

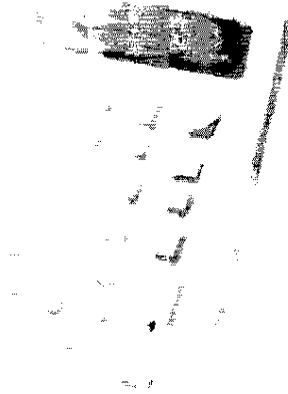
Add-ons add up

By LAURA FICK
Special to the Daily Record

esort and amenity fees, gratuities, taxes, set-up charges — if a meeting planner is not careful, these fees and a host of others could be unwelcome surprises when it comes time to pay the bills for your next event.

But, according to event and meeting planners in Maryland, this need not be the case. By knowing what to ask and look for, most add-on fees can at least be worked into the budget, if not completely avoided.

"I hate surprises," said Paul Henning, president of Annapolis-based **Conference and Logistics Consultants Inc.** "We work so hard to eliminate surprises for our clients. You have to ask all the questions up front."



According to Henning and others, reading the contract is one of the most important ways to avoid surprise fees. Most contracts will outline all costs and even include language to specify that no additional fees will be tacked on.

"You should always have a contract," said Henning. "A contract is not a document you take to court. A contract is a checklist that clarifies all expectations into reality. If a contract is unclear, find someone who will write it better or find another vendor."

"Contracts spell out all of the information" about fees for the event, said Bobbie McAdam, president of **Meeting Planners Inc.** in Chester on Kent Island in

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Paul Henning
Conference and Logistics
Consultants Inc.

the negotiated amount.

"Make sure everything is as quantifiable as possible," said Henning. "That way, if there are surprises, you minimize them."

Queen Anne's County. "For instance, gratuities can range from 18 percent to 22 percent. If you haven't thought of that, it can be a shock. If you have a \$75 cost per person, it's up to \$90 by the time you figure in tax and gratuity."

If the project is vague, meeting-planning experts say to make sure a cap is included for all add-on fees — for instance, that the additional fees and gratuities will not exceed \$500 or 10 percent of



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