



Magic Convention Planning Guide

Bruce Chadwick MA, M.Div.

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CONTENTS

3	Introduction
5	General Chair
8	Registration
13	Hotel
20	Schedules
22	Talent
27	Dealers
35	Lectures
36	Close-Up
37	Website
39	Treasury
41	Transportation
42	Ticket Sales
44	Theatre
49	Promotions
52	House
54	Hospitality
55	Contests
56	Church Service
57	Committee Profiles
60	TAOM

INTRODUCTION

A phenomenon of the 20th century was the development of the magic convention. It grew out of the desire for magicians to gather for fun and fellowship. From there gatherings morphed into more structured events with shows, contests, lectures, workshops, and special magic happenings. Dynamics such as location, planning, leadership, technology, and even the status of magic in general, began to mold magic conventions into the modern entities they are today.

It is interesting that very little has been written about magic convention planning. The first “how to” written work I know of was the history I authored in 1988, the year I was President of the Texas Association of Magicians and our Fort Worth Magicians Club hosted the 43rd annual TAOM convention.

With all the hard work, intense decisions that had to be made, and the steep learning curve we endured to plan and execute that great convention, I decided it would be a prudent to archive our accomplishments. The move was to chronicle what our host club did, both right and wrong, and note where we might improve when we hosted future conventions. Thus the document “The 1988 TAOM Convention: A History of its Planning and Execution” was penned.

In 2000, the Texas Association of Magicians held a Planning Summit in Austin, Texas. The Board of Directors decided it was time to evaluate the status of the organization and analyze its convention procedures and protocols. This led the group to commission a broader “TAOM Convention Planning Guide” to help TAOM host clubs as they planned TAOM conventions.

As the Historian of the organization, I was conveniently “assigned” the role as editor. Information from my 1988 document was used as the core of the guide. The guide was then augmented with additional text and contributions by Judy Hollingsworth, David Hira, Scott Wells, Trixie Bond, Chuck Lehr, Paul Siegel, Kevin Stadler, Steve Burton, Mark Roberts, Louis Daniel, Bob Utter, Mica Calfee, and others.

The intention of the 2000 guide was that it be fluid, with the hope that as clubs hosted TAOM conventions, they would add to the guide, give additional perspective and keep it up to date. While the idea was sound, lack of future contribution quickly became a problem. However it is understandable. When clubs finish hosting their conventions, committee members are weary and the wherewithal to contribute to some nebulous convention planning guide is minimal.

It is now unbelievable that the original 2000 document is a whopping twenty-two years old. Expectations, attitudes, tastes, opinions, and perspectives have evolved. The art of magic has changed drastically. While many of the ideas in the 2000 guide are still sound, other material is obsolete.

As TAOM Historian, I spoke-up at a 2019 TAOM Board of Directors meeting and voiced my opinion that the guide needed to be updated. You would think I would have learned my lesson when I “volunteered” in 2000. Apparently, this was not the case. Once again, I was “commissioned” to produce an updated guide. So for the past three years or so, I have worked on updating the 2000 document. It has been a slow process, but the peer pressure that comes from the TAOM Board of Directors is formidable.

The reality of this guide is finally at hand. Certainly it is not going to revolutionize magic convention planning, but I think it will have its use. Like the two previous documents, it is still nothing more than a compilation of ideas and suggestions that have been gleaned from the experiences, trials, and errors of many people.

Also this updated work is not meant for use only by the Texas Association of Magicians. This new guide is written generically. It is a guide that any magic convention can use. The principles and techniques are universal for any person or group who seeks to put together a magician’s conclave.

Yes, there are Texas Association of Magicians specifics that Texas magic clubs hosting TAOM conventions must consider. Rather than weave TAOM protocols into the various chapters of the guide and muddy the sections for non-TAOM conventions, it was decided instead to just include a brief section at the end for the Texas Association of Magicians.

By no means is this guide intended to be definitive on how conventions must be planned. Certainly it is not comprehensive. What works for one convention may not work for another. Convention Planning Committees should use suggestions only as they deem prudent. Conventions will continue to evolve, technology will continue to change, and ideas that work today may be outdated tomorrow.

Some of the text from the original 1988 historical archive and the 2020 guide is still preserved in this new “Magic Convention Planning Guide.” However most of this guide has been rewritten. Ideas and suggestions from the original two works that are no longer apropos have been eliminated. Many other newer ideas and suggestions have been added.

Please know that anyone who is planning a magic convention is free to use any of the suggestions contained herein. However use should be enacted with discretion. If a suggestion doesn’t make sense or seems outdated, it should not be used. Ideas are not guarantees and they must be used at one’s own risk. At the same time, this information will probably be very useful as it does chronicle many commonsense strategies for practical magic convention planning.

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GENERAL CHAIR

Someone must oversee the overall process of planning a magic convention, and it is usually wise for a Convention Planning Committee to have only one central leader. Sometimes called the General Chair, this person has the ultimate responsibility to lead overall convention organization, planning, and execution. The chair must lead and motivate a group of sub-committees to accomplish goals and tasks.

The General Chair must be a “people person” with exemplary leadership skills. The chair must have meticulous planning ability, provide good organization and able to work as a motivational leader. The successful magic convention comes about because of good communication, respect for people, and understanding. This formula will foster a team of diligent hard-working individuals who generally will work beyond the call to duty to make their magic convention successful.

While there should be only one leader, the General Chair must not make all decisions. Major decisions must be made only through the democratic consensus of the Convention Planning Committee. When a General Chair starts making dictatorial decisions without the consensus of the team, the gates of petty politics and disgruntlement begin to open. This can quickly take the fun out of hosting a magic convention for everyone involved.

As well, the Chair should never try to do most of the work. This only leads to confusion, miscommunication, and frenzy. Rather the General Chair should assign, oversee, and lead various committees to do the tasks assigned to them. The Committee Chair must make sure the heads of various committees clearly know what is expected of them, maintain expectations, accountability, and oversee communication.

If there is any basic advice regarding how to host and plan for a magic convention, it would be that it is never too early to start planning. Most conventions start planning several years in advance. The initial steps are to choose a date for the convention, and then choose a convention hotel and perhaps a theatre for the evening shows. Hotel and meeting facility choices are monumental, for they set the tone for the entire convention.

Contracts and agreements with hotels and theaters must be made early. However it is possible that the person who will become General Chair may not yet be decided. It may be prudent for a planning group or club to elect a person to be a temporary representative to get contracts and agreements in place. When the General Chair is finally determined, the chair can take over the planning and leadership.

The General Chair should constantly “think through” the convention, jot down thoughts and ideas, consult previous convention planners, and ask lots of questions. The chair should try to examine what makes other conventions successful, and not be ashamed to “borrow” successful ideas when prudent.

COMMITTEE PROFILES

Convention Planning Committee chair profiles define roles and assignments. It is most important for a convention to have a list of the committees and the definition of each committee's responsibilities in writing. This way people will clearly know what is expected of them. They will also know the roles of the other committee members so that clarity and transmission is maintained.

The Committee Profiles presented near the end of this guide is recommended as a start. However the list will probably have to be modified to fit both the Planning Committee's needs and the abilities of its chairmen. When assigning committee chairs, the abilities and talents of people should be carefully evaluated. Sometimes people have certain abilities and resources that make them ideal for specific committees. It might also be possible for the same person to serve on multiple committees or even chair two or more committees.

Committee chairmen should also be made to understand that they can secure volunteers to be part of their committee and help them accomplish their tasks. They should call meetings of their committee as needed.

MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

Most conventions are executed by volunteers. For their input and contribution to be maximized, they must be managed with congeniality and respect. They should be motivated to do their tasks incrementally rather than all at once.

The people who chair committees usually come from the ranks of a host magic club. A simple sign-up sheet can be used initially to canvas magic club membership to see who might be interested in helping plan the convention. At initial Convention Planning Committee meetings, chairs can be assigned.

As individuals are chosen to do the various Convention Planning Committee roles, a person's talents and abilities should be carefully weighed. It is best to take advantage of a person's strengths and offer special help where they are weak. If it is evident that a person doesn't have the wherewithal to accomplish a particular role, then obviously that person may not be the best candidate for the job.



Be warned that some individuals have "type A personalities" that cause them to be potentially overbearing and controlling. These types of individuals should be handled carefully.

The General Chair must keep in mind that planning committees are usually comprised of unpaid volunteers. As such, they must be managed as volunteers. While some volunteers will excel in their roles, only reasonable results should be expected from others. Fortunately with proper leadership, volunteers usually give their full contribution potential, and especially if they are praised and respected. The key to get them to do tasks is to give them responsibility and provide them with good leadership.

Having periodic planning meetings with all sub-committee chairpersons in attendance is essential. If committee chairs know what is expected of them, and everyone knows what other chairmen are supposed to do, polite peer pressure will be formed, and reliability will usually be maintained. Also having periodic convention planning meetings with all committee chairpersons in attendance helps clarify responsibilities and measure progress.

However it should be kept in mind that sometimes people fail in their commitments. Perhaps they simply aren't cut out for their job. Most often however, life, health, family, occupational obligations, and unforeseen circumstances are the culprits that get in the way of accomplishments. Wise General Chairs will be on their toes and shift duties and responsibilities as needed, or even replace a committee chair if needed.

Chosen wisely, most volunteers will do a good job with their responsibilities. They should be constantly encouraged, praised, and thanked. They should be built-up and led with compassion and understanding. They are generally doing difficult jobs for free and should be commended as their work progresses.

When the convention is history, the General Chair should take the responsibility to show gratitude in ways that are meaningful. Each committee Chair of the Planning Committee should be recognized for their accomplishments and not their failures. Special appreciation certificates, plaques, and other gestures of appreciation are a must. People must never be taken for granted.

COMMUNICATION

For a Convention Planning Committee to function successfully, good communication is essential. Methods of communication will vary depending on the information to be communicated. The use of e-mails, phone calls, text messages, letters and even personal visits cannot be overly emphasized. Notifications about planning meetings must be sent well in advance. Magic clubs hosting conventions can also use verbal announcements at magic club meetings and use their club newsletter and email communications to make notifications. A good General Chair will never allow ineffective communication to cause major problems.

An updated roster of committee chairmen and their contact information such as email address and phone numbers is very important. The roster should be freely distributed to everyone. Committee chairs should be called and reminded the night before convention planning committee meetings. They should also be reminded that they will be asked to report on the status of their accomplishments.

CONVENTION PLANNING MEETINGS

The General Chair should oversee all convention planning meetings. The meetings should be well organized, comprehensive, and kept on track. It is important that major components are not forgotten, and relevant information not missed. All of this requires careful advance preparation.

The General Chair should keep a file on each committee. The information should be kept up to date. It should be reviewed before each Convention Planning Committee Meeting so that pertinence is emphasized, and details are not overlooked. Action items need to be assigned, details outlined, and completion dates determined.

The General Chair should maintain careful notes during Convention Planning Committee meetings. Perhaps it is wise for someone to serve as Secretary to record detailed minutes of meetings. Ideas, thoughts, and suggestions should all be recorded. Properly planned, only a few general Convention Planning Meetings are required to plan a convention.

CONCLUSION

If a convention is planned properly, at the convention the General Chair will not have to run around like a “chicken with his head cut off,” frantically making sure everything is in place, ironing out problems, putting out fires, and so forth. Certainly a few last-minute problems will probably arise during the convention where the General Chair will have to act.

For the most part however, a well-planned convention will allow the Chair to enjoy the convention, the fruit of hard work, leadership, and planning. It is reassuring for the General Chair to know that committees understand their tasks and will take care of problems that arise under their jurisdictions.

* * * *

REGISTRATION

The Registration Chair is the person in charge of all convention registrations. The chair schedules staffing of the convention registration booth and operations center, and promptly turns over to the Treasurer any moneys received for registrations. The chair produces badges for convention attendees, supervises the assembly of the convention souvenir packets if used, and may help oversee seating for shows.

One of the most important ingredients for magic conventions are customers. Without an adequate number of convention attendees, a convention will not be successful. The job of Registration Chair is therefore quite important. It is a job that demands prompt and constant attention. The chair must be computer savvy, know how to manipulate spreadsheets and computer data, and have enthusiasm to endure to the very end.

It is also sometimes helpful if the Registration Chair has a spouse, roommate, children, or other dependable helpers who can assist. There are many things that must be done, all the way from correspondence, answering the phone, running errands, to stuffing registration packets.

REGISTRATIONS

Conventions have no rules, few traditions, and sometimes no consistency when it comes to convention registration fees. In determining how much to charge, many factors should be considered. Convention attendees must pay for transportation, food, and lodging, in addition to convention registration fees.

At the same time, magic conventions are also costly to produce. Registration fees must be enough that will make a convention financially sound, while at the same time not be too exorbitant to keep magicians and their families from attending. Expenses for both the convention and for attendees must balance.

Realities have motivated some conventions to have different registration amounts for different types of convention attendees. Some conventions successfully use a higher registration amount for adults and a lower registration amount for children. If this registration technique is used, a convention must define what the term "children" means, such as dependents living in the home or a family member under the age of eighteen.

Another method is to use the full registration and limited registration technique. Full registrations are generally for the magician and allow full access to all convention events. Limited registrations are generally available at a discounted price and are designed for a spouse and family members and gives them only convention show access. At least one full registration should be purchased before limited registrations can be purchased.

Some conventions have moved to a flat fee per person convention registration rate regardless of age or magic interest. In other words, everyone who attends the convention pays the same rate. This simple approach has great advantages. However the expense may dissuade all family members from registering. To offset this, some conventions offer evening show tickets to non-convention registrants so that spouses and children can at least enjoy some entertainment together. It is also a way for the public to attend shows and help augment convention funds.

Many conventions opt for escalating registration rates based upon date. This means that the opening day of registration is the lowest price. Thereafter at certain dates, the registration rate is increased. This helps motivate convention registrants to register early. Other conventions limit attendance, something that may be necessary anyway depending upon the size of the convention hotel and its meeting facilities.

In the past, some conventions have used family registrations. In other words, a family pays one single registration that admits both the parents and all children to the convention. Unfortunately abuse has rendered this approach inadvisable. Unscrupulous "families" comprised cousins, aunts, uncles, nephews, and even neighbors from across

the street, may register together under the family registration umbrella. With the proliferation of mixed families in modern society, unmarried couples, children and even spouses having different last names, policing the family registration is all but impossible. Abuse of family registrations can also severely undercut registration profit and hurt a convention.

Lastly, some conventions offer “one-day” convention registrations. Individuals pay a fee to attend just one day of the convention. A day convention registration rate is usually less expensive than the full registration rate. However this technique is not feasible for shorter weekend-long conventions.

REGISTRATION PROCESS

A convention registration system will need to be generated to register individuals for a convention. The days of paper registration forms have passed. This is the Internet age and convention registration has moved solely to websites and online registration procedures. With the proliferation of the cell phone and other portable computer devices, people have become accustomed to ordering products online. People have no problem registering online for magic conventions as well.



Shopping cart programs on websites go far to facilitate the registration process. Convention attendees can pay online with a major credit card, debit card, or other money transfer method. Bookkeeping and record maintenance has been enormously simplified with online registration methods. Most shopping carts easily allow the Registration Chair, Webmaster, and other administrators to download registration information, usually in spreadsheet formats. Also most carts automatically number and date registrations.

Basic information must always be a part of the registration process. This may include registrant’s names, their addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and credit or debit card information. The registration process usually involves the name of the convention, the dates for the event, and explanations about the convention registration fees. It may also include contact information for the Registration Chair and the name and reservation phone number of the convention hotel.

REGISTRATION BOOTH

Many hotels have a convention registration booth area that is permanently built into the hotel. Hotels will usually allow conventions to use this area free of charge. If no booth is available, simple tables can be used to provide an ad-hoc registration area.

The registration booth must have electricity and Internet access. A house phone, bulletin board, and back tables for computers and printers may be useful. The booth can be decorated with banners welcoming magicians to the convention. Portable magician’s backdrops can be used to define and decorate registration areas. The booth should open early beginning with the first day of the convention and stay open during reasonable business hours. By the middle of a convention, a registration booth is generally no longer needed to register people for the convention.

The Registration Chair should make sure the registration booth is adequately staffed. It is probably wise to assign individuals specific jobs and work out some form of work schedule. Sometimes local Convention and Visitor’s Bureaus may be willing to provide one or more of their staff or volunteers to work a booth free of charge. The number of helpers a bureau will provide is usually prorated, pertaining to the number of convention attendees. Note however that sometimes bureaus cannot provide staff on holidays or holiday weekends.

If the registration booth must close for dinner and before the first day evening show, it might be a good idea to provide ushers with some sort of printed list with the names of pre-registered attendees and their seat numbers as applicable. Ushers can then permit attendees to enter the auditorium or ballroom and see the first night's show without name badges. Or alternatively, the Registration Chair may opt to keep the registration booth open for late arrivals throughout dinner and during the first night's evening show. During times the booth is closed, a small sign with a phone number can be displayed so that individuals can call and get assistance if needed.

Sometimes hotels can provide a separate room from the registration booth to store materials and equipment to keep the registration booth clutter free. Sometimes called the Operations Center, this room can also provide a resting spot and refreshments for the various convention workers. If computers and other expensive hardware is going to be stored in the room, it is good if the room is lockable, with only the Registration Chair and perhaps the Hospitality Chair having keyed access.

