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Front Lines

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IGC Show moving to McCormick Place

Chris Beytes

Faced with major construction at Navy Pier and the long list of inconveniences that would come with it, IGC Show founders Jeff and Cheryl Morey have announced their decision to move the event to a new permanent home in Chicago: the Lakeside Center hall at McCormick Place, beginning next summer with IGC Show 2019, slated for August 13-15.

Jeff knows the change will raise questions, so he and his wife are working hard to ensure both attendees and exhibitors that they'll keep all the "signature extras" the IGC Show has offered at Navy Pier through the years, such as the three free keynotes, continuing education sessions, networking opportunities and Wednesday's free classic rock concert. In fact, they say, the move will make it easier for attendees and exhibitors to get the most from their IGC Show experience—by bringing all the events together in one central location.

"Everything will be on the show floor level," Cheryl explains. "No more climbing stairs, no long hikes to the ballroom for the keynotes and concert, no going to the next floor up for the conference sessions. The trade show floor will be the center of the action and the hub for everything."

The move was forced by construction of a $100 million, 222-room hotel on top of Navy Pier's Festival Hall, the site of IGC Show's trade show since its inception in 2007.

"This past August at our 12th annual IGC Show, we felt the pains from the construction," Jeff says. "And that was just the beginning of the demolition and building planned for the years to come. Our attendees and exhibitors suffered from restricted entry to the exhibit hall. Elevators weren't working, escalators weren't operating—it wasn't pretty."

Adds Cheryl, "Fortunately, despite these challenges, the show was a huge hit with attendees and exhibitors alike. But we also lost a lot of the prime lobby space that previously housed show registration and the GCA Café. Not to mention, the large windows looking out to Lake Michigan—they were all gone."

Meanwhile, just south of Navy Pier, McCormick's Lakeside Center streams natural light into the contemporary, recently revamped space and presents spectacular sweeping views with floor-to-ceiling windows looking out to Lake Michigan.

Jeff and Cheryl say they plan to continue offering discounted show rates at hotels in Chicago's popular Loop area, in addition to hotels at McCormick Place.

"We started a big updating process on the IGC Show two years ago—for example, the addition of the IGC Networking Lounge and Shop Talk Retail Discussions on the show floor," Cheryl said. "Now starting next August, we

are excited to add a lot of things we never had room for in the past. Stay tuned for lots more details. Think of it as IGC Show 2.0."

Via email, we asked Jeff if this move was temporary or permanent. "We will never return," was his reply. Why?

"Because the placing of the new hotel—literally on top and on the front of Festival Hall (our show hall) will forever degrade it. The building we loved for over 10 years will be gone. Simply put, they are ruining the place. All those beautiful bay windows looking out on the lake in the lobby areas will be permanently gone, as will the lobbies themselves." He added that the new hotel will be an expensive boutique brand, with room prices way out of the range of "show hotel rates."

But as for Chicago?

"We're in Chicago to stay," says Jeff. "We're not going anywhere after this move." **GP**