SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCES NEED CAREFUL ADVANCE PLANNING

Whether the conference you are planning is large or small, the organization formula will vary little. This formula requires:

- Clear objectives
- A good overall plan
- Organized manpower to implement the plan
- Sound financial administration

A good overall plan takes into account the many scores of details that need to be anticipated and provided for. Whether a conference is a success or not depends upon how well it has attained the goals determined in advance by the sponsors. Too many conferences fail in their prime purpose because those responsible have not had a clear cut conception of the objectives to be reached or goals achieved by the conference. Most conferences have a deeper and more important purpose than enjoyable luncheons, dinners and receptions, which are usually designed simply as an effective setting under which the real objectives of the conference can be attained.

HANDY TIPS FOR ORGANIZING THE CONFERENCE

GENERAL CHAIRMAN - Responsible for the easy and coordinated action of the entire committee structure. Reports to the Executive Committee of the convening organization.

VICE-CHAIRMAN - Acts for the General Chairman in his absence or incapacity and cooperates generally with him on all matters.

TREASURER - Is custodian of all moneys and maintains all financial records and pays all bills after proper certification. It is desirable that this person be bondable.

SECRETARY - Maintains all files and records of the organization, issues calls for and keeps minutes of Executive Committee and General Committee meetings and handles all general correspondence.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - Needed only in large and complex set-ups. Relieves officers and committees of matters not readily handled. Works with the General Chairman. This office may warrant a full-time salaried executive for a reasonable time prior to, during and after the conference. In fact, many organizations already have on staff a permanent executive secretary who would naturally fill this role.

FUNCTIONAL COMMITTEE - Each functional committee should be given clear and specific instruction concerning the duties with which it is charged. Very often, confusion arises when the local committee’s activities and the national headquarters activities are not coordinated. Unnecessary errors or duplication sometimes may result.
FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE - The Budgetary Committee is the most important committee. It will handle all finances and determine how much can be spent and where, and will set the registration fees. An outline of the usual expenses encountered are shown in this sample budget.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENSES</th>
<th>INCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mailing and Postage</td>
<td>Registration fees (delegate and companion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing (pre-mailings, programs, tickets, etc.)</td>
<td>Partial registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs and decorations</td>
<td>Override on functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speakers and invited guests</td>
<td>Contributions and/or sponsorships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration Desk staff and materials</td>
<td>Parent body financing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra help - what kind?</td>
<td>Exhibit space rental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local transportation</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translation services and equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhibit and exhibit space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting room rentals, reception</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nutrition breaks</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of meals (whether borne by delegates entirely)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gratuities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other facilities (PA system, sound recordings)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gifts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Companion program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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The Finance and Budget Committee should also keep in mind the following important points:

- Who will make payment for the various functions
- When is payment due
- What is the policy on refunds
- Ticket prices for various functions
- Who will check out funds at the start and check in at the close of each session or function
- When is payment due to speakers
- When is payment due to the extra help
- What is the cost and number of meals (estimate “high” as to cost)
- What is the guarantee on final number of meals (estimate “low” as to guarantee at one time)

HOUSING COMMITTEE - The Housing Committee is set up to assure satisfactory accommodation for all guests and delegates. This Committee will work with the hotel manager and hotel staff. The hotels in Edmonton have experienced professional staff to handle this type of business.

- Make a tentative booking of required numbers of rooms in hotels and motels
- Information on hotels and their regular or special conference rates to send out as promotional material
- Have emergency housing available for latecomers
- Review cancellation & attrition policies
- Confirm rooming list payment structure (individual, group, etc.)
- Complimentary room nights based on total nights confirmed
- Keep a good liaison with the hotels or motels regarding reservations coming in
- If your conference plans to have exhibits, determine where exhibitors can be housed

Information the Headquarters Hotel should have from you:

- Date when the majority of the group will arrive
- Date when the majority of the group will depart
- Determine if the VIP’s accommodations will be paid for by your organization
- When available, the exact time and date each delegate will arrive and depart

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE - The Public Relations Committee has a two-fold duty. Promotion of your conference to gain maximum attendance (focusing attention on the important objectives) and the publicizing of your conference are the two facets of this Committee’s work. A good job of publicizing will help your conference on its way to being a successful one. Some points to check are:

- Newsletter, association publication, etc.
- Hometown publicity to promote attendance
- Direct mail to promote attendance
- Send advance information on your conference to the press,
- Invite the news media to meetings and banquets
- Set up a press table when considered necessary (with typewriters)
- Obtain copies in advance of all speeches for the press
- Have speakers and conference officers available for interviews with the press
- Arrange for a photographer
- Arrange with photographer for sale of pictures to delegates
- Personally call on city editors and on radio and TV stations program directors (allocate responsibility for these calls)
- Set up a room, area or place for press headquarters
- News releases and pictures of speakers for hometown papers radio and TV
- Hometown coverage of your conference in progress and after it is over
- Early bird booking incentives
- Set up website link to hotel reservation site
WELCOME AND HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE - The Reception and Hospitality Committee will be the host for delegates of all functions. They welcome all guests, members of the press, and visiting dignitaries. Check over these points:

- Hospitality suite
- Welcome banner for headquarters hotel
- Meet planes and trains carrying delegates or guests; welcome banners or posters are effective; greeters in Klondike costume add colour and interest
- Prepare a shoppers guide of interesting places to shop
- Flowers in rooms for guest speakers and/or dignitaries
- Arrange room deliveries as required (program guides, welcome gifts, etc.)
- Invite local dignitaries to special events
- Advise them if they are expected to speak
- Meet planes and trains carrying delegates or guests; arrange to welcome local dignitaries, welcome banners or posters are effective; greeters in Klondike costume add colour and interest
- Prepare a shoppers guide of interesting places to shop
- Flowers in rooms for guest speakers and/or dignitaries
- Arrange room deliveries as required (program guides, welcome gifts, etc.)

