

Some hotels charge a penalty if estimated room occupancy is not met. Negotiate room reservations and penalties if not used. Consider other area events occurring on the same weekend that could possibly ensure no remainder rooms as negotiation leverage. Set a schedule to evaluate room reservations periodically for ability to release rooms reserved without financial liability. Be sure to check with other recent hosts to determine expected room occupancy.

Visit hotel sites to inspect facilities and meet with convention sales managers.

In contract negotiation, secure a suite for the SRAPPA President and certain number of free rooms based on booked rooms.

The Spring Board Meeting held the February or March preceding your conference, is a good time to solicit freebies such as a free meal for the board members and their attending spouses to showcase the hotel's catering and cooking skills. This should be negotiated when signing hotel contract.

Select the hotel you feel would best serve your convention needs and negotiate the best room rates possible. It is always preferable to have the convention (including educational space and exhibit space) in the hotel of choice.

Review suggested convention dates and hotel information to the SRAPPA Board of Directors for approval at its annual meeting.

Request start-up funds from SRAPPA Secretary/Treasurer and open a bank account.

Determine the "theme" for the annual meeting. (Example: 2005: Takin' Care of Business in Memphis; 2006: Green Leaders in the Bull City)

Prepare preliminary conference budget

Schedule planning committee meetings weekly or more frequently as needed

Phase III: 12 to 18 months prior to your conference date

Be prepared to present preliminary budget, hotel site, hotel rates, preliminary conference fees, and conference date at the board meeting of the prior year host (18 months prior to your conference).

Sign a contract for vendor booth setup. Select a convention services company (vendor booth setup) that also handles drayage. Some hotels will not except shipments made to the hotel by vendors due to a lack of storage space; it is necessary to have a company who will receive shipments.

Develop a logo

Prepare a preliminary agenda, plan entertainment events and spouse's agenda. Consider contracting with an event management company to assist in events such as: golf tournament, spouse events, entertainment, etc.

Finalize registration forms for attendees and vendors.

Secure an exhibitor's booth at the annual meeting preceding yours and plan your exhibits as a promotion to encourage attendance at your meeting. Bring inexpensive souvenirs that represent your area and give them away as free gifts. (Booth is provided by host committee free of charge)

Plan to have members of your planning committee attend the annual meeting prior to yours. This will give them an opportunity to observe the process and ask specific questions of people responsible for events similar to those that they will be responsible for. Be prepared to staff vendor booth providing information concerning your next year's conference.

Have a web site for your conference completed and ready to be linked to the SRAPPA web site as soon as the conference before yours is over. Work with the Vice President for Communications of SRAPPA to have your web site linked to the SRAPPA web site.

Phase IV: 6 to 12 months prior to your conference date

Be prepared to present final hotel rates, final conference fees, and updated budget at the board meeting of the conference prior to yours.

Secure mailing addresses for SRAPPA members and exhibitors. (Check with SRAPPA VP for Communications and host of the previous SRAPPA convention.)

Submit reminders and preliminary information to SRAPPA VP for Communications and web page throughout the year.

Determine educational theme and issue a *Call for Papers*. Notify presenters by the May preceding your conference.

Develop sponsorship opportunities.

Mail letters and registration forms to vendors and sponsors soliciting participation; coordinate mailings with Board Members so that they can solicit vendors with whom they have previous relationships.

Determine method of booth selection for vendors, i.e. first to sign up, first to select booth, upon receipt of payment, etc. Based on method, begin booth selection process with vendors.

Begin distribution of conference registration materials (either by mail or email). Continue with mailings or emails throughout the time to remind and encourage participants to register.

Set up detailed spreadsheets to record all registration and financial transactions. SRAPPA will want this data when the conference is over for the ongoing database. Keep in mind the information that can be used in planning future conferences, especially concerning sponsorships, how many are registered by certain dates, and what percentage of participants eat which meals and attend other activities, etc. Track when people register (how many months, weeks before the conference) for SRAPPA database.

