

Tips on how to run a successful conference or seminar:

It is very important to make sure that any business event that you are planning on having is successful and is a return on investment. I will outline in short articles the factors to consider in having a successful conference or seminar, these will be written under the following headings:

Corporate reasons for having a conference

How to plan for a conference

Budgeting for a conference

Marketing for a conference

Finding the right venue

Event management and logistics

Conference on-site logistics

Review of the conference and follow up

Part 5

Finding the right venue for a conference or seminar:

I have in previous articles detailed the reasons for having a conference and how to plan for this. Before selecting the conference or seminar venue it is important to understand the goals and objectives of the event and what you want to achieve. You need to have set the budget to understand how much you can spend on a venue as well as understanding what type of audience you will be inviting and where they are located as this will influence the location and type of venue most suited for your event.

Timing of the event:

- Before choosing a venue you need to decide on the date of the event. The more in advance you can book the venue the better choice you will have in finding the right venue and getting the facilities that are suitable. Different times during the year are popular for events and the venues will normally charge a premium at these times. Certain days in the week are more popular like midweek, venues again may charge more for room hire.*
- Make sure that the date does not clash with other National events that may affect attendance. Different seasonal times of the year, public and school holidays can affect the attendance of an event. Remember if you are inviting guests or holding an event in different countries you need to be aware of their public holidays. Be aware of other large events that could affect you holding your event as this could clash with some of the delegates attending or the location of your venue. Also any large event*

such as a sporting event or large convention or exhibition in the locality can affect accommodation, restaurants being fully booked and lack of meeting space.

Image of the Event and Delegate Profile

- *It is most important to make sure that the image of the company or Association is matched by the image of the conference or seminar venue. The tone and type of venue should be in keeping with the conference concept and part of the overall theme marketing of the event.*
- *Delegate profile must be investigated before deciding the venue. Research of attendees' status, where they are located, numbers to attend, age, male to female ratio, can affect the type of venue suitable for your event.*

Location & Meeting Space for the Event:

- *Location is a very important to consider: make sure that the venue is easily accessible for all attendees. Will the delegates be coming from near or far, do they need overnight accommodation, Is the event best suited for a city centre or country location, near an airport or train station, easy access to public transport, or do you require near access to motorways and a venue with plenty of parking?*
- *Accommodation: Is the event just one day or over several days? Do you require on-site accommodation or a conference centre or venue with a selection of hotels near to the venue? Even if the event is only for one day you may still need accommodation for the pre event set up for staff.*
 - *The programme of a conference or seminar will dictate how much time you need to hire the space for setup, rehearsal, exhibition set up if linked with a conference, and de-rigging if you have much staging after the event. You will need to take this into account when finding out what space is available on the dates you require.*
 - *Understand how many meeting rooms and what size, breakout rooms, exhibition space, registration area and lunch and coffee break areas you require and on what dates. It is easiest to set this out on a spreadsheet and add to this the number of overall attendees you expect at each session. You need to understand how many rooms you require and their layout such as theatre style will not require as large a room for 50 pax as one set out for cabaret style, or classroom style for the same number. Always make sure that you have adequate space for your delegates to be in a meeting without feeling cramped, this is also important for the coffee break or lunch areas where the delegates will want to network.*
 - *The facilities – Staging, audio visual requirements, multimedia and technical support must be taken into consideration. Each session requirement will affect the size of room required. Ceiling height restrictions, weight load bearing factors and easy access is important to consider when the space is*

being used for exhibition. If the event requires simultaneous translation you will need to leave adequate space for booths to be set up. The plenary room may require, back projection with stage set this will take up quite a large area of the room. Note that some venues already have tiered theatre seating and in-built audio visual facilities in their meeting rooms. If wishing to have a private lunch area consider whether this will be a stand up fork buffet suitable for a networking lunch which will not require such a large area as a seated buffet lunch. Coffee break areas should be with-in easy access to the meeting rooms or a central place where the main exhibition area is set.

Venue Search and Site Visit

Venue search can be done by a specific venue search agent who do not charge a fee but get commission from the booking. Alternatively an event company used for managing the event can do a venue search and booking on your behalf. If you prefer to do this yourself, then tourist offices, hotel chains, trade directories, the internet, can all assist.

Once you have a short list of venues you think are suitable you must always do a site visit to inspect the venue as brochures and website will never compensate for an actual visit and understanding the layout of the venue and how the delegate flow and programme will work. When doing a visit always have an inspection check list, (If you require further information on the check list please contact B2B Event Management and we will send out.) When you do the site visit you must also be prepared to discuss your programme, and give the venue as much information to enable them to understand the best use of their site for your event. Before making a final decision make sure you understand the contract and cancellation policies. It is also advisable to see if you can get any references from other organizations that have used the venue for their events.

Further articles on how to run a successful business event that has ROI will follow. To receive these valuable ideas and make sure that you do not miss any of the articles we will deliver them to your in-box free. The articles will be full of tips and ideas, to help you and your business in event management.

Reference reading:

John G Fisher - How to run a Successful Conference