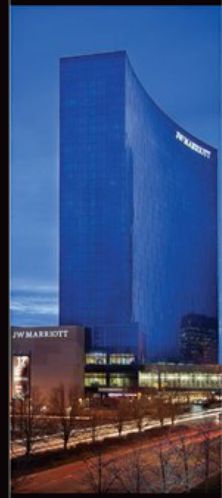


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COMMENTS

PCMA@Catalyst: Battling Pirates

Room-block pirates, who lure attendees away from your conference room block by unethical and/or fraudulent means, aren't a new problem. Is it getting worse? PCMA's Catalyst community (catalyst.pcma.org) talked about their experiences with pirates and what can be done to stop them.

We are currently experiencing hotel piracy for our annual meeting. We've posted a notice on our conference website to make it clear that our conference hotel is the only location that is "official housing," in hopes that our attendees/exhibitors will realize this.

I've reached out to the two companies that have contacted our delegates and they had no idea what I was talking about. I have since learned that one of them was a company that was actually being misrepresented, meaning they are a known housing company but they were not the ones contacting our delegates. Whoever did contact our delegates was using their name and phone number! My guess is they are probably committing credit-card fraud as well!

I don't know where to go from here besides making it clear in our marketing materials that we don't use outside housing. Any suggestions would be welcomed. And if anyone is willing to share cease-and-desist letters with me, I'd really appreciate that as well.

Lizza Catalano, Conference Planner, Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics

I have experienced this with companies who have pirated client blocks — literally tried to undercut, using a hotel miles from where the meeting was to take place and far different quality. The client wrote a cease-and-desist letter and threatened a lawsuit if the company continued to mine their membership. I had never experienced anyone reaching out to me until this past

'I was simply floored to experience it firsthand, and think it is one of the most unethical things going on in our industry today.'

month. I registered for a show we are exhibiting at with an association client, and once I was registered as an exhibitor, I received an email from a company claiming to be able to provide reduced-rate rooms at the same host hotel as the meeting. I was floored at the boldness of the email and wondered how they received my email, name, and so on.

I immediately reported the pirate to the exhibit manager and am unsure of what they did. I was simply floored to experience it firsthand, and think it is one of the most unethical things going on in our industry today. Vent finished.

Tanna McFee Pearman, National Sales Manager, Silver Legacy Resort

Regarding room-block "pirates" — I do not have any advice. One of our sponsors fell victim to this sort of scam for our 2014 conference. I would love to hear what the community has to say about this topic.

Our registration company has software to help us audit for people who booked "around the block." Upon check-in, registration asks attendees where they stayed and then the software compares the list gathered on site to the list made at booking (prior to on site). After the audit is complete, we gather the names that we did not have prior to on site and send them to the hotels. Ninety percent of the time the hotels add the attendees to our block and they get counted toward our attrition requirements.

Ewa Jodlowska, Event Coordinator, Python Software Foundation

Here are a few steps to take to protect your association:

- ▶ Charge "around the block" fees for attendees who book unofficial housing.
- ▶ Promote a distinct event "official housing" logo or other supplier designation. Be protective of official branding against fraudulent housing parties.
- ▶ Carefully screen anyone who is requesting your list of attendees, and be careful what you post online without taking security measures.

▶ If you find out a company is misrepresenting itself as official housing, take swift and aggressive legal action.

▶ Effectively communicate to your members who the official housing agents are and how to contact them. Communicate this loudly and often.

▶ Communicate the benefits of staying within the official housing block, i.e., free shuttles, Internet, networking, etc. Consider special incentives.

▶ Always include a contractual clause ensuring lowest room rate offered over meeting dates.

▶ Negotiate a price-protection clause into the hotel contract that protects associations against being undercut on the room rate. These may require hotels to cross-reference rooms booked at the group rate to ensure there is a corresponding conference registration. Otherwise, the individual must pay the hotel's undiscounted rate.

► Raise awareness. The more people know, the more strength they have. It's important to remember that attendees just want to get their room booked at a reasonable rate and may not be aware of industry problems with "around the block" booking.

Tony Prusak, Associate Vice President of Business Development, ABTS Convention Services

PCMA@Catalyst: Bad Behavior

How groups define and practice basic standards of business etiquette was another enthusiastically debated topic on Catalyst in recent weeks. Cultural changes may be altering our behavior, some commenters pointed out, and almost everyone called for more discussion and education on the topic.

I know this is going to sound like it is coming from an old man ... well, it is! In the last two weeks I have attended an industry trade show and an industry educational event. I was struck and horrified during both events by how many times during a serious business conversation that someone unrelated to the conversation busted in and interrupted the discussion. This includes during a scheduled appointment for a sit-down meeting in an exhibitor's booth.

