



**CAREERS IN
MEETING AND
EVENTS
MANAGEMENT
HOSPITALITY MARKETING**

CAREERS IN

MEETING AND EVENTS MANAGEMENT

HOSPITALITY MARKETING

INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT BUSINESS FUNCTION

PLANNING EVERYTHING FROM SALES MEETINGS TO MAJOR CONVENTIONS

EVERY TIME A LARGE INDUSTRY HOLDS A NATIONAL CONVENTION OR A COMPANY calls its sales force together to discuss sales goals, someone must coordinate the meeting, making the schedule run efficiently, the rooms comfortable and effective, and the food satisfactory. Meeting and events managers oversee these types of arrangements.

Think about some of the events you've attended or seen on television. Major political conventions and debates require careful and specialized planning, involving a large staff of planners and workers. Business trade takes place at important meetings, conventions and events. For example, the food and publishing industries hold conventions and trade shows to display their new products and offer samples.

The reasons that companies and organizations hold meetings:

- Education
- Training
- Information exchange
- Decision making
- Research
- Sales
- Strategic planning
- Team building

- New product introduction
- Reorganization and problem solving

Training and education appear to be the most common reasons for meetings. Virtually every type of business holds meetings of some sort.

It is estimated that typical executives spend anywhere from 25% to as much as 75% of their day in meetings. As an industry, more than \$8 billion were spent in one year on meetings just within the continental United States. Executives believe that many of their meetings turn out to be a waste of time, and it's up to meeting planners to ensure that meetings add to a company's efficiency and profits, rather than just cost money and provide a pleasant diversion for those who attend.

In addition to corporate meetings, people need events planners for entertainment and cultural activities too. If your city offers special summer arts events, planners set up the activities, entertainment and food. What's more, events are held to celebrate special occasions in people's lives. Weddings, retirement parties and other family events require the help of an events planner to make them successful.

You might consider moving to a major city anywhere in the world and working as a meeting planner within a large corporation. Your job might involve travel to various corporate locations or to sites of future meetings for employees to shareholders and boards of directors.

When researching meeting and events management careers, no one place offers complete career information. That's partly because types of meeting and events planner jobs vary so much. Information on positions may be grouped in with hospitality industry jobs. In fact, this career is often placed within that category, since duties almost always involve a hotel, convention center, restaurant or similar facility to host the meeting. And many meeting planners work right in hotels or transfer from the lodging industry into meeting planning. If you have a special interest, you might be able to work it into your events planning career. For example, if you love meetings and concerts, you might be able to work in the entertainment industry or even help set up concerts in your local community.

Meeting and events management offers many interesting choices and benefits – like travel, meeting interesting people and seeing your work come together in an actual, often exciting, event. It's a little known career that crosses many industries. With a little management experience, you can be well on your way to a fast-paced, important, and rewarding career, planning and facilitating great experiences for others!

CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

WHAT'S GREAT ABOUT THESE JOBS IS THAT MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMPANIES have such positions. You might have to look a little to find them. Sometimes a meeting or events planner works out of a company's human resources department, or maybe sales and marketing. Often, meeting planners are connected to training departments too. Or you might find an entire department of meeting planners that stands on its own.

Unlike many well-defined careers – like accountant or lawyer – you'll find that a number of different training and career paths lead to meeting and events management. You'll need to look around to figure out the best path for you.

When you research this career, be sure to look at it from a variety of angles. You'll find some information under hotel and motel lodging careers. And any information on the hospitality industry can give you a feel for the type of culture you would work in, as well as trends in business and job opportunities. But you'll also want to study business, travel, technology, and lots of other areas that might affect job opportunities or the way meeting planners accomplish their work.

You'll see that there are many different approaches to take in your decision to enter the field.

HISTORY OF MEETING AND EVENTS MANAGEMENT

THE AMERICAN HOTEL AND MOTEL ASSOCIATION REPORTS THAT IN 1900, THERE WERE fewer than 10,000 hotels in the United States. A typical first-class hotel room cost about \$2.00. In the 1920s, new highway construction led to the opening of the first "roadside" hotel in California. Hotel construction reached an all-time peak and then, about 10 years later, the depression nearly put a halt to the booming industry, as hotels posted the lowest average occupancy rate on record, 51 percent.

