

The Underbelly of Hospitality

How understanding hotels can help you have a better event

Background

Carol Tebay, Executive Arrangements Event Planning

- Development Coordinator for Autism Services
- Worked in hotel sales & catering offices for almost 15 years
- Catering Manager at Saskatoon Inn
- Began Executive Arrangements in 2012
- Autism Services - event coordinator to development coordinator



Your experience

- Events in hotels and/or venues?
 - what kind of event(s)?
 - where?
- What was your experience like?
 - frustrations?
 - exceeded expectations?

How events “happen” in hotels

Your Event



What your catering consultant wishes you understood

1. Deadlines

- What kind of deadlines?
 - signed contract
 - guestrooms cutoff
 - event details
 - guarantees
- Why are they important?



What your catering consultant wishes you understood

2. Contracts and event orders

- Read them!
- Be sure you understand what you are signing
- Double-check for errors and/or omissions

DOUBLE-CHECK YOUR INVOICES, TOO

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Your booking contract

- Event space
 - your numbers:
 - be realistic - don't inflate (*esp. on 1st time events*)
 - know the function room capacity - don't go over (*i.e., exceed fire code*)
 - times should include your setup times
 - what is all the space you need (*e.g., breakout rooms, event office, storage area...*)
 - rental rates:
 - can be based on catering minimums or pro-rated based on guestroom pick-up (*or a combination of the two*)

Your booking contract

- Guestrooms

- types of room blocks:
 - rooming list
 - book & pay on own
 - open block

- Cancellation

- option:
 - if you do have to cancel, you may be able to negotiate on the penalty fees if you plan to rebook the event for a later date

Your booking contract: *ATTRITION*

- Technically, you are responsible to pay for every guestroom you have listed on your contract
- *ATTRITION* defines the penalties when you don't fulfill your contract and it allows you to reduce your numbers in advance if you know you'll have less people at the event

Your booking contract: *ATTRITION*

Example (for 100 guestrooms):

- *From Contract signing to 90 days out: You can adjust your room block by 15%*
 - *You can drop your block to 85 guestrooms*
- *From 89 days to 60 days out: You can adjust your block by 10%*
 - *You can drop your block to 77 guestrooms*
- *From 59 days to 30 days out: You can adjust your block by 5%*
 - *You can drop your block to 73 guestrooms*
- *Inside 30 days there will no allowable reduction in your room block*

Your booking contract: *ATTRITION*

ASK Questions

- make sure you understand how the hotel interprets the attrition clause

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR DEADLINES AND WATCH YOUR BLOCKS

Article:

<https://www.aventri.com/blog/successful-room-block-management-part-2-attrition>

Your booking contract

- Contracts are negotiable
 - Ask questions
 - Let them know what a competitor is offering
 - If it's not in the contract, ask for it

Remember: it needs to be a Win-Win for both parties

Things to consider



Your event timelines

“Flipping” a room

Serving dinner

Remarks before dinner is served



Your event budget

Tell your consultant

*Understand they won't sacrifice food
quality for budget*

Things to consider



Function space and guestrooms are finite, time-based resources

If a guestroom is empty or a function room is only used for a half a day, that revenue is lost



A hotel is not a not-for-profit organization

Their goal is to make money while meeting the client's expectations

One more thing



If you choose a different hotel...

Let your consultant know why you didn't choose their hotel

What you can expect and ask for



PRE-CONFERENCE
MEETING



ON-SITE EVENT ORDER
REVIEW WITH BANQUETS



BANQUETS ON-SITE
CONTACT INFO

Event Planning Checklist for venues



Basic information



Setup



Food & beverage



Audio-Visual



Special instructions

Event Planning Checklist for venues



Basic information

- Name of event (“post as”)
- Date
- Start and end times
- Type of event
- Expected number of attendees

- Contact name & information
- On-site contact information

Event Planning Checklist for venues



Setup

- Seating:
 - round tables
 - classroom
 - theatre
- Front:
 - stage
 - podium (with microphone)
- Entrance:
 - registration
- Other:
 - displays or for materials
 - exhibitor booths

