



**CVENT'S
2015**

**PLANNER SOURCING
REPORT**

cvent | *Hospitality Cloud*

Data from Cvent's 2015 Planner Preferences Survey

INTRODUCTION

The biggest question hoteliers ask is, “What are planners’ sourcing behaviors?”

We wanted to know because to understand the answer is to learn how to convert more group business opportunities. So we surveyed over 840 planners to find out.

First lesson learned based on the incredible reaction: Planners are eager to help venues create a better sourcing relationship with them. They want hoteliers to understand their side of the process because it ultimately makes their job easier.

When we analyzed the data some findings were obvious (pricing is the biggest factor when choosing a venue – sorry, it’s still true), but we were surprised by a number of responses:

- Nearly two-thirds of event planners prefer to keep their options open when sourcing
- Over 40% of planners said that a 10% discount would convince them to switch from their first choice venue to their second
- Only 2% of planners indicated that a hotel’s brand was a decision factor

We created this report to provide venues with the insights needed to close more group business.

It’s now up to them to use its findings to create the strategies needed to show planners that they are paying attention and they do care.

Happy planner, happy venue.

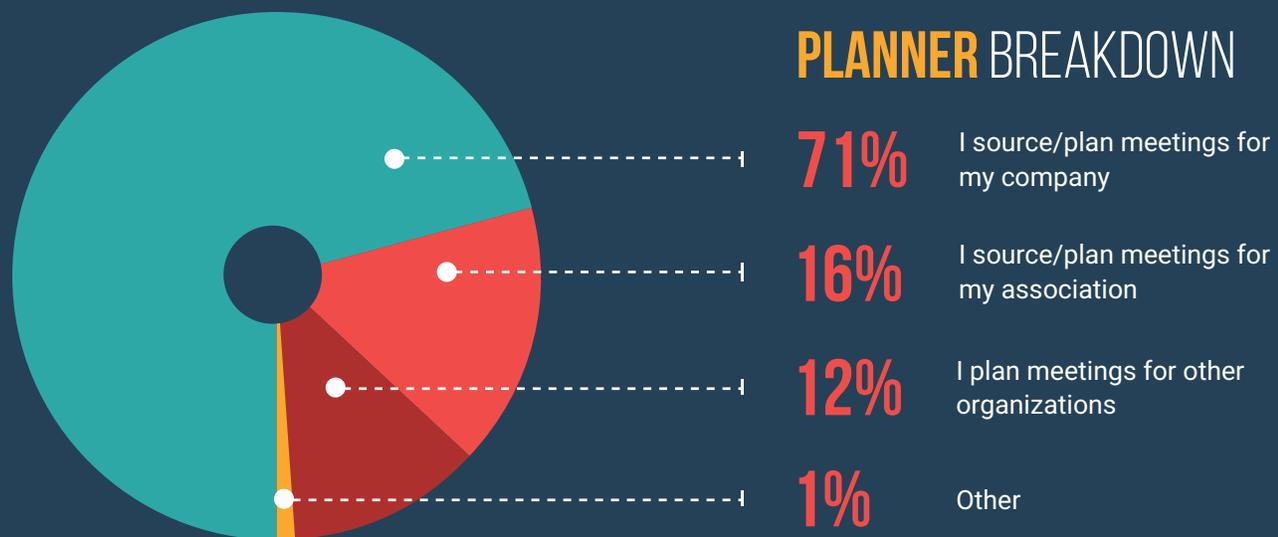


SECTION 1

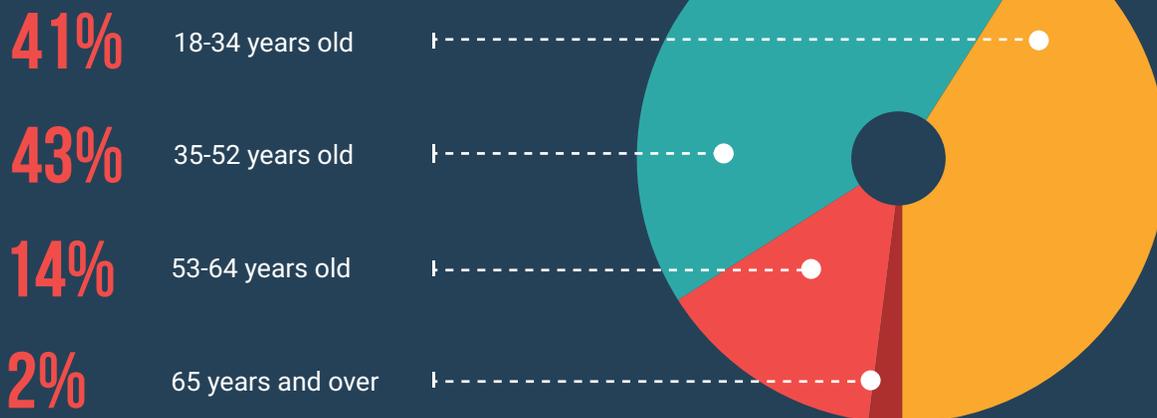
ABOUT THE AUDIENCE SURVEYED

Of the 842 planners we surveyed, 71% sourced meetings on behalf of their company, 17% were association planners, and 11% were third-party planners. 35-52 year olds represented the largest demographic of event planners with 43% of the surveyed audience. Millennial or Gen Y planners (18-34 year olds) were the second largest segment comprising 41% of respondents.

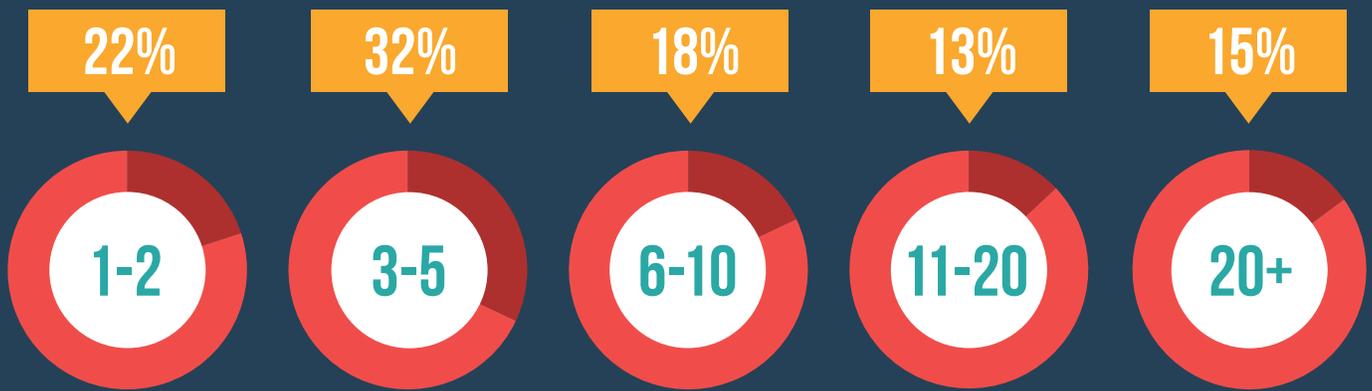
46% of planners surveyed plan more than six events a year, 32% three to five events, and 22% responded that they plan one to two a year.