In 1946, the first casino hotel, the Flamingo, debuted in Las Vegas and one year later, a New York City hotel installed televisions in every guest room. In 1954, Conrad Hilton's purchase of the Statler Hotel Company for \$111 million became the largest real estate deal in history to date. J.W. Marriott built his first hotel in 1957.

By 1960, the average room rate cost about \$10.00 a night. In 1970, Hilton became the first billion-dollar lodging and food service company and the first to enter the Las Vegas market. In 1989, Hampton Inns introduced a business stay option with special amenities to encourage business travelers. By 1990, the average room rate had jumped to nearly \$60.00 per night. In 2000, Hilton unveiled plans for the first luxury hotel in space.

The hospitality industry today is as diverse as ever. Hotels, motels, campgrounds, and special meeting facilities exist in nearly every city and even small resort areas. Many of these facilities depend on meetings and special events to fill their lodging and meeting rooms year round.

In one recent year, the lodging industry took in over \$22 billion dollars. The industry directly supports more than eight million jobs. Tourism is the third largest retail industry in the United States and one of America's largest employers.

The meeting and events industry has expanded to include major events in large destination cities, casinos, cruise ships, and private resorts. Association meeting expenditures collectively equal almost \$14 billion annually. Corporate expenditures have reached almost \$9 billion.

Today, the meeting and events planning industry depends heavily on advancing technology. Meeting planners inspect possible sites via the Internet, make online travel arrangements, and use wireless communication in their planning. They also set up wireless communication for meeting attendees. These advances are expected to give meeting professionals more options in meeting formats, more latitude in presentation techniques and more ways to communicate and connect with clients and meeting attendees.

Meeting professionals have become more important to companies' organizational structures. They work hand-in-hand with company or association leadership to help them accomplish communication and education goals. From top management, to new employees and frontline staff, the meeting planner probably impacts their job. According to one professional, the meeting professional is being transformed "from logistical planner to experience maker and business partner."



WHERE MEETING AND EVENTS PLANNERS WORK

THE MAJORITY OF MEETING AND EVENTS MANAGERS WORK IN OR AROUND HOTELS. Even daytime or luncheon meetings often take place in hotel banquet rooms. Convention centers in medium and large cities also hold meetings, and they're often the largest capacity meeting areas. Meeting planners may work for the hotel or convention center, heading up their catering and meeting services, or work in the convention sales department.

Meeting planners often work for large corporations and most likely have an office in the company headquarters. For this reason, most meeting and events managers probably work in larger cities.

Your office may be in a large corporate complex so you can be near other managers and employees with whom you interact daily. You may be located in the human resources department, marketing department, executive offices, or in a space dedicated to training, meetings and events.

Some meeting and events managers may work for an association or nonprofit organization that is based in a medium or large city.

Cities with a large tourist business probably offer more meeting and events planner employment opportunities. For instance, Las Vegas, Nevada depends on tourism and casino visitors. Many companies and associations host meetings there because people like to visit the city and so many choices in meeting locations exist. Plus, a city like Las Vegas hosts major events – entertainment shows, rodeos and other sporting events.

Destination resorts also may be located in smaller towns or even in remote areas. People like to travel to quiet and scenic locations for meetings or special events like family reunions. In these areas, a meeting planner may work with local hotels, campgrounds, and town halls to coordinate an event. Remote areas are very popular for certain types of meetings. For example, corporate shareholders or executives may meet in a yearly “retreat” to plan their business strategies for the coming year. The resort or meeting place, which may even be a rustic facility on an exotic island, likely has a person on staff to coordinate events for groups. And the corporation or association holding the meeting may have its own meeting planner who coordinates the event for them.

