

A Guide to Help You Plan a Meeting or Event for Your Chapter

There are many details that go into planning your meeting/event. This Guide is organized by categories to assist you.

General hints:

- ▲ Review your program as a whole. Visualize yourself as an attendee. Review the arrival starting with transportation from the airport to hotel. List for yourself some of the questions most likely to be asked and have answers prepared. Walk through the meeting schedules and determine if there is enough time for restroom breaks and the necessary phone calls to the office. You want the program to be informative, interactive and fulfilling, not overdone, overscheduled and hectic.
- ▲ Hire the best vendors. Check their references. Your program is only as good as the vendors that service you. Once you have the best, it's your job to see that they have all the information they need to give you and your attendee the best service.
- ▲ When choosing a meeting site, make sure physically challenged attendees are included in the plans.

Working with the Convention Bureau:

Depending on the size of your meeting, you may want to work with the Convention and Visitors Bureau. If you know the answers to the following questions, it will be easier for them to assist you:

- ▲ Will you require function or exhibit space? How much? Dates? Times? Set-up? Number of people?
- ▲ Approximately how many guests will require overnight accommodations?
- ▲ What is your group's arrival and departure pattern?
- ▲ Can you provide a two to five year history of your group's meetings? You can usually get this information from the hotels where your group has met in the past.

Preparing for a site visit:

Site visits are important in helping you determine which hotel or city is best suited to your group's needs. Before you make that visit, you should know:

- ▲ What are your exact room block requirements?
- ▲ What is the breakdown of single-versus-double-occupancy needs? How many suites will you need?

- ▲ Do you have planned meal functions?
- ▲ How do you handle registration?
- ▲ What is your group's payment history?
- ▲ Are there any special service requirements?
- ▲ Method of reservations.
- ▲ Internet needs/expectations of the group. For a fee? Free?

Things you will want to check during your hotel site inspection:

- ▲ Does the type of hotel (downtown, suburban, airport, conference center) meet your group's needs?
- ▲ Accessibility to transportation/airport.
- ▲ Check-in and check-out times.
- ▲ Guest services available: valet, room service, in-room movies, concierge, internet, parking fees.
- ▲ Is there in-house dining, entertainment and shopping?
- ▲ Is there in-house audio-visual, business center, health club?

Finalizing the decision:

Once you have decided on the hotel, you'll want to confirm and guarantee your dates by signing a contract. And the sooner the better! Do not sign a proposal; be sure you are signing a contract that includes:

- ▲ Details specifying your arrival and departure dates (specifically the days, months, year).
- ▲ Negotiated room rate. If there is not a set rate quoted, your contract needs to spell out the set annual percentage increase to an agreed upon base rate. Guaranteed rates should be applied to your group for three days prior to and after your meeting/event.
- ▲ Specific conditions for cancellations or reductions and the charges your group will incur.
- ▲ Major changes to the contract should be confirmed in writing

Billing:

Managing your budget is one of the most important aspects of planning your meeting. Work with the hotel staff to set up your master account billing several months prior to your event. Cover the following:

- ▲ Notify the hotel, in writing, of any special billing requirements.
- ▲ Meet with the hotel staff three days prior to your event to review the master account requirements and ensure folios are set up accurately.
- ▲ Arrange for periodic review of master account charges with supporting detail.
- ▲ Establish a date and time with the hotel staff for a post-event review of the master account.

Registration:

Registration is a crucial first step in your meeting. Make sure you've covered these points:

- ▲ Is signage clear?
- ▲ Have you ordered all supplies?
 - Tables for filling out forms
 - Desks/tables/chairs for personnel
 - Water pitchers, glasses
 - Signage
 - Wastebaskets
 - Notepaper/pens/pencils
 - Badges and badge holders

Food and beverage:

A key element of successful meeting planning can be found in meticulous attention to food and beverage events. The following guidelines will help you think of the details you need to consider:

- ▲ When you confirm your final counts with the hotel, make them aware of any special meal needs/dietary restrictions (vegetarian, gluten free, nut allergy, etc...). They can and will accommodate for that in advance, but on site may require the attendees to wait long periods for their meal and a higher cost for last minute preparation.
- ▲ Indicate at what point the food needs to be preset before each function, in case the general session ends early. Make sure that salads do not wilt (a Caesar salad does not hold up if it is preset).

