

# TCW

TODAY'S  
CHICAGO  
WOMAN

## LINDA YU

STAR POWER. STAYING POWER.

Nate Berkus

Deborah Card

On the move with Elements

Christine Wiseman

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STOP THE  
EXCUSES!

CONTINUING  
EDUCATION

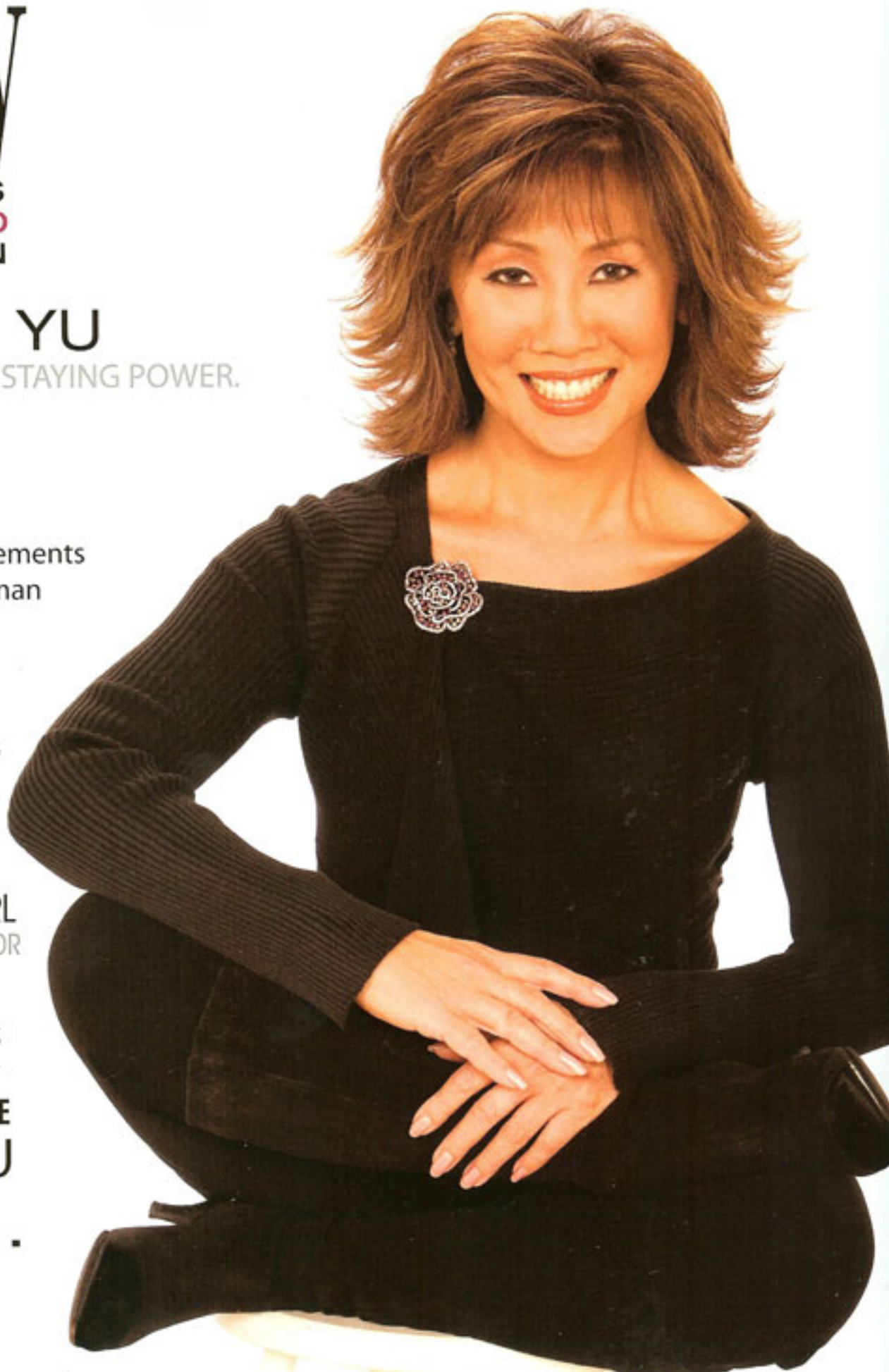
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MUSTARD GIRL

JENNIFER CONNOR

10 THINGS  
TO BUY  
BEFORE  
YOU  
DIE.

JANUARY 2008



## CHECK IN/COAT CHECK.

Don't underestimate a coat check service that operates smoothly, says Amanda Puck, executive vice president of Public Relations for XA, The Experiential Agency. "During Chicago's coldest months, there definitely needs to be an efficient plan with ample space for coat check." Carrie adds, "A guest can have a great time at the event, but if they have to wait 20 minutes to get their coat, they forget all about the great time they just had." Bottom line: be sure to hire enough staff to accommodate the crowd.



