

## YOUNG LEADERS CONFERENCE

## Young Leaders Have Know-How to Make It Big



Daniela Harrison, Avenues of the World Travel, and Willie Montano, CIE Tours, at the YLC's Sunday Kickoff at The Cosmopolitan.



Stephanie Mack, Heritage Bay; Jessica Alfaro, Valerie Wilson Travel; and Carole-Anne Hughes, Valerie Wilson Travel

FOR ALL THOSE travel agent naysayers out there, and yes there still are a few, we'd like to introduce you to the 2013 class of Young Leaders. The fourth annual Young Leaders Conference (YLC) kicked off in Las Vegas on September 9, with gusto and enthusiasm from the travel industry's rising stars. What has become apparent is that this new class of agents is no longer the fresh-faced, naive neophyte eager to sop up as many basic tips as they can. Not anymore. This generation of travel agents is now seasoned, experienced and knowledgeable enough to rub elbows with the big kids of travel. They've got the basics down pat. They are ready, and have already begun, to excel.

"By the fourth year [of this conference], agents are not new to the industry. They are in it now and they are looking to thrive," says Joe Pike, senior editor at **Travel Agent** magazine and co-host of this year's event.

"YLC is great because it combines how to break into the industry when you are new, but also how to go beyond the basic 101 education and really position yourself to take over the driver's seat of the industry, because we are the future," Samantha Erickson, event marketing specialist and YLC co-creator, adds.

The day-long series of seminars and roundtables brought together top agents under 40 to network with each other and to learn from their peers and suppliers.

### The Perfect Pitch

The agents selected for the panel discussions flexed their travel muscles and were able to demonstrate why they



are thriving at such young ages. It is because they get the business. They get the industry. They know how to hone in on a potential client and close that deal. One of the most engaging panel discussions was titled

The Perfect Pitch. Beth Jenkins of McCabe World Travel and Ryan Mielke of Regency Travel shared their know-how on how to make the agent relevant to the consumer.

"The best way to show your value is to show your worth," says Jenkins. "If you are part of a consortia or if you work with a wholesaler, show off the special benefits

## Agents' Assessment

AT A POST-CONFERENCE cocktail reception at TAO restaurant and nightclub at the Venetian, agents assessed this year's YLC experience.

"I think this year is a lot more interactive," says Regency Travel's Ryan Mielke. "Tons of people are tweeting, which is a lot better than last year. All in all the roundtable aspect causes people to be interactive and outgoing."

YLC first-timer Katelyn O'Shaughnessy of Travel-Store says, "I think it's great to get so many people together from all different consortia groups who otherwise would not have met. It is a collaborative group of young, committed travel professionals. It is great to be able to share experiences and hardships and talk about where we would like to see this industry go."