

II. Four Major Components of Convention

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The increased demand for meetings expertise has created a new field of services including meeting planning and destination management. As the size of the convention and meetings industry has expanded, it encompasses a variety of components. To operate effectively, four major components of the conventions industry are interrelated: planners and the groups they represent, host facilities, services, and exhibitors.

What are the four major components of convention industry?

Planners are individuals or groups that plan meetings, conventions, and expositions. Planners fall into a number of categories. There are corporate meeting planners who work exclusively for a corporation, association meeting planners who work exclusively for an association, or independent meeting planners who contract out their services to both associations and corporations. Association management companies as well as travel agencies are also becoming more active in planning meetings, conventions, and expositions.

Host venues provide sleeping rooms, meeting rooms, and food and beverage as well as a number of other services for groups attending meetings, conventions, or expositions. Types of host venues include hotels, conference centers, resort hotels, universities, bed and breakfast inns, and so on.

Services refers to all those individuals and organizations that provide support for the meetings, conventions, and expositions segment of the industry. Service suppliers includes, but are not limited to, ground handlers, destination management companies, entertainers, decorators, transportation companies, attractions, and tour guide companies.

Exhibitors refers to individuals or entrepreneurs to take part in the show for the purpose of promoting or marketing materials and products related to the common interest of meetings

Unit 1. Planners

Vocabulary

Attribute
paradox
fanatics

coordinator
punctilious
shoot from the hip

Comprehension

1. According to PCMA, what are the 10 most important personality characteristics of meeting planners?
2. The person coordinating the meeting is called _____.
3. Explain this statement "Meeting planners are a collection of paradoxes."
4. Meeting planners must have _____ and be able to serve as _____ for the sponsoring organization.
5. What is plan B?

Unit 1. Planners

The individuals or groups who sponsor meetings generally appoint a single individual or committee to coordinate the meeting. The person coordinating the meeting is called a variety of names: **planner, meeting planner, meeting manager, coordinator, and meeting director** to name a few. We will refer to this person as a meeting planner. Numerous meeting planner firms exist, some of which has expanded into the special field. Hotels, resorts, and convention centers also employ professionals whose jobs covers the marketing and hosting of meetings. The meeting planner **analyzes the situation and then plans in a cost-conscious manner a meeting that meet the purpose of those who are attending.**

1. Meeting Planners

Meeting planning is not a field with which most people are familiar, yet many talented, personable individuals would thrive in this industry. An accurate description of a meeting planner would be Webster's definition of the word conglomerate - "made up of separate parts collected together into a single mass." Meeting planners are a **collection of paradoxes**: punctilious freewheelers; time-obsessed fanatics with no sense of their own personal clock, unaware that five o'clock has long since come and gone; nitpickers who can see the big picture and develop elaborate, creative special events; and diplomats who shoot from the hip.

Meeting planners are world travelers, the advanced men and women for the companies and organizations they represent, testing, exploring, and absorbing all the sights, sounds and facilities the world has to offer for conventions and meetings. Meeting planners take everything in stride but never settle for anything less than the best when it's their meeting that's in town. They love to meet people, and they create an atmosphere in which people love to meet. They're entertainers, negotiators, diplomats, educators, gourmets, and good sports. Meeting planners learn to see the world through the eyes of their organizations. And through the knowledge gained in that environment, it becomes second nature to see the world through the eyes of other organizations, groups, political parties, countries and governments.

2. Attributes of Professional Planners

Today's meeting planner must be an expert in the area of adult education and effective communication. They must possess strong administrative and leadership qualities and be able to serve a consultant for the sponsoring individual or organization. A planner needs to know what resources are available and must be organized and detail oriented. It is not enough to see the big picture; you must see, understand, and organize, the little picture as well. This includes all types of details; for example, having water on the table for speakers, and having a "Plan B" for all possible situations. Plan B is a course of action to follow when the original plan does not materialize as anticipated. No matter how well you organize something, no matter how much you anticipate the "what ifs" of organizing a meeting or convention, there is always the unexpected. **Flexibility** and the attribute of staying calm under fire are two very desirable qualities to have.

