and Communications at SACEOS and Co-Founder and Director of TRICOM, highlighted the need for ongoing evolution:

"It's not enough to just do what we've always done. We need to be constantly evolving, learning, and pushing the boundaries of what's possible."

4.4.2. Attracting, Developing, and Retaining High-Performing Event Teams

The critical need for event organizations to prioritize talent attraction, development, and retention was underscored, given the significant workforce challenges faced by the industry. This involves:

- Providing compelling career paths
- Investing in upskilling and reskilling initiatives
- Fostering a work environment that supports work-life balance and professional growth

Sanjay Seth, Asia Pacific Managing Director of BCD Meetings & Events, emphasized the importance of having the right team:

"Our people are our greatest asset. Ensuring we have the right skills, the right mindset, and the right level of engagement is key to our long-term success."

4.4.3. Adopting Collaborative Leadership Models & Cross-Functional Ways of Working

In recognition of the inherently cross-functional nature of event planning, speakers emphasized the need for collaborative leadership models and breaking down siloed ways of working. This involves:

- Fostering alignment and communication across departments
- Promoting shared accountability

Timothy Glanzer of Elevated Meeting Solutions, stressed the importance of teamwork:

"It's not just about my team or your team - it's about us working together as one. The more we can break down barriers and align around common goals, the better we'll be able to deliver for our clients and our attendees."

By nurturing a culture of innovation, investing in their people, and embracing collaborative leadership, event organizations in APAC and globally can position themselves to attract top talent, drive continuous improvement, and deliver exceptional experiences that meet the evolving needs of their stakeholders.

5. Sentiment Analysis by Topic

5.1. Sustainability: A Spectrum of Emotions

5.1.1. Optimism and Determination

Speakers expressed excitement and pride when discussing progress in embracing sustainable practices, seeing a "tremendous opportunity" for real impact and a "moral imperative" to act responsibly for the planet and society.

5.1.2. Frustration and Skepticism

Despite optimism, speakers recognized challenges ahead. Frustrations were raised regarding lack of standardization in sustainability reporting, measurement and communication difficulties, and concerns of greenwashing. Some even expressed skepticism, questioning if sustainability efforts were about "ticking boxes" rather than driving meaningful change.

5.1.3. Urgency and Determination

Despite varied emotions, speakers emphasized that sustainability is no longer a "nice-to-have" but an essential component of successful event strategy. They called for bold, collaborative action and a willingness to tackle systemic challenges.

5.2. Technology: Balancing Excitement and Apprehension

5.2.1. Excitement for Innovation

Speakers expressed excitement for the transformative potential of emerging technologies like AI, VR, and blockchain to reshape the event experience, enhancing personalization, engagement, and efficiency.

5.2.2. Apprehension and Fear

Alongside excitement, speakers raised concerns about data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential for technology to erode human connections. Worries were expressed regarding the industry's rush to embrace new technologies without focusing on fundamentals of good event design and delivery.

5.2.3. Need for Balance and Intentionality

Despite these emotions, speakers recognized the need for balance and intentionality in adopting new technologies. They emphasized starting with clear objectives and use cases, rather than deploying technology for its own sake, and considering the entire attendee journey.

5.3. Attendee Engagement: Craving Connection

5.3.1. Appreciation for In-person Events

Speakers and attendees alike expressed a profound appreciation for the power of face-to-face experiences to foster meaningful relationships, drive knowledge exchange, and create lasting memories.

5.3.2. Desire for Evolution and Personalization

While appreciating in-person events, speakers recognized that attendee expectations have evolved. They emphasized the need for experiences that are engaging, inclusive, accessible, and tailored to diverse needs and preferences of a global audience.

5.4. Leadership: Navigating Uncertainty

5.4.1. Uncertainty and Trepidation

Speakers acknowledged profound challenges facing the industry, expressing a sense of uncertainty and self-doubt. They spoke of decision-making difficulties in an environment of constant change and fear of being left behind.

5.4.2. Resilience and Resolve

Underneath these challenges, speakers emphasized the need for agile, collaborative leadership and investment in talent development. Despite the challenges ahead, speakers expressed a deep conviction in the enduring value and relevance of the events industry, with a resolve to shape a more sustainable and equitable future.

6. Strategic Recommendations and Actionable Insights

Based on the comprehensive insights and sentiments shared during **The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024**, it is clear that the events industry stands at a critical juncture. To navigate the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities ahead, event professionals must be prepared to take bold, strategic action across several key areas. These recommendations are grounded firmly in the perspectives and experiences shared by speakers and industry leaders throughout the sessions.

6.1. Develop a Holistic Sustainability Strategy

The imperative of sustainability was a resounding theme throughout **The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024.** However, speakers emphasized that a piecemeal or superficial approach will no longer suffice. Event organizations must develop comprehensive sustainability strategies that encompass environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations.

