

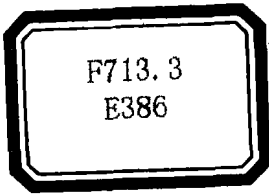
F I F T H E D I T I O N

CONVENTION SALES and SERVICES



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Convention Sales and Services

Fifth Edition

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Waterbury Press
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Cranbury, NJ 08512
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E-mail: Waterburypress@compuserve.com

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 0-9620710-3-X

Preface

Much has happened in the hotel-convention business since the first edition of this text. The industry has undergone many changes. More, perhaps, than in any similar period before it. If nothing else, the industry has achieved tremendous growth. Today the convention industry is over \$85.82 billion annually and is growing steadily.

Just since the *last* printing of this text, sweeping changes have taken place in how hospitality products are sold, and new avenues have opened up for hotel advertising. The widespread acceptance of computer technology (laptop computers, electronic mail, and fax modems) has made it possible for hotel salespeople and clients to immediately confirm hotel availability and arrangements. And, technology such as the Internet and CD-ROMS enable hotels to advertise their properties in ways that were unheard of a few short years ago! Today's meeting planner can take a "virtual tour" of many properties without leaving his or her desk.

The changes taking place in this booming industry and the growing impact of convention business to properties of all sizes prompted the fifth edition of this manual. Over the years we have maintained file folders for each chapter of the text. Into them have gone trade journal articles, scraps from newspapers, student and instructor comments, book reviews and seminar notes. Each of these folders became the basis for revised data, new ideas, clarifications and reworked segments. The contents of this fifth edition have been updated substantially. New photographs and forms highlight the revised content. Each chapter has been updated to reflect the latest in research and practice.

The first four editions of this book have been tested on the firing line in university

classrooms and in hotel sales offices throughout the world and many ideas offered by early users have been incorporated into this edition. Most gratifying have been the critiques of seasoned industry professionals who have commented, "Yes, this is just the way it's done...large or small, those properties that are successful follow the procedures as layed out in your text."

It is hard to conceive of a new hotel going up today without plans for meeting facilities. However, the convention business requires more than just a physical plant. It is definitely a *people* business. The prizes go to those with the greatest expertise in the craft.

Convention Sales and Services was written to serve as a primer and guide to those who already are involved in this exciting segment of the hospitality world. All facets of the convention business will be discussed.

Part I offers practical insight into different kinds of meetings and conventions, the types of organizations that stage such events, and the people who hold the key to site selection, and suggests how to reach and sell these important groups and people. Material includes how to analyze a hotel property to determine which segments of the market may be sold and serviced successfully and how to organize a staff to go after that kind of business. Practical advice is given on such subjects as negotiations and letters of agreement.

Part II deals with the vital convention service. Once the client has been sold on holding his or her event in the hotel, the staff must serve to allow the convention to flow smoothly. Each convention is a custom production, and skilled, knowledgeable hotel people are needed for its execution. Repeat

business is essential for the success of any hotel, and professional convention service is absolutely necessary for a hotel to compete for its share of business.

The modern hotel executive must have a complete grasp of convention sales and service. This knowledge points the way to consistently high occupancy rates, filling in those empty calendar spots, those off-season times, those weaker days of the week. It offers an opportunity to go after the *kind* of guests you want, instead of just numbers.

No one can progress to executive ranks within the modern hotel field without a full understanding of the role such business plays in today's hotel plan. This lucrative market merits careful attention by students and those already in the field. *Convention Sales and Services* is offered to facilitate your entry into and growth in the hotel industry.

Text Features

Our purpose throughout the book is to present convention management in a readable style with ample illustration to facilitate comprehension and encourage retention of the text material. Based on the suggestions of professors, students and industry professionals, a number of improvements have been made in the fifth edition. The discussions of many topics have been rewritten to update them and to make them more comprehensive. New or expanded sections have been added to every chapter. For example, several references have been added explaining the increased use of the computer in selling and servicing conventions. Each chapter also contains numerous cross-referenced illustrations, actual industry examples, as well as interesting profiles of

successful hotel sales and service managers and interviews with the people most important to a property targeting the conventions business — a number of diverse meeting planners who give “first-hand” insights into how to best meet the needs of today's meeting professional.

End-of-Chapter Material.

Review questions follow each chapter. These questions help the reader pull together and integrate the basic concepts of the chapter. In addition, the questions give the reader an opportunity to see how their own values will affect the way they apply the management principles. Several “case studies” are also included in the text to test the practical application of principles presented and to provide ample opportunity for group “brain-storming.”

