

# Helpful Tips for Planning Educational Meetings/Conferences

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# Steps to Planning a Successful Conference

The following information is not intended to be a complete guide to planning meetings and expositions; rather, it offers some suggestions and guidelines to follow.

## **SITE SELECTION**

– involves consideration of the following:

### **Location and accessibility**

- Downtown, suburban, resort, etc.
- Proximity to airport, interstates, trains, subway stops, etc.
- Cost and availability of parking

### **Scheduling the meeting**

- Avoid religious, state and national holidays.
- Ask for information about other groups that scheduled in the same facility immediately before, during and immediately after your meeting.
- Outline the basic schedule of your meeting before selecting a site.

### **Site Inspection**

- Request references from other groups who have recently used the property under consideration.
- Is the property accessible for attendees with disabilities?
- Is there sufficient meeting, registration and exhibit space?
- Does the facility have it's own audio-visual company onsite? If not, whom do they recommend to provide AV services?
- Does the property have a business center? If a business center is not available, what is the nearest provider for copy/fax service?
- Is airport transportation provided?
- What is the condition of sleeping rooms?
- What is the general cleanliness and quality of furnishings and decorations throughout the facility?
- Inquire if any renovation is scheduled and what impact it might have on your meeting space?
- Determine if meeting room charges will apply and if so, how those charges are calculated. Note that meeting room charges are often negotiable especially when catered events are included.
- Evaluate the attitude and customer service of facility staff in general and in particular at the front desk and in restaurants.

## **Contract Negotiation**

- Provide the hotel with your meeting history including sleeping room pick up at prior meetings.
- Discuss sleeping room rates, meeting room rates (if applicable) and any costs related to exhibit hall space.
- If possible, provide a complete meeting room schedule with room names and hours.
- Request a complimentary microphone in meeting rooms.
- Ask the property to confirm menu prices nine months prior to the meeting.
- Ask for one complimentary sleeping room for every 50 used by meeting attendees.
- Review attrition clauses carefully to evaluate your liability in case meeting attendance falls below anticipated levels. Be certain to ask for a sleeping room reservation total before the meeting begins and an actual room pick up after the meeting ends. This is important information to use in negotiating future hotel contracts.

## **Departure Fees**

- Many hotels charge an early departure fee to guests who do not stay for the length of their reservation. It may be waived for emergencies, but is becoming more common.

## **Food and Beverage Attrition**

- Many hotels ask for food and beverage guarantees when they submit the contract. For obvious reasons, negotiate this clause carefully. The hotel is essentially asking the sponsoring organization to guarantee a particular amount of food and beverage revenue.

## **Deposits and Payment Arrangement**

- Many hotels are asking sponsoring organizations to make a deposit prior to the meeting. Try to demonstrate good payment record and it may not be necessary. Or, sometimes the property will waive the deposit if you agree to pay the bill within 10 days. Also pay close attention to the payment portion of the contract. Some properties state billing cycles of 15 days and impose additional fees. Many properties will agree to accept 80% of the bill immediately with the remainder upon in depth review of the bill within 30 days.

## **BUDGET**

– A good budget is perhaps the most critical factor in planning and producing a successful conference.

### **What are the financial goals of the meeting?**

- To break even or produce a profit?
- Does the organization have a specific revenue goal to meet?

### **Starting from scratch!**

- If possible, review records from previous meetings and compare budgeted costs to actual costs.
- Look for major discrepancies.
- Research costs with key suppliers (hotels, convention bureau, travel agencies, transportation providers, AV providers, catering providers).
- Get quotes in writing.
- Research the history of the meeting.

### **Determine who is in charge of making decisions?**

- Who will be making final decisions on expenses?
- Who will sign the hotel master bill?
- Identify a limited number of people who can make decisions on-site regarding expenditures.
- Determine the expense level at which further authorization will be required.

### **Record Keeping**

- Maintain current and central files.
- Copy all bills.
- Create and review regular budget reports.
- Develop the registration process for both pre-registration and onsite registration.
- Upon completion of the event, prepare a detailed final budget report for use at future events.

## The Budget

- Benchmark against meeting histories when available.
- Evaluate and revise projections regularly.
- Know the budget well and be prepared if needed to cut expenses.

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Advertising</b>	Income from ads placed in conference programs, directories and other print pieces
<b>Exhibits</b>	Fees from organizations purchasing exhibit space at the meeting
<b>Mailing List</b>	Income from rental of conference attendee mailing list to both exhibitors and advertisers
<b>Attendees</b>	Income from individual registrations
<b>Sponsorships</b>	Financial support from organizations & businesses in exchange for recognition
<b>Ticket Sales</b>	Income from sales of tickets to specific conference events
<b>Misc. Income</b>	Income from sales of conference audiotapes and/or other product sales
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Audio Visual</b>	Rental of AV equipment, labor to set up equipment, cost of technician to operate equipment
<b>Awards</b>	May include costs of specific awards given at the meetings and/or expenses for award recipients
<b>Decoration</b>	Decoration of registration area, exhibit hall, theme parties, etc.
<b>Exhibits</b>	Rental of exhibit space. May also include contractor fees including: pipe and frappe, equipment rental. May also include development and printing of exhibit prospectus
<b>Facility Rental</b>	May include exhibit hall rental, meeting room rental, convention center rental or rental for special events
<b>Food &amp; Beverage</b>	Includes the cost of planned meal functions, refreshment breaks, receptions, etc. A gratuity charge and tax are typically applied to food and beverage charges
<b>Gifts &amp; Amenities</b>	Includes the cost of items purchased for VIPs (speakers, board members, key facility staff, etc.) May also include delivery charges and taxes
<b>Insurance</b>	Cost of event cancellation/interruption insurance and/or liability insurance. Sometimes an additional rider is required for off-site events
<b>Labor</b>	Includes the cost of labor to move boxes, equipment, set up rooms
<b>Music/Entertainment</b>	Includes the cost of musicians, performers, entertainers, licensing fees paid to ASCAP and BMI. May also include rental of necessary equipment
<b>Office Equipment</b>	Copiers, fax machines, computers and printers as needed on-site or in the office
<b>Postage &amp; Shipping</b>	Cost of mailing promotional material, and to ship materials to the meeting site

