



Work Smart Live Smart

Healthy Delegates – Building A Successful Meeting

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You are holding a conference and the details are falling into place – but have you kept the delegates well-being in mind?

Employee wellness is hitting the corporate radar because leaders are seeing that it is deteriorating and is negatively impacting their bottom line. How are you, as the meeting planner, going to assist your delegates in maintaining and achieving wellness and support their on-going wellness efforts?

Let's look at some areas where simple strategies will have a huge wellness impact:

1. **Food** – Ask the chefs to go light on the glazes, sauces and salad dressings. Pick meats that are leaner with smaller portions and go heavier on the vegetables. Provide multi-grain breads and have fresh fruit and vegetables. Fruit desserts are a much better choice than pies and cakes. Watch for the sleep inducers such as turkey, milk based sauces and the high sugar desserts. Provide more energy by loading up on the proteins for breakfast and morning snacks. . Nutrition breaks should be 30 minutes to allow people time to stretch, line up for the bathroom and have some refreshments. Longer breaks also allow for room resetting, equipment switches and delays. 90 minutes for lunch allows for delays in the program and still gives the delegates time for a relaxed meal.
2. **Drinks** – Provide plenty of water and juices. Go lighter on the coffee and pop. Juice bars are a nice touch. We know that alcohol disrupts our precious sleep not to mention the difficulty it creates in making good decisions when under the influence. What happens in Vegas doesn't always stay in Vegas. Reduce the focus on alcohol and increase the number of wellness opportunities.
3. **Exercise** – Energize your groups with stretches at beginning or end of keynotes and general sessions. Provide opportunity for exercise by ensuring that conference facilities are adequate or form networking walking teams. Arrange some networking sessions in the gym - designate specific times so that delegates won't be afraid to venture as they are sure to meet up with other's in their group. Side activities can include roller or ice skating or walking tours of the area - beats sitting bar side.

4. **Sleep** – Breakfast usually starts at 7:00 am and is over by the start of the 8:30 morning session. Your delegates are taking in a lot of great information and hopefully finding out how others handle their challenges and issues. They are also staying up late and expending a great deal of energy. If you want them at their best start later and help them to retain more of this vital information. I once heard a well-known CSP (Certified Speaking Professional) say that sleeping people don't learn. If they skip the morning keynote and general session to get a few extra winks they aren't getting their money's worth. Start later and encourage them to eat breakfast- help them to be focused and at their peak.

5. **Avoid The Endurance Event** – Provide time at the end of each session for discussion and networking. Don't jam workshops back to back, causing people to scramble and run from place to place. If the goal is learning you need to provide the time for it to happen in a relaxed environment. Provide enough time to get into the workshop information. Thirty minutes is hardly time to scratch the surface. If it is longer than 90 minutes then there needs to be a stretch and bathroom break built in. In our fast paced world most of us are use to moving and sitting in a conference chair for that long can be excruciating. Many of us have a significant slump in our energy and focus in the afternoon – usually from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Boost your conference's energy by programming humour, energizers, lighter topics and breaks during this dip. Watch for over-crowding. Conference facilities tend to place chairs side by side. Many people feel uncomfortable touching the person beside them. This can take the focus away from your speaker. Have the room set with a couple of inches between each chair and enough space between rows to allow people to move in and out without bumping the people in front of them.

By utilizing these five simple strategies around food, drink, sleep, exercise and comfort you will have more engaged and healthy delegates and a conference that was seen as a success by all involved.

Stress and wellness specialist, **Beverly Beuermann-King** translates current research and best practices information into a realistic, accessible and practical approach through her dynamic stress and wellness workshops, on-line articles, e-newsletters and media interviews and through a collaboration called *Awakening The Workplace*. Visit www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com for more on Beverly and her wellness work.

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