



## **Guidelines for the Equitable Distribution of Exhibition Dates and Date Projection Exhibition Management, Convention & Visitor Bureaus, and Facility Management March 2007**

### Introduction

Exhibitions (both trade and public events) are proven to be an effective marketing tool. Because of changing demand, building of new facilities and increasing pressure from local governments to generate more revenue, destination officials are eager to not only have “heads in beds,” but also to have the convention facilities booked as much as possible.

This is substantiated by the Destination Marketing Association International research that quantifies the economic impact of an event on a city. It is this revenue generation that has led cities to commit millions of dollars to planning, building and expanding exhibition facilities.

Prepared by the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE), this guideline was originally published in 2003 and updated in 2007, to provide guidance to exhibition organizers, convention and visitor bureaus and facilities with a set of guidelines and principles that can be used by all parties and with all types of exhibitions, including trade shows and public events such as fan-fests, festivals and business-to-consumer events.

The subject of date allocation between the policies of convention and visitor bureaus as well as public exhibition managers, who feel that the emphasis on bringing in the non-consumer event (trade, scientific, dealer, etc.) with its high use of city housing facilities, has worked to the disadvantage of the public exhibition and the trade exhibition sponsoring local/regional exhibitions in the allocation of dates for events.

More recently, with competition for the hearts and minds of consumers more difficult to capture, a new unethical practice has begun. That is the practice of *outboarding*. In response, in 2006 the IAEE Board of Directors adopted a position statement on the practice of outboarding. outboarding is defined by IAEE as the creation of a concurrent event that is related to an existing exhibition or event but that is not sanctioned by the organizer and which seeks to benefit from the audience the organizer attracts. IAEE considers outboarding to be unethical business conduct and should not be condoned nor tolerated.

Exhibition and event sponsors invest significant financial and other precious resources in the planning and execution of their events. Their financial resources are at risk, as are the business reputation and good will that are vital elements of a sponsor's business success.

The predictable and inevitable consequences of outboarding diminish the size and diffuse the quality of the audience that event sponsors work very hard to gather. Outboarding also reduces the value of an event for exhibitors and sponsors who likewise have significant resources invested in the event.

IAEE further believes that abundant opportunities exist through sanctioned means for those who wish to conduct their own marketing and/or selling events to do so in cooperation and coordination with the sponsoring organizers of exhibitions and similar events.

These guidelines have been written to educate and motivate the exhibition industry to adopt written policies relative to date allocation and date protection, and to realize the responsibilities that each segment has to each other in providing an orderly marketplace for goods and services.

## **Guidelines on Date Allocation and Date Protection in the Exhibition Industry**

Date allocation and protection appear to take many forms, including:

1. protecting the weeks and days of traditional public exhibitions in the face of new policies and pressures being exerted to fill the expanded facility and hotels concurrently
2. the problem of competitive exhibitions, particularly of the consumer type, being booked too closely together when they are competing for the same audience and same exhibitors in the local area
3. the number of trade shows holding the same set of dates in multiple cities
4. the lack of a clear and concise written booking policy by the exhibition facility and/or the convention and visitor bureau stating how trade exhibitions and public events are allocated
5. the policies of date allocation that are not clearly stated to all event organizers requesting dates
6. the lack of clear definitions of the meaning of “tentative” and “letters of agreement” leading up to a formal contract with the exhibition facility

IAEE feels strongly that it takes the cooperation of all the elements of the exhibition industry—exhibition management, convention and visitor bureau management and facility management—to ensure clearly stated guidelines dealing with fair and equitable distribution of event dates, date protection and tentative bookings.

While IAEE recognizes that not all venues and all facilities have the same marketing orientation, each venue has the responsibility to provide written policies for that venue.

In view of these challenges, IAEE believes these guidelines will improve relationships among exhibition management, convention and visitor bureau management and facility management.

### Exhibition/Event Management Principles

Listed below are principles that guide the exhibition manager’s commitment to fair and equitable distribution of event dates.

