

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:

- 1. Corporate reasons for having a conference*
- 2. How to plan for a conference*
- 3. Budgeting for a conference*
- 4. Finding the right venue*
- 5. Marketing for a conference*
- 6. Event management and logistics (in several parts)*
- 7. Conference on-site logistics*
- 8. Review of the conference and follow up*

Part 6C Liaison with the Venue and Conference Room Setup

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 C, we will cover liaison with the venue and conference room setup.

Liaison with the Conference or Seminar venue

We have already discussed in Tips part 5 the topic “Finding the right venue”, the importance of choosing the right the meeting space for your event and what needs to consider. In this section we will discuss what you need to plan for in the main meeting room.

It is important to make sure that the meeting room is large enough for the capacity of expected audience, the production area required for staging and the audio visual equipment (AV) and control. This should already have been discussed and verified with the venue before signing the contract.

- **Production Requirements** – you need to consider the space that you will need for the stage and presentation, the projection AV and power outlets, and where to place the screen and top table in relation to the room orientation and entrance doors – you need to minimize disruption from possible late comers. Certain conference rooms already have inbuilt stage, screen etc, which makes the room setup easier to plan.*

- *For front projection you need to allow the front row to be at least no closer than twice the screen height, and the bottom of the screen should be no lower than 1.2 meter from the ground. Allow for optimum viewing angles and if necessary in a large room you may require two screens or large LCD projectors for those seated at an angle and who are not looking directly at the screen. If using back projection you may require one third the length of the room to project a clear rear image. A minimum of 3 meter ceiling height is required for a clear image to be projected above the audience head.*
- *It is important for the production company that is working with you to do their own site visit to the venue to clarify all the technical logistical issues. These may include staging position, power capacity, main power points, ambient lighting switches, where best to run cables, and where to put translation booths if required. If possible it is always advisable to have the meeting room on the ground floor room with easy access for the crew to unload equipment for set up and de-rig.*

Conference Room lay out

How you lay out the conference room depends on the type of meeting as well as the number of people attending and the room's capacity. Check the room's exact measurements carefully with hotel floor plan as the hotel estimation of capacity audience may be different to your event's requirement.

There are several different layouts commonly used that you can consider for your meeting depending on its type:

- **Classroom** – *useful for workshop type environment where delegates face the screen behind rows of desks usually with a central aisle for access.*
- **Theatre** – *front facing rows no desks, some specific rooms will have raked or auditorium seating, others may have tablets for writing that can fold down for delegates to use. This setting is useful for presentations and you are more restricted on space.*
- **Cabaret or Half Moon** – *where delegates sit on half table facing towards the screen and speaker. This is a good layout to use for training classes where you need a bit of collaboration between delegates. If the room is larger than anticipated attendees the cabaret style tends to take up more space than theatre seating.*
- **Hollow Square** – *seating with delegates facing each other on 4 sides of a square this is good for meetings where delegates will be having discussions with each other and need to see all the participants.*
- **U-shape or Open Square** – *where delegates sit on three sides of the square normally with the screen of presenter in the open side. This is good for workshops and training sessions where there is presentation but where delegates also need to be able to discuss topics.*

- **Boardroom** – used for the smaller meeting groups where seating is around a long table with one or two people at either end.

Hotels will have an indication of the room capacity for your type of set up, however it is always best to check and allowed for plenty of space for people to move around. You know your programme: you might need extra space at the side depending on the activities planned and depending on whether refreshments or lunch are going to be served in the meeting room.

You need to be prepared if more people register to attend the meeting and you need to make adjustments to the staging to make more room: it is important to discuss these possibilities with your production company and to have layout of the floor plan to hand.

During all the planning of the conference or seminar you need to keep the hotel informed of the running order of the programme and what facilities and services are required from the hotel or what you will be using from outside suppliers.

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 [register on our web site](#) and we will deliver them to your inbox free. The articles will be full of tips and ideas, to help you and your business in event management.

Next Tip Sheet: Part 6D – Banqueting and refreshments

Reference reading:

John G Fisher - How to run a Successful Conference