

Gyro Convention Guidelines

I. Introduction:

A blue ribbon committee was established to identify ideas for minimizing International and District Convention costs without seriously jeopardizing the quality of the convention. The committee members reviewed existing guidelines and solicited suggestions from other Gyro members. The results of this effort are incorporated in this guideline document. There are many suggestions that apply equally to International Conventions (IC), International Interim Conventions (IIC) and District Conventions (DC).

It should be remembered that there are differences with different districts, clubs, and members, and these differences make it impossible to have one guideline for each component of putting on a successful convention. Individuality, innovation, and creativity play an important part in the planning and implementation of a meaningful and enjoyable convention.

This set of guidelines will assist you in creating a plan to incorporate the essential elements of an IC, IIC and/or DC. Many members in the past developed documents with provide suggestions for conducting a convention based on actual experience. The contents of these documents will be summarized, and are now attachments to this guideline document.

II. General Information for the three types of Conventions.

- Convention Bureaus can help in getting bids from suitable hotels. They may not be of much help for “goodie bag” material.
- Although the costs might be less in smaller towns, it may be difficult to find adequate facilities. In Calgary, there were only four hotels that could accommodate a group our size. There are only two cities in District VIII that have an International airport. Smaller towns would necessitate a car rental. As an example, Interim meetings on the east coast of Florida save money on the hotel rooms but this is more than offset by the cost of a rental car for the duration.
- It is best to get as many members involved in the planning and to work on the convention, because they may be more likely to attend. It is a very good way for them to get to know their club members better. Having a reputation for providing a high quality “goodie bag” when people register is another way of motivating people to attend the convention. A skit is another way to get people working together and more enthusiastic about the convention. By developing your own skit, money can be saved by not hiring other entertainers.

A. International Conventions.

- **Executive Council Involvement and Oversight.** It is important that a member of the EC become more involved in the upcoming conventions. They should review and approve each request to host a convention. From that point on, one EC member should be appointed to monitor progress of each convention committee’s

plans. The first criterion is location. The EC should insure that proper locations are selected. Also, there is no substitution for promotion. You cannot repeat yourself too often. Budget to send people to prior Conventions and Interims. Go to other Districts. Sell your raffle tickets at all of these functions.

- It is difficult to see how more time can be saved than it is. Meeting all day Wednesday would just get rid of a Thursday morning meeting but you have to be there on Thursday anyway. We cannot have International interfere with the social part of the Convention starting Thursday night. If they do that, District attendance would decline significantly; and we must remember, in most cases, it is a District Convention as well.
- If International EC sponsored the International Convention, it is thought that the attendance would be reduced, since it is usually a District Convention as well. Again, local contact is necessary. After the Wednesday and Thursday meetings, the EC is in charge of the Saturday night banquet. The rest is still a District Function.
- Long lead times are required. For example, the Calgary contract was signed more than three years in advance with a deposit of about \$5,500 on signing. It was very specific and tailored to the needs. There was a clause that specified that only Gyros would occupy rooms on the same floor as the hospitality room to avoid any complaints. Ian personally assigned the rooms on that floor to specific people (mostly his club) to insure that there would be no problems. This is a very important document, and it is advisable not to accept the standard contract that the hotel produces. It can be changed and the hotel expects it to be changed.

B. International Interim Conventions.

- Based on past experience, shortening the length of the convention is not a great answer to reducing costs. This was approved at a Board of Governors' meeting in the past; the decision was reversed by the next BOG without fail. People want to spend the extra time. It might be possible to schedule the meetings at Interim without any free time. Time needs to be scheduled either before or after the meetings (or both) for sightseeing and socializing. Days could be specified when the hospitality room would remain open in order to arrange trips, dinners etc. This has the advantage that Districts who are concerned about a few extra dollars in costs for this function would only have to pay for the meeting days. After that, it becomes personal.
- Having the function on a weekend will reduce the need for vacation time being used by participants who are still working. Again, this applies to Interims as Conventions are already on weekends. If the Interims could be scheduled for weekends without undue cost increases, that would be great.

C. District Conventions.

- It is better to assign responsibility for district conventions and district interims to clubs in an orderly fashion rather than asking volunteers to host the event. (Permit smaller clubs to share the responsibility.)
- Two or more Clubs could jointly put on the convention. This is a good idea provided that they are in close proximity.

III. Planning the Convention. There are several aspects of preplanning and for conducting the convention to have sufficient revenue and reduce costs. The subjects to be provided in more detail include the following: 1. Fund Raising; 2. Hotel negotiations; and Advertising.

1. Fund Raising:

- Have each host-club member pre-register for the convention/interim, in order to provide sufficient “start-up” funds.
- For the Calgary Convention, donations were solicited from all of the Alberta Clubs in the District. Only Alberta Clubs were asked, because they were encouraging their friends to attend the convention in Alberta. About \$3,500 was received in contributions from three Clubs and one Gyrette organization. These funds were paid back however; this is a possible source of “start up” funding for conventions.
- For those not using the host provided hotel for lodging, a surcharge could be charged. The Gyros that choose not to stay in the convention hotel still gain the benefits of complimentary meeting and hospitality rooms. The surcharge would provide some compensation for the reduced number of room-nights that provide for some free banquet and meeting rooms.
- Local clubs could conduct a yard sale. This should not be difficult to conduct, and the members can manage the whole affair while not accruing expenses. This could be either a one, or two-day affair. For example, the Bellevue Gyro club conducted a yard sale and raised approximately \$2500 which helped to defray their convention costs.
- Conduct an on-going raffle for quality items throughout the interim or convention for each day of the convention as a fund-raiser. For example, Bellingham did this with great success. The raffle items should be of high quality and have appeal to the Gyrettes as they have the money. For example, a large screen plasma television and a diamond ring have appeal.

