



VICKI JOHNSON
& ASSOCIATES, LLC

Case Study - Annual Company and Client Appreciation Conference

This client hired us to support the logistics of their annual company and client appreciation program. Headquartered in Japan and with offices throughout Asia, Europe, and the United States, the organization alternates between national and international destinations.

The previous year's conference in Europe had been the most successful one to date, with elaborate meals and unique venues for networking opportunities. Rated higher than any previously produced, this event created a personalized and individualized experience for the attendees. In short, company and attendee expectations were set at an extremely high level.

Attendees included corporate sales and upper management, as well as clients—approximately a 50 percent split between the two groups. The company uses this annual gathering to introduce new products, extend gratitude and appreciation to existing clientele, and create networking opportunities for the entire group.

Services

We were engaged to provide the following services only 10 months before the conference. The destination had already been chosen.

- Conference site research
- Contract negotiations
- Pre-planning and on-site logistical support
- Room block management
- Post-convention bill reconciliation

Goals

1. Provide a unique and highly personalized event for VIP clients and executive staff from around the world.
2. Exceed expectations set by the previous year's conference and special events, when they were truly "wowed" by every aspect of the guest experience.
3. Incorporate various Japanese customs and traditions, while still capturing the heart and spirit of Washington, D.C.
4. Assist with developing a budget after the destination was selected, a practice we don't recommend to any of our clients. We proposed a preliminary budget in the early stages of the planning process, with an understanding that specific areas could be well financed.
5. However, other line items we were in a situation where we were far short of what would be needed to accomplish the meeting goals.

Solutions

1. Create a positive first impression:

Because the hotel is the first stop for guests, it sets the stage for a positive experience. Too large a hotel is impersonal, but too small and they may get unwanted attention and feel uneasy.

A detailed analysis of the company's goals and mission for this event, Vicki Johnson & Associates, LLC, had the information needed to secure a hotel that provided the environment where the guests felt as if they were entering a friend's home. The hotel was highly experienced in welcoming international clientele and the staff understood and embraced the nuances specific to various cultures.

2. Don't compete with the past:

As much as the previous year was a resounding success, we knew that competing with the event was not the right approach. Instead, we focused our efforts on creating unique experiences that highlighted the destination, while being true to the culture of the organization. We collaborated with the client to customize menus, entertainment and tours and worked to ensure the guest experience was enhanced not just with amenities, but personalized service that displayed attention to detail without being intrusive.

3. Stay within budget:

The budget goals were a challenge to say the least. When an organization selects a destination before considering the financial implications, there is sure to be a disconnect between the vision for the event and reality. Add to the equation the expectations set by the success of the previous year, our work was cut out for us. We developed a budget that we continually monitored and negotiated contracts to get the best return and value.

Result

There is nothing greater than the feeling of having "hit it out of the ballpark."
To quote our client,

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Our attendees were very happy about the event and it was actually the best workshop we ever had in the U.S. On behalf of our entire team, I'd like to thank you and your event planners for the greatest help during the event. Without your support, this great event never would have happened. We would love to work with you and your team again.