<b>Press</b>	Includes the cost of press releases, media tours, maintenance of a press room at the meeting and/or a press conference
<b>Printing &amp; Art</b>	Includes the printing of promotional materials, the conference program, exhibit directory and prospectus, directory of attendees, logo development and photography
<b>Professional Services</b>	May include any form of production support, consultants, etc.
<b>Registration</b>	Includes the cost of badges, tickets, forms, computer rental or services, bags, etc.
<b>Security</b>	Professional security guards, ushers, ticket takers, etc.
<b>Signage</b>	Cost to prepare directional signage, banners, logos, etc.
<b>Speaker fees</b>	Includes the fees charged by professional speakers and may include travel expenses
<b>Staff Expenses</b>	May include sleeping rooms, travel, food and other expenses
<b>Supplies</b>	Usually office supplies for use onsite
<b>Taxes</b>	Sales tax
<b>Telephone</b>	May include long distance charges and the cost of installation and operation of telephones or internet connections onsite
<b>Temporary Help</b>	Cost for temporary staff to support the meeting
<b>Tours</b>	May include charges for tour operation or destination management company, food and beverage, gratuities, etc.
<b>Transportation</b>	Includes charges for shuttle bus, car rental and limousines
<b>Volunteers</b>	Any charges incurred by volunteers which might include food and beverage and supplies

## SUCCESSFUL EXPOSITION TIPS

Promotion – Critical to the success of any event is promotion. The expo hall should be promoted to both the exhibitors and attendees.

### Attracting Exhibitors

- Develop a database of potential exhibitors
- Include past exhibitors
- Include advertisers in trade magazines
- Include vendors
- Visit other trade shows for leads
- Purchased lists – evaluate the return on investment before investing in a purchased list

**Develop an Exhibitor Prospectus** – It's important to design an exhibitor brochure separate from your attendee brochure. Within the expo brochure, state specific details including: exhibit hall hours and event schedule, pricing, rule & regulations, exhibitor registration information, contact information, last years exhibitor list and a floor plan. Be sure to tell exhibitors why they need to attend your event.

**Mailings** – Whenever possible begin promoting the conference at least one year in advance. When details are not available, develop a simple promotional flier. Maintain contact with your complete database at least 3-4 times per year.

**Select a Service Contractor** – this is the most important vendor you will select. The Service Contractor designs a booth floor plan, sets the pipe and drape, handles exhibitor freight and can assist with special decorating and furniture needs. Be sure to select a contractor with an established track record and one who will provide excellent customer service.

**Exhibit Hall Functions** – Review the conference schedule and take full advantage of times when attendees are not in sessions to build traffic in the exhibit hall. The most successful meetings make the exhibit hall an informative and interactive place in which to conduct business. It is important to arrange at least some non-conflicting exhibit hall hours (time in the hall that does not conflict with conference programs or educational sessions).

- **Prize Drawings** – Solicit exhibitors for prize donations and/or make the drawing interactive between exhibitors and attendees.
- **Catered meals in the hall** – includes receptions, lunches, brunch, refreshment breaks, desserts.
- **Sponsorships** – The key to successful sponsorships is return on investment and value to the sponsor. Price sponsorships realistically with value to the sponsor in mind...and be sure to recognize sponsors offering appropriate thanks.

***For example:***

Print recognition on pre-conference brochures and/or onsite programs

- Custom signage
  - Acknowledgement during main sessions
  - Free registrations
  - Sponsor ribbons
- **Advertising** – if you have a chapter newsletter, dedicate one issue as a show issue and sell space to exhibitors. You may also want to sell advertising in your on-site conference program.
  - **Be visible** – be sure the main contact visits all exhibitors to help answer questions and thank them for participating.

# Sponsorship Support

## SELLING SPONSORSHIPS MADE EASY

With the continuing dramatic growth of sponsorship of everything from local little league baseball teams to the Olympics, a lot of people are out attempting to sell sponsorship to companies. The standard way is to write a lengthy proposal listing all the sponsorship levels available, mail it out with a cover letter to a name from a master mailing list, and maybe follow up with a phone call. Effective? Hardly!

Sponsorship sales is like any other selling process. You must understand your product (the event, sport, arts or entertainment project you are trying to sell); you must understand how your product meets their marketing needs. Sounds simple, doesn't it? However, most sponsorship approaches only involve the first step, understanding their product.

