CHAPTER 1

Overview of Meetings Profession

**LEARNER OUTCOMES**

1. Differentiate between the meetings profession and the service and hospitality industry.
2. List common titles and roles associated with the planning side of the meetings profession.
3. Define the types of organizations that host meetings.
4. Describe major entities on the supply side of the meetings profession.
5. Identify multiple stakeholders for a meeting.
6. Explain the value of meetings to a specific audience (attendees), destination, state, and the U.S. economy.

**Chapter Summary:**

An overview of the meetings industry requires the learner to be able to differentiate between the meetings profession, the service industry, and that of the hospitality industry.

The service industry is a sector of the economy that primarily consists of businesses providing service versus a tangible goods or products. The hospitality industry is a sector in the service industry and includes businesses that provide solutions to temporary needs. These businesses would be transportation, food provisions, venues, and overnight lodging.

The “2012 Economic Significance Survey” demonstrates the economic impact of a meeting. There are 1.83 million corporate and business meetings, tradeshows, conventions, congresses, and incentive events taking place in the U.S. it results in $280 billion in direct spending. Providing 1.78 million U.S. jobs, $115 billion contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP), $28 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue, and $6.8 billion in U.S. labor income.

One of the oldest meeting professional organizations is the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), which held its first meeting in 1956. PCMA’s 2013 Convening Leaders annual convention generated $2.3 million in gross revenue, thereby, contributing to direct spending, jobs, the GDP, and tax revenue in the U.S.

To define the meetings profession one needs to recognize that the meeting and event profession includes large gatherings of people for business, sports, or entertainment.

The governing agency for the meetings and events industry is the Convention Industry Council (CIC) formed in 1949. The CIC has created the Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX), which has an industry specific glossary, templates for common tools, standards for professional behavior, and the designation of the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP).

Besides the obvious economic impact of the meetings industry, the profession tracks meetings by size, duration, and where the meeting is held. Governments and publics worldwide are keenly interested in meetings for the purpose of forecasting to plan resource allocation. Government agencies look to the hospitality industry’s vitality to plan city and state infrastructure improvements. It is sad to note that the individual impact of a meeting is often under reported, because the meeting industry is so varied and large.

PCMA has conducted an annual meeting market survey for over 23 years in their Convene Magazine (a monthly journal of PCMA). This annual report provides the average of a meeting’s value to a destination. In order to capture a better understanding of the meetings industry one needs to define the service industry. The service industry is a sector of the economy that primarily consists of businesses providing a service rather than a tangible good or product. Retail, transportation, distribution, food service, healthcare, and rentable facilities are all a part of the service industry. Within the service industry is the sector of the hospitality industry. The Standard Industry Codes (SIC) in the U.S. include, hotels, restaurants, catering, and meeting management as a part of the hospitality industry.

The business of meeting management requires a professional or in some cases a group of volunteers to coordinate and implement the gathering.

There may be a large variety of titles to the individual or group of individuals responsible for the success of the meeting. An example of titles may be meeting coordinator, planner, or manager. In some cases the title may be unrelated, such as Vice President of Marketing, or Communication Director. No matter what the title, the task is to handle all arrangements of the meeting. Many firms may look to hire or contract to manage the logistics of the meeting.

Those positions would be an Independent Planner or Third-Party Planner. If outside the U.S. a Professional Congress Organizer (PCO) may be hired; or a Destination Management Company. Many cities that have a Destination Management Organization (DMO) also referred to as a Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) may also provide services for hire.

The most common meeting hosts are Associations, which typically use PCO’s to conduct their meetings along with volunteers. Corporations are also coming meeting hosts. It is very common to have an in-house staff for meeting coordination and travel. Some companies may use an independent planner to provide meeting coordination. Government Agencies will make use of paid public employees and volunteers that will oversee educational meetings and city festivities.

The meeting industry is served by multiple entities, with many of the events being held in cities, suburbs, and even in the wilderness! These destinations will often compete for the meeting business.

Once a destination is chosen, the meeting professional must work with other entities to fulfill the expectations of the meeting. Those entities will include venues, transportation, caterers, and even Audio Visual companies.

Meetings are guided by multiple stakeholders. An obvious stakeholder is the attendee of the meeting. However, other people and organizations have an interest in the meetings effect and out-come. These other stakeholders include media, leadership within the organization, and suppliers attending the meeting.