Between October and December establish a date for the spring mid-year SRAPPA board of directors meeting which is held in the hotel where the annual meeting will take place. This meeting is usually held in February or March, beginning with Friday dinner and ending with dinner Saturday. Adjacent hotel rooms are secured for Friday and Saturday night by the hosting school for all board members. A suite large enough to hold board meetings is provided for the SRAPPA President; if this is not possible, a conference room will have to be booked. All costs for the Spring Board Meeting with the exception of any gifts given to board members are covered by SRAPPA.

Someone from the hotel, preferably the convention sales manager, should be available on Saturday to guide the board on a tour of the hotel. A typical agenda includes Friday night dinner at a local restaurant, and Saturday breakfast and lunch at the board meeting and dinner Saturday night.

Discuss catering costs with your hotel catering manager as well as other establishments where you plan to serve food or drinks. Try to take advantage of local and regional foods. Work closely with your hotel convention sales representative, the hotel catering manager, and your decorating company. They do this daily and can offer very valuable advice on almost every aspect of your meeting. They are also great at helping solve the many daily problems that arise "behind the scenes" during your convention. Catering cost will be your greatest expense. Work with your catering manager to manipulate and manage menus and quantities served.

Phase V: 0 to 6 months prior to your conference date

Plan to give a conference update at the board meeting. You also may be requested to give a conference update at the APPA Annual Conference usually held in July.

Continue to send registration reminders to mailing lists for both attendees and vendors.

Select color for host/volunteer shirts; use item as a sponsorship opportunity and place order.

Security guards charge by the hour; therefore, the schedule you supply to the security company, if the hotel or convention center requires security, is very important.

Choose team members early; determine method of time-spent compensation (preparation and weekend itself) prior to selection, i.e. will worker be released from regular workload to help in preparation? Will worker receive time or money compensation for time spent (and ensure your HR department is in agreement)?

Design and arrange purchase of conference bags; this is an excellent opportunity for sponsorship. Stress functionality (size, beverage carrier) for continued use.

Check historical data and adjust according to your conference site; percentage of attendees at meals will be lower in large cities. Plan adequate menus; a reception from 6 or 7pm to 10pm should include something more substantial than simple hors d'oeuvres; breakfasts should consist of more than muffins and Danish.

Be sure to confirm a suite for SRAPPA President (if negotiated in contract) and notify hotel conference manager that it is necessary for Board Members to have rooms close to one another.

Determine memorabilia/gifts to be given to attendees and place appropriate order.

Determine gifts to be given to presenters and place appropriate order.

Determine presents, plaques, and recognitions that will be given and place order. Verify with SRAPPA President.

Design program brochure and registration package. Include a booth layout in the package.

Set a deadline for abstracts and bios from presenters. Make arrangements to have these burned to a CD for distribution in the registration packet.

Decide if a T-shirt exchange will be part of your program. This information must be included with the registration material.

Prepare and mail exhibitor packets and acknowledgement material. All costs, such as electricity and Internet connectivity, should be included or clearly spelled out. Construct computerized layout of exhibit hall so layout can be shared via email at anytime; one person only to make modifications to layout.

Determine layout of exhibit hall with regard to staging, food and tables.

Purchase one large prize to be given away at the end of the exhibit show (or at the banquet). Determine how you administer the drawing and how attendees are eligible. (Suggestion: Bingo; have a method for attendees to visit each booth and receive a sticker from the vendor; completed bingo cards make them eligible for the grand prize.) Make sure the method is communicated to attendees and vendors.

If you plan to have text of educational session pre-printed, this would be a good time to contact a local printer.

Arrange for a professional photographer to take formal and candid photos (electronic preferred) of all events and provide a disk for showing at the Annual Banquet and forwarding to the SRAPPA Vice President for Communications immediately thereafter. (The VP for Communications must file an article on the conference with APPA soon after the conference, and it must include pictures.)

If possible, get letters signed by the mayor of your city and the governor of your state welcoming the SRAPPA participants. These letters would be included in the packets given out at registration.