In order to be effective at sponsorship sales, you must first be a salesperson. Take some sales training, understand what it is to be a consultative salesperson, discover the art of overcoming objectives, and learn how to tailor your sponsorship to meet the sponsor's needs while, at the same time, meeting the needs of your event. (Remember, event, sports, arts and entertainment are all synonymous.)

When determining who you are going to approach for sponsorship, DO YOUR HOMEWORK. Get a copy of the annual report, request copies of their marketing materials, do a data search at the library, discover what their marketing strategies and approaches are for the coming year. Does your event fit those strategies? Can it be tailored to match those strategies? Or, is it in total opposition to what they want to achieve? If that is the case, don't waste any more time on that sponsor. Go on and find out who is qualified to become a sponsor for your event.

Once you have the necessary background to discuss the company intelligently, call your appropriate contact within the company and discuss your project with him/her. Ask if you can meet to discuss your project. If the contact requests information, fax a brief, one-page fact sheet. Then, follow up for further discussion. Don't waste your time, energy or money on a voluminous proposal that resembles the first draft of War and Peace if the sponsor isn't interested!

Let's take it from the point where the sponsor is interested. Be prepared with a full proposal that relates the specific sponsor needs and benefits as they pertain to your event when you go into your presentation meeting. This should contain relevant materials from the annual report, marketing materials, and data gathered from your initial telephone conversations. Be prepared to negotiate a package that is mutually beneficial. Take time to listen to the potential sponsor's needs and attempt to incorporate those requests into your sponsorship package.

Okay ... you're successful and you have your sponsor. Your work has just begun. During the entire process from pre-event to post-event you will be in close contact with this sponsor. You will involve them in the production process, maintain contact through creative material execution to ensure adherence to their graphic standards, include them in all

public relations activities, make sure every element in their sponsorship package is delivered, and when everything is over, provide the sponsor with a post-event summary and report.

This, of course, is a very brief overview of sponsorship sales. However, it addresses some of the major pitfalls and problems currently encountered by people attempting to sell sponsorships. This is a very targeted, sponsor-specific approach that gives a much greater return on time and energy than some of the current methods. This whole process is greatly enhanced if undertaken by someone who is a sales professional. Selling sponsorships is great fun and certainly rewarding, both financial and emotionally. Selling properly just enhances these benefits.

## **STRATEGIC SELLING: HOW TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE**

Whether your event needs \$5,000 or \$5,000,000 in sponsorships, you need to have sales training and experience. However, many event people have never had formal training or experience selling anything. As a result, they make mistakes that alienate potential sponsors and, ultimately, lose sales.

The protocol of selling is actually very easy to learn. By following a formula of ten steps, you can increase your effectiveness as a salesperson and land more sponsorships than you ever thought possible.

**STEP 1: BE GOAL-ORIENTED.** In sales, as in any aspect of business, it is critical to be goal-oriented. If you don't have specific goals, you will not be able to measure your progress effectively and examine what you need to do to become better at your job. In order to set realistic goals, look at your sponsorship sales over the past two years. Has there been a steady rate of growth? Do you anticipate any activity that will impact your sales positively or negatively over the next year? Determine what level you need to reach in

order to have a financially solvent event. Remember that your goals have to be reasonable. Unless there are extremely extenuating circumstances, you cannot expect to increase your sponsorship sales by 200 percent in one year. A more realistic goal would be 20-30 percent.

**STEP 2: WRITE YOUR GOALS DOWN.** After you have taken the time and effort to set your goals, write them down. If you think you can skip that step, you are wrong. Goals that are not written down are just dreams. Turn your dreams into reality by picking up your pen. When not written down, goals become cloudy and may hinder the success of your plan. Writing your goals down is a great way to refresh your memory and keep you focused.

**STEP 3: KNOW YOUR PRODUCT.** It is amazing how many people walk into a prospect's office without a thorough knowledge of the products or services they provide. Without such knowledge, there is no way to identify how you can fill the client's needs. Do your homework before you meet with a potential client.

Know what you can -- and cannot -- provide, including various sponsorship benefits and rights. This way, you have all of the information you need to make an effective presentation and your client will appreciate your respect for his or her time.

**STEP 4: IDENTIFY THE CLIENT'S NEEDS.** Selling a prospect a sponsorship that will not meet the client's objectives hampers your ability to build the long-term relationship you need to be a successful salesperson. The most effective salespeople see themselves as problem-solvers, identifying the barriers that their customers are facing and providing the tools to break down those barriers. Put yourself in your sponsor's shoes and try to determine how you can best help your sponsor accomplish his/her goals. Present your sponsorship with a benefits orientation. Make sure the prospect understands the benefits. Once they do, the prospect becomes a sponsor.

**STEP 5: NEVER, NEVER LIE.** While pointing out benefits and offering additional benefits is important, it is even more important not to mislead the client in your presentation. Promising more than you can deliver is the quickest way to lose credibility and clients. If the prospect asks you something about which you are unsure, tell the prospect, "That's a good question. Let me get back to you on that." If the prospect asks you for something you know you cannot deliver, be honest and say so. Then, see if you can help the prospect resolve the situation in some way.