Hospitality jobs are everywhere. Every state, region and type of community has some sort of lodging, meeting space, or events area. Many events managers start their careers working for town and city governments, coordinating events like festivals and parades. Most convention centers are owned and operated by city governments. So you could not only choose where to work, but you might be able to choose whether or not you want private or public sector employment.

A growing number of meeting and events managers today work from home. Once you establish a client base, you can successfully manage events for others in your own business. You may choose a “niche” market. Maybe you specialize in weddings and social events. Or you might become expert at organizing government and political meetings. You may become the meeting planner for several smaller companies who can’t afford their own in-house staff. But chances are you will need some solid experience before setting out on your own.

When you choose meeting and events management as a career, you might want to think ahead to the type of work you want to do and the type of place where you want to work, as well as your preferred location in the country. Then you can gear your entry-level experience and education to your final goal. And remember that in many meeting and events jobs, some travel is involved.

THE WORK YOU WILL DO

JOB DUTIES DIFFER SOMEWHAT FOR MEETING AND EVENTS PLANNERS, DEPENDING on the type of company, level of position, and location. Since this field covers a variety of industries and job duties, it can be broken down into a few main categories for a more complete picture.

If you work for a hotel, your title might be:

- Meeting Manager
- Convention Services Manager
- Group Sales Manager
- Catering Director

Convention Services Managers for Hotels Convention services managers coordinate the activities of various departments in large hotels for meetings, conventions and special events. While the meeting takes place, convention managers make sure that any problems are resolved and that all operations – audio/visual presentations, food service, room setup – conform to the outside meeting planner’s or group’s expectations.

Convention managers assist groups in planning their events. They help determine how many and what size rooms are needed, banquet service needs, and how many lodging rooms to block off for the group. In the advance planning of the meeting or event, convention managers work much like salespeople, and many may work in a sales capacity, with a quota for booking rooms and events at the facility. In addition to sales, they, like all lodging employees, constantly perform guest service (customer service) activities.

Meeting planners and meeting managers represent a diverse group. Specific duties vary, but basically, they are responsible for total project management of any assigned meeting or special event. Every detail of the meeting – from initial site selection to the color of a tablecloth – is their responsibility.

Specific duties performed by meeting and event managers who work within a corporation or organization include:

- Development and writing of project plans
- Producing work schedules and budgets
- Meeting site inspections and selection
- Negotiating of site cost and setup
- Review of contracts with sites and vendors

- Meal planning
- Travel arrangements for attendees
- Recruiting faculty or speakers
- Contracting with speakers and meeting their needs
- Writing, editing, oversight of meeting promotional materials and programs
- Coordinating and organizing a program syllabus (the handouts, educational materials)
- Communicating with managers to meet the goals of the meeting
- Providing onsite support the day of the meeting
- Working with vendors and site staff to ensure they follow through as needed
- Overall conference management and planning

Corporate Meeting Planners Often, the corporate meeting planner holds responsibility for a variety of projects. There may be one large meeting per year, with a few smaller meetings throughout the year. Or the company might hold quarterly meetings that are scheduled way in advance. Associations, like physician groups, usually host one or more large conferences a year, with as many as 30,000 people attending. The average meeting planner works on as many as 60 meetings per year!

The corporate meeting planner must remain flexible, since last-minute requests for meetings can complicate the schedule. A company may introduce a new product and want to call together its sales force. Management issues may call for a special meeting to solve a problem in the company. The corporate meeting planner and the staff must be ready to accommodate the needs of the company, especially its upper management, in crisis situations.

An example of a typical meeting planning project is an annual corporate leadership retreat. Each year, the company holds this meeting to review the previous year's successes, announce plans for the next year, and most of all, to train and motivate its managers. The meeting planner works with senior management to schedule the appropriate time for the meeting, and may have to conduct several identical meetings to accommodate schedules of different executives, sometimes located throughout the world.

