Best Practices in Auxiliary Services: Conference & Events Services

Authored by the NACAS Professional Development Committee

NACAS

Accounts Receivable
- Get payment in advance for outside caterings
- Advanced payments for future catering are correctly processed and recorded

Admissions
- Share youth camp data with select
- Admissions data field requirements.
- Help to market to a potentially unnoticed market.

Alcohol
- Contract with local peace officers to provide security at events with alcohol present.
- Formal process for alcohol server training.

Athletic Facilities
- Do a walk through of athletic spaces with a representative from the Athletic Dept at the beginning and end of each usage to check for damages.

Audio Visual
- Offer website development for conferences as an additional revenue generator
- Working knowledge of AV services, capabilities and inventory
- Have specific contract language that outlines the service expectation levels in terms of Audio Visual and their and associated costs
- An annual written agreement in place with the Office of Technology Services which sets a flat annual rate for a list of defined services at a specified service level and during set business hours. The agreement should also state how service outside that defined in the contract, or in excess of the expected service level is documented and billed.
- Cards with guest Wi-Fi password for non-student & non-employee Wi-Fi access

Background Checks
- All event staff have background checks if in contract with youth
- Use RAPTOR, which is a computer software program to do quick on the spot background checks using a person's drivers license.
- Youth groups require chaperones to have background checks. This is a requirement written in the agreement

Bookstore
- Partner with Campus Bookstore to offer to provide customized apparel/branded apparel. Also, extend discounts to Event attendees.

Campus Partners
- Work with campus services such as A/V and Custodial with offerings, expectations, shared software, and appreciation/recognition for their partnership and service

Catering
- Catering vendors provide rebates back to the University
- Catering vendors provide an agreed upon level of marketing support to the Conference Services Department
- Conference and Events have input on the catering menus offered and some input on competitive pricing
- Catering uses Conference and Events shared event management software to view and work catering orders and guaranteed numbers
- Event Summary Reports are completed after each event to give immediate feedback to Catering, Kitchen & Event Planners.
- Catering contract includes sliding scale rates for summer dining volume
- Hold daily/weekly production meetings to go over events for the next upcoming days
- Hold tastings for university internal clients and conference services staff when new menus are released

Check-In
- A check-in/check-out software system is utilized for conference guests and groups – beneficial to be the same system used in University Housing

Coach Camps
- Policy in place for internal coach camps. Policy outlines who is running the camp and who is responsible for any profit / loss.
- Expectations written for chaperones
- Procedures in place for lighting, rain, etc.

Communication
- Weekly communication to the campus about what guests are present, who they are, where they are, and how they may impact employee parking and dining
- Hold a pre-conference meeting with each group upon arrival. The leaders of each residential group meet with the CES staff along with security, athletics (if they are using athletic spaces) and a representative from facilities. It ensures everyone is on the same page and everyone knows the rules and what to expect.
- Provide the phone number of the college contact person to the primary customer contact, in case something is needed during the day.

Continuous Improvement
- Organize an on campus group of event professionals to

continue educating and working towards enhancing the event and conference services departments

Co-Sponsored Events
- Co-Sponsored events are not allowed during the summer in order to maximize revenue, due to minimal campus involvement
- Policy in place that outlines how fees are waived for co-sponsored events and the appropriate signatures required to approve this type of event

Customer Satisfaction
- Customers know of all of the different options for rooms, catering and services available to them
- A standard survey given to all customers following their event or an on-line survey sent out with all final invoices
- Offer registration services to clients

Customers
- Customer database used for past, current and potential customers
- Conference and Events Center should be a one-stop shop for all customers needs and should interface with other campus services