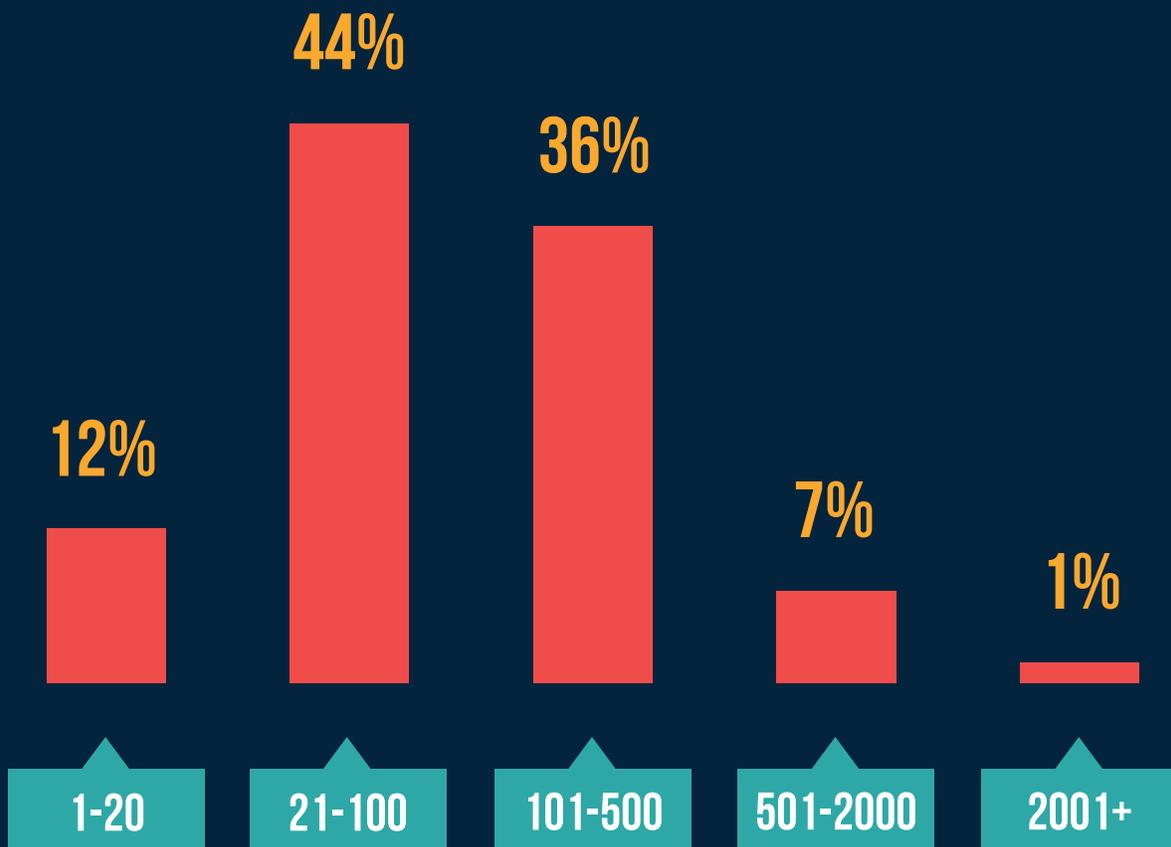
PLANNER AGE BRACKET



HOW MANY EVENTS DO THEY PLAN A YEAR?



HOW MANY ATTENDEES DO THEY AVERAGE PER EVENT?



