Gaining executive endorsement for a Strategic Meetings Management Program (“SMMP”) is only the beginning. When the time comes for the actual implementation and rollout, the process sometimes tends to seem overwhelming.

Many successful SMMP’s start small and grow as visibility, cost savings and adoption increase. In fact, experts in the area of SMM recommend a phased approach as a best practice. It is critical to define a strategy for both short term and well as long term, eliminating the pain of having to make significant changes along the way that will ultimately disrupt the success of your SMMP.

This business case outline is a simple but practical plan that can be deployed as you enter the implementation phase. Each organization is unique and your approach will need to be configured to align itself with your organization’s culture, executive support, business objectives and available resources.

**Content for a simple, but effective business case:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Current Situation/Business Need | 5. Justifications and Impacts |
| 1. Objectives | 6. Expected Results |
| 1. Risks | 7. Selecting Meetings Technology: Keep It Simple  8. Recommended Rollout Plan |
| 1. Proposed Strategy |  |

**1. Current situation**

Detail the current situation and keep it simple.

Some of the questions that should be answered in this section include:

1. What are the obstacles we face?

2. Are contracts signed by authorized signers and therefore, legitimate?

3. Are all legal/regulator risks mitigated with the current system?

4. Is meeting-related spent visible across the organization?

Below are some typical obstacles associated with organizations’ current situations:

* Inefficiencies in meetings management with multiple home-grown and/or manual processes
* Overlap, duplication of efforts, re-work and redundancies
* Inconsistencies related to lack of automation
* Home-grown technology can require significant internal IT support
* Missed opportunities for cost savings with suppliers
* Lack of supplier rationalization
* Inability to capture actual spend data with suppliers
* Lack of preferred supplier program
* Inability to leverage combined meetings and travel spend
* Limited visibility into total meeting spend
* Limited visibility to re-usable space or funds due to cancelations
* Limited compliance with corporate sourcing or legal processes for meetings
* High risk factors– Duty of Care, absent or inadequate insurance coverage

**2. Objectives**

The primary objectives for implementing an SMMP, supported by an end-to-end technology platform, are to create efficiencies, increase visibility and transparency, maximize cost savings, support compliance with your organization’s policies and mitigate the substantial risks that meetings can pose. There may be additional objectives based on your organizational needs that could be included here. Some of the questions that should be answered in this section include:

This section should answer the questions:

1. What business problems will this solve?
2. How do we streamline our processes and improve quality and consistency?
3. How do we capitalize on penalties incurred?
4. Is this important or does this align with business objectives for our organization?

Below are some typical objectives for implementing an SMMP:

* Gain significant efficiencies through automation, more streamlined processes and optimization of resources
* End-to-end technology increases visibility into meetings and events taking place and the ability to capitalize on penalties incurred
* Drive cost savings through strategic sourcing and development of a preferred supplier program
* Increase compliance and mitigate risk through visibility into meetings activity and the ability to deploy a crisis management plan

**3. Risks**

Identify risks to the organization as well as the risk associated with doing nothing. Risks could be categorized into:

* Reputation
* Exposure to negative public opinion through mismanaged meetings
* Corporate social responsibility
* Market
* Financial
* Legal and Regulatory
* Business Operations

Outlining the risk of inaction is just as important. Again, identify the risks that might be specific and/or most critical to your organization.

This section should answer the question “What will the impact be if we DON’T implement a SMMP:

Specific to the Life Sciences vertical, a lack of visibility into who is planning meetings, where they are being held and which Health Care Professionals are attending significantly restricts the ability to comply with government regulations, putting the leadership and the organization at risk.

**4. Proposed Strategy**

Define the strategy that aligns with the objectives and which are actionable and measurable.

This section should answer the questions:

1. What is the strategy?
2. What do we recommend?
3. What business problems will this solve?
4. What are the critical success factors?
5. What are the priorities that must be implemented first? And last?

A typical Proposed Strategy may include the following:

* Deploy state-of-the-art meetings management technology
* Identify the key stakeholders for initial rollout and develop a communication plan for distribution and adoption of the program.
* Centralize hotel sourcing/contracting activity using e-RFP’s
* Create a cross functional team to serve as a task force or advisory council, including affected stakeholders and potential champions.

