



PRACTICAL ISSUES WHEN ORGANIZING AN ASSOCIATION EVENT

PRIME CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN ASSOCIATION PLANNING A MEETING ARE THE PROGRAMME AND THE VENUE. HARD ON THE HEELS OF THESE ESSENTIAL DECISIONS COME A HOST OF PRACTICAL ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED, SUCH AS PUBLICITY, BUDGETING, VALUE ADDED TAX, TRANSPORT AND TRANSFERS, REGISTRATION. THIS ARTICLE WILL FOCUS ON TWO OF THE NUMEROUS CONCERNS ARISING: INSURANCE AND VISAS. WHAT IF THE PLAN DOES NOT WORK OUT - SHOULD THE EVENT BE INSURED? AND FOR THE DELEGATES TO REACH THE MEETING - DO THEY NEED VISAS?

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INSURANCE

Insurance is a thorny issue for associations to tackle. There are companies or brokers which offer cover for 'events' and it is clearly of interest to association executives to investigate this, with regard to their responsibilities.

The largest risk would be cancellation of the entire event, but insurance normally covers cancellation only for reasons beyond the control of the organiser and not by any decision of his. When the meeting is the general assembly of an association, it can usually not be cancelled under any circumstances (a point to be stressed when booking a venue, also); it must be held in

accordance with the statutes, however low the attendance, with a further procedure to set the situation to rights afterwards, so that the administration can continue.

Conferences are often intended to bring in funds to support the general running expenses of the organisation or expand activities, but if the association managers find that numbers are far from those they had hoped and planned for, they will be required to prove that they made every possible effort to attract participants if they are trying to recover their outlay by claiming on insurance. Proving that one advertised is possible, but understanding why people did not read one's notices or respond to the interesting programme is difficult or impossible. Insurers ask whether they are to cover the expected profit, but if an association is officially 'non-profit-making' this is contradictory.

The expense of paying to a hotel or conference centre the contractually agreed minimum if the meeting fails to generate the expected business will fall on the association, so the association manager has to judge whether an insurance premium will benefit him or just add to his losses. Often his conclusion will be to negotiate his best position with the hotel, balancing the lowest potential loss in case of problems with the greatest flexibility in case of success.

Notices of meetings commonly include a disclaimer of any responsibility on the part of the association if participants have accidents or become ill, which is reasonable since the delegates should be covered by their own firms or their personal insurance. For exhibitions, similarly, stands and personnel should be insured by their own firms. The association's own staff should be insured as part of their employment. If the venue's reservation contract requires the organiser to subscribe to liability insurance, the cheapest and simplest means is likely to be inclusion in the venue's own insurance for a short period.

