

# **PROJECT ATTRITION TEMPLATE 1: EVENT ORGANIZER TIMELINE FOR EVENTS WITH A SIGNED CONTRACT**

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The following planning template is a product of the Convention Industry Council's *Project Attrition*. In early 2003, industry leadership gathered together and funded an initiative that was designed to broaden the awareness among industry professionals about attrition and its impact on the meetings, conventions and exhibitions industry. The initiative is *Project Attrition*.

This tool, Template 1 and three other templates were designed to assist the professional event and trade show organizer and industry suppliers in managing today's number one problem, attrition. This timeline is for an event to be conducted in the next year and an attrition fee is anticipated. This timeline offers a series of tactical suggestions designed to help minimize potential attrition and maximize the utilization of event-contracted guest room blocks.

## **13 Months and More Prior to Arrival**

- ❑ Establish a strategic plan to minimize attrition as far in advance as possible; the plan should provide attendees incentives with monetary value to make a guest room reservation inside the contracted guest room block.
- ❑ Review exhibitor policies; add or enhance incentives with monetary value for exhibitors to make guest room reservations inside the block.
- ❑ Review all signed hotel contracts for upcoming years.
- ❑ If, based upon current trends and recent history, the block needs to be adjusted and/or reduced, contact the hotel immediately. One or more years prior to arrival is the most opportune time to reduce a guest room block and thus reduce attrition liability. With a year or more notice, the hotel may have the opportunity to resell rooms.
- ❑ If the guest room block in the signed contract is in line with current trends and recent history, review the rest of the contract and communicate to the hotel any changes and/or updates in the organization's policies and procedures (i.e. changes in registration procedures, enhanced technology enabling one-stop shopping for housing and registration, etc.).
- ❑ Set target dates to review guest room pickup beginning with the date guest room registration opens.
- ❑ Review all marketing opportunities for the organization to partner with the host hotel(s) to encourage attendees to secure a guest room at the event-contracted hotel(s). Plan to communicate multiple messages to the attendees prior the reservation cutoff date.
- ❑ Provide value-added commodities to attendees that reserve a guest room at the event-contracted hotel(s) (i.e. car rental discount, ground transportation discount, tickets to special events in the host city, etc.).

## **4 – 6 Months Prior to Arrival**

- ❑ Prior to registration opening, establish a process to track registered attendees who have not made a guest room reservation at the event-contracted hotel(s).
- ❑ Open guest room housing.
- ❑ Schedule to review guest room pickup on a bi-weekly basis (or other time frame that meets the needs of the organization and hotels) with the event-contracted hotel(s).
- ❑ Monitor event-contracted hotel(s) web sites for guest room rates advertised over the event dates that are lower than the event's guest room rate.
- ❑ Call event-contracted hotel's toll free telephone number for central reservation systems and audit the event-contracted rate and other promotional rates over the event dates.

- ❑ Distribute several messages promoting the event-contracted hotel(s) and the benefit of staying at the event-contracted hotel(s) to the potential attendees via fax, email, e-newsletters and/or direct mail.
- ❑ Create a pace report. Track guest room pickup of the current year and compare it with the previous year on a weekly basis.
- ❑ In the event guest room pickup is below the previous year, contact the event-contracted hotel(s) immediately and ask to release guest rooms if necessary. It is best to communicate with the event-contracted hotel(s) as soon as possible.
- ❑ Review other vendor contracts that are affected by attendance. Confirm or revise the contracted numbers accordingly. Examples of other vendors include transportation companies and outside caterers.

## **2 – 4 Months Prior to Arrival**

- ❑ Schedule to review guest room pickup on a weekly basis with the event-contracted hotel(s).
- ❑ If guest room pickup is below pace (and expectations), increase the marketing efforts to the targeted audience (email blast, etc.).
- ❑ Obtain guest list of reservations inside the group block at the event-contracted hotel(s). Identify registered attendees who do not have a guest room reservation at the event-contracted hotel(s) and call them.
- ❑ Continue to monitor event-contracted hotel's web sites and toll free number for central reservations for guest room rates advertised over the event dates that are lower than the event's guest room rate.
- ❑ Analyze the registration and reservations of the event exhibitors. If required, assess the collection of pre-payments and/or deposits.
- ❑ In the event the guest room pickup pace is down, contact the event-contracted hotel(s) immediately and ask to release guest rooms if necessary. It is best to communicate with the event-contracted hotel(s) as soon as possible. At this stage, the organization should be prepared to reduce the contracted meeting space proportionately to the reduction in the contracted guest room block.

## **1 – 2 Months Prior to Arrival**

- ❑ Continue to review guest room pickup on a weekly basis with the event-contracted hotel(s).
- ❑ Continue marketing efforts to the targeted audience.
- ❑ The guest room reservation cutoff date is usually between 3-5 weeks prior to the first day of the event.
- ❑ If necessary, ask the event-contracted hotel(s) if it is possible to extend the reservation cutoff date.
- ❑ If the reservation cutoff date is extended, ask the hotel if it will continue to accept the contracted room rate.
- ❑ If necessary, ask the event-contracted hotel(s) to allow attendees to make guest room reservations directly with the hotel.
- ❑ Be prepared to review overall room pickup and the potential of attrition liability.
- ❑ Ask the event-contracted hotel if it will consider a fire sale (the promotion of a last minute guest room rate significantly below the event-contracted rate). Ensure that the group will get credit for guest rooms reserved in this rate category. This is a fairly new concept that many hotels may be unfamiliar with. It will probably require discussion.

## **30 Days and Fewer Prior to Arrival**

- ❑ Schedule to review guest room pickup twice a week or as needed with the event-contracted hotel(s).
- ❑ Prepare an attendee evaluation for distribution on site that specifically addresses attendees' guest room usage.
- ❑ Finalize planning details for the event (Specifications Guide, etc.)
- ❑ Continue to follow the recommendations outlined above.

- ❑ Replace cancelled reservation with new bookings.

### **On-Site**

- ❑ Schedule a meeting separately from the pre-event meeting to discuss any issues surrounding the guest room pickup and attrition liability.
- ❑ Ensure the focus of the pre-event meeting is on the event and the attendees' expectations and needs.
- ❑ Conduct a daily meeting with the designated hotel individual(s) to review previous night's guest room pickup, cancellations, and no-shows.
- ❑ Conduct a daily meeting with the designated hotel individual(s) to compare the event registration list with the hotel's guest list. The organization should receive credit for guest rooms reserved outside of the event-contracted block.
- ❑ Distribute attendee evaluation and promote its importance to attendees. Try to collect as many completed evaluations as possible. Make daily announcements encouraging attendees to complete the evaluation.

### **Post-Event**

- ❑ Conduct a hotel audit with the designated hotel individual(s) comparing the event registration list with the hotel(s) guest list. The organization should receive credit for guest rooms reserved outside of the event-contracted block.
- ❑ Collect final pickup report(s) from the event-contracted hotel(s). This will be the final guest room history report for the event.
- ❑ Compile attendee evaluations.
- ❑ Compare the guest room pickup to the contract for the following year. Make any necessary changes to the guest room block at the event-contracted hotel(s).