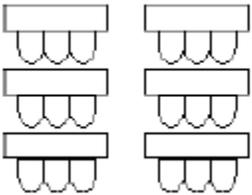
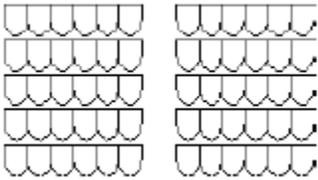
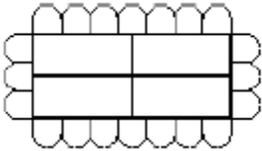
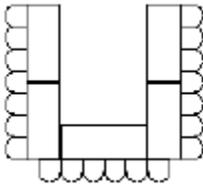
- ▲ Ask that all buffets be dual sided so the lines flow smoothly and there is no wait for food. Make sure your room setup is conducive to the flow you need (the hotel usually allots for 100 people per buffet line - if they are dual sided the line moves more quickly).
- ▲ Determine whether the table seating is for eight, ten or twelve.
- ▲ Request that signs be placed in front of all dishes to correspond with each buffet food item. For sit-down meals, a printed menu can be at each seat.

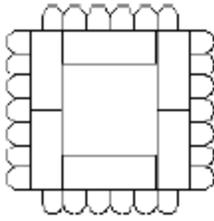
Room layout/set-up:

You should not just use a meeting room for your event just because it is available. There are many things you should consider. Let's focus here on the meeting room layout.

How tables and chairs should be arranged in a meeting room depends on how the content will be delivered to participants. Different set-ups allow for different types of learning and audience participation or interactions. Choose a room that will help you achieve your objectives for your event.

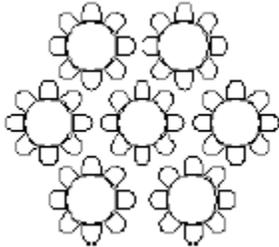
Following is a description of various set up options.

	<p>Classroom style Rows of tables with 2 or 3 chairs at each one, with tables arranged to face the front of the room. Appropriate when the conference is an informational type presentation. The presenters are providing the information, with some dialogue with the audience.</p>
	<p>Theater style Rows of chairs facing the front of the room, usually divided by center and/or side aisles. Maximizes meeting room space utilization. Theater works well when the audience needs to take minimal notes and/or the presentation is 2 hours or less in length.</p>
	<p>Conference style Six-foot or eight-foot conference tables clustered in the center of the room to form one solid surface. Chairs are placed around the perimeter of the tables. Small "brainstorming" sessions when the group does not have a designated presenter/leader. They provide plenty of workspace for each person and good communication/visual lines for each participant.</p>
	<p>U-Shape Six- or eight-foot conference tables placed end to end in the room to form the shape of a U. Chairs are placed around the outside of the U. Small groups that require conversations between the presenter and audience, as well as conversations between the participants.</p>



Hollow Square

Six- or eight-foot conference tables placed in a rectangular outline with open space in the middle. Chairs are placed around the perimeter of the square. Small "brainstorming" sessions when the group does not have a designated presenter/leader. They provide plenty of workspace for each person and good communication/visual lines for each participant.



Banquet style

Used for food functions, standard round tables of either 60 or 72 inches in diameter are used to seat 8 to 12 people.

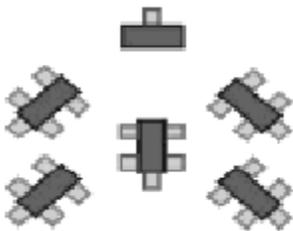
Half Moon Rounds

Seating around half of the table so all are facing towards the front with no one's back to the presenter.



Chevron or "V" Shape

The chevron arrangement allows discussion among small groups of participants during or immediately after a larger group activity. Chevron creates a more enclosed type of feel for the presenter and audience.



Herringbone

Appropriate when the meeting is an informational type presentation. The presenter is providing the information, with some dialogue with the audience. Herringbone creates a more enclosed type of feel for the presenter and audience.