

# MARIN BRIGHT



Marin Bright, founder and CEO of Bright Business Media, which publishes Smart Meetings Magazine, SmartMeetings.com and produces Smart Meetings Experiences, has worked in the hospitality industry for more than 30 years—first serving hotels and establishing herself as the top sales person, then launching nine magazines. In 2002, Bright started Smart Meetings with the goal of improving the quality of the print and online meeting experience, and becoming meeting planners' No. 1 resource for industry news and information. Over the past 18 years, woman-owned Smart Meetings has led the way as an innovator and trailblazer in meetings. Bright pioneered the first one-on-one appointment-based events for hotels and planners, launched one of the first websites in meetings media, and created the first 'consumeresque' B-to-B trade publication for meetings. Bright continues to lead the company to expand its offerings and set industry trends. She has received numerous accolades, including the prestigious WPA Distinction in Leadership Award and two consecutive Folio Top Women in Media Awards as a corporate visionary. Bright has been honored as a Legend in the Northern California chapter of PCMA's Bay Area Meetings Industry Excellence Awards. On a personal level, her successes and accomplishments include winning a battle with breast cancer several years ago.



## 1. What values/skills do you believe are most important in being a leader?

It is important to walk your talk. I try to lead by example, being consistently fair and driven. I try to be open to ideas and feedback and give clear direction and feedback in return. Most of all, you have to have a healthy sense of humor.

## 2. How did you overcome any challenges that you may have faced in this industry?

You really just have to be resilient. I learned early on that if something doesn't work, you have to be flexible and approach the goal from another angle. When I launched the events side of the business ten years ago, I had to test different models until I came up with the boutique, personalized networking and education events that have become known as the best way to get work done while having a great time. Oh, and did I mention the importance of having a sense of humor when the inevitable goes wrong? See the February 2020 cover story for some marvelous examples.

## 3. What does inspiring the next generation of girls mean to you? And how do you support this?

I tell young men and women to go for their dreams and not be intimidated; ask for what you need.

## 4. Is there anyone you would like to acknowledge for their support or influence in your journey to becoming a leader in the events industry?

My team motivates me every day. They work tirelessly to innovate and serve our busy meeting professional community. I also have to give a shout out to Brenda Elmore, my first employee at Smart Meetings who worked diligently to help me start the company. She passed away last year and the industry is a little bit less fun because of her absence.

## 5. Why do you believe gender equality is important in the events industry?

This is a female-dominated industry, yet I don't see that being played out in management roles at the biggest companies. Let's work together to change that so everyone can contribute to their highest and best ability.