Along with the ability to be flexible and to remain calm and composed is the necessity of being able to deal with people. Good communication skills are indispensable. Planners need to listen to their clients and to help them clarify their objectives. They also need to be able to clearly explain options and consequences to listen for hidden agendas and apprehensions and to help their clients work through these roadblocks. Finally anyone who deals with people needs patience and tact. In a recent study done by Strick and Montgomery (1991), 615 members of the **Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA)** were asked to rank ten personality characteristics associated with successful meeting planners. They ranked them as follows:

- Organized
- Efficient
- Responsive
- Attentive
- Intelligent
- Prompt
- Courteous
- Hardworking
- Friendly
- Hospitable

According to "State of the Industry Report," Successful Meetings (1992), most meeting planners are between the ages of 35 and 55. Over 50 percent of the meeting planners are women, 66 percent have a college education, and over 40 percent earn more than \$35,000 per year. Although this composite gives a general idea of who the typical meeting planner is, the demographics continue to change and diversify.

3. Types of Planners

Vocabulary

executive director
regional meeting
annual convention
on-site management
association committee
repetitious
conducive

program committee
board meeting
leg work
a revenue generator
secretary
a necessary evil

Comprehension

1. What are the three main categories of meeting planners?
2. The planning of meetings in associations may fall under the direction of the association's _____.
3. Top executives work with association _____.
4. The association meeting planner is responsible for coordinating _____ as well as _____.
5. What are the responsibilities for the meeting planner?
6. What is the primary revenue generator for the association?
7. Cooperative meeting planners are employed by a _____ business.
8. Cooperative meeting planners range from _____ to _____.
9. Cooperative meeting planners are often called _____ and _____.
10. Many of the Cooperative meetings are will be _____ in nature.
11. Cooperative meeting planners provide an _____ that is conducive to conducting business.
12. _____ may be solely responsible for a meeting or they work with a full-time corporate or association planner.
13. _____ work exclusively for the government.

3. Types of Planners

The meeting market has become larger, more sophisticated, and more specialized. As a result, a new career area has developed. Today, there is a need for professional decision makers who are responsible for all stages of meetings preparation and presentation. Until recently, meeting planning was one of several functions performed by association and corporate executives. Now, it has emerged as a profession in its own right. In the United States, there are approximately 100,000 people who are involved in meeting planning. We can identify three main categories of meeting planners:

Association executives.

Corporate meeting planners.

Independent meeting planners and consultants.

1) Association Meeting Planners

Associations are managed by professionals, one of whom is the association meeting planner. Of these professionals, 85 percent plan meetings on a full-time basis, averaging five meetings per year (Bernrt 1990, p.23). Depending on the size of the association, the planning of meetings and conventions may fall under the direction of the association's executive director or they have a specific department or person who is responsible for the planning of meetings, convention, and expositions. Top association executives usually spend their time working with association program committees, discerning what topics should be covered and how they should be covered.

Meetings are big business for associations. The planner's primary goal is to plan all association meetings. They may be responsible for regional, national, and international meetings. Most national or international associations are divided into regional groups to enhance interaction between the members. The association meeting planner is responsible for coordinating regional meetings as well as the Board of Directors' meetings.

The number of board meetings held per year varies with the association, but the average association has two board meetings per year. Association meeting planners are responsible for directing meetings dealing with member services, standards, conventions, trade shows, and publishing. Sales, training, and management meetings are also becoming an important aspect of the association planner's responsibility.

A considerable amount of the association meeting planners' time is spent planning the annual convention. The association meeting planner generally works in conjunction with a committee of association members in planning the convention. The planner's responsibility is to provide guidance as well as the leg work for the planning. They oversee the budget development, site selection, entertainment, transportation, and on-site management of the conference. Promotion of the meeting is very important function of the meeting planner. Although association meetings and conventions are designed to provide services to the membership, they are also a primary revenue generator for the association. The yearly convention generally generates a large portion of the association's yearly revenue; therefore, high conference attendance is a very important factor. Large associations actually have a marketing department that works in conjunction with the meeting planner in promoting the annual convention. They are also responsible for the evaluation of the conference. Association committees plan the meeting agenda, educational session, and business meetings.

2) Corporate Meeting Planners

Corporate meeting planners are employed by a for-profit business or corporation, and their job includes, but is not necessarily limited to, planning meetings and conventions for that company. They range from a secretary who has been given the responsibility to plan one training session for the boss to an official corporate meeting planner whose sole responsibility is planning, organizing and implement meetings and conventions for the employees, managers, and owners of the corporation. Therefore, they often have titles other than "Meeting Planners," such as administrative assistant and executive secretary. Of these corporate planners, 43 percent have meeting planning as their primary area of responsibility, averaging over five meetings per year (Bernert 1990 p.23). Corporate planners are involved with a variety of different meeting types, such as management meetings, training meetings, sales meetings, incentive trips, and seminars. Many of the meetings will be repetitious in nature and include many of the same people year after year; therefore, the corporate meeting planner must be very diligent in making the meetings new and exciting to the attendees.

