

# Catalyst Ranch Media Kit



## About Catalyst Ranch

At its inception Catalyst Ranch forged a new category for the city of Chicago – a Creative Meeting & Event Space. Catalyst Ranch was the first venue in Chicago to realize that the results of any offsite meeting can be enhanced if attendees are placed in the right environment. In 2002 we started with the concept of what our own ideal working environment would be and then coupled with extensive research, experience and pure gut instinct, created a pioneering and innovative boutique conference center in Chicago's burgeoning West Loop.

At Catalyst Ranch we refuse to believe that only Creatives should be allowed to work in non-businesslike, fun, eclectic spaces. Everyone can be more productive if the conditions are optimized. Our many loyal clients have proven us right. We found it takes more than a utilitarian room, some tables and chairs, notepads, pens and A/V equipment to hold an effective meeting.

Catalyst Ranch is an independent boutique conference center with a creative environment that incorporates breakout space within the main meeting room. Our customer service is totally comprehensive so that the meeting planner or facilitator can focus on the content of the meeting vs. all the behind the scenes details. That's why we've developed our patented model of The Well-Balanced Meeting. Catalyst Ranch caters to everything from training seminars, strategic planning meetings, association meetings, workshops, consumer market research, staff retreats, board meetings, sales meetings, as well as ideation sessions, and we'll make sure you have a Well-Balanced Meeting, too. Catalyst Ranch is 15,000 sq. feet of absolute inspiration comprising 6 meeting rooms, plentiful common areas and tons of natural light.

**Our space, your innovation!**



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# History

The idea for Catalyst Ranch was born on a quiet, sunny day in early June, 2002. Eva Niewiadomski did her typical morning routine, hopped on the subway downtown and by 8:00am was hard at work at her job as New Products Marketing Manager in the

Convenience Foods Division of Frito-Lay (most recently Quaker Oats, before the PepsiCo purchase). The division had just gone through a restructuring and Eva was excited about the new platforms she would be working on. What she thought was a meeting with her boss to talk about new priorities and projects actually turned out to be a discussion about her impending layoff at the end of August, 2002.

Thankfully, Eva had been thinking about what she'd want to do after leaving Quaker and the idea of Catalyst Ranch crystallized that very same evening.

The core precepts of the idea came from a variety of sources. Eva had created two Innovation Hallways and a Creativity Room for Quaker, which had been enthusiastically received by her co-workers. As a trained facilitator, she'd had lots of experience putting together creative environments in non-traditional locations and knew the additional heavy burden that creating those environments engendered. Her home was decorated in a style all her own - a mix of vintage and ethnic furnishings and artwork - which friends enjoyed continually exploring and discovering something new.

In a matter of 5 months (3 of which she was still working full time at Pepsi), Eva conducted qualitative research, developed a business plan and financial forecast,

searched for a site, hit garage and estate sales, refinished furniture, started building a client base, developed a marketing plan and tackled all the other millions of tasks that a good entrepreneur must fit into her day.

The lease was signed in mid-September and work began the following week. The space was completely raw - only the HVAC systems and bathrooms were in place. Eva ended up being the on-site construction manager, coordinating carpenters, drywallers, electricians, painters and hordes of volunteers (she never fully realized how many wonderful, generous friends she had until then). Construction was completed in a matter of 5 weeks. Time was of the essence as there were already three bookings in the month of November. Sight unseen!

In preparation for our first meeting in early November, the small crew of volunteers stayed up all night putting on the finishing touches and the last pane of glass for the French doors slid into place at 5:30am. The first client arrived at 7:00am.

The business grew by leaps and bounds from that day forward. We outgrew the 9,000 sq. ft. of the 3rd floor and started having to turn business away. So 3 years later the build-out of the 4th floor began, adding an additional 6,000 sq. ft. and two new rooms.

Since then, we've split one of the rooms to add a focus group capability, adding two-way mirrors, lots of specialized A/V equipment and an observation room.

The next phase of our history is being written as we speak.



## Press

Catalyst Ranch has been featured in articles in various noted publications in the United States including **The Wall Street Journal**, **The New York Times**, **The Chicago Tribune**, **American Way Magazine**, **Crain's Chicago Business and Inc. Magazine**, as well as one international publication, the prestigious **Nikkei Trendy** (Japan's version of The Wall Street Journal). We're also featured in four books, "**Customer Satisfaction Guaranteed**" by Chip Bell and James Patterson, "**From Workplace to Playspace**" by Pamela Meyer, "**Disciplined Dreaming**" by Josh Linkner and "**Marketing Research: Methodological Foundations**" by Gilvert A. Churchill, Jr. For an archive of articles please visit:

<http://catalystranchmeetings.com/media.html>



## Recent News

**August, 2014:** Catalyst Ranch is thrilled to announce that it has been awarded "Best Small Meeting Venue," by Professional Convention Management Association's *Convene Magazine* for their national "Best in Show" awards. Catalyst Ranch, along with the winners in other categories, is currently featured in the August issue of the magazine which is available now online and at newsstands. *Convene* has been the monthly publication of the Professional Convention Management Association, and an industry leader since 1986.

