

## Useful Sources for Meeting Planning Information

by Ben Yalow

The following are useful sources for Convention planning. These are some of the ones used by professional planners. While we have a different set of needs and problems, many of their sources contain information useful to us. On the other hand, much of what they say is useless or inapplicable - but it's probably worth following up on at least the free resources.

Magazines:

All of the following are free to "qualified" subscribers - which means pretty much anybody involved in putting on lots of meetings. In short, probably everyone here. You can usually get a subscription form by writing to the address listed. If not, the back of any one of them usually has a free card you can send in to start your subscription.

Meeting News (from Gralla Publications)  
PO Box 1785  
Riverton, NJ 08077-9785

Meetings & Conventions (from Reed Travel Group)  
PO Box 173331  
Denver, CO 80217-9427

Successful Meetings (from Bill Communications)  
Circulation Department  
633 Third Ave  
New York, NY 10017

Of these, Meeting News is a tabloid newspaper size, the other 2 are standard large magazine size. All appear (roughly) monthly. M&C has a special issue in March (the Gavel issue) which has a fairly complete listing of almost everyplace with function space, professional societies, etc. Successful Meetings does the same thing, also in March, called the Sourcebook issue.

There is also the Official Meeting Facilities Guide, which costs \$30 (2 issues/year) and has more detailed information about the various properties. Since you need to pay big bucks to be listed there, only the larger or pricier hotels are listed there, and the extra detail isn't that great. It's also generally somewhat cheaper to subscribe in response to them soliciting you (you usually get an extra free issue or two), so if you want it at all (which you may very well not), wait until you get a mailing from them (and if you subscribe to the 3 freebies I listed above, you will get a mailing from them - as well as more junk mail from properties than you know what to do with.)

Meeting News also sponsors 2 meetings every year on meeting planning. Meeting World is held on the East Coast in July, and Meetings West is held on the West Coast in November. Generally, you'll get solicitations from Meeting News if you subscribe. There are usually free, exhibit-only tickets that you can get if you wait for the right mailing. The sessions cost about \$50 each and last an hour. They usually aren't worth going to at that price. On the other hand, tapes are generally available afterwards for a few dollars per session. (Note: Anybody who has had a ride in my car right after I get the tapes can tell you they're really surefire ways to get some sleep - but about half of them have some really useful information, if you can figure out which ones.)

Most hotel chain generally have good listings of all of their properties with meeting space. The best one is from Marriott, with the other chains of varying quality. You can generally get them by writing the National Sales Office for the chain that covers your district - they're usually listed in the phone book.

A number of planner organizations also exist. Generally, it's fairly expensive (a few hundred dollars per year) to join. A number of them also have things like meeting insurance programs, or other useful stuff. You can write to them for more information. The ones most closely related to us would be:

American Society of Association Executives  
1575 Eye St NW  
Washington, DC 20005

Meeting Planners International (this one is the biggest planner group)  
1950 Stemmons Frwy, Suite 5018  
Dallas, TX 75207

A group, which is an umbrella organization of 20+ other groups, is

Convention Liaison Council  
1575 Eye St NW  
Washington, DC 20005

(Note: This group has just recently come out with a new, non-binding arbitration program for dispute resolution. I don't know of anybody who has used it yet, but there have been a number of articles which have indicated why this may be better than the AAA arbitration that many conventions have in their contracts.)