On the environmental front, this means going beyond low-hanging fruit like eliminating singleuse plastics and embracing a more holistic approach to sustainable event design and execution. This includes:

- Setting measurable targets for carbon emissions reduction, waste diversion, and resource efficiency
- Implementing robust measurement and reporting frameworks to track progress transparently
- Collaborating with venues, suppliers, and attendees to drive sustainability across the entire event lifecycle

"It's not just about reducing our footprint - it's about actively regenerating and restoring the communities and environments we impact," said Sherylee Eyles of Tourism New Zealand.

On the social and governance fronts, event organizations must prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in their event design, team composition, and leadership structures. This means:

- Ensuring accessibility and representation for marginalized groups in event programming and speaker lineups
- Fostering a culture of belonging and psychological safety within event teams
- Implementing robust policies and training around issues like human rights, modern slavery, and ethical supply chains

"Sustainability isn't just about the environment - it's about creating a more just and equitable industry for all," noted Dylan Sharma of SACEOS.

By taking a holistic, integrated approach to sustainability, event organizations can position themselves as leaders in driving positive change while mitigating risk, enhancing brand reputation, and meeting the evolving expectations of stakeholders.

6.2. Invest in Data Capabilities

The power of data and analytics to transform the event experience was a recurring theme throughout **The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024**. However, speakers cautioned that simply collecting data is not enough – organizations must invest in the capabilities and infrastructure to derive meaningful insights and drive data-informed decision-making.

This includes:

- Implementing robust data governance frameworks and protocols to ensure privacy, security, and ethical data usage
- Investing in data analytics tools and talent to turn raw data into actionable insights
- Leveraging AI and machine learning to personalize attendee journeys, optimize marketing efforts, and enhance operational efficiency

"Data is the currency of the modern event experience," said Darren Chuckry, Executive Director of Content Innovation at Tag. "But it's not just about collecting data – it's about using it strategically to create value for your attendees and your organization."

By building a strong data foundation, event organizations can unlock a wealth of opportunities, from hyper-personalized attendee experiences to data-driven revenue streams and more effective measurement of event ROI.

6.3. Experiment with New Formats and Technologies

The rapid pace of technological change was a consistent theme throughout **The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024**, with speakers highlighting the transformative potential of AI, virtual and augmented reality, and other emerging technologies. However, they also cautioned against blindly chasing the "next big thing" without a clear strategy and use case.

Event organizations must adopt an experimental mindset, embracing a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. This means:

- Allocating dedicated resources and budgets for testing and piloting new technologies and event formats
- Encouraging cross-functional collaboration and co-creation with attendees, suppliers, and technology partners
- Embracing failure as a learning opportunity and fostering a "fail fast" mentality

"It's not about being first – it's about being purposeful and strategic in how we adopt new technologies," said Ong Wee Min of Marina Bay Sands.

By striking the right balance between innovation and pragmatism, event organizations can stay ahead of the curve, deliver cutting-edge experiences, and position themselves as industry leaders.

6.4. Prioritize Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

The need to foster a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable events industry was a recurring theme throughout The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024. Speakers emphasized that this is not just a moral imperative but a strategic business imperative, as diverse teams and inclusive event experiences are proven to drive better outcomes and greater attendee satisfaction.

To prioritize diversity, inclusion, and belonging, event organizations should:

- Implement robust diversity and inclusion policies and training programs for all staff and stakeholders
- Ensure accessibility and representation across all aspects of event design, from venue selection to speaker lineups
- Foster a culture of psychological safety and belonging within event teams, where all voices are heard and valued

"Diversity isn't just a box to check – it's a source of competitive advantage," said Timothy Glanzer of Elevated Meeting Solutions. "When we create truly inclusive environments, we unlock new perspectives, ideas, and opportunities."

By embracing diversity, inclusion, and belonging as strategic priorities, event organizations can tap into a wider talent pool, better reflect the diverse communities they serve, and drive innovation through the power of diverse perspectives.

6.5. Cultivate a Learning Mindset

In an industry characterized by constant change and disruption, the ability to learn, adapt, and continuously upskill is essential. Speakers at The Meetings Show Asia Pacific 2024 emphasized the need for event professionals to cultivate a growth mindset and embrace a culture of continuous learning and development.

This means:

- Investing in professional development programs and resources for event teams
- Encouraging cross-functional knowledge sharing and mentorship opportunities
- Fostering a culture of curiosity and experimentation, where failure is seen as a learning opportunity

"The only constant in our industry is change," said Sanjay Seth of BCD Meetings & Events. "Those who embrace a learning mindset and continuously adapt will be the ones who thrive."

By prioritizing continuous learning and development, event organizations can future-proof their workforce, attract and retain top talent, and foster a culture of agility and resilience that will serve them well in navigating the challenges and opportunities ahead.