**5. Justification and Impacts**

Support the reasons for moving forward with implementation based on the Current Situation. Gather as much information as possible around total spend, volume of meetings, number of suppliers and any significant cancellation or attrition penalties paid that can be identified - Accounts Payable/Finance, meeting management companies, and hotel partners are good resources for this information.

* Use industry empirical evidence to support the amount of meeting spend by a typical organization.
* 10 – 25% savings can be achieved through the implementation of a robust SMMP, aided by state-of-the-art technology. Source: Best Practices in SMM Strategic Sourcing - White Paper by BTN Group (sponsored by Cvent) 2011
* Meeting spend accounts for 25% to 40% of the organization’s annual travel spend. Source: Advito 2014 and GBTA.
* Meeting spend is typically 1% to 3% of company revenues. Source: Travel and Meetings Management Integrations: Still Work In Progress For Most" - White Paper by BTN Group (sponsored by Travel and Transport), 2014
* According to research performed by Aberdeen, technology users achieve:
* 55% savings in productivity when working with reporting and dashboards
* 43% in budgeting for current and future events
* 32% in managing travel and lodging statistics
* Aberdeen research also reveals that through the deployment of a technology solution, organizations are:
* 70% more likely to hold real-time visibility through an enterprise- wide calendar
* 76% more likely to hold real-time visibility into overall and individual meetings spend
* 76% more likely to hold real-time visibility into Strategic Meetings Management data
* Aberdeen has also identified that meetings management technology users can also expect:
* A 73% higher rate of cost savings
* Nearly 40% higher rate of compliance to corporate policies and guidelines related to meetings and events
* 35% higher frequency of events meeting or exceeding goals and objectives
* Nearly 30% higher frequency of meetings and events executed within or below budget
* Assumptions to include:
* Total meetings spend and # of meetings
* Initial costs to launch the proposed recommendations
* Use Cvent’s simple ROI calculator to demonstrate the return on investment and potential savings and benefits from deploying an SMMP.

**6. Expected Results**

Demonstrate the benefits in the near term that align with the Objectives, Risks and Proposed Strategy. Note that in the beginning, the ability to report on data will be limited. However, as an SMMP matures, so does the volume and credibility of the data.

This section should answer the questions:

1. What is the anticipated ROI on implementing an SMMP?
2. How will the ROI be calculated?
3. What methods will be used to obtain the data?
4. Which financial criteria are important to decision makers?
5. Who assumes the costs?
6. Who receives the benefits?

Results could include:

* Resource reductions and reallocations. Will automation enable you to reduce or reallocate resources for other priorities and/or increase the focus on the strategic elements of meetings?
* Estimated negotiated cost savings on hotel spend over Years 1, 2 and 3.
* Increased transparency and visibility to meetings
* Robust reporting capabilities through technology implementation

Be especially conscious of the varying interests of executives (i.e. Finance is interested in cost savings/avoidance; Risk Management is interested in how the implementation will reduce risk; Sales/Marketing is interested in how the experience will improve and how implementation may improve their ROI on meetings and events).

Specific data that will be available through meetings technology:

**Upon Registration of Meetings**

* Total # of meetings registered
* Meeting type
* Business unit
* Budget
* Meeting owner
* Average lead time

**At the Conclusion of the Sourcing Process**

* Cost savings on sleeping rooms (be sure to partner with your procurement or finance group to define “cost savings” and “cost avoidance”)
* Cost savings/avoidance on meeting room rental
* Value of concessions negotiated

**At the Conclusion of Meeting**

* Budget vs. actual spend
* Negotiated savings during the planning process
* Usage of preferred suppliers (show as a %)
* Average meeting duration
* Average number of attendees
* Top 10 destinations
* Attendee satisfaction surveys – did the meeting/event achieve its objectives?

**7. Selecting Your Meetings Technology: Keep it Simple**

Technology plays a vital role in the success of your meetings program. From, the meeting registration and sourcing process to budgeting and analytics, the right technology tools and partner can determine the success or failure of your program. Technology drives adoption of your SMM Program. If the software is not easy to use, then your planners, especially the occasional planners and requestors, will not use it.

