

Convention Organizer's Checklist

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About this Checklist. This checklist is not meant to just be something to check off as you do it. It also gives advice, both by suggesting what should be done for many checklist items and by the very existence of the item.

It's not comprehensive. Many specialized items are left out. This is intentional as otherwise you'll find that much of the list won't apply to your convention.

If you find that something is left out that you feel is important or you disagree with something said, please let me know: I wish to thank Kathryn Kane for her commentary on the contents of the checklist.

This Checklist is organized alphabetically with major topics showing with one "*", and subheadings related to it with increasing numbers of asterisks.

* Accounting Records.

** Checking Account. Have you set up a separate checking account, at least, to isolate convention versus personal or non-convention expenses? Use this account to make all deposits, payments, and reimbursements. Also consider how many people and who you want as signers.

** Receipts. Be sure to keep good records of the costs of organizing, conducting, and cleaning up (literally and figuratively) the convention. Have you set up a filing system (at least one by check number) to keep track of receipts for checks written?

** Deposits. Have you set up batches or other methods to track what went into each deposit? This will help you track down what happened to errant memberships.

**Deductibility. Have you identified what expenses pertain to the convention? Many of your costs (travel in promoting, part of personal telephone, etc.) can be written off against the cost of the event. Get the advice of a good accountant.

**Fiscal Year. Have you determined the fiscal year for the convention? For example, if the expenditures and income relating to the convention span two years, you might be able to file only one return - for the year the convention concludes. Otherwise, you should probably estimate and accrue expenses that will eventually occur to offset advance income. A messy business, taxes. If your convention will be ongoing, have the fiscal year end after the payment of your major bills relating to the convention, if you're on a cash basis.

(Quote to remember: "Nothing's certain but death and taxes." A. Capone)

** Interest Income. Will you be sustaining a large cash balance for more than just a few months? If so, look into interest-bearing checking, savings, money-market, etc. accounts. At the least, they can save you charges for maintenance of the account.

* Advertising. What forms of advertising will the convention use?

**Lead Time. Especially for magazines, be sure to allow sufficient lead time. Negotiate for special rates, especially for multiple submissions and non-profit or non-professional rates.

****Businesses.** A store or organization with similar interests might be willing to assist you in promotion. For example, a hunting goods store might be willing to put out fliers about an upcoming gun show. They might even be willing to sell advance memberships.

****Clubs and Organizations.** Get into contact and keep contact with convention-related area C&O's?? to keep them informed of convention progress.

****Conventions.** Conventions with similar interests have great potential for assisting in advertising. Consider 1) advertising in their publications (Program Book and Progress Report), 2) including your fliers with their mailings, 3) sponsor a party at the other convention (be sure to publicize it well at the convention and as much ahead of time as possible), and 4) set out fliers around the convention area (with their permission) or see if they'll pass them out along with their Program Book.

****Displays, including Posters.** Be sure to have tear-off slips or fliers for people to take with them. Check periodically for refilling. Naturally, get permission to set it up in advance.

****Fliers.** Print shops often have special rates for doing fliers (minimum 500 copies). The design has to be distinctive enough to stand out. Colors other than white are often a good idea, too. It's best to set them out where most people who would be interested in your convention would be passing. Fliers can also be used for bulk mailings by yourself or with other organizations so you can piggyback your flier with their mailing.

**** Public Service Announcements.** See Publicity Releases.

*****Publicity Releases.** These should be sent out to mass media (tv, radio, newspapers, cable, and magazines) with sufficient lead time for the particular publication. Use contact tools such as Finder Binder to determine individual and department to contact in each organization. The mass market will often list your event for free if given sufficient information that will let them determine that it's of interest to their readers, through Public Service Announcements. Be sure to send the P.R. to the PSA Director.

*****Television.** Ads to general public usually are most effective in week (or at most two) just prior to the convention. However, preparation of the ad usually takes several weeks. Costs are sometimes exchangeable for program book ad space.

(Quote to remember: - "Understatement is the best form of advertising." - D. Parton)

*** Art.** Is the convention going to be using original art for stationery, ads, and publications? If so, contact artists well in advance of the need and secure permission for the uses intended for the art.

*** Art Shows.**

Art Show Publications. Have artists been given full information about the event? You might consider separate Progress Reports, rules, etc. mailings to artists to keep them fully informed.

****Artist Space Limits.** Have you set a maximum/minimum number of flats or space that can be sold to each artist?

****Artist Supplied Fixtures.** Can artists bring their own displays cases, lights, hangings?

****Waiting List.** Have you provided for a waiting list in case space sells out? This will provide a quick resource in case of cancellations or if you decide to expand the show.