**STEP 6: PAY ATTENTION TO THE DETAILS.** From maintaining a neat appearance to checking proposals for typographical errors, it is important to pay attention to the impression you are making. Once you make the sale, be sure that the product gets delivered or the client gets regular updates on the service. Attention to detail builds strong relationships and repeat sales.

**STEP 7: FOLLOW THROUGH.** At each point in the sales process, it is important to follow through to the next level. From calling on a hot lead to making sure that your proposal was received, not following through in sales is the equivalent of dropping the ball in a football game. Failure to follow through shows a lack of commitment and makes a bad impression on would-be clients.

**STEP 8: BE TENACIOUS.** Anyone who has been in sales for any length of time knows that getting a "yes" to a sales pitch on the first visit or through the first contact is a rare occurrence. Often, it takes a sales representative several contacts and repeated follow-through to prove him or herself to a client. Estimates are that 90 percent of salespeople give up too soon. Perhaps the sponsorship is perfect for the client, but you have approached him or her at the wrong time. By being tenacious, continuing to provide the client with information and offering your services, you can ultimately reach the proper intersection of timing, need and action.

**STEP 9: KNOW WHEN TO CLOSE AND WHEN TO WALK AWAY.** You have followed all of the steps and have a prospect who seems very interested in sponsorship. Now is the time to ask for the order. There are many different ways to do this, and you will have to determine which is right for you. Unfortunately, in spite of your best efforts to be prepared, identify your client's needs, create a good impression and follow through diligently, there will be prospects who will not become sponsors. There comes a point in the sales process where, if the prospect becomes unreasonable or if you have come to an impasse, you need to walk away. Recognizing when you are wasting your time on a prospective sponsor with irrational demands or a budget that is too small is just as important as knowing when to close.

**STEP 10: GET TO WORK.** Once the sale is complete, you have only done 10 percent of the work. You must now ensure the best possible service. Keep in contact with your sponsors to stay on top of their progress. If there are any problems, handle them in a timely, professional manner. Make your sponsor feel as if he or she is your top priority. Follow through with all promised benefits and you can be assured of a renewal after your event.

## **MAKE YOUR SPONSORSHIP A “WIN-WIN” BY ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS**

The next time you read a newspaper or magazine article about a sport or special event, see if there is any mention of the participating sponsor’s name. If so, the sponsor has just scored a publicity “coup” that cannot be measured in dollars. The public relations impact is so much stronger than the same amount of coverage in advertising space that there is no comparison. More and more companies are realizing that sponsorship, carefully planned and skillfully executed, can be a win-win situation – a boon for both the sponsor and the event. Poorly thought out, sponsorship can be a costly mistake.

Each year, more and more sports, entertainment and special events take place, creating a greater number of sponsorship opportunities for a diversity of products and services. However, not all of these opportunities are for all sponsors. To get the most from sponsorship, make sure that both sponsor and event organizers’ needs and expectations are being met. Here are some questions that a sponsor might ask when deciding whether an event is right for them. By being prepared to answer these questions you have a better chance to attract sponsors.

### **1. WHO IS COMING TO THE EVENT, IN TERMS OF BOTH SPECTATORS AND PARTICIPANTS?**

Are these the people I am trying to reach through my marketing efforts or will my message be misdirected?

### **2. WHO ARE THE OTHER SPONSORS?**

Am I in good company? Do I have too much company? One of the appeals of event sponsorship is that it helps corporations avoid the “ad clutter” of television. If there are too many sponsors, your name could be lost.

### **3. WHAT ARE THE SPONSORSHIP BENEFITS?**

Am I included in the press kits? Do I participate in all the media events? What on-site recognition/ acknowledgment -- signage, introductions, opportunities for product demonstration -- will I have? What is my visibility to those who are attending? To those who are watching on TV?

### **4. WHAT IS THE GOAL OF MY SPONSORSHIP, AND DO THE ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS**

**QUESTIONS INDICATE THAT I WILL REACH IT?** The goal is not always a direct sell of product or service. Firms may use special event involvement to provide sales incentives; to enhance dealer and employee loyalty by inviting them to events; to provide an opportunity for product demonstration; for goodwill, giving current customers the opportunity to rub shoulders with

top brass; and/or to build a company's image.

## **5. WILL I GET MY MONEY'S WORTH?**

What is the history of the event? How have other sponsors fared? If this is a first-time event, what bonus breaks are being offered as an inducement to participate? What is its potential longevity? Do I have right of first refusal for upcoming years?

Results -- particularly those geared to image enhancement -- may be difficult to quantify. Some companies do ask their sales forces to track sales before and after, and indicate those figures show a positive response.

Others hire a tracking service which measures exposure time and offers advice on such topics as how to increase logo visibility.

In the final analysis, each sponsor must answer the question, "Is it worth it?" based on its own investment, goals and results. As a sponsor, you want to reach your market at their lifestyle level, making sure the audience is receptive and qualified to receive your message. You want to be assured of maximum coverage. And you want to know that your involvement is long-term, to ensure maximum benefit.

## **GETTING THE SPONSOR TO COMMIT MEANS TAKING A LOOK AT ALTERNATIVES**

Corporations have traditionally used sponsorship as mainly image advertising. Evaluations were done simply on the association and how it related to the company. If it was seen as a beneficial association and the money was there, the sponsorship was approved.