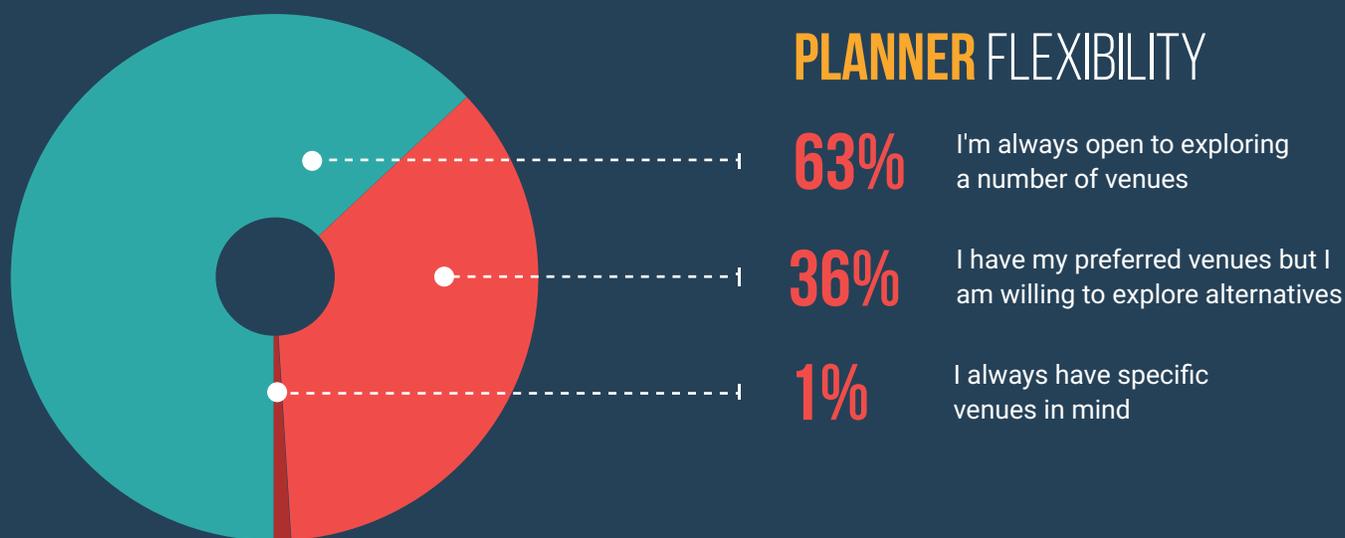
SECTION 2

PLANNER FLEXIBILITY

Respondents were surprisingly flexible when selecting venues for their event. Only 1% of planners stated that they consistently turn to the same venue for their events. 36% of respondents stated that they do have preferred venues but are willing to consider alternatives. The majority of planners (63%) responded that they always begin their venue-sourcing process considering a number of venues.

To understand what causes planners to switch venues we asked survey participants to rank the top three reasons why they change. The popular reasons were venue cost (25%), customer service (24%), and size and adequacy of space (16%).

When asked about the discount needed to switch from their first choice venue to their second choice venue, 40% of respondents said they would require less than a 10% discount. 51% of respondents stated that they would need a discount greater than 10% in order to make the switch. 9% said a discount would not change their choice.