AUDITORIUM SEATING

Early registrations provide early capital for a convention. Fortunately more people register for conventions at the previous year's convention than during any other month. After that however, registrations usually drop-off drastically. Registrations usually pick up steam again right before a convention. Some people even wait until they arrive at the convention to register.

A valuable technique to get people to register early for a convention is to offer early registrants best seating for the evening shows. The earlier an attendee registers for a convention, generally the closer they will sit in proximity to the theatre stage.

There is nothing wrong with this marketing technique so long as attendees who register early for the convention do indeed receive good middle section auditorium seats. They must not be given seats in the front of the house on the far left and right sides of the auditorium. Far left and right seats should be used for the public and non-convention attendees.

There is a growing trend for magic conventions to use general admission seating. This means simply that once the auditorium doors open, people enter the auditorium and seat themselves wherever they want. This is the method that was used for years in the movie theatre industry. However this approach is not without problems.

First and foremost is that convention attendees have no incentive to register early for the convention since they are not being rewarded with best seats close to the stage. Also when the theatre house doors open, a competitive stampede of people rushing into the auditorium is unsightly and perhaps even dangerous. Primal urges are often hard to control!

Conventions that have successfully used the general admission approach and at the same time use the incentive to register early to be rewarded with best seats close to the stage, buffer entry with tiered admittance. Registration group letters are indicated on convention attendee's name badges, with anywhere from 25 to 50 persons included in a group. The first group of persons who registered early for the convention (Group A) enter the auditorium first. They enter through a particular door of an auditorium and seat themselves wherever they want. Once they are seated, the second group of persons enter (Group B), perhaps through a second door of the auditorium and seat themselves. Similar groups follow in consecutive fashion.

As an alternative to this "airline group approach," ushers at the door can just make verbal announcements that individuals in "Group A" may now enter the auditorium through any available door, then "Group B" and so forth. Unfortunately this system tends to crowd doorway entries.

Conventions that use assigned seating have implemented ways whereby registrants can choose where they want to sit in the auditorium for evening shows. This is an easy way to provide incentive for convention attendees to register

early. Some conventions use blown-up theater seating charts to help people choose seats. Other convention registrants who are web savvy use programs where registrants choose their seats as part of their online registration process. This mimics the way many airline companies allow passengers to choose their seats on an airplane.

It may be useful to give good complimentary evening show seating to dignitaries or other special guests as directed by the Convention Planning Committee. Also performers usually receive complimentary registrations as part of their compensation, and they should be given respectable auditorium seat assignments as well. Sometimes they are included in the first group that is allowed into the auditorium. At other times there are seat sections reserved only for performers. Information about talent complimentary registrations and performer contact information must be communicated to the Registration Chair as soon as possible so it can be added to the registration database and convention badges can be generated.

Some conventions mix lay people in among where magicians are seated. Lay people react differently to magic than do magicians. Their enthusiasm, applause, and response is always refreshing and contagious to the magicians seated around them. It is also a good idea to reserve a section in front of an auditorium or ballroom seats for lay persons so that magicians will have a pool of laymen to choose from as volunteers for their acts. There must also be special seating for handicapped persons and for the hearing impaired.

NAME BADGES

Another component that is a very important part of the Registration Chair's job is to produce good convention name badges. Many different styles of clear plastic name badge holders are readily available from various suppliers. Some models allow for a printed name badge in the upper section of the holder while the lower section holds a printed removable convention schedule. Some badges provide magnets and pins for attaching to a person's shirt or lapel. Some can be inserted into a person's front shirt pocket. Most models have attachment points for a lanyard so that a badge can be worn around the neck. Still other conventions use simple pin-type button badges. Others use pin-type badges with lanyards or magnets.

Names on badges (especially an individual's first name) should be bold enough so that it can be seen a few feet away. Computer name badge label software is abundant and sometimes it can even be downloaded free of charge from the Internet. Some labels come in perforated strips of five or more that can easily be sheet fed through computer printers. The registration desk can easily have a computer and a quality printer at the convention registration desk so that name badges can be made on the fly for walk-in registrations.

If assigned auditorium or ballroom seating is used, attendee's seat row and number can be printed on name badges. This reduces the need and cost for printed tickets for convention registrants. As explained above, badges may be labeled with group letters so that attendees can be allowed into the auditorium based upon their registration date. Badges can also be used as the "ticket" for admittance to the dealer's room, lectures, and other convention activities.

Convention badges may also have a QR code printed on them so that attendees with cell phones can have continuous access to the latest updated convention schedule. Some conventions use different color name badges to differentiate between full and limited convention registrations. Other designations can be included on name badges such as backstage access, volunteer recognition, VIP personalities, etc. It is also wise to design a name badge that cannot be easily duplicated by unscrupulous individuals.

Some conventions have used badge colors to separate convention attendees for simultaneous convention events. For example, individuals with a red badge may see a cabaret show while individuals with a blue badge see a lecture. The next day the roles are reversed, and red badge attendees see the lecture while blue badge attendees see the show. This technique is especially useful when seating for an event or show is limited.

REGISTRATION PACKETS

When an attendee arrives at a convention, they are often given some sort of registration packet at the registration booth. Contents of registration packets vary but may include a convention souvenir program, name badges, restaurant guides, brochures about tourist destinations, discount coupons, membership cards, and so forth.

Most Convention and Visitor's Bureaus offer free or low-cost brochures and other literature that may be of interest to convention attendees. Maps, schedules, "things to do and see" guides, bus and mass transit schedules, gifts, trinkets, dining guides, and other items can be included. Creativity can make for a very attractive packet.

Often registration packets are simple letter-sized envelopes with the registrant's name and sometimes registration numbers printed or labeled on the upper portion of the outside. This system allows for easier alphabetizing to make them easier to locate. It is also a good idea to already have a stack of unlabeled registration packets made-up and ready for immediate use for walk-in registrations. Instead of envelopes, some conventions provide canvas bags or other containers and use them for registration packets.

Some conventions have simplified the registration packet system even further by not labeling convention envelopes at all. A person is given his or her name badge and then handed a generic convention envelope. Other conventions eliminate the convention packet altogether and instead put brochures and other information on a table adjacent to the main registration booth. Registrants simply take what they want.

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HOTEL

To facilitate the communication and decision-making process between a magic convention and the convention hotel, one person should be designated as the Hotel Chair. The chair should be granted full authority to represent the convention regarding all matters related to facility decisions, contract negotiations, and hotel use. The chair should work closely with the Sales and Catering department and other hotel management both before, during, and after the convention. The hotel should know the Hotel Chair is their main contact for the convention.

CHOOSING A HOTEL

At one time, many magic conventions held their evening shows primarily in theatres. Economics, convention attendance, and other factors have forced many conventions to move evening shows into hotel ballrooms. The capabilities and capacities of hotel ballrooms are therefore prime considerations when choosing a convention hotel. Additionally, the ability for a hotel to provide adequate meeting spaces for other convention activities, as well as accommodations and amenities for hotel guests must also be considered.

The primary qualification in considering a hotel is whether its ballroom is large enough for a convention's evening shows. Ballrooms have maximum room capacity limits that are usually controlled by local fire authorities. Ballroom capacities during the day for activities such as lectures and so forth are not generally a problem because rarely do all convention attendees attend all day events. The opposite is usually the case for evening shows. These events are generally well attended by most convention registrants. Also add to the mix the possibility that the convention might sell evening show tickets the public, hotel ballroom capacities become even more important.

If a legitimate theatre is chosen for the evening shows, the convention should consider whether the hotel is within walking distance to the theatre. Otherwise a convention must calculate the costs of busses or other transportation costs to move registrants to and from the hotel and the theatre.

Also a large hotel meeting room that can house all magic dealers together is preferable. If no such room is available, then smaller rooms near each other should be used so that registrants can easily move between one room and another. Signage that delineates that multiple dealer's room are being used is a must. Also having the dealer's room, lectures, and close-up rooms on the same floor as the ballroom benefits convention attendees.

HOTEL NEGOTIATION

Hotels are experts at selling guest rooms. The more rooms a hotel sells, the greater the hotel's revenue. This is their business, and they tend to broker all sorts of deals to do whatever they can to keep their facility booked.

A convention negotiates from a position of strength before the hotel contract is signed. After a contract is signed, a hotel has no incentive to agree to additional amenities or make changes to the contract that are not in the hotel's best interest. Conventions should negotiate with hotels shrewdly and with prudence. Sometimes several editions of the hotel contract must be penned before full agreement can be reached between a magic convention and a hotel.

Hotels usually have standardized contracts that are then modified in the negotiation process. Be aware that hotels are experts when it comes to the content of their contract. They can very easily persuade a magic convention to make concessions, agreements, and contract for services that a convention might not really need and not in a convention's best interest. They can also include legal jargon to impose stipulations that may not be advantageous for a magic convention.

Case in point, for a recent small magic convention, a hotel determined that the convention needed at least 50 guest rooms on Thursday night, the night before the convention began on Friday. When the convention analyzed its needs however, it determined that it needed only 15 rooms for Thursday night. The hotel's response, "Well, we just want to make sure you have enough rooms for Thursday night."

The same hotel wanted a commitment of 200 rooms for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights. The magic convention estimated it needed only 150 rooms. Ultimately the magic convention booked 162 room nights, which was good for the hotel. However if the convention had taken the hotel's recommendation of 200 rooms, it would not have fulfilled its room commitment. The magic convention may have had to pay for the use of the ballroom, dealer's rooms, and close-up rooms, or even worse, pay for the unoccupied rooms.

A hotel may suggest a certain number of rooms per night be reserved. If a convention counters with a lower number and the hotel balks, the magic convention can always suggest that the hotel increase their room rate quote a few dollars to help compensate for the room quantity reduction.

Most hotels offer reward programs for hotel guests. This can be in the form of airline miles, hotel upgrades, and perks such as free restaurant meals. In lieu of hotel giving such rewards to a magic convention, a convention might opt to ask the hotel to give them some complimentary room nights for future use after the convention. If a magic club is hosting the convention, the club can use these complimentary nights for out-of-town magic lecturers.

Before hotel contracts are signed, a convention should know that hotels usually give complimentary room accommodations and sometimes free restaurant meals to the person or persons meeting with their staff and considering their hotel for their convention. Hotels may also give similar complimentary accommodations to magic convention event planners when they must travel to the hotel for hotel management and coordinator meetings. Hotels may also give free meeting room space for Convention Planning Committee meetings.

A convention should determine if there are any plans for hotel renovation, management, or ownership change. The hotel contract, which is addressed more fully below, must be clear regarding what happens in the event of force majeure, such as natural disasters, acts of God, unforeseen circumstances, pandemics, and even hotel incompetence. The contract should also state which days, both before, during, and after the convention, the hotel will honor the convention room rate. The contract should also state when convention attendees can start booking their hotel rooms. Hotels also need to be attentive to give conventions the correct link for reserving rooms.

A hotel should also agree in writing that the hotel will not allow other groups to hold their conventions at the same time as the magic convention. If the hotel must host other activities during the same time, then the hotel should guarantee in writing that said events will be situated away from magic convention activities.

GUARANTEES

Hotels typically provide free meeting room space such as the ballroom and meeting rooms in exchange for a convention guaranteeing that it will book a certain number of rooms. Generally called a "room block guarantee," the guarantee can include nights immediately before and after actual convention dates. Sometimes a percentage occupancy of the number of rooms blocked is required to get complimentary meeting spaces. This is usually about seventy to eighty percent.

Most hotels also want conventions to guarantee a certain amount of food and beverage sales. This has nothing to do with the purchases that hotel guests make in the hotel's restaurants. Rather, contract "food and beverage" means banquet meals and food served for special convention meetings and parties.

Although many magic conventions have given into the idea of a convention banquet to satisfy the food and beverage hurdles, most magic conventions don't need food and beverage. If a magic convention does concede to buy food

and beverage, it should be noted that prices are usually exclusive of service charges. A convention should ask for rates that are inclusive of all service charges. This can provide a convention huge savings.

A convention should be very careful in guaranteeing how many rooms it will occupy. It should consider the consequences a hotel may instill if a convention fails to fulfil its room block contract. Some hotels may require financial remedies for unsold rooms. Others may charge for the use of ballroom and other meeting spaces if a convention does not meet the agreed upon percentage of its room block guarantee. These details should be clearly stated in the hotel contract.

To determine how many room nights a convention may need for its convention, it is a good idea for a convention to check previous convention attendance figures and use these to estimate their upcoming convention attendance.

It should be noted that the room block guarantee number should not be based on a "per night" basis. In other words, the agreement should not be that a particular convention night must have a certain number of rooms rented per night. Rather the guarantee should be based on a "total night" basis, total rooms counted over the duration of the entire convention. For example, five rooms rented for four nights equals twenty total room nights.

Also the convention guarantee should be based on the total number of nights sold for a convention based on accrual. For example, if a guarantee for Friday night is 200 but only 175 rooms are occupied, and then on Saturday night 200 rooms are booked but 225 rooms are occupied, then a proper hotel contract should state that the "200 room night guarantee" has been met.

Also a hotel contract should state that attendees who stay at the hotel for the convention but who did not make reservations prior to the room block cut-off date are still counted toward the room block guarantee.

HOTEL CONTRACTS

The hotel industry is fiercely competitive. Hotels must generate as much revenue as possible to stay in business. It is therefore prudent to know that some hotels sometimes try to slip additional fees into contracts. A convention should be wary of contract language that puts an agreement unduly in the favor of the hotel and not the convention.

Ultimately it will be the convention that will have to sign the hotel contract and be responsible for the parameters of the contract. Obviously, the contract should be completely understood. It is probably a good idea for multiple convention planning committee members to pour over the contract and ask questions. It may even be prudent for a committee to have an attorney view the document before it is signed so that complete understanding is achieved, and potential ambiguity is eliminated.

There should be no hidden hotel charges. There should be no verbal agreements. All agreements must be in writing and clearly stated in the contract.

The rules a hotel may put into a contract and impose on the convention and hotel registrants should be clearly stated. Some union hotels require the use of bell staff and will not allow dealers to carry their own sales stock into the dealer's room. Most hotels do not allow outside catering and require that all food and beverage be purchased from the hotel.

A contract should delineate the days of the convention. It is important to point out to hotels that the day before the convention may be needed to set up hotel ballroom equipment and get dealer booths in place. This should be in the contract as well.

A contract must state clearly which hotel meeting rooms will be used for convention activities. A room schedule of use should be specified. It must delineate both dates and times of use. Many hotels have a clause in the contract stating that the hotel will have the right to release, decrease, and move assigned meeting space. The hotel should

not have the option to arbitrarily move convention activities to other meeting rooms other than as agreed in the contract. A convention can protect itself by making sure the contract states that moving convention activities to other meeting rooms may be done only with the written consent of both parties.

A contract should also clearly state if there are costs for using hotel meeting rooms. As mentioned above, complimentary use of meeting spaces is usually conditional upon convention room guarantees.

Hotels sometimes require a convention to obtain liability insurance and name the hotel as additionally insured. Regardless of hotel requirements, such insurance is probably a good idea anyway due to modern-day liability. Most hotels can suggest insurance companies they are comfortable with.

It is important for the Hotel Chairman or Dealer's Chairman to provide the hotel with CAD drawings (or equivalent) showing how all meeting rooms, including the ballroom, dealer's room, and close-up rooms, will be set-up with tables and chairs.

If hotel pipe and drape curtains are to be used, particularly for dealer's room booths, the contract should specify how much pipe and drape will be provided and the cost thereof. Booths are normally 10 feet wide and 10 feet deep. They are usually furnished with three tables. The front table is usually a standard eight feet long banquet table. The two tables at the back are usually narrow "school tables," with one table stacked upon the other.

The contract should state the complimentary use of ballroom tables and chairs, and dealer's room electricity. Also if a hotel has the ability, the complimentary use of the in-house public address system in the Dealer's Room should be in the contract as well

If the hotel has one, the contract should also state that the convention can have complimentary use of the hotel's Convention Registration Booth. The booth must have Internet and electricity access.

Magic conventions might also ask for the use of a separate room close to the Convention Registration Booth that can be used as an Operations Center. This room can be used to store materials and equipment to keep the registration booth free from clutter. It also provides a private area where problems can be solved, and personnel can meet. It can also serve as a resting spot for workers and where refreshments can be provided. This room should be lockable, with only the Registration and Hospitality chairs having access.

Sometimes dealers and performers send boxes and props to hotels in advance of a convention. Some hotels charge for accepting and storing these packages. It must be agreed in the hotel contract that the charges for these hotel services must be paid by the senders of the packages and not by the magic convention.

The hotel contract should state what other services will be provided and which ones must be purchased. A hotel may provide free easels but will probably charge for printed signs. If it is available, a convention might ask for free usage of the hotel's electronic marquee to let convention attendees know the location and times for convention events. This can also be useful for a convention in advertising shows that might be open to the public. All these specifics must be in the hotel contract.

If a hotel offers free shuttle services, this needs to be stated in the contract. Also hours of operation and shuttle range should be in the contract as well.

If a hotel does not obligate a convention to a food and beverage minimum, or no attrition on the sleeping rooms, this should be clearly stated in the contract.

