

# The Value of Working with Third-Party Meeting Planners

BY PADDY BAKER



**W**ith marketplace changes, shifts in supply and demand, and the challenges brought on by limited resources, associations are increasingly turning to third parties for help with event planning, meeting management and hotel site selection. In the past, it was common for association managers to be reluctant to seek assistance with meeting planning outside of their organization. This was sometimes due to a concern they might lose control over the membership experience or the decision-making process, or that the cost to use a third party was prohibitive; however, this could not be further from the truth.

Third-party meeting planning companies offers associations extensive experience and industry relationships as a result of the sheer volume of meetings they deliver to the market. In turn, third parties bring significant buying power to the clients they serve. Many third parties bring more business to hotels and destinations than any one organization can, which results in cost savings and enhanced experiences for the association clients that choose to use them.

Associations have seen a decrease in staff over the years. Currently, it is common for one person to manage the workload previously handled by three. In a time when resources are limited, reaching out to a third party to assist with the site selection portion of your meeting comes with significant benefits.

## Time

With limited resources, utilizing a third-party planner will not only save you valuable time, but it will allow you to dedicate your focus to the most important aspects of your meeting. Third-party planners know that hotel site selection is only one small portion of your event, so by handling this part of the meeting process for you, third parties provide you with the ability to dedicate your attention to content development, marketing, and other significant event logistics.

## Cost Savings

Working with a third-party planner will result in cost savings in three areas: hotel rates, operation costs, and internal staffing resources. Due to the fact that third parties book numerous meetings and events each year, hotels often extend exclusive promotions and incentives to third-party clients. These promotions can save costs on everything from room rates and attrition, to food and beverage or audio/visual equipment. On top of this, there is no cost to use the services of third-party planners, which saves your association from needing to hire additional staff to dedicate to the sourcing and hotel contracting of the meeting. The hotel chosen by the client pays the third party a small percentage of the room revenue actualized.

## You Remain in Control

From selecting the city, host property and everything in between, clients of third-party planners are the

decision makers. You are in control of the entire process from start to finish.

## Third Party Planners Are Your Advocate

Throughout the entire process, you are the priority. The third-party planner will work with hotels on your behalf to mitigate risk and ensure the specific goals of your meeting or event are met. This can include everything from coordinating site visits, contract negotiations, consulting on best locations and meeting patterns, and delivering reporting metrics on cost savings before, during and after the event.

## Vast Industry Knowledge

When you work with a third party, you are not working with just a single person; your contact comes with the support and knowledge of everyone within the organization. You not only have the access and knowledge of your Associate, but also the expertise of their counterparts. Larger third parties have feet on the ground all over the world, and their vast knowledge is there to help you!

Bottom line: Working with a third-party planner adds tangible benefits, lowers your operation costs, and provides you with an advantage that is extremely valuable in today's hotel seller's market.

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