Today, many companies, experiencing significant downsizing and budget restraints, are pulling the plug on major sponsorship commitments. On the surface, this may seem like the logical solution but, on further inspection, one realizes that the marketing strategies once achieved through couponing and FSI distribution can now be incorporated into sponsorship and can serve a dual purpose. This not only maximizes a company's expenditures but also allows the savvy brand manager to better capitalize on the events arena.

Let us assume that a company is launching a new product. Traditionally, a major amount of funding would go into the testing and consumer response phase of the launch. If a brand manager were to take a look at the projected target market and research lesser known events that reach that market more specifically, then that same manager could hone in on an excellent win-win situation. If that same manager were to go a step further, they could target down to even the regions that they find better for testing and the marketing quarter of the year in which they would choose most ideal to run such a program. The same basic principles that apply when utilizing any print or broadcast media can be applied to the selection of events and sponsor properties.

## SPONSORSHIP IS A TOUGH SELL

As many of us are aware, sponsorship is a tough sell when you are dealing in opportunities that sometimes look like operating budgets of small countries. To get tied up in buying these opportunities as expensive signage and consumer goodwill is no longer a palatable enough incentive for most corporate decision makers. There will always be the big boys who seem to have limitless desires to sponsor, of course, but the real winners in the event and property sponsorship game are the sellers who do their homework and tailor their presentations to potential sponsors with the sponsors best interest at heart. Don't get caught in the trap of trying to sell the big hit. It is difficult enough to get a sponsor to listen to what you have to say, so make sure that you say something that they want to hear. By doing that it shows that you really want the program to benefit the company, not just put a big commission in your pocket. If you play the sponsorship game this way, you will get more people to listen and buy. After all, a sponsor that has a good experience is going to continue to accept your phone calls. And the truth is, that one who doesn't have a good experience will forget your name.

Long standing traditions in sponsorship are giving way to a more cost conscious future. Instead of spending millions of dollars to sponsor a single event, such as a tennis tournament, networking a variety of events together is the current wave. This allows companies flexibility and the best possible utilization of their monies.

## CONSUMER DIALOGUE IS A PART OF SPONSORSHIP

Anything that can be done face-to-face with consumers can be done at special events as part of a sponsorship package. This is not a throw-in compensation but the basis for the decision to move forward, so don't trivialize the opportunity to point this out to the potential sponsor. Simmons Research has shown that attendees of special events, fairs in particular, have extremely high buying indexes. Recognize this and use this knowledge to analyze and design sponsorship packages for your potential sponsor company that meet their marketing strategies and goals.

**A sponsorship should be viewed as a partnership with each entity bringing something to the table.** Sponsorship can be an ideal way for companies to sample, test market, data capture, survey customers, distribute coupons, or simply enhance customer awareness. Knowing this to be the case, incorporating any or all of these benefits as part of the overall sponsor program is a must for you to achieve maximum results from your presentations. And, achieving this with an eye on the sponsor's expenditures and budget will make your presentation a most refreshing change of pace. Never forget that the sponsor that spends a few thousand dollars per event this year could potentially spend a few hundred thousand next year.

**What Are the Shared Qualities of Top Sellers?** You've all heard the S-Myth™ ... salespeople are born, not made. Well, that's not necessarily true. The Harvard Business School did a study to determine the common characteristics of top salespeople. The evidence they found is clear that most people can be top sellers if they are willing to study, concentrate and focus on their performance.

Here are the attributes the study found in highly successful salespeople:

- **Did not take “no” personally and allow it to make them feel like a failure.** They have high enough levels of confidence or self-esteem so that, although they may be disappointed, they are not devastated;
- **100% acceptance of responsibility for results.** They didn't blame the economy, the competition, or their company for dips in closings. Instead, the worse things were, the harder they worked to make negatives work to their advantage;
- **Above average ambition and desire to succeed.** This is a key area because it affected priorities and how they spent their time on and off the job, with whom they associated, etc.
- **High levels of empathy.** The ability to put themselves in the customer's shoes, imagine needs and concerns and respond appropriately was a habit;
- **Intensely goal-oriented.** Always knowing what they were going after and how much progress they were making kept distractions from side-tracking them;
- **Above-average will power and determination.** No matter how tempted they were to give up, they persisted toward goals. Self-discipline was a key;
- **Impeccably hones with self and the customer.** No matter what the temptation to fudge, these people resisted and gained ongoing trust of customers;
- **Ability to approach strangers even when it is uncomfortable.**

How many did you rate high in? What should you be doing to help yourself? Selling is a great field filled with opportunity. But that opportunity must be utilized ... and that takes concentration and focus. The S-Myth™ (that's sales myth!) --- salespeople are born, not made ... debunked again!

## **RULES FOR SUCCESS**

1. Believe that you have already succeeded before you even begin the task. Act, dress and speak not for who you are now but for who you want to be.
2. Replace negative statements with positive phrases. Tell yourself “I am a good person.” “I am a success.” Practice this before going to bed and upon waking in the morning.
3. Take responsibility for your actions and your life. Never allow yourself to blame others for your lack of success. Even though an event might be caused by someone else and is out of your control, control your own reaction to the event.
4. Think positively about all of your accomplishments, no matter how small they may appear to others. They are your building blocks of success.
5. Formulate a mission statement and keep it with you at all times.
6. Remind yourself of great success stories and the difficulties those people had in accomplishing their goals. Such examples as Helen Keller and Winston Churchill remind us that our problems and tribulations are small fish in a great sea.
7. When taking on a new project ask yourself: “What is the worst that can happen?”

