

TACTICS FOR BETTER DESTINATION AND VENUE NEGOTIATION

A QUICK REFERENCE LIST FOR EVENT PLANNERS

- Prepare a fully comprehensive budget for your client that includes every conceivable charge or cost
- Do exhaustive research - check what rates/prices are in the public domain, online or in rack brochures. Do this BEFORE you call the venue as this provides the starting point for all rate-based discussions
- Have a full command of all figures so that in any face to face negotiation you can quickly calculate the impact of 10% or 12.5% discount, if it's offered
- Know the real value to you and your budget of any and all concessions such as early access (a key requirement in venue negotiations according to our survey)
- Profile your attendees and devise a clear picture of likely food and beverage requirements
- Have a policy regarding unconsumed but paid for food - can it be donated to a local shelter for the homeless, for instance?
- What portion calculations has the venue done in relation to appetizers or canapes - how many per person?
- Can you save money by limiting choice at a served function to one main course or entree, with 10% vegetarian option?
- Can you negotiate no extra charge for alternative entrees - gluten free, no shellfish, nut allergies, etc
- Check the official venue AV inventory so you know exactly what's in-house or brought-in
- Is the in-house AV equipment fit for purpose? Do they have latest model projectors and plasmas screens? Is it plug and play?
- Can you bring in your own AV supplier? Is there a cost for this?
- Free WiFi? Remember to check the source of internet, bandwidth, speeds, capacities etc
- Have you spoken with the in-house IT guy?
- Can you use the physical spaces and assets - i.e. walls, ceilings, floors - of the venue for sponsorship opportunities? Is there a charge for this? if so, are you entitled to finder's fee or commission?

- Have you read the venue contract? Do you understand it fully? A neophyte eventprof should consult an attorney for assistance with this
- Is there anything different/unusual in the contract that you haven't seen before? Question this
- Are all of the terms and conditions reasonable and in line with what you've seen and signed before?
- Pay particular attention to cancellation or postponement clauses (as applicable to both parties), to attrition clauses and to the payment terms and conditions
- Be super aware that this brave new world of meetings and events is changing so rapidly that what you know may now or soon be irrelevant - experience negotiating with hotels may help you but increasingly sharing economy principles are taking center stage and require a different mindset!
- One size does NOT fit all - have negotiation tactics ready for all the different venues that you'll encounter
- What about resort fees? Are they applicable? Can you make them go away?
- Likewise, free room ratios, upgrades and free site inspection rooms are usually on the table when negotiating with accommodation providers
- Have you reached out to your on and offline communities for input? Remember the power of networks, communities and word of mouth.
- Do you recognise fellow eventprofs in the venue team? If you rent this venue are you getting just a venue or an event partner? What can the venue bring to the event? Do they see this as a marketing opportunity for them? Are they enthusiastic about the event and willing to negotiate to secure your business?
- Have you checked out the venue online and built a clear picture of what you're renting? Have you considered how it might fit thematically with the event objectives? In what ways does this venue bring an overall budget benefit to the total cost of the event?
- Do you have flexibility regarding the date of your event? Have you discussed with the venue its "value dates", ie, dates less likely to sell so more likely to be discounted?
- Do you have other clients/business that could use this venue within the next 12 months? Have you calculated the approximate value of this business so that you can present a compelling case to the venue of the total potential value of your business over a 12 month period?
- Have you checked what other events are taking place in the venue around your dates? Are there piggyback opportunities? Have you researched what event management companies are involved with these events? Can you approach these companies and discuss a shared production cost scenario?

- Have you checked access times to the venue? Have you asked about union regulations? Have you built union fees and gratuities into your budget? Have you noted what's part of the on-site events inventory?
- Do you know the sales team at the venue? Have you worked with them on events in the past or at other venues? Have you turned up physically at the venue and met the team there face-to-face? Have you been cultivating a relationship with the sales team over time? Have you invested in the relationship?

EVENT TECH AND NEGOTIATION CHECKLIST

- Venue listings can be a great starting point to filter venues that are potentially suitable and match your criteria
- A good electronic RFP can be the best tool for striking the best venue deal, streamlining and managing the process
- The sharing economy has shaken up the venue and accommodation markets and shifts power to the planner for better informed negotiations
- Filling a venue during off-peak demand or squeezing a shorter event during a short time frame when a venue is empty is a win-win situation for the venue and planner
- Try to piggyback on another similar event to share stage sets and production so that both events can benefit from savings
- If you can be flexible with dates this will give the venue greater opportunity to give better rates and offer a stronger package but beware of international holiday clashes
- Cut down travel time and expense by using 3D and virtual site inspections
- Virtual Reality tools can bring an event space to life by overlaying different setups to visualize a truer version of the space
- Automated quotes and real-time online bookings can work for some simple events and meetings and can help to drive down the costs by cutting out the middleman
- Venue reviews can give honest and constructive pointers to highlight areas of concern or potential further negotiation and reassurance
- Sophisticated eRFPs can be used right through the selection and decision process to confirmation of the venue and the data can be imported directly into some event registration platforms

- Contracts can be signed digitally. Gone are the days of signing and faxing or posting back copies of contracts
- Combining technology and traditional methods (like picking up the phone) can be a winning combination to get the best deal from venue negotiations
- Technology can save time and streamline the venue researching and selection process, right through the negotiation stages to the final contract being signed
- Very recently we have seen event technology innovate to help improve venue negotiations by storing all the back-and-forth, so now is a good time to consider using event tech
- Team sharing capabilities give planners visibility to leverage their team's sourcing activity
- The survey results were surprising in terms of the lack of adoption of technology in this area but it will be interesting to see how the uptake increases over the next few years
- Technology which helps the organizer save time also delivers a cost saving as this time can be employed more productively