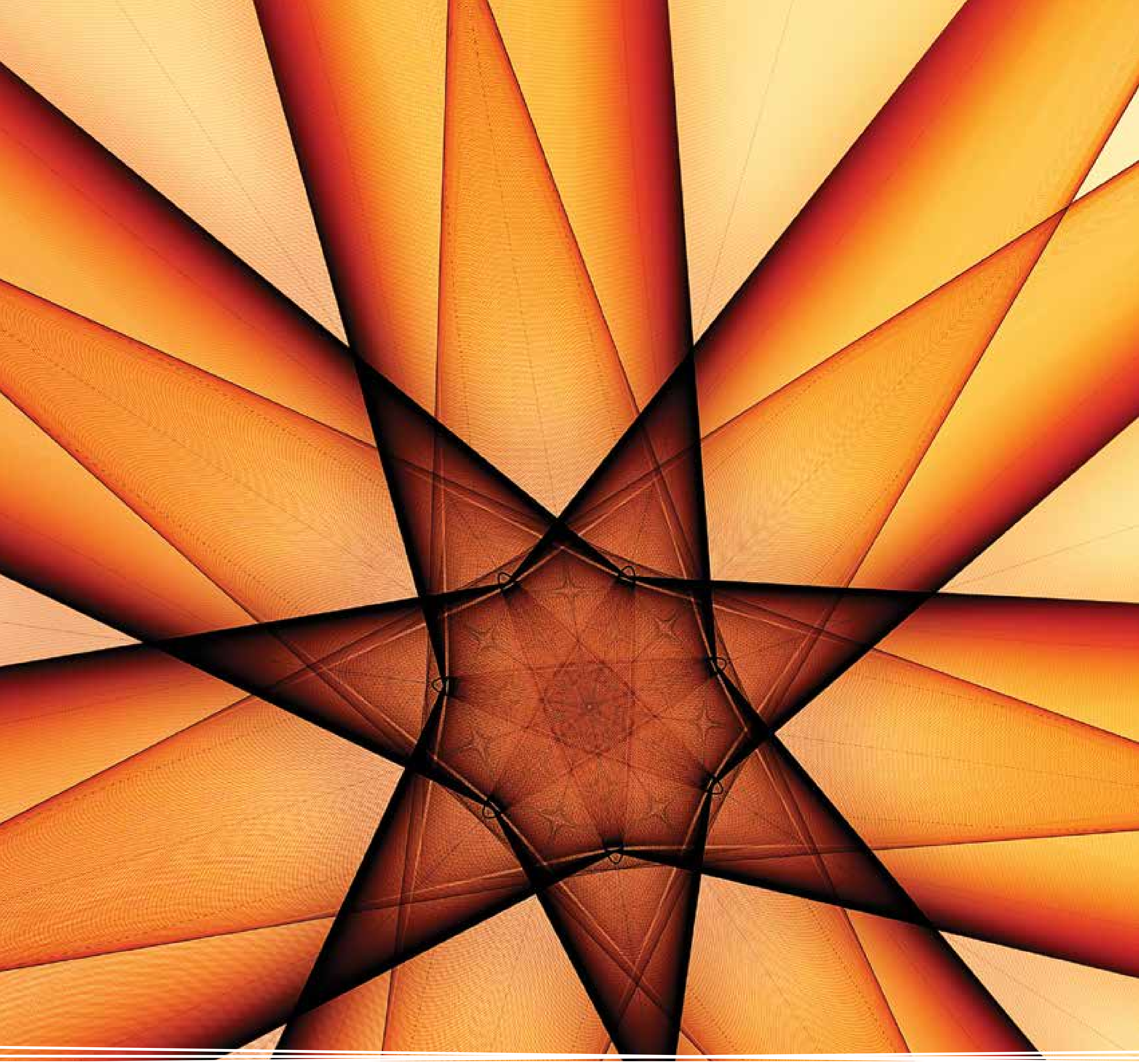

meeting planner guide

DOLCE
HOTELS AND RESORTS®

discover what's possible

We developed this guide as a tool for you after almost 30 years of our name being synonymous with successful meetings. Whether you're in the initial stage of property selection or are already caught up in the details of execution, this reference will help you in all stages to plan the most inspired meetings at the most inspiring places.

OUR GUIDE HAS ELEVEN SECTIONS:

- Budgeting
- Speed RFP Process
- Managing Housing
- Event Registration
- Selecting and Working with Speakers
- Meeting Room Setup
- Technology/Audiovisual
- Pre- and Post-Conference
- Team Building
- Food & Beverage
- Meeting Planner Tools

MEETINGS, ELEVATED

When it comes to meetings, details matter. From the space and time for groups to push their limits to the right complement of nourishment for both mind and body, meetings at Dolce are anything but ordinary. In fact, they're so memorable, they stay with you well beyond your stay with us.