Once a date is determined, the meeting manager begins the site selection process. A few potential sites in the area are identified and their availability and facilities checked. Next comes a trip to each favored site,

inspecting it for suitability, and asking questions of the site convention manager or other representative. The meeting planner then weighs the positive and negative aspects of each site and maybe discusses those findings with a manager or team within the company. Once a site is selected, the meeting manager locks in the dates, negotiates the price, arranges payment of a deposit to the facility to hold it for those dates, and begins the rest of the planning process.

Promotion of the meeting, or at least notification if managers have to attend, usually occurs as soon as a date and location are secured. The meeting planner communicates the basics of the meeting and begins to plan the details. The manager may contact possible speakers, arrange their audiovisual needs, and negotiate fees and terms. If the speakers are internal staff, the meeting planner still must work to set a schedule and to coordinate presentation needs.

Until the time of the meeting, the planner works to coordinate the event, setting up meals and snacks, as well as possible social activities. The meeting may include giveaways for all attendees, or maybe a drawing for prizes to encourage attendance at meetings. More informational materials with schedules and speaker details may have to be written, produced and distributed. Attendees may need directions to the site and instructions on making lodging arrangements. The planner's staff will receive registrations or RSVPs for the event and track the number attending.

The closer to the time of the meeting, the busier the planner will get. There will be innumerable last-minute details and changes. Speakers can cancel and the number attending can change. Usually, sites require an accurate count for meals within about 48 hours before an event, and the planner must have a good idea of the count. During the actual event, the pace picks up to almost frantic level. The meeting manager is the onsite coordinator, making sure the site follows through on meeting speakers' and attendees' needs.

The more complicated the meeting schedule, the more details there are that can go wrong. The meeting planner must act fast to correct any problems and make sure the meeting goes on schedule and as planned.

Special Events Planners

Special events planners perform many of the same functions as meeting planners, and some people may perform duties from both jobs. For example, a meeting may involve special events as part of the schedule. Maybe a dinner/dance or entertainment are planned. The meeting planner may coordinate these details, or may enlist the help of an events planner/manager to handle the special event.

Planning special events requires not only organizational skills, but a sense of creativity, even artistry. Professionals in this job may work for a company or facility, even a special events center, or may work as a contractor to other companies and organizations, assisting them with special events. Large corporations may also have a special events planner position on their meeting planning staff.

Special events coordinating involves many of the same responsibilities as meeting planning. Site selection may get complicated, since the event could involve activities requiring a stage with lighting and other presentation effects. The special events coordinator often works with several outside vendors or entertainers. Contracts and negotiating the terms and price of each participant's role are one important duty.

Often, special events revolve around a specific purpose for the company or client, such as introduction of a new product or celebration of reaching a company goal. They might be held to thank, recognize, and sell to the company's clients or customers. For example, a pharmaceutical company might hold a special event in the city where a group of physicians is meeting for an educational conference. The company's goal is to promote awareness and use of their drugs for the doctors' patients.

The special events manager (working for the pharmaceutical company or hired as an outside coordinator) will find a location near the convention, and work with the company sales force to plan the event. The planner organizes food, entertainment, décor, and all of the details, like making sure the hotel or other site offers enough parking or provides valet parking the night of the event. This type of special event can be difficult to plan, because the organizer may know how many people were invited but not know how many will actually attend.

Some special events managers work onsite to plan, coordinate and oversee all events that occur at the facility where they work. Their job may involve booking – securing top entertainment acts or other events to be held in their venue. Then, the facility makes money on ticket sales from the event itself, and if they also have lodging or other facilities and activities, the event generates revenue from those parts of the company by serving

as the attraction that brings people there. For example, casinos and theme parks present entertainers, selling rooms to those who come from out of town for the event, and bringing people into the casino to gamble or the park to play.

Many cities hold special events to attract people to their community or to the downtown area. A city/convention bureau employee will often organize the event, sometimes working with an outside special events manager or promoter.

Several related jobs may fall under meeting and events management. First, special events planners may work to organize smaller events related more to personal activities than for large corporations and associations. Many special events planners work from small offices or from home and assist people, usually in their local area, with organizing parties, weddings, and other special events and celebrations. Although the event may be smaller and the budget less, many of the same details remain and the planning must be meticulous. The event planner will coordinate local vendors, sites, and work closely with the event host.

