

Assisting with the Opening of Government Agency Center

Attendee Number: 4,000+ persons a day;
Location: Washington, DC;

This Government Agency required assistance in planning for and executing the opening and initial startup of a new government building which would soon become a tourist attraction, that would average up to 4,000 visitors a day. The GA Staff was responsible for coordination, data entry, registration, tour set up, and all admin, meeting & event planning support required to support the 4,000 daily registrants, 6 days a week.

Highlight of Challenges encountered and How These Challenges were Met:

1. New Office and Staff: One of the first things that the GA Team needed to accomplish was to assist the Government Agency with opening their office and help with their registration process. The Government Agency office was so new; they were still unpacking boxes and moving into the office space. The staff had a significant burden on them at the time and had limited time for instruction to the GA Staff as they needed to get their own office in order under tight deadlines. However, the tour groups and individuals needed to be registered and there were meeting planning needs that had to be accomplished. The GA Team moved right in, with little direction, to become extensions of the Government Agency staff to make this happen. Individuals and Groups were calling, emailing and mailing the office at a rapid pace, requesting a tour of the new center and wishing to block time.

The GA Team immediately began helping to create a system for organizing data, registering individuals, providing confirmation back to individuals and groups and to help to organize the tours. When cancellations and tours happened, the GA Team made those adjustments, filling in individuals/groups from the waiting list and making the proper communications to the parties involved. By serving as extensions of the Government Agency Staff, the GA Team was able to handle all meeting planning logistics, while allowing the Agency Staff to focus on their program needs.

2. VIP Customer Service: The opening of the Government Agency Center was done in conjunction with the 2009 Inauguration celebrations and therefore, received a significant amount of attention from Senators, Congressmen and their staff. This required a specific type of customer service as the GA Team took pride in the level of professionalism they provided. Our team was responsible for the logistics involved in the opening ceremonies of the Government Agency, including the invitations to VIP's and keeping track of RSVP's.

The personalized attention involved in working with Congressmen and Senators was significant as the registration process was customized. Clearly, a misspelled namebadge or not having badge present was not an option. It is here that the GA motto of paying attention to detail was extremely important.

2. Serving as Ambassadors: As stated above, the GA Team immediately stepped in and began assisting with logistics and being an extension of the Government Agency Staff. We immediately took on the role of serving as the ambassador of the Center as those booking the tours assumed we were members of the Agency staff. For this reason, it was imperative that the GA Team did their best to answer questions as thoroughly as possible and provide the best customer service as possible. As the tours were so popular, they filled up quickly. Many times, a group was not able to get their first or second choices and would be

upset by this answer. The GA Team worked hard to find alternatives and compromises to do whatever it took to keep all parties happy. They communicated with the Agency staff when it was clear that the tour group would remain unhappy. The GA Team always followed the protocol laid out for them and checked in with the Capitol Visitor's Staff when appropriate.

Key Requirements Addressed in this Case Study:

- I. Registration process and databases
- II. Managing conferences/meetings concurrently in multiple sites
- III. Pre and post activities
- IV. Set up and tear down
- V. Complying with various local, state and federal policies and regulations

Registration Staffing; VIP's: As stated above in the challenges for this meeting, the GA Team spent considerable time working with VIP's. Being alert for VIP's at registration is critical. Inappropriate handling of VIP's is a critical mistake that must be avoided. For the Government Agency program, we took special care to be sure that all individuals and groups were registered properly. As there were so many VIP's that needed to be registered, paying attention to detail was a critical reason behind our success for this event.

Registration Process and Databases: The GA Team worked diligently on entering data and processing accurate information for this program that hosted 4,000 visitors a day. The data design process and organization process that is required to pull this off successfully is substantial. Accuracy, following protocol and setting up systems is the key to making this program work. Our event planning knowledge was key to understanding systems and assisting the Government Agency in making this work.

Managing Conferences/Meetings Concurrently in Multiple Sites: The GA Team had staff present at the Government Agency for a significant amount of time. During this time period, our company was responsible for delivering several other key conferences and meetings across the country and locally. As we are skilled at running meetings concurrently, this was a seamless process for us. The staff members that were present at the Government Agency checked in with our company every Friday morning before reporting to their work at the center. This allowed them to stay in close communication with us and other deadlines that might be approaching. Our network is also designed to allow our staff to connect remotely, which they would do during their lunch hour and in the evenings when they returned home. Working as a team, we easily managed the other conferences that took place during our contract with the Government Agency.

Pre and Post Activities: Prior to starting with the Government Agency, we reviewed expectations with the POC to fully understand their needs and expectations of our staff. We worked through the hours that they needed and received a sense of the burden and time constraints they were facing as the Opening Celebration was quickly approaching. Initially the contract was for four persons from GA 40 hours per week Monday-Saturday. This contract was modified twice and at its peak GA had five conference and event planning staff assigned to the project.