Conventions should not seek the lowest group room rate. Rather they should go after the lowest published room rate. Many hotels due to the economy have decreased rates and list it on their website. By having this demand in the contract, if a hotel breaches this agreement, they will have to remove the lower rate from their system or match the lower rate for all convention attendees.

After the convention ends and the room pick-up seems low, a room audit should be conducted. The registration list can easily be compared to the guest list. This request should be in the hotel contract. It is best to start the process a few months before the cutoff date and ask for a pace report in intervals of every four weeks or so. The more rooms found outside the room block, the better history and therefore the better negotiating power for future events.

The hotel contract should state clearly what happens if the convention must move to another hotel. Likewise the contract should be specific in stating what financial obligations, charges, or non-refundable deposits might be lost if the convention must change hotels.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If a convention has some flexibility when it comes to choosing its meeting dates, it might be prudent to choose dates when hotel occupancy is low. Toward the end of the summer for example, many families have concluded their vacations and children are returning to school. This makes hotel occupancies typically low and hotels are usually more willing to work out convention deals. On the other hand, holiday weekends, weeks of spring break, and so forth when demand for hotel rooms is high, may not be the best time to negotiate great convention hotel rates.

It is a fact that reasonable room rates will attract convention attendance. Even with skyrocketing costs, \$100 to \$150 per night room rates still hold for many quality hotels. Smaller hotels may even have less expensive room rates. Some hotels may want to increase hotel room prices depending upon the number of guests occupying a room. Some hotels charge more for multiple beds and suites.

As a negotiating tool, conventions may consider showing quotes from other hotels that have lower rates. Pitting one hotel's rates against another is a sound negotiating strategy.

A convention should expect to receive a certain number of complimentary or "comp" rooms. One room night for every forty rented room nights is typical. Such agreement should be clearly stated in the contract. Conventions can use comp rooms for convention talent or planning committee dignitaries to reduce overall convention expense.

Amenities such as free or reduced rated parking are a plus. If hotel offers free parking, this should be listed on the contract. By the time the convention takes place, the hotel might be charging for parking. Expensive hotel parking can be detrimental when it comes to coaxing attendees to attend a convention.

If a hotel does charge for parking, the rate should be worked out in advance and specified in the hotel contract. A convention should also ask for convention hotel guest reduced parking rates and determine if there are "in-and-out" charges and the cost.

As another negotiating factor, conventions might recommend to hotels that they sell soft drinks, breakfast foods, box lunches and so forth in the lobby areas outside of the main ballroom or similar areas. With tight convention schedules, and especially around the lunch hour, this will provide a great convenience for convention attendees and is a great way for a hotel to make additional revenue. It also relieves pressure from the hotel restaurant staff during peak times and especially on holiday weekends. If an agreement like this is made, this should be clearly stated in the hotel contract. Whether or not a hotel has free breakfasts and complimentary Internet are also factors to consider. These considerations should be in the contract as well.

A convention should make a master list with the hotel that specifies who is to receive complimentary rooms and hotel services, and whether the cost for said charges should be added to the convention tab, which is often referred to as the "master account." This list should normally be delivered to the hotel several days prior to the convention. Some hotels even delineate in the hotel contract how many days prior to the convention the list must be delivered to them.

It is also a good idea to have in the hotel contract an agreement that all convention hotel guests, including performers and convention committee personnel, are all fully responsible for paying for their own room tabs and incidental room expenses unless otherwise designated.

If a hotel has one, a convention should ask for the complimentary President's Suite. Such a suite can be used for special convention parties and convention meetings. As well, such a suite can usually be traded back to the hotel for two smaller comp rooms. These can be used for convention talent and help reduce overall convention costs.

As an alternate, parties can be held in one of the convention hotel breakout rooms. This also ensures that gatherings will not last longer than desired. It is also sometimes wise to advertise the duration of parties to convention attendees, such as Saturday night from 10:00 pm to midnight. The caveat of hosting parties in breakout rooms is that hotels usually specify that all food and beverage must be provided by the hotel.

The hotel reservation cut-off date should be carefully negotiated. This is the date when hotel guests must make their hotel reservations to get the discounted hotel convention room rate. Some hotels "require" cut-off dates six weeks prior to a convention. A more realistic cut-off date is four weeks before a convention.

If the day before the convention is needed for convention set-up, such as in the case where a convention may need to set a ballroom stage and theatrical equipment, set-up the dealer's room and so forth, this should be clearly stated in the hotel contract.

RESTAURANTS

The hotel contract should dictate the specific hotel restaurant(s) that will be open during the convention, list their hours of operation, and guarantee that the establishments will be properly staffed. Since magicians tend to be late night people, the contract should state that at least one restaurant will be open late (up to midnight). Closing all restaurants at 9:00 pm is not acceptable for magic conventions.

The hotel should be reminded that if it will price their restaurant meals competitively as compared to outside restaurants, this will motivate attendees to eat at the hotel. At the same time, it is also great for convention registrants if there are family restaurants near the hotel. The hours of operation for restaurants must be considered, what days the restaurants will be open, and which restaurants will be open if one of the days of the convention falls on a holiday. In downtown areas, sometimes restaurants are not open on weekends.

Maps to restaurants and local attractions should be placed in convention attendee's registration packets or made available at the convention registration desk. It's a good idea to also ask restaurants to advertise in the Convention Souvenir Program. This can produce easy revenue for both the convention and restaurants.

If there is bus, trolley, or other type of mass transit available in the area that can take convention attendees to dining establishments, then schedules and information should be communicated to convention attendees as well. If hotels can also provide transportation, it is good to determine if there is a cost.

AUDIO-VISUAL

Sometimes hotel contracts prohibit the use of outside audio visual and theatrical equipment. Hotels may try to dictate that only equipment from their hotel AV departments be used and that it must be rented from the hotel. Rates from hotel audio visual departments are usually exorbitant. In addition, rarely will hotel audio-visual departments have the type and extent of audio-visual services needed by a magic convention.

Magic conventions typically must bring in theatrical equipment such as sound, lights, curtains, IMAG (screens, video projectors, cameras), and stage platforms. Some performers have their own theatrical equipment that they must

use. It is important that the hotel contract specify that the magic convention can bring in and operate its own theatrical equipment. Failing this, magic conventions may be opening themselves up to thousands of dollars in exorbitant hotel AV fees.

Regular wall outlets usually do not provide enough electrical power for stage lighting and audiovisual equipment a convention might bring into a ballroom. Typically three or more electrical drops are needed, each drop being 120 VAC 20 amps. Therefore electrical drops in the ballroom area for lights and sound will probably be needed.

Sometimes conventions provide complimentary electrical drops in the ballroom. More likely than not however, a hotel will charge for their electrical drop service. Hotels can charge anywhere from \$250 per day or more for electricity. For normal everyday use, the contract should state that the convention may use at no cost the electrical wall outlets in close-up rooms and dealer's rooms.

Often a magic convention will have to use portable platforms to build the ballroom stage. Some hotels have the capability to build such stages, but hotel prices should be judged against outside platform vendors. If the hotel is to provide the portable stage platforms in the ballroom, this should be clearly delineated in the hotel contract. Hotel stage platforms must be stable with continuous surfaces and no sizeable gaps.

The ballroom stage that is typically needed measures 40 feet wide and 20 feet deep. This provides for a 24-foot stage opening with eight-foot wings on each side. When flat floor seating is used in hotel ballrooms, the platform stage should be not less than 36" tall. Strangely enough, stage platforms taller than 42" tall should not be used as well. Platforms taller than 42" inhibit front row audience members from seeing performers as they move upstage and away from the apron and proscenium.

The contract should state clearly that ballroom lighting (house lights) control must be accessible at one location near or at the audiovisual booth where the convention's stage lights, sound, and audiovisual equipment will be controlled. Sometimes ballrooms have a portable house light control box that can be run to the control area. Without it being delineated as complimentary in the contract, this can cost a convention upward to \$100 or more per day rental.

CONVENTION PLANNING COMPANIES

When it comes to choosing a convention hotel and negotiating the hotel contract, the going trend is for conventions to use the services of convention planning companies. Such companies are experts in convention services and hotel negotiation. They can reduce much of the frustration, miscommunication, "red tape," and decipher flowery legal language that often occurs in hotel contracts.

Planning companies can point out hidden meanings in hotel contracts and arbitrate to save clubs hundreds of dollars in unforeseen fees. These companies usually work with conventions all the way through their event, act as a liaison between the convention and the hotel and facilitate arbitration where needed. Best of all, such companies charge conventions little or no fees for their services. Rather, it is the hotel that pays these companies a ten percent commission for each hotel room sold under the convention contract. The caveat is that hotels must generally increase their convention hotel room rates to compensate for having to pay the commissions. Also hotels usually cease negotiating with conventions when they are informed that a convention planning company will be involved in the negotiations.

If all of stipulations of convention hotel contracts seem intimidating, an alternative for a convention to consider is to rent hotel meeting areas or convention center meeting spaces outright. Such rentals are usually high, but sometimes it's the best avenue.

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SCHEDULES

Most magic conventions are a healthy combination of shows, lectures, workshops, and dealers. Conventions can also include other events such as youth activities, contests, gospel magic services, close-up magic emphases, panel discussions, photo sessions, mixers, banquets, meetings, and parties. The extent of convention activities is limited only by the imagination of the Convention Planning Committee.

In turn, magic conventions must determine a schedule for its events. While there are no hard written rules when it comes to developing timetables, there are a few commonsense considerations.

One of the fundamental mistakes made by many magic conventions is to produce schedules that are too hectic. No one benefits with rushed convention schedules. A schedule should never be so full of activities, that a convention registrant must be super-human to attend everything.



A good convention schedule must provide opportunities for convention registrants to recuperate between events. They need time to move from one event to another. They need restroom breaks. They need uninterrupted time to eat and sleep.

Also convention events must be staggered and not overlap. A convention attendee should never be put in a position of missing all or part of one convention event to attend a simultaneous event elsewhere.

Typically no less than 30 minutes of in-between time should be given between convention activities. Lunch breaks must be at least an hour in duration, and evening meals should have at least a two-hour window to allow convention attendees to dine before an evening show.

Also attendees need time to shop in the dealer's rooms. A complaint that is often heard from both attendees and dealers is that the convention schedule did not give convention attendees adequate time to shop with no other convention events taking place.

The length of convention lectures vary. Usually lectures are between 60 to 90 minutes in duration, plus time at the end of a lecture so that registrants can purchase lecture notes and other merchandise.

For activities on the last day of a magic convention, hotel check-out times must be considered. Hotel guests should not have to miss a convention event because of check-out time requirements. Fortunately most hotels nowadays offer express check-out services where guests are not required to physically check-out of the hotel at the front desk.

The following is a well thought out four-day convention schedule that was used for a recent TAOM convention. Note that there are a lot of lectures, which most convention attendees enjoy. Also note the lectures are one hour in duration. There is at least thirty minutes between events and there is time in the schedule for meals. Evening shows are 90 minutes in length and give time after the shows for convention attendees to prepare for the next event.

Friday:

9:00 Dealer's Room Set-Up
10:30 Registration Opens 10:30 – 5:00
12:00 1- Lecture 12:00 - 1:00
1:00 Dealers Open 1:00 – 5:00

1:30 2 - Lecture 1:30 - 2:30
 3:00 3 - Lecture 3:00 - 4:00
 4:00 TAOM Board of Directors Meeting
 5:00 Dealers Close
 5:00 Registration Closes
 7:30 Saturday Evening Stage Show 7:30 – 9:00
 9:30 4 - Lecture 9:30 – 10:30
 11:00 Bizarre Magic

Saturday:

8:30 Willard Breakfast
 9:30 Registration Opens 9:30 – 12:00
 10:00 Stage Contest 10:00 – 12:00
 10:00 Dealer Room Open 10:00 – 1:00
 10:30 Dealer's Show 10:30 – 12:00
 12:00 Registration Closes
 1:00 Dealers Close
 1:00 5 - Lecture 1:00 – 2:00
 2:00 Dealer Room Open 2:00 – 5:00
 2:30 Close-Up Contest 2:30 – 4:00
 4:00 6 - Lecture 4:00 – 5:00
 5:00 Dealers Close
 7:30 Saturday Evening Stage Show 7:30 – 9:00
 9:30 Panel Discussion 9:30 – 10:30

Sunday:

8:30 Gospel Magic Service 8:30 – 9:30
 9:30 TAOM General Meeting 9:30 – 10:00
 10:00 Next Year's Convention Registration Opens
 9:00 Dealers Open 9:00 – 12:00
 10:00 7 - Lecture 10:00 – 11:00
 12:00 Dealers Close
 1:00 8 - Lecture 1:00 – 2:00
 2:00 Dealers Open 2:00 – 4:30
 3:00 Pro Close-Up Show 3:00 – 5:00
 4:30 Dealers Close for the Convention
 7:30 Sunday Evening Stage Show 7:30 – 9:00
 9:30 9 - Lecture 9:30 – 10:30

Monday

8:30 10 - Lecture 8:30 -9:30
 9:45 11 - Lecture 9:45 – 10:45

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TALENT

Choosing good talent for a magic convention is very important. It is usually the Talent Chair who hires or otherwise schedules all performers, lecturers, and dealers for a convention. Agreements should be made via written contracts so that details are clear. The chair works with the Treasurer and General Chair to write a talent budget for hiring performers. The Talent Chair provides the General Chair and the Treasurer with copies of all executed talent contracts. The Talent Chair has the responsibility to make sure each performer is paid immediately after their services are rendered. The chair must work closely with the Lecture Chair, Dealer Chair, and Transportation Chair.

Where convention attendees once traveled long distances to attend conventions, this is no longer true. Now there are many regional magic conventions held around the country. Competition for magic convention attendees is greater than ever. It is very important for a convention to have a sound line-up. Convention talent choices must be made tactfully.

NEGOTIATION AND AMENITIES

There was a day when magicians performed at conventions without pay. Surprisingly today there are still some magicians who will donate their services. However most performers must have compensation, even if it is just registration and hotel accommodations. Other magicians charge exorbitant rates to perform at magic conventions. Others derive much of their livelihood from the convention business. Many performers also offer special workshops and teach-in seminars for additional fees.

There are multitudes of negotiating strategies when it comes to bargaining with performers. Certainly the opportunity to be a major “star” at a convention is a major enticement.

Many performers have magic items for sale, and many will want a dealer’s booth at the convention. Some performer/dealers travel with entire magic stores, while others sell only a few specialized items. Often conventions use their dealer’s booths as bartering tools, and a way to help compensate convention talent.

Rarely are performers “paid” to lecture at magic conventions. Most performers will lecture for free because it gives them added spotlight at a convention and a way to increase their sales revenue. Suffice to say, it is important for the Talent Chair to make wise decisions when agreeing to allow talent to also lecture and sell as a dealer at a convention.

When a club agrees to pay a performer’s hotel accommodations, the convention should specify that the performer must stay in the convention hotel to help the convention meet its room block guarantee. The convention typically makes reservations for its performers and then pays for the performer’s rooms via the convention master account.

To keep the convention from incurring a performer’s room service charges, pay-per-view charges, restaurant tabs, and other incidentals, written agreements between the convention, performers, and the hotel must be established. It should be clearly understood between the performer, the convention, and the hotel, that all incidental charges performers make to their rooms are solely the responsibility between the performer and the hotel. At the time of check in, most hotels will require that guests present a credit card or other form of payment to cover incidentals.

AGREEMENTS

It is very important for magic conventions to use written contracts when engaging the services of performers. Contracts keep communication clear and define agreements. A copy of a performer contract is included at the end of this section. The document was examined thoroughly by legal experts and has been through many revisions. So

called “lawyer language” has been deleted to make the contract easy to understand. Before the contract is used by a convention however, it should be examined critically, and reworked where needed.

In addition to the contract, casual communication is also very important. All performers should know that the Talent Chair is their main contact, both before, during, and after the convention. Obviously, performers will need the Talent Chair’s phone number, email address, and other contact information.

Before the convention, the Talent Chair should inform performers regarding the most expedient way to get to/from the airport and the convention hotel. Usually taxi and shuttle services are most expedient. At other times a volunteer with a cargo van or large SUV is very helpful in transporting performers and their equipment. While it is the Transportation Chair’s job to facilitate these needs, the Talent Chair may be the one to communicate to performers the Transportation Chair’s role and contact information.

At one notable TAOM convention, the host club impressed its performers by picking them up at the airport in a full-sized limousine. A special deal with a local limousine service was brokered, and the company made round trips to the airport for a nominal fee per run. In addition, various club members of the host club made donations toward the fees, and so the costs to the convention for the limo were minimal.

It is a good idea for the Talent Chair to work with the Stage Manager to prepare information sheets for the performers and give it to them when they arrive at the convention. Sometimes these sheets are inserted into performer’s convention registration packets. Sheets should delineate when and where the performer is to entertain, how to get to the performance destination and where the theatre backstage entrance is located, a schedule of events, maps, and other useful information. Performers should be told the time and duration of technical rehearsals, what to expect regarding the green room and dressing rooms, house opening and show start times. They should be reminded that the length of their performance is very important, and they must not exceed their allotted time onstage.

Some conventions use Talent Handlers. These are volunteers assigned to notable performers who then provide them with personal assistance. Volunteers contact their assigned performer(s) and inform them of their role to assist them. Volunteers may be responsible for making sure their assigned performers know when, where, and what time they are to perform. They might provide performers with water/soda for their lecture or performance, help them backstage, and assist them with their lecture sales table if needed. They might also work as a liaison with hotel and Hospitality Chairs to assure that the performer’s room accommodations are acceptable.

