Allstate Taps Cvent to Lower Costs, Reduce Risks, and Improve Speed to Market with Strategic Meetings Management Program

About Allstate:

- **Industry:** Insurance
- **Headquarters:** Northbrook, IL
- **Offices:** U.S. and Canada
- **Number of Employees:** 43,300 employees, 39,600 licensed sales professionals, and Allstate independent agents
- **Estimated Annual Revenue:** $39.513 Billion
- **Website:** https://www.allstate.com
- **900 -1,100 meetings/events annually; annual meeting/event spend of $18 Million**

The Allstate Corporation is the largest publicly held property and casualty insurer in America. The company serves more than 16 million households nationwide through Allstate and its subsidiaries Esurance, Encompass, SquareTrade, and Answer Financial. Allstate offers a broad array of protection products through multiple brands and diverse distribution channels including auto, home, life, and other insurance plans.

The Challenge:

As one of the top insurance providers in the U.S., Allstate Insurance Company hosts more than 1,000 meetings and events each year.
Despite such an expansive meetings schedule, the company lacked a disciplined approach to managing venue sourcing for its meetings and events activities. Allstate had been using a decentralized sourcing process in which approval for financial and legal risks, as well as event expenses, was conducted on an inconsistent, ad-hoc basis. This led to a lack of visibility for those outside the planning team and affected spending levels, savings, meeting numbers, deposits, credits, and reporting. Controls over these and other line items including event governance and signatory protocols did not exist. Without oversight into the process, incentive payments from suppliers were sent directly to planners; raising concerns about possible supplier influence on venue decisions.

Strategic Approach:

In August 2017, Allstate’s Sourcing & Procurement Solutions department launched a new Strategic Meetings Management (SMM) program and meeting and events policy for employees who plan company meetings or incentive events. The program encompasses departmental, sponsorship, and recognition events defined within Allstate’s new meetings and events policy. The SMM program was branded as MeetingHub, powered by Cvent’s meetings management software platform. Allstate’s new strategy was driven by its Director of Travel and

Travel Team along with collaboration from the company’s Travel and Transport (TMC) partner. They worked closely with Cvent to develop a centralized sourcing process to manage venue sourcing across all the insurer’s meetings and events.

Allstate also hired a dedicated SMM Manager and sourcing specialists to work with Cvent to help develop a meeting and event policy. Debbie Barker, an implementation consultant at Cvent, and Allstate’s travel team collaborated on the development of a standardized meeting and event policy for the insurer. Under the new policy, Allstate established a clear definition of qualifying meetings and events for its company. The company defined qualifying meetings and events as having 10 or more room nights booked and a contract and/or cumulative contract valuing at $20,000 or more. Moving forward, any meetings and events that met these criteria must go through the centralized MeetingHub sourcing process.

MeetingHub provides Allstate planners with a disciplined approach to venue sourcing, using the latest technology, industry benchmarking, automated workflows, and processes. The implementation of MeetingHub for venue sourcing at Allstate aimed to provide:

- Governance controls with respect to contracts
- Validation of rates and contract terms using historical and market data
- Detailed reporting on key metrics with meetings: meeting type, spend level, savings, and number of meetings
- Visibility into credits or deposits for reuse with future meetings
- Enablement of benefits of the Allstate Duty of Care Program for event attendees
- Better use of Allstate’s onsite facilities for meetings, when applicable
- Improved tools for meetings of all sizes, from small DIY meetings to full production support for large-scale events for close coordination with conference planning teams

Program Implementation

The first step in implementing the strategic meetings management program (SMMP) was to secure buy-in from Allstate management for this new concept. Stakeholders and regions within Allstate were identified to help lay the groundwork for a communications plan to familiarize planners around the country with the new meetings and events policy and MeetingHub. Kick-off meetings were held across 22 Allstate regions and departments in a phased process over a six-month period. A quarterly newsletter and social media notifications helped reinforce the communications and implementation processes.

A user group was formed to help identify process improvements and streamline the MeetingHub process. The group helps ensure that the “voice of the planner” is considered in all meetings and events decisions, addressing any misconceptions that MeetingHub would diminish planners’ control of meeting planning. Planners continue to have complete autonomy over final venue decisions and all program elements. The use of technology provides an improved user experience and company-level data visibility. Ongoing training and feedback sessions enable the team to continue to refine and improve the program.

A meeting and event risk scoring process is being developed to score events based on factors such as venue destination, number of attendees, senior leadership presence at an event, and higher risk travel components such as cruise ships and charter air. The higher the meeting/event score, the more involved Allstate’s physical security team will be. This capability also gives Allstate’s travel team the ability to cancel an event or move it to a safer location.

Within five months of the new program launch, Allstate realized over $600,000 in savings across its meetings and events business.

Program Results:

At the outset of program implementation, Allstate estimated $18M in meetings and events spend per year. Within five months of the new program launch, Allstate realized over $600,000 in savings across its meetings and events business. Most of these savings were
accomplished through the standardized venue sourcing process that gives Allstate’s meeting planners greater negotiating leverage with hotels. During this same time frame, budget estimates for all registered meetings climbed from $18 million to more than $44 million.

The implementation of MeetingHub powered by Cvent technology gives Allstate management visibility into a formal and trackable process for managing venue sourcing to ease any of their concerns. Planners retain complete creative control over managing and running events. The MeetingHub program also enables Allstate’s teams to manage the safety of event destinations and provide proper duty of care for event attendees.

Allstate has also implemented Cvent’s mobile event apps CrowdCompass, OnArrival 360 and Lead Retrieval to take its larger events, such as National Forum and Leadership Forum, to the next level by integrating all its event data in one, central location and enhancing the attendee experience. Allstate’s collaboration with Cvent and its hard work implementing MeetingHub helped the insurer capture the award as SMM of the Year at the 2018 Cvent CONNECT Conference.

Future Plans:

Allstate is already thinking ahead on how it can further integrate with Cvent technologies. Allstate’s one-year plan includes a payment solution to increase spend visibility and to auto-populate the Cvent budget, creating a better user experience. The company hopes to also incorporate Cvent’s Inquisium solution for meeting and non-meeting surveys. Allstate’s two-year plan is designed so that the subsidiaries within Allstate’s family of companies can also benefit from a similar use with Cvent.