

Convention planners

review

The Message is the Message

There is a growing realization among meeting managers that the trappings of their meetings — the physical surroundings, the food and drink, the fringe benefits of a meeting, as it were — have been overemphasized at the expense of meeting content. One of the leading industry spokesmen for this point of view has been Richard Cavalier, a meetings consultant and contributor to *Sales Management Magazine*, where his column "How Meetings Help Sales" has long appeared.

A book by Mr. Cavalier entitled *Achieving Objectives in Meetings: Theory and Practice of Solving Business Meeting Problems* recently came to our attention. It was evidently published as part of the organizing efforts of a new meeting consultants company called *Corporate Movement, Inc.*, to whom Cavalier was a consultant. Although the company seems not to have survived, the book is nevertheless a worthwhile addition to any meeting manager's library and worthy of review in this space.

The handsomely designed, hard cover volume is divided into two parts. *Part One, In Theory* takes up only 19 of the book's 218 pages, but a lot of pitch is packed into that short span.

Mr. Cavalier's thesis is that the meeting is changing. The focus is shifting toward content and away from packaging. Show-biz is out of date, although statistically it was never really in, as the author points out. The day of the dog-and-pony show has come and gone. In today's, and tomorrow's meetings, the message is the message.

This not unpainful switch, according to the author, has far-reaching consequences for the meeting manager ("Almost anything can help destroy a meeting, but only near-perfect decision-making can give it life."); for the industry's suppliers and producers ("Your meeting management responsibility includes riding herd on show-biz types who really believe a catchy lyric sung to the sales force will ring up sales with the customers."); for the facilities industry ("When you know what you should be saying, where you say it is of secondary importance."); and, most critically, for the people for whom meetings are staged ("The personnel problems of a company cannot be solved by the meeting manager alone;

yet . . . he can help acclimate the company to the potential of its prime asset — the intelligent employee.")

Mr. Cavalier builds a strong case for the meeting with the adult education-oriented format. "People are the stuff of your meetings, and education is where it's at for tomorrow's meetings," he says.

He lays the blame for past emphasis on packaging at several doorsteps. The industry press, he believes, has reported the dramatic spectacles on the meetings circuit and ignored "the prospect of changing people's lives through adult education via the meeting format." Producers and other suppliers, realizing that windfall profits lay in theatre productions, have tended to stress what they know best, at the expense of understanding industry and the corporate viewpoint. And meeting facilities management has stressed reputation and decor — important parts of the show-biz spectacular — often at the expense of service.

Finally, citing the work of social scientists like A.H. Maslow, Frederick Herzberg and Mehmet Beqiraj in motivational research, Cavalier builds a case for content in meetings as a means of providing meaningful incentive for employees and sales forces. He sees multi-media extravaganzas as self-defeating bribes. And he takes a swipe at sensitivity group training, characterizing it as "quack medicine." Get back to fundamentals: people, he concludes.

Part Two, In Practice constitutes the balance of the book and is its major section. Some of its chapter headings say things like "The Message and Meanings," "Agenda and Control," "Tooling Up," "Handling Hotels," and "Meetings Abroad." It is a blend of new and old material, the old being selected pieces Mr. Cavalier wrote for his column in *Sales Management*, and before that for *Advertising and Sales Promotion*.

Some of the new material includes a series of checklists. "Message Profile" asks questions which force the user to analyze the nature of the message that needs to be communicated. A part of that analysis gets at the question, is a meeting the best means of communication for that specific message?

"Audience Profile" forces you to look at the message from the point of view of the intended audience, and leads to a decision on the viability of the prepared meeting with regard to that audience.

In a section entitled *Working with a Consultant*, the author offers both a "Consultant Evaluator" and a "Something-for-Nothing Evaluator. The first asks some tough-minded questions about prospective consultants. You may not learn anything new here, but you probably haven't seen it all put down in one place before quite like this. And helping you to remember what you've known all along is worth something.

The "Something-for-Nothing Evaluator" is to be used prior to and during a first interview with the supplier of a proposed "free" service. It helps you to come to a determination of whether the free service is positive or negative, and finally whether it's worth filling out a "Consultant Evaluator" form on the supplier. Again, it makes you think a bit, which can't be all bad.

There's also a balance sheet which puts the cost of the proposed meeting into perspective with a quantification of the profits and return on investment to be derived from it. It gives benefits less costs.

Under *Agenda and Control*, an "Objectives Profile" is more or less standard management practice stuff. A "Training Profile" helps make the final decision on the training value of the proposed meeting. A "Preliminary Agenda" and a "Meeting Justification Guide" are pretty much what their names imply.

