



PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY

Tight Timelines & Preferred Partners: How Relationships Can Support Your Hybrid Event Planning Experience

Overview

This case study will examine how the event planning team's use of preferred partnerships assisted with the creation, execution and overall success of a key business meeting.

Background

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, a pharmaceutical company could no longer host both their national sales leadership meeting and national sales meeting in one location. With only seven weeks of pre-planning, the event planning team was challenged to safely execute the meetings in multiple locations.

Method

The event objective was to bring together regional pharmaceutical sales teams for the National Sales Meeting. The engagement objective was to create an experience as close to the in-person event as possible.

The event team decided on a hybrid meeting model where the leadership meeting would take place in four different locations, followed by the sales meeting in 45 locations, each representing an area of the country. Attendees had the option to attend these events either virtually or in-person.

With the change to a hybrid model, the following considerations were made in the planning process:

- Larger room for physical distancing and AV/camera equipment
- Engagement platform that would allow for social media, chat and live Q&A (Spotme was used)
- Training speakers for video recording
- Hardwired internet at all locations

The planning team relied on preferred hotel and vendor partnerships to organize the event despite the tight timeline. The team was able to easily source and contract 27 locations for this event at Hilton properties. Based on pre-negotiated COVID-19 terms, a Hilton Express Agreement was established for ease of contracting.

After contracts were finalized, this organization worked with their preferred planning and production company to finalize the event details, including food and beverage, room set-up, internet and AV equipment.

Results

Each of the 45 viewing locations had between 7-10 in-person attendees and 7-10 virtual attendees—totaling approximately 800 participants between the virtual and in-person viewing parties.

Leadership was pleased with the program and anecdotal feedback from attendees was positive, with comments including:

“We were happy to ‘get together’ as normally as possible.”

Conclusion

Though the compressed timeframe offered challenges, key business relationships and preferred partnerships were key to the success of this well-received hybrid meeting.

The following were identified as WINS:

- A Hilton Express Agreement made it easier to contract the large number of hotels quickly
- Working with Hilton Flexible Agreement to coordinate all RFPs going to 45 locations made a significant positive impact on the contracting process
- Having a solid agenda and plan before starting to source event resources
- Additional **“dress rehearsal”** time during a pre-event meeting proved extremely useful, especially given the compressed planning time

The following were identified as LESSONS LEARNED:

- **CONTRACTING**
 - » *When sending an RFP, have hotels answer in advance so planners can make an informed decision based on true capabilities*
 - » *Add in hybrid language to the Express Agreement*
- **PLANNING**
 - » *Understand in advance what equipment and infrastructure come with each hotel (e.g. hardwired internet)*
 - » *Work closely with the hotel team to understand if local guidelines change or incur operational nuances that need to be communicated to attendees in advance*
 - » *Not all properties have food and beverage outlets open, so determine during the planning process where food is coming from for attendees and how it is being served*
- **ON-SITE**
 - » *Provide additional event training to sales teams, as many hotels currently have limited convention service managers*