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Indies Team Up to Chase Corp Biz

By Marshall Krantz

Publication: Successful Meetings

Date: Wednesday, June 1 2005

The procurement craze that has gripped many companies has, in many cases, resulted in mandates to limit purchasing by corporate meeting planners to just a few suppliers. As a result, independent suppliers of meetings services are banding together like never before, in an attempt to win business from corporations.



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Third-party planning firms in particular are finding they can better compete for corporate business if they collaborate with the likes of event registration companies, destination management companies, and AV companies. "It's the wave of the future," explains Marilyn Hauck, president of The Complete Conference of Sacramento, CA, speaking about supplier collaboration. "We'll see a lot more of it, especially with smaller independent planners."

Sometimes planners and suppliers present joint proposals to potential corporate clients, but most often they subcontract with other suppliers so they can offer companies one contract and one point of contact. "It's like building a house—I'm the general contractor," says Christy Lamagna, president of Strategic Meetings and Events in Bernardsville, NJ. Lamagna, who planned 20 meetings last year, maintains her own preferred suppliers, including an audiovisual company and a vendor of promotional merchandise. She also maintains preferred relationships with suppliers, such as caterers, in destinations to which she often returns. "I leverage all the business from my clients so I can get bulk discounts from my suppliers," Lamagna explains. Lamagna passes along the supplier savings to her clients—she takes a management fee for her work—which in turn allows her to submit more competitive bids.

Chris Pentz, whose Pentz Group Communications in Levittown, PA, focuses on medical meetings, says the collaboration is beneficial: "I often partner with other independent planners. If the meeting is too big, I'll need assistance, someone to manage registration or medical abstracts."

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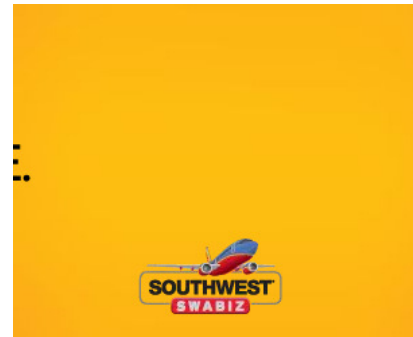
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