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Collaborating With Convention Services

CSMs are key partners at hotels and conventions venues

By **David Dvorak, CMP**

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David Dvorak, CMP

Vice president, catering and convention services, for Starwood Hotels & Resorts and president of the Princeton Junction, N.J.-based Event Service Professionals Association.

Tip Sheet

- Determine whether the facility allows CSMs to accept gratuities. Tips can be based on the extent of the CSM's efforts to ensure the success of the event. (For a glance at what planners typically give CSMs and other venue staff, see ["Tightening Up on Tips,"](#))
- If policy prohibits cash tips, consider a gift or token of gratitude.
- Appreciation in any form is welcome. If tips and gifts are not allowed (or not in your budget), acknowledge outstanding performance in a letter to the CSM and/or the CSM's boss.

The convention services manager (who alternatively might be called an event services, operations, catering or facilities manager, or even director of conventions/trade shows) at your host property or venue can play an integral role in helping you create an outstanding event.

Following are insights on what CSMs can do for planners, as gleaned from three members of the Event Service Professionals Association, based in Princeton Junction, N.J.: Zack Davis, CMP, convention services manager at the Louisville (Ky.) Convention & Visitors Bureau; Vanessa Kane, CMP, CMM, manager of meetings, events and exhibits for Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States; and Kathryn Gleesing, MBA, CMP, director of the International Foundation of Employee Benefits Plans, based in Brookfield, Wis.

CSM's Role The CSM is the liaison between the meeting planner and the other venue departments and staff members who are involved in the execution of your event.

A hotel CSM, for example, works with the reservation team to ensure housing blocks are correct and registration websites are ready to go when the planner needs them. They help the banquet department as well as the A/V team understand meeting room setups and timing. As a liaison between the culinary team and the planner, they provide F&B that suits budget requirements, dietary restrictions and seasonality.

Like hotel CSMs, convention center CSMs work closely with planners but on a larger scale. They move exhibits in and out with drayage companies, handle A/V production teams, arrange bus transportation and assess electrical needs. Essentially, they make large-scale tasks simpler for the planner to manage.

CSMs at convention and visitor bureaus are one-stop shops for coordinating elements associated with citywide events such as hotels, convention centers, transportation and permits.

Collaboration Ideally, the planner and CSM will meet during the site inspection. Once the contract for the event has been signed, the CSM becomes your main contact at the property or venue -- and you will be in contact frequently as the big day approaches.

Early meetings and other communications with the CSM should address essential elements -- type of event, number of attendees, catering needs, meeting room setup, A/V equipment requirements, etc.

Subsequent communications should address registration trends, room block pickups, changes to the program schedule, unique requests from attendees, décor and entertainment needs.

CSMs generally lead the preconference meeting with the planner and key venue staff, where intricate, final details are reviewed. The CSM's role is to ensure that the planner is comfortable with venue operations and that all departments recognize the event's importance.

These pros also coordinate the postconference meeting to debrief with planners on the success of the event and areas that could be improved.

The skills, talents and experience CSMs offer can prove invaluable in making an event successful, memorable and flawlessly executed.