There is a chapter on PERT (Problem Evaluation and Review Technique) and Critical Path Analysis methods as applied to meetings management, for those not yet familiar with the technique originated by the U.S. Navy during development of the Polaris System. As the author points out, this is a particularly useful device for bringing all of the pieces together.

In "Handling Hotels," the emphasis is on the contract. Most of a facility's failures can be avoided if both the letter and the intent of what is to be provided appear in a well-thought-out-and-drawn-up contract that included penalties for non-performance. There are also useful tips for seeing that a hotel's personnel understand and cater to your problems. Included in this chapter is a reprint of the master Hotel/Association Facility Contract developed by the American Society of Association Executives in cooperation with representatives of the hotel industry, as well as the author's suggestions of protective contract provisions. And in this day of all-inclusive convention centers, there is a useful reminder that you are better off

to pick and choose from among a variety of separate facilities in any given location, rather than to bend and fit your meeting requirements to one super, all-under-one-roof facility.

In the section on meetings abroad, a "Foreign Trip Cost Comparison Guide" should prove useful to meeting planners drawn to distant shores. And some space is devoted to the pitfalls of taking a group abroad, only to confine all of their contacts to Americans and American-type facilities.

The above are only a few of the useful subjects dealt with and guideline lists provided to jog the reader out of his or her meetings-as-usual lethargy. With its combination of theory and practice, this book should be of interest to meeting and convention managers of all persuasions and degrees of experience. To quote part of the author's summary: "Because the meeting is an event, it never exists prior to the unfolding, cannot be viewed as a complete entity at any point during its unfolding, and can be described but not recaptured after it is finished. Therefore, it really exists only in the mind of the meeting manager — validated by results." □

Achieving Objectives in Meetings. Richard Cavalier, Program Counsel, 4900 Marine Drive, Ste. 811, Chicago, Ill. 60640. 218 pages. \$14.95. 1973.

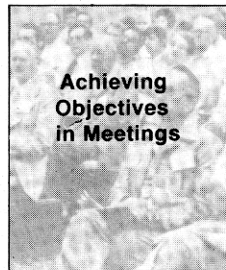
Meeting planners do not have to be told that meetings are demanding or that they require thoughtful management of the myriad tasks and decisions involved in successful ones. We would all benefit, however, from an improved understanding of the relationships of those functions and processes and how we might better control them.

Achieving Objectives in Meetings provides something more than a guidebook of "how to's." Mr. Cavalier identifies the crucial decision areas involved in meeting management, breaking them down into understandable, manageable form.

By viewing the meeting from an almost mathematical perspective, the manager may be assured that each decision will relate appropriately to the whole meeting. He becomes equipped to make each decision an intelligent, authoritative and valid one.

This unusual and enlightening book accepts without question the importance of clearly outlining methods of control to achieve measurable objectives and meaningful goals. Control is the key word and Mr. Cavalier approaches the meeting manager's responsibilities from that perspective using absolutes (always, never, only, etc.) in all instructions. One may choose compromise, we are told, but that is a selection of risk as well.

An excellent communicator who mixes wisdom and wit, he's an exceptional teacher who expresses ideas in measurable terms. He provides, in addition to impeccable logic, appropriate supportive materials which enable the manager to use this text as



an extremely valuable problem-solving kit.

All materials presented are based on two tenable fundamentals which will not necessarily be embraced as truths by all who call themselves meeting managers: (1) meetings are a commitment to convey information and as such attention must be focused on meeting *content* rather than on the package, and (2) the meeting manager is one who controls each of three key elements of the meeting (message and authorities, participants/audience, and support materials/media) to ensure that *communication* occurs. We are taught that the

meeting manager never confuses education with entertainment and to judge each meeting on its educational merits.

The philosophy expressed is the backbone of this book's importance. This rare presentation of the importance of the message is couched in sales terminology. The message is universally applicable to meetings management; the reader must invest energy to translate the information into more general terms and that expenditure of energy will be well repaid.

Supportive materials are excellent. Included are reprints of ASAE's Hotel/Association Facility Contract, a PERT Guide and other valuable worksheets and guides which will carry the planner from early stages of program concept

through final evaluation and conference reports.

The professional who applies the theories presented may measure success in what the author terms the Alpha-Omega of every meeting planner's responsibility, the achievement of (meaningful) objectives.