THE DOLCE DIFFERENCE

For 30 years, Dolce meetings have been uniquely perfect. We begin with personalized service, nourishing cuisine and modern facilities.

When you host a meeting a Dolce, our conference planners are there to help you set up the meeting rooms, design menus and plan events and activities. And nourishment hubs and free Wi-Fi on all properties assure that all attendees will feel right at home.

Dolce's Complete Meeting Package (CMP) groups the price per person and per day of major services and products of the meetings, including guest rooms, meeting rooms, three meals a day, snacks for breaks between meetings, full audiovisual support and more. We also offer our services à la carte for a more personalized approach.

budget wisely

Last-minute changes can cost your organization a lot of extra money. In order to better stay within budget, we advise planning well in advance by using a vehicle like a spreadsheet for your expenses and any income you may receive from vendors, sponsors or exhibitors.

Be sure to pay attention to more than just guest room rates. Many hotels and conference centers include things that others charge for. Instead, consider all factors in your overall budget, such as:

- Food and beverage prices
- Recreational budget
- Resort fees/health club fees
- Audiovisual
- Transportation costs
- Technology fees
- Local taxes
- Service charges

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

Determine which expenses will be assumed by the meeting sponsor and by the attendees.

Create a balance sheet listing expenses for all functional areas of your meeting, such as staff time, marketing expenses, air and ground transportation, accommodations, food and beverage, entertainment and recreation, taxes and gratuities, service charges, audiovisual equipment and production costs. Build in a contingency fund for unanticipated, last-minute expenses.

Don't forget expenses for licenses (music, written materials) and insurance (liquor and general liability, business cancellation and interruption).

Check budgets from similar meetings to gauge spending. Consult with your company's accounting office or financial officer on formatting the budget so it's compatible with internal accounting systems.

Secure the signature of a financial officer or other person with fiscal responsibility in your company for any expenditure above what you have budgeted. Make sure funds are allocated to pay all suppliers. Establish a holding account for accrued program expenses.

Determine goals and objectives for the meeting as it relates to your budget; keep in mind the pre-planning questions about the type of meeting, attendees, theme, etc.

Show where income is coming from and where it is going. Identify what percentages of income are being derived from which areas.

Analyze what the organization is spending and where expenditures may be to large.

Determine where there may be flexibility to increase revenues.

Project overall increases and deficits.

Make sure the budget is developed within the overall context of the organization's goals and its fiscal structure.

ESTABLISH AN EXPENSE BUDGET

- All expenses relating to each area need to be listed.
- Estimates should be obtained from suppliers.
- Be detailed in developing line items.
  Develop a budget handbook for calculations and backup quotes.

DEVELOP THE INCOME BUDGET

When developing this budget, ask the following questions:

- Is profit expected from registration or exhibits?
- Should social functions break even or make a profit?
- Will there be outside funding or grants for portion of revenue?
- Then, use recent registration trends and history to determine registration income.
- Consider changes in economic environment that may affect registration.
- Be conservative in arriving at income estimates.
- Consider investment income (larger meetings) interest earned on advanced registration and exhibit space rental fees.
- Determine all sponsorships.

speed rfp process

SO WHAT'S A SPEED RFP?

Good question. It's a tool created by Elite Meetings International, and they describe it as something they created after being inspired by the power and possibilities of the electronic Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

HOW IT WORKS

Meeting professionals are now able to preload account and event information and then submit RFPs to any SpeedRFP-enabled hotel without rekeying data. They can also manage all of their RFPs from one place. For hospitality suppliers, SpeedRFP seamlessly integrates into their website, works alongside existing RFP forms, and increases visibility to the SpeedRFP planner network without charging any commission or transaction fees.

HOW SPEED RFP BENEFITS MEETING PLANNERS

- Send RFPs to any SpeedRFP hotel
- No need to re-key RFP data
- Attach your own RFP documents
- Manage RFPs in one place
- Share RFPs with global sales reps

managing housing

As a planner, one of the most important things you handle is managing the block of rooms. Use this as a guide to keep that bit of your job organized.

SELECTION OF PROPERTIES

- Know your attendees' needs, preferences, frequent-stay affiliations and preferred price-points.
- Know your group's history of picking up blocked rooms; review frequently to determine the number of rooms to block and your pattern.
- Complete at least one site visit to the hotel you select.
- Review potential hotels with your shuttle contractor for cost value.
- Keep abreast of and consider any new properties being built, as well as any renovations planned.
- Do your homework and know when the property and the destination's peak times are, and research what the potential rates will be during that period; and, if possible, find out what other groups are in-house at the time and what rates they are paying.

