



ROGERS
WORLDWIDE

GLOBAL VIEW

Notes



Working with a Professional Conference Organizer

By Michelle Bruno

Every conference organizer knows how challenging event management is in an international setting. While in the US, an event organizer uses different planning and management companies for various aspects of the conference; internationally, it can be immensely practical to use only one event management company known as a Professional Conference Organizer (PCO). These companies provide a host of services to streamline the international conference planning process.

What services PCOs provide to US companies

While some PCOs offer only partial services or act as consultancies, and others only provide administrative support, many offer comprehensive, “soup to nuts” services. While US-based conference hosts are accustomed to dividing the meeting planning and on-site logistics tasks among several companies, full-service international PCOs can perform all of the tasks under one roof:

- Registration
- Venue contracts
- Accommodation booking

- Public relations
- Event promotion
- Transportation
- Meeting room set-up
- Food and beverages
- Off-site events

This comprehensive approach to service offerings helps reduce the stress of planning an international event, and simplifies a complex process that can be fraught with unknowns.

Why it’s a good idea to use a PCO

PCOs, besides providing the services outlined above, can also offer guidance on local etiquette, customs and business protocols. They have contractors experienced in providing the services necessary for large groups of people that US organizers would be hard pressed to locate or vet themselves. They can provide the most cost-effective resources for a conference and advise clients on any necessary safety or security measures that should be implemented.

Continued on page 2



How PCOs are compensated

Payments for services to a PCO come in several different forms. The company may work for a flat fee on a per-project basis or on a per-delegate basis. The PCO may also receive a commission from the hotels with which they negotiate housing blocks for the US conference host. Insurance plans for the host company may also be available through the PCO for which they receive a commission. According to Roslyn McLeod, managing director of Australia-based event organizer Arinex, the fee for PCO services are normally around 15% of the conference budget, but often less.

Where to find a PCO

To locate a PCO for a destination, there are two methods. First, look for an association local to the area in which the conference will be organized, such as the Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (<http://www.abpc.org/>), or the Professional Conference Organisers Association (<http://www.pco.asn.au/>) in Australia. If a local organization doesn't exist, use the resources of an international association, such as the International Association of Professional Conference Organizers (IAPCO; <http://www.iapco.org/>).

Tips for Working with a PCO

- Submit the Request for Proposal (RFP) for PCO review through an association such as those listed above. The RFP phase is actually a good time to test the waters on a potential partnership. It's better to discover early on that the intended partner is poor at keeping deadlines, communicating, asking questions or providing details—all critical aspects of a long-term relationship.
- Investigate the reputation of the PCO. Ask them how long they have been in business and the clients they have worked with; get contact information/references for their previous clients.
- Carefully negotiate the contract. Clearly list which services the PCO will be managing and which are left for the conference host to manage. Also, be certain to

enumerate rates and fees for each service provided and on what schedule the fees will be paid.

- Determine if all reports will need to be provided in print as well as by email.
- Elect a one or two-person team that will act as liaisons in the communications.
- Provide the PCO with as complete an outline of the event as possible or perhaps the history of a previous event, such as the following:
 - Revenue generated
 - Mailing list size
 - Previous destinations and venues
 - Delegate description
 - Meeting style description (academic, promotional, training)
 - Website address
- Work out a schedule for progress reports.
- Ascertain what management system will be used to track details, such as registration, spending receipts and expenditures.
- Plan an exact timetable for execution of the event.
- Determine whether volunteers will be part of the process.
- Determine who will coordinate and accommodate the speakers.
- Decide what need there is for translators.

POST-EVENT

- Determine if evaluation survey results are desired.
- Specify if a final financial report will be required from the PCO.

When planning an event internationally, partnering with a PCO can greatly aid the organizational process. Searching for a reputable PCO through a trade association, and using the RFP bidding process can aid conference hosts in locating a reputable partner. A PCO can bring issues to light that conference hosts may not have anticipated. They can often mean the difference between the success and failure of the conference.

Global View Notes is published by:
Rogers Worldwide

1550 E. Higgins Road, Suite 106
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

Contact:

Jeanette Mucha, LCB
Director National Sales
Tel: (847) 806-9200
Mobile: (847) 970-8017
jmuch@rerogers.com

Editor:

Michelle Bruno,
CMP, CEM
Tel: (801) 520-0797
michelle@brunogroup.com

Past Articles:

You can find all our articles archived on our web site.
www.rogersworldwide.com/content.asp?PageID=241

For a list of offices and agents of Roger Worldwide, visit:
www.rerogers.com/uploads/AGENTS052010.pdf