

10 STEPS TO MANAGING A SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE OR EVENT

There's much more to a conference than the event itself; you need to ensure your attendees have a positive experience from the beginning of the process through to the end. Confirming attendance, communication, how people get there and back home, refreshments, amenities, accommodation, technology are just some of the essential factors.

At CT Group Travel, we've compiled our Top 10 Steps to help you on your way.

1. Team

You need a great team of people behind you to make your conference a success. Think about the time you will need to spend on every aspect of the conference and consider if you need support from professionals. It's easy to forget that professional help can save you time and money in the long run – and a good event support company should work in partnership with you.

2. Budget

Your budget will determine what you can and can't do, so get this nailed down as early as possible. Make sure you have considered every aspect so you don't have any nasty surprises. It's essential to build a good working relationship with the venue hosts and be very clear on what's included and what's extra – and the cost breakdown. Don't leave anything to chance. Think about how you will be accountable on costs in terms of managing expenses and reporting.

3. Location, location, location

It sounds obvious, but make sure your conference venue is located somewhere accessible for the majority of your attendees. Think about road and public transport links – how long will most people need to travel to get there in good time, allowing for factors like rush hour. What kind of environment are you looking for – is there a theme? Check what other events are going on at the same time, for example in an adjacent hall or auditorium. Could it be noisy or overly busy? Could another conference on the same day be with a competitor or something conflicting?

4. Venue

There's always a compromise somewhere when selecting your venue. You can't please everyone and people all have different ideas about what makes a venue desirable. Try to strike the right balance and consider practicalities like location and quality of the facilities and amenities like restrooms, parking, cloakrooms, registration and food and drink. Think carefully about accessibility and access to accommodation, if needed.



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5. **Travel & Accommodation**

Think about how much support you are providing your guests in terms of logistics. If your own employees are attending, how are they getting there? What about guests? Should you or could you provide an integrated travel service? It doesn't have to cost more and could save you money. If you're organising travel, are you doing it properly? There's a huge amount to consider and be careful if you are collecting personal data like names, addresses, and passport numbers. You can't just collect and use this data without permission and the right protective measure in place – it's the law. Again, a good specialist can manage all these aspects for you and they should be able to get competitive rates for travel and housing.

6. **Registration Process**

Ensure you have good processes and communication around registration. How can you gauge numbers? What system are you using to track acceptance? Are you asking for dietary preferences? What about allergies or special assistance? If you are trying to attract visitors who might be considering whether or not to attend, what can you do to make the whole experience simple and positive? Again, you can get help with this side of things and a good conference organiser business can provide online tools for registration and to record travel requirements. It doesn't have to cost you more and will often save money and improve the process.

7. **More than just the event**

A common mistake is to forget about set-up and strike. If you have employees or contractors working to prepare and dismantle your event, have you booked sufficient time in the conference space for this to happen? Have you allowed for rehearsals? Think about where these people will stay and how they will travel. Even if it's not your direct responsibility, good visibility and control of these factors can help you stay ahead and in control.

8. **Technology**

Don't underestimate technology. Even the simplest requirements need clarity and testing. Many event organisers rely on the venue to supply projectors, computers, microphones etc.. But you need to check all the detail and make sure you speak to the operator in advance, so they know what you need. Think about other technology that might be important: is there a wi-fi signal in the auditorium, do you need roving microphones or radio mics and how will these be used, will you have all the visual content in advance, is the PA system sufficient etc..? Make sure you define who is responsible for these elements and that they are prepared and available when needed.

9. **Food and Drink**

If you're providing refreshments or more, then don't just assume the venue can arrange this how you would like. Think about the timings, logistics and practicalities. Have you sampled the quality of the food? Are there any references or testimonials you can refer to? Are you prepared for allergies (you need a policy)? This is a big area to consider and you need a plan – and ideally some professional help.

10. **Don't go it alone**

The worst mistake many conference organisers make is sinking in the sheer volume of work required. Stay ahead of the game and bring in the right support where you need it. Get a team together and identify where your skillsets lie. In many cases, the organisers are the ones who need to worry about the content and presentational side of conferences, so think about who can take on the logistics.