Unlike the association meeting planner, the corporate meeting planner does not have to spend as much time and energy promoting the meetings or conferences because attendance is usually required by management. Although this removes one burden from the corporate meeting planner, it places another one on them. People are more likely to enjoy participating in meetings they feel they choose to attend; required meetings are therefore often viewed as a necessary evil and are more difficult to plan. Corporate meeting planners must be masters at orchestrating meetings that meet the needs of management as well as the attendees by providing an enjoyable atmosphere that is conducive to conducting business.

3) Independent Meeting Planners

Independent meeting planners are entrepreneurs who specialize in planning meetings and conventions. Associations or corporations who do not have a full-time meeting planner may choose to contract with an independent meeting planner. Over the past decade, independent meeting planners have not only increased but also have become more sophisticated and knowledgeable. Experts predict that the independent meeting planner field will continue to grow. With the downsizing of corporations' budgets, this is an economical way to have meetings and conventions professionally planned.

Independent meeting planners may be solely responsible for a meeting, or they may also work in conjunction with a full-time corporate or association planner. In this case the role of the independent meeting planner is that of a support person who lends his expertise to the project. For example, the independent meeting planner may only be involved with the site selection process or be in charge of a single event, or may act in an advisory role for the entire meeting or convention. The independent meeting planner spends their time planning a variety of meetings, with the average meeting planning between 6 and 15 meetings per year. Primarily they focus on sales meetings, management meetings, training seminars, and incentive trips. Also they are heavily involved with the planning of major conventions.

4) Others

Government meeting planners who work exclusively for the government. They function much as corporate meeting planners do and can be found in all segments and ranks of the government. Like corporate meeting planners, government meeting planners are facing tough economic times and must be masters at managing the budget as more and more budgetary constraint are being placed on government employees regarding travel and overnight stays.

Travel agencies are new players to the meeting planner segment of the industry. Historically, travel agencies worked hand in hand with meeting planners to provide support in the sight selection process, transportation needs, and housing information. Currently, there are a number of travel agencies that offer the one-stop-shop approach to sponsoring organizations by having trained meeting planners on their staff. This enables travel agencies to provide the expertise necessary for planning meetings while also taking care of the specific needs regarding rooms and transportation.

4. Meeting Planner's Responsibilities

Vocabulary

incumbent
budget
signage
buzz word
spousal program

agenda
shipping
gratuities
handicapped

Comprehension

1. What is the primary and common objective of the meeting planner?
2. Meeting Planners are involved into three stages of the meeting: _____
_____ and _____.
3. _____ is awarded to meeting planners who have reached standards of proficiency.
4. Before planning the meeting, the meeting planner considers a _____, o _____, b _____, a _____ and m _____ s _____.
6. Once the meeting planner considers the pre-meeting responsibilities, s _____ and f _____ selection is the next thing to be considered for the success of meetings.
7. When the meeting planner decides the destination, he/she considers _____, _____ and _____.
8. The individual in charge of site selection should visit the property __ times: one _____ and one _____.
9. Once the site has been selected, _____ can be planned.
10. The convention is marketed in the _____ of the previous year's convention. The information included should be _____, _____ and a general overview of the themes.

4. Meeting Planner's Responsibilities

The duties of meeting planners are as diversified as the meeting planners themselves. Regardless of whether meeting planners work for association, corporations, or independent consultancies, their primary objective is to run a successful meeting. The role of the meeting planner varies from meeting to meeting and organization to organization, but in general meeting planners are responsible for the following areas:

Pre-meeting Activities

- Planning the meeting agenda
- Establishing meeting objectives.
- Attendance
- Set meeting budget and controlling expenses.
- Selecting the meeting site.
- Negotiating rates with suppliers.
- Plan exhibition
- Exhibitor correspondence and packet
- Marketing plan
- Plan travel to and from site
- Arrange ground transportation
- Organize shipping
- Organize audiovisual and technical details.

