27 June

17.15 The FAB 2019 conference concluded with a panel discussion on the importance of engaged employees and the impact of a successful employee engagement programme.

Andre Bolduc is Senior Manager – Customer Experience & Strategy at ACI World, who run the airport passenger service and benchmarking programme ASQ (Airport Service Quality). “Customer experience is mainly driven by emotions,” was his mantra. “The power of people is the power of creating emotions.”
Praising the power of people: ACI World Senior Manager – Customer Experience & Strategy Andre Bolduc

An engaged, passionate, loyal and committed employee has a crucial role to play, and will ultimately help increase non-aeronautical revenues – as proven by various studies, he said.

“Technology is essential but the human touch is probably the most important part of the customer experience.”
TDn2K Founder & Chairman Wally Doolin described staffing as “an opportunity as it is through people that we win in the marketplace”. He added: “Guests reward better service with additional sales and traffic.” Although some of the data presented gave something of a reality check, with staff turnover rates high and rising in the USA, Doolin concluded by noting some of the factors that can increase staff retention.
“The data shows some recurring factors: improved growth and development and flexible scheduling,” he said. Recognising employees in a meaningful way is also an area of opportunity.

“Success is all about how you take care of your people,” he said. “If you do it well, they will take care of the customers.”
16.30 Martin Moodie introduced the finalists in the FAB Team Member of the Year Award – all fantastic and moving stories. The winner will be announced at the FAB Awards tonight.
Two extraordinary success stories were showcased in a panel session entitled ‘Curating a unique customer experience’.
Crews Managing Partner/President Nick Crews outlined three critical elements to innovating the hospitality experience: brand selection/implementation; team members; and taking calculated risks.

Clear strategies: Crews Managing Partner/President Nick Crews (left) and Chick-Fil-A New Restaurant Growth Director Sean Warren

“It is critical to find like-minded owners who have the same vision and goals,” he said. This should be achieved through transparency and honesty, operational excellence and leveraging combined expertise. “Don’t be scared to take the risks and you will be successful.”

Chick-Fil-A New Restaurant Growth Director Sean Warren then told the story of his company. “We grew by serving great food and taking care of guests, creating a real brand loyalty,” he explained.
It’s the little things that matter, says Chick-Fil-A’s Sean Warren

Warren also described the four elements of a satisfyingly straightforward service model: people, food, hospitality and speed.

“These things might seem obvious, but how many people and companies do them well?” he asked. “Done well, they can pay huge dividends. The secret is, ‘we care’. About creating the best guest experience possible, and about each and every individual.”

15.00 m1nd-set Travel Retail Research Director Clara Perez presented insights on drivers and turnoffs in travel F&B, based on a special study commissioned for FAB 2019. The research is based on interviews with 1,600 global travellers.
Among those who visit F&B outlets, the main advantages are, according to the research:

- It is a good way to kill time
- More choice than inflight
- Comfortable seating or Wi-Fi

Trying local flavours was the sixth most-cited advantage. It has been a major theme of the conference, Perez noted, and concessionaires and airports are “working hard to make it a more relevant reason” to visit F&B.
Among those who don’t use F&B concessions, the perception of airport F&B as over-priced was the clear disadvantage cited by interviewees. Other disadvantages are lack of time and limited choice, with a lack of healthy options the fifth most-cited reason. This has been another key theme of the conference, and is particularly an issue among millennial travellers, Perez said.

14.30 The ‘phygital revolution’ was the theme of the first session of the afternoon at FAB 2019. HMSHost Senior Director, Business Relationship Management Joy Butler discussed the company’s flexible approach in embracing new technologies and solutions, with a focus on the importance of mobile payments. “The payment journey can mean the difference between success and failure,” she said. “The market is a lot less forgiving, so you have to get payments right.”
“At HMSHost, we aim to make it a friction-free and seamless experience, while making sure data is being protected.”

QikServe Founder & President Daniel Rodgers took up the theme. “Digital is an enabling force for an industry coming under immense transformational pressure,” he said.

But humans process change slowly. “The main driver of change is operators being proactive and committed to understanding consumer behaviour and desires. Operators need to be up to the challenge and prepared to deal with the emotions involved. It requires organisational change.”
The phrase ‘build it and they will come’ does not apply to digital transformation, he said. “You as operators have to take customers there. The benefits are better sales, efficiency and happier guests.”

13.00
Going Glocal: Innovating Sense of Place in international destination dining. From the dishes to the design, an outstanding panel line-up talks about the ingredients that go into an authentic expression of the critical concept of Sense of Place. A quality quartet if there was ever one; DFW Airport Vice President Concessions Zenola Campbell (above), and below, HWH Hospitality Investments Co-Founder Mustafa Al Hashimi, SSP North America Executive Vice President Pat Murray and Redesign Group NZ Managing Director Jo Pennycuick.
“We want food to be the hero, to be picture-perfect, as it will be on social media,” explained Dallas Fort Worth International’s Zenola Campbell. “Travellers should experience great tasting food that’s unique and different from our community, and make sure they want to take pictures and talk about it.”