The Talent Handler works closely with the Talent and Transportation chairs to assure performers are appropriately transported to and from the airport and facilitate performer transport and their props to/from the performance venue. They may even help a performer load, unload, and transport equipment to the theatre or hotel ballroom.

SHOWS AND PERFORMANCES

It is unfortunate that many magic conventions tend to have very weak first evening shows. This does not have to be the case. In fact a strong first night show should be produced because it sets the tone for a dynamic convention. Also if show tickets are sold to the public for the first show, certainly the show must have quality.

A great show idea that was used many years ago at a TAOM convention was a matinee called “Classics of Magic.” This show featured about fifteen performers. The line-up included a combination of local magic club performers as well as volunteers from the convention talent line-up. Each performer presented one classic magic trick. Some of the magicians were famous for the trick they presented.

Emceed by a notable magician, the show opened with him seated in a leisure chair surrounded by an intimate living room stage setting. The emcee would talk about the history of a particular magic effect (some of the histories were

provided to him by the performers) and then introduce a performer who then performed the effect. The show was a lot of fun, inexpensive to produce, and it gave limelight to a lot of people.

If there is some sort of stage contest show at a convention, a great way to reduce talent expense is to put the magician who wins the stage contest on one of the evening shows. Another idea that both the IBM and SAM national organizations have used is to make one of their evening shows the final rounds for their stage contest. Sometimes conventions feature the contestants for the first half of such shows, and then schedule a more famous magician to feature the second half.

Once upon a time, most magic convention evening shows started around 7:30 pm and ran until about 10:00 pm, with a twenty-minute intermission. Times have changed however and shows of this length are probably too long for modern audiences.

Today's audiences seem to be psychologically conditioned to watch 90-minute feature motion pictures with no intermission. The going trend for convention evening shows is for shows to also be about the same length with no intermission. A good general start time is 8:00 pm, with a conclusion around 9:30 pm. This pattern gives convention attendees time after a show to prepare for the next convention event, which could start as early as 10:00 pm.

A magic convention might also consider inviting celebrities and politicians. Often they will attend evening shows, and especially if they are somehow given a little limelight. Some celebrities may even be willing to make stage appearances or otherwise be involved in shows.

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SAMPLE PERFORMER CONTRACT ATTACHED

TAOM CONVENTION PERFORMER AGREEMENT

This Performance Agreement is entered into between the Texas Association of Magicians host club SAM Assembly 138 Alliance of Illusionists Incorporated (hereinafter referred to as "HOST") and **Performer's Name** hereinafter referred to as "PERFORMER") on January 30, 2020.

RECITALS

WHEREAS, HOST is conducting a convention for the Texas Association of Magicians in Fort Worth, Texas, USA during the Labor Day weekend, noon Friday afternoon **September 4, 2020**, through noon Monday **September 7, 2020**, and desires to engage the services of **PERFORMER** for such convention in accordance with the terms of this Agreement. **NOW, THEREFORE**, for and in consideration of the mutual promises, covenants, and conditions described herein, the parties agree as follows:

1. Description. HOST engages the services of the PERFORMER for the **2020 TAOM Convention** in Fort Worth, Texas, USA. The PERFORMER agrees to provide the following magic performances at the convention in accordance with the terms of this Agreement:

- Sixty-minute-long lecture
- Emcee for one of the convention evening shows
- Twenty-minute evening show stage performance

Scheduling of the performance(s) during the convention will be determined by the HOST, and HOST reserves the right to change the schedule of the performance(s) during the Friday afternoon September 4, 2020, through noon Monday September 7, 2020 period as it deems prudent.

2. Consideration. HOST agrees to pay PERFORMER at the convention as full consideration for PERFORMER's services no later than at the convention ***one Workshop Registration, three-night hotel accommodations Friday evening through Sunday evening September 4 through 6, 2020 and a fee of one-thousand dollars (\$1000)***. This fee is inclusive of transportation and related expenses. HOST shall pay for the room accommodations only. The PERFORMER is fully responsible for all charges and liability charged to the room including and not limited to room service, pay for view television, bar amenities, and other hotel services. If dealer's room booth space is part of the consideration above, an additional written agreement regarding the use of such dealer's space shall be negotiated between the PERFORMER and the HOST Dealer Chair. **PERFORMER shall send the HOST an invoice for the consideration due.**

3. Performance. The HOST shall designate the performance location for the PERFORMER's act(s). The PERFORMER acknowledges and agrees to comply with the authority of the Talent Chair and/or the Stage Manager. The HOST shall provide sound reinforcement, lighting, curtains, and other stage facilities at its discretion. The parties acknowledge that no special theatrical equipment, including and not limited to stage rigging, lighting instruments, curtains, scenery, sound reinforcement, special effects equipment, and so forth shall be provided by the HOST. Due to the nature of the shows and the limitations of lighting capability, a generic stage lighting plot will be developed. It is agreed that the Talent Chair and/or Stage Manager will determine the sound levels appropriate during performances. The PERFORMER is solely liable for paying any fees, royalties, commissions or otherwise required by BMI, ASCAP or other licensing authority for the use of any media the PERFORMER's may use during his or her performance.

PERFORMER agrees that any special requirements necessary for the performance of the act or acts must be specified by the PERFORMER in the space below. If not so specified, HOST is under no further obligation.

4. Rehearsal. The PERFORMER acknowledges that in preparation for **evening** show performance(s), he or she agrees to be in attendance for a technical rehearsal time scheduled by the HOST. The technical rehearsal time does not

allow time for involved hanging, re-hanging, or re-focusing of stage lighting instruments. The technical rehearsal is only a period to establish the PERFORMER's stage cues for lighting, sound, curtains, and so forth, and not a full run-through of either the PERFORMER's act or the show as an entirety.

5. Fire Regulations. To comply with fire regulations, PERFORMER agrees not to perform any effects with fire, flash paper, flames from candles, matches, torches, flashpots, or other fire or smoke producing apparatus without Fort Worth, Texas Fire Marshall and Talent Chair approval.

6. Objectionable or Blue Material. PERFORMER understands and acknowledges that the convention is designed for family audiences. PERFORMER therefore agrees to refrain from the use of any foul language, blue, ethnic, sexual, vulgar, or inappropriate material as defined by the HOST. Upon breach of this provision, PERFORMER acknowledges that he or she waives all consideration due under this agreement.

7. Media Recording. The HOST will request that no audio or video recording of the PERFORMER's performance(s) will be made unless permission is granted by the PERFORMER. If the PERFORMER wants to arrange for (or otherwise requests that) his or her performance be recorded, permission from the Talent Chair must be granted. If owner of the performance location requires that additional fees be paid to allow for such recording (such as additional money for equipment, stagehand labor, union regulations, and so forth), the PERFORMER shall have sole responsibility for paying such fees.

8. Independent Contractor. PERFORMER is an independent contractor and not an employee or agent of the HOST. PERFORMER assumes all responsibility for any local, state, federal or other taxes that may be due as a result of this contract.

9. Indemnification and Acts of God. PERFORMER agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the Texas Association of Magicians, the Bruce Chadwick SAM Assembly 138 Alliance of Illusionists Incorporated, its officers, directors, employees, and members from any claims for any loss or damages to PERFORMER, the PERFORMER's property, or the audience that may arise out of PERFORMER's performance. PERFORMER agrees to pay for any damages to persons or property resulting directly or indirectly from the PERFORMER's performance or conduct. HOST shall not be liable for any consequences arising as a result of any fire, strike, labor dispute, court order, weather, act of God or other circumstances outside the reasonable control of HOST, and it is agreed that said circumstances do not constitute Breach.

10. Breach. In the event either party materially breaches the provisions of this Agreement, the other party shall have his or its remedies at law. Upon any material breach of this Agreement by PERFORMER, PERFORMER waives payment of all consideration provided for herein. If the Host cancels this agreement, said cancellation shall be made by the Host to the PERFORMER within 30 days of the convention, otherwise all consideration shall remain payable in full.

This Agreement is freely negotiated between both parties and both parties hereby **SIGN** this two-page contract to validate the Agreement.

HOST

X _____

Bruce Chadwick SAM Assembly 138
Alliance of Illusionists Incorporated
PO Box 12345
Fort Worth, TX 76110
communications@allianceofillusionists.com

PERFORMER

X _____

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone _____
E-mail Address _____

DEALERS

One of the most exciting things about a magic convention is the Dealers' Room. Here the world of magic apparatus, illusion books, and the latest miracles come to life. Needless-to-say, the Dealers' Room offers an appeal all its own and many magicians attend magic conventions specifically for the Dealer's Room.

THE DEALER CHAIR

It is the Dealer Chair's job to oversee the magic businesses that demonstrate and sell wares at a magic convention. The chair usually develops the dealer's room booth ground plan in conjunction with the hotel and Convention Planning Committee. Then prior to the arrival of the dealers, the chair verifies that booths are properly arranged with tables, chairs, shelves, signage, pipe and drape booth divider and backdrop curtains, and so forth.

Magic dealers lease or otherwise obtain one or two booths in the convention's Dealer's Room. It is the Dealer Chair's job to assign booths to dealers. The chair may also schedule volunteers to help dealers get their wares into their booths and help them load unsold merchandise out of their booths at the conclusion of the convention. The chair is also the "go to" person if dealers have a question or issue during the convention. The chair monitors the room when it is open, oversees security, and manages the room's open and closed times.

Opinions regarding who should oversee the Dealer's Room vary. Some argue that magic dealers makes for good Dealer Chairs. Others contend that the Dealer Chair should have no ties to being a dealer to show impartiality. Whomever is chosen, the chair should be ready to assist dealers anyway possible.

THE BUSINESS OF DEALERS

Most magicians don't have a clue what it takes to be a magic dealer. It is a very difficult profession and not usually a very profitable profession. Currently there are less than 100 brick and mortar magic shops remaining in the United States. Most magic dealers do what they do because they love the art of magic. Most have multiple streams of income. Some are also performers and magic manufacturers. Some teach magic lessons, write magic books, and many others have non-magic income on the side to make ends meet.

Magicians at magic conventions tend to see only the retail cost of an item. It's easy for them to think that being a magic dealer is highly lucrative. Rarely do magicians consider the wholesale cost of merchandise and the overhead that is associated with sales. For conventions, dealers must pay their dealer's booth fees, transportation, hotel, food, convention registration, and other costs.

Wholesale magic companies typically advertise a MSRP (manufacturer's suggested retail price) for the magic tricks they distribute. Typically dictated in the price is a 40 percent mark-up for a retail magic dealer. Out of that 40 percent, a dealer must pay all other expenses. That means at a magic convention, a typical dealer must sell about \$2500 worth of merchandise before the dealer starts making a profit off sales.

For dealers who are not being traded a booth or lecture at a convention, reasonable booth fees are therefore very important. Conventions with exorbitant dealer booth fees are prohibitive to most magic dealers. While it is true that a convention cannot guarantee dealers they will profit, it can do everything within its power to help them profit. Dealers who go in the red at a particular convention usually never return to that convention.

The Convention Planning Committee should consider these realities and make prudent decisions to attract quality dealers at its convention. Convention Planning Committees and Dealer Chairs must realize that a good dealer's room is important to the overall success of their convention.

CHOOSING DEALERS

It should be the Talent Chair who will book dealers for a convention, with the Dealer Chair assisting the Talent Chair as needed. The Talent Chair will use dealer booth spaces as a commodity and bargaining tools during the process of securing performers and lecturers. Most dealers jump at the opportunity to perform and lecture at a convention because it gives them additional convention limelight, visibility, and an added chance to market their merchandise.

Generally conventions secure dealers on an invitation basis. Occasionally dealers will request to display at a convention. Either way, it is up to the convention to affirm or deny all requests. Space will be limited. It is wise for a convention to choose its dealers carefully.

Dealers who have displayed at previous conventions and have a positive reputation in the magic community should be pursued. Dealer Chairs from other conventions can be contacted and asked about their experiences with particular dealers. As a courtesy, it is wise for a convention to always invite local magic shop owners to the convention as dealers.

The number of dealers at a magic convention must be limited. If there are too many dealers compared to the number of convention attendees, most dealers will not profit. A good ratio of dealers is no more than one dealer for every 40 convention attendees. Also there is great value to convention attendees if there is a broad range of various magical dealers without excessive overlap of the same type of merchandise.

DEALER CONTRACT

All dealers should be required to fill out an application form, which can double as a Dealer Contract. All agreements must be made in writing for clarity and dispel miscommunication. Dealers should also be required to sign the agreement physically or electronically to indicate their acceptance of the agreement. The application can be in PDF or paper format, or the application can be electronic on the convention's website.

Applications should include a dealer's company name, address, hotel address, phone information, credit card information, e-mail address, number of dealer's booths required, and if electricity is needed.

The Dealer Contract should stipulate the rules and conditions imposed by the hotel. Hotels may not allow animals unless they are trained to assist the handicapped. Most hotels will not allow items to be attached to walls. Hotels and/or the municipalities where a hotel is located may forbid or limit the use of fire. Some require fire permits.

The contract should also stipulate any rules imposed by the convention. Dealers must not litter aisles or infringe on the space of other dealers. Loud demonstrations that may disrupt the atmosphere of the room must be avoided. Video playback or music must not be turned-up too loud. Pornographic and off-color materials should always be forbidden. A family friendly environment should always be emphasized.

A rule that most conventions require is that all dealers must be registered for the convention, mainly because this is the way convention badges are generated. Sometimes conventions give complimentary convention registrations to dealers as part of dealer's booth fees. Other conventions require that dealers pay for their own convention registrations, the same way all other attendees register for the convention.

A Convention Planning Committee should also understand that many dealers come to conventions only to sell. Rarely do most dealers attend other convention events. Some dealers attend multiple conventions throughout the year and the idea of seeing the same talent, lectures, and convention events over and over is not appealing. Most dealers are exhausted after a long day in their booth and have no interest in other convention events. Still, some dealers will have to squeeze their booth sales with performing and lecturing for the convention.

DEALER ROOM LAYOUT

A large hotel meeting room that can house all magic dealers together is preferable. If no such room is available, then smaller rooms can be used. Rooms should either be connected or near each other so that registrants can easily flow between one room and another. Since many conventioners are accustomed to the dealer's room being in the same room, signage delineating the fact that dealers are in multiple rooms is a must. If possible, having the dealer's room, lectures, and close-up rooms on the same floor and in the same proximity as the ballroom benefits convention attendees.

The assignments of the booths in the dealer's room should be carefully planned and evaluated. Dealers with similar merchandise should not be next to each other. Also the reputation of magic dealers should be considered. It is also no secret that certain magic dealers are contentious toward other dealers.

The amount of hotel space available for the dealer's room should be carefully considered. Standard booth sizes at magic conventions are usually ten feet deep and ten feet wide. In each booth, tables and chairs are usually offered. These usually consist of a front draped table measuring 8'-0" x 30" and two narrow "school tables" (6'0 x 18") stacked on top of each other at the back of the booth. Some dealers will change these table offerings depending upon their booth merchandise.

It is also nice if there is walking space between each booth to give dealers and convention attendees room to get behind their front table. Pipe and drape backdrop curtains and sometimes waist-high dividing curtains between booths compliment a room.

Some conventions put a water station complete with tables and chairs in the center of the Dealer's Room or just outside the room in the foyer. This gives a nice place for conventioners to congregate.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is probably a good idea to limit the number of spaces that any one dealer can purchase for a convention. Many conventions limit dealers to a single or double-wide convention booth.

Also there is no reason to discount the cost of double booths. If a dealer wants more than one booth space, they should pay for two spaces. Some conventions forbid dealers to sublet part of their booth space to other vendors, and other conventions allow dealers to use their booth spaces however they want.

The dealers that require electricity should have their booths placed near electric receptacles in the floor and walls. Some hotels must run electrical connections. Called electrical drops, hotels may charge for this service. A convention should find out which dealers need electricity and if there is a hotel cost, said expense should be added to that dealer's booth fee.

A paging system is useful in the dealer's room so that the Dealer Chair can make announcements, close the dealer's room, and so forth. A convention-owned portable sound system or a bullhorn can be used. Sometimes Dealer's Rooms will have a built-in sound system that the hotel will allow the Dealer Chair to use free of charge.

Signage is important for each booth so that when dealers arrive, they will know their assigned spaces. Professionally made signs are nice, but many dealers bring their own signage. Experience has shown that simple computer-generated letter sized pieces of paper or cardstock with the dealer's name printed on them and lying on each booth's front table is adequate.

Dealers should be given at least four hours prior to the opening of the Dealer's Room to set-up their booths. It is also nice if there is a hidden refreshment station during the convention only for dealers, with fresh coffee, water, sodas, and perhaps pastries in the morning.

Often dealers need hotel Internet connectivity to process their credit and debit card sales. It is good to arrange Internet access with the hotel. If there is a cost involved, this should factor in on how much the convention charges dealers for their spaces.

The Dealer's Room open and closed times should mesh with the overall convention schedule. The room should be open at times that best benefit the overall convention. Conventions must provide time in the convention schedule where there are no other convention activities except the dealer's room being open. Convention attendees must have some uninterrupted time in the convention schedule to shop.