Exhibition/Event management should supply the convention and visitor bureau and the exhibition facility with complete details on their events, including an accurate description of the type of event to be held, special features within the event, accurate net square footage/meters required, realistic move-in/move-out time needed and housing requirements.

Exhibition/Event management should recognize the problems that having a number of tentative reservations in various cities create and should keep these to a minimum.

Exhibition/Event management should complete a “letter of agreement” for exhibit space as soon as possible, and remove in writing any tentative dates held for the same event

in other cities and facilities once the “letter of agreement” is signed and a deposit is made.

Exhibition/Event management should recognize the economic value of event dates to all cities and make every effort to assist cities to efficiently maximize their facility use.

Exhibition/Event management should make every effort to be cooperative in working with other exhibition managers, convention and visitor bureaus and facility management in adjusting cities.

### Guidelines for the Exhibition/Event Industry

1. Exhibition/Event Management should:
  - a. fully understand the booking policy of the convention and visitor bureau and the facility for the allocation of dates
  - b. act in a professional and ethical manner to acquire dates
  - c. confirm within a 120-day period those dates which are being held on a tentative basis with a “letter of agreement” to or from the facility and pay a deposit
  - d. be certain that all information given to the convention and visitor bureaus and exhibition facilities is complete, accurate, and up-to-date
  - e. keep a continuous flow of written information between exhibition management, facility management, and convention and visitor bureaus
  - f. alert facility management and convention and visitor bureaus to major changes in the event, including the addition or subtraction of major areas of exhibitor emphasis and housing and exhibit space requirements
  - g. review (the exhibition/event manager), in a timely manner, the statistics supplied by the convention and visitor bureau after their event and prior to its circulation through the DMAI reporting system
  - h. supply (the public event manager) statistics on their events to the facility and the convention and visitor bureau
  - i. maintain accurate statistics relative to the estimated economic impact of their event on the venue in which it is held
2. Convention and Visitor Bureaus should recognize that exhibition/event management has the right to:
  - a. know the policies and procedures affecting exhibition dates from both the convention and visitors bureau and facility management; therefore provide exhibition/event management with a clearly written policy on the allocation of exhibition dates
  - b. know the calendar of events preceding and following their scheduled event by sixty days
  - c. know the “tentative” and “letter of agreement” policies on the part of the convention and visitor bureaus and/or facility management when inquiring about date availability
  - d. examine, in a timely manner, proposed reports about to be circulated about their exhibition to other convention bureaus prior to their circulation in the city in which their recent event has been held
  - e. expect the facilities (exhibition, hotel, etc.) as outlined in the original agreement with the convention and visitor bureau and facility to be available at the time of the execution of the event
  - f. change venues without penalties if facilities (halls, hotels, etc.) as originally agreed upon are not available

- g. receive written confirmation of dates for their exhibition at least twenty-four months ahead of the event to enable exhibition/event management to properly promote and sell space to exhibitors
  - h. be provided with complete written information on any and all taxes or license fees that are imposed by state, county, and local laws and any changes in those taxes or fees that occur after the booking has been made
3. Facility Management should recognize that exhibition/event management should :
- a. receive a contract that is relevant to their event. This means a contract for business-to-business exhibitions (trade, scientific, dealer, etc.) and a different contract for public exhibitions
  - b. be provided with complete written information regarding rules, regulations and prices governing the facilities use prior to contract signing
  - c. be provided with complete written descriptions of events preceding and following their exhibition by sixty days
  - d. receive a facility contract signed by with a clause to the effect: "This written agreement supersedes all prior discussions and agreements and constitutes the sole and entire agreement between exhibition/event management and the facility concerning the event. This agreement may be amended only in writing signed by both parties"
  - e. reject as unfair after-the-fact assessments of taxes of all kinds, fees, etc., which were unknown and/or not included in the written agreement signed by both parties at the time a facility contract was signed
  - f. receive a written policy from the exhibition facility relative to any protection afforded exhibition/event management relating to similar and/or competing exhibitions. Such a policy should state clearly what exhibition management can expect in the way of protection on a year to year basis for the time of the year of the event and exhibition facilities policy on similar content events being held within sixty days of the event