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What to Look for in your Hotel/Venue Contract

General Venue Details: As you are sourcing venues, even before you get to the contract phase, it's important to understand the following about your preferred/chosen venue and how it affects your attendees.

- **Location:** How easy is it to get to the venue by regular means of transportation (air, car, public transport, etc.). Evaluate where your attendees are coming from.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure the entire venue is accessible for all attendees – not just the meeting spaces.
- **Parking and Transportation:** Assess the parking availability for attendees. Collect rates and garage locations from the venue. Ask the venue about the approximate cost of a taxi/rideshare from the airport.
- **Site Visit:** If feasible, tour your preferred property and see the meeting space and guest rooms physically before the contract is signed to make sure that it will fit with your program and event goals.

The following are key elements to review in the contract and with venue staff prior to final signature

Sleeping Room Blocks

- **Sleeping Room Rate:** Identify the room rate per night in the contract. How does this rate compare to previous years' meetings?
 - Note whether the room rate changes depending on the number of people staying in the room (often, the rate increases for triple/quad occupancy).
 - Identify the room tax and any resort fees. These fees are usually added on per night, not just once. If there is a resort fee, what does it include? Tip: Ask for the resort fee to be waived or reduced.
 - How will room reservations be made – will the hotel provide a booking link for attendees to use, or will organizers be providing the hotel with a rooming list?
 - Is internet access in guestrooms complimentary?
 - Is there a different process for an attendee to book an accessible room?
- **Room Block Grid:** How many rooms per night are you requesting? Typically, this works best if it's in a bell curve. (Exhibit A)
 - If you have any historical data on final room pick-up from previous events, these are excellent references to help identify your room block needs. When



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in doubt, be conservative in your estimation as there is often a financial liability for unused rooms.

- **Attrition:** The attrition rate is the number of room nights we must meet without financial penalty.
 - What is the listed attrition rate? Is this cumulative or per night (80% attrition of total room nights vs 80% of rooms each night)?
 - For example, if you have a block of 50 rooms on Tuesday, and 50 rooms on Wednesday night, at an 80% cumulative attrition, your party will have to book a total of 80 room nights between the two days. If this does not happen, the contract signor would be responsible for paying for the unused rooms up to the 80% mark.
 - If you are requesting a small room block (40 rooms each night or less), it's a good cost-saving tip to try to negotiate a contract with no attrition. If you are also using meeting space at the hotel, you might be able to negotiate this.

Meeting Space

- **Space Rental Fee:** Understand the full rental fee, including any taxes or service charges.
 - Depending on your specific conference, you can potentially negotiate complimentary meeting space as long as you meet a certain food and beverage minimum (before taxes and fees).
- **Setup and Breakdown Times:** The contract will state the start time and end time of the rental period for each meeting space you will occupy.
 - Access Hours: Confirm when you can access the meeting space for setup and when your rental period ends. Your program should be built around your contracted rental period and there could be additional rental fees if your program extends past these times.
 - Time Allocations: Ask about any extra fees for additional setup or breakdown time. Depending on your conference, the venue could potentially rent your meeting space to another group moving in if, for example, your contracted rental period ends at 12:00 PM on the last day of your program.
- **Room Capacity and Set:** The venue should be able to provide you with detailed floorplans of their event spaces with the square footage of the meeting rooms listed.
 - The floorplans will also include the maximum personnel capacity based on how the room is set (theater, classroom, banquet, etc.)
 - If your meeting will have AV components (projector, screens, stage/riser, audio, etc.), this will reduce the maximum amount of people that the room says it can accommodate on the published floorplans.



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- The goal of your event should play a factor in how the room is set up. If group discussion is a big portion of the programming, a theater style set up won't be as effective as banquet rounds (exhibit B). However, with banquet rounds, you won't be able to fit as many people in your contracted room as you would with a theater set.
- Ask the venue what furniture is included in the room rental and what, if anything, you would need to rent. If you are at a unique property, you might have to rent certain furniture where if you are at a hotel property, most basic event furniture is included in the meeting room rental.
- Potential Hidden Cost: If you want to change the set up of your contracted room at any point in your program (i.e. reset the room from theater set to banquet rounds for an evening dinner), the venue will often charge organizers to reset the room.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure the meeting space is accessible for all attendees.
 - Pay attention to the path the attendee takes from public spaces (like the lobby and/or guest rooms) to get to the meeting space. Note if there are any stairs (even just a couple!) that could limit someone with mobility restrictions from entering the meeting space.
 - If there is a stage/riser that presentations will be given from, does the hotel have a ramp (if required) and/or stairs with handrails in their furniture inventory?
- **Location:** Where is the contracted meeting space in relation to other public areas of the property? For example, is the meeting space right off the lobby or near the gym and/or pool?
 - Is there another group holding a meeting while our meeting is going on? If so, where is their meeting space in relation to ours?

Food and Beverage

- **Food and Beverage Minimum:** The F&B minimum is the minimum contracted spend on venue catering that you must hit **before** you account for service fees, admin fees, and taxes associated with catering.
 - Identify in the contract the F&B minimum. If you were able to negotiate waived or reduced meeting room rental, it would also be noted here. If you do not hit your F&B minimum and your meeting room rental was waived/reduced, you could be subject to the hotel adding in meeting room rental costs.