Also many magic conventions forget that magic dealers are humans and not machines. Few dealers want to work behind a booth longer than eight hours per day. Also most dealers appreciate it if their booth hours are broken into a couple of shifts with a midday break. However this break shouldn't be scheduled during lunch. Convention registrant lunch time is usually a very busy time for dealers.

Dealer's Rooms are normally closed during evening shows. Some dealers like the idea of opening their booths after the evening show. Others loathe the idea.

Most magic dealers are open to the concept of a Dealer's Show whereby they can have five to ten minutes of stage time to introduce themselves to convention attendees and demonstrate or otherwise display some of their offerings. The duration of the overall Dealer's Show depends upon the number of dealers and the amount of time given to each dealer. The show should be brisk, high energy, and hosted by a good emcee. Dealer's Shows are generally a lot of fun, full of laughter and excitement.

SECURITY

Dealer's Room security is very important. Unfortunately most dealers have experienced theft during conventions. Certainly efforts should be made to minimize this. Many conventions use a security guard or off-duty policeman to help protect a dealer's wares and monitor the entrance and exits of the dealer's room.

Some conventions hire security to stay in the Dealer's Room whenever the room is closed. This may even include during the night, especially if the hotel cannot make the room entirely secure. During closed times, no person should be allowed in the room without the General Chair's or Dealer Chair's presence.

Careful consideration must be made to the fact that many Dealer's Rooms are part of the hotel ballroom system. While the outside doors to the Dealer's Room may be locked, it is possible the doors going from the Dealer's Room into the hotel kitchen corridors cannot be locked.

There seems to be two different philosophies regarding admitting customers into Dealer's Rooms. Many conventions only allow convention registrants to enter the Dealer's Room. They gain admittance by displaying their convention registration badges. For conventions that choose this route, obviously the entrance to a Dealer's Room must be monitored.

Some conventions open the Dealer's Room to the public, which means that everyone including laymen, convention attendees, and even magicians not registered for the convention can access the room. The justification here is that since anyone can walk into a local brick and mortar shop, why shouldn't they also be able to walk into a Dealer's Room at a magic convention?

Most magic dealers welcome the idea that the room is open to the public because it brings in more customers. If a room will be open to the public, it is best to inform dealers in advance so they can shift their mentality and protect secrets, as well as be prepared to offer tricks suitable to the novice and lay person.

Most dealers appreciate information on how to load their merchandise into the Dealer's Room. The use of hotel and convention owned carts and dollies are usually greatly appreciated by most dealers.

Some dealers ship their wares to a hotel prior to the convention. Typically they use shipping companies such as FedEx, DHL, and UPS. It is good for the Dealer Chair to communicate to dealers if a hotel charges to hold and store incoming packages. Dealers must be solely responsible for paying any costs directly to the hotel.

Some dealers ship to a local business, individual, or magic shop to avoid these charges, with the understanding that their packages will be delivered to the hotel and placed in the owner's booth during the Dealer's Room set-up time. Such agreements must be between the dealer and the magic shop owner only, and not a responsibility of the convention.

* * * *

SAMPLE DEALER CONTRACT ATTACHED

DEALER CONTRACT
Texas Association of Magicians Convention Hosted by the
Bruce Chadwick SAM Assembly 138 Alliance of Illusionists Inc
September 4 – 7, 2020 - Fort Worth, Texas

The Bruce Chadwick SAM Assembly 138 Alliance of Illusionists Incorporated (hereinafter known as the Convention) is hosting a convention for the Texas Association of Magicians Incorporated, Friday noon through Monday noon, Labor Day Weekend, September 4 through 7, 2020. The Convention and the Dealer (person, persons, or company leasing Dealer's Room booths for the convention) agree to the following contract.

TIMES AND LOCATION

The Convention shall schedule all convention events and the Dealer's Room hours. Changes may be made by the Convention without notice. The location of the Dealer's Room shall be the room or other areas designated by the Convention. The Club shall assign the location of all booths. The convention hotel is the Radisson Hotel Fort Worth North-Fossil Creek, located at 2540 Meacham Blvd, Fort Worth, Texas 76106 USA. The choice and location of the convention hotel is subject to change by the Convention in or around the Fort Worth, Texas area. When making hotel reservations, Dealers should mention the Texas Association of Magicians convention to receive the convention rate.

BOOTH DESCRIPTION AND AMENITIES

All single-wide booths are approximately 10' deep and 10' wide. Double-wide spaces are approximately 10' deep are 20' wide and are available for twice the single booth price. Triple-wide booth spaces are not available. Booths shall have an 8-1/2" x 11" identification sign. Single-wide booths normally include one 6' draped table, two stacked draped tables at the back, and two chairs, and double-wide booths have twice this number of accoutrements. Internet access may or may not be available from the hotel depending upon the hotel's capability. Electrical access is controlled solely by the hotel, and Dealers may need to provide their own extension cords to reach behind booths to the nearest wall electrical outlet unless otherwise directed or provided by the hotel. A maximum of 20 amps of 120 VAC current can be pulled from a single circuit. All fees and use agreements for electricity and Internet shall be negotiated solely between Dealers and the hotel. Any additional fee for electric use is not included in this agreement.

SET-UP AND DISMANTLE

Dealers may begin loading and setting-up in the Dealer Room on Friday September 4, 2020, at 9:00 am. The Dealer's Room shall close for the convention on Sunday evening at 5:30 pm, and Dealers agree to not start dismantling their booth until this time. Dealer's Room hours are tentatively scheduled as follows, and the schedule may be changed by the Convention before or during the convention:

Friday:	Saturday:	Sunday:
1:00 to 6:00 pm	9:30 am to 1:00 pm	10:00 am to 2:00 pm
	2:30 pm to 5:30 pm	

TERMS AND FEES

Single-wide booths are \$250 per space. Double-wide booths are \$400 per space. All Dealers and Dealer employees, volunteers, or other staff working in booths shall be registered for the convention. Included with each booth fee are two complimentary convention registrations, which shall allow two persons to access all convention events except the Willard Breakfast. The Saturday morning Willard Breakfast may be added for an additional \$20 per person. The Dealer's Room shall be open to the public and the Convention shall not require convention registration credentials for admittance. With laymen in the Dealer's Room, Dealers are encouraged to treat magic secrecy in their booths the same way brick and mortar magic shops protect secrets.

CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE

All exhibitors shall send to the Convention a certificate showing general liability insurance. The minimum coverage level of one million dollars shall name both the "Texas Association of Magicians Incorporated" and the "Bruce Chadwick SAM Assembly 138 Alliance of Illusionists Incorporated" as additionally insured. This certificate shall be emailed as a PDF file to communications@allianceofillusionists.com or a hard copy shall be mailed to the Bruce Chadwick SAM Assembly 138 Alliance of Illusionists Incorporated, PO Box 12345, Fort Worth, Texas 76110 USA. The Convention must receive certificates no later than one week before the convention. Dealers who do not comply with this certificate requirement shall not be allowed to exhibit or display, and no money refund shall be given.

ARRANGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

Exhibits shall be arranged so as not to create any obstruction to the view of other exhibits, block or otherwise interfere with walkways, or encroach on the booth space of other dealers and exhibits. The tacking, posting, placing, or distribution of advertisements outside of a Dealer's leased booth space is not permitted. The hotel forbids anything to be attached to the walls or ceiling. Dealers shall not solicit, sell, or perform outside their contracted booth space unless approved by the Club.

Dealers shall comply with all state and local codes. The use of fire is prohibited. It is the responsibility of Dealers to keep their booths neat and clean. Music and speaker sound systems are prohibited. The numbers of booths for the convention are limited due to space restrictions and to promote Dealer profitability. The Dealer's Room Chairman or other person(s) as directed by the Convention have ultimate authority over the Dealer's Room, and decisions made by the Dealer's Room Chairman and Convention are final. All questions should be directed only to the Dealer's Room Chairman.

RIGHT OF REJECTION

The Convention may cancel this contract during the convention without returning any money paid by the Dealer. The property of a Dealer may be removed from the Dealer's Room for selling or displaying blue, vulgar, sexually explicit or other objectionable material, engaging in behavior unbecoming, engaging in any illegal activity, for not supporting a family friendly environment, or violating any spirit of this contract as determined by the Convention. Dealers may not sublet, transfer, loan, or allow booth space to be used by another party.

FINANCIAL AND LOSSES

Dealers are not an employee of the Convention and Dealers are solely responsible for collecting and otherwise paying all city, state, and federal sales tax. It is the sole responsibility of each Dealer to protect their property. Neither the Texas Association of Magicians Incorporated nor the Convention shall be responsible for Dealer losses.

LIABILITY

Dealers agree to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the Texas Association of Magicians Incorporated, the Bruce Chadwick SAM Assembly 138 Alliance of Illusionists Incorporated (Club), the hotel, and their owners or managers, officers, or directors, agents, employees, volunteers, subsidiaries, or affiliates from any damage or expense arising from or out of persons, including the Dealer, its agents, employees, staff, workers, or business invitee. Dealers shall be fully responsible to pay for all damages they cause to property owned by the Convention, hotel, their owners or managers.

PAYMENT AND CONFIRMATION

This contract is freely negotiated between both parties and both parties hereby sign this three-page DEALER CONTRACT to initiate the request to be a Dealer at the convention. After the Club receives this contract, the Convention shall email the potential Dealer a PayPal request for the amount due. Dealers shall then pay the PayPal request online either with a PayPal account or with a regular credit/debit card, no PayPal account required. Payments by cash or check are not accepted. Dealer's Booths are not considered reserved or leased until:

- a signed copy of this contract is received by the Convention
- the Convention approves the contract and thereby the dealer for the convention

- payment in full is received by the Convention
- a CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE is received by the Convention as described above

The Convention reserves the right to fully cancel this contract without explanation prior to the start of the convention at Friday noon, September 4, 2020. In the event of such cancellation by the Convention, the Convention shall refund all money paid by the Dealer. In the event of cancellation by the Dealer, payments are neither refundable nor transferable. If the Dealer is also a Performer for the convention, the spirit of this contract stands separate from any negotiated Performer Contract. This contract is only between the Convention and the Dealer and does not implicate or involve in any way the Texas Association of Magicians Incorporated unless otherwise specified herein.

CLUB

DEALER

X _____

X _____

Bruce Chadwick SAM Assembly 138
Alliance of Illusionists Incorporated
PO Box 12345
Fort Worth, TX 76110 USA
communications@allianceofillusionists.com
817-832-6062 Landline Non-Texting

Name of Dealer _____
Company Name _____
Mailing Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone _____
E-mail Address _____

<https://taom.org/2020/>

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LECTURES

In the early days of magic conventions, the lecture was basically a teach-in where a magician would demonstrate and then explain magic tricks. These presentations have changed over time to include magic philosophy, performance technique, speeches, historical presentations, business aspects of the profession, and specific types or genres of magic. It is good for a Convention Planning Committee to vary lecture emphases so that the varied interests of convention attendees are covered.

Magic lectures have become big business. Where in yesterday's world magic lectures were usually taught only by experts and professionals in the magic field, today everyone wants to lecture, regardless of their ability, expertise, knowledge, or experience.

Lectures are popular because they are usually tremendous ways whereby performers, magic dealers, and specialized suppliers can augment their convention sales. Lectures are scheduled by the Talent Chair and rarely do magic conventions pay presenters to lecture. Rather lectures and dealer's booths are usually traded to talent as part of their payment to perform for conventions. In fact some performers will refuse to perform at a magic convention unless they are also invited to lecture. They know it is possible for them to make more money from their convention lecture sales than they are paid to perform at the convention.

In the early days, an enterprising lecturer got the idea of giving written notes to attendees. That quickly morphed into lecturers asking for donations or nominal fees to cover the cost of reproducing notes. Today's lecturers usually have detailed lecture notes, books, and videos that correspond to the lecture presentation.

The lecture room must be properly set-up. It should have good seating for convention registrants. A raised platform for the lecturer is also advantageous. A good background or backdrop, adequate lighting, a sound system, and even eye magnification (video camera, projector, screen) may be helpful to enhance visibility and ambience. Sometimes side curtains are positioned on the floor, on each side of the platform, to provide wing space and offstage areas.

Lecturers should start on time and not exceed their allotted time. A good Lecture Chair will help a lecturer set-up and then introduce the lecturer with gusto. It is important for the chair to get biographical and other information from the lecturer to use in the introduction. The chair should then signal a lecturer toward the end of the lecture that the stop time is nearing. A simple cue card or hand signals can be used.

The length of convention lectures vary. Usually they are between 60 to 90 minutes in duration, plus time at the end of a lecture so attendees can purchase lecture notes and other merchandise.

It is important that lecturers set-up their merchandise tables at the back of the room or out in the foyer or hallway. If merchandise tables are set-up at the front of a lecture room, the crowds that typically descend upon tables after a lecture may impede the next lecturer from setting-up, or interfere with other subsequent room activity.

A lecturer may need help from the convention to help sell his wares. The Lecture Chair may be of assistance if the chair does not have other impending duties. Otherwise the chair may arrange for volunteers to assist the lecturer.

* * * *

CLOSE-UP

The Close-Up Chair is responsible for overseeing the close-up magic shows at a convention. These include both professional close-up shows and close-up contests. The chair arranges for emcees in each of the close-up rooms, makes sure each room is set-up properly before each show, and makes sure each room is properly identified with appropriate signage. The chair should work closely with the Contest Chair to see that needs of the close-up contest are met.

TRANSFORMATION

In a way, close-up shows at magic conventions have become amusing. In the real world, close-up magic is magic performed intimately with an audience. Often this is one-on-one performance, or performance to a small group. In the early days of magic conventions, close-up magicians sat down at tables and performed the type of magic that is now called table magic.

In today's world, typical close-up magic convention performers must perform for significantly larger audiences. Magic is a visual art form and audiences must see the art to appreciate it. This has caused many magic convention close-up performers to perform standing-up and use larger effects that normally would fall into the stand-up or cabaret magic categories. This transformation has been gradual and probably unfortunate. A lot of "close-up magic" performed at magic conventions is not really close-up.

AUGMENTATION

Magic conventions must do the best they can to accommodate close-up artists. To help audiences see and hear the performers, one tactic often used is to have each performer perform in small meeting rooms. Conventioneers stay in the rooms and the various performers then rotate room-to-room to perform.

Unfortunately sight lines will always be bad for at least part of an audience. People will probably have trouble seeing over the shoulders of the person seated in front of them. When performers use small tabletop props such as coins and cards, cups and balls, and so forth, certainly people seated at the back of the room especially will have a hard time seeing.

To help remediate these problems, sometimes audience members are seated in the first couple of front rows of seats, while the rest of the audience is positioned behind in tiered platform seating. Other times video cameras, projectors, screens, and monitors are used to provide eye magnification, so the performance is enlarged for visibility. The use of sound systems and added theatrical lighting are other elements that can help convention close-up shows. Professional equipment will be needed, and most conventions will probably have to rent said equipment. Rental costs, labor, and current technology must be carefully weighed.

* * * *

WEBSITE

It is virtually impossible for the modern magic convention to take place without the aid of a website. A website is the principal method whereby magic conventions are advertised and information is distributed.

The person who oversees the website is called the webmaster. A webmaster's role tends to fluid because the intricacies of the Internet and website protocols constantly change. A webmaster usually designs and builds the website for the convention, and then makes frequent updates as convention planning evolves and talent and activities are added to the convention line-up.

A webmaster must work closely with many different chairs of the Convention Planning Committee. In particular, the webmaster must keep good communication with the General Chair and the Talent Chair of the convention. A sound convention website will advertise convention benefits. It will also measure progress as convention planning moves forward.

There was a day when a webmaster had to know computer languages such as HTML. With the proliferation of modern website companies that provide easy-to-use templates with "drag and drop" capabilities, modern website construction is relatively easy. Almost anyone can produce a decent looking website with very little experience.

Website companies such as Wix, GoDaddy, and so forth have made it easy to acquire a URL, establish hosting services, and build a good convention website. Most offer shopping cart add-ons that makes it easy for guests to register for the convention. Websites do not have to be expensive or intimidating.

While a website needs good aesthetical appearance, it must also be simple and easy to use. However the content of a magic convention website is of primary importance. It must contain the major components whereby potential convention attendees can learn about the convention, register for the convention, and get their basic questions answered. Basic content of a magic convention website includes:

- Name of the event
- Purpose of the convention
- Overview of talent and dealers
- Calendar Dates
- Location of the Event
- Cost of the Event
- How to register for the convention
- Hotel Information and a Link to Book Rooms
- Convention Schedule
- Promo Videos
- Contest Information
- A "frequently asked questions" section

SAMPLES OF FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **ARE ONE DAY REGISTRATIONS AVAILABLE?** With the convention registration fees so low, one day registrations are not available. Register now to assure a spot at the convention. Seating for the evening shows is based upon registration order.
- **CAN I REGISTER AT THE CONVENTION?** If registration space is still available, then individuals can register at the convention. However registrations are limited. It's anticipated that this convention will sell out. It's best to make registrations in advance.
- **IS THERE RESERVED SEATING FOR THE EVENING SHOWS?** General admission seating will be used for all shows. About 30 minutes prior to each evening show, groups of convention registrants will be admitted into the ballroom based upon their registration order. In other words, the first group of people who register for the convention will have the opportunity to enter the ballroom first to choose their seats. After they are seated, the next group who registered will be allowed to enter, and so forth. Laymen purchasing public tickets will be allowed into the room last, about fifteen minutes before showtime.