**** Awards/Ribbons.** Have awards categories been set up if there's going to be any judging? Have ribbons been designed and ordered? Have judges been recruited? If attendees are voting, is there a ballot box and voting forms?

****Flats/Hangings.** Are there sufficient quantities and in good repair? If you're having them brought in from out of town, have you detailed an agreement as to logistics, costs, etc.?

****Art Show Forms.** Have they been sent out to artists who have been accepted into the Show? Have you checked with other conventions to see what has worked in the past?

****Room Policies.** Have signs been made up to notify everyone of food, drink, and smoking policies?

****Insurance.** Are you providing insurance against theft, damage, etc.? Is the artist taking the risk...if so, make sure it's plainly stated in the rules for the show. You might also want to have the artist sign off on their taking that risk.

****Security.** If professional or convention security being provided for the Show? Is the room quite secure for after hours? Rules. Have they been sent to artists who have indicated interest in the Show?

* Auctions.

****Auctioneer(s).** Have auctioneers been arranged? Have they been kept up to date on the auctions?

****Credit Cards.** Do you plan to accept credit cards for sales? If you do, you'll probably need a telephone to verify the sale. Obviously, you'll also need to get your own merchant number or arrange to use someone else's.

****Rules.** Have rules been circulated to the attendees indicating times, items to be auctioned, preregistration requirements, payment terms?

****Runners.** Have you arranged for people to handle the art? This includes bringing it to the auction area, displaying it to potential buyers, and returning it to the sales/checkout area.

* Bank Account. It's usually a good idea to open a separate bank account to handle the income and checks involved with the convention. Tax and accounting people like this a great deal.

(Quote to Remember: "A penny saved is penny earned." - J. James)

* Banquets

****Identification.** If you're not opening you banquet to everyone at the convention, you'll need some form of ID so that those who paid can be let in. This can be a receipt, ticket, or something added or deleted from their membership badge.

****List.** Remember that at least one person in every crowd is going to lose their banquet payment receipt. Keep an alphabetized list handy to cover this.

****Selection.** It's always nice to give people a choice of menu selections, but do you have an accurate method of deciding how many of each entree to have available? A good way is to allow people who buy in advance to choose (if more than one is going to be allowed or you aren't going buffet style) and those who buy past a certain date have to take a pre-arranged selection. Remember the almost-obligatory vegetarian selection.

(Quote to remember: "But we had Meat Loaf just yesterday!" Columbia (Rocky Horror Picture Show))

****Ceremonies.** If your Banquet will include Awards or other items of interest, do you plan to open the event to non-banqueters?

****Facility/Hotel.** They will often decrease or eliminate charges on function space in return for having a banquet. But this will often be in the form of a guaranteed sale. Make sure that you have the ability to

adjust your guarantee as close to the event as possible with as little penalty as possible in case your pickup is lower than you'd forecasted.

****Setup.** The hotel should be able to give you maximum setups for the space. Be sure to take into account space for bars, displays, awards platforms, head tables, etc. in your space requirements.

****Advertising.** Have you included a signup form and pricing/menu information in your pre-convention publications? Have you provided for at-convention displays encouraging attendance if you're not sold out come the convention?

****Decor.** Are you having special decor for the banquet? The hotel/facility can usually set up any decor through their own decorators. You might not be allowed to use outside decorators, in fact. Only standard decor and place settings are included in the menu price unless a special package has been arranged.

****Cost.** What is the facility/hotel including in the quoted cost? Does it include tips/tax? Are you planning on upgrading the decor that comes with that particular menu selection? Keep all of this in mind when pricing the event.

****Complimentary/Special seating.** Are you having space reserved for special guests or award winners? If so, set the space aside to ensure that they will be able to attend. Keep complimentary seats in mind as well when planning on the cost/selling price of banquet tickets.

* **Beeepers.** If essential convention personnel are likely to be away from easy contact, consider renting beepers to maintain contact. See Radios - the radio log person can be the contact point for beeping people and posting messages.

* **Bids for Function/Hotel Sleeping Rooms.** Also see Hotel Contract. This is mostly beyond the scope of this publication.

****Convention Bureau.** Have you inquired of local convention bureaus for facilities that suit your needs? Contact suitable facilities to arrange tour and meeting with a Sales Manager. Do not sign anything until final contract (your form or the facility's) is prepared to your satisfaction.

