

Trends in the Faith-Based Market and the Key to Successful Partnerships



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As planners and suppliers, we are always trying to “plan” or lay the foundation for the future. Our terminology may be different but in the end, each of us has goals to attain. Suppliers’ goals are likely financial and return on investment related whereas planners’ goals often are attendance related or mission focused. When we look at the current trends in our industry, and more specifically, when we isolate the faith-based sector, I think we can all agree that faith-based meetings have a smaller piece of the business mix pie than ten years ago. This makes our jobs more challenging, trying to find where our pieces fit so that both sides are successful. To illustrate this, think about trying to find that “perfect recipe” when baking a pie. There are so many more ingredients to consider today than ten years ago...gluten-free, organic, dairy free and the list goes on and on. It used to be more simple: 1. follow the recipe and 2. bake the pie. But now there are many other factors to consider.

It’s the same with finding a location or destination for ministry events, we are dealing with a much more analytical and revenue maximization world than ever before. It can be frustrating and feel as though we are running up against obstacles at every turn because we just can’t get the ingredients right to make a pie that both sides are happy with.

This year at CMCA I assisted in facilitating a breakout session about current trends in the industry. It was interesting to collaborate and compare with colleagues, both planners, and suppliers, to see what each is facing; their areas of success and failure. We talked about current trends related to generational changes, how travel,

in general, has changed, creating an experiential event, contract negotiations, AV costs and many more.

As we discussed these trends and gained an understanding of how they can lead to more successful events, it became very clear that the most important “trend” in successful events isn’t actually a new concept at all but instead is simply developing personal relationships with each other. Simple, yes, but it can get lost in this digital, email, cluster selling, revenue managing world. Everyone in the room agreed that when we have meaningful and information seeking discussions, we are able to get to each other’s core needs and either come to an agreement or have the knowledge to realize it is not a good match. You can’t fully understand these concepts if you don’t engage in meaningful discussions and build relationships over time. So often, a business opportunity will be turned down two or three times before it results in that perfect recipe. It’s important to remember that eventually, all the ingredients will come together.

In today’s economy, the difference between being successful in finding the right venue at a price structure that works is knowing which pantries to look in. This knowledge only results from those relationships we have developed and through exploratory discussions. I can say with 100% confidence that ingredients and economic factors change all the time in this fast-paced, revenue managing world, but the most successful professionals in our faith-based community (on both sides) are those who remember to dig deeper, ask questions, put people before dollars and build relationships over time. By doing this, we can identify those right ingredients and have the knowledge to put together the very best business partnerships that benefit both sides.