

INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

Formulas for Success

- Determine the key players and how they relate to each other in planning and executing your convention center event. These key players will include:
 - The customer.
 - The convention center team.
 - Service providers, contractors and vendors (including general service contractors, exhibitor-appointed contractors, production companies and audiovisual contractors, registration companies, plant and floral contractors, caterers, security contractors, telecommunications and Internet service providers, transportation companies, electrical contractors and emergency medical contractors).

Communication

- Partner with the convention center to communicate effectively from start to finish.
- Utilize the convention services manager to work through the important steps of planning the meeting.
 - Block space in the center as early as possible.
 - View the booking process as a firm business commitment.
 - Review the date and space hold periodically to make sure needs haven't changed and that the booking is still appropriate and practical.
 - Respond promptly to the center's contracting process.
 - Schedule site visits well in advance.
 - Submit floor plans well in advance for convention center and fire department approvals.
 - Provide detailed event requirements for the use of each space and room for each time period of the day, as far in advance as possible.
 - Let your convention center team know immediately when there is a problem.
 - Let the convention center management know how well the team met your expectations and your event's needs.

Misconceptions

- Understand the facts, rather than the myths, about convention centers. For instance:
 - Convention centers are usually operated like private enterprises rather than public buildings.
 - Many convention centers host local and regional meetings as well as large citywide conventions.
 - Convention center rental is not always negotiable and is usually limited to criteria such as events schedule over holidays or during the low season.
 - Convention centers usually make concerted efforts to accommodate planners' requests for flexibility in contracting.

Facility Design

- Understand that unlike convention hotels, convention centers are designed solely for conventions and meetings; expect a practical layout with high-quality interior finishes, a pleasing and functional physical environment, and flexibility to support various groups.



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- Discuss with convention center representatives, well in advance, the guidelines about putting signage on the outside of the center, in public areas, or in common space shared with other groups in the center.
- Clarify whether rooms or area names will be changed if a convention center is undergoing expansion, so that signage and final program information will agree.

Booking and Negotiating

- Understand the role of the CVB in marketing, selling and booking the convention center, as it varies from city to city.
 - Ask the CVB for the specifics of the city's booking policy, as it relates to the booking date window in which the meeting manager can obtain a confirmed date.
 - Discuss important items with convention center staff, rather than simply discussing with the CVB, before making a final decision on a convention center.
- Understand the terms and conditions of any agreements; ask the convention center about unclear details and review agreements with legal counsel.
- Request the names of other groups that will be in the center over your group's dates, as well as on either side of your dates, if applicable.

Facility Labor and Service Contractor Relationships

- Work as a team with all parties involved in producing your convention, including the convention center, its exclusive or preferred service providers, exhibitor appointed contractors, and others.
- Understand the union jurisdictions in the center as part of your decision making process and your planning process.

We Are From the Government and We Are Here to Help You

- Make local government agencies (such as the fire marshal, police, and city, county or state business licensing departments) a part of your team early on.
- Ask about local laws and regulations that could affect your convention such as life safety issues, taxes and permits, and traffic management.

Risk Management and Emergency Preparedness

- Work with the convention center to plan for emergencies during your event.
 - Ask for a copy of the center's emergency preparedness plan, and develop your own plan based on your priorities and policies.
 - Share your plan with the convention center team.
 - Enlist the help of the center's fire marshal or safety manager and your event manager in developing your plan.
 - Ensure that your plan and communication with the convention center team include often overlooked items such as identifying responsibility for making the decision to evacuate and designating an outside location for your own staff to relocate.

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Facility Services, Technology, and Facility Contractors

- Understand that each convention center has exclusive contracts with specific service providers in order to provide a consistent, reliable and high level of service at a competitive price.

Catering

- Understand that convention centers, like convention hotels, have exclusive food and beverage service.
- Consider meeting with the chef during the planning process to sample the menu, make adjustments, and allow the chef to learn more about your group's needs.