MEETING AND EVENTS MANAGERS TELL ABOUT THEIR WORK

This Weekend, I Will Be Hanging Out With Drew Carey and His Entourage, as They're Performing Here

"I've paid my dues for 10 years to get to where I am. My title is Assistant Vice President, Entertainment and Booking for MGM MIRAGE Sports and Entertainment in Las Vegas, Nevada. We own several venues, and I manage the calendars for all of the venues we own and operate.

Between my freshman and sophomore years of college, I accepted an internship with Walt Disney World. That's when I realized that the hospitality industry was for me. I saw how diverse and interesting it could be and transferred to the University of Las Vegas (UNLV,) one of the top schools in the industry. Next, I took an internship at the school's Thomas and Mack Center and started in the business.

I've worked for several hospitality employers in Las Vegas and have gradually worked my way up into my current job. I don't really have a formal job description, but my responsibilities are fairly standard. Primarily, I manage venue calendars, run proposals for potential shows that we're considering hosting or promoting. This helps us predict if the shows would be profitable.

One of my duties is to look for new and unique events to host. I listen to many tapes and CDs, and watch videos of artists who want to play at one of our venues. I have lots of meetings too – weekly marketing meetings, production meetings and staff meetings. I manage the budget for several venues – that includes approving invoices, writing requests for proposal and variance reports. These reports explain any major differences between budgeted and actual money spent.

I also talk to lots of different agents within the music industry to keep up with concert tours and available dates. When we book an artist or event, I review the contract too.

What I love best about my job, aside from the excitement of pulling together a great event, is that it's different every day. The people I deal with are always different and each event is unique. Of course, the celebrities I get to meet and the all-star events I'm involved with are big perks.

The biggest drawback to my job is the hours I have to put in. It takes a lot of work to pull off a great special event. I put in between 50 and 80 hours per week. I have to admit though, that I love what I do. So that makes it easier to work more. People I meet ask me if my life is 'glamorous,' and I guess it is. I meet famous people, sometimes ride in limousines and stay at beautiful hotels. But for all of the glamorous details, there are a hundred more times when I'm attending to routine behind-the-scenes details that are anything but glamorous. I move chairs and barricades, and am often the first person in the arena before an event and the last to leave. I also spend lots of time reviewing 150-page contracts in legal jargon, and working up dozens of pro formas to make an event work.

Eventually, you realize that the famous people and artists you work with are just people too. It's exciting to meet them, but many have big egos and can be very demanding. Their success is partly because of those traits and I guess partly responsible for them too. Many also are quite eccentric, but I just look at them as coworkers who happen to get paid a lot more than I do!

UNLV was an excellent education for this job, with extensive programs in Event Management. Any chance you can get to intern in or around the entertainment and events environment is a big plus in landing an events management job.

This is a great and exciting industry. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement, but I still enjoy my family and hanging out with my buddies. It's more than a job; it's a part of who you are. And I tell people that if you're in it for the glamour, don't plan on doing it for long. It's a job that takes a lot out of you, and you must really love it."

In Simplest Terms, I'm a Project

Manager "I'm the meeting manager for a large

high-tech manufacturing firm. And the work I do managing meetings for them is really like managing a lot of big projects. It's important to come into a job like this with an understanding of project planning and marketing plans too. I spend a lot of time not only planning the meetings, but documenting these plans. I assign timelines, costs and responsibilities to various parts of the meeting. When I'm in charge of a project, I have to ask all of the tough questions – planning ahead to avert anything going wrong.

On the other hand, there's a really creative side to what I do. Not all meeting planners get to use their creativity, but I do. I like the balance of creative and business duties. So it's important to be an organized, detail person who can maintain some flexibility and creativity too.

Mostly, I'm responsible for straight business meetings and some special events for the company. I have to understand how to build a project or meeting from start to finish. That involves both marketing and business aspects of the plan. I have to make sure the meeting accomplishes a particular purpose or goal. And I have to make sure that people come to the meeting too.