****Tentative Holds.** Have you asked the Facility/Hotel to hold space on a tentative basis with right of first refusal (without a deposit)? This give you right to reserve space on a definite basis or release it on 72 hours or so notice if another group is willing to plunk their money down. It protects you against another group that wants the spaCe on a tentative basis (without putting money down or signing a contract) from having a better right to it than you.

* **Budget.**

****Forecasting.** Have you obtained actual results of similar events and revised those results to reflect the anticipated costs/income of your convention?

(Quote to remember: "A stitch in time saves nine" - B. Frankenstein)

****Contracts.** Does the budget reflect commitments that are known? Also see Program Participants, Hotel Contract.

****Revisions.** Are you updating the budget as actual expenses and revenue are incurred or are better predictable.

****Departmental Input.** Have the various department heads of the convention been involved in setting department budgets? Have they received feedback on allowed expenditures? Do they have a copy of their own budget?

* Bulk Mailings. A rate about « of normal mailing cost (1/3 if an IRS-certified non-profit group). However, mail isn't forwarded if the recipient moves. Also, extra cost for change of address notifications is requested.

* Bulletin Board. See Messages.

* Businesses. Also see Advertising, Car Rentals, Transportation. Have you asked businesses to be Official Sponsors? Especially for large events, heavily public-oriented corporations may wish to identify themselves with your event. For example, Pepsi or Coca-Cola companies.

* Business Licenses. Are they required where the convention will be held? The hotel can probably give you some idea. For most small events the government agency or agencies won't notice your event. For larger ones, however, it might be safer to inquire.

* Car Rentals.

*Dealers Room

**Hours. Are dealers aware of setup and teardown times and hours the room will be open?

**Security. Has after-hours security been arranged for the dealers' area? Are dealers aware of the policy for access after-hours? Is the room quite secure for after hours?

**Smoking Policy. Are the dealers aware of convention and facility policy? Are signs posted around the facility being used for the dealers' room?

* Deposits. The hotel and other suppliers of good and services may require deposits.

**Deposit Funding. Do you have sufficient funds to pay required advance deposits? Hotels may defer the deposit until closer to the convention if there are cash flow problems.

* Elevators/Escalators. If the facility/hotel has them, it's a good idea to ensure that they'll fix any that break down when they inevitably do break down. That's a good thing to have in the hotel contract as well.

* Employer ID Number. You'll need to apply for one if the convention is going to be a new entity. Contact the IRS for the form.

* First Right of Refusal. See Bids for Function/Sleeping

* Function Space. See Hotel Contract.

* Films.

**Technical Expertise. Do you have sufficient people recruited with the technical expertise to use the planned equipment?

**Breakdown Protection. Do you have spare projectors, extra bulbs, splicing materials?

**Film Ordering. Have you ordered your films sufficiently in advance to ensure getting those you want and in time for your event?

* Green Room (used for marshalling program participants prior to their going to their events). Is it close to the function space? Have program participants been told ahead of time where to find it? Is there enough space for all the participants for each time block to meet? Do you plan to serve food/beverages? See Hotel Contract, Corkage.

* Guests. See Program Participants.

*Handicapped Access. Have provisions been made to meet the needs of the handicapped? What problems are there regarding the physical site (lack of elevators, ramps, etc.)? Are Braille or ASLAN needed?

* Headquarters (Convention) - See (Convention) Office. Hospitality. See Hotel Contract, Corkage - Will you be providing a hospitality room(s) (complimentary food and drinks) to all attendees or a particular group of attendees?

*Hospitality Suite.

**Space Requirements. Is there sufficient space for the expected number of people to congregate (it's best for a large patio to be adjacent)?

**Damage Control. Have you provided for carpet or furniture protection against spilled food/drink? Have easily transportable valuables been removed (by you or the hotel, that is)?

**Hotel Contract. Is the hotel aware and have they cleared bringing food and drink into the hotel? Are you paying them corkage for the food and drink or are you buying it from them? This is a good thing to cover in the hotel contract.

* Hotel Contract. Do you have a signed agreement with the hotel that details all of the considerations that are important to your convention? Be sure not to sign any of the hotel or facility's own agreements without it addressing all of your concerns. These concerns include:

**Attrition. A popular (with hotels) clause in recent years is called "attrition". This means that if the event doesn't pick up

**Corkage. Is the hotel willing to allow you to bring in your own food and drink into the hotel? They usually won't for function space, but they often will for hotel rooms or suites. This can save a lot of money if you are providing guest, volunteer, or attendee hospitality. Sometimes they will waive it outright and other times for a fee. They even might waive it for function space if it's restricted to the con office, for example. However, hotels rarely will let you bring in catered food or beverages.