8. Allow yourself to make mistakes. It is an essential growth component.
9. Strive to be the best you can, not the best there is. You may find, however, that one leads to the other.
10. No one was born a great doctor, lawyer or salesperson. We all came into the world as babies. We all become what we are based on the choices we make. You can choose success.

## **COMMON PROBLEMS OF SPONSORSHIP SALES**

Whether talking with a group of downtown Main Street managers in Camus, Washington or corporate sponsorship buyers in Toronto, Canada, the problems of sponsorship sales are the same. The following represent some of the most common problems expressed by both buyers and sellers of sponsorship. The first half are expressed by sellers of sponsorships; the second half by buyers of sponsorships.

### **Sellers**

#### **How do you select an appropriate sponsor for an event?**

In order to be effective at sponsorship sales, the event and sponsor must be a good match. In order to determine that, you must know your own event first. What are the demographics of the attendees/participants? (This is simply age, gender, ethnicity, geographic location, education, etc.) What are the psychographics of the attendees/participants? (This is an understanding of their activities, interests and opinions.)

Then, you must understand all the components of your sponsorship offering: What are your media relationships? Do you have signage and other on-site marketing opportunities? What is your total inventory and how is that inventory made available to the sponsor? What is the total exposure that the sponsor (not the event) can realize from participating.

Finally, you must understand the potential sponsors. What do they want? If you have done your homework, studied the annual report, and done a current data search to determine how they are marketing their company/products, you will be able to quickly determine which sponsors would benefit from association with your event and which ones won't. When looking at the available materials, look to see if your event offers the sponsors the types of customers they are looking for. Is the media an enhancement to their current marketing efforts? Do you have something unique in your inventory of "goodies" that will enhance their participation?

Remember, sponsors are bombarded with proposals from thousands of organizations looking for everything from \$25 donations to million dollar sponsorships. If you can offer them a marketing environment that helps them achieve their goals (increased sales, increased market share, decreased marketing expense ... these are some of the basics), you have just increased your ability to successfully sell a sponsorship.

#### **How do I find the decision maker?**

First, there's more than one decision maker for sponsorship. If you consider that sponsorship monies can come from a variety of departments ... advertising, public relations, marketing, employee relations, diversity marketing, even human resources ... you realize that there are a number of options for reaching a number of decision makers.

You can always ask the "gatekeeper" who the decision-maker is for each of these areas. Of course, if it is a large, publicly-held company, you can readily get the list of officers and determine which of them is a decision-maker.

And, last, you can always ask the person you are negotiating with "...is there anyone else that they would like to have involved in the decision-making process." This does not affront the person you are working with and allows them to, comfortably, bring in someone else if that is necessary.

### **When is an appropriate time to sell a sponsorship?**

A "pat" answer would be -- anytime! However, there are some basic rules about timing.

First, you should be starting your sponsorship solicitations a year in advance. Second, you should be sensitive to the budgeting cycles of your potential sponsors. Find out if they work on a calendar year or if their fiscal year is different from the standard January-December. For example, McDonald's fiscal year starts September 1. Since much of their budget planning is done in June, that is the time you would want to schedule a strong sponsorship presentation. If the company works on a calendar year, call and find out when they do their budgeting. Some do it as early as May of the preceding year, others wait until November. In either case, you would want to have material to them before these dates and follow up, closer to the budgeting time, with additional information and strategies for participation.

### **Buyers**

#### **Sellers present too much information.**

Be careful of trying to put the Bible on the head of a pin! In your enthusiasm for your property (and you are not alone!), you provide all the information you can think of including all the press clippings, media schedules, program books, collateral material, and whatever else you can think of to get the sponsor excited about participating in your event.

However, what really happens when you provide too much information is that they get bogged down in details and eventually give up since they can't extract the information they need to make an intelligent, informed decision. Other side of the coin: sellers present too little information.

Just as bad is the person who provides so little information that, again, the sponsor can't make an intelligent, informed decision. If you keep in mind that you are trying to satisfy sponsor needs while still meeting your own, you will present enough material to help them select your event or property for sponsorship. No follow through after initial contact.

Tenacity is one of the traits of successful sponsorship sales people. If you have made an

initial call and followed up with support material, you have just started the selling process. You need to continue that relationship through telephone calls, in-person visits (where applicable), and consistent follow through. Some sponsorships can be sold in hours ... others take years!

## **COMMON ENEMIES OF SALESPEOPLE**

The better we are at defeating the common enemies that all salespeople face, the more successful we will be. These enemies are:

### **EGO**

Our egos make us think that what we have to say is more important than what the customer has to say, so we memorize product knowledge and dump data on any prospect who will stand still long enough to listen.

### **TOO MUCH TALK**

Because what we have to say is all important, we pitch customers. The best salespeople know that the pay in selling is far greater for asking the right questions, than for knowing the right answers. I have yet to hear of a salesperson listening himself out of a deal.

### **POOR LISTENING HABITS**

Because we talk too much, we listen poorly. If you truly want to listen better, don't talk. Nature abhors a vacuum and someone's words will rush in to fill the void. If they are not yours, they will be those of the customer. The person who talks will monopolize the conversation, while the person who listens will control the conversation.