On-site Activities

- Pre-event briefing
- Execute plan
- Move-in/ Move-out
- Management of people
- Troubleshoot
- Invoice approval

Post-meeting

- Debriefing
- Evaluation
- Thank-yous
- Shipping
- Plan for next year

The list provides an overview of the many responsibilities of meeting planners as a whole. It is clear from this list - which could easily be extended - that meeting planners are more than just travel and accommodations organizers. They are involved from the earliest planning stages to the final execution of the meeting. The success of the meeting depends heavily on how well they perform their task. Experienced meeting planners may receive the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) designation from the Convention Liaison Council. Certification is awarded to meeting planners who have reached standards of proficiency as measured by experience and examination.

1) Pre-meeting Responsibility

Before a meeting planner can start planning the meeting, he or she must first determine why the meeting is being held. Meeting can be and often are a tremendous waste of time and money. It is estimated that in 1992 Americans spent over 300 million days in meetings, over half of which were unproductive. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the meeting planner to help the sponsor determine whether or not the meeting is really necessary. Once the necessity of the meeting is determined, the meeting planner can work with the sponsors to ensure that the meeting is a productive one.

(1) Keys to hold meetings

Agenda

The key to a productive meeting is the meeting agenda. Although the meeting agenda is not always the meeting planner, he or she must be intimately involved with both the written and hidden agenda of the meeting. Meetings and conventions are often designed for a number of stated reasons, but there may also be hidden agenda. Many corporations use meetings as a way of rewarding top producers. Although the meetings are designed to provide education or training, there is also a lot of weight placed on providing recreational activities that will allow the participants to combine business with pleasure. The agenda may be planned in conjunction with the meeting planner, or the planner may be given a copy of the meeting agenda. If the planner is involved with the meeting agenda, he or she should advise as to the proper handling of specific types of meetings. For example, if the group sponsoring the meeting desires team building experiences, the meeting planner would provide insight into how this could be accomplished through room setup, educational opportunities, and recreational activities.

② Objectives

The meeting agenda provides the groundwork for the establishment of meeting objectives. The establishment of meeting objectives is something that the meeting planner may or may not be involved with. Regardless of the role that he or she plays in the establishment of meeting objectives, the planner must allow the entire plan for the meeting or convention to be driven by the objectives. The meeting's objectives provide the framework from which the meeting planner will set the budget, select the site and facility, and plan the overall meeting or convention.

③ Budget

Setting the budget for the meeting is a difficult task. It is successful if the meeting planner is consulted prior to the finalized edition. A working budget should be established and used as a guideline for making decisions, with the understanding that budgets change for different sites and various activities that are planned. The planner should always be kept aware of the budget and be consulted when changes in the budget are being made. Income for a meeting, convention, or exhibition could include, but is not limited to:

- Registration fees

- Exhibitor fees

- Company or sponsoring organization moneys

- Advertising revenues

- Revenues from the sale of educational materials

- Event sponsor contributions

- Registration fee interest

- Grants or contributions

Expenses for a meeting, convention, or exposition could include, but are not limited to:

- Meeting planner fees
- Marketing expenses
- Printing and copying expenses
- Mailing
- Shipping
- Support supplies, such as office supplies and mailing
- Support staff
- Audiovisual equipment
- Signage
- Speaker fees, honorarium, and expenses
- Mementos for guest and attendees
- Tours
- Ground transportation
- Spousal programs
- Food and beverage events
- Gratuities
- Interpreter
- On-site personnel
- Rental fees for meeting and exposition space

Attendees

The meeting objectives and budget will help determine the targeted attendees. **Attendance** can either be an important focus of the meeting planner, or it can be relatively unimportant. In the case of an association meeting planner or an independent meeting planner who is working for an association or another form of sponsoring organization, attendance is paramount to the success of the meeting or convention. In the case with corporate meeting planners or independent meeting planners working of corporations that will require attendance, the issue becomes unimportant. Attendance is directly related to the type of marketing. To develop a marketing plan, the planner must consider what they are marketing (convention, meeting, exposition, etc.) and what is their potential market (i.e. who the prospective attendees are).

⑤ Marketing strategy

The meeting planner should then determine what marketing strategies would best suit the target market. There is an abundance of marketing strategies available, and the meeting planner is only limited by time and budgetary constraints. Successful meeting planners must understand the importance of marketing their meetings, and they must place adequate time and financial resources into successfully marketing meetings.