TOP SIX REASONS WHY PLANNERS SWITCH VENUES



DISCOUNT NECESSARY TO BEAT PREFERRED VENUE



SECTION 3

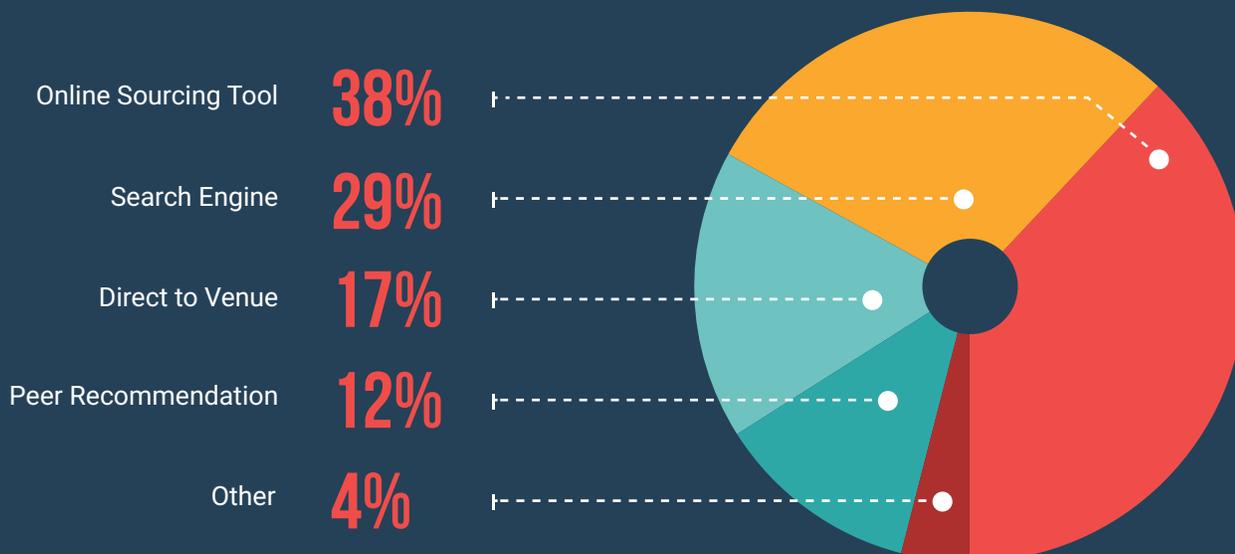
THE SOURCING JOURNEY

Venue sourcing is often a multi-day process that involves multiple touch points between venues and planners. To stay relevant with planners, hotels need to continue to adopt technology and maintain an online presence. 38% of planners responded that they begin their venue sourcing by searching on online sourcing tools such as Cvent, while another 29% said that they begin by using search engines. Interestingly, when users begin sourcing, only 7% of planners responded that they are extremely certain of the venue.

In terms of influencing channels, 95% of planners indicated that peer recommendations are highly or somewhat influential. As predicted, online venue directories and the venues' corporate sites were also popular with 90% and 88% of planners reporting the respective channels as highly or somewhat influential.

Researching venues still remains a significant hurdle for planners with 24% of them indicating that it was the task that posed the most difficulty. The next most common pain point was compiling the responses (17%).

TOP SOURCING CHANNELS



THE PLANNER STATE OF MIND AT THE ZERO MOMENT OF SOURCING

	EXTREMELY CERTAIN	VERY CERTAIN	SOMEWHAT CERTAIN	NOT CERTAIN
THE DESTINATION OF THE EVENT	41%	31%	23%	5%
THE DATES OF THE EVENT	36%	38%	24%	2%
THE EVENT VENUE	7%	17%	42%	34%
BUDGET FOR YOUR EVENT	28%	43%	26%	3%

INFLUENCE OF CHANNELS

	HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL	SOMEWHAT INFLUENTIAL	NOT INFLUENTIAL
ONLINE VENUE DIRECTORIES	34%	56%	10%
VENUE'S CORPORATE SITE	32%	56%	12%
SOCIAL MEDIA / BLOGS	12%	40%	48%
TRADESHOWS	6%	30%	64%
PEER RECOMMENDATIONS	59%	36%	5%
TOTALS	1,223	2,038	1,791

