

## **PROJECT ATTRITION TEMPLATE 4: CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU TIMELINE FOR EVENTS**

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The following template is a product of the Convention Industry Council's *Project Attrition*. In early 2003, industry leadership gathered together and funded an initiative that was designed to broaden the awareness among industry professionals about attrition and its impact on the meetings, conventions and exhibitions industry. The initiative is *Project Attrition*.

This tool, Template 4 and three other templates were designed to assist the professional event and trade show organizer and industry suppliers in managing today's number one problem, attrition. This timeline is for convention & visitors bureaus (CVB) sales and service personnel and is designed to assist in managing the communication process with customers during the next year. It also suggests tactical approaches on how the CVB professional can assist his/her customer in marketing the upcoming meeting, minimizing potential attrition, and maximizing event profit for the destination.

### **13 Months and More Prior to Arrival**

- ❑ Review all confirmed and contracted events for the upcoming year(s) and secure historical data from the most recent meeting and compare it to the contracted room block for the future meeting.
- ❑ Assuming the risk of attrition, get all executives involved including the Hotel General Manager(s) and the organizational leadership and attain everyone's awareness of the attrition potential. Get everyone involved in implementing strategies to make the meeting a success.
- ❑ Commit a plan to paper. Write a joint business/marketing plan in conjunction with the member hotel(s) and the client detailing strategy and tactical plans leading up to the meeting.
- ❑ Initiate discussion between the parties involved if the variance between the guest rooms used at the most recent annual meeting and the contracted guest room block is greater than 10%. Identify possible causes of the decline in guest room usage.
- ❑ Discuss industry and/or membership trends that may impact attendance.
- ❑ In partnership with member hotel(s) and the client, re-evaluate the guest room block and/or the meeting room space based on historical data.
- ❑ Present findings to client, review the difference between the guest room history and the future guest room block, and discuss the potential attrition liability.
- ❑ Offer recommendations on how to reduce the financial liability, i.e. reduce guest room block, and/or release some meeting space, etc.
- ❑ Determine if reductions in the guest room block and/or meeting space, impacts the negotiated concessions, convention center charges, and/or other contractual items.
- ❑ Conduct in-market competitive analysis over the selected meeting dates to anticipate the attendees staying outside of the event-contracted hotel(s) and official group block. (Is the city busy or quiet? What rates are the competitive hotels offering?).
- ❑ Identify trends in the local market as well as trends in the industry that might effect the organization and their members' perception of the guest room rate.
- ❑ Discuss changes to the convention center contract and the rationale behind those changes and obtain agreement from the meeting professional in writing.
- ❑ If signed contract is in line with current trends and recent history, confirm any changes and/or updates in policies or procedures, i.e. additional attendee marketing, incentives/or discounts for attendees confirming inside the official guest room block.
- ❑ Set target dates to review guest room pickup once registration opens.
- ❑ Review any marketing opportunities the bureau and member hotel(s) can partner with the organization in getting attendees to reserve a guest room within the official room block and continue with this type of partnership until the meeting starts.

#### **4 – 6 Months Prior to Arrival**

- ❑ Prior to registration opening, have a process in place for identifying potential attendees who may try to make a guest room reservation outside of the official group block.
- ❑ Registration opens.
- ❑ Set up an internal schedule to meet on a bi-monthly basis (or timeframe that suits your needs) to review guest room pickup reports and cross-reference them with the registration reports.
- ❑ Continue to market to the attendee the value of staying in event-contracted hotel(s) via applicable web sites, newsletters, blast emails.
- ❑ Compare the guest room pickup on a weekly basis with the previous year's pickup.
- ❑ Communicate guest room pickup, emerging trends, etc. with the meeting professional.
- ❑ Offer attendance-marketing suggestions to the event organizer if the actual guest room pickup is slower than the historical guest room pickup (compare guest room pickup to the pace report).

#### **2 – 4 Months Prior to Arrival**

- ❑ Schedule weekly meetings with the meeting professional to review guest room pickup and registration reports.
- ❑ Address guest room block and/or meeting space changes as soon as possible with the meeting professional.
- ❑ Determine if it is necessary to release guest rooms from the group block.
- ❑ If the guest room block is reduced, determine if meeting space needs to be reduced as well.
- ❑ Continue to partner with meeting professional to promote the hotel(s) to potential attendees.

#### **1 – 2 Months Prior to Arrival**

- ❑ Continue with weekly or bi-weekly meetings with meeting professional to review the guest room pickup reports.
- ❑ Continue to partner with meeting professional to promote the hotel(s) to potential attendees.
- ❑ Cut-off date will likely fall in this time frame.
- ❑ Remind meeting professional of the cut-off date.
- ❑ Determine if it is possible to extend the cut-off date.
- ❑ Determine if the group guest rooms may continue to be sold at the group rate.
- ❑ If agreeable to meeting professional, allow attendees to call in their guest room reservations directly to the hotel(s).
- ❑ If it has not already, attrition clause will kick-in during this period, be prepared to:
  - Discuss with the meeting professional last minute efforts to fill the group block, i.e. negotiate a “fire sale,” with the understanding that guest rooms reserved at the “fire sale” rate would be credited to the group.
  - Outline in writing potential attrition damages for all parties at this time.

#### **30 Days and Fewer Prior to Arrival**

- ❑ Meet on “as need” basis with meeting professional and member hotel(s) sharing all applicable reports.
- ❑ Advise meeting professional of the group room pick-up and discuss registration pace and activity.
- ❑ If the cut-off date falls within this time frame, apply recommendations suggested above in the 1 – 2 months out time frame.
- ❑ Discuss (or continue to discuss) options that might help to mitigate some potential damages if the guest room block is not where it should be, i.e. resell released guest rooms and meeting space.
- ❑ Continue with best practices established over the previous 6 months.

**On-Site**

- Schedule a meeting separate from the than pre-event meeting to discuss issues surrounding the guest room pick-up.
- Keep focus of pre-event meeting on the group and their needs.
- Meet daily with meeting professional (or their representative) to review the previous night's guest room pick-up to include cancellations, no-shows, etc.
- Meet daily with meeting professional to identify individuals that stayed in the hotel(s) but outside of the official group block. The organization should receive credit for these individuals.