

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
Finding the right venue
Marketing for a conference
Event management and logistics
Conference on-site logistics
Review of the conference and follow up

Part 3

How to budget for a conference or seminar

The last two fact sheets reviewed the corporate reasons for having a conference, and how to plan for a successful conference. There can be many business reasons why a company should consider having a conference, not least are that events are an important part of the marketing mix. We will now outline the main check points to consider when budgeting for a seminar or a conference:

- *It is important when setting the budget to have funds that is sufficient to fulfill the objects and make sure that the event is successful and professional and has the right impact that fulfills expectations of your attendees*
- *When working out the budget compile a checklist of:*
 - *fixed costs which is around 35% of the budget costs*
 - *variable costs (per delegate) this is around 50% of the budget costs*
 - *calculate a reasonable contingency of around 15% of budget costs*
 - *review your costs regularly, it is most important to establish budgetary control of costs at the beginning of the project planning. You will need to know where you can enhance the event or cut back as required.*
- **Fixed costs** – *these costs need to be covered regardless of the number of attendees. Dependent on the type of conference it is normally staging and production which*

probably takes the largest proportion of the costs, with venue cost after this.

- *fixed production costs this include:*
 - *Staging – design of set, lecterns, backdrop, furnishings, graphics, banners, room decoration, floor plans*
 - *Audio Visual - such as screen, projection, video, camera recording, laser projection*
 - *Sound to include - speakers, microphones of all types, CD Player, mixer, cabling, adaptors music copyright, creation*
 - *Speaker support – design, image production, animated images, script writing, training rehearsals*
 - *Lighting – design, equipment hire, installation crew, freight transportation rigging and de-rigging costs*
 - *Crew – design and equipment hire, installation, freight transportation rigging and de-rigging, per diem, show caller, script assistant, and all the technicians for the above equipment used*
- *Fees and Insurance – this includes, producers fee, speaker fees, event management fees if an agency is being used to help with pre event planning registration or logistics. Also you may need to pay for equipment insurance, or event insurance for cancellation etc..*
- *Invitation process – this will be a once only cost and is not dependent on the number of delegates attending this can include:*
 - *Invitation - design costs, print cost for direct mail, brochure, website setup, database list of invitees, telemarketing follow up. Any advertising, posters and promotional costs as well as follow up activity to boost delegate response*
- *Venue hire to include function rooms and contracts, as well as additional venue costs such as for gala dinner if off site.*
 - *Normally you will have to pay a deposit on the room hire when booking for the event with a sliding scale of payment to be made as you approach the event. You need to commit to a number of delegates when booking the room hire. Note be aware of the cancellation fees and dates when confirming the contract, make sure from the outset that you know roughly within 20% your delegate numbers. Also note that some conference centres do not always include the same services as hotels and these can sometimes be an additional charge to the room hire.*
- *Set up Services – this includes security personnel, extra staff, on site signage, registration costs, secretarial services and other ancillary costs such as conference*

office costs, telephone and faxes. Always check exactly what services are included and for what period they are offered. Include wet weather back up if applicable, entertainment if you are having a gala dinner

- **The variable costs** - are usually the bulk of your budget, and this will be dependent on the number of delegates that you expect to attend. It is vital to know or estimate the number of attendees before you can compile a working budget. It is impossible to be absolutely accurate on your variable costs as conferences are dynamic events and ever changing, this is why it is important to create a workable budget in the early stages. Past historical documentation can be valuable when looking at attendee numbers and booking trends as sometimes there is a last minute rush to register. The variable items need to be checked carefully if the budget is to be kept under control. If there is to be at the outset a significant variation in estimated number of delegates then you need to get agreement for a variable overall budget range.

variable costs include

- *Banqueting food & drink, refreshment breaks
Accommodation
Travel
Delegate print materials, menus, table plans
Ground transportation
Flowers
Table, room, speaker gifts
Tips/service
Porterage
Insurance
Partner programme
Social events*
- **Contingency budget** – always build in at least 15 % of variable and non variable budget as a contingency budget for the unexpected, such as additional drinks, crew overtime, additional catering, unforeseen printing costs etc... You need to also put in here any currency conversion fluctuation to be covered.
- Above are most of the expenditure amounts of the budget however you may also be able to generate some revenue at your event depending on your objective and type of event planned. These could be:
 - *Charging an attendance fee, having different charges for early bird registration to normal attendance*
 - *Sponsorship from business partners, TPVs to cover such things as speakers, F&B entertainment, drinks reception*
 - *Advertising sponsorship on pre conference documentation/ web site as well as during the conference*
 - *TPV/ distributor exhibition area in conjunction with the conference where stand space is charged*

- *Partnering the conference with another company where both companies can benefit with shared audience to promote their services or products*

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](#)