PLANNER PAIN POINTS

24%



Researching Venues

22%



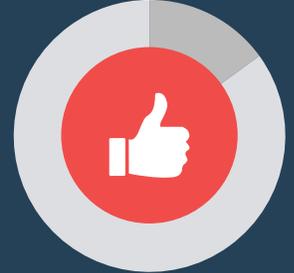
Negotiating With the Venue

17%



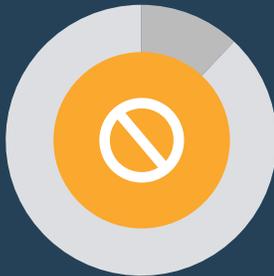
Compiling Proposal Responses

15%



Comparing the Proposals

12%



None

8%



Choosing a Venue

2%



Other



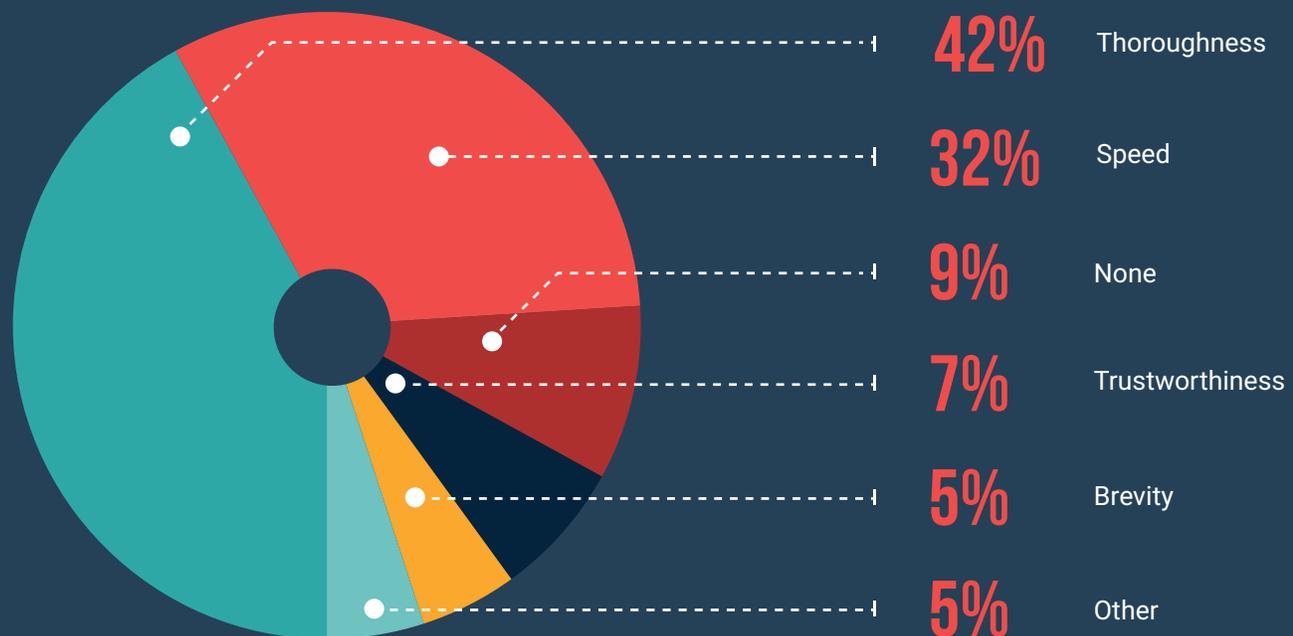
SECTION 4

PLANNERS & PROPOSALS

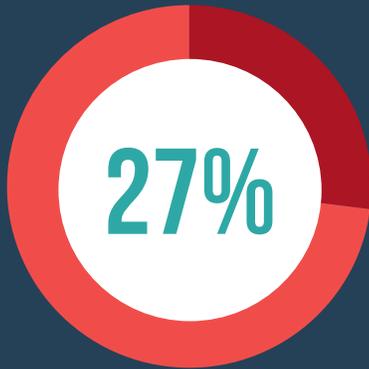
What do decision-makers at event venues need to keep in mind when submitting their bid? Thoroughness is the most common aspect planners feel hotels need to improve when submitting their response. The second most common response was speed with 32% indicating it.

What ultimately leads a planner to say yes? 27% of respondents stated that venue cost was the most important determining factor in their decision. 20% stated availability of preferred dates, followed by location of venue (16%) and the event space layout (14%).

PLANNERS SAY SUPPLIERS LACK IN:



