

SO WHAT IS THE RIGHT VENUE FOR YOUR EVENT?



I once remember suggesting to a university professor that the right venue for his conference would probably be on his university campus. How wrong one can be! He said that it was the last place he wanted to host his conference because it was his workplace and what he wanted was to meet in a well-appointed hotel that did not break his budget but provided an enjoyable experience for his colleagues from around the world. In his case it was the attractiveness of the meeting venue that was overriding any other consideration including economic.

Text Roslyn McLeod

The first question is what are the objectives of the meeting? What have the precedents been? Is there a venue tradition? Does size of the meeting, its number of participants, how many concurrent sessions and which sessions are more popular demanding what larger capacities, is there an exhibition, is lunch included and is it sit down or a part of the

exhibition, what social functions are included? Does the venue have electronic capability?

A FEW TIPS

These questions and many more provide the background information that enables you to construct a brief to send to venues. So TIP 1 is to do up a briefing document

that summarises all the relevant information for the hotel or congress centre to assess if the business is a match for their venue and to provide a costing to match your needs. It is good practice to outline your requirements and will be useful in putting together the budget and the project plan.



TIP 2 is to research the available venues to approach. Convention bureaus are a good source for the list but be aware that some only recommend their members (it depends how those bureaus are funded).

When it comes to larger meetings the appropriate venues will be on the list but if you are looking for interesting venues for smaller meetings or the social events then a search engine may yield a wider range of information because specialist/social venues do not always see themselves as a part of the meetings industry.

TIP 3 is to establish what kind of support the venue will extend to help you manage your event? Establishing the capabilities of the operations staff prior to working with them is a challenge but the level of talent/systems/commitment etc of the venue team will make a big difference to your doing your job effectively.

TIP 4 is to make sure your briefing covers all your needs to ensure the quotation you receive is comprehensive. Ask the venue to inform you of costs that may occur that you have overlooked or they suspect you may require. Put the onus on the venue to make you aware of any possible charges to minimise surprises.

Is rental free at the venue with conditions attached or is it charged by time slots? Hotels often charge per delegate packages inclusive of a range of basic inclusions. Is this good value for your needs or costly and is it based on achieving an accommodation minimum room block? TIP 5 is to be very careful not to tie into an expensive arrangement if you do not achieve minimum conditions. TIP 6 is to be conservative but allow for contingency, just do not commit to pay for it up front

which will enable you flexibility as your registrations become apparent.

SEVEN TO TWELVE

TIP 7 is to write your wish list at the outset. For example services such as internet could be an item negotiated for no charge. These requests must be negotiated prior to contracting the venue or you will miss out on valuable complimentary extras. TIP 8 is to understand that the deal must be fair for both parties so be polite and reasonable and if the venue is keen to win your business you may be successful in getting a better deal.

TIP 9 is to understand the flexibility within the venue. Which services are mandatory and when can you bring in your own provider? What will the AV cost in the venue?

TIP 10 is to ask the venue who else will be on site at the same time? Is there any

conflict with the co-tenants or will they be noisy and interrupt your meeting? Will the venue be making your space available to other parties when you are not using it? Will this present a security problem or require you to pack down and reassemble the next day?

TIP 11 is to make sure the venue has the right insurance and OH&S policies and practices in place and your event has its own too. Do you have the expertise to sign the contract and not commit to payments that you will not be able to make? Negotiate up front to give the venue an understanding of what lies ahead in regard to your payment ability.

How do you find out what you do not know? TIP 12 is to recommend a PCO who is an expert. This article touches on a few questions that need to be asked but there are probably 150-500 questions depending on the size and complexity of the event so there is good reason to consult with an expert. Venues all have different systems and policies and approach the way they make their pricings and offerings not to mention their cancellation fees.

Venue selection is more than personal preference for ambience and functionality, it requires an expertise to be able to maximise the value for money in each case.

This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers, author Roslyn McLeod, OAM, Managing Director of arinex pty limited. IAPCO represents today more than 118 professional organisers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 41 countries.

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