

50 Ways to Save Money Planning Meetings

Here are 50 ways to cut costs when planning your next meeting.

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Tips for achieving cost savings through a combination of reducing expenses, avoiding costs, and good negotiating, courtesy of Dorie Deebold, managing director, Starwood Hotels and Resorts Philadelphia, and Rick Kauffman, business development manager, ITA Group:

Planning

1. Choose your locations wisely. Look for hot dates, off-season rates, and lower-tier destinations.
2. Be flexible with travel patterns.
3. Use electronic communications instead of print.
4. Prioritize your concessions and negotiate what's most important to your group.
5. Take advantage of volume buying with vendors, such as booking multiple meetings with a property at the same time.
6. Generate a cost-savings/cost-containment report for each meeting to show how much money was saved.
7. Use preferred vendors for volume discounts.
8. Consider airports hotels, which tend to have lower rates and fewer transportation costs.

Hotels/guest rooms

9. Negotiate complimentary guest rooms based on pickup, such as one per every 40 rooms.
10. Have resort fees and Internet fees reduced or waived, at least for VIP or staff rooms.(Try for the full block if possible.)
11. Disallow early departure fees on rooms.
12. Make sure rooms booked after cutoff date are at the contracted rate.
13. Negotiate rooms booked pre- and post-convention at contracted group rate.
14. If you have to cancel the meeting, put the cancellation funds toward a future meeting at the property.
15. Have [attrition](#) based on hotel occupancy, so each night the hotel reaches 95 percent occupancy, you pay no attrition.
16. Get complimentary access to health club or lounge for VIPs.

Meeting rooms and F&B

17. If adequate meeting room space is not available and suites are used as breakout rooms, have suite charges waived or reduced.
18. Have standard setup fees and meeting space rental fees waived.
19. Reuse signage from meeting to meeting.
20. Negotiate complimentary beverages for on-site staff office.
21. Ask the CVB if they will host any events or offer entertainment options at no cost.
22. Book restaurant reservations using a group credit card to avoid [DMC](#) fee.
23. Negotiate a sliding scale for F&B at a hotel.

Audiovisual

24. Negotiate discounts with the hotel's in-house AV provider as part of your preferred-vendor agreements.
25. Ask to have service charges waived for using an outside AV provider.
26. Have service charges waived on local calls.
27. Require free high-speed Internet access in staff office and meeting rooms.
Have free phone lines installed in meeting office.
28. Get discount on photocopier and printer rentals for the on-site office.
29. Ask for complimentary power strips and extension cords in staff office.
30. Ask for free podiums, microphones, and easels.
31. Try to piggyback on staging and rigging for events before and/or after your meeting.

Décor and entertainment

32. Require free use of hotel linens and buffet décor.
33. Reuse table florals at meals.
34. Reuse table draping and other decorating materials.
35. Reduce travel expenses by using local entertainment and speakers.
36. Look for creative hotel function space and décor, such as the rooftop, the loading dock area, and the kitchen, and use existing props.
37. Get reduced power and electrical fees for entertainment and for outdoor function lighting.
38. Have trucking fees waived or get discounted delivery fees.
39. Make sure the stage for entertainment is complimentary.

Activities and transportation

40. Book flights as early as possible—the savings can be significant.
41. Seek discounts on golf tee times, bottled waters, and towels on carts.
42. Ask for discounts for spa treatments.
43. Inquire about complimentary VIP and staff airport transfers.
44. Avoid individual airport transfers when possible; book in groups.
45. Ask CVB for discount or free tickets to shows, entertainment, or other services.
46. Ask hoteliers for complimentary VIP transfers (also ask if they have a house car you can use).
47. Seek reduced pricing on destination management company activities.
48. Keep activities on site to minimize transportation costs.
49. Use DMC to staff hospitality desk instead of in-house staff.
50. Check all invoices carefully for billing errors.