MONITOR ROOM PICKUP

Monitor the process constantly. Also test the call centers. Be prepared to make adjustments, which may include:

- Lowering the block or adjusting shoulder blocks (i.e., move-in and move-out days or other days immediately preceding or following the official meeting dates).
- Adding rooms (easiest to do in properties already in your block).
- If possible, allow for all modes that attendees may use in making a reservation – phone, fax, email, Internet, mail.
- Keep detailed pickup reports.

COMMUNICATIONS

Determine what information you need from hotels in your block in order to communicate to your attendees what they need to know to make their reservations.

This could include:

- Room rates, taxes, other costs.
- Amenities – fitness center, coffee in room, Internet access, room service and hours, etc.
- Suite descriptions and diagrams.
- If the hotel will be included on a shuttle route.
- Number of rooms available.
- Information on special-needs rooms and services.
- Make sure your staff, whether internal, bureau or third party, is prepared to answer questions via phone.
- Attendee information. Create a "Frequently Asked Questions" section on your website or in print, and publicize it.
- It is important to communicate with your partners. Items that need communicating include:
- Group profile (your policies and procedures, key staff, VIPs, traffic patterns, etc.).
- Past histories.
- Special needs of VIPs, meeting staff, show contractor, speakers, etc.
- Billing instructions and master account authorized signers.

ON-SITE MANAGEMENT

- Prior to the start of the meeting, meet with the hotels to go over any changes and answer any questions. Always set up a pre-con meeting.
- Obtain last-minute pickup reports.
- Set up an information desk, or office, where attendees can go to ask questions or get assistance.
- Go over reservations by board members, VIPs, speakers, staff, contractors and others that need to be specially billed, handled or protected from being sent ("walked") to another hotel.

POST-CONVENTION EVALUATION

Require completion of a post-con report in the hotel contract. Some contracts require a completed post-con report before payment of master account.

Review the post-con report with hotel. It should include:

- Pickup of rooms at various numbers of days in advance: 120, 90, 60, 30, 7.
- Final pickup, plus complimentary/staff rooms used.
- Meeting room and catering revenue.
- Outlet revenue: restaurants, gift shop, health club, etc.
- Number of suites used and pattern.
- Meet with the hotel staff and record any trends or factors that may have affected your group.
- Communicate this information to future properties and use it to determine future room blocks and patterns. This is your most valuable tool when selling the value of your program to another property.
- Include a question about the hotels and your housing service on your post-show evaluation. Follow up with those attendees that gave negative feedback to determine what can be improved.
- Internally evaluate your housing process. Determine what changes need to be made for the future.

MISCELLANEOUS

Backup Plan A

Make sure you have one. Professional speakers are on the road a lot, and you can't blame them for wanting to limit the amount of down time they spend at any conference. However, you never want your speaker taking the last flight on the night before the meeting, especially if he is scheduled to speak first on the agenda.

Backup Plan B

- What else could go wrong? It's anything you can think of, from demonstrators and pickets at the front of your hotel or meeting venue to inclement weather delaying the speaker's arrival, and even laryngitis.
- What is your emergency plan? What steps will your speaker take to help find a suitable replacement?
- Strive for excellence.
- Provide the best attendee environment possible.
- Classroom and theater-style are not the only setup possibilities. Be open to suggestions that have worked for this speaker before.
- Involve the conference planner to discuss ways in which the room setup can enhance the program that has been developed.

event registration

No matter the size of the event, it's your job to register all attendees. While in some cases, this might just mean taking down names and creating badges, other times, you might have to facilitate much more complicated efforts. Things like lead retrieval and integration with various technologies. You may also have to create tickets or alternative mechanisms to indicate what specific sessions, events or tours each person plans to attend.

Another duty could include tracking attendees' actual participation in sessions, especially for continuing education credits. While registration needs to be the simplest of tasks to your attendees, it can be one of the most complex pieces of meeting planning.

- One of the worst things you can do is to spell an attendee's name wrong on the badge and another is to overcharge a credit card. Have the data processing checked by a different individual before a confirmation is sent.
- Send confirmation of receipt of registration information and monies within 24 to 48 hours if possible, but no later than 10 working days. Send electronically to save costs, if possible.
- Encourage registrants to attach business cards, rather than hand-written information, for legibility.
- Allow companies to register multiple attendees via a simple list, rather than insist they complete individual registrations for everyone.
- Encourage whoever is doing data entry to call.

BASICS

Decide upon your organization's registration philosophy, policies and procedures.