**Function Space. How much does it cost for the total event? Be sure to specify what rooms are included and for what nights. Also note if it includes setup and teardown time. If the rates are variable depending on sleeping room pickup, banquets, or other things, the measurement factor should be clearly defined (i.e., if dependent on sleeping room pickup, it should be clarified that the pickup includes nights two days before and after event, rooms rented by committee and attendees, and that con has right to pay to added rooms to reach rate break point).

**Insurance. How much does the facility require you to carry? In these days of high liability insurance costs, it's a major component of your budget.

(Quote to remember: "My insurance company?" (General G.A. Custer)

**Microphones, tables, chair's, staging, podiums, easels, stanchions. Is the hotel/facility going to charge for these items? If they do, they can cost as much as the facility rental itself. This is an extremely important item to have clarified. In some convention facilities you can rent the hall with or without it being set up (rates vary accordingly) and you can rent your own through approved vendors ("decorators"). Even in facilities that charge rent on these items, some smaller meeting halls may come with equipment.

**Parking. Will the hotel provide parking at no charge to all convention attendees? If they normally charge for parking, will they discount it for attendees? It should be stated in the contract.

****Power.** Is the facility charging for any or all power hookups? Have you planned to pass this-charge, if any, on to dealers, artists, or other vendors? Does the facility give some power hookups in certain areas for free, especially if pre-existing? Convention facilities often charge for hookups if a power grid is set up without pre-existing outlets. However, they usually will do a few hookups free for the convention (especially in registration and hq areas) and may allow free power in small meeting rooms. Hotels sometimes will charge for power, but usually only for unusual or heavy-load items.

****Sleeping Room Rates.** Amount hotel charges per night (excluding tax) for each room occupied. Obtain quote for single/quad occupancy if possible and if children can stay in room with parents for free. Also, state that special rates apply pre and post-convention for at least 2 days for convention attendees.

*****Right to audit.** Sleeping room pickup is important for many reasons, including minimizing risk for attrition, function space charges, and maximizing comped sleeping rooms. For this reason, a right to audit hotel sleeping room pickup is important. For example, it's good to be able to compare an alpha list of convention attendees against the list of all rooms rented at the hotel each night. That way rooms rented by attendees can all be located. Many times attendees rent rooms outside of the room block, but if the hotel contract is written correctly, they still apply as convention room pickup. After all, they're only renting a room because of your convention.

*** Information Desk.**

****Location.** Have you provided for one at-con? If so, is the location plainly noted on maps of the facilities given to attendees?

****Information Needed.** Have you provided the people manning the Info Desk with answers to commonly asked questions? Have they been given a city map, yellow and white pages, copies of past convention publications, program and film guides, etc.? Do they have the phone numbers of other convention and hotel departments?

****Communications.** Do they have a phone or other means of communicating with the rest of the convention and the outside world?

*** Insurance.** See Hotel Contract.

***Internet/Email, Web Site**

****Web Site.**

*****Download time.** Are the graphics light enough that someone with a slow modem can download without waiting so long that they give up?

*****Name.** Something memorable is always good, but often not available. Make sure to include the Web Site address on all of your printed publications and ads.

*****Updates.** Is the information being kept current, including downloadable copies of pre-convention publications, membership lists (if applicable and not confidential), Program information, and answers to recent questions? If someone requests info, it's likely other will want to know too, and this might be something to consider adding to the Web Site.

*****Contacts.** Are there contact links for convention departments so that requests for information can be routed directly to the right person?

*****Information Needed.** Does the web site include answers to anticipated frequently asked questions?

*****Payment.** Is there a downloadable or print-friendly membership or other payment form included in the site, along with PayPal or other web-enabled payment method(s)?

****Internet/Email**

****Email.** Make sure that email addresses are available in databases for volunteers/committee, program participants, and members. Much cheaper and faster, usually, than having to phone or mail publications out.

****Email contacts.** Wherever possible, and subject to privacy requests or requirements, ensure that people have appropriate ability to contact via email. This extends to putting email contacts throughout the Web Site, in publications and correspondence, and in committee publications.

* Lighting.

****Quantity, Quality, Location.** Is it sufficient? Art shows, Masquerades, and Award Ceremonies are likely going to need additional or specialized lighting.

****Supplier.** Will the facility/hotel provide it?

****Operators.** Do they require special operators of their own? Do you need to rent the lighting?

****Technical Expertise.** For special lighting, do you have people on convention staff who are qualified to set it up and operate it?