—C. Penny Hiernu
Chairman,
RMAMPI Resources Committee

Your comments and suggestions are appreciated. If you have materials which you would like to see reviewed in this column, please write: C. Penny Hiernu, Chairman, RMAMPI Resources Committee, 280 Orchard Street, Golden, CO 80401 or call (303) 279-5259.

Meetings & Performance

ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES IN MEETINGS. By Richard Cavalier. 218 pages. Corporate Movement, Inc., New York. \$15.49.

ALL TOO OFTEN, meeting organizers spend most of their time on meeting mechanics—counting bodies present, the hotel decor, the food service. They ignore the actual purpose—communicating a message, says author Richard Cavalier.

His new book—*Achieving Objectives in Meetings*—focuses on planning, coordinating and executing meetings with the message in mind.

Cavalier looks at two broad areas:

- *The meeting message & meaning.* He shows how to determine a meeting's purpose and measure its success.

- *The speaker as authority.* He shows how meeting leaders must pace their program according to their working agenda.

Within these contexts, the book offers practical advice on how to understand and control the entire content of a meeting.

In workbook-type format, the author includes self-help forms which can be used in organizing a meeting.

Forms provide aid on:

- Audience profiles
- Banquet show bid comparisons
- Committee guides and reports
- Meeting justification guides
- Message profiles

Whether you're planning one meeting or many, *Achieving Objectives in Meetings* will prove helpful and insure that your meeting accomplishes its purpose. □

Books

¶ Richard Cavalier's *Achieving Objectives in Meetings* (Corporate Movement, New York City, 219 pp., \$14.95), subtitled *Theory and Practice for Solving Business Meeting Problems*, is as thorough a manual as a meetings manager would ever want to have. Cavalier, a contributing editor to SM and an established authority in the field, gives a comprehensive explanation of the theory behind meetings, and their successful production, in the first 20 pages of the book. The balance, containing reprints of his published articles, covers the practice of meetings. Topics include the message, the agenda, coordination, handling hotels and suppliers, and meetings held abroad. "Analysis forms"—checklists and evaluation sheets whose attention to detail borders on the obsessive—are included in each chapter. Logically presented, useful information, but not meant for beginners. ■

—ANDREW KAPOCIUNAS

SALES MANAGEMENT FOR MAY 13, 1974

Readings

The following is a partial list of materials catalogued by the MPI Resource Library. Each month we will list more titles and quarterly we will provide an index to periodicals in addition to this list of readings. Members may order this material direct from the publishers or may borrow materials from their local libraries. For information on the MPI Resource Library, call Ruth Ann Zook at (303) 388-6809.

GUIDES

PLANNING EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS by Sally K. Sprague and Jayne M. Becker, 1979. New Ventures, 13001 Brookpark Road, Oakland, CA 94619, (415) 530-5653. Softcover, \$6.50 plus \$.75 postage/handling.

Guide for one-day seminars, panels, workshops, and conferences for up to 300; describes various meeting formats, committee responsibilities including media coverage; contains checklists and a six-month timetable. 54 pages.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR DYNAMIC CONFERENCES by Robert E. DuBey, Charles E. Golden, Ben E. Pitts, and Marlin C. Hill, 1982. University Press of America, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, MD 20726, (301) 451-3366. Softcover, \$10.50.

Covers planning committees, needs assessment, program design, evaluation, and guest speakers; application of conference planning to business, industry, government, education, and church conferences. Includes evaluation forms. 137 pages.

PROFESSIONAL GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS by Coleman Finkel, 1976. Successful Meetings, Book Division, 633 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017, (212) 986-4800 or (800) 543-3000, operator 184. Hardcover, \$14.95. Quantity discounts.

Discussion of speakers, programs, room setups, audiovisual aids, and travel planning. Six persons in the industry contribute chapters to this guide. 182 pages.

RUNNING CONVENTIONS, CONFERENCES, AND MEETINGS by Robert W. Lord, 1981. AMACOM Publishing Div., American Management Associations, 135 W. 50th St., New York,

NY 10020, (212) 586-8100. Hardcover, \$23.50.

Discussion of theme development, date and site selection, program planning, VIPs, registration, signs, kits, promotion, publicity, exhibits, on-site management, speakers, transcripts, travel tips, and special meetings such as press conferences, and class reunions. 192 pages, indexed.

SALES MEETINGS THAT WORK: PLANNING AND MANAGING MEETINGS TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS by Richard Cavalier, 1983. Dow Jones-Irwin, 1818 Ridge Road, Homewood, IL 60430, (312) 798-6000. Hardcover, \$21.95.

