

Everything is Negotiable; You Just Have to Ask

Some Things to Consider and Items to Negotiate

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Part 1

Before the site inspection, you should have in mind which space seems to be the most conducive for their group.

However, I recommend conducting a site inspection at several properties to compare the different rates — you can always go back to your favorite hotel and indicate the lower price from the other hotel to see if they can match it. Do not conduct lengthy negotiations with each property if the hotel space is not being seriously considered to hold the meeting, as it will waste everyone's time. Before you sit with the sales person to review the hotel contract and your additions to the contract, view the space that was blocked for the group. You should have as much information about the space as possible to (1) be better equipped to find solutions if there are issues about the flow of the meeting — the meeting space is on the 3rd floor and they blocked the lunch room on the 4th floor, (2) to have an overall knowledge of the

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Negotiation

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policy and what are the costs for receiving boxes? Inform the hotel how many boxes will be sent, when, and to whom.

5. Extraneous "hotel policy" clauses: How can you agree to something that was not communicated. A statement should be included in the contract that only signed agreements are valid (eg, find out that payment for the meeting is due at departure after arriving on site, could be problematic if earlier notification was not given).

6. Billing: You should specify your billing policy (how the hotel invoice should be separated, who is authorized to charge items to the master bill — if one was set up, what charges are the individual's responsibility, etc). To eliminate potential problems, invoices

should be signed after each function. The more specific the billing procedures are, the less opportunity for extraneous charges.

Other items to consider are: who will pay for parking, golf, health club fees, etc? Is the organization exempt from sales tax?

7. Registration: Does the group require a separate check-in location or activities area? Who will staff it? Is there a charge?

8. Keys: Will the hotel provide them at no charge? (This could be the "why wait for the security guard to open and close the door" clause.) Make sure the hotel locks the door after the set-up is done especially if it is a multiday function. Find out who is responsible if property is stolen from the ballroom.

9. Room turns: Define exactly what time the meeting rooms need to be turned, how quickly, the start time of the

meeting, and the Provide the hotel agenda to ensure are scheduled. A be included about approval from you finalized. Hotels set the room before will even charge 10. Double book organization has meeting and sleep contracted.

In any contract, a to sign indicating bility, make sure i the indemnificatio both parties - why and not the hotel i also, if the hotel i to make them acc

provide, if they were to have unforeseeable renovations (eg, alternative space at a comparable hotel within a X-mile radius or monetary compensations). Again, be specific!

2. Competition: The hotel should inform you if a competitor (pharmaceutical, automotive, computers, etc) is holding or inquiring about meeting space. Generally, a hotel cannot deter another group from blocking space, but forewarned is forearmed.

Ask to be notified as soon as any large groups (competitor or noncompetitor) are planning to or have block space next to your assigned ballroom. This information can be helpful so you could change the room set-up if noise from the other group will be a problem (picture a mariachi band meeting next door to your CPA meeting). It will also be helpful for planning around the other group's breaks (eg, if breaks were in the foyer, they can be scheduled at different times).

Part 2

There are a ton of items you can negotiate at a hotel. The goal is to make your attendees as comfortable as possible and

Checks and balances should be in place.

1. Costs: The hotel should inform the sponsoring organization of all potential costs, and the costs should be approved in writing by the sponsoring company. The worst budget problems may arise out of the unknown (eg, the hotel does not have enough staging and must rent it).

groups in house at the same time, should add into the contract that the hotel will provide x-amount of risers for the meeting at no charge).

If you can, find out what are the hotel's sales goals for the month of your meeting and how will your meeting help the hotel to attain them (be aware that some hotels will not release that information). With your wish list, you must ALWAYS list solutions to the problems. There is no reason to have a contract if there are no agreed solutions to pre-determined potential problems.

For organization purposes, dividing the additions into categories (general, sleeping rooms, meeting space, audiovisual, etc) is helpful. Were there to be litigation, the "signed contract additions" would be useful.

Please note that the language used in the following sheets is not the actual language that should be used in your additions to the contract. Some items that could be discussed and/or negotiated during the site inspection are:

1. Renovations (meeting space and hotel): Are they soft (new bedspreads) or hard (new carpeting) changes? The hotel should ensure that the attendees will not have to duck under scaffolding or take the "long way around" to a meeting room because of construction. You should anticipate and list what kind of back-up system the hotel should

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contract can hold them to that.
Always list the item and details of what the hotel will do in a scenario AND what the hotel provides if they breach the contract. It is not enough to say the hotel will "not walk your guests" - you need agree in writing before the breach what the hotel will provide in case a breach occurs (the guests will get spa, free room, amenity, free transport, etc).
Never list any clause in a contract without having a pre-set agreed give back.
These are just a few of the items that could be negotiated during the site check. The best advice I could give is to decide on what the meeting needs before the negotiation and what the hotel can do to fulfill those needs. What was promised during the site inspection should be included in the contract. Everything is negotiable.

presence in the upcoming year.
While increased globalization is expected across the board, meeting professionals from different countries have different worries.
In Canada most responding to the survey said that they are most concerned about the impact of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, which requires a passport for entry into the United States for U.S and foreign citizens.
Canadians are also worried about health pandemics and diseases such as SARS which caused damage to the country's tourism sector several years ago.
The average meeting professional is also looking for technology in the form of

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increase expected is 0.7%.

Overall, 57% of responding organizations are located in only one country. Over half of the other 43% operate in more than five countries.

Pharmaceutical planners expect government regulation to have the greatest impact during the coming year.

2. Injury: Why should the sponsoring company be responsible if the hotel (staff, the overall facility, equipment) was negligent? This clause could reduce, if not eliminate, the sponsoring organization's liability. Hold harmless: is a clause in the contract that ensures that the group will not be responsible in the event of a claim. It usually protects the hotel from these "claims;" however, you could add a line in to make the clause mutual.

3. Alcohol (dram shop laws): Each state has a different law with regard to responsibility from alcohol-related accidents when a sponsoring organization is involved. Obviously this cannot be changed, but it is important for you to know this information.
The hotel should carry a specified amount of insurance and it should comply with all the laws regarding liquor service. You should request that only qualified and trained bartenders staff your event.

4. Receiving costs: What is the hotel

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