

FULL DAY SEMINAR

ConRunners Meeting
10/12/01

AN OVERVIEW OF MAKE-OR-BREAK POSITIONS FOR A CON

Chairman
Banker

Hotel Liaison
Programming

Publicity
Registration

CHAIRMAN

Characteristics Needed

- Flexibility – Can deal with new things – Can reverse decisions when more data is available
- Delegation Skills – Ability to see the strengths of others and use them advantageously
- Ability not to take things personally
- **DECISION-MAKING** – Most Important Skill to Have
- Listening skills
- People skills
- Motivational skills
- The ability to choose good people
- **Communication Skills** – 2nd Most Important Skill to Have – explaining decisions will make things better
- Organizational skills
- Experienced with convention and positions and areas and etc.

Things a Chairman Needs to Do:

- Get ConCom to talk to each other – Have regular meetings
- Keep things in perspective
- Ask for help – get a trusted assistant if possible
- Keep disagreements with assistants a private matter
- Don't let real life bleed into con activities and vice-versa – especially when assistant is your SO
- Don't overextend – Realize that this takes a lot of time
- Don't over-commit – Say “NO” when needed – Don't feel guilty for necessary decisions
- Pass on relevant experience to your ConCom and successors
- Build a Team – Based on Loyalty and Friendship
- Remember that the con is for the Attendees
- Have a Vision
- Don't fill empty ConCom positions with yourself

BANKER

Characteristics Needed:

- Can do basic math
- High sense of Fiscal Responsibility – Can handle lots of money – Able to do so in a Timely fashion
- Budgeting skills – Creation, Implementation, Revision when needed, Stuck to when needed
- Organizational skills
- Available
- Honest
- Communication skills
- Common Sense
- Record-keeping skills – Basic Bookkeeping
- Decision-making skills – Independent – Able to say “NO”

HOTEL LIAISON

1. List the convention with the **Phoenix Convention & Visitors Bureau** – They will notify hotels, who will then contact you – Most hotels want food & beverage functions, which our conventions don't have much of – Benefit of listing with the Bureau is that they will also list you as an upcoming event on their calendars
2. Determine the site and Begin contract negotiations
 1. Function Space cost should be based on room nights rented (sliding scale –more rooms, lower price)
 2. Reduced rate for room rentals, both for general attendees and for the convention
 3. Deposits pre-con – Attempt to minimize the amount deposited for the function space before con
 4. Be reasonable in contract demands – Compromise
 5. Full disclosure up-front
 6. Market your strengths
 7. Waive corkage
 8. Make certain that union contractors aren't required
 9. Waive tax & gratuity; make it a part of the base cost, not an additional cost
 10. Time of year affects rates
 11. Have everyone sign a clean, clear copy of the contract
 - (Both ConCom reps – Chair, Banker, Hotel Liaison – and hotel reps)
3. Inform on Function Space & other rental room usage – set-ups should be turned over no later than 1 month out from the con – Have at least one walk-thru of the facilities – Videotape it if possible – Interface between the con and the hotel
4. Do damage control
5. At con, you are the 1st contact for problems that are hotel-related
6. Get a nightly room night list & check it against con attendance to make certain that you are being credited for the right amount – Affects function space cost – Might be good to make friends with the Night Auditor
7. Closing out meeting involves the Chairman, Banker, and Hotel Liaison – Check bill for accuracy before paying

VOLUNTEERS

- Have a post-con party to say Thank You
- Take steps to build a community between those who regular work cons and those just starting
- Conventions are currently lacking a regular meeting between workers (just workers) and workers and attendees

PROGRAMMING

Pre-Con Job Functions:

- Contact participants
- Process contact info – Mike Willmoth holds Pro Master Database
- Create schedule

Timeline Order:

- List of pros
- Invite them – make clear what is offered (i.e. conditions of comp membership, etc.)
- Generate ideas : Topics of interest, Suggestions, Surveys, Other cons' programming schedules, Observation, Current trends, Develop relationships with other cons in other states to exchange info
- Respond to interested parties
- Process responses
- Create schedules – put it in grid format
- Publish schedule : Pocket program; put label on pros' badges with their schedule
- Implement the schedule – Post changes as they occur
- Send thank-you's after con
- Pass on info to next cons

PUBLICITY

- Currently there is a problem with reaching the people – Not bringing in new people, or losing them

- Online and Offline pushes needed
- Online : Websites, Web Rings, Newsgroups, Email lists
- Bookstores, comic book stores, gaming stores, memorabilia dealers
- Schools : Drama clubs
- Flyers don't give enough info to excite – give additional info on back
- Offer info that draws younger, newer fans
- Perhaps put coupons on back of flyers : at-door double
- Make bookmark sized flyers
- Media relationship – contacts change regularly, and are hard to establish
- Create a media package : a Press Kit
- Show up at local news morning shows and see if they have extra time to fill
- Have Knowledgeable Freak in Costume to have media go to for info when they show up at con (see if SWCG will assist in costuming those who come across well on media)
- Look into co-marketing in conjunction with the hotel
- Event listings – make certain con is listed
- Perhaps change the description of the 'convention' to 'festival'
- Give something extra to pre-reg peoples – limited edition book, etc.
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs) – need to have them
- Movie screens – provide slides – costly – see if they do PSAs – check out Harkins, since they are local
- Trading ad space
- Get people to Sponsor (those who market to niche) – give you money for ads, banners, etc.

Examples of Potential High-Interest, Low-Cost Media Guests:

- Video Game Designers
- Independent Filmmakers
- Special Effects People
- Comic Book People (writers, inkers, artists, editors, etc.)
- Animation People
- Behind-the-Scenes People
- Props Designers
- Costumers

REGISTRATION

- Keep lines short & fast
- Pre-laminate badges
- Use label machine to put names on
- Keep records in appropriate database (ACCESS for Registration)