

Convention Management AND Service

FIFTH EDITION

Milton T. Astroff
James R. Abbey

Convention Management and Service

Fifth Edition

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EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE
American Hotel & Motel Association

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By WATERBURY PRESS
2C Truro Drive
Cranbury, NJ 08512

and

By the EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE of the
AMERICAN HOTEL & MOTEL ASSOCIATION
2113 North High Street
Lansing, Michigan 48906

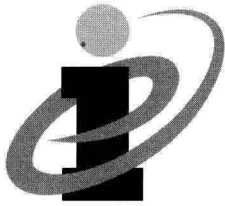
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Printed in the United States of America
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 03 02 01 00

ISBN 0-86612-173-0

Editor: Thaddeus Balivet



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your career.**

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We commend you for taking this important step. Turn to the Educational Institute for additional resources that will help you stay ahead of your competition.

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, meetings, conventions, expositions, and incentive travel directly generate over \$82.8 billion annually, and this figure 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, email, 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 on properties of all sizes prompted the fifth edition of this book. 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 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... whether they are large or small, those properties that are successful follow the procedures outlined 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 rewards of good business go to those with the greatest expertise in serving people.

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

Part I offers practical insight into various kinds of meetings and conventions and the types of organizations that stage such events; it also suggests how to reach and sell the people who screen and choose meeting sites. Its material includes ways to analyze a hotel property to determine which segments of the market may be sold and serviced successfully and ways to organize 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 convention service, a vital aspect of the business. Once the client has been sold on holding his or her event in the hotel, the staff must serve in order to allow the convention to flow smoothly. Each convention is a custom production, and skilled, knowledgeable hotel personnel are needed for its execution. Repeat business is essential for the success of any hotel, and professional convention service is absolutely necessary if a hotel is to acquire 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 in the forecast, those off-season times, those weaker days of the week. It offers an opportunity to go after the *kinds* 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 that convention business plays in a hotel's success. This lucrative market merits careful attention by students and professionals alike. *Convention Management and Service* is offered to facilitate your entry into and growth in the hotel industry.

Acknowledgments

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 added interviews 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

Kristine K. Gagliardi—Hilton Hotels Corporation

Ed Griffin, Jr.—Meeting Professionals International

Carolyn Hamilton—Graphic Communications

Karen Hudson—Four Seasons Hotel, Newport Beach, California

Beverly W. Kinkade—ITT Sheraton Corporation

Helmut Knipp—Lexington Management Corporation

Sam Lippman—Consumer Electronics Show (CES)

Lyn Matthew—Embassy Suites Resort, Scottsdale, Arizona

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

George Mittler—Sheraton San Marcos, Chandler, Arizona

Richard J. Newman—International Association of Convention and Visitors
Bureaus (Past president and CEO)

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

Cody Plott—Hyatt Hotels Corporation

David Scherbarth—Sheraton Bal Harbour Beach Resort, Bal Harbour, Florida

David Scypinski—Hilton Hotels Corporation

Charlotte St. Martin—Loews Hotels

Lee Sterbens—Greyhound Exposition Services

Sara R. Torrence—National Institute of Standards and Technology

Charles Walhaven—Opryland Hotel, Nashville, TN

Janet Wright—The Wright Organization

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- Decide ahead of time how much you want to accomplish during each study session. Remember to keep your study sessions brief; don't try to do too much at one time.

Read the Course Text to Learn

- *Before* you read each chapter, read the chapter outline and the competencies. Notice that each competency has page numbers that indicate where you can find the concepts and issues related to it. If there is a summary at the end of the chapter, you should read it to get a feel for what the chapter is about.
- Then, go back to the beginning of the chapter and *carefully* read, focusing on the material included in the competencies and asking yourself such questions as:
 - Do I understand the material?
 - How can I use this information now or in the future?
- Make notes in margins and highlight or underline important sections to help you as you study. Read a section first, then go back over it to mark important points.
- Keep a dictionary handy. If you come across an unfamiliar word that is not included in the textbook glossary, look it up in the dictionary.
- Read as much as you can. The more you read, the better you read.

Testing Your Knowledge

- Test questions developed by the Educational Institute for this course are designed to measure your knowledge of the material.

XX Study Tips

- End-of-the-chapter Review Quizzes help you find out how well you have studied the material. They indicate where additional study may be needed. Review Quizzes are also helpful in studying for other tests.
- Prepare for tests by reviewing:
 - competencies
 - notes
 - outlines
 - questions at the end of each assignment
- Before you begin to take any test, read the test instructions *carefully* and look over the questions.

We hope your experiences in this course will prompt you to undertake other training and educational activities in a planned, career-long program of professional growth and development.

Introduction

Although no one is quite sure when they became formalized gatherings, conventions have become extremely important in today's business world. Businesspeople and other professionals 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 that covers only one type of convention. The basic purpose of many meetings 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 talk with their suppliers face-to-face about the delegates' problems.

Every field has its conventions--trade unionism, education, arts, commerce, politics, and fraternalism all rely on conventions to bring together a cross-section of the membership's ideas and interests. The attendees congregate in hotel properties across the country to attend meetings and look over exhibits; invariably they come home better acquainted with their fields and more certain of the goals of their organizations.

What do conventions mean to a hotel? They can mean the difference between black and red ink in the profit column. 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.

Group business is valuable to hotels for several reasons:

1. Convention delegates 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 and other revenue centers also benefit.
2. 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 slack months. And better employer-employee relationships are maintained when employees know that, even in the traditionally slow months, there will be work—and income—for them.
4. Group business is an excellent source of repeat business. With a convention, a large number of potential repeat guests become acquainted with your hotel. If they are treated well and are pleased with the host property, 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.

The only way to get this repeat business is through the development of an honest 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 operation of the modern convention.

5. Should a trade show be part of the convention event, hotels find there is heavy demand for their suites and lounges.
6. Spouses of delegates, more than ever, are accompanying delegates to conventions, and this typically increases business in shops, health clubs, and other areas of the hotel.

In this book, we will take an in-depth look at these trends and other factors affecting the nature and scope of today's convention business. 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 convention business offers you the opportunity to enjoy an exciting and rewarding career with practically limitless potential.

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