



# Midwest Association of Independent Inns Conference & Trade Show Schedule Of Events – Updated 11/30/2024

(Subject to Change – more detail added as schedule is finalized)

See Our Conference App With More Conference Details – [Click Here For The App](#)  
Conference App Courtesy of Frictionless Guest App

## Monday, December 2, 2024

9:00 am – 5:00 pm | Aspiring Innkeeper Seminar

## Tuesday, December 3, 2024

11:00 am – 5:00 pm	Attendee & Vendor Registration - <i>Vendor Set-Up</i>
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Vendor/Innkeeper Roundtables - Sharing Best Practices & Topics of Interest to Innkeepers Today <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>“Driving Customer Satisfaction: Best Practices to get the 5 Star Reviews”</b> – Leslie Drake – InnStyle</li><li>• <b>“Let’s Talk Mattresses – It is BED &amp; Breakfast!”</b> – Bobby Cleveland – Verlo Mattress</li><li>• <b>“Exceeding Your Guests’ Expectations Using Technology to Assist with Guest Communications”</b> – Marty Etzel – ThinkReservations</li><li>• <b>“What You Need to Know About Hiring an Interim Innkeeper”</b> – Sue Kalis &amp; Ramona Sonnenberg – Interim Innkeepers Network</li><li>• <b>“Importance of Simplifying Daily Activities Through Automation”</b> – Jamey King – eviivo</li><li>• <b>“Food/Menu Development/Costing”</b> – Heather Turner – Forfeng Designs</li><li>• <b>“Think of Your Website as the Digital Front Door to Your Business!”</b> – Jeff Logan – Logan Marketing</li><li>• <b>“The Art of Buying &amp; Selling”</b> – Eben Viens – The B&amp;B Team</li><li>• <b>“Innkeepers Pain and Challenges”</b> – Clay Cushing – ResNexus</li><li>• <b>“What’s On Your Mind?”</b> – Open Discussion</li></ul>
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm	MWInns Annual Meeting (MWInns Members Only)
5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Vendor Marketplace and Opening Cocktail/Appetizer Reception - Corn Photo Booth - fun, free photos!
6:30 pm	Dinner on Your Own

Wednesday, December 4, 2024

8:00 am – 8:30 am

**Welcome**

8:30 am – 9:15 am

**Speakers**

**"Catering to Today's Travelers, Embracing Your History, Staying True to Your Brand"** - Presented by: Mark Kittrell - Owner of Black Hawk Hotel, Cedar Falls IA & Angela Harrington - Owner/CEO of Catalyst Hospitality Management

Hear the story and rich history of the second longest continuously operated boutique hotel in the country ~ The Black Hawk Hotel.

Keeping focus on the changing landscape of the guest experience, hear about rebranding strategies implemented for future growth and success.

We all share the passion, commitment, and dedication in our own unique local lodging businesses so plan to be inspired!

9:30 am – 10:15 am

**"SBA & USDA Federal Small Business Loan Programs for Independent Inns"** - Presented by: Bruce Hurta - Outdoor Hospitality Loan Specialist at Business Finance Depot

As a veteran small business lender for over 40 years, Bruce Hurta offers the SBA and USDA federal loan programs nationwide for financing independent inns, B&Bs, and other unique Hospitality businesses. These loans have lower down payments and longer repayment terms than conventional bank loans. We offer SBA loans from \$300,000 to \$10 million, and USDA loans from \$2 million to \$25 million. Loan proceeds may be used for:

Business acquisition \* Business expansion \* Partner buyout  
Business startup including new construction \* Refinance existing business debt for better repayment terms

At Business Finance Depot, we also offer some conventional and unconventional financing options, in addition to the more popular SBA and USDA loan programs.

10:15 am – 10:30 am

*Break*

10:30 am – 11:15 am

**"Why MWInns.com Is Becoming the Go-To Website for Midwest Travelers and What it Means for Members"** - Presented by: Jeff Logan - Chief Marketing Officer at Logan Marketing

Learn how this fabulous and feature-rich website is driving traffic to the site and ultimately to your inns!

11:30 am – 12:15 pm

**"Innkeepers Asking the Tough Questions and Getting Straight-Forward Answers in Plain English on Topics from Data Security to Credit Card Processing & Beyond"** - Presented by: Wynn Salich - Principal at Casablanca Payments, & Innkeeper Panel

Data security's constantly emerging threats can feel a lot like playing an unending game of whack-a-mole. In plain English we will talk about how to better secure your sensitive business information in this era of growing fraud and costly breaches. The ever-changing payments industry and payment processing will be also discussed, with Innkeepers asking the tough questions and sharing their best practices.