**July, 2014:** Catalyst Ranch announces a new, ongoing partnership with Jon Wool and JHW Hospitality. Through the agreement JHW Hospitality will utilize Catalyst Ranch's award winning creative space as the exclusive host for their renowned series of events, workshops and seminars. JHW Hospitality, which has held events with Catalyst Ranch in the past, has been at the forefront of restaurant and hospitality consulting in Chicago.

**June, 2014:** Catalyst Ranch is thrilled to announce that it has been awarded "**Best Conference Venue**," by Illinois Meeting and Events Magazine for their Best of 2013 Awards. The winners were announced at the annual "Best Of" Reception on May 7th. Catalyst Ranch, along with the winners in other categories, is currently featured in the spring issue of Illinois Meetings and Events Magazine which is available now. Catalyst Ranch has previously won the "Best Conference Venue" award in 2012.



# Bio - Eva Niewiadomski, Creator of Catalyst Ranch

Eva Niewiadomski is a successful entrepreneur who created a new category in the hospitality industry – Creative Conference Space – by opening Catalyst Ranch over 11 years ago. Eva believes that ideas, learning and breakthrough thought thrive when people are placed in an environment that stimulates and invigorates the senses. It's important to take individuals out of the typical cubicles and conference rooms where they're ensconced throughout their daily working lives if you want them to think differently and approach problems from a new viewpoint. So she created such an environment at Catalyst Ranch. The rooms are housed in a historical loft in downtown Chicago and whimsically furnished with vintage furniture, ethnic artwork, colorfully painted walls, toys, books and much more. In 2008 Catalyst Ranch was named to Inc. Magazine's Top 100 fastest growing private companies in Illinois. In 2006 and 2012, Catalyst Ranch won the Most Unique Venue and Best Conference Venue, respectively, in Illinois Meetings & Events Best Of Awards.

Prior to starting her own business, Eva spent almost 20 years in corporate, working for The Quaker Oats Company in a variety of finance and marketing positions and at Arthur Andersen & Co. Eva has a degree in Public Accounting from Loyola University and an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management.

Eva's understanding of the transformative nature of creative environments was shaped during her tenure at Quaker. In her role in New Products, she was trained in brainstorming facilitation. One of the key components for successful brainstorming was putting people in a completely different environment in order to generate a higher caliber of ideas. She created many inspiring environments for her brainstorming sessions. Eva also spearheaded several independent initiatives within Quaker's headquarters, two Innovation Hallways and a Creativity Room, all of which were positively received by her colleagues.



Eva



World famous snack service!



# Client Testimonials

## Here's what Our Clients are Saying...

Thanks for your quick help with our meeting. The meeting was very productive and in a great environment.

Most folks commented on how much they liked the venue – even those I had expected to be a bit cynical about it.

**Paul Wolfe**

GVP, Global Human Resources  
Orbitz Worldwide

I have to tell you, it is always a pleasure to work with you and everyone else at the Ranch.

It makes meeting planning so easy and everyone enjoys the fun rooms.

You and your organization have client service down to a science.

**Tish Caldwell**

Motive Quest

Thank you very much for everything. We had a great time and appreciated everyone's help. We would like to

thank you and every member of your team for the excellent service you provided and we look forward to returning for any future retreats.

**Arturo Zavala**

Chief Clerk,  
Career Development  
Roosevelt University

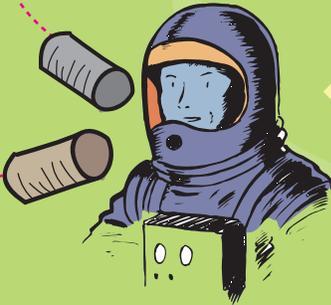
Thank you so much for all of your hard work. The event was a huge success. I

was overwhelmed by the positive feedback

received from all of our attendees. I can only begin to show my gratitude.

**Mike Boyle**

John Marshall Law School



Our nerdy and often reserved group came out of its shell and had a very open dialogue

for paving the future of our field. Catalyst Ranch was just that – a hospitable and professional service combined with a zany and inspiring atmosphere.

**Dr. James Patton**

Associate Director  
Center for Rehab Robotics at  
the Rehabilitation Institute of  
Chicago

It was an absolute pleasure working with you and we greatly appreciated the care you and the rest of the staff took dealing with our fun, dynamic, yet dietary strict group. :) We have received endless comments on the space we chose and how seamless the event ran.

Thank you so much for all of your contributions. If we are to hold a similar event in the future, we will be calling you first!

**Anne Kralcy**

Midwest Administrative  
Coordinator

NEXT: A Division of the  
Birthright Israel Foundation

...my session at Catalyst Ranch last week was nothing short of stellar - thanks in large part to your amazing facility and incredible staff. As always, my clients loved the Ranch and it made my job as facilitator so much easier,

given that EVERYTHING I COULD POSSIBLY NEED was available - no schlepping! I lost count of the number of times a Ranch Hand asked if they could help in any way - and how many times I took them up on it!

Great fun + great support =  
GREAT IDEAS!

**Jean**

J. Bystedt & Associates