

Working with Hotels/ Meeting Venues

Room Set-Ups:

Styles- Hollow Square, U-shape, Classroom, Theater, Banquet Rounds or Rectangles, Fishbowl, and Reception

Material table

Registration table

Flags

Water station (go green – ask for glassware)

Pens and paper

Ask for a spacious room set if you have a lot of handouts or if attendees will be using laptops

Audio Visual (AV):

Is it an onsite company or an outside vendor? If outside, inquire about what equipment the venue has on hand

WiFi access – get the code

Be aware of setup cost and per hour labor charges

State in the contract that your group is able to bring their own AV equipment. This allows you to bring your own items such as LCD projectors, laptops, easels and flip charts.

Set and test equipment an hour before the program starts

All cords should be secured to avoid trip hazards

Room Blocks:

Advertised vs. actual cutoff dates

Rebate on booked rooms to help with costs

Ask attendees about their accessibility requirements

Attrition clause- Example: Attrition is 80% you have 200 rooms blocked, you are able to go as low as 160 rooms without the penalty of paying for the unused rooms)

Create a VIP list (staff, officers, speakers, instructors and VIPs) and note how each room will be paid for (pay on own, room and tax only, and master bill)

Hold a few rooms for late comers or last minute VIPs under a fake name. If you don't end up needing the extra rooms, cancel them prior to the cancellation date to avoid paying for the unused rooms. (Look at the hotels cancellation policy)

Contract Concessions:

Hotel/ venues service managers don't always have a lot of wiggle room on certain things pertaining to the contract. Contract concessions enable the planner to negotiate in order to get a more attractive contract.

Examples:

VIP upgraded rooms

Welcome gifts

Complimentary room block ration, 40:1 (for every 40 rooms nights, 1 room is complimentary and applied to the final bill as a discount)

Free parking

Shuttle/transportation

Breakfast vouchers

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Discounted AV pricing (many hotels will offer significant discounts on AV equipment since they already own most of it)
Late check outs

Food & Beverage (F&B):

F&B minimums (before tax and service)

Is it an onsite or an outside company? If outside, inquire about what they do have on hand (e.g.: coffee, water, glassware)

Deadlines/ guarantees

Ask attendees about special dietary needs

Plated meals are generally the cheaper meal option because it is preselected and portioned per person – start requesting RSVPs 6 weeks out. Periodically send reminders to all attendees that have not responded.

Ask to create menu if the standard options do not fit your price range

Reception food can be staggered throughout the length of the reception (half out at the beginning and fill with the other halfway through- display looks fuller longer)

Beverages on consumption vs. open bar (per head)

Leftover food – get it wrapped

Inquired about leftovers being donated

Service charge

Bartender fees (may apply if bar revenue is below a certain amount)

Corkage fee – cost for bring your own beverages to the venue (mainly for their services of ice, glasses, clean-up)

Sponsors:

Ask about space and number of tables/booths that it will accommodate

Add them to the food count- if applicable

AV needs

Send them information- hotel info, shipping address, property map, loading zones, and full program

Force Majeure

Protects both parties in an extraordinary event or circumstance beyond the control of either party which would prevent them from fulfilling the contract such as war or a strike. Force Majeure only delays fulfillment, not excuses it altogether.

BEOs (Banquet Events Orders)

Review thoroughly

Have the hotel/venue make corrections before you sign – this way you know that it is correct in their system. You may not have your main contact on-site during your event, this BEO is the only info that their staff has to go by.

Final Bill

Review thoroughly

Be sure you have received all of the concessions and/or discounts that you contracted for

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Notes:

Open communication – give all the info that is known and keep touching base as more info is available.

Pay attention to deadline (deposits, guarantees, cutoffs)

Make it clear who can make changes or additions BEO's while on-site

Never hurts to ask

Ask for tables to be draped and skirted

Be clear about where your signage can be

Reader board - be clear about what you want posted and what should not be posted for all to see

Tips – ask the sales manager/main contact who on their staff can receive tips

Be respectful, clear, and responsive – work with them, form a professional partnership