

Some LESSONS LEARNED and BEST PRACTICES from FALL 2006 Regional and District Conventions

- Facilities
 - Make sure the hotel contract is reviewed by someone familiar with them, such as the USAC Executive Director.
 - DO NOT obligate to cancellation charges without board approval.
 - Keep all activities at one site so that expensive busses are not needed to ferry people to banquet halls or churches.
 - Keep guests together in one hotel.
 - Make sure there is sufficient seating for all sessions, plenary and breakout.
- Publicity
 - Order mailing lists from USAC within one week of mailing dates. Mailing lists are constantly changing and the closer they are ordered to the actual mailing date, the more accurate and effective they will be.
 - Get the word out early and keep it in front of potential attendees
 - Spell out the program in detail on promotional material.
- Program
 - Get on the Bishop's calendar 12 to 24 months out.
 - Have back up speakers in case one has to cancel.
 - Plan in advance to include members from as many clubs as possible in liturgies as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, gift bearers, servers, and ushers. Participation not limited to host clubs is appreciated and gives an inclusive sense. It also gives more people a reason to attend the convention.
 - Keep awards at the Banquet to a minimum.

Secret of Serra

**Increasing
Attendance
And
Profits**

**At
USAC District/Region
Conventions**

**USA Council of Serra International
Super Weekend, August 2005**

Usual elements of a great convention

Location and Date

Attention to detail

- Good weekend
- Nice hotel / rooms reasonably priced
- Secure Bishop(s)
- Outstanding speakers and panel sessions
- Wonderful liturgy(s)
- Good food / wonderful cocktail hour
- Promotion – mailing – club visits
- Balanced budget
- Everybody will leave with a good feeling

Perceived value

- Low registration cost
- Low hotel rate

Often this alone
does not

generate good enough attendance

Why?

What's missing?

Answer

Often

We have not given enough
Serrans “**real reason**” to be there

Let's look at the market

Serrans attitude about conventions

Regulars

Occasionals

Never-beens

The normal convention will always attract the regulars
.....and a few occasionals

But usually not enough to increase attendance

How can we give more Serrans a
“**Real reason**” to be there?

Secret is fairly obvious

We need a
marketing plan

to attract more “occasionals” and “never-beens”

Here’s a simple 4 step plan
that works

#1. Decide how many new attendees you want

#2. Decide who they will be (what categories/groups)

#3. Create a “Reason to be there” (for each group)

#4 Promote heavily (but only to them)

Marketing plan

steps

#1 How many?

Pick any amount - any number works

#2 Who will they be?

You decide – Pinpoint them by **target groups**

Select from these **target groups** (or others)

- first time attendees 10
- new people on convention organizing committee 4
- extra Club Presidents 3
- extra Club VP's for Programs 5
- extra Club VP's for Vocations 5
- extra Club VP's for Membership 5
- extra Club VP's for Communications (secretary) 5
- extra Chaplains 3
- new spouses 10
- from XYZ club which hasn't recently been represented 5
- Past DG's who haven't been attending 3
- Past Club presidents who haven't been attending 7
- new club officers who missed out on SLPC 10

Challenge: Change these individual's minds from "NO" to "YES"

How do you do that?

Marketing plan

step

#3 Create a “reason to be there”

For each target group

Examples

President:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “How to manage volunteers and have fun” Topic at convention session• “Your Club’s success with (hottest USAC project)” Report from each president• “Closed meeting the evening before” Personal invite from new DG• Copy them on all other mailings and emails
VP for Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “How to insure that your the speaker will show up” Topic at convention session• “Why to use a USAC Program only 3 times a year” Topic at convention session• “How to present a TRUE Easter Program” Topic at convention session
Increase chaplain attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Chaplains Challenge to Serrans” Chaplains will have their own meeting and report results at special session to Serrans
Organizing committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obvious• If they build it, they’ll be there
1 st time attendee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letter to regulars• “Bring a buddy”• Offer a BIG BONUS
New club officers who missed SLPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letter from Governor• “Get caught up” session• Letter from Club President – mini Club board meeting at Convention

#4 Promote heavily

- Separate mailings, emails, phone calls to each individual target group. Repeat often their specific **“reason to be there”**
- Do not waste money promoting heavily to regulars
- Start promoting early - **10% rule** - You’ll lose 10% (or so) total attendance for each month you wait beyond 6 months prior
- Create and promote perceived **“need to register early”** 3 months (2 hotels – tiered registration fee – limited space)
- Always a strong promotion to **recent attendees** to “Bring a Buddy” who hasn’t been coming

3 touches

Gets only the regulars

vs

7 touches

Gets the targets to change from a **“no”** to a **“yes”**

Consider paying for these “Reason to be there” activities also:

(Touch each potential expansion person **seven times**)

- Mailing announcement of your attendance contest
- Mailing from club chaplains
- Mailing from club presidents to constituents
- Mailing from Hotel encouraging inexpensive upgrades and/or extending low convention rate for a few days before and after
- Mailing from hotel promoting very special rate of \$XX
- Mailing from your Bishop(s) or Diocesan Vocations Director
- 2nd mailing to Serrans from each Club president to all his /her constituents
- Purchase Limo service for special target attendees
- Purchase BIG BONUS awards

How do we pay for all this?

How do we pay for all this?

You'll need an expansion budget of

\$50

per expansion person

“Sugar Daddy”

or

“Increase registration cost”

Examples:

25 increase from 75 base = \$1250 $\$1250 / 100 = \13 per attendee

40 increase from 100 base = \$2000 $\$2000 / 140 = \15 per attendee

40 increase from 160 base = \$2000 $\$2000 / 200 = \10 per attendee

Don't chicken out

Spend all the money

That's how you increase attendance!

Increase your profits

Keep the hotel out of your wallet

Room rate Hotel can steal your profits
Meeting rooms Food & beverage

Contract negotiation is the key

Hold back your probable optimism

- Start early - **one year rule**
- Room rate - negotiable **\$30 rule** counteroffer \$30 below initial hotel offer
- Room reservation guarantee - **50% rule** never guarantee rooms more than 50% of expected attendance
- Meeting rooms - negotiable cost and guarantees Do not approve large food/beverage guarantees to get free meeting rooms – Just don't do it
- Food and beverage - watch required minimums for free meeting rooms (see above)
- Defer meal selection - resist pressure to make firm meal selections and coffee break commitment early in negotiations. You may need this cushion later to balance your budget
- Defer “meals served” guarantee until last minute
 - their 5% rule** - they'll be ready for 5% over serve of your guarantee
 - your 5% rule** - Guarantee 5% less than the number you are **absolutely positive** will attend each meal or event
- Mutual headcount of meals served - Your hotel is certainly honest “**but**” you might still save the cost of 5 or 6 meals.

This is one excellent way to increase profits

Review

1. How do we increase attendance and profits at Regional/District conventions?
2. Plan the usual good convention for your area
 - Location
 - Attention to details
 - Present perceived value
3. Conducting a good convention often does not increase attendance
4. Why not? We need to give more Serrans a “real reason” to be there
5. Create a 4 step marketing plan
 - How many?
 - Who?
 - “Reason to be there”
 - Promote with “7 touches”
6. How much of an increase do you want, and who will they be?
7. Suggested “real reasons” to be there
8. Promote heavily – selectively
9. How do we pay for all this added promotion
 - “Sugar Daddy”
 - Increased registration cost
 - \$50 converts to \$15 per participant
10. Keeping the hotel out of your wallet increases profits