Dining
- Identify special food needs and introduce group manager to the chef
- Conference and Events works with dining to ensure collective numbers of diners can fit into the space at meal times or need to be staggered. Recommends menus be geared to adults or youth accordingly.
- Conference guests are provided meal cards for entrance to the dining center; card office can use their software for meal usage tracking
- Work with campus dining to provide coupons to incentivize guests to use retail operations on your campus.
- Make sure summer menus for youth comply with day care regulations for type and quality of service - for contracted Dining Service and Outside Dining affricates
- Customize dining menus for large groups.
- Clearly mark food allergy information at service stations
- Provide food allergy free stations

Financial
- Monthly department charge backs are processed for custodial, security, and set ups
- All purchases adhere to the budget or explanations of variance are documented
- All rentals to for-profit groups receive written permission from AVP of Finance

- Ensure timelines for deposits and final payments are met and payments tracked
- All rentals to not-for-profits receive a 10% discount. Identify who must approve requests to waive fees.
- If possible, provide a temporary billing code/account number and access to a campus copiers in case any last minute copies are needed while on site. (In some instances, it might be possible to provide an actual temporary copier in the meeting location.)
- Require external clients to provide a W9. This helps our Treasurer when he is booking the receivables from overdo clients.
- Have an on line payment system for customer payments

Financial or Written Policies
- Amenities and Cost listed in Contract - Ex Free Wi-Fi

Food Trucks
- Require food truck vendors to provide a current copy of their health department inspection and a certificate of insurance naming the college as additionally insured with general liability limits of $2M

Information
- Third party liability insurance option such as TULIP for external events
- Drug use on campus policy in addition to alcohol and tobacco

Insurance
- All events must produce a certificate of insurance as part of the contract
- Insurance certificate covers sexual molestation, general liability and workman's compensation with $1M for each

Interns/Student Labor
- Provide summer students polos so they look more professional and have a kick off lunch to provide customer service training
- Work with Colleges to get interns to support the Department
- Use student labor and enhance pay package with free summer housing
- Provide student training on processes, customer service, expectations

Logistics
Event logistics (set-ups, meals, IT support) are all confirmed 7 days prior to each event
Customer signs off on final logistics and policy is clear on what changes cost

Marketing
- Incentives in place for current customers to recommend new clients
- Incentives in place for early renewal
- Incentives in place for multiple bookings throughout the year
- Flyer describing prices and services
- Marketing handouts and collaterals developed and used
- The University is branded throughout the event spaces
- Use of social media to promote conferences and bring awareness to conference services
- Hold open houses to bring awareness to conference services and the services that are offered
- Annual marketing plan is done with budget for advertising, memberships, lead generation costs, how much the plan covers each stream of business and how often
- Market to large businesses who hire summer interns is a potential client
- Event discount for student groups available
- Partner with Office Campus Merchant Program from Card Office: Merchants can have % off discount for holding events on campus (team meetings, etc.)
- Consider discounts as incentives for first time customers and/or return customers on 2nd booking only
- Create potential customer database with names and contact information for local non-profits, professional associations, event planners and regional Universities
- Incentives - Have a per person pricing structure option
- Use a program like Constant Contact to manage your targeted marketing e-mail blasts along with tracking the number of "opens" and "unsubscribes"
- Ask for testimonials from groups that can be used on collateral or on the website

Mascot
- Use a form to request the Mascot for events

Operations
- Quarterly Department Communication Briefings
- Operational checklists cover pre-event, the on-site and the event close out
- Use a tracker if an event needs access early or late to the event space (outside of normal facility hours) so they can be invoiced accordingly and also staff is notified with a minimum of 7 days notice so we can adjust staffing as necessary.
- Maintain electronic files for all events inclusive of required paperwork
- Create an operations manual for summer conferences. Including FAQ for summer staff to help answer guest questions

Parking
- Conference Office works with Parking Office to provide parking options; often times summer is a decrease in revenue/increase in availability for the Parking Office

President
- Use a form to request the President for events
- Separate checklist for events where the President will speak or attend. Designate certain aspects when he/she is speaking/podium guests/hosting - i.e., logo has to be prominently placed, etc.)

