

Inside AOCs

close to home. This evens out travel costs over a period of time and provides a chance for participation by persons in each geographic area who might not be able to attend meetings outside their home area.

The selection of a specific hotel is made on recommendation of the local committee with advice from AOCs' executive director and meetings coordinator.

AOCs has to use larger hotels because such hotels can commit the large number of sleeping rooms (500 to 800) needed to keep members close to the meeting activities. Using a cluster of smaller hotels might mean lower room rates, but would also mean having to travel between hotels to attend technical sessions, committee meetings or social functions. More important, the larger hotels also usually are the only ones with sufficient meeting rooms (large exhibit hall, 7 or more technical session meeting rooms with the capacity for 100-400 persons, more than a dozen committee-size rooms, ballrooms for meal events, etc.) to accommodate an AOCs meeting.

Could AOCs use a convention center? Yes, but convention centers must be rented so they couldn't be used without adding to meeting costs. Large hotels do not charge for meeting rooms when they know an organization's members will be filling the hotel's sleeping rooms. If you meet in a convention center and hold your social functions outside the hotel, you'll pay more for the sleeping rooms. AOCs does negotiate a discount from the walk-in rate for sleeping rooms. When a local committee is selecting a hotel, a major consideration (along with hotel size, meeting-room capacities, etc.) is how much of a discount a hotel is willing to provide.

What about meeting at a university? That's been tried for short courses and other specialized meetings. Sometimes it works well, sometimes it doesn't. In one case, AOCs had virtually the entire enrollment of a short course check out of the less-expensive dormitory rooms and into a nearby commercial motel. Our spring meeting usually occurs when universities are still in session and dormitory rooms are not available. Universities, incidentally, are no longer cheap. Universities regard meetings as a way to help increase income. Many university towns lack the transportation capacity to move 1,200 to 1,700 people into town one day, then out again 4 days later.

What about giving folks a chance to rent rooms in cheaper hotels? You can. If you'd prefer to stay in a less expensive, nearby hotel, you may do so. AOCs registration is frequently greater than the rooms reserved at large hotels and space is reserved at nearby hotels. Some members on limited travel funds have sought out these less expensive accommodations. Others cut costs by finding a roommate to share housing expenses.

How come the room rate paid may be more than you pay at the same hotel for another group's meeting? It's a matter of supply and demand. Room rates vary from season to season. If you're there in the off-season for the hotel, you may get a less expensive room. If the other group has more frequent or larger meetings at the hotel, the room rate may be lower. Weekend rates are frequently lower because most groups don't meet over weekends. AOCs will be having meetings in the near future that start

on Saturdays to obtain the lower room rates available.

Another tip to cut meeting costs: changes in domestic commercial airline regulations now permit airlines to offer discount fares to persons traveling to-and-from specific meetings. AOCs has negotiated such discounts for the past 2 years. You may find you can save on airfare costs by using this special service. Or, just as with hotels, you may find you can make a better deal elsewhere because, in this era of deregulation, new and cheaper fares crop up almost daily. These low fares generally entail restrictions or inconvenience—advance payment requirements, travel on specific days, limited number of seats at that fare, etc. Therefore, you should investigate such offers carefully before deciding that cheaper is better.

AOCs does and will continue to keep costs an important factor in its meeting planning equation, but many other factors must be considered. Hotels and travel facilities are other considerations.

Staff changes

Sharon D. Michalove is the new staff editor for *JAOCs*, succeeding Philippa Logan, who has returned to her native Great Britain after a vacation trip to the Galapagos Islands. Her husband, originally from Ireland, completed his post-graduate academic work at the University of Illinois this past December.

Michalove received her bachelor's and master's degrees (Library and Information Science) from the University of Illinois. She previously has worked for Scott, Foresman and Co., a textbook publisher, and for the University of Illinois Office of Agricultural Publications.

Martha Francisco, who has been an owner, co-owner and operator of typing and typesetting services for the past 18 years, has replaced Deborah J. Shreffler as a typesetter. Shreffler returned to college as a full-time student.

And finally, but certainly not the least important, AOCs Production Manager Jean Bettenhausen and husband Ken became parents with the birth of Brian Bettenhausen in mid-November. By the time you read this, Jean is back at work full-time, but Brian has not yet found gainful employment.



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