I started out as an administrative assistant with an association. At the time, I didn't plan on meeting management as a career. And I think that's true of a lot of my colleagues. We started out planning meetings as part of an administrative-type job and found that we liked that part of our job best. We also discovered we were good at it.

Starting out the way I did is a good way to break into the field. You can get experience working with a nonprofit association or planning meetings and events as a part of your regular job. That way, you'll get experience and find out if you like this kind of work. You'll also meet people in the convention field.

Many of the meetings I plan are scheduled way in advance. For example, we have regular meetings that occur at the same time every year. So I can set up and plan those well in advance. But sometimes, I have to set up a meeting at the last minute just

because something happens in the company to bring it about. Recently, I had to wait for approval on a meeting until just a few weeks before its scheduled date, so I had to work fast. I don't mind it too much; it's just important to remain flexible.

We launched a new product, and I only had a few months to pull together a block of meeting room space, sign the contract, and pull the meeting together. It really helps to maintain flexibility and to be a multitask person. You might be planning three or four projects at once, or have to interrupt what you're doing to jump to another project while you're close to deadline on one meeting.

Along with planning skills, people skills really help me do my job well. I have to keep everyone happy and sometimes walk a fine line. I try to maintain a good relationship with hotel convention staffs because I will need them again. I also have to meet the needs of my company's leadership – the ones who have the most interest in a successful meeting. And I have to meet the budget we've set for the meeting or event as well.

Today, most meeting planners have to show a return on investment for their meetings. In other words, we have to prove that the benefits of the meeting justify the expense involved in conducting the event. This can be tough, but I know that if I conduct a good meeting, I can show lots of benefits, and the company will understand and support the value of the meeting. I have to look for good methods to measure that value and to document it in reports.

I really encourage people interested in the field to get into the hospitality/convention industry by working in an entry-level job. That way, you can gain experience and find out if you're right for this kind of work. You have to be customer oriented and really enjoy working with people, even the demanding ones.

You have lots of education options in this field too. Since business skills are important, a two-year degree program that revolves around business and project planning is a good start. Then go to work for a company in planning events or projects to gain some good experience.

I can't emphasize enough the value of the professional associations in this field. They're a big help in learning about

related careers, finding posted jobs around the country, and in keeping you informed and trained to advance once you enter the field. So contact the associations and get involved.”

**I Plan Special Events for Companies
and My Goal is Always to Be Sure
the Attendees Have Fun**

“I’m a third-party special events planner. That means companies and associations contract with me to plan and run their special events. My job is very different from that of corporate or association meeting planners. They may plan a meeting where I conduct a side event, one that’s really separate from the meeting, but taking place at the same time. My event aims to draw from the same attendees.

For example, a pharmaceutical company may hold a special reception for physicians in the same city (even the same hotel or convention center) where a physician specialty group is holding an educational conference. I work with representatives of the pharmaceutical company, organizing a fun, and sometimes elegant, social event. We coordinate food and



beverages, all of the décor and room setup, and then we bring in entertainment.

Lots of our events take place at special events venues. We might plan a reception or other activity at a city's aquarium, the zoo, or a big theme park like Disney World. Each event involves lots of details and logistics, since one change or problem affects another part of the event. We might work with up to 200 different vendors to pull together everything we need to conduct just one large party.

I came into this field from the multimedia and entertainment side. I added some catering and transportation experience, and then some special schooling. All of these combined to give me the skills I need to conduct successful events. Most of the events I supervise now are for Fortune 500 and pharmaceutical companies. I might arrange a casino party, a helicopter tour, or multimedia and catering for a large party.

Most people sort of fall into this career field. After all, almost every type of company has some sort of meeting and special event. Lawyers, accountants, physicians, sales and manufacturing employees, all host meetings and events. Many people in the field started out working in one of those industries and then became good at what they do. Soon, word of mouth brought them more recognition. I depend on word of mouth and my Web site for new business.