(2) Determining factors of Destination selection

Site, meeting facility, and hotel selection are based primarily on the purpose of the function. The success of meetings, conventions, or exposition rests heavily on the site and facilities chosen. Factors determining the desirability of the destination included airport access, ground transportation, and number of meeting room and hotel rooms available. Despite the fact that in recent years budgets have become tighter, the focus placed on price is less important than convenience. Sites that provide good overall services to groups are receiving first priority when doing site visitations.

Personality of sponsors

Each sponsoring organization or cooperation has its own personality. Some groups like the atmosphere of a big city that provides numerous opportunities to visit museums, theaters, and major tourism sites. Others prefer the quiet, peaceful atmosphere of a secluded resort or of a hotel in a smaller city or one located on the outskirts of a major metropolitan area. If the purpose of the meeting or convention is to provide intense training, perhaps the meeting planner would choose an airport hotel or facility that would provide easy access with very little opportunity for interruption. If the purpose was to combine business with pleasure, the meeting planner would be more likely to choose a site in a resort area that provides both excellent meeting facilities as well as plenty of opportunities for recreational activities.

Service

Service is the buzz word of the 1990s. When choosing the actual meeting facility and the hotel, service sells the site. Increasing competition in a saturated economy has forced the hospitality industry to reevaluate its attitude towards service. This coupled with the recession has affected all areas of the industry. People are becoming very selective in the way they spend their income. For the hospitality, this means that they must work harder to gain their portion of the pie. In the past this has meant offering newer rooms and more amenities, but today the quality of service has become the point of distinction. Meeting planners and suppliers alike must focus on providing a level of service that leads the guest to feel at home, well cared for, and anxious to return (Callan 1990).

Handicapped Accessibility

Along with the service attitude of the staff, those planning meetings are also looking for a higher level of services for their special attendees. With the American Disabilities Act being implemented in 1992, the needs of the disabled are coming into the forefront of major issues for the hospitality industry. The facilities, services, and amenities they feel most important are handicapped accessibility, flexibility on the part of the staff in being willing and able to assist the needs of the physically disadvantaged, and the ability to accommodate special dietary needs.

④ International Attendees

Another important area to be considered for many associations and corporations is the host property's ability to meet the needs of their international attendees. The facilities, services, and amenities that need to be provided are multilingual staff, easy exchange of currency, interpreters, international codes and symbols on guest information and signage, and the ability to accommodate special dietary considerations.

(3) Site Visit

The individual in charge of site selection should never sign a contract with a facility until after a site visit. It is suggested that the planner make two visits to the site - one announced and one unannounced. It is one thing for a planner to be chaperoned around a property with the convention service manager making the appropriate introductions; one should be guaranteed outstanding service during such a visit. Once a scheduled trip has been successfully completed, the planner should visit the site unannounced, perhaps even using a different name. This visit will afford the planner a view of how guests are usually treated. After successfully completing the two site visitations, the planner or representative from the sponsoring organization can negotiate and sign the contract.

(4) Program Planning

Once the site has been selected, the actual meeting, conference, or exposition can be planned. A detailed agenda can be produced to include meeting rooms and recreational activities. A spousal program can also be designed. Upon completing this, the planner in conjunction with the sponsoring organization should implement their marketing strategy.

(5) Marketing Strategy

In case of a corporate training meeting, the marketing may be no more than a flier or memo discussing the time, date, place and agenda. If the event is a major convention, marketing starts a year prior to the event. Generally, the convention is marketed in the registration packet of the previous year's convention. The type of information that should be included in this marketing piece should be dates, place, and a general overview of the theme. As the dates for the meeting, convention, or exposition approach, the marketing material should become more specific. It is estimated that the average person does not assimilate information until it has been presented to them at least three times. Most sponsoring groups find that 6 to 8 pieces of mail yields the greatest return. The planner should also develop the exhibitor correspondence and packet. The exhibitor correspondence should mirror the correspondence sent to the registrants, but should also include information specific to the exposition. The exhibitor packet may be developed by the meeting planner or by the exposition manager.

(6) Final Blueprint

The last thing the planner will be responsible for is developing the final blueprint for the actual meeting, convention, or exposition. This blue print is often called the staging guide, staging book, planner's guide, planning book, or coordinator's book or guide. As the final set of blueprints for a building provide every detail regarding the construction of the building, so does the blueprint for the meeting, convention, or exposition. This book provides step-by-step detail as to everything required for the event. The book generally is in loose-leaf format and is housed in a three-ring binder, allowing for updates to be included and copies to be made without disrupting the flow of the document.