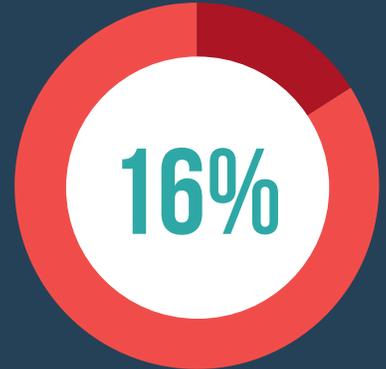
TOP 9 VENUE-BOOKING DECISION FACTORS



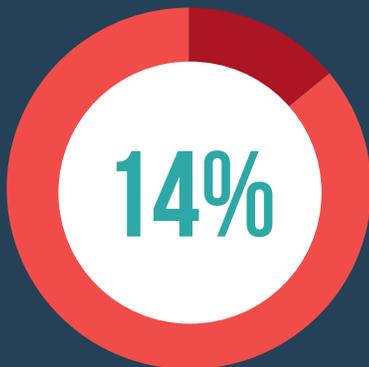
VENUE COST



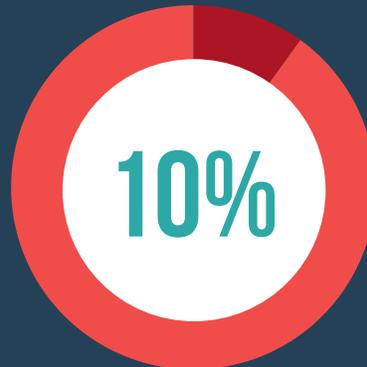
AVAILABILITY OF
PREFERRED DATES



LOCATION OF
VENUE



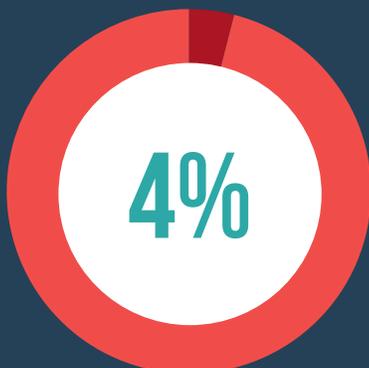
MEETING / EVENT
SPACE LAYOUT



CUSTOMER
SERVICE



UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE
OF VENUE



EXISTING RELATIONSHIP
WITH VENUE



BRAND OR CHAIN
AFFILIATION



FREE
AMENITIES

SECTION 5

FROM THE PLANNERS' MOUTHS

We rounded off the survey by giving planners the chance to voice their opinion about unique things venues did to win their business.

Common themes involved price, customer service, communication, and attentiveness. Below, we highlight eight responses that we thought offered compelling insight into planner sentiment about the venues they interact with.

We asked, "In the past two years, what's one unique thing a venue did that won your business during the RFP process?"

" HAD US ON SITE AND
**SPECIALLY
CRAFTED A CAKE**
AND APPETIZERS FOR OUR GROUP.
**THEY EVEN SENT THE LEFTOVERS
BACK TO OUR OFFICE. "**

" **RESPONDED QUICKLY**
AND WENT OVER AND BEYOND.
DETAILS! THEY WERE SO
ORGANIZED I DIDN'T HAVE TO DO
THE WORK, **THEY DID. "**

" OFFERED AN ALL-INCLUSIVE
PACKAGE THAT **MADE MY JOB**
1,000 TIMES
EASIER AND SAVED ME
LOTS OF TIME. "

" **CUSTOMIZED**
AN INCLUSIVE MENU FOR US BASED
ON OUR ADVICE AND OUR BUDGET.
THEY WON THE
BID THIS WAY. "

“ **COMPENSATING GUEST ROOM FOR SITE VISIT**

– I AM STILL SHOCKED WHEN HOTELS MAKE ME PAY FOR A ROOM WHEN I HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO BRING

THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS

IN BUSINESS DURING A WEEK. ”

“ GAVE US A **DISCOUNT** FOR THE FOLLOWING **YEAR.** ”

“ **GOT BACK TO ME IMMEDIATELY.**

I FIND THE RFP PROCESS TO BE **MOST DIFFICULT** WHEN YOU ARE WAITING FOR A REPLY, RESPONSE AND HAVE TO KEEP FOLLOWING UP. ”

“ I APPRECIATED THE HOTEL HAVING ALL THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT PERSONALLY GREET ME ON THE MORNING OF MY SITE VISIT, **THEY REALLY SHOWED THAT THE BUSINESS WAS IMPORTANT TO THEM.** ”

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For more information, please visit:
www.cvent.com/RFP

or connect with us:

