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What happens in Vegas stays on YouTube: Social media and tech education at ICSC #RECON15

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As we all prepare for ICSC RECon 2015, booking meetings and figuring out which cocktail parties are the hottest this year, be sure to check out what ICSC has scheduled for social media and tech education.

I was able to catch up with Sarah Malcolm, director of new media at ICSC and she clued me in on some of the new happenings. Throughout the show, there will be an ICSC Social Squad live blogging, periscoping (live video streaming), and conducting interviews. Malcolm said their focus this year is "to have more of a live feel to the show, where people will have a never before seen 'behind the scenes' look at RECon." She also mentioned there is a new feature within the RECon app that includes way finding, booth to booth directions. This will certainly expedite people around the show and cut down on our poor office manager directing strangers that come up to our reception desk. Good news, Katie!

As for the actual show program, here are some classes, sessions and panels to help you stay in the know:

On Sunday, May 17th, you may have to clear some pool time to make it to a session with Corbatt Guest, CEO of Imaginuity Interactive and Brian Lutz, director of mobile and digital strategies of CBL for a session on "Driving Revenue from Social Media." I thought this sounded like an interesting session as it speaks to ROI and "evolving your live marketing campaigns in real-time." A lot of people are starting to get the hang of social media but measuring it and modifying a strategy is another story.

A second Sunday course includes a session on omni-channel personalization from Patrick Flanagan, VP of digital marketing & strategy of Simon Property Group. The CRE giant has been a social media front runner for years so anything Simon is speaking on in this realm is worth investigating. I feel like there is still quite a bit of confusion around omni-channel and multi-channel so this is a good session to catch if you fall in that camp. Learn "how shopping centers and retailers can best work together in an online and in-center partnership to drive traffic and sales."

The MAXI awards, for distinction in marketing, social media, tech and NOI are Sunday evening. Attend this ceremony to hear many examples of what industry leaders are up to.

There isn't too much happening Monday as far as social media and tech sessions but there is a new development at RECon this year called the "Talent Development Pavilion" (aka TDP), housed at the Marketplace Mall. There will be free wifi, hourly workshops focused on personal branding, LinkedIn, presentation skills, social media mistakes, a resume critiquing service and a professional photographer available for taking headshots, free of charge. This is pretty neat and I'm curious to see how many people at the show truly utilize these services.

Tuesday, May 19, get ready for one of RECon's keynotes, Erik Qualman, a bestselling author known

for his book, Socialnomics. Qualman wrote and produced the world's most watched social media video (you know the one, where it shows the shocking number of relationships that start and end because of social media). I've seen Qualman speak before and he is very entertaining.

Also on Tuesday, there is an hour session on how to use social to market shopping centers and help retailers. Alan McKeon is the moderator; he's one of the people I find most interesting in this industry because his work studies analytics and looking to the future.

The last session on social media and tech at RECon 2015 is a panel discussion on "Deal Making in the 21st Century Using Current Technologies." There is clearly a ton of technology out there for retailers to gain analytics to make better decisions on site selection, inventory and products but there hasn't been too much talk about how deal makers can utilize technology. Other than the panel missing the presence of at least one woman (six men), I'm excited about the take-aways from this session as the NEIDEX Next Gen committee is planning a similar event in July.

Remember, what happens in Vegas lives forever on social media so be smart and have fun. See you out there!

Fun Fact: According to the Las Vegas Travel Guide, "FedEx CEO, Fred Smith saved his company in the 1970s by gambling their last \$5,000 in Vegas. He turned \$5k into \$35k by playing Bkackjack. This allowed FedEx to stay in business a few days longer, at which point he was able to raise \$11 million to keep FedEx going."

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