It has caused me to think about how we are (or are not) teaching the basics of good business etiquette. Do we discuss it with our work colleagues? Do we create it as an expectation with direct reports? Do we lead by example? Have we forgotten that poor business etiquette can destroy one's professional credibility?

What scares me the most for our industry is the notion that a real conversation about business and commerce may be becoming so rare that others assume you are in casual conversation instead of a business

conversation, and that it would be acceptable to jump in without waiting to be included.

Bill Reed, CMP, Senior Director of Meetings, American Society of Hematology

I, too, have wondered about refreshers on business etiquette, as it seems to be waning today. Multiple generations in the workplace aren't helping, as each tends to have different preferences built on life experiences. With digital expanding fast, suddenly everything seems urgent (it's not), and I think we could all use better filters to determine what's urgent and/or interruption-worthy and what can wait.

I realize [the] initial post wasn't hitting the generational thing — but imagine if there was a session where we put a healthy list of business-etiquette maxims on the table before a diverse group of participants. Their mission would be to winnow it down to a shorter list of unbreakable commandments.

With the right facilitator, that could be an enlightening discussion. With the wrong facilitator, it could be a rumble. And don't get me started on reading non-verbal cues. Maybe that's the "201" follow-up course.

Donna Kastner, Vice President, Expo/Sponsor Sales and Activation, Velvet Chainsaw Consulting

I agree that there is a definitely polite way to engage one another at a conference or any social business function. To Donna's point, multiple generations in the workplace have started to change the way we interact; some for the better and some that need work by all generations to get on the same page.

The digital age, while creating amazing new platforms in which to connect, has taken some toll on the fine art of in-person contact. The way we interact is just not the same as it was before smartphones, tablets, and social media.

Additionally, many folks now work from home and only communicate electronically all day long, so they often lose their tact in person. I will also state that one thing hasn't changed, and it's old-fashioned pressure that we as sales professionals have to meet clients at these events that our companies are paying for us to attend. None of this excuses a rude interruption. We could all benefit from some refresher on business etiquette and include some modernizing based on the elements that have changed and shaped it.

It would also help for people to remember to be on purpose and intentional before the conference or event by reaching out to your targets [in advance] and set up a time to visit. Great topic, Bill.

Tanya Steenwyk, CTE, Senior Sales Manager, Hilton Americas - Houston

From one "old man" to another, I completely agree with your observation, as apparently many others do as well. However, I am not sure it is entirely generational, but perhaps more caused by the endemic lack of manners and civility that seems to have permeated the fabric of our society.

Everyone seems poised to bite your head off at the slightest provocation. I notice it more so when traveling to other countries where the "disease" has yet to take hold to the same extent. All too often, even in business situations, surly has taken the place of civil and it feeds upon itself. Manners and etiquette are out the window.

I, for one, would also be interested in an open discussion regarding how one can begin to change this pervasive behavior, or at the very least, help make us all more aware of our actions and their effect upon others.

Ray Kopcinski, CMP, Senior Director, Million Dollar Round Table

FROM OUR BLOG

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Farm to NYC Table

Staff at Grande Lakes Orlando, home to both a JW Marriott and a Ritz-Carlton hotel, cultivate the 7,000-square-foot Whisper Creek Farm on the property, growing citrus fruit, berries, greens, tomatoes, melons, and even hops. When Grande Lakes chefs came to the James Beard House in New York City to preview their homegrown menus, Associate Editor Corin Hirsch was there. Read more: convn.org/on-the-farm

#PCMAEC: 3 New Things

Meetings are about learning and doing new things. Executive Editor Chris Durso wrote about three new things he did while attending the PCMA Education Conference — and you can even listen in on one of them. Read more: convn.org/pcmaec-new

Is the Salary Gap Real?

Convene's annual Salary Survey indicates that men make more money than women in the meetings industry, but we've been hesitant to draw any direct conclusions about pay inequality because our sample size is too small. But anecdotal evidence does seem to show that men's salaries are higher than women's. Read more: convn.org/salary-gap

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Nicole Havers
@nhavers



@TahiraCreates I feel like I know you so much better after reading your interview in @pcmaconvene! Pics from container terminal event?



ONLINE EXTRA

C2MTL: More Gray Matter, Less Green

No one would claim that the C2MTL (Creativity + Commerce) business conference, which was held in Montreal on May 27-29 (see Innovative Meetings, p. 34), was an inexpensive undertaking. The conference featured dozens of global speakers, state-of-the-art audiovisual and lighting, and an environment saturated with color and texture. But it was instructive to see that many of the decisions C2MTL's producers made didn't rely on buckets and buckets of cash. Take the area pictured in the photograph above. Event designers created an intimate and well-defined space for business meetings by filling in some of the area over participants' heads. The key material used? Long strips of white paper. To see more examples of how C2MTL relied more on thinking deeply than on deep pockets, see our slideshow at convn.org/more-gray.



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