* Logistics. Also see Office Supplies.

****Vehicles.** See Car Rentals also. Have you arranged for sufficient rental or borrowed vehicles to transport convention materials on and then off site?

****Manpower.** Are sufficient volunteers arranged to handle this work? Remember that much of this type of work has to be done before everyone arrive on site and after everyone else is done with the convention.

****Carts.** Have you arranged for either borrowing the facility's/hotel's carts to load/unload? Remember that the hotel/facility carts may be occupied when you need them as that's the time they are probably also busy.

* Mail.

****Pre-Con.** Has a system been set up for distributing and routing mail received at the con's address to people responsible for responding to it?

****At-Con.** Has a mail slot or other system been set up to distribute messages etc. during the con? Does convention staff know where it's located.

****Critical Information.** Has an information-protection system been set up to protect the convention from loss of critical documents (such as membership info)? One way is for the mail clerk to keep photocopies of such essential documents before making distribution or a log of the distribution (for example, batch listings of memberships incoming).

* Maps. Do attendees know how to get to the convention? Your final publication going to attendees, dealers, etc. should include a map and directions. You might plan on large-sized maps in critical areas around the convention and that your convention information desk has copies.

* Membership Badges. See also Membership Badge Distribution, Registration, Membership Database.

****Pre-Convention.** Make sure that they're all prepared for pre-convention members. It's best to let everyone know, in your last contact with members, that they'd better let you know of membership transfers and name changes immediately.

****At-Convention.** Also, make sure that you have plenty of badge-making supplies on hand for at-convention changes and for memberships sold at the convention.

****Emergency Need.** If there is any possibility you might run out, locate a source for further supplies for at-convention use or have a backup badge system. Membership Badge Distribution. See also Registration, Membership Badges, Membership Database.

(Quote to remember: "Bodges? We doan need no stinkin' bodges!" – M. Brooks)

****Early Registration.** Have you provided for early handout (possibly at another location than the main Registration location) of badges for convention volunteers? Do the volunteers know where this location is?

****Alphabet Breakdown.** Have you set up for a breakdown into several lines for pre-convention membership badge pickup? (if there are sufficient numbers to justify this) Pre-Registration Procedure. Are people picking up their pre-prepared badges signing off that they've picked it up? Are you distributing badges to dealers, artists, or program participants in a different location than that for attendees? Are the dealers etc. aware of the location? (If you are splitting up locations for badge pickup, be prepared for people having to hike all over the world to find if someone screwed up and put their badge in the wrong place.)

* **Membership Confirmations.** People who buy memberships pre convention appreciate a postcard or letter confirming that they have their membership. Assigning a membership number for reference also helps.

* **Membership Database.**

****Computerized Databases.** Do you plan to use a computer for pre-convention or at-convention memberships? Ensure that the storage device(s) are sufficient to handle the expected membership size. Also that it can generate mailing labels when needed. For at-con use especially, have training sessions for Registration staff to use the system.

* **Press**

Committee Awareness. Is everyone working the convention aware of where to direct Press to so that they are handled according to your policy? Address Pass badge lets your convention security people and others know that the Press is aware of restrictions or other policies in place.

* **Program Book.**

****Plans.** Do you plan one other than a Program Schedule?

****Quantity.** Will you have sufficient copies printed for potential attendees? Consider giving one-day attendees Program Schedules and Guides only or having extras of each of these on hand in case you run out of Program Books. Extras, in emergency, can always be printed and mailed after the event (though this is an expensive way to go and often maddening to attendees).

****Ad Sales.** Do you plan to sell ad space in the Program Book? If so, start your effort well ahead of the convention and be sure to advertise rates in all convention publications.

****Production.** Do you have the expertise to produce the quality Program Book you wish? If not, it's never too soon to locate volunteer talent to assist, to find good places to print the final product, and to solicit material.

* **Program Participants.** See also Travel, Program Participant Name Signs, Program Participant Schedules.

****Financial Arrangements.** Have you made it clear what Program Participants are receiving for appearing on the Program? This may include the following:

***Travel. Is the PP having their way paid to the convention? What class of travel? If it's an allowance, how much? When are they needing to arrive and when should they depart?

***Speaker's Fee. Will one be paid? To what type(s) of guests? How many days and what activities does it cover? Are speaker's fees normally paid to this type of convention and this type of particular guest?

***Per Diem. Are food costs being paid? Should it be charged to the hotel room or is a lump amount being paid on a daily or event basis? Do they need to provide receipts? Since "Per Diem" implies "daily", make it clear the total dollar amount that's being paid so it is clear the amount you communicate isn't being paid each day.