No matter what type of event I plan, my goal is to make sure everyone who attends has a good time. I can't go wrong – it means the clients have accomplished their goal and I've made my clients happy. Unfortunately, 90% of my work is spent getting ready for my favorite part of the job – and only 10% of my time actually is spent at the event itself.”

WHAT'S IT TAKE TO SUCCEED?

PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN A FIELD LIKE MEETING AND EVENTS MANAGEMENT ARE about as important as any formal training and experience. It takes the right person to do this job well and to enjoy it. In the hospitality industry, you must be able to get along with people in all positions and from all walks of life. Guests at meetings and events may not be easy to please. You'll also deal with coworkers, from secretarial staff to senior executives.

Meeting and events planners realize that the people who work at the locations and venues, as well as vendors and service suppliers, are crucial to successful follow-through of their carefully made plans. If you can't get along with them, and motivate them to do a good job for you and your client or boss, your job will be a lot tougher.

You'll need to be able to manage your own responses in stressful situations with anyone involved. You might come across a very upset guest, speaker, or entertainer. You'll need to diffuse the situation and take care of it to the best of your ability. This also requires quick thinking and a calm manner in stressful times.

Sales abilities will help too. Many of the same skills that make successful salespeople come in handy when dealing with the public. Plus, the ability to negotiate, and even to persuade, can be useful in coordinating meeting sites and services. Finally, many meeting and events management-related jobs involve actual sales, falling within a hotel or company's sales department. After all, any large facility depends on using its space to capacity in order to make a profit. In those cases, you'll need the ability not only to sell, but to think strategically and to remain motivated in order to meet sales quotas.

The ability to juggle many tasks at once, and to quickly change attention to an unrelated detail, will serve you well in meeting and events management. Even if you work on only a few meetings per year, you'll have to handle so many different aspects of each one that the ability to handle interruptions and a mind for detail will help.

Independent decision-making is a skill demanded by managers in this field. You must also be articulate and be able to present ideas clearly and forcefully, since you will be interpreting the needs of one group (your clients) to another group (your suppliers) who can meet them. You might also have to do presentations to groups to describe a plan or budget for an event. So you should be comfortable speaking persuasively in front of people.

Initiative, or being a self-starter, is an attractive quality for meeting and events managers. Attention to detail and quality of work are important traits too. Good communication skills, including written communications, will be needed in almost any meeting and events management position. You'll have to write reports, plans, promotional materials, and communicate constantly. You should easily meet deadlines, have good time management skills, and follow schedules carefully.

Many meeting and events planning positions require travel. Although it's possible to work in the industry without a lot of travel, chances are you'll have some. So you must be willing to travel and should enjoy it too.

ATTRACTIVE FEATURES

TRAVEL IS A VERY ATTRACTIVE FEATURE OF THIS JOB FOR THOSE WHO LOVE IT. OFTEN, meeting and events planners will have to travel to a site or venue well in advance of the activity to make sure it fits their needs. They'll also travel to the event itself. The amount of travel depends on the specific job, and once you break into the industry, you should be able eventually to find a job that offers the amount of travel you want.

Many meeting and events managers get a lot of satisfaction from their jobs because they get to experience the result of their efforts. They say there's a certain rush from being there when it all comes together, seeing people have fun, or reading positive evaluations about a meeting. It's one job where you can be right in the middle of the action, making it better as you go and then participating in your own success.

Unlike jobs with duties that repeat themselves daily, each unique event or meeting has a distinct beginning and end. You should be able to sit back and take a deep breath at the end of each successful effort.

Excitement, fast pace, and even some glamour, appeal to many people who enter this field. Your job is important to a company or association or other client. You help facilitate its communication and accomplish its goals. You might get satisfaction from knowing you participated in efforts to teach, train and motivate people. If you plan special events, you can possibly find a niche in a particular speciality that matches your interests – like sporting events or weddings. You may organize the kinds of events where you will meet famous people whom you admire.

Variety is an attractive feature for many in this industry. You can enter the field from a number of industries and angles. Once you're in a