Order or purchase all memorabilia and gifts for speakers, spouses, and board members. Solicit/purchase door prizes for vendors and attendees. Identify spouse/guest host committee and individuals to be responsible for each programmed event.

Secure materials for badges. Make sure that spouses get badges. Also have ribbons that identify SRAPPA Board members, sponsors, speakers, APPA Board members, hosts, and vendors.

Order direction signs to SRAPPA activity areas in the hotel and for educational sessions. Well thought out signage is crucial to a smoothly run event.

Finalize transportation arrangements if necessary for events.

Open a line of credit with the hotel for direct billing after the event.

If the hotel has a marquee, have "Welcome SRAPPA Members" placed on it.

Work with florist on design of centerpieces; consider slight modification for reuse at various events. Pay extra for their delivery and setting, retrieval, and redelivery when needed.

Consider event insurance, commonly called "show-stoppers"; contact Secretary-Treasurer of SRAPPA to utilize SRAPPA insurance connections (cost must be borne by host committee).

Get information from the President and make audio/visual arrangements for speakers.

Finalize food and beverage catering arrangements with the hotel or outside establishments.

Finalize registration schedule and individual assignments.

Assemble bags with conference information to be given to all registrants, spouses, and guests upon arrival.

Schedule host/volunteer personnel to assist at each educational session.

Line up staff to introduce educational sessions. These people do the speaker introductions, and it is a great opportunity for host institution staff to get public speaking experience.

Review exhibit area and regroup booths if necessary so there are no glaring empty spaces.

Exhibits will often cover up booth numbers so prepare large numbers to attach to front of exhibits.

Make special signs to acknowledge booths of sponsors, business partners.

Compile detailed script of announcements to be made at each conference event, and who will make them. Include information on transportation, times of events, and prizes to be awarded.

Phase VI: At the Conference

Ensure that table set up at Board meeting is appropriate. Have coffee, tea, and juice available at all times.

Double check all microphones and other equipment before each event.

Have numerous staff circulating during exhibit hall setup actively offering to help.

Have light refreshments, especially coffee, ready as soon as exhibit hall opens for setup. Have coffee and light drinks available for exhibitors at all times hall is open.

Have laptop with conference information, forms, printer, extra office supplies, scissors, duct tape, sewing kit, etc. at hotel.

Have staff ready at dances to take the floor. Have backup for special foods; ask staff to eat last.

Make a list of prizes in the order they will be awarded, with donor and blank space for winner. This is another example of very useful historical information.

Ask your photographer to make sure that photos taken in the exhibit hall include the company name of the booth in the photograph.

Ask SRAPPA members to drop their business cards in one box for drawing the smaller prizes. Provide blank business cards and pen if they don't have business cards.

Provide evaluation forms at each educational session; have session introducer collect the forms at the end of the session.

Have nice door prizes (e.g., golf weekend donated by host resort) for drawing exclusively for vendors. They are critical to the financial success of the event, so SRAPPA needs to keep them happy. You can have a third box containing their booth numbers/names already made up.

At every opportunity (e.g. meals) thank exhibitors and sponsors and stress need to visit the booths to support exhibitors.

Phase VII: After the Conference

Congratulate yourselves!!!

Have a party for all the volunteers and helpers to show your appreciation for all their hard work and time sacrificed.

Send disc containing all digital photographs taken at the conference to the SRAPPA Vice President for Communications immediately after the conference; this is needed for reports to APPA.

Send thank you cards to special guests and major participants.

Send registration (names, addresses, institutions/companies), meal participation (percentages of attendees at each meal), exhibitor and sponsor (amount contributed and detailed contact information) data to the SRAPPA Vice President for Communications as soon as it is compiled.

Satisfy all outstanding financial obligations.

Prepare final meeting income and expense report for presentation to the SRAPPA Board at its spring meeting.

Closeout bank account and present remaining revenue to SRAPPA Board at its spring meeting.