Part I discusses industry professionalism and cites cases, research studies, and theories on adult learning, motivation, and human relations; part II explains how to incorporate goal achievement into planning decisions and meeting management; contains a PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) diagram, analysis guides, and detailed work sheets. 250 pages, indexed.

THE SMALL MEETING PLANNER by Leslie F. This, 2nd ed., 1979. Gulf Publishing Co., Book Div., P. O. Box 2608 Houston, TX 77001, (713) 520-4444. Hardcover, \$14.95 plus \$2.00 handling.

For planning national and international meetings, seminars, workshops, and conferences for 100 or less; covers program development, management, and implementation; procedures for boards and committees; evaluation; group participation; with checklists, sample forms, and seating diagrams. 262 pages, indexed.

SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE PROGRAMMING METHODS by Gus Mueller, 1982. Fern Publications, 2117 S. High St., Bloomington, IN 47401. Softcover, \$10.00 to MPI members; nonmembers add \$1.95 postage/handling.

For both entrepreneurial and employed meeting planners, this booklet defines types of meetings, program formats, and components of program planning; presents ways to calculate the planner's fee; includes sample forms, function sheets, and checklists. 90 pages.

SUCCESSFUL SEMINARS, CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS by the staff of Public Management Institute, 1980. Public Management Institute, 358 Brannan St. San Francisco, CA 94107, (415) 896-1900. Looseleaf. \$47.50 plus \$3.00 shipping/handling.

The planning system presented with work sheets, sample forms checklists, and a master plan chart can be applied to program planning for various types of meetings; includes coverage of budgeting, promotion, and audiovisuals. 410 pages.

TAKING YOUR MEETINGS OUT OF THE DOLDRUMS by Eva Schindler-Rainman and Ronald Lippitt, 1975. University Associates, 8517 Production Ave., P. O. Box 25240, San Diego, CA 92126, (714) 578-5900 or (800) 854-2143. Softcover, \$10.50 plus \$3.00 transportation charge.

Handbook for meeting managers which includes problem solving ideas, planning guidelines and sheets, checklists, and sample program designs. 100 pages.

The security industry's only asset is its personnel and payroll is weekly in many cases.

BOOK REVIEWS

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For The Meeting Planner On Your Christmas List

For that hard-to-buy-for meeting planner on your holiday gift list, here's a selected bibliography of books in the field.

The listing was compiled by James Abbey, Ph.D., University of Nevada-Las Vegas and C. Penny Hiernu, chairman, RMAMP Resources Committee, Denver.

General Meeting Planning Texts

Achieving Objectives in Meetings, by Richard Cavalier, 1973. Program Counsel, 4900 Marine Drive, Suite 811, Chicago, IL 60640. \$14.95.

The Conference Book, by Leonard and Zeace Cavalier, 1977. Gulf Publishing Co., Book Division, P.O. Box 2608, Houston, TX 77001. \$14.95.

Meeting Management: A Professional Approach, by James E. Jones, 1978. Bayard Publications, 695 Summer St., Stamford, CT 06901. \$17.95.

At A Glance . . .

Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance, O. Gartfield Jones, 1971. Hawthorn Books, Inc., 260 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. \$2.95.

Planning and Staging Company Meetings, 1974. Successful Meetings Directory and Book Dept., 633 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017. \$5.00.

Taking Your Meetings Out of the Doldrums, by Eva Schindler-Rainman and Ronald Lippitt, 1975. University Associates, 7596 Eads Ave., La Jolla, CA 92037. \$7.00.

Convention/Conference Management

Convention Sales and Services, by James R. Abbey and Milton T. Astroff, 1978. William C. Brown

Company, 2460 Kerper Blvd., Dubuque, IA 52001. \$17.95.

Convention Liaison Manual, 1972. American Society of Association Executives, 1101 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. \$5.00.

How to Run a Convention Without Losing Your Mind, by Jack R. Morris, 1977. Insurance Conference Planner, Book Div., 695 Summer St., Stamford, CT 06901. \$8.35.

Making Your Convention More Effective, 1972. American Society of Association Executives, 1101

16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. \$12.00.

Theory and Practice of Convention Management, 1970. Successful Meetings, Directory and Book Dept., 633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017. \$5.00.

*The above is only a partial listing of materials. For a complete list of known resources please write: Meeting Planners International, 3201 Barbara Drive, Middletown, OH 45042 or call (513) 424-6827 and ask for a copy of the Source Book for Meeting Planners. ✓

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