### **ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT WHAT'S ON THE CUSTOMER'S MIND**

Because we have been listening poorly, we think we know what the customer should want, rather than what she does want.

### **TALKING ABOUT THINGS THAT DON'T INTEREST THE CUSTOMER**

A carefully constructed, canned pitch will normally contain something like 20 feature benefits and the salesperson will tell the customer all about every one of them. This dumps the whole load on the customer, but customers buy for their reasons, not ours. Customers will usually have only one or two primary buying motives. Talking about other things only distracts, confuses and bores the customer.

### **FAILING TO DETERMINE THE CUSTOMER'S ATTITUDE**

A customer can have only one of three attitudes at any given time: acceptance, objection or indifference. If we know how to determine the customer's attitude accurately, and how to respond appropriately, we will be well on the way to a sale.

### **NOT ASKING FOR THE ORDER**

Our fragile egos tell us that if the customer rejects the offer, it is really a personal rejection. We feel slighted and fail to ask for a commitment of any kind. If you ask, you get. The more you ask, the more you get. If you don't ask, you don't get. It's just that simple.

## **LACK OF WELL-DEFINED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

If you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you've arrived?

## **NOT TAKING NOTES**

If we don't write down what is important to the customer, we will forget and talk about what we think is important. The strongest memory is weaker than the palest ink.

The above information on Selling Sponsors was written by Sylvia Allen, President of Allen Consulting and respected industry leader in the areas of event management, marketing and sponsorship. She is available for private coaching on sponsorship, can develop a sponsorship seminar that meets your specific organization's needs and offers a full range of products to help you with sponsorship sales from her book HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL AT SPONSORSHIP SALES to her video 12 Steps To Sponsorship Success to her highly popular newsletter The Sponsorship Newsletter. Visit her website for ordering information on any of these products. Allen Consulting, Inc., Holmdel, NJ 07733 Tel: 732-946-2711; <http://www.allenconsulting.com>.

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<http://www.hometownsponsors.com>

# 50 Ways to Save Money At Your Meeting

by Glenn Brill, Executive Director  
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You'd be hard pressed to find an industry that plans and runs more meetings, conventions and seminars than the insurance industry. Those meetings cost money, lots of money. How can you plan and stage a successful meeting without spending as much money? Here are tips culled from conversations with professional meeting planners throughout the badger state.

1. Use the local convention & visitor's bureau. "Bureaus are great ways to save money," said Robin Craven, Co-partner in Alliance LLC in Madison. "They offer many free services you otherwise would have to pay for, like name badges. They also can save time by telling you which properties in their area have the meeting space you're looking for and can even collect proposals from those hotels for you."
2. Consider booking your meeting during a hotel's shoulder season. "One of the oldest tricks in the book is going off-season. Certainly a resort is more expensive in the summer" said Kristin Bjurstrom Krueger, CMP, Director, Meeting Services & Medical Education at the State Medical Society of Wisconsin in Madison.
3. If possible, be flexible with your arrival and departure dates. Lynn Johnson, President of AccessPoint Meeting & Association Management in Menomonee Falls, advises "ask your hotel salesperson what you can do to create a better piece of business for the hotel. Checking in on a Sunday could result in better rates than checking in on a Tuesday."
4. Negotiate to book a future meeting with the hotel while you're on-site with your current meeting. "Do multiple meetings in a hotel and ask for a bargain," suggests Margo Haig, owner of Haig & Haig Independent Meeting Planners in Glendale.
5. Make sure to read all the details in your proposed contract, highlighting areas that need further negotiation. "Always strive for a win-win situation between you and your suppliers," said D'Etta Waldoch Koser, CMP, Associate Director of International Programs for the International Bone Marrow Transplant Registry in Milwaukee. "Above all, try to be flexible and fair."
6. Know the value of your business before you start negotiating with the hotel. "For example, when I can tell a hotel my beverage consumption is a certain level, it can result in lower food prices at the accompanying reception," said Krueger.
7. Lock in food and beverage prices during your negotiation and have the costs included in the contract. Haig suggests "getting banquet policies added as an addendum to your contract."

8. Know the needs of your meeting. Johnson advises "put everything you need in writing and review it during your negotiations with the hotel-that's half the battle. This can eliminate last minute extra charges."
9. Hold a pre-convention meeting with hotel staff to make sure you're on the same page. Damian Mogilka, CM, a Meeting Planning Consultant based in Cudahy, also suggests "checking with other groups that have used the hotel. You'll get an idea of how the hotel performs and any areas you should pay special attention to for your meeting."
10. Try to negotiate lower sleeping room rates for your speakers and staff.
11. Look for sponsors to underwrite elements of your meeting. "There are always people looking to showcase their product or service to your attendees," according to Krueger.
12. Recycle your name badge holders and signage. It will save the cost of replacing them and generate good P.R. with your concern for the environment.
13. Work with groups meeting in your hotel either before or after your group. "Do your bookings so you can share services with other meetings. This can save on room set-up and special equipment charges," said Krueger.
14. Evaluate the number of breakout sessions you offer. Reducing breakouts can save money in meeting room fees, speaker costs and audio-visual charges.
15. Use one theme for your meeting. The same props can be re-used in different configurations throughout the meeting.
16. Book versatile entertainers. Those offering several types of music or performance styles can be used for more than one event, saving money. "Also, try to book your own entertainment, rather than going through a talent agency" said Mogilka. "This can save you a good deal of money."
17. Book versatile speakers. Select those who can offer you a keynote speech and lead a workshop session.
18. Using local speakers can save on travel expenses. Convention & visitors bureaus and hotels often have lists of local speakers.
19. Shop at "home" for speakers. Using industry experts rather than professional speakers, may not only be cheaper, but they can have more built-in credibility with your audience.
20. Negotiate with your speakers. Offer to pay a flat fee instead of a speaker's fee plus expenses. Also, booking a speaker for more than one meeting can lead to reduced speaker fees.

