TRAVEL & MEETING PLANNING SERVICES

Presented to Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church
WHO WE ARE

• A department within the Shared Services Division of GCFA
• A staff with collectively over 75 years of travel and meeting planning experience
• Domestic and international experience
• VISA support services available
• Access to an online registration portal which provides quick, efficient means of capturing attendee registration information, 24/7 from anywhere worldwide
• Audio-visual specialist available to assist with any AV needs
WHAT WE DO

• Assistance with initial site and venue selection
• Contract negotiation with hotels/colleges/convention centers
• Budget management
• Timeline development
• Build an online registration site (GCFA uses eTouches) to capture as much information as needed from your attendees
• All logistical planning for your meeting leading up to the event
• On-site support (if needed or requested)
• Post-conference evaluation for future meetings
RULE FOR EVENT PLANNING:
If it seems easy, you are doing it wrong.

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TRAVEL & MEETING PLANNING
BEST PRACTICES - PRE-EVENT

• Scope of Event:
  • Who / What / Where / Why / Purpose

• Develop a timeline that is manageable for all aspects of the meeting

• Budget – Revenue vs Expenses
  • Balancing revenue vs expenses to ensure breakeven
  • Fixed vs variable costs (look out for hidden costs!!)
  • Registration fees – what do they cover
  • What does the individual pay for vs the meeting?
  • Additional revenue streams (sponsorships, exhibit booths)
TRAVEL & MEETING PLANNING
BEST PRACTICES - PRE-EVENT

• Venue and site selection
  • Location (city, state, country)
  • Venue (downtown hotel, airport hotel, resort)
• Pro’s and con’s for the sites/locations requested
• Send out RFPs (Request for Proposal) for several bids to ensure fair selection
• Negotiate contracts to ensure the best possible savings and concessions
  • Hotel room rates
  • Meeting space
  • Food and Beverage
  • Other services
• Have your legal department review the contract
WHAT IS AN RFP?

• Send out as soon as you have confirmed dates
• Information and overview of group
• Preferred dates (offer 2 option dates) – arrival date/pattern
• Number and type of hotel rooms (single/double/suites)
• Budget for room rates
• Food and beverage events
• Meeting space including any other events, or exhibits
• Due date for proposal to be received
• Decision date
• Concessions (must include breakfast, suite upgrades, 1/40 comp) – Don’t be afraid to ask!
• Non-negotiable contract terms (for example 80% attrition)
CONCESSIONS AND NEGOTIABLE ITEMS

- 40 complementary guest rooms
- Suite upgrades for VIPs
- Discounted staff guest rooms
- Complementary meeting space
- Complimentary WiFi
- Complimentary hospitality suite
- Waived or reduced attrition
- Complimentary or reduced parking
- Complimentary amenities for VIP guests

- No walk clause
- Cut off date for guest rooms
- Guest room rebates
- Group rate 3 days pre and post event
- Reduced resort fee
- Discounted/upgraded food and beverage
- Discounted/upgraded audio visual
- Complimentary airport transportation
- Food and beverage minimum
THE 5 P’S

PROPER PLANNING PREVENTS POOR PERFORMANCE
TRAVEL & MEETING PLANNING
BEST PRACTICES – LEADING UP TO AND ON-SITE

- Submit rooming list and manage room block to ensure no (or minimal) attrition
- Provide VIPs, on-site contact, authorized signatories
- Provide final guarantees 72 hours prior
- Conduct a pre-con meeting with the hotel
  - Review rooming list, meet key staff, go over BEOs with banquet staff
  - Dietary requests, disabilities, translation services, security needs
- Check all meeting rooms to ensure correct set up/AV needs
- Make sure you have updated registration list to include paid vs non-paid
- Trouble-shoot on site
- Verify all banquet checks daily, question discrepancies
- Example of Banquet Event Order
TRAVEL & MEETING PLANNING
BEST PRACTICES - POST-EVENT

• Conduct a post con meeting with the hotel and the committee
  • What worked, what didn’t, what improvements can be made
  • Always do it within one week of event so that the mind is still fresh
• Review and audit the final hotel bill and any other meeting related expenses
• Provide suggestions on improvements for the next year
• Begin research for sites/venues for the following year
AN OVERVIEW OF ONLINE REGISTRATION

- Go paperless – saves time and labor with manual/paper registration
- Online website to facilitate registration of meetings, conferences, board meetings
- Registration process captures all the pertinent information of your attendees
  - Custom reporting
  - Hotel room block management
  - Credit card transactions for registration fees through a payment portal
  - Attendee demographic information
- Can provide the ability to promote your event and send out mass emails
- Create an informative website to display your agenda, speaker information, program content and any other public information on the event
- Many also integrate with mobile apps
- Examples of online registration platforms include: eTouches, Cvent, Eventbrite
For more information:
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