- Conduct a fifty-fifty raffle where half of the raffle money becomes the prize. Little expense involved and easily conducted throughout the event. This should be done on a voluntary basis without pressure being applied.
- A Free Registration Raffle, which was essentially a 50/50 drawing, was sold on every occasion for the Calgary Convention. Once a book of 50 tickets was sold (\$20/ticket) there was an onsite draw with the winner receiving a free registration. Calgary made about \$3,000 on this.
- The liquor raffle was extremely successful for the Calgary Convention. Books of tickets were mailed to each club president. The tickets were sold within the club (and maybe outside but we don't know that) and the stubs and money were mailed back. Some clubs declined to sell the tickets due to their club policy and others requested more books. Note that it is important not to make the club feel obligated to participate. The goal was to raise enough money to pay for a very expensive band on the Saturday night. That amount was exceeded.
- Annual auctions to raise funds for the operation of the club and various charitable endeavors works very well. This provides "up front" money required. The auction essentially is: "members donate, members buy". The auction items vary from useful items to dinners at member's homes and weekends at member's cottages.
- The Calgary Club held a function where expensive tickets were sold to family and friends for a great "heavy appetizers" function and put on a performance. It was well received and \$500 was raised for the convention.
- Anything that can be done to get the members involved is a good thing.

2. Hotel Negotiations.

- Make full use of City Convention Bureaus who can communicate with different hotels to obtain a lower room and convention room costs. The Convention Bureau may also provide some free items for the registration bags.
- By using an All-Inclusive Resort, one might be able to reduce overall convention costs, since one fee would include all room, meal, and beverage costs.
- When dealing with the hotel, try to obtain use of meeting, hospitality, and banquet rooms free, due to a guaranteed number of room nights (number of people with rooms times the number of nights).
- When dealing with the hotel, try to obtain permission to bring in personal drinks (alcohol and non-alcohol) and snacks for the Hospitality Room. In some cases, this may only be possible in a separate suite that is rented by the sponsor.

- Obtain the contract in advance as much as possible to help reduce the effects of future price increases by the hotel.
- Compare cost of corkage fee to purchasing your own wine for the banquet.

3. Advertising:

- This is a must. When you have done all you can do, start over. It is a necessity that host clubs send delegations to all District Functions in the year preceding the convention, all International functions and functions in nearby Districts. (Calgary targeted District IV specifically due to its proximity and the fact that Jim Roberts was being installed as International President. This increased the attendance at the convention.)
- In preparing for a convention or interim, it is very important to have a website of pertinent information and a site where the names of those people who have registered may be posted. This encourages others to attend once they see the names of other friends who are attending. (The Olympia club did this for the 2005 convention at Ocean Shores with many favorable comments.)
- Assign host-club members to attend installations, interims and conventions where they promote and advertise the activity with banners, flyers, skits, etc. The Olympia Club used business card sized advertisements, which people were more likely to retain. They placed these on all plates at all Gyro functions occurring prior to the event.
- Advertising in the GyroScope has already been approved. The challenge is the scheduling of the GyroScope and the time it takes for distribution, particularly in Canada.

IV. Other Cost Reduction Tips:

- Schedule the convention during off season time periods for the specific geographic location, if possible. There are strict limitations for the International Conventions and various District Conventions.
- Obtain discounts from members who have a business that could perform some work such as printing the materials for the convention or engraving items to be provided in the registration bags.

V. Gyro International Reference Materials (Attachments).

- A. ***Convention Planner.*** This is a guide for planning and supervision of a convention. The organization and program can be used for either type of convention. The duties of each committee are well defined. A checklist is

provided for an International Convention. It may be condensed for an Interim or District Convention.

- B. ***Clubs Hosting a Gyro International Convention, Attention: Convention Chair.*** This document provides a Schedule of Events, in order to make sure that all events are properly identified and included for an International Convention.
- C. ***Conventions*** by Jim Parker. Jim Parker provides 20 pertinent comments about various aspects of conducting a successful convention. This is based on his experience with helping to organize a couple of conventions.
- D. ***Highlights and Lessons Learned When Organizing the Gyro International and D I Convention, July 17-20, 1997*** by Ed Benhoff and Percy Kay. Subjects include planning, contracts, registration, GyroScope advertising, timing, voluntary functions, local participation, registration, and convention wind-up.
- E. ***Highlights and Lessons Learned When Organizing the Gold Rush of '96, Edmonton, Gyro International and D VIII Convention, July 11-14, 1996***, by Marty Larson and David Burnett. Subjects include program outline, registration form, hotel accommodations, schedule of events, welcome letter and pertinent information for attendees, list of committee members, outline of guest room requirements and associated table and refreshment requirements, final finance report showing the budgeted and actual costs and income, as well as a copy of the hotel contract for review. An evaluation was created, and the results of the feedback are provided.

Attachments

Convention Planner with International Convention Checklist
Clubs Hosting a Gyro International Convention, Attention: Convention Chair
Conventions by Jim Parker
Example: Gyro International and D I Convention, July 17-20, 1997
Example: Gold Rush of '96, Edmonton, Gyro International and D VIII
Convention, July 11-14, 1996

Blue Ribbon Committee Members: Larry Duba, Chairman; Bob Barnaby, Jim Friedl, Ian Greig, Olavi Jarvela, Denis Moffatt, Ab Nightingale, Jim Roberts, and George Willett

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