

# 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 (In several parts)  
Conference on-site logistics  
Review of the conference and follow up*

## *Part 6B Accommodation Considerations*

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### **Event Management - planning logistics for a conference or seminar part B**

*The previous fact sheets reviewed the corporate reasons for having a conference, and how to plan and market 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. The event logistics and management is a large area to cover so we will cover this in several sections. In this section, part B, we will cover accommodation considerations.*

*These are the main check points to consider when planning and implementing event management for a seminar or a conference:*

- **Overnight accommodation**
- **Agent or direct with hotel** - You may chose to do this direct with the hotel or use a booking agent.

*It is worth noting that the booking agent will probably get a good price for the hotel bedroom due to the amount business they take to the hotel. If you chose an agent which has the benefit of saving time or research, you may not be able to further negotiate on other conference services such as room hire, audio visual equipment, food and beverage rates as you are dealing through a third party who is claiming commission.*

*Sometimes you can negotiate a good deal if you use a hotel chain for other events or do repeat business. Like all business relationships it has to work both ways.*

- **The accommodation type** required for the delegates and staff will vary according to the type of event: whether it is residential or off site accommodation for an event taking part in a nearby venue. Consideration needs to be given as to how long the event is taking place i.e. the number of room nights. Some events promote the ability for delegates to have an option on choosing different class hotels for their accommodation during the event.
- **Meeting with hotel management** - When organising a meeting with the hotel either at the site visit or at the stage of further negotiations it will help considerably to have past event statistics of types and class of rooms required, or the number of beds required in the various categories of hotel room. If it is a new event let the hotel know the number of delegates you anticipate will attend and what types of bedrooms they will require.  
Some hotels will charge a different rate for the different types of rooms. If, however, the event requires you to use most of the hotel bedrooms you may be offered the run of house of all the rooms at one set rate. It is then important to know the room repartition (number of type of different rooms) as this can be pertinent if all the delegates are supposed to be treated equally. A single room and a double room for single use can be quite different in room size as well as size of bed. A standard room and an executive room may be the same size but one may have a queen size bed and the other a king size bed with additional amenities, plus separate shower and bath included.  
You need to check with the hotel exactly what is included in the room rate.
- **Know the accommodation required by your delegates** - Bear in mind that you may need a range of different rooms for your different status delegates and company staff such as VIP guests, senior management, celebrity speaker, famous entertainers, and sponsors. If delegates are paying for the accommodation then you may need different types of rooms at differing quality hotels from the inexpensive through to the five star. If status is irrelevant then make sure that all the delegates are allocated the same standard of room at hotels of similar star category.
- **Understand requirement of the hotel contract** - It is important when you negotiate with the hotel for bedrooms that you know the number you require and attrition clauses in the contract.  
Know the cancellation policy: take note of dates and the percentage of rooms you are able to cancel without having to pay cancellation charges. Also note determine whether you have to pay a full 24 hour delegate fee for cancellations, which includes the food and beverage, or the room only rate which will be much less. This consideration will make a big difference if the number of attendees drops below your guaranteed number.  
Also take note of when the deposits have to be paid as well as when rooming lists and final numbers will be required.
- **Check-in process and payment** - Make it clear to the hotel if the rooms are charged to a central account or if the delegates are going to pay individually for the accommodation or their extra incidental charges on departure.  
It is important to discuss with the hotel management whether it is a group or individual check in and what the check out procedure is. This will enable you to make

sure that there are plenty of reception staff and porters available if the group arrives at the same time.

Delegates will not expect to have to wait a long time in queues. If a group arrives before the rooms are available then you may wish to have an area set aside for guest refreshments and room keys to be given out.

Consideration should also be given to luggage storage.

- **Check in time and check out times** - Ask the hotel what the arrival check in and the departure check out times are. It is important that your delegates are aware of check-in process so that you that you can set expectations of what the hotel can fulfil.

You may need early access to rooms if the delegate is arriving on an early overnight flight. The delegate will probably want to check into his room on arrival and you may have to book the room for the night before. If the hotel is not booked the night before they may allow the guest into the room early without extra charge. The same applies if you need to negotiate late check out for certain delegates.

- **Rooming list**- normally if it is a large conference the hotel will require a rooming list in arrival date order. This will be most useful if it is in alphabetical order with the number of nights required and type of room with any special needs. It is helpful to give this list to the venue as soon as possible or at least two weeks before the event.

- **Negotiation with hotel** - Hotels on the whole are open to negotiation if you are reasonable with them and they are able to comply and are not too busy the night before the event. Some hotels will give you upgrades at no additional charge if you are booking for a large group; some will allocated a specific number of staff rooms at discounted cost. All this depends on the individual hotel but it helps if you can build up good rapport with the hotel conference manager.

You may well be able to negotiate better term if you are dealing with a large size group, or are using other services of the hotel in relation to room hire, ordering onsite food and beverages.

Remember there has to be some give and take on both sides. The hotel wants to make sure that your event gets the best service just as you do. The more you let the hotel know about the event — the profile of delegates, the objective of the event and the event organisation and timings — the better prepared they are to give you good service.

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.

**Next Tip Sheet:** Part 6C - Liaising with the conference or seminar venue management; room configurations

**Reference reading:**

John G Fisher - How to run a Successful Conference