12:15 pm – 1:45 pm

Marketplace/Lunch

1:45 pm – 2:30 pm

### Speakers

**"Steps to Nirvana: Preparing Your Inn for Short- or Long-Term Sale"** - Presented by: Eben Viens - Owner of The B&B Team

Your exit strategy should be the first topic addressed in your purchase plan, enumerating financial or personal goals (desired or required) before you reach the point of preparing your Inn for transfer to new owners. This conversation will cover the multitude of steps you should be addressing whether you are several years or decades from a desired transfer date. Topics will include operational strategies, how to use your internal financial statements as a tool for development and a marketing vehicle when courting prospective buyers, key approaches to valuation of Inns and independent hospitality properties, and beyond. The presentation will be instructive and supported by The B&B Team's trove of data on transfers of quality, going-concern hospitality businesses.

2:45 pm – 3:30 pm

**"The Guest Journey"** - Presented by: Jamey King - Senior Marketing Manager at eviivo

The Guest Journey should be taken into consideration for every guest reservation that comes into your inn. This education session will present key points of that journey for the guest by covering the three stages they encounter: Before the Stay, During the Stay and After the Stay. This session will focus on marketing to the guest, the importance of a visual and informative website and communications to your guests in the Journey timeline. This presentation will be a useful tool for enhancing your strategy for positive guest reviews and keeping guests in the rebooking funnel.

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm

*Break*

4:00 pm – 4:45 pm

**"A Midwest Breakfast to Enhance Your Brand"** - Presented by: John Walch & Jim Shopofski-Walch - Owners of Hawk Valley Retreat &

Cottages, Galena IL

We believe that your breakfast should be part of your marketing plan and enhance your brand. We will share ways to examine your breakfast and make sure that it not only nourishes your guests but also enriches the overall experience of their stay.

Topics covered will include service types, small wares, menu options, plating, and special touches that will make sure your guests become raving fans.

4:45 pm – 5:00 pm

Closing Day Remarks

5:30 pm

Off-Sight Event (Transportation to/from hotel, Black Hawk Boutique Hotel Tour, "Taste of Iowa" buffet dinner, entertainment)

## Thursday, December 5, 2024

9:00 am – 9:15 am

Welcome Back

9:15 am – 10:00 am

### Speakers

**"Developing Your 2025 Marketing Plan"** - Presented by: Marty Etzel - Senior Sales Account Executive at ThinkReservations

Was 2024 a good year for you? We certainly hope so - or did it seem your guest base was either in Europe or pinching pennies due to inflation? No matter what your 2024 results and your 2025 outlook, you need a property specific marketing plan and even more important, solid execution of the plan. How do you achieve your best potential?

This session will cover how to develop a marketing plan (with handout outline) and many of the basics of execution - analytics, PPC programs, understanding all the places where a looker can find you and some tips on how to convert them to bookers. We'll cover both high-level topics such as developing your position and message as well as get into the details on using and interpreting your Google analytics results.

10:15 am – 11:00 am

**"Spoil Your Guests with a Spa Like Bath"** - Presented by: James Kuester - Owner of Küster Design

Have you ever stayed at a hotel or inn where the guest bath put a damper on your experience? Well, as an independent innkeeper, you only want to make the best impression on your guests and make sure they only have rave things to say about you on social media and to their friends. One sure way to do that is to give them a bath experience like no other. In this interactive session James will provide tips and insights into how

11:15 am – 12:00 pm	<p>to wow your guests and give them a bathroom experience to write home about!</p> <p><b>"AI-Driven Marketing for Modern Innkeepers"</b> - Presented by: Jordan McNamara - Marketing &amp; Communications Manager at the University of Northern Iowa - Wilson College of Business, and a Panel of Innkeepers Successfully Using AI</p> <p>Discover how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming hospitality marketing. This session dives into how innkeepers can leverage AI tools and strategies to drive efficiency, increase brand awareness, and boost bookings. Explore practical, hands-on techniques for implementing AI in your marketing efforts—empowering your inn to thrive in a competitive landscape. Join us to unlock the potential of AI to elevate your marketing, streamline operations, and position your business for enduring success.</p> <p><i>Refreshment Break at Vendor Marketplace</i></p>
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Vendor Drawings/Door Prizes/Goodbyes

***The schedule of events is subject to change as conference details are finalized.  
Keep checking back! More information and details are added to the schedule as they become available.***