***Hotel Room. Is the convention making reservations for PP's? Will the convention be guaranteeing the room or will they also pay all charges?

***Convention Memberships: Is the convention paying for the membership for the PP? And their Significant Others? Family? Friends?

***Special Events. Is the convention providing tickets to banquets or other events?

* Program Participant Name Signs.

**Purposes. Is there a card made up for each program participant signed up pre-convention so that it can be set in front of them during panels? Unless it's a one-person event, many attendees won't know who is who when two or more people are sitting behind a table. Even if everyone introduces themselves at the beginning, attendees arriving after the introduction won't know.

**Size. Also, is the sign large enough to read? It doesn't have to be giant-sized, but should be able to be read from at least 30 feet back.

**At-Convention Name Signs. Do you have materials and a person with good calligraphy to do at-convention name signs?

**Sign Pickup. If you have people appearing on more than 1 panel during the convention or haven't made up a different sign for each appearance of a guest on a panel, have you provided for pickup of the sign prior to the next event?

* Program Participant Schedule.

**Distribution Pre-Convention. Have you provided program participants with schedules and program topics before printing the attendee's program schedule? This gives you a chance to find that a program participant won't be able to make it to the convention for his/her first scheduled panel and make appropriate changes before you print and distribute the schedule to attendees.

**At-Convention Distribution. Have you provided a list of scheduled events for each participant showing the ones he/she is expected/invited to attend? It's usually best to make a pocket-sized card showing just those events.

* Program Schedule.

**Format. Is it printed in a fashion that people can separate it from any program book and carry it conveniently with them?

**Changes. Have you provided a well-publicized location to post program changes?

* *Public Service Announcements. See Advertising, Publicity Releases.

* *Publications, Ad Sales.

*Publications. Have you planned to sell ads in convention publications?

**Ad Rates. Are the ad rates for various size ads noted in each pre-convention publication, including rates for program book?

**Technical Requirements. Have you specified technical requirements for submission of ads, such as camera ready, half-tones acceptable, color ads, etc.? Publications, At-Convention. Have you provided for a mimeo, ditto, or copier for at-convention if you are doing publications during the convention? If not, is there a copy facility nearby that can do quick copying?

**Committee/Volunteer Newsletter. Consider doing such a publication to keep the committee up-to-date on convention details. It's also a good way to keep volunteers interested in the upcoming convention.

**Committee/Volunteer list. The Newsletter is a good place to list who's doing what. This way someone can let you know if they don't like their assignment or if they don't want a particular person working for them.

**Committee Meetings. This is also a good place to notify everyone of meeting times/locations.

**Committee Meeting Notes. The Newsletter could also carry a detail of business that passed out of the last meeting and other information for those not attending.

* Radios. See also (Convention) Office.

**Need. If your convention is spread over a large area or you're using a large hall that makes communications from one end to another difficult, you might consider renting radios. Pre-licensed radios are available for rent in most all cities.

**Type. FM frequencies rather than CB's are usually much better, especially since CB's can't punch through buildings.

**Use. Radios could be used by convention security so that they can be called and notified of problems immediately (be sure to have a base station radio with a nearby telephone so that FCC required logs can be maintained and so that a fixed point for contact can be kept). Other uses for radios include communications with places away from phone contact and technical crews setting up large halls.

* Receipts. Make sure that revenue-handling areas of the convention are supplied with receipts. This might be preprinted forms for memberships and art show or standard NCR and carbon forms for miscellaneous uses.

* Registration. See also Membership Badges, Membership Badge Distribution, Membership Database.

**Hours. Have you publicized the hours your registration will be open? Try having it ready (and the events and rest of the convention as well) to open prior to the announced time (unless opening 1 hour early would cause problems, such as items for sale to first arrivals). It reduces the opening crush of attendees arriving at the opening.

**Training. Are the Registration workers checked out on the procedure? Registration is the attendees first impression of a convention...it's important that it be a good impression. Also, make sure that pre-convention registration information is available to research problems.

* Sales Taxes.

**Taxability. Will admission to the convention be sales taxable? Art Show sales? Memorabilia sales by the convention?

****Third Party Sales.** Are items being sold at the convention be subject to sales taxes? If so, local and state licenses may be required. If items are being sold by others than the convention itself (i.e., if there's a dealer's room), you'll have to advise dealers of the convention's and government policy and tax rates that apply.

* Scheduling the Convention. Have you considered:

****Public Holidays.** Some holidays are great for conventions because people have time off to attend. Others are bad because people traditionally find other things to do. Labor Day versus Christmas, for example.

