



## 2024-2026 Board of Directors - Nominee Bios

### Officer Nominees

#### Vice Chair



**Oswaldo Freitas**  
**Managing Director – Co-Founder**  
**Easy Time Travel**

With more than 30 years in the industry, Oswaldo Freitas has been working with the USA trade. He started contracting hotels, transportation, attractions and other products for Soletur and Nascimento Turismo, both major Tour Operators in Latin America with headquarters in Brazil, and then developing Latin America Market for JTB Americas.

In 2019, Oswaldo opened his own company providing groups, leisure, MICE, and FIT products for clients speaking Spanish, Portuguese, and English.

#### Treasurer



**Richard Groesz**  
**Director of Contracting**  
**American Ring Travel**

I started my career at ATI in 1989 at a time when bookings were still coming over a telex machine and the FAX was just gaining popularity. My desktop computer was a new IBM with a green screen using DOS 2.0. Over the course of the nineties, I was promoted several times, sent to Honolulu for 2 years, then left ATI to setup Meeting Point NA in 1994. I spent that summer organizing travel to the main venue cities for the World Cup. A few years later, I returned to ATI as a Senior Product Manager.

In 1999, I was recruited by Best Western International Worldwide Sales. I handled airline crew, travel agents, tour operators and OTA's before anyone really knew how to categorize them. I met with the founders of what is now hotels.com and Expedia (Richard Barton). Costco had bought a small pacific travel agency, and formed their first travel division, and I setup a coop marketing agreement with them. Following the tragic events of 911, I left the industry to pursue my dream of becoming a Realtor for the next 13 years. I returned to the industry in 2016 with American Ring Travel. Here I've contracted for our FIT, Fly & Drives and most recently our bus tours. I am also the company's Sustainability Coordinator.

## Secretary



### **Makiko Matsuda Healy** **Senior Vice President, Tourism Market Development** **New York City Tourism + Conventions**

As Senior Vice President of Tourism Market Development for New York City Tourism + Conventions, Makiko Matsuda Healy has the overall responsibility for strengthening New York City's position as a premier travel destination in new, emerging, developing, and specialty markets, with a primary focus on product distribution channels and strategic trade partnerships. She held a key role in the company's global network expansion and strategized growth in markets such as Brazil, China, India, and Muslim Travel. She is particularly passionate about the development of inclusive travel for people with disabilities.

Ms. Healy actively participates in national-level tourism development efforts, working closely with Brand USA, US Travel Association, and the network of US Commercial Services throughout the world, as well as trade associations such as International Inbound Travel Association (IITA), and the Japanese Travel Industry Association (JTIA) where she serves as a board member. She also serves as an advisory board member of Travel Ability which promotes accessible travel for people with disabilities.

She has been an active participant of the annual Sino-U.S. Tourism Leaders Summits, organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, and Brand USA. Ms. Healy received the Moves Power Women award in 2022, and the Travel Industry Sales & Marketing Executive of the Year award by the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) in 2009.

## Director Nominees

### Inbound Operators



**Nick Hentschel**  
**Chief Operating Officer**  
**AmericanTours International**

Nick Hentschel is the Chief Operating Officer at AmericanTours International, LLC (ATI), where he is responsible for developing and implementing overall corporate strategy, with a focus on distribution and investment in technology. Nick served on the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board during the Obama Administration, advising the U.S. Secretary of Commerce on important issues facing the travel industry.

Founded in 1977, ATI has been a leader in the North American inbound travel industry for over forty years. Our philosophy has always been “innovation, not duplication.” Operating tour and travel products and services across all of North America, ATI develops specialized solutions to deliver product from over 30,000 accommodation, attraction, and transportation supplier partners to customers worldwide.



**Umang Malbari**  
**President**  
**Discover Destinations**

Umang Malbari, born in India in 1985, is a captivating entrepreneur whose journey from a modest background to the helm of a successful company exemplifies the American dream. In 1992, Umang's family made the courageous decision to relocate to the United States, seeking new opportunities and a brighter future. Growing up in a working-class family, he imbibed the values of hard work, perseverance, and ambition from an early age.

Umang's pursuit of knowledge and passion for business led him to Georgia State University, where he studied Business Administration. Armed with a solid foundation in business principles and a deep understanding of the global marketplace, Umang was poised for a career that would leave a lasting impact.

In 2010, Umang seized the opportunity to turn his passion for travel into reality by founding Discover Destinations LLC. As the Chief Executive Officer, he has been the driving force behind the company's remarkable success. His business acumen, coupled with a keen understanding of the travel market, has propelled Discover Destinations LLC to new heights, establishing it as a leading player in the industry.

Discover Destinations LLC, under Umang's astute leadership, rapidly gained recognition for its innovative approach to travel, offering unique and personalized experiences to clients. The company's success is a testament to his strategic vision, dedication, and commitment to delivering exceptional service.

## Supplier



### **Sandi Lackey** **Associate Director, Worldwide Sales** **BWH Hotels**

Since 2005 Sandi Lackey has been a pivotal figure at BWH Hotels, assuming diverse responsibilities ranging from developing partnerships and formulating strategies to driving revenue, managing distribution connectivity partners, conducting analytical research, and engaging in marketing initiatives. Her role extends further to promoting and educating clients on brand awareness.

In 2018, Sandi's contributions were instrumental in establishing BWH Hotels' first two leisure and corporate (Bleisure) accounts, resulting in substantial growth. During the same year, she joined the Global Managed Distribution department under the leadership of Matt Teixeira.

In the fall of 2019, the IITA appointed Sandi to a vacant hotel director seat. A role she fulfilled until July 2020. In March of 2020, she chaired the technology committee, emphasizing her dedication to advancing technology initiatives within the industry. In 2022, Sandi secured a director seat on the IITA board for a 2-year term, which she is currently completing. Actively participating in and supporting various travel industry tradeshow, she remains a prominent figure in industry events.

In 2023, BWH Hotels recognized Sandi's skills and expertise by promoting her to Associate Director, Worldwide Sales. In this advance role, she has taken on additional responsibilities managing the North America leisure group team and overseas various programs within the managed distribution department.

Sandi is an alumna of North Central College in Naperville, IL, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Business Management with a minor in Psychology. With a wealth of experience as a seasonal professional in the travel industry, she dedicated 14 years to a Tour Operator before joining BWH Hotels. In her previous role, she played a crucial role in marketing, product development, and product building and pricing, contributing to brands such as Hyatt Vacations, Globetrotters Caribbean, and Amtrak Vacations.

## At-Large



### **Tony Lyle** **Executive Director** **Visit Galveston**

With over 30 years in the tourism industry, Tony Lyle is a seasoned professional, currently serving as the Executive Director of Visit Galveston. Formerly the Chief Marketing Officer for Visit Lake Tahoe, Tony is renowned for his transformative approach to destination marketing. His commitment extends beyond professional roles; he actively volunteers to further industry interests.

Tony excels in building loyalty, retention, and revenue by infusing hospitality into every interaction. His visionary mindset creates brand storytellers and Brand Ambassadors—turning satisfied customers into enthusiastic advocates. Beyond his professional achievements, Tony holds a Bachelor of Education with Honors in Outdoor and Science Education from Liverpool John Moores University in England. This unique educational background enriches his contributions to the tourism industry, adding depth to his approach.