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**Ten Secrets of Super Successful Meeting Planners**

**By Susan Friedmann**

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Whoever said that being a meeting planner was easy, lied! Rather, it should be classified under the tough and demanding job category. But, along with being tough, it's also fun, exciting, exhilarating, stimulating, and never, never boring. You have the opportunity to go to exotic places, stay in luxurious hotels, and experience life from a totally different angle. Who could ask for anything more? For those of you ready to shoot me at this point, know that I fully understand your pain!

The purpose of this article is to look at ten skills that help make a super successful meeting planner, and how you can take this expertise and use it to enhance the great job you're already doing.

1. Planning and organizing

The most common reason shows go wrong lies in the simple fact that not enough time is devoted to adequate planning and preparation. And, many of those shows that are believed to have been successful, are often more by chance than through actual organization. Super successful meeting planners have both a strategic and tactical plan of action. They then use the following five basic questions as their foundation before making any arrangements: Where does this meeting fit into our corporate marketing strategy? Why are we meeting? What is the purpose of the meeting? Who should attend the meeting? What is our budget?

2. Taking care of details

So much of putting a meeting together means taking care of the details, and there are usually more of these than you care to think about. Being detail-oriented is a definite plus. The key to so much of a meeting planner's success is having a system that works. Creating checklists is one of the best I know. With the hundreds of pieces that make up the meeting puzzle, the only way to put them together and keep tabs on all the details, is with a checklist. Become a checklist fanatic and consider having a checklist for each checklist. I'm getting dizzy just thinking about it.

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### 3. Practicing savvy marketing

A significant part of a successful meeting planner's role involves developing a pre-, at- and post-event plan. Most meeting planners fail to have a plan that encompasses all three areas. Budget is naturally going to play a major role in deciding what and how much promotional activity is possible. Super successful meeting planners know the importance of developing a meaningful theme or message that ties into their strategic marketing plan, and that will guide their promotional decisions. They know and understand their target audience and plan different promotional programs aimed at the different groups they are interested in attracting.

### 4. Being a team player

Super successful meeting planners know exactly how to work together as a team, helping each other

out whenever and wherever necessary. They help everyone get acquainted, develop a level of trust, and familiarize and understand each other's strengths. They know what it takes to create an environment of camaraderie where the staff, as a whole pulls out all the stops to succeed and set themselves apart from the competition.

### 5. Knowing how to manage time

Super successful meeting planners have mastered the art of managing their time. They are well organized and have essential information at their fingertips, which means that their work environment is orderly and efficient. They know their priorities, don't over commit themselves, and can differentiate between important and urgent tasks. They are superb delegators and are not afraid to ask for help whenever they need it. And, finally, they don't procrastinate; on the contrary, they practice the "do it now" habit.

### 6. Negotiating skillfully

Skillful and savvy negotiators know exactly what they want. They spend time doing their research so that they know as much as possible about their opponent. They are prepared with strategies and tactics, questions and possible concessions. They are masters at finding alternative ways of talking about, reacting to and solving problems. They use their talents of intuition, flexibility and concern for others to reach an agreement where both sides win. They look to create a feeling of cooperation to build a mutually beneficial working environment.

### 7. Applying a positive attitude

Research successful people and you'll find that having a positive, "can do" attitude ranks high on their list of characteristics. Not only are they positive and upbeat, they surround themselves with naturally positive and successful people. Give it a try and see if their attitude rubs off on you. When you focus on what you can do versus what you can't do, expect to find solutions to your various challenges. Try changing your vocabulary to reflect your optimistic thoughts and feelings, and see what happens. People find you more attractive and want to be around you, especially when you focus and direct your

conversation onto the outcomes they want.

### 8. Evaluating results

Any master continuously looks to improve on their performance, and a super successful meeting planner is no different. Create a system to evaluate your results. Ask your participants for their feedback. Find out what they liked about your event, and what they would like to see improved in the future. In addition, ask yourself what you thought went well and what you would do differently if you had to organize this event again. Chronicle all your data and keep accurate records so that you can refer to them the next time around.

### 9. Being a perpetual learner

We live in an information age and are surrounded by more stuff than we can possibly cope with. However, successful people love it, as they are perpetual learners. They know the pitfalls of relying on what worked in the past as a guide to what will work in the future. That's why they constantly look for new and improved ways of doing things, learning from the masters and staying open and willing to try different approaches.

### 10. Keeping a sense of humor

If you don't laugh you cry and in the meeting industry there's no lack of situations where it's easy to shed a tear. Keeping a sense of humor will definitely help prevent you getting mad, angry and frustrated with those incompetent and disorganized suppliers. Learn to laugh at their mistakes as well as your own to keep a saner perspective on life. If nothing else, remember that laughing is good for your health and will help reduce your stress and blood pressure levels.

Written by Susan A. Friedmann, CSP, The Tradeshow Coach, Lake Placid, NY, author: "Meeting & Event Planning for Dummies," working with companies to improve their meeting and event success through coaching, consulting and training. Go to

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## **The Meeting Planner's Online Advantage: The #1 Myth About Online Registration Systems**

### **By Bill Flagg**

We hear it over and over again: It's the number one myth about online registration systems that keeps many meeting planners from making their lives easier and their events more successful. We want to explore this myth, bring the truth out into the light so that everyone knows what online registration is really about.

## Ten Secrets of Super Successful Meeting Planners

The #1 Myth:

I know my current system isn't perfect, but I'm comfortable with it. Plus, it would take too much time, money and headaches to switch to something better. I wouldn't even know where to start.

Why is this myth completely false?

Because thousands of meeting planners said the same thing before they discovered that a high-quality automated system:

- \* Is easy to implement without any technical knowledge
- \* Only takes a matter of hours to set up – and in some cases, less than an hour
- \* More than pays for itself - and is affordable to even the smallest meetings

How is this possible?

A few years ago, these systems were made available through your web browser. No software to buy, install, or maintain. You don't have to figure out how to connect to your website. This entirely new type of service exists on the web, instead of on your office computers, allowing for anywhere, anytime, real-time access to your events and corresponding data.

- \* The benefits of a Web-based Service:
- \* You don't need a technology department to use it
- \* You can turn it on immediately
- \* You control everything without having to wait - form changes, reports, accounting
- \* You can give immediate access to your colleagues anywhere in the world, anytime
- \* The security of your data will be many times greater
- \* You get to use a multi-million dollar online registration system for just a few dollars per registration.

I sincerely hope this article makes your conference and event registration even more successful!

If you would like to receive more great tips on how to increase your registrations and decrease your workload, visit

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