

“The Meeting Professional’s Dilemma”

A Play in Three Acts

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Act I

The Email

Lights up on an overworked and under appreciated CMP working late into the evening.

SFX: Ding!

CMP: Another email. Hmmm, it’s from the Marketing Department. Let’s see...client summit, 1200 of our best customers. Looking for fresh ideas to launch our new banking service...want to “wow” the clients and make a strong branding statement. Need maximum impact on a minimum budget.

Oh dear, they want the meeting in Fresno, California, the headquarters of our biggest customer. I don’t know Fresno. And, of course, they want it to happen in three weeks.

Okay, I can partner with the CVB to pin down an appropriate venue and find hotel rooms. I can handle catering and transportation easily enough.

Now, what about production? I need someone who really “gets it.” There’s no time for handholding. I need someone I can trust. I can’t keep up with all the new production bells and whistles. There must be someone who understands those tools and knows when they’re appropriate to meet our strategic objectives. Also, someone who has contacts across the country so I don’t have to reinvent the wheel for every meeting.

What now?

In a flash of inspiration, our protagonist reaches for the phone.

Fade out.

Whether you're an independent, corporate or association planner, you've no doubt received a similar e-mail. Your clients, internal or external, require the highest level of professionalism to make them look their best. They've carefully crafted their message and want it communicated effectively and at a good value. And more and more, they want it FAST.

In many cases, these challenges can be addressed by partnering with a skilled Meetings and Event Producer. The services of a Producer can be procured through a full-service production company or a video production company; however there are a growing number of talented creative groups operating as stand alone Producers, not associated with an equipment provider.

A Meetings and Event Producer should be able to offer a wide range of services, including equipment, staff, logistical planning, script writing, video and speaker support, and stage design. All the talent needed to assist in planning and operating your meeting – making your client look their best!

Back to that e-mail...is it appropriate to bring in a Producer? Here are a few things to think about as you make that determination.

Partnering Strategically

- A Producer should be an extension of the Meeting Planner or the Meetings Department, keeping you apprised at each development stage.
- The Producer should understand the strategic objectives of the meeting and how they coincide with the company's overall direction.

Expertise

- A credible Producer has extensive nationwide resources and can tailor a production team to best fit your specific needs and budget.

A Producer's knowledge of cutting edge presentation technology can bring a fresh and exciting look to your

meetings. Often these tools provide exactly the right punctuation to create a lasting impression on your attendees.

- The Producer's experience with venues, labor, and suppliers can insure the flawless execution and success of your event.

Divide and Conquer

- A good working relationship with a Producer allows you to focus on your core business. Meanwhile, the Producer's team deals with everyday logistics.
- The Producer's focus is on concepts, deliverability, key branding touch points and overall logistical management. The Meeting Planner may then concentrate on making sure all the other elements mesh to create a singular impression.

Value Added

- There are costs associated with outsourcing to a Producer. However, as you explore this opportunity, consider the real costs linked to your time and the time of your Meetings team.
- The Producer can leverage long-term relationships with suppliers across the country to negotiate beneficial rates for your event.
- The value of creating an on target presentation that meets your financial, creative, and logistical goals is something only you can evaluate.

So, a decision has been made to partner with a Producer. You've networked with your MPI peers to establish a list of qualified candidates. What's next?

Next month:

Act II

The Selection