

ConRunners 6

October 4, 2003

Moderator:

Chairman's Duties

(Rick Andrews, Craig Dyer, Mike Willmoth, Lee Whiteside, Stephanie Bannon)

- learn to say "no"
- delegate authority
- conceive the big picture
- choose the committee – emphasis on able to do the job, reliable, responsible (fannish resume)
- committee that can get the job done and will carry out the scope of your vision – consider personality and style of work when choosing
- micromanaging is a bad thing
- choose a committee that won't kill you at the end of con
- make certain that all disagreements are behind the scenes (shouldn't be evident to attendees)
- if there is a dispute between committee members, need to moderate
- **MAKE DECISIONS**
- Be able listen to all points of view, then determine what is best for the con
- **Communication is key**
- Knowing when to make the decisions, or when to let the committee make the decisions
- Ways to communicate effectively:
 - Email lists – response required?
 - Information needs to get to committee by whatever is the best means for those involved
 - Committee Meetings
 - Chat Room – difficult to get everyone online at once
 - Sometimes things shouldn't be sent to the whole list; sometimes should be to the individuals involved – don't put all the dirty laundry on the list
 - Debating in online groups – don't put it on list unless open to everyone's input
- Carry out those things that the supporting organizations require
- Be Consistent
- Let new committee members know what has worked, and not worked, in the past
- Be aware of political considerations
- Know history of groups in order to make things work better
- Let committee know what they can, or cannot, do
- Define what the position needs to do; committee should be involved in process
- Doing what is best for the convention is put before personal preferences
- Have experience with conventions on a committee level so that have an understanding of the process
- Must have loadable RAM
- Networking – leading committee to the goal; herding cats
- Vice-Chair – use as cattle-prod to chairman
- Have a back-up; keep them informed; use them as a sounding board
- Chair Assistant/Chair Secretary – keep notes, remind of important events
- Just because you like someone doesn't mean that they will be good for the job, and vice-versa
- What happens if the person you think is best for the job won't do it?
- Real life happens – accommodate it in your personal life and with your committee peoples
- Must know how to duck when the committee starts throwing things
- Site selection
- Committee selection
- Theme selection
- Monitor the committee for progress without micromanaging
- Publicizing – w/ publicity & banker
- Guest selection
- Put out fires – both figuratively & literally – without hosing the convention
- Rates charged – determine with banker, along with other financial concerns
- Overview of the finances of the conventions

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- Deal with the board of the sponsoring organization
- Negotiate
- Deal with the corporate entity sponsoring the convention
- Personal traits / character traits:
 - Decisiveness
 - Reliable
 - Organized
 - People skills
 - Able to admit when wrong
 - Able to choose proper committee
 - Good in a crisis
 - Doesn't fold under pressure
 - Leadership
 - Able to take charge
 - Know when to cut losses
 - Recognize problems when they occur and not afraid to deal with them
 - Tactful when necessary – able to lay it on the line, direct, blunt when needed
 - Flexible
 - Communication skills
 - Never assume anything
- Remember that committee isn't psychic – must tell them what you need from them; deal with what they give you
- Able to take advice where needed – remember to ask for advice
- Shouldn't play favorites
- Follow-thru necessary
- Has to be prepared for not everyone to like them – will have to make the unpopular decisions
- Diplomatic
- Timing is everything
- Ability to separate the person from the job
- Don't take things personally – the job isn't a reflection of the person
- Social group – can't slash and burn; don't alienate them
- Know the people you are dealing with
- Ability to read people
- Committee needs to be willing to work for other chairs – personal favor positions don't work well when real-life kicks in and chairmen quit
- Ability to say no – can't let everyone do whatever position they want, but accommodate when appropriate
- Need to be able to work with their banker & understand the constraints of a budget
- Must be **accessible**
- It is a JOB, and a lot of work – if not going to do it, then should give it up
- Coordinate committee – can't just leave them
- Can make job more difficult if don't chose the right people
- Facilitate communication between the committee members
- Know overall timeframe of when things happen in order to oversee properly
- Know what your committee should not be doing (per federal guidelines, group guidelines, etc.)

Picking a Theme and Carrying It Out Successfully

- is it important?
- Not needed for some conventions
- Gaming cons – no one thing takes up more 20% of total
- Theme doesn't need to tie into programming, etc.
- Gives ambience
- Work events around

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- Gives con attendees something more to come for
- Should be something that unifies con as a whole
- Special events can reflect it
- Should theme relate to guest? – sometimes guest suggests a theme; sometimes it doesn't work
- Décor & ambience vs. programming, guests, and events – sometimes deals with one, sometimes the other, sometimes both
- If tying guests to theme, then get guests beforehand
- Should theme be family-friendly – overall theme should be family-friendly, with more adult-oriented applications during midnight events (stay w/in legalities)
- If you have a theme, how much of con should you stamp it on? – depends on how far you want to go; badges are a good venue; at least decorative touches (signage, program book, consuite, etc. – make it consistent)
- The whole committee needs to work together to make it come together – at least Registration, Publications, Publicity, ConSuite (if want the décor), Ops (signage), Programming
- Ambience Coordinator if want to make the theme go throughout the convention
- Costumes is good ambience
- Hats, shirts are a nice touch
- Can have t-shirts for sale as well as for committee (if skew sizes properly and do in moderation)
- Red shirt for security (or volunteers?)
- Talk to Pat about shirts for cheap (c. \$7 per shirt)
- Make your committee happy with your theme – chairman decides and then gets committee excited about it
- Broad-based themes if going to include art show (too much to have an art show all dragons)

CopperCon 23 Discussion

- guests enjoyed it; attendees enjoyed it
- 289 room nights
- revenue from restaurant: \$5225; convincing others that keeping restaurant open is a good thing
- hotel is happy; interested in future business
- front desk staff sending security out for noise complaints generated by the front desk (guests didn't complain)
- quiet from a security standpoint
- dealers went home happy except for the one that brought gaming miniatures (Dragons Lair)
- dealers want to be open an hour after art auction ends – mention during art auction
- media guest – moderate success; might have gotten enough extra people to cover the extra cost (don't have the final numbers yet) – the guests enjoyed themselves
- registration data should be done and turned in to banker before leaving con
- registration should have a staff of c. 6, 4 people on at any time (1 dedicated to data entry)
- programming was organized in room; wished it had more experience
- programming 90+ comps – a little high (some may not have shown)
- signage – easels in lobby would be good – needed to be better
- liked location of consuite
- consuite needs to be larger, more social (maybe start using the other bedroom)