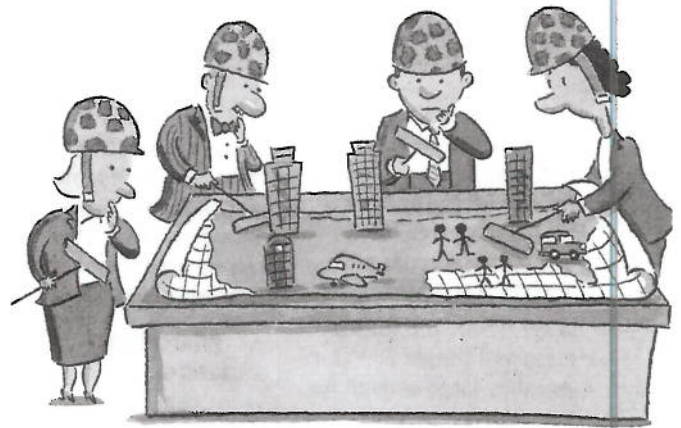


SITE INSPECTION CHECK LIST

# Back To Basics

*Getting to know the fundamentals of a site inspection*



BY DANA LYNN BERNSTEIN

A hotel site inspection, completed before day-to-day meeting planning begins, is highly beneficial. It not only familiarizes the planner with the meeting space and hotel policies, but also helps the convention services manager (CSM) understand the planner's goals and concerns. If a limited budget or time precludes a site inspection, a detailed phone conversation with the sales manager and the assigned CSM can clarify issues that might arise later in the planning stages.

Here is a checklist which represents some of the most important information you should acquire and people you should meet with during a site inspection.

### ✓ General Information

- Hotel name (get the exact name and spelling for your invitations).
- Address.
- Telephone and fax numbers (both sales department and general number).
- Names:
  - Sales manager.
  - Banquet manager.
  - Convention services manager.
  - Accounting manager.
  - General manager.
  - Setup manager.
  - Manager on duty — you can usually get this name a week before your meeting.
  - Head concierge.
  - Front-desk manager.
- Establish and verify the dates, times, and rooms for which the meeting and sleeping-room space is to be held.

### ✓ General Notes

- Negotiate the date until which the hotel will hold the meeting space, so you are not pressured to sign the hotel contracts the minute you return to the office.
- Discuss the following items with the CSM:
  - 1) The time by which the meeting rooms need to be completely set up.
  - 2) Any additional provisions to be included in the contract.
  - 3) The purpose and objectives of the meeting.
  - 4) The demographics of the attendees.
  - 5) The meeting format.
- Review the hotel contract (and your contract additions) with the salesperson—try to negotiate face-to-face.
- Ask to see a meeting in progress at the hotel.

- Make sure you are able to see the meeting rooms when they are empty (rather than when they are occupied with another meeting or set up in a totally different format altogether).
- Bring with you a program agenda, room diagram, preliminary audiovisual list, preliminary banquet event order, credit profile, and contract additions if they were not sent in advance (it's best to send the information in advance so the hotel staff can flag any concerns and familiarize themselves with the meeting specifications).
- Be prepared to project the number of guests the planner is expecting (sleeping rooms and catering functions).
- Use a rating scale (1 representing the lowest and 5 representing the highest score) when evaluating the

following items:

- Appearance of grounds.
- Appearance of reception area.
- Appearance of front desk personnel.
- Appearance of lobby.
- Overall appearance of the hotel.
- Ease of check-in.
- Ease of check-out.

### ✓ General On-Site Questions

- Does the hotel consider itself a resort property, downtown property, etc.?
- Will a convention be in town? Who, and how many people are expected (the planner should also call the convention & visitors bureau to obtain this information)?
- When are the local celebrations and festivals (e.g., Seafair in Seattle, Mardi Gras in New Orleans)?
- What are the low, high, and shoulder seasons of the hotel?
- What is the likely climate during the meeting dates (day and night)?
- How old is the property? When was it last renovated, and what was done?
- To what address and to whom should the registra-

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tion boxes be shipped? Are there any restrictions (e.g., the hotel can only receive 15 boxes before there is a charge, boxes can be no more than 100 pounds)?

- Where are the storage areas and freight elevator? Are they large enough for your needs?
- Are there any renovations going on in the hotel before or during your scheduled meeting? Are they soft (bedspread changes) or hard (new carpeting)?
- How many meeting rooms are on site? What is the total square footage of meeting space in the hotel?
- What is the number of employees compared to the number of sleeping rooms?
- Are employees unionized? When does the contract expire? Does the contract have any restrictions?
- How much are the porter and/or maid fees? Are they

- mandatory?
- Can the hotel flag any concerns in the area (e.g., construction)?
- Ask the hotel for three to five references (planners who have held a meeting at that facility within six months and who had approximately the same number of attendees).

**✓ Meeting Space**

- What is the name of the room that is blocked for the group? (Verify the time for which it is blocked.)
- What floor is it on? Is it accessible?
- What is the decor (e.g., color, chandeliers)?
- What are the table sizes? Are there enough for your group? If there are several functions, the hotel may have to rent extra tables.
- What is the ceiling height clearance of the chandeliers? This is important for audiovisual needs.
- Are there any obstructions (e.g., pillars)?
- What other functions

will be near the room on the meeting date (noise and traffic factor)?

- Can the room be set up the day before the meeting? For a morning meeting, this is mandatory.
- What is the room rental? (This is a negotiable point.) Does it include taxes?
- What are the business services hours of operation? fees? equipment available?
- Does the room have a light control? Can the lights be dimmed?
- Is the meeting room accessible to elevators?
- Is there a temperature control in the room, or does the engineering department control it?
- Does the meeting room have adequate ventilation?
- Are any competitors meeting in the hotel at the same time as your group?
- Can the hotel provide a welcome desk for the day of the group's arrival? Is there a cost?
- Is there a weekend package rate for guests staying at the hotel prior to or after the meeting?
- Does the hotel have any calendar holes to be filled (open dates where the planner can negotiate better room rates)?
- Is there a complete meeting package (CMP) rate? Can the group have their meal functions separately? Are there special menus to choose from?
- What is the legal seating capacity in the room?
- Is signage allowed?
- Is the banquet function near the meeting room?
- Where is the kitchen in relation to the meeting room (noise factor)?
- Where are the service

hallways? Are they noisy? Does the hotel staff know not to enter the room when the meeting is in progress?

- Will the CSM be on site the day of the meeting?
- Is a house phone in the meeting room? If so, can the ringer be turned off?
- Does the meeting room have mirrors or windows?
- What is the square footage of the meeting room (how wide is the room — will the screen, podium and head table all fit)?
- Are the reader boards sufficient and in key locations? This will help the planner to determine if extra signage is needed.
- Is there a setup or reset fee for the rooms? Some hotels will charge if the room specifications change when on site — negotiate this and put it in the contract.
- Are there groups in your meeting room before you? Can you split audiovisual costs with them?
- Are there on- and off-ramps to access the meeting rooms (is the hotel ADA accessible)?
- Are the restrooms and public telephones near the meeting room?
- Are there airwalls to separate rooms? What is the potential noise factor?
- Are pens, note pads, candy, etc. provided? Is there a cost? (This is a negotiable point.)

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