

Tips When Negotiating With A Hotel

Recently a client wanted the hotel where we were holding our program to waive the fee for the Internet connection in the meeting room. This is a concession I often negotiate on behalf of my clients. In fact, I wrote about that in my April 2007 newsletter. But the hotel refused.

What happened? In this situation, the contract had been signed months earlier, so we had absolutely no leverage. In fact, at that point we weren't negotiating, we were begging.

So how can you avoid this from happening to you when you plan your events? When you are negotiating a contract with a hotel, it is important to think beyond rates, dates, and number of sleeping rooms. It is critical that you identify the concessions you need for your meeting and to get them on the table **before** you sign the contract. I taught a course on Negotiating at Bentley College and my students often said, "The program isn't defined well enough when we sign the contract to know what to ask for." Really?

Will you be providing meals and refreshments breaks in your program? Then negotiate for a reduction of the published catering prices.

Will you need Internet connection or telephones for your event? Negotiate for reduced fees.

Will staff be staying overnight at the hotel? Request a reduced staff room rate.

Have you been caught by unexpected fees and surcharges? Add language that prohibits fees being added "after the fact."

Will you get everything you ask for? Probably not. So identify which concessions add the most value to your program and are the easiest for the hotel to provide. And most importantly, ask the hotel **before** you sign the contract.

Oh, and my client's program? The hotel did make other "post signing" concessions and the program was a great success.

Shelley E. Griffin, CMM, the president of Boston-based Griffin Conference Group, is a respected industry leader with over twenty years experience. For more helpful tips, please visit our web site at www.griffinconferencegroup.com.