- **DO CHILDREN GET IN FREE?** Children ages five and younger get in free, but they still require a name badge. Send an email to the Registration Chair with the child's name, birth date, and parent's name. A phone number should be included so the convention can contact families as needed. Families need to register before children's name badges can be generated. All children must be accompanied by a legal parent or guardian throughout the convention. Unaccompanied children will not be allowed into the Dealer's Room.
- **IS THERE A FAMILY REGISTRATION?** The convention does not offer a family registration. The convention has replaced this with the Full Registration, which is designed for the magician. This allows the magician into all convention events. The Limited Registration lower registration fee is designed for non-magicians such as the spouse and family members who want to the ability to attend only the shows. Please note that at least one full registration must be purchased before one or more limited registrations can be purchased. The convention is doing everything possible to keep registration prices low!
- **IF I REGISTER FOR THE CONVENTION, SHOULD I ALSO BUY TICKETS FOR THE EVENING SHOWS?** Tickets for the evening shows are included as part of each registration. There is nothing else to buy.
- **CAN THE LAY PUBLIC GO TO THE EVENING SHOWS?** Tickets for the evening shows will be available closer to the convention dates and may be purchased online.
- **WHERE IS THE HOTEL?** The hotel is located at 12345 Wherever Blvd, Favorite City, Texas, and about two miles north of downtown. It is very easy to find and is visible from the interstate. It is right across the street from a McDonald's.
- **HOW CAN I RESERVE A HOTEL ROOM AT THE \$119 RATE?** Simply call toll-free 800-123-4567 and ask for the magic convention rate. Note that reservations for the special \$109 per night room rate must be made before XYZ date. Room reservations may be made online [HERE](#).
- **CAN I STAY AT OTHER HOTELS IN THE AREA?** It is appreciated if registrants stay at the convention hotel. The Convention has a nightly room block and must sell the rooms of that block. Otherwise the convention may be obligated to "buy" unoccupied rooms or otherwise compensate the hotel for using their ballroom and meeting spaces. PLEASE help the Convention meet its hotel obligations!
- **DOES THE HOTEL HAVE FULL AMENITIES?** The hotel features free parking, an indoor swimming pool, early check-in and express check-out, fitness center, free Wi-Fi, luggage storage, and on-site dining. Also there are two free breakfasts per day for each booked room. The rooms are beautiful, and the hotel is a wonderful property.
- **CAN I GET A REFUND IF I CANCEL MY REGISTRATION?** For cancellations received on or before XYZ date, a full refund less credit/debit card surcharges will be given. For cancellations received after XYZ date and before WXYZ date, a fifty percent refund less credit/debit card surcharges will be given. There are no refunds after VWXYZ. All cancellations must be submitted via email to the Registration Chair at the following email address. The date stamp on the email will be used to calendar the request.
- **CAN I UPGRADE MY REGISTRATION?** Registrations can be upgraded from LIMITED to FULL by contacting the Registration Chair.

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TREASURY

Magic conventions are expensive endeavors. It's an unequivocal fact that things cost money. A Convention Planning Committee must carefully weigh the costs of their convention, determine a budget, and work to produce the best magic convention it can afford.

It is essential to have one dedicated person in charge of the funds to monitor income and disbursements. Too many "hands in the cookie jar" leads to bad outcomes. Often called the Convention Treasurer, the chair administers all the money for the convention. The Convention Planning Committee will have to decide how credit card processing is handled and online monies are received. Usually funds are disbursed via a convention checking account and online financial services.

Accountability should always have a priority. Controversies among Convention Planning Committee members sometime occur when Treasurers fail to present financial transparency. Conventions should have an "open book" policy whereby any Convention Planning Committee member may be allowed to examine the financials at any reasonable time. A convention might also consider having their Treasurer bonded.

A convention should have only one US Mail address where invoices and correspondences are sent. This can be the General Chairman's or Treasurer's address, or perhaps a post office box address can be secured for the convention. As well, one central email address is also prudent.

A Convention Planning Committee might also consider the wisdom of forming a non-profit corporation to spread liability and provide bankruptcy protection. In the unfortunate event of lawsuits or financial instability, it is much better for a corporation to be litigated as compared to individual Convention Planning Committee members.

BUDGET

To develop a magic convention budget, a committee might start by examining the budgets of previous conventions and then parallel their budget accordingly. Inflation and price increases should be analyzed to refine budget amounts. Budgets can always be revised. Committees should keep a keen eye on the best and worst-case scenarios.

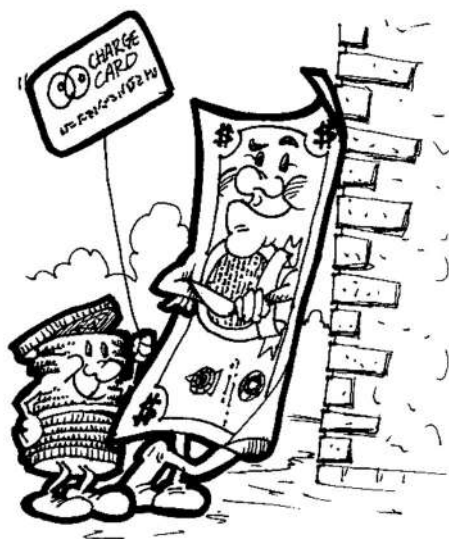
The following is a list of some of the major expense categories that are typical for hosting magic conventions.

- Dealer's Room Amenities (coffee and pastries, pipe and drape, signs)
- Dues Collected from Convention Members and Transferred to Sponsoring Organizations
- Hotel Rooms (talent, dignitaries)
- Office Supplies (registration, convention packets, computer printing ink)
- Postage
- Printed Materials (name badges, souvenir programs, signage)
- Promotions/Advertising (magic periodical advertisement, posters, flyers, mailouts, vinyl banners, website)
- Registration (URL, website hosting and maintenance, office supplies)
- Talent
- Theatrical (stagehand labor, ballroom stage rentals, theatrical equipment, video projection)
- Ticket Sales (online charges, printing of tickets)
- Travel (picking performers up from the airport)
- Treasury (credit card online processing, checking account services)
- Miscellaneous (insurance, etc)

Frequent Treasurer's reports should be presented to the General Chair as well as to the Convention Planning Committee. A computer spread sheet is an easy way to make such a report. Simple computer programs can create invoices for use in billing individuals for moneys owed and produce receipts as needed.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

As referenced above, the Convention Planning Committee will need some sort of financial account to manipulate convention receipts and pay bills. Usually this is a convention checking account. Most financial institutions require minimum deposits to open checking accounts. Usually they also require minimum balances to avoid monthly service charges. Accounts should first be augmented by any existing monies available for use by the convention.



As a magic club or group hosts a convention, hopefully they will profit. Profit can be used to jump start future conventions. Many magic clubs or groups that host multiple conventions tend to save convention profit and use it as emergency backup for future conventions.

Most credit card processing companies require that their accounts be linked to a bank account. Sometimes there are "verification periods" that limit how many transactions or the total money amount that can be processed until verification is confirmed.

As receipts from convention registrations are gleaned from online registrations, processed through entities such as PayPal, Venmo, Zelle, Square, or other banking credit card services, monies can be transferred virtually to the convention checking account. However, PayPal has monthly maximum limits on how much money can be transferred out of a PayPal account and moved into another banking account.

Only a couple of people should have the power to write checks and disburse funds. Primarily this should be the Treasurer. In the event the Treasurer becomes incapacitated, it is good to have the General Chair or other trusted second person listed on the account as a backup.

A treasurer must be able to write checks at the convention and have access to a debit card attached to the bank account. Small matters may come up that require cash, but these are usually minimal.

Most performers will readily accept check payment for their services. Sometimes prudent Treasurers have checks pre-written for each performer. A few performers may need to be paid cash at the convention. Some performers prefer to have payments transferred to them via PayPal or other virtual account service. The way a performer is to be paid should be delineated in the performer's contract.

At the conclusion of a convention and upon the complete disbursement of funds, any left-over assets should be handled as per the Convention Planning Committee's direction. Usually financial accounts created for convention funds are either terminated or minimalized until the next convention.

* * * *

TRANSPORTATION

Convention attendees must travel to and from magic conventions. A vast majority of individuals will travel either by car or airplane. It is generally understood that most convention attendees will take care of their own travel arrangements. However some magic conventions find it prudent to also have a Transportation Chair.

The chair should investigate what local transportation services are available during a convention. The chair should make solid contact with the convention hotel and maybe even the local Convention and Visitor's Bureau to garnish as much information as possible. The Transportation Chair should be familiar with hotel shuttle services, Ubers, taxis, buses, train schedules, and their costs.

The chair should then make information available to convention attendees. Perhaps a special flyer can be included in the convention packet, or the information might be printed in the Souvenir Program, or available at the convention registration booth.

The chair can also have roles when it comes to transporting convention talent. While it may be the Talent Chair's responsibility to inform performers regarding the most expedient way to get to/from the airport and the convention hotel, the Talent Chair may opt to turn these responsibilities over to the Transportation Chair. The Transportation Chair may also oversee the transport of performers and their equipment to/from the convention hotel and theatre. A cargo van that is rented by or loaned to the convention is often handy.

As mentioned in the Talent section, one notable TAOM convention impressed its performers by picking them up at the airport in a full-sized limousine. A special deal with a local limousine service was brokered, and the company made round trips to the airport for a nominal fee per run. In addition, various club members of the host club made donations toward the fees. The cost to the convention was minimal.

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TICKET SALES

Rarely are magic conventions financed solely by convention registrations. Sources of revenue also come from magic dealer fees, advertising space sold in the souvenir program, and other sources. Some conventions that host conventions on a regular basis invest any profit they make into interest bearing money accounts, so that the money grows in preparation for the next convention. Some conventions receive grants and other financial gifts from individuals who support the magic arts.

PUBLIC SALES

A major source of income readily available to magic conventions is money generated from public ticket sales. Magic conventions spend a lot of money for talent, theatre rentals, stagehands, and theatrical equipment. So the question becomes simply, why not fill any extra empty seats with the ticket buying public? Most magic conventions tend to draw 300-500 registered attendees. Most theaters hold anywhere from 800 to 1200 people. Even hotel ballrooms can easily accommodate over 500 seats.

Any magic convention that does not profit, especially when it has an abundance of theater and ballroom seats not filled by convention attendees, is not properly promoting its ticket sales to the public. In fact it is possible to raise enough revenues from public ticket sales that a convention could make a profit even if no one registers for the convention! Tickets can easily be sold to the public for \$20 to \$25 per seat.

Laymen love magic shows. They will laugh, applaud, and "ooh and ah" the performers where magicians won't. Laymen respond like normal people because they are normal. With laymen in the audience at magician's conventions, their magnetic enthusiasm will carry rapport to unimaginable heights.

The Saturday morning stage contest show is yet another convention show that can be sold. Saturday morning tickets can easily be sold for \$5 to \$10 per ticket. Blocks of tickets can be sold at a 50% discount to non-profit groups such as civic clubs, Scouts, and so forth. Also these groups can then mark tickets up 50% to generate funds for their organization.

Show tickets can be sold through an array of different online show ticket brokers. The convention can also sell tickets on its own website. Simple tools such as PayPal buttons can be used.

CORPORATE SALES

A convention might consider selling tickets to companies. Companies often give these tickets to clients, customers, and employees. Companies can buy individual tickets or as a block for a reduced cost. Some companies buy tickets and donate them or have them donated to non-profit groups and humanitarian causes. A company might even sponsor an entire show. In turn the magic convention might dedicate the show to the company or even name the show after the company.

Rather than go after a company's advertising budget, a key to selling block tickets to companies is to focus on employee recreation budgets. When talking to a corporation about ticket sales, it is important to reach the "right person." This is the person who has authority to write a relatively small checks without a lot of company approval. Also host club members that have inroads to the management of companies should be considered.

Companies can write-off donations as business expenditures. Convention program advertising can be given away to corporations as an incentive for them to buy larger blocks of tickets. Tickets can also be consigned to companies through their employee relations departments where employees can buy tickets at special employee discounts.

The local Chamber of Commerce may have guides with the addresses and phone number of the major employers in the city. Posters can be placed in their employee break rooms, on their bulletin boards and other designated places.

A discount fee structure for companies that buy 100 or more tickets can be constructed. Video tape footage (such as that from performer's promotional videos) can be used as sales tools to promote ticket sales. Literature should be created to convey in written form the convention ticket offers to companies. Flyers might also emphasize employee benefits.

OTHER AVENUES

Magic club members can be encouraged to buy tickets and give them to family, friends, and associates. Close-Up magicians can be used during special receptions or "parties" for VIP guests in the theatre "Green Room" or other meeting location before shows.

A tremendous publicity blitz instigated the week before the convention will insure good ticket sales to the lay public. Online and social media advertising, special articles written in the local newspaper as human-interest stories, and discount online coupons can all contribute to the success of ticket sales. Local television stations can provide public service announcements. Theatre marquees can be used to promote the shows. Tickets to the evening shows can be consigned to local magic shops and tickets should be made available at the door before the evening shows.

BASICS OF TICKETING

With the advent of online ticket avenues, the day of printed show tickets have all but disappeared. However even with online ticket sales, basic information on ticket receipts must be provided. This may include ticket prices, dates, times, place of the shows, and seating information.

When general admission tickets are sold to the public (attendees seat themselves wherever seats are available), convention attendees should be allowed first into the auditorium to claim their seats. After they are seated, then the public should enter through a special entryway and take their seats.

As an alternative, sections in the auditorium can be reserved for convention attendees and other sections for the public. Seats for VIP's and other dignitaries can be reserved by using chair back slipcovers, roped off sections, and other designators.

A convention should probably designate a Ticket Sales chair to work the job of selling tickets to companies and to the public. The chair may oversee printing the evening show general admission tickets and help manage online ticket sales. If it is used, the chair usually manages the theatre box office. The chair makes sure that all moneys received from ticket sales are immediately turned over to the Treasurer.

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THEATRE

It is easy for patrons to take their seats, enjoy the evening theater magic show, and never realize the intricacies of what has happened backstage. It is easy to be critical that the stage lights were not right, or that the music was too loud, or that some stagehand missed a cue. It would be good for magicians to realize that the world of technical theater is quite complex and demanding. Include with this the fact that most magic convention evening shows are presented without a dress rehearsal, it is incredible that shows are the quality they are.

STAGE MANAGER

The Stage Manager is in complete control of the theatre stage for all stage shows. His job is to make sure shows run professionally and smoothly. The Stage Manager must be experienced. He must know stage technology and the requirements of magic performance. The manager calls all cues including sound, lights, and curtains. The manager oversees the set-up, tear-down, load-in and load-out of performer's props. The manager makes sure performers have a dressing room and that the floor is swept between acts. The stage manager oversees the all-important technical rehearsal before performances. He also collaborates with union stage crews to determine lowest budgets, tries to minimize overtime, and works as the liaison between union crews and the performers. The Stage Manager has a copy of the contract used to secure the facilities and a copy of the insurance for the performance venue.

To present an example of what a good stage manager does, attached to the bottom of this chapter is a simple document that national SAM convention stage manager Bruce Chadwick used during his continuous 22-year tenure. Chadwick would deliver this document to theatre officials before the use of their theatre facility. Once at the theatre facility, he would have a group meeting with stagehands and go over the document in depth to make sure everyone was on the same page. This document became crucial for Chadwick and SAM show producers Brad Jacobs, Hank Moorehouse, Mike Douglass, John Apperson, R. G. Smith, and assistant stage manager Mike Miller, to finely tune the national SAM convention theatre shows into some of the best shows of the organization's history.

UNION STAGEHANDS

When stagehands are a union crew (typically IATSE affiliated), generally they must be hired through a labor contract, which is a contract separate from the theater facility rental contract. Union stagehands work the lights, follow spots, sound system, curtains, and other backstage equipment under the direction of their union steward and the magic convention's Stage Manager.

Union crew members are professionals. Even if a theatre renter may have limited stagecraft knowledge, union crews can make their shows look good. They know their theatre and equipment. They should be treated with respect. They know that when a show looks good, they look good. While it is easy to ridicule union stagehands as expensive, rarely is this the case when one understands the intricacy of their jobs.

Typically union houses have specified salaries for their union members, have minimum amounts of hours they will work, and have maximum shifts they will endure before going into overtime. For both safety and practicality, they also have minimums concerning the number of crew that must be called for any given show.

LIABILITY

Most theatres require a certificate of liability insurance, listing the theatre as additionally insured. Required insurance coverage amounts vary. Insurance companies have various names for these liability policies. Policies that address "Social Gatherings and Meetings on Premises Not Owned by Insured" is usually the key to find the right

policy. It is wise to check with the administrators of the theatre facility being rented to recommend an insurance supplier that the facility has dealt with in the past and is comfortable using.

If one or more performers will use fire onstage, state and municipal laws regarding the use of fire must be considered. A trip to the local Fire Marshall's office, or a quick perusal of municipal websites regarding the use of fire onstage, is usually the key. A fire permit may need to be obtained. The Fire Marshall may require a fire inspector to attend technical rehearsals and preview performer's fire effects. Fire Marshalls may also require that a fireman be in the stage wings during performances. A convention should be very aware that if fire regulations are not followed, stringent civil and criminal penalties may incur. It is always best to follow the law.