HWH Hospitality Investments’ Mustafa Al Hashimi explained how his company follows five key principles to create compelling concepts: storytelling, emotions, attraction, purpose and engagement. “We believe that people eat with their eyes first,” he said. “The aim is to attract those who are curious about what you have been able to create.”
SSP North America’s Pat Murray outlined the evolution of localised dining and discussed what defines Sense of Place. “What’s happened in society? Food is cool now. That’s part of the culture we live in; chefs are rock-star celebrities” he said. “That’s taken things from being generic and boring, and over time to become more exciting and cool.” Sense of Place can be driven by many elements, and some of it is emotional, and some of it is visual.

Redesign Group’s Jo Pennycuick concluded the session by describing the company’s ‘back to basics’ approach to design. This strategy for achieving sense of space encompasses telling a story, styling, character and theming.

11.45 Sustainability, health and wellness were at the forefront of a panel featuring Culinary Tides President Suzy Badaracco (second from left), Pink Fish CEO & Co-founder Ronny Gjose (second from right), and Vancouver Airport Authority Director, Commercial Services Mirela Rusu (far right).
Badaracco assessed how environmental and social concerns affect F&B, and how travellers want to take control of what they eat in a world where they do not always feel in control. The role of concessionaires and airports is to facilitate and guide that control, to help them “become their own hero”.

Gjose told the story of Pink Fish, a new kind of fast casual concept with sustainability and healthy eating at its very heart. But customers often say one thing and do another, so he emphasised that taste is always the most important thing. “That’s what makes them come, and everything else is a good bonus.”
Duty of Care: Culinary Tides President Suzy Badaracco (above), Pink Fish CEO & Co-founder Ronny Gjose, and Vancouver Airport Authority Director, Commercial Services Mirela Rusu (both below).
There are ambitious plans for Pink Fish, giving consumer concern for sustainability and healthy eating. “We see demand for seafood F&B concepts being higher than traditional fast food in the future,” he said.

Rusu concluded the session by discussing Vancouver Airport’s pioneering environmental initiatives, which cover recycling, reducing waste, emissions and potable water use. “Sustainability is part of our culture,” she said.

**10:15** A high-power panel featuring Wow Bao President Geoff Alexander, Plaza Premium Group Founder & Chief Executive Officer Song Hoi-see and Paradies Lagardere Dining Division President Regynald Washington shared success stories and some of the latest innovations in F&B.

One of the major themes was using technology to enhance the customer experience and getting the balance right between automation and the human touch. “When people think about innovation, technology immediately comes to mind,” said Washington. “But high technology provides us with a platform to deliver a high-touch experience. The personal touch is a significant driving force of the dining experience."

On curating an F&B offering, Song Hoi-see delivered a memorable line about how it was crucial to “wake up all five senses to activate the sixth sense – your stomach.”
Paradies Lagardère Dining Division President Regynald G. Washington is one of the most-respected figures in the North American FB scene. He’s also a wonderful orator, his big, powerful voice lending added impact to his message. “Be a maniac about delivering excellence,” he says.
Plaza Premium Group Founder & Chief Executive Officer Song Hoi-see is one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the aviation industry. From a single airport lounge, Mr Song has driven the creation of an extraordinary global network that operates over 160 locations in 42 airports globally. What’s the secret to his success? “There’s nothing secret, it’s all passion,” he tells the audience.
The quality of presentations at FAB 2019 is... well... just FAB-ulous. After the brilliant all-women session centered on wellness, moderator Dermot Davitt is joined by a powerhouse panel comprising Geoff Alexander, President, Wow Bao (standing); Song Hoi-see, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Plaza Premium Group; and Regynald G. Washington, President, Paradies Lagardère Dining Division.

08.55
An important session at FAB 2019 on the theme of wellness, with Menu Matters President Maeve Webster (standing), Vane Airport Media Founder Cristina Alcivar (centre) and Kathy Casey Food Studios Owner Kathy Casey (right).

A frustrated traveller turned journalist and publisher, Alcivar challenged the travel F&B industry to focus more on wellness and offer a greater variety of healthy options. Just as importantly, airports and concessionaires need to do a better job of communicating the healthy options available, she said. “The time has come to break bread with wellness, it is an opportunity for growth and a selling point – and consumers want it.”
Webster highlighted recent trends in wellness including: a shift towards holistic health (not simply about being healthy or losing weight any more); veganism, vegetarianism and flexitarianism; functional foods that have tangible, identifiable benefits and sustainability.