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- Note the contracted service fee, admin fee, and tax rate. These can be subject to change depending on when the contract is signed and when the meeting will take place.
- Cost saving tip! If your meeting will take place in Q1 of the new year, ask if the hotel will allow you to use the previous year's menu pricing. If not, you can expect menu pricing to go up 3-5% year over year.
- Based on the catering menu provided by the venue and the food functions in your program, how likely is it that you will meet this figure based on your projected attendance?
- If you are at a hotel property, you will not be able to bring in a third-party catering company. If your meeting is at a unique location (historic property, university, etc), there may be more flexibility available, but you still could be required to use the venue's exclusive and/or preferred vendors for certain services.

Audio Visual

- **Equipment Availability:** Identify with the venue if there is any AV included in the meeting room rental. Discuss your equipment and onsite tech support needs with the in-house AV provider so they can provide a realistic estimate of the costs to help build your budget.
- **Meeting Room WiFi:** Is WiFi in the meeting spaces complimentary? This is especially important to verify because every property is different. Costs for internet services will also vary with every property/location.
- **Third party/Outside vendors:** Depending on the venue, you may have flexibility to bring in an outside AV company. There are pros and cons to going this route, but we recommend getting a quote from the in-house AV provider to help establish your budget. One benefit of using the in-house AV company is the convenience of having them already onsite. If an extra piece of equipment is needed last minute, it's often easier for the in-house provider to procure it.

Additional Fees and Charges

- **Service Charges, Admin Fees, and Tax:** The most commonly seen fees in an event contract. These fees are often tacked on to catering services and room rental. You might also see these fees added to the cost of AV services.
 - All (or a percentage) of the Service Charge may go to the staff that services your event as a gratuity. The Admin Fee is usually applied to help offset the costs of utilities and equipment. The property should be able to explain the fees they add on.



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- **Hidden Costs:** Request a detailed breakdown of additional fees (e.g., cleaning, security, overtime charges) that you could run onto that aren't spelled out in the contract to avoid unexpected expenses.
- **Payments and Deposits:** Make sure you are aware of all deposit amounts, payment schedules, and cancellation fees per the contract.

MISC Helpful Questions to ask Venue Staff:

- Is there another group in house over our meeting dates?
- Can you provide a detailed list of all amenities and equipment available onsite?
- What is the protocol for dealing with emergencies during the event? If the property has a written plan for emergency situations, ask for a copy.
- Verify if you need to provide insurance and what coverage is required. If you are using any outside vendors (for AV, posterboards, photography, entertainment, etc), ask if your vendors need to have their own insurance.
- Are there any restrictions on décor, lighting, or noise levels that we should be aware of?
- Does the venue provide security staff, or will we need to hire our own? What are the costs involved?

IMPORTANT! Be curious and ask questions of the property before and during the sourcing process. If there is something that you don't understand or need clarification on – ask! Don't be shy to ask the venue to clarify anything that is discussed.



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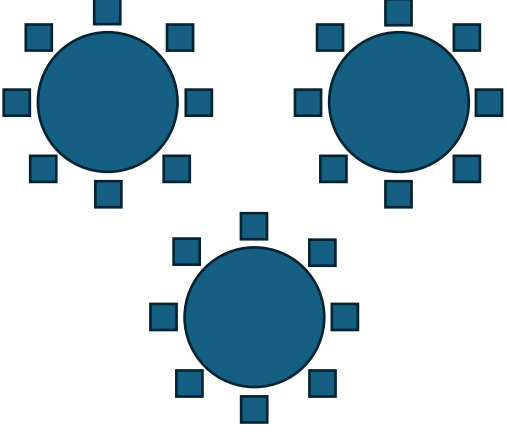
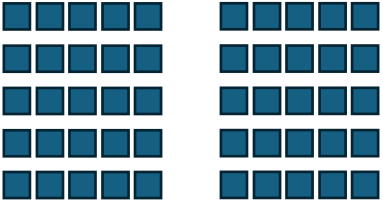
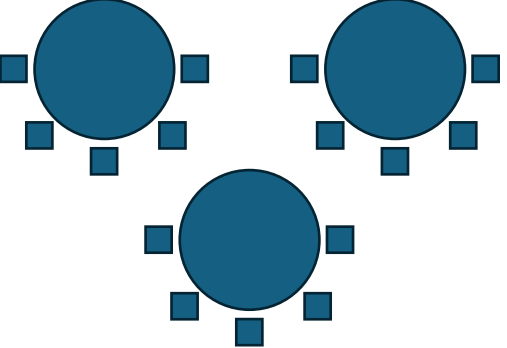
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Exhibits

A. Example Room Block

Monday, October 28	Tuesday, October 29	Wednesday, October 30
45	50	40

B. Example Meeting Space Set Up Styles

<p>Rounds</p> 	<p>Theater</p> 
<p>Semi-Rounds</p> 	<p>Classroom</p> 