CHOOSING A STAGE

Both labor and theatre rental fees are usually very expensive. A convention planning committee must make the decision early and decide whether to use a rented auditorium or be satisfied with the use of a hotel ballroom stage. Both avenues have their advantages and disadvantages.

Theatres are typically expensive to rent. There are facility costs, costs for the box office, ushers, stagehand labor costs, insurance, and intricate contracts. Therefore when theatres are rented, a convention usually makes a corresponding decision to also sell show tickets to laymen.

The hotel ballroom stage on the other hand is usually much less intricate and less expensive. The caveat is that the audience usually must sit in chairs with flat floor seating. Also theatrical equipment including lights, curtains, and sound must be obtained and operated by the convention.

Both sight lines and audience angles for hotel ballroom stages are big issues. Wings used on the stage, someone seated in the front of the house, far right and left of the wings, may not be able to see the performer due to sight lines. Perhaps more importantly, proper ballroom platform heights are necessary so that audience members seated in chairs can see over audience members seated in front of them.

If a hotel ballroom platform is 36" or lower, many of the patrons in the audience will have difficulty seeing performers onstage because of the patrons seated in front of them. If a hotel ballroom platform is 48" or more in height, the first few rows of audience members will not be able to see performers who move far upstage.

The most ideal height for a hotel ballroom stage is therefore 42 inches tall. Rarely can hotels accommodate stages that are this tall. This means of course that outside sources for stage platform rentals will have to be considered.

Quality platforms must be acquired. Platforms that are not level, rickety, do not meet at the joints, or are not the same exact heights, are all problematic. Not only are such platforms dangerous, but they also inhibit performers who must roll their props around onstage.

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SAMPLE OF GENERAL STAGING SPECIFICATIONS ATTACHED

From Bruce Chadwick
National SAM Convention Stage Manager
August 2001

**GENERAL STAGING SPECIFICATIONS
SOCIETY OF AMERICAN MAGICIANS (SAM)
CONVENTION THEATRE SHOWS**

CREW: Generally the theatre shows of the Society of American Magicians Convention can be effectively executed with a skeleton crew: Lights, Sound, Spotlight(s), Grand Curtain and/or Rail. We welcome the doubling up of crew responsibilities where appropriate. We will work in accordance with your rules and regulations. We do request that all stage personnel be in place at least ten minutes prior to the scheduled starting time for each show.

HEADSET: We request that all stage crew members always be on headset and in communication with our Stage Manager.

STAGE MANAGER CONSOLE: During the shows, our SAM Stage Manager will need to work onstage, in the wing, at some sort of Stage Manager's console where he can cue directly via headset the stage crew. Please provide the console with **a good reading light** (white is preferred, but amber or blue gel is ok if it is needed) and a **podium or stand microphone** so that he can also make offstage announcements and voice-overs to the audience through the house sound system. Our Stage Manager will also need **good backstage sound foldback** to effectively hear the Master of Ceremonies and performers.

SHOW STARTS: All shows will start at the scheduled times unless there is a hold established by Producer R. G. Smith or Stage Manager Bruce Chadwick. Generally the house will open 30 minutes prior to show time. Our Stage Manager will call for the house to open at the appropriate time. The House Manager should never open the theatre house with first getting permission to do so from the Stage Manager.

DRESSING ROOMS: We would like to use as many of your individual dressing rooms as available. We will use your greenroom or gang type dressing room if necessary. A changing room or booth located on either wing of the stage is useful but not necessary. Please label and reserve the dressing room closest to the Stage Manager's console for use by each of our Masters of Ceremonies. If available, prop tables located on the wings of the stage are also useful.

STAGE RESPONSIBILITY: We will endeavor to direct all questions regarding the use of your theatre facilities to you and your stage crew. Additionally, we request that any questions you have be directed to our Stage Manager. If performers ask you questions, please answer questions the performers ask you, but please clarify with our Stage Manager any matter of significance before executing a performer's request. When our Stage Manager is not in the theatre, you are the ultimate stage authority between the performers and your theatre facility. Please do not allow anyone backstage before scheduled rehearsal times unless Bruce Chadwick or R. G. Smith has arranged with you otherwise. Please notify our Stage Manager of your rules, regulations, work schedules and required work breaks prior to the use of your facility. Please inform our Stage Manager of local fire codes, location of fire extinguishers, etc. In case of emergency, please take command of the situation. Your authority will always be respected.

REHEARSAL TIME: All rehearsal times will be established prior to the conventions by Show Producer R. G. Smith. These times will remain as scheduled unless re-negotiated by Mr. Smith in conjunction with your theatre crew leader.

LIGHTS

GENERIC CUES: Our philosophy in working magic conventions is to establish before the performers arrive a series of 8-10 generic stage lighting cues. These cues will deal with areas and color. Generally we are willing to take advantage of the lights, positions, and instruments already hung in your theatre before we ever arrive (if any). We will have a minimum amount of time to hang and focus lights and therefore a general light plot is advantageous for us.

Rather than ask performers what their lighting requirements are, our procedure is to show performers the lighting cues/lit areas that are “available” and then ask them which of the cues they want to use. Our experience is that this saves a lot of headaches for everyone concerned.

SPECIALS: On rare occasion, a performer may require that special lights or lighting instruments be hung to meet their illusion criteria. If this need is critical to an act and cannot be satisfied any other way, we will comply with their request. Generally R. G. Smith will notify you prior to a given rehearsal day that such requests will probably be asked. Generally we do not make it known to performers that we are willing to hang and adjust lights to meet specific needs. We must deal with multiple performers for each show, each show is comprised of a different set of performers, and limited tech rehearsal time defines these parameters.

AREAS: We welcome the use of your “house lighting plot” (if any) where your lights approximate our basic needs.

- 1) Curtain Warmer: One or more instruments which project a nice glow on the closed grand curtain.
- 2) Centerstage Apron Light: Light centerstage (mid-stage and downstage of the grand curtain).
- 3) Full Apron Light: A well-lit apron.
- 4) No color pink or straw lights in each of the three basic stage areas: CS, SL, SR
- 5) Blue lights in each of the three basic stage areas: CS, SL, SR
- 6) Combinations of the above area.

HOUSE LIGHT REQUESTS FROM THE PERFORMERS: If a performer suddenly calls for house lights (generally to bring a spectator up out of the audience), the light board operator should take his own cue to bring up house lights. Our Stage Manager will endeavor to give such cues over headset, but sometimes if the performer fails to inform us that he will request house lights, our Stage Manager may miss his cue. Inform our Stage Manager over headset as you execute houselights.

FOLLOW SPOTS

Generally we will use two follow spots. Each spotlight should be prepared with at least steel blue, red, and pink gels. On headset, our Stage Manager will refer to the stronger spot as spot number one, and the weaker spot (if any) as spot number two. Unless noted otherwise, both spots always remain on the magician. The spotlight operators should always be on headset.

SOUND

BOARD LOCATION: We *require* that sound control to be in the house so the sound technician can hear what the audience hears and regulate sound levels. Any complaints about sound level should first be directed to the Stage Manager.

TAPES: Most performers will bring their music in digital format, usually on some sort of portable computer thumb drive.

CUEING: Our Stage Manager will assume the duties of talking directly to each performer and taking from them their audio files. Your Sound Technician can expect that each tape will be cued exactly so that when the tape player button is pushed, your Sound Technician should immediately hear audio. We would appreciate it if your Sound Technician would bring performer's media backstage immediately after the show and return it to the performers.

Our Stage Manager will also get all sound cues directly from the performers. He will then call over headset all sound cues. We understand that it is difficult for a sound technician to wear a headset while running a sound board. Still, it is very important that your Sound Technician be on headset to hear our Stage Manager's sound cues.

MICROPHONES: We request that there be *four microphones available* for each show. Ideally, we request that *two of the mics be on stands* (removable hand-held). These two mics should be located on the stage; one on the right wing area and one on the left wing area. If they are not wireless microphones, each mic should have enough cable to reach the opposite side of the stage. We prefer unswitched mics so that only the Sound Technician has the power to make the mics hot or mute them as necessary.

We also request the use of *one wireless lavalier mic* if possible. We would also like to be able to use *one Stage Manager's console microphone* so that our Stage Manager can do offstage pre-show voice-overs, etc. (See *Stage Manager's Console* above).

NOTE: Please provide the Stage Manager console and the performers with adequate onstage foldback.

CURTAINS

FREE PIPES: If possible, we will probably require several free pipes or batons where we can fly performer's scenery. Rarely will a performer have any type of scrim, backdrop, or other rag scenery. When there are items to be hung, they are generally small scenic properties and special hardware for the rigging of illusion effects. Fortunately only a few performers (if any) will have scenic hanging situations.

GRAND: We prefer that there be a grand drape where the Master of Ceremonies (emcee) can walk between the proscenium and the grand curtain to enter and exit the stage. Generally the MC will work off the side of the stage where the Stage Manager's console is located (generally Stage Right). The grand can either travel or guillotine. We require that a stage crew member always be available to open and close the grand drape (the Rail Operator if appropriate). This operator must be on headset or otherwise be able to clearly hear the cues of the Stage Manager. This grand curtain will open and close several times during each show. *Please do not close the grand curtain at the end of an act until cued by the Stage Manager to do so.*

OTHER CURTAINS: As far upstage as possible (but still allowing for room for performers to get across the stage behind the curtain), we need a backdrop. This curtain will remain stationary throughout all of the shows. Also, if possible, we would like to use a mid-stage curtain (travel or guillotine). Please trim the stage with legs and teasers as appropriate.

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PROMOTIONS

When a product is created, generally a business will go through a four-part identification process. A business will recognize a need, develop a product that satisfies the need, advertise the product to those who need it, and then close the sale. All aspects of this process also apply to magic conventions.

Convention Planning Committees usually do a good job recognizing the need for magicians to attend a quality magic convention and then develop a quality product. Unfortunately they often fail when it comes to advertising the availability of the product and closing the sale.

A convention cannot spend more than the income it collects. A convention must be very careful when signing contracts and making commitments. Otherwise the convention may be destined for financial failure. The process of spending money as it becomes available is sound wisdom for most Convention Planning Committees.

Most of the convention financial success or failure is rooted in advertising and promotions. There is an old saying that “failing to advertise is to advertise to fail.” A Convention Planning Committee can plan the greatest convention ever, but if they do not properly advertise and promote their convention, their convention will falter.

There are many ways a magic convention can be promoted and advertised. Advertising can be relatively inexpensive or extremely costly. Some advertising is effective and other modes of advertising are ineffective. There is no perfect formula. A Convention Planning Committee will have to determine which advertising methods are likely to be most effective and fit within the realm of their budget.

EMAIL

One might think that email campaigns are a given for most conventions. Unfortunately this is not always the case. Email is inexpensive and easier than ever to use. There are an abundance of inexpensive email companies who can make email campaigns a cinch. Companies can help a convention organize its email lists and make it easy for recipients to subscribe or even unsubscribe from the list. These companies often provide templates that can make emails snappy and sharp in appearance. Companies can offer many other suggestions and do the dirty work of keeping-up with current email protocols.

The next question is, where can a convention get magician email lists? Previous magic conventions often have an email database that the convention can use. Often there are magic organization email lists that are available to conventions. Magic dealers often have email lists that they will share. Email addresses can also be gleaned through the magic convention’s website when there is a sign-up block for people to sign-up to receive email notifications.

The five most common types of emails include:

- Newsletter emails
- Lead Nurturing emails
- Promotional emails
- Milestone emails
- Survey emails

Newsletter emails are as their name implies, emails that are sent out in newsletter format. These types of emails work best when they are sent out on a consistent schedule. They often utilize blogs, updates, information about milestones and upcoming events. They can have links to videos that are uploaded online through companies such as YouTube and Vimeo.

Through the dynamic efforts of Judy Hollingsworth and Dal Sanders, the Texas Association of Magicians produces a periodic emailed newsletter called “Magic Across Texas.” The newsletter highlights magic events happening in and around the Texas. It includes news about public magic shows, events, and information of general interest to the Texas magic community. Additionally of course, the newsletter also highlights the next TAOM convention.

Lead Nurturing emails are designed to guide recipients into becoming customers. Typically recipients are not ready to buy, but through a series of systematic emails, the emails nurture recipients into eventually buying.

Promotional emails highlight products or services and then add some valuable content such as a certain percentage off sales or establish temporary sale prices and limited time offers. Marketing surveys show that most customers want promotional emails. The question is at what frequency should emails go out? Inundating recipients with emails two or three times per week may be too often, while emails sent monthly may not be frequent enough.

Milestone emails celebrate customer’s anniversaries, birthdays, and achievements, while at the same time interacting with a company’s brand, products, and services.

Survey emails enable companies to get feedback from customers and potential customers. They are powerful ways to judge the effectiveness of a company’s products and services. They can give a company insight into what they are doing right or wrong and give direction on improvement.

WEBSITE

A good magic convention website is a must. It must be administrated by someone who knows what they are doing. Typically called the Webmaster, this person helps build and then often oversees the website. Websites must have a consistent purpose and an obvious goal. They must be easy to use and intuitive in navigation so that visitors can quickly find the information they need. Websites need an attractive appearance that is aesthetically appealing. They must have good SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and analytics capabilities.

Websites may include videos about the upcoming convention and include snippet interviews with some of the talent. In turn, talent tends to promote the videos to their customers, which also promotes the convention. An entire section is included in this guide on other important aspects of website development and management.

PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS

Although printed newspapers and magazines are becoming scarce, their online presence is booming as never before. Magic Conventions should never overlook the possibility of advertising in magic magazines. The monthly periodicals of the major magic organizations such as the Society of American Magicians and the International Brotherhood of Magicians should be considered.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media advertising is a must. Online platforms are numerous on the Internet. The idea that one person can become an expert on all platforms is not usually possible. A Convention Planning Committee should choose which platforms will serve the convention best and then find experts on those platforms. A convention doesn’t have to use all social media platforms, nor does it have to spend a lot of money on the platform for it to be useful in promoting a convention.

PRINT ADVERTISING

There was a day when magic conventions were promoted primarily with US Mail. Printed mail advertising pieces fell to the wayside for many years due to the less expensive and abundant electronic advertising. However printed advertising is on the rebound. Companies are once again sending out tons of bulk mail, flyers, and postcards through the US Mail. A magic convention can take advantage of this rebound by sending out its own flyers and postcards. Magic organizations often have US Mail lists that can be used.

BROADCAST MEDIA

One might think that television and radio advertising is out of the reach of most magic conventions. However this is not necessarily true because magic has a universal appeal. While paid advertising spots may or may not be within the purview of a magic convention, local radio and television stations are always on the hunt for human interest stories. They desperately need a constant source of local news and information that is interesting and satisfies innate human curiosity. Radio and television stations have many programs where they interview and report upcoming events.



BRANDING

Logos are a very important part of most businesses. Companies spend lots of money to come-up with aesthetically pleasing and eye-catching logos that make company identification almost second nature. The logos for Amazon, PayPal, Facebook, Coca-Cola, Apple, McDonalds, UPS, Starbucks, and hundreds of other major companies pop into a customer's mind when their company is mentioned. Likewise the need for a good magic convention logo is a must. Artwork and motif must be made consistent. Standardization of logo colors and aesthetic appeal is vitally important.

OTHER IDEAS

Advertising and promotions must target specific audiences. For example, a magic convention that specializes in children's magic should primarily be directed to the children's entertainer. A convention that offers theatre evening show tickets to the public must generate advertising specific to reaching the public.

A magic convention may opt to produce advertising memorabilia and other merchandise that can be sold or distributed freely to advertise a convention. The convention organization President or General Chair might travel to area magic club meetings and promote their convention event.

Some conventions have discovered the inexpensive method of leaving their convention advertising flyers on the registration desks of other conventions. Sometimes flyers are inserted into the convention registration packets of other conventions. Magic conventions may find it useful to contact spokespersons in the magic community who do audio and written blogs about magic events. Hundreds of other methods of advertising can be used by a magic convention. It is best to make a list of potential avenues, brainstorm, and explore potential avenues.

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HOUSE

It is the House Chair's job to oversee the theatre or ballroom house for the convention's stage performances. The chair usually secures ushers for the shows and then supervises all ushering procedures. If a convention chooses to use them, the chair may also oversee the printing and distribution of playbills to audience members as they enter the auditorium. The chair may also line-up individuals to sell Convention Souvenir Programs in the lobby at the start of each evening show. The chair should transfer money to the convention Treasurer as soon as possible.

USHERS

Ushers are needed for convention evening shows. Their job is to admit attendees as they enter the doorways to the theatre and help them find their seats.

If the evening shows are to be held in a theatre, the House Chair should contact the theater management and get general information on how their theatre manages their ushering processes. Some theatres have professional ushers that can be hired by the convention. Sometimes theatres require that their union ushers be hired. At other times a theatre may give the convention the option to provide its own ushers.



Where volunteers can be used as ushers, local magic club or organization members are great for the role. A simple sign-up sheet can be used prior to the convention. A convention might also consider using clowns from the local clown alley, volunteers from service organizations, debutantes, and youth from Scout organizations.