Keep it as simple as possible. Look at the registration method(s), instructions, policies and procedures from your attendees' perspective, not your own. Speak their language.

Decide, based upon your attendees' technology usage and the event's needs, where available technologies will enhance the registration process without over-complicating it. Make sure your choices are tested and work perfectly before adopting them.

Determine the size and scope of your event. Ask yourself what potential complexities there are with registration. What are attendees registering for? The event by itself or specific parts of the event? Do they pay for each registered item in an à la carte mode, or are some items included?

Decide whether to process registrations in-house or outsource the function. Consider the following:

- Attendee needs and expectations.
- Size and scope of the event.
- Event needs and complexities.
- Existing in-house capabilities (accounting and financial processing, technological, staffing, online capabilities, database management, etc.).
- Internal costs versus outsourcing costs.
- Do you have plans to verify actual attendance?

PRE-REGISTRATION CONSIDERATIONS

Work with your finance department to set policies for things like:

- Lost-badge replacement.
- Name substitutions.
- Credit card payments.
- International currency transactions.
- Cancellations and refunds, whether to make exceptions, and who has authority to make the exceptions.

Again, ask yourself:

What are the needs of your attendees? What information is important enough to go on the front of the badge, and what is most important to be in larger type? What information can go on the back of the badge?

What do you want to track? Do you need to know session attendance in advance?

Should attendees have the option for their names not to be published on any registration lists?

Do you want or need to give the attendee a means on the registration form to inform you of any special needs, like physical disabilities or dietary restrictions?

Should you mail badges in advance to avoid on-site lines?

What are your online capabilities, or the capabilities of your contractor? How can your organization encourage or require online registration to minimize staffing needs and keep costs down?

Do you need a hard copy of the registration form? What information needs to be on the form? What information will you need for membership, finance and event logistics tracking, and future marketing efforts?

Is it important to you that attendees register early for the event for either logistical reasons or cash flow? If so, what will you do to encourage this? Will you offer an early bird discount? Will you offer an advance-only, multiple or group discount?

Determine your deadlines for advance registration – for when you can no longer process registrations before the event and when you must advise your meeting attendees to register on site.

SPEAKERS MATTER

In fact, for a lot of meetings, they're the focal point. They need to convey the envisioned message. They represent the vision of the meeting. Planners who are involved in the process of finding, hiring and working with the speakers need to follow the guidelines below.

TIPS ON WHERE (AND HOW) TO FIND SPEAKERS

Speaker's bureaus: If you call a speaker's bureau, call one that you know or one that has been recommended.

Professional associations: Become involved in a professional association such as Meeting Professionals International, the American Society of Association Executives, the National Speakers Association or the Professional Convention Management Association. Even if you don't attend their professional conferences, their education/conference departments are great resources.

Professional conferences: Most professional speakers use these as opportunities to showcase themselves. You can hear them speak, meet them and get to know them.

Colleagues and periodicals: Peers will give you the most honest feedback. Also find potential speakers mentioned in trade journals, business publications and newspaper articles.

Educational institutions: Depending on your topical needs, you may want to call a specific department at a university, such as the economics school. Professors have great expertise and may be relatively inexpensive.

EVALUATING SPEAKERS

Before having them sign on the dotted line, consider the following:

- How quickly does the speaker respond to your questions?
- How willing does the speaker appear to accommodate your needs?
- Gather references on the speaker.
- In general, how easy does the speaker seem to be to work with? It's best to assess this subjectively through personal conversation.

Ask the speaker the following questions:

- How long have you been speaking?
- What are your credentials and background?
- Will you be speaking any place where we can observe your cadence?
- Do you have any professional video, audio or written promotional materials?
- Have you spoken for other companies or associations in the same industry?
- Will you customize your material to my group? To what degree?
- What kind of pre-program research will you do (e.g., ask for an annual report, talk to staff or management, find out about the industry)?
- Will you bring your own handouts?
- Will you be accessible to the audience, either before or after the presentation?

SPEAKER'S BUREAUS

If you use a speaker's bureau, be prepared to answer "the five Ws" (or if you're not using a speaker's bureau, at least know the answers for yourself):

- Who is the audience?
- What is the budget?
- When is the meeting?
- Where is the meeting?
- Why are you having the meeting?

You might also be asked if this the first time this meeting is being held and for a list of the speakers you've hired in the past.

Be realistic in your budget and limitations. Unless you have unlimited budget, don't dismiss a potential winner just because they're not a household name.

PREPPING YOUR SPEAKER

It is almost impossible for a presentation to look anything but mechanical and canned if the speaker hasn't had the opportunity to understand the audience.