21. Work with the hotel chef in planning meals. "Serving food items that are in season saves money," according to Krueger.
22. Shorten cocktail parties and receptions. "Nobody will notice a 15 minute reduction" according to Janet Sperstad, CMP, President of Meeting Expectations, Inc. in Mukwonago.
23. Serve food during cocktail parties. It will reduce alcohol consumption. But, Sperstad notes, "salty food will cause people to drink more."
24. Use drink tickets. Rather than an open bar, giving guests two or three drink tickets will reduce consumption.
25. If you sponsor an open bar, evaluate what you offer. Providing just wine, beer and soft drinks is cheaper than offering mixed drinks as well.
26. Have entertainment during cocktail parties. Your guests will drink and eat less if diverted by entertainment.
27. The banquet menu isn't the Bible. Tell the hotel what you'd like to pay for a meal and have the chef come up with a menu to fit your budget. "Make sure to include dessert-it's the last thing people remember," said Haig.
28. Think small. Rather than offering full-size danish and bagels at continental breakfast and breaks, offer mini versions of each. If this isn't an option, Haig suggests "having the hotel cut large danish in half because a lot of people won't eat the large pastries."
29. Do you need to offer a full breakfast? Adding cereal and yogurt to a continental breakfast can "dress it up" and satisfy your attendees.
30. Order your breaks "on consumption." Soda, candy bars and other packaged items will be charged per item consumed. It can be cheaper than paying per person or ordering a specific quantity. Also, "have the hotel add more food and drink to a break only upon the meeting planner's orders. This will cut down on wasted food that's not eaten but that you pay for," said Haig.
31. Regularly monitor budgeted income and expenses for a meeting or convention.
32. Entertainment doesn't have to be expensive. Krueger often "taps into local university performing groups and even children's performing groups rather than a "hot" band."
33. Re-confirm speakers' audio-visual needs. They may have originally requested equipment they no longer need.
34. Negotiate reduced rental rates on audio-visual equipment if you'll use it longer than a day. Haig says A-V can make or break a meeting and cautions "don't skimp on A-V, a little spent will save the meeting."

35. Think A-V when selecting your meeting site. If you're planning a meeting with lots of audio-visual equipment needs, booking a conference center with most of the equipment on-site can be cheaper than renting it from an outside vendor.
36. Limit use of wireless microphones. "They're much more expensive than wired microphones," said Sperstad.
37. Limit microphones for panel discussions. Sperstad suggests "using one table microphone for every two panelists-let them share."
38. Design your meeting programs in-house. Give your printer a computer disk with your program on it to eliminate typesetting errors.
39. Format your convention programs for standard paper sizes.
40. Send large convention mailings at bulk mail rates if time permits. Waldoch Koser adds, "get to know your participants' tendencies to respond to mailings. Consider whether fax broadcasting or e-mail is more effective in evoking a response than mass mailings."
41. Who designs your convention program? Using a talented high school or college art student can save money over a commercial artist or ad agency.
42. Make your directional signage last longer. Use Velcro to attach directional arrows so they can be used more than once.
43. Don't do on-site printing on-site. If you need printing done at your meeting, consider using a local quick printer, rather than your hotel-it can be cheaper.
44. Maintain good records. "Keeping a history of what your delegates have eaten in the past will prevent you from ordering too much food," said Haig. She also advises not to book more sleeping rooms than you'll need because "hotels talk to each other and it could cause problems down the road."
45. Evaluate your meeting. Have participants fill-out evaluation forms following the meeting. "Pay attention to participants' needs to help you make more cost-effective decisions at the next meeting," advises Waldoch Koser.
46. Make sure the shoe fits. "Have the hotel put you in a appropriate size room for your group," Haig advises. "A 50 person meeting shouldn't be in a 300 person ballroom, especially since the ballroom will cost more to rent."
47. Know your participants. This will allow you to spend your meeting budget most effectively. "The meeting planner must have a clear understanding of what participants value highly, what they are willing to compromise and what they will simply not notice." said Waldoch Koser.

48. Get promotional photos & artwork free. Many convention & visitors bureaus will loan photographs and artwork at no charge for use in convention programs.
49. Join meeting industry professional associations. If you plan a lot of meetings, the professional education and networking groups such as Meeting Professionals International offer can be invaluable.
50. Consider outsourcing. Hire an independent meeting professional. Their job is to plan meetings and they know many ways to save you money. Craven says "you can't put a dollar value on the relationships someone working in the industry everyday has. They can save you money on food & beverage, sleeping rooms and more."