

Hello Visitor! | [Log In](#) or [Register](#)

[About Us](#) [Advertise](#) [Subscribe](#) [RSS](#)

  

[Home](#)

## How to Increase Meetings and Events Business

It's not enough to simply launch meeting planner surveys

ARTICLE | FRI, 04/22/2011 - 06:52

By JOAN KING

In the hospitality industry, sales and marketing staff are under increased pressure to compete for – and retain – meeting and events business. One of the secrets behind successful venue providers is to know the meeting planner better, even before they walk through the door. The importance of this kind of intelligence cannot be overemphasized, as it enables management to understand their preferences and match the right staff with the right meeting or event. This enables them to step up their game and create more successful outcomes.

It is also critical to be ready if things go south (since we don't live in a perfect world). Fortunately, meeting planner feedback systems have evolved into powerful tools that can identify where revenue is at risk based upon intent to return. In fact, newer technologies go beyond surveys, creating critical dialogue throughout the event timeline and generating actionable intelligence. Utilizing an at-a-glance dashboard, management can have keen insight about how they're doing and how they can convert performance scores into revenue.

### **The Raison d'être for Knowing Your Meeting Planners**

Making that connection with meeting planners is no longer optional. Event bookings continue to be a vital source of revenue for hotels and resorts, and meeting planners today have increased bargaining power (and there are other alternatives, such as virtual meetings). So getting those bookings is more challenging than ever, yet it's only half the battle: since today's discounted rates increase the cost of customer acquisition, keeping the business is now more critical than ever. And it all depends on getting the right kind of intelligence.

The ability to know meeting planners better will ultimately determine which organizations are in a stronger competitive position to win and keep the business. And even as planners lock in attractive rates, it is more imperative than ever to exceed their expectations.

### **How Well Do You Know Your Meeting Planners?**

It is more critical than ever to know your meeting planners and how they perceive the entire service experience, from the initial planning stages and during the event timeline, from start to finish. More often than not, if they are dissatisfied, few may complain and the rest simply switch to another venue provider.

One of the common denominators among venues that consistently deliver successful events is having the ability to take the pulse of their customer at any given time. Tacking on a post-event survey is not enough; and traditional survey methodologies cannot achieve a high enough response rate to yield valid results. Acquiring knowledge about the meeting planner's experience is an ongoing process that enables critical issues to be identified at the conclusion of the event, to help operators understand what's most important to their planners.

Typically the feedback process should begin prior to the event start and by taking actions that will

positively impact the client's early perceptions. In fact, there is a lot to be learned by getting online feedback before and after an event, so that when the next group arrives for the pre-convention dialogue, everyone has already stepped up their game and is now more prepared to deliver an even better meeting experience.

It goes without saying that gathering continuous feedback is only one step in the process; more important is the dissemination of actionable information to the staff that delivers the service experience. That's because behind the scenes of any great conference event and/or satisfied meeting planner are the savvy venue personnel that plan and host the event, and know how to properly execute from start to finish.

### **Meeting Planner Intelligence That Goes Beyond Traditional Surveys**

If an event host does their part and keeps customers happy, that increases the probability that they will book repeat business and recommend the venue to others, often in spite of price wars. Paying attention to meeting and event planners does matter. One way for a hotel or resort to equip their venue for continued ensured success is finding a more sophisticated technology for both taking better care of the meeting planner and for strengthening your competitive advantage in hosting successful events. In short, it requires technologies that go beyond traditional survey solutions.

Ideally, the right technology that brings about improved outcomes should include some critical capabilities that streamline communication, analytically correlate every critical aspect of service delivery and provide historical data capture for trending and strategic planning—all of which cumulatively enhance relationships with meeting planners. It is also essential for your system to produce actionable information in the form of easily accessible "hot button" reports.

The bottom line is that you should follow due diligence in finding the right system for your organization to help you compete in the meetings business, capture market share, consistently deliver impeccable service – and effectively execute service recovery quickly if something isn't just right. The more advanced systems available today are sophisticated and customizable technologies that have been field-tested and are in production.

One of the premier meeting planner feedback systems being successfully utilized today by many respected hospitality organizations is UniFocus' MEETINGScope.™ When this system was first designed, there was an unfilled need in the industry to go beyond simply launching a survey at the end of a meeting, and instead to create additional conversation with the meeting planner throughout the sales, planning and delivery process. Ultimately this capability provides venue providers with opportunities to win and keep more business.

Ultimately, any meeting planner feedback system is only as valuable as its ability to help venue providers achieve dramatically better outcomes for their meetings and events business. Converting a score into revenue critically changes the entire dynamic of how a management team responds to its overall performance and focuses the team on the key issues that impact value and perception. With this kind of knowledge, they can better assess ROI on their investment, understand where they have the greatest probability of confirming business and in which market segments they outperform industry benchmarks.

Meeting planners are spending dollars more wisely and will only patronize hotels or resorts that truly pay attention to their needs and requirements. In the past, old-style survey approaches made sales and conference managers feel like they were getting a report card rather than generating useful information about how they could improve the service experience, from first contact to event delivery. Today's more advanced online feedback approaches are designed to improve outcomes by capturing continuous critical business intelligence.

In today's competitive meetings and events environment, it's not enough to simply launch meeting planner surveys. The successful event host must be able to ask the right questions that produce actionable feedback throughout the entire meeting timeline to maximize intent to return and

recommend. This requires the kind of technology that can prompt frequent and productive conversation with your meeting planners, putting valuable information right at your fingertips. Simply retaining a single meeting planner's business provides a great ROI.

With today's more advanced technologies, you can get above-property and property level reports and at-a-glance dashboards that give management complete insight about meeting planner satisfaction. These capabilities not only allow you to see results at a high level, but give you the option to easily drill down to any level for problem identification and subsequent resolution. This is the new standard for the industry and it is essential for capitalizing on the meetings and events marketplace as a source of critical revenue.

Remember, if you take care of the meeting planner the right way, you will also be protecting a vital revenue stream that you can't afford to be without, recovering possible lost revenue and getting an unmatched ROI.

*Joan King is Managing Director, Loyalty, for UniFocus. She can be reached at [jking@unifocus.com](mailto:jking@unifocus.com) or by phone at 972-512-5169.*

---

[TERMS OF USE](#) | [PRIVACY STATEMENT](#) | [SUBSCRIBE](#) | 

Powered by [Phase2 Technology](#)