At a minimum, make sure to tell your speaker about:
Audience size, age range, ratio of males to females.
Topic and length of presentation.
Session format including time allotted for audience questions.
Names of those sharing the platform (if any) and their topics.
Ancillary media events (pre- and post-meeting interviews).
Dress code (business attire, casual, black tie).
Rehearsal hours, if planned.
Speaker lounge or ready-room location and hours when available.
Whether multiple ranks will attend, or the entire audience comes from one level in the company.
Current issues/challenges in the company or division.
Subjects which are off limits for whatever reasons.
Names of high-profile people who will attend.
Consider carefully whether you wish for anyone to be included by name in the speaker's remarks. Sometimes it helps to personalize the presentation; sometimes it's better left out. The speaker may:
Ask you and some attendees to fill out a questionnaire.
Want to talk to some of the attendees.
Want you to send material about your company, e.g., annual reports, office memos, company newsletters, etc.

HELPING YOUR SPEAKER

If your speaker is to speak after a meal, make certain the table service will be finished or will be unobtrusive when the speaker begins.

The room should be set at a comfortable temperature, the podium well-lit, and the sound system in perfect operation.

Keep any noise-generating meetings out of adjacent rooms.

Keep the meeting on schedule, especially for that last speaker before everyone runs to the airport.

Plan your introduction carefully. Make sure not to mispronounce your speaker's name or misspell it in any literature. If you condense the bio provided, make sure that you emphasize the important points. If the speaker gives you a specific intro, read it as is; this might be a setup for the presentation.

Involve the speaker in the development of conference promotional materials. Most speakers welcome the opportunity to help you promote their presentations to potential attendees. Use their unique knowledge to develop a program description that helps ensure that both attendee and speaker expectations will be met.

Make sure the speaker receives copies of all the promotional material, as well as any media invitations you have extended.

Work with the speaker to create memorable handouts. Surveys show that conference attendees rate handouts as an essential part of the learning experience.

Make sure the fee you pay to the speaker includes preparation of the handouts.

The conference organizer may need to reproduce a large number of handouts required for the program. If so, make sure you have established deadlines that will work for both of you.

Treat your speakers as part of your team. Keep them informed as the program develops. Provide them with a speaker kit outlining when materials are due – particularly as it relates to promotional deadlines. (Note: many speakers will provide you with their own kits, asking that you respond. Do so promptly.)

Let speakers know the location of the speaker's lounge as well as the meeting room. Let them know when the speaker's lounge will be available prior to the meeting.

selecting / working with speakers (cont'd)

FEES AND NEGOTIABILITY

Most speakers are willing to negotiate. Here are some of the give-backs – that is, additional in-kind benefits you may extend to the speaker – that you may talk about to warrant a reduction in fee:

- Video master copy
- List of attendees
- Testimonial letter
- Referrals
- Extra night(s) accommodations
- Choice of time slot/date
- Multiple performance contract
- Extra publicity
- Spouse airfare/meals
- Mailing list
- Article in your organization's newsletter
- Two or three ads in newsletter at no charge

Ask if the speaker offers any discounts for:

- Certain geographical areas
- Resorts
- Time of year
- Non-profit organizations
- Multiple engagements in one city
- Can the speaker fill more than one slot? Hiring another speaker means additional expenses for transportation, hotel and food.

LEGAL AGREEMENTS

The following are standard items that should be in every contract:

- Company name, address, contact name
- Speaker's name, phone number, cell-phone number, emergency phone number
- Place of engagement: location, address, phone number, room where speech will be presented
- Period of engagement:
- Day/date of speech
- Length of speech – e.g., approximately 1 hour
- Time frame – e.g., approximately 1-5 pm
- Expected attendance
- Topic title
- On-site contact(s): name, phone/fax numbers, e-mail address, emergency phone number
- Fee plus any additions such as airfare, hotel accommodations, material reproduction costs, etc
- Technical requirements: audiovisual needs, reproduction of any handouts, etc.
- Payment schedule: When deposit/final payment is due and to whom check is payable
- The fine print. This is to protect the speaker or bureau from liability. If you are hiring celebrity entertainment, it can be very specific down to the type of drinks the entertainer wants in their dressing room. Make sure you read this over carefully. It can mean additional dollars that you weren't counting on spending.
- Additional riders. These usually encompass lighting, staging, special food/drink, etc., and they always mean more money. Before you make your final decision, consider the extra cost. Will it break the budget?
- Signature and dates. A contract is not complete until it includes the speaker's/agent's signature and date as well as your signature and date.