Instructional Support Package.

A comprehensive Instructor's Manual to assist teachers in the classroom use of the text is available. Each chapter in the Instructor's Manual includes a review outline, a list of key terms, a suggested lecture outline, suggested answers to the end-of-chapter discussion questions, and a test item file.

Transparency Masters.

A complete series of transparency masters have also been prepared for the instructor. To a large degree the study of convention sales and service is a study of forms. The charts, exhibits and figures from the text have been enlarged and reproduced in a separate manual available to educators.

Profiles

Successful hotel sales and service managers profiled throughout this text greatly added to the educational value of the book with their real-life examples. In this fifth edition, we have also added additional profiles and comments from other notables in the conventions industry. To all these contributors — thanks!

Alan Brenner — Monterey Conference Center, Monterey, California

Jeff Coy — JLC MARKETING ASSOCIATES

Kathy Dixon Leone — Boca Raton Resort and Club, Boca Raton, Florida

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Nora May — Sheraton Tucson El Conquistador, Tucson, Arizona

Marilyn McIver — Marriott Desert Springs Resort, Palm Desert, California

Gene Meoni — Grand Traverse Resort Village, Michigan

John Mirallegro — Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort, Atlantic City, New Jersey

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Keith Patrick — Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers, New York City

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David Scypinski — HILTON HOTELS CORPORATION

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Lee Sterbens — GREYHOUND EXPOSITIONS SERVICES

Sara Torrance — NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS
AND TECHNOLOGY

Charles Walhaven — Opryland Hotel, Nashville, TN

Janet Wright — THE WRIGHT ORGANIZATION

Introduction

Although no one is quite sure how or when they came about, conventions have become extremely important in today's business world. Business and professional people realized early the importance of getting together to discuss their problems and to clear up misunderstandings. Out of these early meetings came the massive convention business we know today.

A great many people have the misconception that a convention is just another vacation. But the basic purpose of a convention is not to assemble for fun and games but to exchange viewpoints and discuss matters of mutual concern.

When a convention is tied to a trade show, delegates expect to see and hear about the newest equipment and supplies in their profession or industry. They expect to have an opportunity to discuss personally with their suppliers the problems that have been troubling them.

Every field has its conventions: professions, trade unionism, education, arts, commerce, politics, and fraternalism all rely on conventions to bring together the membership's cross section of ideas. The conventioners congregate in hotel properties across the country to attend meetings and look over exhibits; invariably they come home better oriented toward their jobs and more certain of the goals of their organization.

What do conventions mean to a hotel? They can mean the difference between black and red ink in the profit column. Obviously, conventions play an important part in a hotel's overall sales effort. As much as 70 percent of

total sales volume in major hotels is attributed to the influence of convention business; smaller properties count the effect at 15 to 20 percent.

Such group business is valuable to hotels for several reasons.

1. Conventioneers not only provide room revenue for the hotel, but because they are more or less captive, they also use room service, hospitality suites, and laundry and valet services. The hotel's restaurant, lounge, drugstore, and barbershop also benefit.
2. Convention and group business allows a hotel to forecast advance booking. Since the length of each guest's stay is pretty much predetermined, employee scheduling is more accurate and labor costs are reduced.
3. Convention business can fill the gaps in the slack months. And thus better employer-employee relationships are maintained by eliminating the fear of slow periods and providing secure and steady working conditions.
4. Group business is an excellent builder for repeat business. With a convention, a large number of potential repeat guests become acquainted with your hotel. If they are well treated and are pleased, they will not only advertise by word of mouth, but they also will be likely to stay with you on other visits to the city.

And the only way to get this repeat business is through the development of an

honest and fair rapport with convention groups. This means living up to all promises and obligations and providing excellent attention to details and the service that is so necessary for the smooth running of the modern convention.

5. Should a trade show be part of the con-

vention event, hotels find there is heavy demand for their suites and lounge facilities.

6. Spouses, more than ever, are accompanying delegates to conventions and this typically increases business in shops, health clubs and the like.

In this book, we will take an in-depth look at these trends and other factors affecting the nature and scope of today's meetings market. We will see how the hospitality industry is responding to the increasing demands of this lucrative market segment, and learn how selling to or servicing the conventions and meetings market offers the opportunity for you to enjoy an exciting and rewarding career with practically limitless potential.

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