Event Planning Checklist for venues



Food & beverage

- All-Day Meeting Package
- Meals:
 - breakfast
 - lunch
 - dinner (plated or buffet)
 - reception (appetizers, hors d'oeuvres)
- Breaks
- Bar (cash, host, drink tickets)

*List start & end times for everything

Event Planning Checklist for venues



Audio-visual

- Audio:
 - podium/microphone
 - wired mic(s) - where?
 - wireless mic(s) - lapel, handheld
 - sound for laptop?
- Visual:
 - screen(s)
 - internet access for video?
- Lighting

Event Planning Checklist for venues



Audio-visual

- In-house AV companies:
 - Advantage: on-site to deal with unexpected issues (*double-check if on site 'after hours'*)
 - Disadvantage: could be pricey (*recommend getting a few AV quotes*)

Some venues won't allow outside AV companies or if they do, they might charge a "patch fee"

Event Planning Checklist for venues



Special instructions

- Dignitaries:
 - flags on stage?
 - designated parking?
- Special deliveries:
 - décor
 - exhibitors
- Anything else that might impact the setup and service of the event



Bonus: give them a copy of your program/agenda

Be kind to your catering consultant

“Event coordinator” is
the 5th most stressful job
behind fire-fighters and soldiers
(CareerCast, 2019)

Why?

- Organization
- Multitasking
- Attention to detail
- Time management and deadlines
- Communications
- Being a people person



How can you help your catering consulting

- Get yourself organized
 - when sending your details
 - *communicate as much information as you can about your event*
 - when asking questions/relaying information

Example: event details

SET UP

Exeter Room (plenary)

- half rounds of 6 people per table (facing front); ice water and glasses on tables
- (10) 6' exhibitor tables
- 16' x 8' stage at the front
- podium & microphone on the stage
- 6' table on the stage
- (2) 8' tables at the back of the room for door prizes and conference materials
- breakfast buffet/coffee station

Outside Exeter Room

- (1) 6' tables for registration, with 3 chairs

CHANGES for Saturday, May 4 setup (Exeter Room)

- ADD (1) 6' table just inside the entrance, with 2 chairs
- REMOVE (8) exhibitor tables

Example: event details

AV

- screen
- data projector
- wireless lapel microphone
- hand held microphone with stand (we'll use this for our Q & A after the sessions)
- patch into house sound (from our laptop computer)

Example: event details

Catering - Friday, May 3 for 110 people* *(*this includes exhibitors)*

7:30-8:15am> Kelsey Trail Breakfast (\$14/ppl)

9:30-10:00am> AM Break

Granola Bars for 40 people (\$3.25 ea)

Fresh fruit for 40 people (\$5.50/ppl)

Vegetables & dip for 20 people (\$4.50/ppl)

100 cups Coffee (\$2.50/cup)

40 cups Tea (\$2.50/cup)

**is it possible to leave any left-over breakfast food out for the break?*

12:00-1:00pm> Cafeteria Lunch Buffet (\$20/ppl)

Example: event details

Catering - Friday, May 3

6:00-9:30pm > Banquet in Exeter Room for 70 people*
*(*we always have less people attending the banquet)*

6:00pm - Cash bar opens; bar closes at 9:30pm

6:30pm - Plated Three-Course Dinner (\$35/ppl)

Salad: Spinach mandarin salad...

Main: Pan-roasted chicken supreme...

Dessert: Saskatoon berry cheesecake...

In closing...

- Read your contracts and event orders
- Ask questions
 - *Each hotel has slightly different policies - make sure you understand them*
- Be organized
- Watch your deadlines
- Communicate, communicate

Show a willingness to work with the hotel and they'll be much more willing to bend over backwards for you

Make it so your catering consultant
doesn't have to
“manage you”
in addition to all the other things
they have to manage

Questions? Comments?

Thank you

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