THINGS TO MAKE SURE OF

Travel

- Establish who makes the travel arrangements for the speaker. Most speakers like to do their own and bill you separately.
- Let the speaker know who (name of travel agent) is making arrangements. Let them avail themselves of the same deal that may be available to your attendees, including, say, corporate discounts or group fares.
- Speakers will try to get the client the best airfare deal possible but must have the flexibility to fly full coach, if necessary. Also, they most likely will be able to upgrade to first class with no additional expense to you.
- Have the speaker's travel itinerary so you can have someone waiting for them at the airport upon arrival and bring them back.
- Hotel accommodations
- Have late arrival as an option.
- The room should be on the master account.

Payment

Speakers expect to be paid on the day of performance. Alert your accounting department to have a check cut. If you are working with a bureau, it might ask for the check in advance so the check can clear and the bureau can pay the speaker in a timely fashion.

Recording agreements

Most celebrity speakers will not allow recording of their speeches. If they do, an additional fee could be required.

Audiovisual budget

Is your AV budget in conflict with speaker requirements? If your budget is particularly tight, let the speaker know up front, so you can work together on achieving the right balance. For example:

- Ask if a wired microphone may be substituted for a wireless one.
- Ask the speaker if his presentation requires an elaborate, expensive lighting or sound system.

meeting room setup

An effective meeting is most effective in a well-configured meeting room. Here are some configuration options and benefits for each:

CLUSTERS SETUP

Groups of interconnected rectangular tables. Also known as pods or team tables.

Benefits: Groups of three rectangular tables, configured to maximize working sessions, collaboration and group participation with the facilitator(s). Tables are set at angles so that no back is facing the main speaker. Fosters creativity and team building.

Optimal seating capacity: 11-61+

Best meeting uses: teaching and training, lecture presentation, team building, discussions/negotiations, seminar, workshop, conference/exchange, brainstorming

Best technology uses: projection presentation, individual computers, white boards/flip charts, sound/music, video conference

ROUNDS SETUP

Round tables arranged to maximize seating requirements for a variety of purposes.

Benefits: Ideal setup for meal-centered meetings and banquets encouraging business and socialization for any size group. Typically 6, 8 or 10 people are seated per table. Sometimes configured as crescents, where no back is facing the speaker. Less elbow room than a Cluster.

Optimal seating capacity: 1-61+

Best meeting uses: meeting with meal

Best technology uses: white boards/flip charts, sound/music

CHEVRON SETUP

Chairs are arranged in rows slanted in a V shape and separated by a center aisle. They face the head table or speaker.

Benefits: A more productive large-group setup than the classroom style with the speaker as the focal point. More eye contact between the group and the speaker than the classroom setup, forming unity and more effective participation.

Optimal seating capacity: 11-61

Best meeting uses: teaching/training, lecture/ presentation, discussions/negotiations, executive presentation, seminar, conference/exchange

Best technology uses: projection presentation, individual computers, white boards/flip charts, sound/music, video conference, teleconference

THEATER SETUP

Seats are in rows facing the stage area, no tables.

Benefits: Perfect for shorter presentations, seminars, lectures and Q&As that require the attendee to focus on looking and listening. Best suited for presentations that require more elaborate audiovisual technology without needing note taking or laptop usage.

Optimal seating capacity: 11-61+

Best meeting uses: teaching/training, lecture/presentation, team building, executive presentation, seminar, workshop

Best technology uses: projection, white boards, sound/music, video conference

meeting room setup (cont'd)

BEDROOM SETUP

Rectangle or oval-shaped tables are set up with chairs on both sides and ends.

Benefits: A formal executive level setup designed for meeting with one primary facilitator. Good space for a comfortable working session, as well as food and beverages. Ample room for teleconferencing and visual presentations

Optimal seating capacity: 1-40

Best meeting uses: lecture/presentation, board meeting, discussions/negotiations, executive presentations, conference/exchange, brainstorming

Best technology uses: projection presentation, individual computers, white boards/flip charts, sound/music, video conference, teleconference

U SHAPE SETUP

Series of tables set up in the shape of the letter U with chairs set all around on one or both sides.

Benefits: Ideal setup to promote an open forum for smaller groups of up to 40 people. All participants are able to make direct eye contact with one another enabling a lively discussion of ideas in this structured setting.

Optimal seating capacity: 1-40

Best meeting uses: teaching and training, meeting w/ meal, discussions/negotiations, team building, conference/exchange, brainstorming

Best technology uses: projection presentation, individual computers, white boards/flip charts, sound/music, video conferencing, teleconference

DOUBLE U SETUP

Two U-shaped tables are set up with chairs.

Benefits: Many of the same benefits as a U-Shape setup, but can accommodate more people. Participants can face one another enabling a lively discussion of ideas in this structured setting.