Rate Management
- "After Hours" charges for facilities
- Central booking systems that identify all parties on campus
- Monthly meetings that highlight the Events of Significance for the month ahead. Event Planners, Grounds, Parking, Security, Risk, Insurance and Events are all represented.
- Create check list for all events that are controversial i.e.: controversial speakers

Room Scheduling
- The same room scheduling software is in place and used by both Conference and Event Services and the rest of the University
- Bed scheduling software is used for overnight stays
- Conference and Events have priority over all campus spaces in summer to produce revenue
- Housing Operations staff is integrated with Conferences group for room key management
- Scheduling software has capability to hold rooms in real time

Safety
- Emergency Alert Text, Emails Etc. for Event/Conference Attendees
- Have emergency management procedures for all buildings used in the summer and making sure that summer staff is trained appropriately
- Ensure that the primary on-site customer contact has information relating to emergency procedures, i.e., fire alarm (where they should exit, how far away from the building), tornado alarm, etc.
- Make sure that the primary on-site customer contact has information relating to an actual emergency, i.e., calling 911 or alternate on campus number, how to dial out (for example, need to dial 9, then 911 or other number)
- Ensure state requirements for background checks of adult staff working with minors are met.
- Brochure in each room that provides emergency information such as fire safety. Include emergency contact

information and an on-call staff number
- Advertise emergency alert apps to guests

Sales Dept.
- Sales Calls Procedures, Goals, and Expectations
- Client Event Bookings, Proposals, Confirmations and Hand-off Procedures

Scheduling
- Include all the correct departments in the "Shared oversight of spaces" For example: include Grounds department, Fire Marshall on the oversight of outdoor spaces

Security
- Guest lists are sent to Security of guests in housing as well as group leader contact so they are aware in case of Emergency
- Provide event staff usher training (crowd management, evacuation procedures)
- Outline late night set up procedures, security notifications and access to buildings

Signage
- Concise directional signage throughout building and campus.
- Signage needs to correstpond to the University branding
- Campus Signage/Posting Policy - this policy is sent out with all contracts listing guidelines that must be adhered to
- Offer a set of directional signs for in buildings or on the road (charge appropriately). Road signs to offer turn-by-turn directions from any of the on-campus entrances to the parking lots. Also, Pedestrian Signs to lead guests from the parking lot directly to the event on campus.

Software
- Software includes an online registration services module that allows us to set up websites for online conference & event registration.
- Software includes catering management features

Space Management
- Computer program is used to identify how many guests can fit into each event space

Student Events
- To ensure students are arranging events in accordance with campus policies, a manager approves each student event-- before the event even appears on Conference Services' dashboard. The manager will collect event details, which may include a form, and meeting with the student event planner.

Sustainability
- Provide recycle bins in meeting area for paper and plastic.
- Create a "Green Event" checklist for event planners highlighting local sustainability efforts, resources, and best practices.

Temp IDs
- Guest ID system in place for overnight guests

Training
- Customer Service
- All training documented and on file
- New employee on-boarding program in place and used. Common tasks are identified and employees are certified that they know how to perform them (including summer help)
- Employee Recognition Program in Place
- Create a certification program for all summer staff. List all of the tasks they need to be able to perform. Train and certify that they can perform the tasks.
- Each employee keeps an up to date job binder with key responsibilities, samples, timelines and contacts
- Certification for summer staff in the following areas: first aid, CPR, and AED
- Include in training, information about where all the AED units are located on campus
- In Texas all residential groups that include minors have all of their adult staff and volunteers complete a state approved sexual abuse and molestation training that is good for two years. Ensure that all internal groups complete this as well. Have it as part of the contract for our outside groups.

University Involvement
- Based on the conference topic, we may offer incentives or discount to meeting planners if they allow our students or staff members to seat in on the conference/seminar.

Website
- Website up to date
- Website has virtual tours and photos of event spaces
- The University main web site has an easily found link to the CES Department Website to help direct individuals who want to rent space on campus