**Key considerations for choosing meetings technology**

1. *Keep it Simple*
   * Buy what you need to launch your program now, but choose a provider that can support your future vision. Most technology providers will let you renegotiate or purchase more as your adoption grows.
2. *Ease of Use* 
   * The user interface for the technology should be simple and intuitive. This includes the request forms, site selection and sourcing technology, and reports.
3. *Comprehensive sourcing database*
   * You are a large company with multiple offices and meetings in multiple locations. Having a sourcing tool that is not comprehensive will make it tougher to save costs.
4. *Reporting at your fingertips* 
   * No one likes to log into solutions and run reports, especially management. Find technologies that provide comprehensive reporting that is easy for all stakeholders to access as needed.
5. *Adoption & Support* 
   * Adoption is key to success. Both with the program as a whole and the technology solution. Pick the technology that provides unlimited support and invests resources in helping your team adopt the solution (you are going to need it).

For more information on how to achieve your meetings management technology goals in three easy steps, download our [Meetings Management Simplified white paper.](http://www.cvent.com/en/strategic-meetings-management/simply-whitepaper.shtml?cid=701o0000000dJzwAAE)

**8. Recommended Rollout Plan**

A clearly articulated rollout plan is essential to success in implementing an SMMP. Collaboration is key in a successful rollout since the process will involve other departments, resources and third parties. Following is a suggested outline for the early phase of the rollout.

***Note:***

* Develop a rollout timeline for executives and key stakeholders with progress updates every three months to ensure buy-in at each milestone
* Beta test with a small group of key meeting owners to ensure that the systems and processes are working as designed and make adjustments as needed
* Solidify your communications campaign to those who will be impacted by the SMMP.
  + How it will impact them and WIIFM (What’s In It For Me?)
  + Provide training for the core meeting planning team, the power planners and occasional planners throughout the organization, those in the approval process (if/when implemented) and your suppliers.
* Keep new processes as simple as possible.

**Key steps in the rollout process will include:**

1. **Automate the Approval Process**

* This step will largely depend on the specific needs of your organization, the matrix for approvals, your line of business and the willingness of a variety of stakeholders to engage (i.e. meeting owners, finance, procurement)
* Work with your technology provider to map the approval routing process that can be based on a variety of variables such as signature authorities, approvers, etc.
* Ensure that all levels in the approval chain are aware of their role, what the guidelines are and what the exception policy is.

1. **Register Meetings**

* Create a portal through your organization’s internet or a link for meeting owners to provide details of the meeting
* Meeting details can be collected through a standard form, with logic questions based on previous answers such as meeting type or department.
* Details should include meeting owner, dates, location if known, number of expected attendees, budget, and any other data you’ll wish to report on.

1. **Calendar Meetings**

* Once a meeting is registered, your meetings technology platform should be able to populate the information into a Calendar that can be shared enterprise-wide.
* The calendar can organize meetings by type, department, or any other useful categorization to your organization.

1. **Centralize Strategic Hotel Sourcing**

* Develop a process to collect meeting registrations and hotel sourcing requests.
* If you have a standard contract addendum, attach it to all RFP’s.
* Consider addressing the usage of cancelled space credits in your meetings policy. Identify who will source and contract meetings – will one person own the meeting start to finish or will you group by discipline, with sourcing and planning handled by different people?

If you haven’t already, be sure to read through our [Communication Plan Template](http://www.cvent.com/en/strategic-meetings-management/Communication-Policy-Template.shtml?cid=701o0000000dJzqAAE) to assist in the development of you Rollout Plan.

As your SMMP matures, focus on other elements of SMM, including **planning and execution, payment/expense reconciliation**, expanding **data analytics and reporting** and overall **strategy** optimization to enable your SMMP to achieve its intended outcomes and optimize its performance and value.

Need to present a business case to your boss or senior leaders? Start with [Cvent’s Business Case PPT Template](http://www.cvent.com/en/strategic-meetings-management/Presentation-Template.shtml?cid=701o0000000dJzoAAE)!