Dinner on stage at the Lyric. Decor by Kehoe Designs captured by Jai Girard Photography.

## TRANSPORTATION.

Make it easy for guests and clients to attend! When possible, provide complimentary valet service for your guests. If the event or meeting is in the city, remember to provide out-of-town guests with parking suggestions.



Sunset views over cocktails at West Loop Studios. Decor by Kehoe Designs captured by Rick Aguilar.

**Do** be prepared and ready for guest arrival at least 30 minutes before event start time. First impressions are everything. Guests are always early – you can never plan for traffic in Chicago – and you want the very first guest to see your event in all its glory. **DEBI LILLY**

**Don't** overlook last minute details and don't underestimate your audience! Today's women are more experienced and sophisticated than ever so you have to be on top of your game to give them a new and different experience. **AMANDA PUCK**

**Do** always make your guest your number one priority. We create an event for our toughest guest; we target the busy woman who's coming to the event by herself. If we make her happy then we know she'll have a good time. **CARRIE LANNON**

## FAVORS.

What you pass out to your guests will depend on the event. "Our rule is if our client can't provide [an appropriate] gift bag, then we don't give them," Carrie says. "If you have to give gift bags with key chains or gum in them, you should probably not give them anything. It takes away from the experience they just had (at the meeting or event)." One great idea for gift bags: beautiful stationery or note cards with your company's logo.

## EVENT FLOW.

Keep your guests moving. There's nothing worse than a crowded room full of people who can't move from table to table. Debi Lilly says greeting guests with "a warm, welcome hello, even if a guest is early (or late) is the key to making guests remember the event for years to come."

Keep these key points in mind, and start planning ahead of time, and your meeting is sure to be one the guests will remember long after they've left. ■

## A Simple Plan

Got A Company Meeting To Plan? No Sweat, With These Easy Guidelines. *By Marta Cichowski*



When it comes to pulling off an important business meeting or event for your company, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by all the details. No need to worry! We're giving you great advice from three of Chicago's top event planners to make sure your next meeting is a smashing success.

Event planners each follow their own unique strategies to pull off a client's event, but a few tactics are universal. Of course, preparation is key! The first step is to create a detailed checklist or production schedule to keep you organized from beginning to end.

According to Debi Lilly, the chief eventeur at A Perfect Event, determining your meeting's overall vision is first and foremost. "Every event should be unique, thoughtful and customized to the occasion," she says. "The first step is to create a vision for the event. What is the look, feel and style you want to create for your guests?" Debi, who specializes in planning luxury events, may be best known for orchestrating Oprah Winfrey's 50th Birthday Gala at Harpo Studios, where guests were wined and dined by Wolfgang Puck. Debi's event checklist includes type of event/theme, guest count, date, venue options, catering/food, invitations, floral/décor, entertainment, photography, transportation, hotel/room blocks, dine arounds/activities, favors, registration/coat check and event flow. Prioritize the details. Depending on the size of the event or meeting, your checklist may be shorter. Still feeling daunted? Let us break down some of the key points of your planning to-do list.

### SCHEDULE.

Carrie Lannon, president of Lannon Communications, a public relations agency, says the production schedule for planning events is critical to guiding her staff through the event. "Line by line, the schedule explains

what needs to be done, by what date and who's responsible for each item and a contact number for that person."

### THEME.

When choosing a theme, remember: it doesn't have to be complicated. "A theme can be as simple as a 'sleek and modern' look," says Carrie. "When you say theme, people tend to think it's going to be like a circus, but really, it's a direction that's driving everything at the event, a description people can relate to." Debi adds, "The theme sets the tone, creates the design on both the invitations and décor, sets the menu and so much more. It's the best way to launch out of the starting gate with creativity and passion."

### CATERING/FOOD.

Carrie recommends keeping everything light. "Light h'orderves, dinner, beverages – keep everything light and easy," she advises. "Women are often holding their purses during a social event, so food has to be one bite, easy and quick." If you're holding a formal dinner, remember to have options. "If guests have food requirements, our client will let us know in advance," says Carrie.

### ENTERTAINMENT.

Make sure the band or musical performers have a designated area to perform, allowing enough space for setup and the dance floor, if there is one. Remember, music sets the tone for the event and people like to talk, so make sure your guests can carry on a conversation without shouting over the music.