Optimal seating capacity: 26-61+

Best meeting uses: teaching/ training, team building, discussion/ negotiations,conference/exchange.

Best technology uses: projection, individual computers, white boards, sound/music, video conference, teleconference

CIRCLE OF CHAIRS SETUP

Chairs aligned in a circular pattern without any tables in between.

Benefits: A highly informal setting that facilitates lively discussion, interactive presentations and brainstorming between smaller groups of participants for brief intervals. Focus is on discussion with no work space or many technology requirements.

Optimal seating capacity: 1-40

Best meeting uses: team building, discussion/negotiations, workshop, brainstorming

Best technology uses: white boards, sound/music

meeting room setup (cont'd)

HOLLOW-SQUARE SETUP

Tables set in a square (or rectangle) with chairs placed around the outside of the table. Center (inside) table is hollow.

Benefits: Facilitates group discussions and brainstorming, but can also accommodate the agendas of multiple speakers. This organized layout works for both small and mid-size groups utilizing various technologies.

Optimal seating capacity: 1-40

Best meeting uses: board meeting, team building, discussions/negotiations, workshop, conference/exchange, brainstorming

Best technology uses: individual computers, white boards/flip charts, sound/music, teleconference

AMPHITHEATER SETUP

Seats are in rows facing the stage area, no tables.

Benefits: Perfect for shorter presentations, seminars, lectures and Q&As that require the attendee to focus on looking and listening. Best suited for presentations that require more elaborate audiovisual technology without needing note taking or laptop usage.

Optimal seating capacity: 26-61+

Best meeting uses: teaching/training, lecture/presentation, seminar, executive presentation

Best technology uses: projection presentation, individual computers, white boards/flip charts, sound/music, video conference, teleconference

CONFERENCE SETUP

Rectangular or oval tables are set up with chairs placed around all sides.

Benefits: Best for smaller meetings where the focus is on the participants themselves as in team building, product development or discussion groups. Layout encourages a communicative and professional setting. Ample room for teleconferencing and visual presentations.

Optimal seating capacity: 1-25

Best meeting uses: board meeting, discussions/negotiations, workshop, conference/exchange, brainstorming

Best technology uses: individual computers, white boards/flip charts, sound/music, teleconference

OPEN ROOM SETUP

Empty room allows free-form meeting environment.

Benefits: An open-space setting that promotes a free flowing and creative meeting environment for small or large groups. Mostly for purposes of team building and brainstorming. Open Room can be complimented with various props and meeting aids.

Optimal seating capacity: 1-61+

Best meeting uses: team building, brainstorming

Best technology uses: projection, white boards/flip charts, sound/music

CLASSROOM SETUP

Rows of tables with chairs face the front of a room and each person has a space for writing or using a computer.

Benefits: A classical approach for both large and small seminars and training programs where attendees need work space for notes and laptops. This setup lends itself to a Q&A session with the facilitator rather than interactive discussion between participants.

Optimal seating capacity: 11-61

Best meeting uses: teaching/training, lecture/presentation, executive presentation, seminar

Best technology uses: projection presentation, individual computers, white boards/flip charts, sound/music, video conference, teleconference

technology & audiovisual

If you are purchasing a complete meeting package, all of your basic meeting needs are included:

- LCD projection/screen
- High-speed Internet access
- Flip charts and markers
- Sound systems
- Ergonomic furniture
- Rooms specially designed just for meetings

If you are purchasing your meeting on an à la carte basis, you will need to consider the following:

- Several factors that can directly affect the quality and cost of an AV presentation: ceiling height, walls, floors, obstructions, windows, lighting, mirrors, doors, air conditioning and fire exits.
- Ask the AV company's representative to walk through the space with you. This person will be able to explain how best to use the space.
- Communicate with speakers/presenters to confirm AV needs. Plan for a minimum of a screen and flipchart(s), and LCD projector(s). Determine the availability and cost of this equipment.
- Be aware that all rooms are not equipped with sound systems, nor do all sessions need sound. Determine which rooms need sound and which can be used with the systems in place. Try to negotiate a flat rate or a percentage off the daily rate when renting a system.

MEETING ROOM ITEMS TO CONSIDER

- Are there obstructions like pillars, posts or chandeliers?
- What about door locations: will late arrivals interrupt presentation?
- Are there windows with blackout curtains, shades, blinds?
- Wattage: is there enough power available for presentation?
- Ceiling height: is the screen on a stage too high?
- Are the walls lined with sound absorbent panels at least one-inch thick?
- How is the in-room sound system?