****Major Events.** State Fairs and other large-draw events can take people out of the convention-attending mood because they've already had enough activity for the time being. Check with the local convention bureau(s) for lists of upcoming events.

****Similar Conventions.** Sometimes similar activities can help attendance in both events, but that's often not the case. Trade publications will often list upcoming events p be sure to check several trade publications and several different issues. Try to avoid scheduling your event close to the time of other conventions. The size and proximity of the other, competing conventions determine how much you would want to separate yours from theirs.

****Dissimilar Conventions.** It's possible that different conventions from yours could share advertising, facilities, and costs to save both money. Weather. You might not be able to predict it, but you do know the averages. An outdoor event may not work too well if it's usually below freezing or if it's a season of heavy rain you might be tempting fate by having a reception scheduled outdoors without contingency plans.

* Shuttle Service. Also see Transportation.

****Facility/Hotel Separation.** If your facilities and hotels are widely separated (or more than an easy walk apart), you might look into setting up a shuttle service. Most cities have companies that will provide this service (for a fee, naturally). Make sure that your service is with vehicles large enough to service the likely number of people for each round trip and often enough to make it convenient.

****Attendee Notice.** Ensure that attendees know that the service exists.

****Shuttle Service Funding.** Hotels served by the shuttle that have arranged with you to house attendees will, if arranged in advance, often pay for a portion of the shuttle cost. This is usually based upon a fee per night that an attendee stays in a room.

* Signs. Also see Program Participant Name Signs.

****Sign Needs.** Ask the hotel, function facility, and committee what signs they will need well ahead of the convention. This way they can be prepared in advance and be somewhat standardized, which looks a lot better than scraps of paper with various (poor) penmanship used.

****At-Convention Sign Making.** Lay in a supply of material to make at-convention signs. Computer sign-making programs can work well. Artist/Calligrapher. An alternative to using a computer is to have a volunteer artist who is good at calligraphy

* Sound System. Does the facility come with an existing sound system?

****Quality/Volume.** Is it adequate for your needs?

****Microphones.** Are there sufficient microphones being provided by the facility?

****Operator.** Will the facility allow you to operate the system or do they have to supply someone?

**Technical Expertise. If you plan to do it yourself, do you have someone on convention staff with sufficient expertise to install and operate the planned system?

**Separability. If the facility has breakout rooms, is the sound system capable of being used selectively for each breakout room?

* Stationery. It's a good idea to design stationery letterhead paper and envelopes) and a business card for the chairperson and others who need one. Naturally, wait until you know the phone number and address you'll be using. If the address being used isn't exclusively for the convention's use, be sure that the Post Office knows it's okay for the convention's mail to come there. Otherwise they might return it as "not at this address".

* Suites. See also Hotel Contract. Do you anticipate demand for them for your convention?

**Rates. Have you arranged special rates with the hotel?

**Room Blocking. If you want to have special areas of the hotel reserved (such as a party or non-party area), have you arranged to assign the suites in your room block for the hotel?

**Suite Reservations. If there are limited numbers of suites in your room block, are all suite reservations going through the convention so they can be assigned as needed per the convention's priorities?

* Taxes. See Sales Taxes and Accounting (Fiscal Year).

* Telephones.

**Extra Lines. Most hotels and convention facilities can install phones (even give you private lines) without going through a phone company. Be sure to arrange needed lines well in advance.

**Hotel Contract. It's also a good idea to put into hotel contracts that existing, in place lines can be used at no charge (excluding long distance or toll calls).

**Calling the Convention. Make sure that a number for at the convention has been given to anyone who has reason to contact you during the convention.

* Telephone Number List. Especially for larger conventions, make up a phone list for essential hotel, outside facilities, and convention facility numbers and have it ready to be distributed for use at the convention. Every one is always wondering who should be contacted and at what number for particular things, such as housekeeping, security, logistics, etc.

* Tips.

**Front Desk. Are you planning on tipping the hotel/facility staff? It's a good idea to tip hotel front desk staff with flowers/candy at the beginning of a convention. Also, have cash on hand for tips during the conventions.

**Repeat Conventions. If you repeat each year, you might consider tipping convention setup, sales, front desk, and security personnel. \$10-\$25 per person, depending on their function and performance, is appropriate.

**Hospitality Suite. We usually also leave a tip for housekeeping staff that cleans up messy areas, such as the convention hospitality suite, and then a tip for each sleeping room. Also, you might consider a tip to be split among the housekeeping staff at large at the end of the convention.

