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CAMPAIGN: HGI BRAND CONFERENCE

CLIENT: HILTON

AGENCY: LEO EVENTS

Hilton Garden Inn (HGI) hosts its Brand Conference every other year, and 2017 marked the second such conference for which LEO Events handled every aspect, from strategy to production to logistics and execution. HGI retained LEO and it was go-time over the next 18 months to plan the event for 1,700 global attendees.

HGI's Brand Conferences typically have the same strategic objectives—to grow revenue, encourage loyalty, and increase profitability—but this event added a brand reveal, or a “brand amplification,” to the mix. For LEO, that meant starting the conference with one brand look and feel and then helping HGI introduce an entirely new one when conference attendees stepped out of the first general session.

HGI selected Hilton Chicago. From start to finish, LEO ensured that the event not only featured unique, engaging activities but that all of the behind-the-scenes work ran flawlessly.

The conference was almost entirely paperless with LEO writing, scheduling and distributing more than 100 pre-event custom digital communications. LEO also created the registration platform as well as the event app, which achieved more than 92 percent usage, allowing registrants to do all of the “paperwork” before they arrived. When the attendee hit “print” for his or her name badge, the name and geographic location would light up on the screen of a digital, 3-D globe. The registration and event



platforms also collected data in real time to show who had checked in and from where.



Two key elements stand out. First, for the General Sessions, LEO turned the International Ballroom with custom scenic and intimate seating and staging, for all of HGI's executives to make major presentations. The high-energy event kicked off Sunday evening with custom videos, a performance by the Soul Children of Chicago, and an awards celebration.

The next day's General Session started with a performance by a parkour troupe—complete with a look-alike of John Greenleaf to cleverly introduce the global head of HGI to the stage for the brand reveal, “We are Brighthearted.” While the first General Session was taking place, LEO was hard at work flipping the conference from the old brand to the amplified one, including digital and static signage, and focusing on the new messaging and color palette.

Second, we placed a to-scale model of HGI's new “Garden Market” concept in the Grand Ballroom for attendees to experience this coming attraction. It featured virtual-reality Oculus stations for the different global markets to show how the Garden Market would look in Europe or Asia.

A “Bright Conversations Lounge” for vendors and partners to highlight their services and products was created and HGI Food & Beverage also showcased new, brand-wide service items. Attendees used the area for meet-ups as well to leave day-glo messages on the Brighthearted Message Wall. For the second day, we took these messages and threw blacklight on them to make them pop during that evening's closing party, Illumi-Nation.

This final night event spanned two ballrooms and engaged attendees with illuminated, walk-around talent, a live band, as well as custom GLO Bars, a giant custom Lite Brite board and other day-glo games.