

work was erected on the stage and covered in greenery. Basically, we brought the outdoors indoors.

In the end, what could have been a disaster turned out to be a blessing in disguise. In spite of the challenges we were able to accomplish all of our client's objectives, and in the process we were able to test the boundaries of our team's creativity and our ability to perform under pressure.

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# Position Your Meeting for the Future

**By Dana Lynn Hornstein, CMP**

**Partnering with suppliers and obtaining buy-in from your attendees takes trust, and the best place to establish trust is at your prior meeting. That's why one of a planner's goals should be to maintain long-term relationships with all the stakeholders of a meeting. Here are some tips for creating a strategy that furthers your relationships with attendees, hotels, DMCs, and other suppliers.**

the lifeblood out of the hotel will benefit the current meeting you are planning, but it will make your meeting look undesirable for any future dates. As with any industry, the old saying, "It's a small world" holds true. Remember to be fair, ethical, and forthright in all of your negotiations. If you don't get everything you want in this negotiation, in all likelihood you will in the next one.

**1** Don't try to squeeze every last concession out of the property. Always try to be fair and flexible. Draining

**2** Include other vendors in the post-conference meeting. Many planners confine their post-conferences

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(RIGHT ON THE BACK)



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to hotel personnel. Meet with the other vendors who helped organize your meeting and run through the same post-conference exercise with them.

**3** Obtain all pertinent reports after the meeting such as final attendance lists, food and beverage consumption

totals, etc. These figures will be helpful when negotiating future contracts as well as when you reconcile the final invoice.

**4** If you organized a few tours, get the attendance totals for the tours from the DMC to give you an overall idea

of which ones were popular and which ones were not. But also survey the attendees in an evaluation. Solicit their comments on the overall organization of this portion of the meeting, focusing on topics such as their perception of the activities and whether or not there was adequate staffing and ground transportation.

**5** In general, you will hear from the attendee if he or she did not get picked up at the airport. Keep a list of such people (if possible, send them an amenity); also, delete them from the final invoice, then evaluate if you needed more cars or if a gate greet versus a baggage-claim greet would have been better.

**6** Registration staff: These people most likely gave your attendees their first impression of the meeting, off-loaded a lot of work from your shoulders, and heard reactions from the attendees. Meet with them and get their impression of the meeting. They were in the trenches and will likely have heard the scuttlebutt.

**7** Overall, was there enough staff to handle your group? General rule: It's better to have too many than not enough.

**8** Thank-you notes (and, if possible tips) will go a long way in making your next meeting with these suppliers run smoother. Remember, hospitality is a small world and eventually, you will run into these people again.

*Dana Lynn Hornstein, CMP, has been planning domestic and international meetings for over 11 years. Ms. Hornstein's meeting planning expertise includes orchestrating group functions that range from 10 to 1,000 attendees. Ms. Hornstein, who has taught contract law, negotiation, and pre-/post-conference management at Kean University's CE program since 1997, also has over a dozen articles published in various magazines and newspapers on significant key issues of meeting planning.*





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