



## Focus: Association Meetings Management

AMCs support the meeting objectives of their association clients through conference design, participant marketing, site selection, registration, programming, technology, logistics, attendee experience, and tradeshow and sponsorship sales.

Stringfellow Management Group outlines some of the issues associations face when hosting events and speaks to their approach to solving them and ensuring a successful event in their 'Day in the Life' of Association Meetings Management video.

### Why You Should Retain an AMC to Run Your Meeting



**Kathleen A. DeMarco, CAE**  
Senior Account Executive  
Stringfellow Management Group, Inc.

**What do you think AMCs offer associations when it comes to meeting management?**

There are key attributes that AMCs offer to benefit association clients when it comes to managing their meetings. First, AMCs typically have a variety of clients and that enables us to take approaches, successes, and best practices from a wide range of events, and tailor them to them to a particular client's meeting whether it's an annual conference, an awards ceremony, or an educational event for professional, trade or foundation clients. Another important advantage in working with an AMC is our bargaining power. At Stringfellow Management Group for example, we track total room usage and spend data in several categories for all of our client events, and share this data with our major hotel partners. That gives us bargaining power on rates that we can bring to bear for all of our clients, especially smaller associations with less total room usage. Having that kind of leverage makes a big difference for our clients and what they are able to achieve with their meetings.

**How do you ensure that the meeting you are working on is attuned to the association's industry and its needs?**

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### Quick Poll

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Larger AMCs may have teams dedicated to meeting management and they bring that expertise to bear. Our structure is different in that we provide a consistent staff team to work on all aspects of the client's requirements, year round. The team understands the client, has full knowledge of all programs and projects, and gets to know the volunteer members well, allowing the team to be very attuned to their needs and their industry. We also make a point of attending other events in our clients' areas of focus, to gain a broader sense of their overall meeting experiences. Finally, we do post event evaluations where we ensure questions are asked that will help us market future events to those who haven't attended and of course, help improve future meeting experiences for those who were at the event.

#### **What is Stringfellow's approach to working with an association to support their meeting objectives?**

Transparency is really important – clear, open and constant communication between the staff team and the volunteers on goals and objectives help us take a customized approach to each client that optimizes their resources across the board. We also work to apply successful elements from our other clients' meetings when relevant. As an example, one of our clients employs a lot of interactive discussions rather than presentations. We've used that model to make technical meetings more interesting by having thought leaders engaging around relevant trends. Overall, I would summarize our approach as focused on transparency, customization, a clear focus on strategic objectives/goals and measureable outcomes.

#### **What are some of the key considerations for associations when retaining an AMC to assist them with their meetings management?**

As I alluded to before, AMCs have different approaches and structures so it's about finding the one that meets their particular needs. Associations should consider their strategic goals and objectives and determine what kind of support they need to ensure their success. Having an AMC partner that takes the time to understand them and their industry, and that also has collaboration at its core is essential. Finally, clearly defining the roles of the staff, volunteers and the AMC team up front is crucial to ensuring the association's expectations are met.

#### **What do you consider to be some of the important meeting trends associations need to keep in mind?**

I think there's one big trend and it just happens to have a lot of tentacles: technology and how you apply it to your approach to meetings.

We're seeing more of our clients employ mobile apps, allowing attendees to put together their personal schedule, access information and presentations, and engage in social sharing. Gamification and badging are really gaining traction in that context.

Virtual meetings and learning, once a very painful necessity, has now grown by leaps and bounds because we have technology that enables it to be effective. It will never take the place of face-to-face meetings but if you find the right balance, it can really impact what the association is able to offer, allowing them to go beyond webinars to learning platforms.

And we have to keep in mind how technology has effected how groups engage with each other.

#### **Tweets by** @AMCInstitute



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Different generations want different things in terms of how information is delivered to them and what networking means for them. We need to ensure we are sensitive to that and that we enable meaningful participation.

*Kathleen A. (Kathy) DeMarco, CAE is a Senior Account Executive for Stringfellow Management Group, and serves as the Executive Director for Generic Animal Drug Alliance (GADA), National Association for Small Business International Trade Educators (NASBITE), and Web Sling and Tie Down Association (WSTDA). She has worked in association management for nearly 30 years, encompassing advancing roles in project and program management, strategic planning and implementation, membership development and retention, budgeting and financial management, meeting and event logistics, and communications.*