* Trade Name Registration. Register your convention or organization's name with the Secretary of State or wherever. It lets you know if someone else has title to the name and gives you better rights in court against later comers using the name.

* Travel.

(Quote to remember: "I'll be home by Christmas" - N. Bonaparte)

**Official Airlines. Airlines will give large groups special terms and rates for travel by your group members on their airline in return for designation as "Official Airlines". The airlines will, in return, give you some free travel for convention representatives or guests (1 ticket for every 50 sold to convention attendees is fairly typical).

**Travel Agent. It can be beneficial to have a travel agent arrange the contract with the airline. He shouldn't charge you anything to do this ... instead, he might arrange for being designated the "Official Travel Agent" for your convention (it's not a good idea to make him the exclusive travel agent, however, as people often have their own agent they like to use) in return for assisting you.

* Transportation. See Travel, Car Rentals, Shuttle Service.

**Local Guest Transportation. Have arrangements been made for your convention guests to be picked up at the airport or wherever?

**Airport Shuttle. Do you need to set up a shuttle between airport and hotel or facilities?

**Hotel/Facility Shuttle. Are your facilities/hotels widely enough separated that you need to set up a shuttle among them? Be sure that everyone attending your convention has a map issued by you showing where the facilities are or a good enough a description that they can find you. See Maps. If you are setting up a shuttle, make sure everyone knows where the pickup/dropoff points are and when the trips are made.

* Video Program.

**Projector Image. Is your video projector's image large enough to be seen by people at the back of the room?

**Sound System. Is its sound system capable of being turned up for everyone in the room to hear it? If not, consider an amplification system or tying it into the room's existing sound system.

**Ordering Tapes/DVD's. Have your allowed sufficient lead time for getting them to the convention? Have you considered whether you're licensed to show the tapes or dvd's to an audience and received appropriate licensing or permissions?

* Video Taping. Do you plan to video tape the convention proceedings (part or all)? If so, have you obtained releases from people being tapes so you can show or sell copies? Is there sufficient lighting for the type of camera you are using? Do you have backup equipment in case critical equipment fails? Do convention people doing the taping have sufficient technical expertise to handle the job or do you need to hire someone?

*Volunteers. See also Workman's Comp Insurance.

** Volunteer Hospitality. Many conventions do special things for volunteers, such as t-shirts, arranging for them to meet guests, or providing a break room with food and drink (see Hotel Contract, Corkage).

**Special Inducements. Have you enlisted the aid of program or other departments to arrange for special inducements for volunteers? (keep in mind restrictions applying that would make an unpaid volunteer become a paid employee.)

****Break Room.** Is there going to be a room set aside as a volunteer lounge for people on standby or off duty? It's a good idea for volunteers to have somewhere to go periodically to unwind and relax.

****Food/beverages.** Will food be served to volunteers? It's a good idea to at least have beverages available as people tend to dehydrate when they get involved in a convention. Be sure to check with the facility for their policy about bringing in food and drink.

(Quote to remember: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!" - R. Van Winkle)

****Clubs/Organizations.** Do you have connections with local clubs/organizations with interests that mesh with your event(s)? They're a good source for enthusiastic (unpaid) help.

****Numbers.** Have you sufficient resources for recruiting volunteers? For labor-intensive conventions, you'll need about 10% of the number of attendees as a gauge of the number of volunteers required. Also, unless your convention workers are paid, always allow for at least 1/3 more than you think really are needed as volunteers (by their nature) sometimes don't show up or don't appear when you arranged.

****Recruiting Attendees.** Are you asking attendees to volunteer time? Many people attending an event will put in a few hours each day (customary is 4 per day) to assist the event. It's your challenge to make doing this sufficiently easy to do and interesting enough for attendees to volunteer. It's also best to do as much recruiting as possible ahead of the event through checkoffs on membership forms and signup sheets in convention publications.

**** Volunteer Database.** Do you plan to set one up? It's a good way to keep track of who has volunteered and to do mailings to all or specific groups of volunteers. It also lets you know how you stand in your volunteer recruiting.

**** Volunteer Recruiting.** Are you soliciting attendees, through a volunteer form to complete or a checkoff in the membership blank, to volunteer to work the convention?

*** Workmen's Compensation Insurance.** If your convention workers are unpaid volunteers, it's a good idea to have them sign a statement to that effect along with a declining of coverage under Workmen's Compensation. Check with state laws and perhaps an attorney, or else similar groups in your area.

(Quote to remember: "Break a leg!" - M. de Sade)