Webster noted that the focus should now shift to Generation Z in terms of innovations and strategy. The influence of Millennials is passing and it is the new generation that will drive change in the next ten years. Immersive experiences – beyond just the appeal of food – will be vital, she said. Other trends include seasonality, or changing out areas depending on the season, and bringing the locale into the dining environment.

Other factors discussed were luxury offers as a growth area and the potential future impact of lab-based food and DNA-based diets.
Casey discussed a big opportunity in reimagining fast food, by elevating the customer experience for travellers on a budget. Beauty and wellness are also having a huge influence on F&B today, she said. Casey also noted the value of ‘destination layovers’ – with a ‘craveable connection’ – where F&B is so good travellers plan their trips to have layovers at airports with specific restaurants. Finally, the bar is also a huge opportunity and area with plenty of room for expansion, she said.
Day two kicked off with a FAB first – the launch of FAB Women, an initiative to recognise, encourage and develop the participation of women in the airport food & beverage sector.

An inaugural breakfast seminar hosted by SSP was themed ‘Women in Leadership – Personal and Professional Experiences and Challenges of FAB Women’, and was moderated by SSP America Vice President, Corporate Marketing and Communications Lana Cramer.

The brilliant panel comprised (from left) Dallas Fort Worth International Airport Vice President Concessions Zenola Campbell and Executive Vice President Linda Valdez Thompson, Toronto Pearson International Airport Associate Director, Commercial Development Giovanna Verrilli and Tampa International Vice President of Airport Concessions and Commercial Parking Laurie Noyes.
Valdez Thompson discussed her company’s journey to creating a culture of inclusion, which began with regulatory compliance and has evolved through training and mentorship programmes. “Now it’s about belonging and feeling like you are an important part of the organisation, bringing value and all of who you are to work every day.” She added: “This is a partnership between men and women. It is about women working hard to be included, and men being open minded to that inclusion.”

Campbell told an inspirational story of her greatest accomplishment – graduating from college despite a myriad of challenges and obstacles. “I gained respect through hard work – this is important in being a female in any industry.”

On what senior management can do to ensure equality, Cramer noted that it wasn’t enough to settle for just having one woman in the room. “This does not make an impact on the boy’s room,” she said.

Verrilli offered some excellent advice to delegates. “Surround yourself by a supportive circle, find a mentor and give back by becoming a mentor, make time for yourself, and don’t take yourself too seriously.”

26 June
A record-breaking attendance of just under 300 delegates at FAB 2019 has been drawn from all over the globe. Here Martin Moodie chats with Beijing Capital Airport Food Management Co Vice General Manager Jinsheng Zhang (second from left) and Assistant Weilun Wu (left) together with Beijing Capital Airport Food Management Co Service Manager Gang Lei.
Dallas Fort Worth International Board Member Henry Borbolla (right) with Martin Moodie and Yulim Lee
Texan wine? You bet. The state is actually one of the biggest wine producers in the USA. A superb 100% Rousanne from Becker Vineyards was on offer while for red wine lovers the William Chris Mourvedre hit exactly the right spot. William Chris says that the unique characteristics of the Lone Star terroir give its Old World-style wines a Texas flair found nowhere else. “Dark and brooding with a sense of wildness, perfectly suited to the Texas High Plains.” We’d be inclined to agree. Outstanding.

Martin Moodie and Dermot Davitt of The Moodie Davitt Report with Vadim Sagiev, Commercial Director of RegStaer in Russia.
“Welcome y’all.” FAB moved to Fort Worth last night and the brilliantly atmospheric River Ranch Stockyards, courtesy SSP.
Our host for a memorable Welcome Evening was SSP America, led by Senior Vice President Pat Murray (centre), who greeted guests along with Martin Moodie (right) and DFW Executive Vice President Revenue Management Ken Buchanan.
18.00 A presentation from Vantage Airport Group CEO, Midway Partnership Sammy Patel looked at some of the issues facing airport F&B from a concessions management perspective, with Chicago Midway offering an innovative new framework.

“More F&B space is needed and concessions planning formulas are changing,” Patel said. “There is a mismatch between F&B share of space and the challenges of growth, and we need to minimise the cannibalisation of retail.”
Talking time and space: Vantage Airport Group CEO, Midway Partnership Sammy Patel

The first day of the FAB 2019 conference concluded with a Q&A session with Patel and Dallas Fort Worth International’s Ken Buchanan.
17.45 A brilliant presentation from Dallas Fort Worth International Airport Executive Vice President of Customer Experience and Revenue Management Ken Buchanan.

Some great soundbites in an insightful presentation. “Our concessionaires are not our tenants… they are our partners,” he said in noting an important mindset shift in how the airport approaches its business relationships and plays a proactive, collaborative role in driving commercial revenues and consumer services.

