

the chatter

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Advance Planning Pays Off: Five Steps to More Productive Site Visits

Seasoned meeting managers know that a site inspection is the single most critical aspect of deciding where to hold an event. Oftentimes, properties that look just perfect online or on paper turn out to be the wrong fit when you see them in person. Likewise, poorly drawn floor plans or images don't always do justice to the facility. Site visits are an excellent opportunity to see a property in action, inspect the facilities, and gauge the service level.

But too often, heading out the door for a site visit is done in a rush without enough advance preparation. The truth is that site inspections should begin long before wheels touch down in your destination. Getting the most out of your site selection requires diligent pre-planning as well as careful attention onsite. By spending a little extra time up front, your site visit will yield much greater information. The following are five steps to help you prepare for a more productive site inspection.

1) Engage the CVB. If you are considering several properties in the same city, contact the Convention & Visitors Bureau to assist you with scheduling. These destination experts will know the best route between properties, and how long to plan for at each location. Often, they will also coordinate pickup at the airport and schedule a city tour to help you get a sense of the destination. The CVB is an excellent – and free – resource to help you find the perfect location for your meeting or convention.

2) Make your Expectations Known. Review the information that the facility has provided and match it to your meeting specs to ensure the right fit before you commit to a visit. If you have a site inspection checklist that you will be using to evaluate the property, provide it to your sales manager several days in advance. If you don't have a checklist of your

own, PCMA's Resource Center (<http://www.pcma.org/Resources.htm>) has an excellent site inspection checklist you can adapt for your particular needs.

3) Set Appointments with Key Players.

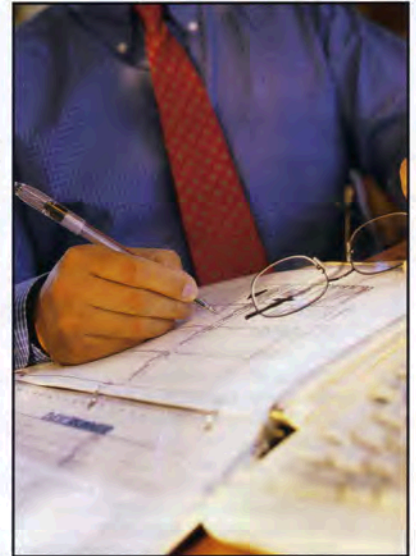
To maximize your time during the visit, provide your sales manager with a list of people with whom you

wish to meet during your site inspection, such as the facility chef, catering manager, security manager, or in-house AV contact. Make email contact in advance of your visit, and provide a specific list of questions to discuss. This will ensure that your contacts are prepared for your meeting, and that your time together is productive.

4) Prepare for Emergencies. In addition to the standard proposal and sales kit, before your site inspection request that your sales manager provide you with information related to emergency procedures and nearby medical facilities. Collecting this information in advance will set your mind at ease as well as provide a reference for the future.

5) Enlist Help from Your Partners. When possible, bring your dedicated vendors and management staff with you on your final site visit. This might include exhibit, housing, audiovisual, registration managers and/or staff who are familiar with your event needs. These valuable partners can point out things pertaining to their area that you might miss.

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The PCMA Capital Chapter is where "You Belong"!

Mission: The Capital Chapter of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) delivers breakthrough education, encourages involvement in community-based service programs, and promotes the value of professional convention and meeting management at the local level.