EXHIBITS COMMITTEE - The Exhibits Committee will be in charge of obtaining space and providing information about the space to all who may desire to use it. It will handle all rental policies and arrangements, and will prepare material about the exhibits for all delegates. Keep in mind the following:

- Prepare an information folder on rental prices, space available and floor plan of the exhibits area. Mail folder to list of potential exhibitors
- Check on availability in the exhibit area of electrical outlets, steam and water supply, a carpenter, an electrician, a plumber and a sign painter
- Some provision for continuing clearance or liaison with hotel regarding regulations on size, weight or nature of exhibits
- Check on floor load and ceiling heights, including truck door dimensions
- Contact display company who may assist in above areas
- Check customs regulations for out of country equipment and materials and/or arrange for customs broker to handle
- Liability insurance or protection against loss or damage in respect to exhibitor “materials” and against suit from hotel for damage and against suit by anyone being injured by exhibit
- Schedule exact timing for moving exhibits in and out
- Security

REGISTRATION COMMITTEE - The Registration Committee will be in charge of setting up whatever facilities are necessary for your group’s registration. It will also be responsible for your conference’s headquarters and information centre. This committee’s checkpoints include:

- Staffing of registration desk clerks, typists and cashiers
- Registration forms and badges, committee ribbons, etc.
- Ticket sales
- Typewriters, bulletin type (large letters)
- Desks, tables, chairs and waste baskets
- Cash box, receipt book and float
- A person who is responsible for handling registration money
- Registration procedure for delegates (policy regarding part time registration)
- Registration procedure for guests and dignitaries
- Provide all facts of the conference and registration procedures to registration staff
- Extra tables, chairs and desks
- Instructions posted for filling out forms
- Informative material on Edmonton and Alberta
- Information desk and clerk
- Bulletin board for messages and phone calls
- List of registrants for officials and the press
- Facilities for photocopying
- Sufficient amount of forms, programs, pencils, note paper, etc.
- Information on hotel facilities and surrounding areas

ENTERTAINMENT COMMITTEE - The function of the Entertainment Committee is very important. It is in charge of all entertainment for the various banquets, luncheons and social events. This committee should check:

- Special entertainment for regular program
- All social functions including orchestra and floor show
- Decorations for banquets and social functions
- Banquet tables set up
- Head tables - notify those who sit at head table where they will be seated through the appointing of a head table marshal
- Number of places to be set at banquet
- Favours, menus and place cards
- Type of bar service required (cash, host, etc.)
- Provision for meal tickets. Giving the hotel a “guarantee” figure
- Tickets to be taken at table or door
- Ticket sales to latecomers
- Sightseeing tours
- Type of food service required (buffet, plated, etc.)
- A printed program and menu for each banquet
- Alert of any dietary restrictions
- Exact serving time
- Special wine service required (table service, etc.)
PROGRAM COMMITTEE - The planning of an interesting and informative program, and the coordinating of all conference functions is the job of the Program Committee. It will work closely with the Entertainment Committee in tying together the business and social functions of your conference to assure a smooth running chain of events. A checklist of duties would include the following:

- Book meeting rooms
- A complete program schedule including all business meetings, social functions, time for studying and exhibits, time for shopping and sightseeing, and plenty of time for various recreational activities
- Printed programs
- Appoint a presiding chairman for each meeting
- Give written notice to each chairman outlining his specific responsibilities and the exact time and place he will appear on the program
- Contact the outstanding speakers in your field well in advance of your conference
- Inform the speakers of the time and date to speak, and the amount of time allotted to them
- Arrange for special properties needed by your speaker such as blackboard, chalk, easel, projector and material to be distributed
- Signage for meeting rooms
- Obtain biographical material for the speakers’ introduction
- Inform the speakers of the type of talk desired
- Have financial arrangements for the speakers understood by both parties
- Furnish programs and courtesy tickets to the speakers
- Have someone to introduce the speakers to conference officials and make welcome to the conference
- Have alternate speaker available in case regular one cancels
- Provide for any other change in the program - post signs
- Speakers’ Ready Room available to test audio/visual equipment
- Provide directional signs to the meeting rooms
- Meet with Audio Visual company to review requirements

COMPANION PROGRAM - The Companion Program should be stimulating. It should not conflict with the delegates program. Balance the program with a variety of activities. Try not to crowd in too many events. Allow some free time for shopping as part of the program.

- Provide a hospitality room where coffee, etc is served. Craft displays and demonstrations may be set up in this room for one morning or afternoon
- Prepare an information sheet of specialty shops, antique shops, galleries, restaurants, etc. which you think your guests might like to visit on their own time. Include the list in each companion kit.
- Have schedules available on other events during your conference such as theatre productions
- Guided tours can be arranged for groups at many of Edmonton’s attractions. A luncheon or coffee concluding the tour may be considered.
- Consider arrangements for some sport activity for variety: tennis, golf, bowling, riding are all available in Edmonton
- Speakers: Edmonton Tourism can offer speaker/entertainer suggestions suitable for your spousal program.
- Send a newsletter advising the guests what is planned for the companion program so that they are prepared to bring along the proper clothing and/or equipment. If the program looks interesting, this will spark enthusiasm for increased attendance
- Work closely with registration chairman to determine number of companions attending. Consider a small gift or souvenir for each companion and guest.

YOUTH PROGRAMS - Will there be children attending the conference with their parents? Consider the following:

- Babysitting arrangements
- Special activities for the children, transportation, meals