

Make an Impression

One of the benefits of holding a conference in an independent hotel rather than in a big chain is the individuality of the event. Don't be afraid of putting your own stamp on proceedings and keep doing whatever it is that sets your establishment apart from the local chain hotel.

Hoteliers often make the mistake of switching to a cold, clinical service just because the event is a corporate one. In reality, it's the friendliness of independent hotels that sets them apart.

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that décor and style are unimportant just because it's a work-related event. A meeting space should impress, inspire and ultimately provide a setting to close that deal. Pay attention to detail, as appearances are everything.

Technology

It goes without saying that hotels hoping to crack the corporate market should be thoroughly equipped in terms of technology. Although it may seem like a large initial investment, most businesses wouldn't look twice at a venue that couldn't offer free WiFi access and AV equipment as standard. Offer complimentary flipcharts, plasma screens and projectors in all of your meeting suites. A hotel we work with that has really reaped the benefits from the corporate market is The Brookland Hotel in Surrey. The Brookland is always well equipped which ensures conferences run smoothly.

- Check everything is working within enough time to get things repaired before your event begins.
- Ensure all members of staff are trained in working each piece of equipment. Having to call your porter on his day off because no one else knows how to work the projector is not ideal.

When the Working Day is Done

If your hotel has the facilities to entertain guests after a hard day's conferencing, ensure they are publicised. Negotiate extras with the booker in order to keep delegates spending on your premises. For

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example, a champagne and canapé reception on a roof terrace or in a garden makes a memorable ending to a conference.

Hotels that include spa facilities should offer them at reduced rates to encourage repeat business. You never know, you may find that delegates impressed with the leisure facilities at your establishment return on pleasure rather than business in the future.

If your hotel doesn't have the facilities to keep guests entertained for the evening, ensure all members of staff can offer good recommendations and reception can order taxis quickly.

It may be worth working with complimentary services outside your business to compensate for what the hotel may lack. For example, a local gym may be able to provide a good deal for your guests if your hotel doesn't have one. Never affiliate yourself with a service whose quality doesn't reflect your own.

Conferences:UK works closely with all its venues to ensure they reach their potential in attracting the corporate market. As part of the service, Conferences:UK dispatches an expert venue finder to each venue in order to provide personalised feedback and advice on how the service can be improved. The service also allows the Conferences:UK team to gain a thorough understanding of all venues, which allows them to be properly represented to conference planners and organisers.

To find out more, visit www.conferences-uk.org.uk



Better by Design

Melinda Bennett of CGA Integration explains the important design considerations to make when moving into the conferencing market

“You should not have to trade off design for functionality. With careful planning the functionality of a space can be delivered alongside beautiful design. To create a successful ‘events space’ it is vital that the technological aspects are considered alongside the visual appearance of the room as part of the planning process; not just what you need the technology to do, but what hardware is required in order to make this a reality. Where carefully designed together, a holistic approach to lighting, audio and video needs can be seamlessly integrated

into the design of a room to deliver the functionality required in an unobtrusive, even invisible manner. When done effectively, this actually enhances the overall ambience of the space, as sound and lighting are critical in creating the optimum guest experience.

“Requirements for conference delegates may be very different from wedding guests and may differ again for those attending a charity fundraiser or gala dinner. Understanding how you wish to position your ‘events space’ is key in delivering the best technology to suit your guests. Many hotels may find that they require facilities which are flexible, to meet the needs of all these kinds of events. In addition ‘types’ of customers also need to be considered. Sometimes spaces are hired out directly to ‘the end user’ who will need the venue to provide all of the facilities and at other times they are hired to an ‘events’ or ‘production’ company who will provide their own technology and room dressing, each have very different requirements of the events space.”

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