



“We Can Do It Ourselves” and Other Dangerous Assumptions around Meeting Planning

By Andy Cohen

“It’s like planning your own wedding,” said the strategy director of a global company.

She was referring to a management event that she and two other executives were in charge of producing and in which they invited me to give a keynote.

Her point was revealing. Are corporations thrusting the responsibility of having the people who run departments put on the meetings themselves as a cost saving strategy? If so, this often proves to be a costly assumption as explained later.

Another dangerous assumption is that event planning is like party planning. But the reality is quite the opposite. Weddings are about creating a wonderful experience for the moment with memories that last a lifetime.

Internal corporate events are about creating powerful experiences that drive change over time and impact the bottom line.

Assuming that party planning is the same as event planning is a dangerous assumption to make for a number of reasons:

- 1) **Costs.** Executives trained in manufacturing, compliance, marketing, etc. are pulled away from what they do best to having to negotiate hotel rates, chair counts, union AV personal, food orders and overall event contracts. Any good executive can focus on learning these new tasks which take time and experience to learn. Besides why would a corporation want to distract them from their true operations that brings in profit to the bottom line of the company? From a cost perspective, it doesn’t make sense.
- 2) **Awareness:** Often executives tasked with putting on an event aren’t aware that their organization has meeting planners to engage or get advice. Many times the responsibility for negating a contact is left with the executive’s administrative assistant. Without the input from a meeting planner who knows the true costs there’s a chance that the organization will pay more than they had to.
- 3) **Understanding parameters:** I watched a conference hotel manager bully an executive who organized and ran the event. This executive was truly upset by the lack of delivery of certain logistics but lacked the experience in knowing what was acceptable or not. In addition, he didn’t speak the “conference-ez” of the hotel manager, which weakened his demands.

Sometimes the size of an event is too small to warrant the cost of engaging a meeting planner. To counter this, meeting and event planners have supplied “tool boxes” to those in charge as a way of helping understand what a meeting entails and guidelines for negotiating, scheduling, etc. Again, this underscores the value of a good Meeting Planner, especially one who is certified.

But in a majority of cases, to assume that putting on an event is equivalent to a “no brainer” party is a dangerous assumption. That is costly in time, energy and at the end of the day profitability for the organization. It’s an assumption worth challenging.

After all, having executives matched with having to plan the event doesn’t necessarily make for a good marriage.

Andy Cohen is the Chief Assumption Officer at Andy Cohen Worldwide. He recently Keynoted at the CMP Conclave to help members identify dangerous assumptions that act as barriers to managing clients and driving solutions. He then provided the tools to challenge those assumptions in order to drive profit, growth and change. It’s called the Assumpt!