It is helpful if the House Chair acquires a ground plan of the theater building and studies it thoroughly. The chair must be able to accurately answer general attendee's questions during the convention. The House Chair should know how to contact police and other emergency services. The chair should know what the policies are regarding fire emergencies or other reasons where the building might need to be evacuated. Note that in legitimate theatres, the theater staff (probably the union steward) will direct major emergencies and theatre evacuations.

PLAYBILLS

Some conventions generate playbills for their evening shows. Ushers hand these programs to attendees as they enter the theatre. These flyers usually list the performers for the evening shows. Simple biographies about the performers are sometimes included.

Playbills should be printed in a simple and easy-to-read manner. They usually dictate that video and flash photography is not allowed. They should also indicate that no unauthorized audio or videotaping is permitted and that theatre patrons should silence their cell phones before the beginning of the show.

Many conventions have found that the use of printed half-sheets work well (5-1/2" x 8-1/2"). Since convention evening shows generally have different talent line-ups, a convention might consider printing each night's playbills on a different color of paper. This helps keep flyers separate from each other.

Most conventions produce Souvenir Programs (see a chapter elsewhere in this guide). These are usually distributed to convention attendees when they pick-up their registration packets at the beginning of a convention. If a

convention is allowing the public to attend shows, sometimes conventions print additional Souvenir Programs and have ushers sell them in the foyer of the auditorium or ballroom. The House Chair will need to secure additional usher volunteers to help with sales.

TICKETING AND SEATING

In place of printed tickets, convention badges are usually the credentials used to allow attendees into convention events. Sometimes when a convention is using assigned seating, attendee convention badges may also have the attendee's aisle and seat numbers printed on them.

Many conventions that sell advance show tickets to the public (non-convention registered attendees) sell some form of printed tickets. This can be something as simple as modified business cards or other tickets printed on cardstock. Most magic conventions also sell evening show tickets online and then customers print their receipts and use them as "tickets" for the shows. This is very similar to the method many movie theatres currently use for online tickets sales.

Rather than use assigned seating, there is a growing trend for magic conventions to use general admission seating, meaning patrons sit in the auditorium wherever they want. This technique is described more fully in the Registration section of this guide.

For the admittance of the public to evening shows, they should be allowed into the auditorium only after convention attendees have had a chance to enter the auditorium. If possible, there might even be specific doors designated only for the ticketed public.

It is also important to have some seats and open areas designated for handicapped attendees, such as for people in wheelchairs, scooters, and walkers. Also an area for the hearing impaired might be prudent. A battery powered light shining on the person performing sign language for those with hearing issues is important. It is also important for the person signing to know they are to turn their lights on and off in parallel with theatrical lighting blackouts.

The House Chair should be informed if a backstage "Green Room" will be used. Some conventions use this room as a hospitality room for pre-evening show parties or for special guests and dignitaries. The chair should also work closely with the Ticket Sales Chair to make sure efforts are coordinated. Most theatre shows usually open the theatre or ballroom house to convention registrants about thirty minutes before showtime. However the House Chair should always get permission from the Stage Manager before opening the house. Typically the Stage Manager will have to make sure the theatre is ready to receive patrons.

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HOSPITALITY

Some conventions assign a person as the Hospitality Chair for the convention. This individual is essentially a “problem solver” for the convention. The person must be knowledgeable about all aspects of the convention and be prepared to address any troubles or concerns. The officer is usually equipped with a cell phone so he can keep in good communication with the convention chairs and hotel management. The chair’s “headquarters” is usually set-up in or near the convention registration booth. Sometimes the chair works out of the Operations Center, which is described more fully in the Registration section of this guide.

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CONTESTS

There's nothing like sitting at home in one's living room with a prized first-place magic contest trophy sitting on the fireplace mantle. Convention magic contests have become big business. From the national SAM and IBM trophies, Las Vegas competitions, to the international FISM competitions, contest trophies and sometimes prize money that comes with them are highly sought after. Many famous magicians got their careers jump started by winning prestigious magic competitions.

While some magic conventions don't offer magic contests, many others do. In fact there are numerous conventions that have magic competition as their sole purpose.

There are no general competition rules that all conventions follow. However most contests have categories such as comedy, stage, and close-up. Most competitions require that an act not exceed certain time limits. Sometimes there are age considerations with categories for junior and senior contestants. Sometimes contest winners are decided by a set of judges, while at other times the winners are chosen by the audience.

Contestants are usually judged by a varied criteria including stage setting, general appearance, eye appeal, attractiveness and appropriateness of dress, props, tables, and equipment. A performer may be judged by stage presence, poise and confidence, intelligible speech, and whether there is a direct and understandable theme.

Entertainment value may be evaluated based upon audience reaction, appreciation, and overall enjoyment. Presentation, personality, projection, routine, continuity, professional presentation, and technical ability may be included. Certainly original content is a big part of most contests.

Most convention contests have paper or PDF applications that must be filled-out and then returned to the convention. Other times applications are done online. Sometimes for eligibility, contestants must submit a video or letter of endorsement from a local magic club. Almost always there are deadlines to submit applications.

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CHURCH SERVICE

The category of Gospel Magic is a branch of magic illusion that many magicians engage in for ministry purposes. As such, there are numerous Gospel Magic conventions held each year, from the ministries of the Fellowship of Christian Magicians to the ministries of various regional gatherings. However secular magic conventions rarely provide much in the way of ministry emphases.

Secular conventions often have convention days on Sundays, the day many people worship and go to church. Therefore the idea of having some sort of Gospel Magic Service is sound. Usually held on Sunday mornings, contents of services vary. Sometimes events mimic traditional church services with hymns, testimonies, and sermons. At other times services may include special Gospel Magic speakers, preachers, sermons, and lectures.

If a convention decides to offer a Gospel Magic Service, it is important to have a quality event. This means the Convention Planning Committee must find good leadership. The leader may either direct the service or find someone else to administer. Attendees can be welcomed, prayer requests can be offered, hymns can be sung, and presenters can present. With a little planning, the service can be a professional and welcome addition to a magic convention schedule.

Some conventions add a Chaplain to the convention leadership family. Convention attendees sometimes have family emergencies, accidents, or become hospitalized. Someone associated with the magic convention and available to console and minister to individuals and families is a positive and advantageous move.

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COMMITTEE PROFILES

1. GENERAL CHAIR
2. REGISTRATION
3. TREASURER
4. TALENT
5. DEALERS
6. CONTESTS
7. BACKSTAGE
8. PROMOTIONS
9. LECTURES
10. TICKET SALES
11. HOUSE
12. HOSPITALITY
13. SOUVENIR PROGRAM
14. CLOSE-UP
15. TRANSPORTATION
16. YOUTH ACTIVITIES

1. GENERAL CHAIR: Responsible for the planning and execution of a magic convention. Chair of the Convention Planning Committee and its organization.

2. REGISTRATION: In charge of the convention registrations and promptly turns over to the Treasurer money received from registrations. The chair also secures badges for convention, oversees the assembly of souvenir packets, helps assign or administrate the evening show theatre seats, and oversees the staffing of the convention registration booth.

3. TREASURER: Establishes and administrates convention financial account(s). The chair works closely with the General Chair and Talent Chair to work up a convention budget, disburse all funds according to the budget, and provide financial accountability. At the beginning of a convention, the Treasurer usually provides the Talent Chair with checks made out to each performer. Only the General Chair and the Treasurer should have power to write checks or otherwise disburse funds. The Treasurer usually terminates or otherwise retires convention financial accounts after the conclusion of a convention and all bills are paid. The Treasurer should provide periodic and final written financial reports to the Convention Planning Committee as requested.

4. TALENT: Hires and negotiates written contracts with all convention performers. The chair works with the Treasurer and General Chair to determine a talent budget, works within the talent budget, and provides the General Chair and the Treasurer with information regarding all talent contracts. The Talent Chair schedules all lecturers and arranges for the dealers at a convention. The chair has the responsibility to make sure each performer is paid immediately after their services are rendered, or in accordance with their performance contract. The chair must work closely with the Lecture and Dealer Chairs.

5. DEALERS: Oversees the Dealer's Room at a convention. The chair may help design the Dealer's Room floor plan. The chair coordinates with the hotel to make sure booths are laid out properly, and that tables and chairs are placed correctly in the booths. The chair works with the convention to provide appropriate signage for each booth, is the monitor for the dealer's room during open times, and manages security during all open and closed hours of the dealer's room. Also the Dealer Chair usually maintains copies of all dealer contracts.

6. CONTESTS: Administrates the contests for a magic convention. The chair coordinates with the Stage Manager and House Chair to arrange and facilitate the stage and close-up performance facilities. The chair secures and

administrates all emcees for all contests. The chair also generates and disseminates the contest application form and other literature that conform to the convention contest rules, oversees communications with contestants, is the recipient of all contest applications submitted back to the host club, and thereafter notifies applicants of their contest acceptance or rejection.

7. BACKSTAGE: The chair works as Stage Manager for the convention. The manager oversees the theatre stage for all stage shows (evening shows and stage contest show). The chair secures all stagehands or otherwise collaborates with union stage crews. When dealing with union crews, the chair works with their management to determine lowest budgets and minimize overtime. The Backstage Chair maintains copies of the contract used to secure the theatre facilities, stage crew, and insurance for the performance venue.

8. PROMOTIONS: Responsible for administering the website for the convention. The chair stresses emphasis on pre-convention promotions and is responsible for promoting and advertising the convention to potential convention attendees and the lay public for the public shows. The chair also works closely with the Souvenir Program Chair and the Ticket Sales Chair, oversees a convention's social media campaigns, and the creation of a graphic logo for the convention.

9. LECTURES: Manages the lectures at a convention and is the ultimate person-in-charge of the lecture hall during each lecture. The chair is the main contact for all lecturers and sees to their individual needs. The Lecture Chair may introduce each lecturer before his/her lecture or otherwise secures an alternate emcee. The chair makes sure all lectures start and end on time.

10. TICKET SALES: Works to sell theater evening show seats to the lay public through individual and block ticket sales. The Ticket Sales Chair is also in charge of printing the evening show general admission tickets or overseeing any other ticketing system chosen by the convention. The chair is also in charge of the theatre box office for the shows to make sure it is properly manned. The chair makes sure that all moneys received from ticket sales are immediately turned over to the Treasurer. The chair must work closely with the Promotions Chair and the Souvenir Program Chair.

11. HOUSE: Oversees all audience entry and seating for theatre or ballroom shows. Secures ushers for all shows and oversees all ushering procedures. If used, the chair also oversees the printing and of playbills for distribution by ushers as audience members enter the theatre for shows. The chair secures individuals to sell Convention Souvenir Programs in the lobby of the theatre prior to the start of any show open to the public, and then immediately turns in to the Treasurer all moneys received from these sales. The House chair must always get permission from the Stage Manager before opening auditorium doors and allowing attendees to take their seats.

12. HOSPITALITY: Works as a liaison between the convention hotel, performers, and conventioners. The chair is the contact person if needed regarding any hotel/attendee problems that develop. The chair is usually stationed in the convention's registration booth. The chair keeps up with the hotel room master account and hotel comp room list. The chair should also work with the Dealer Chair to make sure the dealer's room always has security whether open or closed. The Hospitality Chair works with the Stage Manager and House Chair to arrange for special handicap services during the shows of a convention.

13. SOUVENIR PROGRAM: Oversees the layout, publication, printing, and distribution of the convention souvenir program. This chair also oversees and promotes the sale of all souvenir program advertising space to supporting businesses, block ticket sales purchasers, magic dealers, and so forth. The chair invoices advertisers, receives all payments, and then immediately turns all payments over to the Treasurer. The chair provides the souvenir programs directly to the Registration Chair and assists with the assembly of registration packets. The chair also provides the House Chair with ample copies of the souvenir program for sale in the lobby of the theatre for public shows.

14. CLOSE-UP: Responsible for the execution of the professional close-up shows (in conjunction with the Talent Chair). The chair arranges for emcees in each of the close-up rooms, makes sure each room is set-up properly for each show (that is, tiered seating, table for the performers, and so forth), and makes sure each room is labeled

properly (i.e., Room 1 of 4). The Chair should work closely with the Contest Chair to see that the similar needs of the close-up contest are met. The chair may also generate kiosk maps showing the location of close-up rooms.

15. TRANSPORTATION: Responsible for anything dealing with the transport of performers and their cargo to/from the airport. The chair lines-up transportation for other individuals who need to be transported to/from the hotel. The chair also arranges and coordinates with busses if convention attendees need to be bussed to/from the convention hotel and the theater. The chair might also be the person in charge of coordinating or arranging for limo and van shuttle services.

16. YOUTH ACTIVITIES: Responsible for planning and executing activities for youth (teens) at the magic convention. The chair is also responsible for enlisting all the help needed to implement the activities. The chair must coordinate all efforts with the General Chair so that youth activities do not interfere with the main body of scheduled convention activities. As well, the Youth Activities Chair should make sure planned activities do not take youth away from other regularly scheduled convention events that they might enjoy. The chair must work closely with the Talent Chair, Souvenir Program Chair, and Registration Chair.

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THE TAOM

Texas Association of Magicians conventions are usually planned and executed by one of the organization's host clubs, although there is the rare occasion when the TAOM organization itself hosts a convention. Conventions are always held on Labor Day weekend, usually starting around noon on Friday, continuing all day Saturday and Sunday, and then concluding on Monday around noon.

The President of the Texas Association of Magicians is typically a member of the TAOM member club, which hosts the upcoming convention. This President serves either as the General Chair to oversee the club's magic convention planning, or otherwise oversees the delegation of the role to another host club member.

Both the TAOM President and Vice-President are nominated by their clubs. Their nominations are then voted upon and ratified by the TAOM Board of Directors. The new President is officially installed toward the end of the previous year's convention and serves a one-year term, and through most of the convention his club hosts.

The Texas Association of Magicians organization has specific protocols regarding how conventions are administered, such as the proper use of the convention logo and so forth. Much of this information is contained in the TAOM Bylaws, which can be downloaded from the official TAOM website. The Bylaws should be carefully absorbed by Convention Planning Committees as they plan and host a TAOM convention.

When a club determines that it wants to host a convention for a specific year, it usually sends a written request to the TAOM Secretary/Treasurer who then delivers the request to the TAOM Board of Directors. The Board then votes to ratify or deny the convention hosting request.

The organization requires that convention years be systematically assigned. In other words, a convention year cannot be assigned if the previous year or years are not already assigned.

Conventions are usually held in the city where the host club meets. Clubs then host their TAOM convention autonomously from the TAOM organization. Clubs plan their conventions as they deem appropriate, arrange talent, and determine their own convention schedule. Conventions traditionally are comprised of various lectures, evening shows, a dealer's room, and other special events.

The TAOM organization does require that certain meetings and events take place at each annual convention. These include the Friday TAOM Board of Director's Meeting and the Sunday morning TAOM General Meeting.

The TAOM organization also requires that various stage and close-up magic performance contests be held during the convention. The requirements and specifics of the contests are delineated in an appendix of the TAOM Bylaws. The TAOM Vice-President works in collaboration with the TAOM Trophy and Awards Committee to oversee the contests.

It should be clearly understood that when a club hosts a convention, the club is completely liable for the finances and other responsibilities of their convention. If the host club is profitable, the club benefits. If the club does not profit, the host club is solely liable for any deficit.

The TAOM organization does provide a host club with "seed money" to use in jump starting a convention. These amounts vary because the money comes from the interest-bearing accounts of the TAOM organization. If a club makes profit from hosting its TAOM convention, a small portion of the profit is paid back to the TAOM organization. If a convention uses a Souvenir Program, the statement "This convention was partially funded by the "Renerick "Ren" Clark Memorial Trust Fund" must be included.



A host club starts accepting convention registrations one year in advance of its convention, at the tail end of the previous TAOM convention. The TAOM Board of Directors are generally allowed to register for the next year's convention first, at the conclusion of the TAOM Friday Board of Director's Meeting. Overall registration for other attendees starts on Sunday morning at the conclusion of the TAOM General Meeting.

The TAOM Secretary and spouse receive complimentary convention registrations. Life Members also receive complimentary convention registrations and are exempt from paying TAOM membership dues.

Clubs typically use some sort of registration booth at conventions. This provides an area for registered convention attendees to check-in for a convention, get their names badges and so forth. This is also the place where walk-in attendees register for the convention. The booth also gives the next year's host club an area on Sunday morning to start registering attendees for their convention.

It should be noted that with modern online convention registration ability, paper registration forms are typically no longer used. Some TAOM host clubs use the convention registration software provided through the TAOM organization's www.taom.org website, while other clubs prefer to use other software or online shopping card check-out systems. Some host clubs put all their other convention information on the TAOM organization's website, while other clubs prefer to build their own website. They ask for a link on www.taom.org that directs registrants to their website.

Individuals become TAOM members by paying TAOM dues. A host club collects TAOM dues as part of each convention registration. This includes all performers, magic dealers, and even those who receive complimentary convention registrations. Either the individual or the host club may pay the dues for complimentary registrants.

Dues for registrants is then forwarded to the TAOM organization Secretary/Treasurer. Also forwarded is the directory information for all registrants so the TAOM membership roster can be maintained, and the Secretary/Treasurer can generate TAOM membership cards. Magicians who do not attend an annual convention pay their annual dues directly to the TAOM Secretary/Treasurer as per the instructions on the TAOM organization's website.

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