17.15 Manchester Airport Head of Retail Mike Ward announced the results of a food & beverage tender in a first for FAB 2019, with HMSHost, TRG Concessions and SSP to operate a series of local and national brands. Click here for the full story.
16.50 OTG Founder and Chief Executive Rick Blatstein offered plenty of food for thought for delegates in a compelling presentation, outlining some of the company’s transformative (in more than one sense) concepts.
“Travellers are very savvy now and know what’s hot and what’s not. It’s our moment of opportunity to determine how we can do things better, by listening to customers,” he said.

The result is excellent tech-enabled customer experiences, combining both the physical and the digital. “Our vision is to be shape-shifting, to give customers excitement because a happy customer will spend more.”

16.00 A keynote session on the future of airport food & beverage has just concluded. Dubai Airports Executive Vice President Commercial Eugene Barry assessed the evolving role of customer service. “Airports are stepping up and insisting on shaping standards and experiences. And F&B is at the centre of this new focus.”

He also introduced a new acronym for the industry – ‘W.A.C.D’ – or What Amazon Can’t Do; the importance of experiences in short.
That notion was taken up by HMSHost Executive Vice President and Chief Information Officer Sarah Naqvi, who assessed the impact of various new technologies, from artificial intelligence to apps, and from the impact of start-ups to the need for mobile payments. She also introduced a thought-provoking dilemma, what are the ethical boundaries of introducing and using new technologies?

Hong Kong International General Manager, Retail Portfolio Alby Tsang gave an overview of the F&B strategy at his airport, and looked forward to future plans. Some of the key aspects of that strategy include thinking outside of the box to create experiences for passengers, while matching the foodie culture Hong Kong is famed for.
Taking the stage: Sarah Naqvi (above) and Alby Tsang (below)
HMSHost President & CEO Steve Johnson told delegates that travel F&B had experienced a “quality revolution from where it used to be in the mid-90s”. Consumer trust is important to building on new technologies. “There will be a lot more transactions and we as an industry will get better at digital,” he said. “We will serve customers faster and food will be better. There really is no end to what we can be. But there is still a long way to go.”

14.10 The conference’s first keynote session, ‘Shaken, not stirred’ featured Leigh Fisher Director Dan Cappell, SSP Group Chief Commercial & Strategy Officer Jonathan Sharp and Emirates Retail Leisure Group, Group CEO Andrew Day. Cappell set the scene for the event as “an external observer with an insider perspective”. He compared the state of play in North America with the rest of the world, with a focus on concession fees, pricing policies and tenure of contract.
Sharp and Day both noted the great possibilities of capturing and applying data. “How do we fulfil the industry’s growth potential?” asked Sharp. Much can be learnt from downtown, he said. Consumers know which areas they want to trade up or down on, and many of these feature in the travel space. “Premiumisation is a very real trend, actioned by a consumer desire,” he said.
Food for thought: Dan Cappell (above), Jonathan Sharp and Andrew Day (below)
Food for thought

A 360° analysis of the present and potential of food for trade
Using his company as an example, Day noted the great opportunity provided by integrating and combining retail and food & beverage, among other insights.

13.35 FAB 2019 is formally underway with a stirring, provocative and forward-thinking address from Dallas Forth Worth International Airport CEO Sean Donohue.

Referring to the planned sixth terminal at Dallas Fort Worth International due to open in 2025, Donohue said, “We don’t want to build a traditional terminal. If we do, shame on us.”

He pledged not to allow huge dedicated ‘lobby’ space in the new terminal, instead using technology to facilitate passengers through the first stage of the airport journey before they encounter services such as F&B. The focus must be on creating a real experience.
Sean Donohue: “We don’t want to build a traditional terminal. If we do, shame on us.”

13.00 FAB 2019 began this morning with a tour of Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. Delegates were treated to warm and generous hospitality from the airport and its staff.
The tour took in seven of the airport’s food & beverage concessions:

- **Rio Mambo**: An upscale Latin cuisine restaurant serving traditional Tex Mex dishes.
- **Chick-fil-A**: The fifth fastest growing restaurant chain in the industry; there are now three locations at Dallas Fort Worth Airport.
• **Flying Saucer**: A craft beer emporium offering an immersive experience over two levels.
• **Bar Louie**: A gastrobar serving shareable, chef-inspired menu items, craft cocktails and local beers.
• **Brewed**: A Fort Worth restaurant specialising in comfort food with a Texas twist, with craft beers and Texas wines.
• **Shin Sei**: A traditional sushi bar with a Pan-Asian kitchen – and a local Dallas favourite.
• **Italian Kitchen by Wolfgang Puck**: An authentic full-service Italian concept from influential chef Wolfgang Puck.

At each location, delegates sampled the rich variety – and quality – of food & beverage on offer at the airport. The tour concluded with a reception in which more brands from across the airport were showcased.
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