2) On-site Activities

The meeting planner should arrive before any of the registrants or exhibitors do. In the case of a single meeting, this may be no more than an hour prior to the event, or in the case of a major convention or exhibition, the planner will need to arrive several days prior to the event to oversee the move-in activities. During the move-in process the planner will work closely with facility managers, event coordinators or convention service managers, service contractors, and suppliers as well as a number of individuals responsible for the successful execution of the event. When an event is sponsored by an association, the meeting planner will also be responsible for working with the executive staff as well as the association members who are working on volunteer committees.

① Pre-event briefing

Open communication is maintained through pre-convention meetings. Regardless of the size of the event, there should always be pre-event briefing meetings to insure that the entire bases are covered. The pre-event briefing may include all responsible individuals on the venue's staff. This list of individuals could include, but not limited to, the general manager, sales person, convention service manager, catering manager, chef, front desk manager, and someone from the rooms division. During the pre-event briefing the participants will brief one another on any changes that have taken place since the event guide was developed. The host property will go through each event function sheet to make sure that they are properly prepared. Once the pre-event briefing is finished, the meeting planner and the staff will monitor all events to make sure that the attendees' needs are being met. They will also be responsible for managing all the people associated with the meeting, to make sure that the plan is properly executed.

Executing

The key to executing the plan is to have a thorough event guide and to keep open lines of communication between the sponsoring organization and the host venue. If the event last more than a day, there should be meetings at the start of each day, perhaps over an early morning breakfast. No matter how thorough a planner has been there will always be changes. The planner's ability to respond to those changes will determine the success of the event and ultimately the success of his or her careers.

③ Invoice approval

Another important function of the planner is to approve all invoices. It is generally the practice of host venues to present an invoice at the end of each major food and beverage function. It is the responsibility of the planner to check these invoices for accuracy and to make any changes necessary at that time. This is also the time to make the host venue aware of anything that the planner believes was unsatisfactory.

3) Post-meeting activities

① Debriefing

Directly after the conclusion of the event, the planner should hold a debriefing session. This meeting should include all the individuals that were present at the pre-event briefing. The debriefing session is designed to bring closure to this event and to allow all those involved to discuss openly their perceptions of the meeting. At this time, any items of contention will be discussed and resolved. This is also the appropriate time to discuss re-booking if that is an area of concern.

Evaluation

The meeting planner is also responsible for administering the evaluation. This can take place in a number of ways. The sponsoring organization may place evaluation information in each session so that they can evaluate the attendees' perceptions of each event. An overall evaluation form might also be placed in the attendees' registration packet, and attendees should be encouraged to complete the evaluation form before they leave the site. Meeting planners may offer an incentive to the attendees, such as eligibility for a drawing for free registration to next year's conference, to entice them to complete the evaluation. Evaluation may also be mailed to the attendees once they leave the meeting. A summary of the evaluations should be compiled and used in the planning phase of future events.

5. The MNEs of Meeting Planners

The meeting planner must keep his or her employer's needs in mind when selecting destinations, choosing hotels, making travel arrangements, and so on. When negotiating with suppliers, the meeting planner must ensure that the sponsoring organization is getting the best possible deal and the best value for its money. Strong negotiation skills are a prime requirement for the meeting planners.

Top priorities in selecting sites for meetings are the quality of service and the availability of meeting room facilities. Meeting planners must ensure that meeting areas are large enough, suitable for both general sessions and breakout meetings, well lighted, soundproof, and so on. The needs for each meeting that a planner organizes will be different. The next most important priorities are the site's accessibility, the quality of guest rooms, room rates, and the quality of food service. The availability of recreational facilities and geographic location are usually of lesser importance.

6. The Meeting Planner and the Hotel Staff

Meeting planning involves a high degree of cooperation between the meeting planner and the hotel staff. The convention service manager is usually the meeting planner's contact person in the hotel. The relationship between the two is important to the success of the meeting. Both must have the needs of the meeting participants in mind. The meeting planner wants to secure the best possible services at the lowest possible rates. The convention service manager wants to satisfy the guests so that they will return for subsequent meetings, but he or she must also ensure that the hotel makes a profit. Meeting planners who use the same hotel time and time again can often negotiate favorable rates and secure other privileges. They may, for example, negotiate for free function rooms. For an especially large or important meeting, the hotels may agree to host a cocktail party for delegates or offer complimentary coffee and breakfast.