SCHEDULE PRE-CONS

Before any meeting, it's important to have a pre-conference meeting with you staff, the facility and the vendors. At the latest, the pre-con should be held one day in advance of a meeting. Pre-cons are a time for key staff to meet each other and for last-minute details to be discussed. Even for a meeting of 10 people, a pre-con should be held. The property's general manager, the salesperson assigned to the account, convention or conference services manager, catering manager, audiovisual company representative should all attend.

POST-MEETING FOLLOW UPS

- Hold a post-conference meeting with the same people who attended the pre-conference meeting. Evaluate what worked and what did not, review the bills and solicit feedback immediately from the facility.
- Ask your attendees to provide feedback about the program content and format, meeting facility, speakers, meal functions and other special activities.
- It's a good idea to solicit feedback from the meeting "customer." This way, you can determine if the meeting goals were met, the financial implications of the meeting and steps to be taken to follow up on the results.

Consider a more formal measurement tool to measure a meeting's return on investment. Some ways to approach this are:

- Consider unique goals of individual meetings that could be measured.
- Test attendees before – and after – training sessions to document what and how much was learned.
- Share return on investment (ROI) information with senior management.
- Provide a written report of the meeting for the files and to senior management.
- File contracts for future meetings.
- Write thank-you letters to staff, speakers, hotel staff and other vendors.

TEAM BUILDING

Creative team-building events are built here. Meeting planners who value team building should look no further than a Dolce property. Each of our 23 properties focuses on creating events that build bonds between attendees. If you dream it, Dolce can do it.

Most of our team-building experiences are developed with the goal of building creativity and overall team effectiveness through interactive activities. We offer everything from hands-on culinary team-building events, including an interactive chef's table and culinary competition events to art projects, forest walks and even racing excursions.

PLANNING THE MEALS

One of the most important thoughts to keep in mind when planning a meal is that there needs to be enough time for people to eat leisurely, network and enjoy the presentation if there is one. Generally allow 30 to 40 minutes for continental breakfast, 45 to 60 minutes for full breakfast, 45 to 60 minutes for lunch, and 20 minutes per course for dinner. For refreshment breaks, allow a minimum of 15 minutes for up to 100 people, 30 minutes for up to 1,000 people and 30 to 45 minutes for groups larger than 1,000.

Make sure you ask all attendees for special needs/dietary requirements or restrictions. If you have purchased a complete meeting package (CMP), coffee breaks and meals are included. If you are purchasing your meeting on an à la carte basis, plan for the following: two cups of coffee or tea per person for a morning break and one cup of coffee/tea or one soda per person during an afternoon break.

Consider a luncheon buffet for small group working sessions. Buffets offer variety and faster service. Some properties have minimum requirements for buffets, so ask in advance about buffet minimums and additional fees.

For more formal meals and/or VIP tables, consider requesting one server for each table. Allow one server for every two tables for standard, three- or four course dinners and one server per three tables for lunches. Check with the facility to determine if there will be additional labor charges for the extra servers.

Consider pre-setting desserts or salads to speed service to accommodate programs.

Consider wine service with dinner as an alternative to a full bar service to control costs and provide a more elegant atmosphere for dinners. Depending on the size of the wine glass, you will typically get 4-5 glasses of wine per bottle and should allow 1-2 glasses per person for dinner service.

Ask if there are extra charges for gratuities, service charges, setup fees, carving person, bartender, etc.

Check with facility about estimated time for meal service to determine proper scheduling for speakers, awards, etc.

Always plan to serve a variety of foods during cocktail receptions that are healthy, current with trends and offer visual appeal. Provide for one bartender for every 75-100 people, if you have bars. For fewer than 100 people, pay for liquor by the drink. Offer festive, nonalcoholic beverages in addition to beer, wine and premium brands of liquor. Consider offering hosted liquor for a limited time frame or limited number of drinks per person to control liquor costs.

DÉCOR/CREATIVITY FOR FOOD AND BEVERAGE EVENTS

Décor makes an event. Before yours, ask about linen, centerpiece and buffet décor that is available through the host facility. All types of décor are available from vendors for rent for special events and can greatly enhance the atmosphere. Ask for referrals from catering or conference service managers. Think "outside the box" for meal centerpieces. Things like your client's product or merchandise can be a great alternative to flowers.

PASSKEY

As leaders of the meeting industry, Dolce Hotels and Resorts specialize in delivering superior meetings and retreats. In fact, each property offers expert resources to help its clients find innovative techniques and solutions to create the most inspiring meeting and learning environments.

In the spirit of going above and beyond, we've added Passkey, the world's leading group reservation system. This makes group booking easier by providing a customized website to which planners can automatically upload their rooming lists. It also provides a customized dashboard where, with one click, planners can see how many rooms and nights were booked for each meeting.