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# GLOBAL VIEW

## Notes



## 11 More Questions to Ask on a Site Survey at an International Convention Center

*The International Convention Center Top Question List Revisited*

By Jen Brass Jenkins

**F**or trade show organizers moving into the global space, surveying the capabilities of convention centers (and the infrastructure of the destination) outside the US and Canada is an essential part of the job. A checklist of questions central to this task was covered in a previous article titled, “Top Questions to Ask When Selecting an International Convention Center.” This follow-up piece moves into a more in-depth analysis of these questions and suggests additional considerations when surveying the facilities required to expand your tradeshow reach.

### **What transportation is available from the airport to the venue?**

For any tradeshow organizer this is an obvious question, but consider the nuances: what sort of attendance can you expect at what hours because of transportation issues? What possible challenges could the attendee face when traveling to the exhibition center? Will your exhibition attendees want to visit this convention centre if it's too difficult to get there?

### **Can the venue or Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB) arrange your overnight stay?**

Often the venue representatives or CVB have special arrangements for their work with convention visitors and can arrange rooms at discounted rates or, possibly, for free. If you are able to, visit the hotel or hotels that are part of your hotel block as well to see what commodities are available and what the convention attendee's experience will be like.

### **What are the specific characteristics of the exhibition hall and conference rooms?**

When you get to the venue, do a walk through looking for these details:

- Ceiling height
- Floor material (carpet, concrete, marble, or other)
- Light sources, such as daylight
- Special odd-sized features, like pillars

Bring along a camera as well, and take pictures of the general space, features, conference rooms, outside approach, and anything else that will affect your preparations. Also check the amenities available in the conference

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rooms: size, quality, carpet, necessary audio-visual outlets, and Internet access.

### What kind of venue management will you be working with?

Certainly venue management is organized differently depending on the venue. Some have a business development manager who might handle the contract and signage after which your account will be handed over to a different team of managers that specialize in other aspects of the process. Another venue may have only one contact person work with you from beginning to end.

### What in-house departments are available for your use? Are there preferred or exclusive suppliers for the venue or CVB?

While you are at the facility, try to meet the in-house departments and/or recommended suppliers you will be working with. Since you may not return to the facility before the event kick-off, knowing who you will be working with for each aspect of the event— security, IT, catering, operations, housing, exhibitor services—is very important.

Specifically, what kinds of heating and/or air conditioning amenities are available, what energy outlets are provided, and what converters will you need for electrical appliances?

As those of you who regularly travel know, different countries have different energy sources and availability. This is a very important point to consider when managing the needs of your exhibitors, such as the available power sources, the amount of power they will need for any demonstrations or displays, and the atmospheric aspects of the space.

### What are the rules and regulations pertaining to waste management?

When it comes to waste disposal, many communities do not have as well-regulated procedures or availability as you may be used to. Be sure to ask what sort of disposal is offered and whether there are limits on the amounts that can be disposed.

Are there established procedures for emergencies or staff on hand for medical situations?

Obviously, when it comes to emergency situations we often take for granted the services offered in more developed countries. Ask the managers of the facility about their provisions for medical emergencies and the location of the nearest medical treatment facility or hospital. Do they have emergency medical technicians or other appropriately trained personnel available?

### What security is active before, during, and after the exhibition?

If your exhibitors are bringing specialized equipment for demonstrations or use during the exhibit, will it be secure during the times that the exhibition is closed? In converted exhibition spaces especially, where are the exits and entrances?

### Are there any government regulations governing Internet use you should be aware of?

Privacy regulations over social media outlets and Internet access vary from country to country. Inquire about government regulations as well as the security and encrypted features of Internet services in the facility you are surveying.

### Do you need any printed documentation?

Since most standard information for organizers is provided digitally, if you need printed documentation be sure to ask for it.

These questions and those listed in the previous article about international site surveys will help you better understand the nature of the accommodations available to you in the country you are visiting. This understanding is crucial for optimizing your tradeshow experience and client offerings as well as taking the best advantage of the space, services and surroundings available.

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