

Golden hints to make your congress a great success

Since it is now the case that many organizations and people have become interested in arranging congresses and meetings for their members and colleagues, because they seem to be a great success from the scientific and/or economic point of view, it has been thought helpful to list some tips for improvement based on recent experiences.

- The registration of participants should take place only at one small table in a narrow corridor, and the identification cards for everybody should be in just one small box. Do not use alphabetical order or divide people into several groups as this might unduly increase the speed of registration.
- To register 2 000 participants by this method should not take more than 1 000 minutes, which is equal to 17 hours. Do not make any estimates like this in advance of the congress.
- Standing in a queue for a few hours only does good to people, mentally as well as physically. They get to know each other. It is also good for them to get some fresh air and sunshine in the queue before sitting in dark lecture halls later in the congress.
- Put the information placards as close to the tables as possible, preferably placing the texts under the table.
- Cancel and change the hotel reservations and close the information desk before the notified time so that newcomers do not receive any message of these operations.
- Do not, before the congress starts, tell the authors of abstracts whether they are allowed to present their papers or not. Nor is it necessary to print a list of papers and give it to the participants. They should come and take a look at lists pinned on the doors of lecture halls just before the morning and afternoon sessions.
- Do not make any advance selection of which papers should be presented orally. It is possible to have 52 papers in four hours in one session. It does not matter if there is just four minutes for each presentation and no time for discussion.
- Organize the commission meetings in rooms without projectors and without blackout facilities. Operators of the projectors should be untrained. If the projector is already in the lecture hall then ensure that the cable is missing.
- The list of participants should only be available to the organizers. Who else could be interested in the other participants? They can be met occasionally by chance in the corridors. The most important thing is, of course, that the organization committee knows the participants.
- When you invite people to a welcome party do not mention in the programme or on the map the exact address of the celebration, otherwise almost all those invited will find the place and this might cause chaos.
- Serve the food for the banquet on a long self-service table in a narrow place and put

the empty plates at both ends of the table. This makes the atmosphere very intimate when at last nobody can move back or forth in the middle of the table.

- When people are arriving at a party with an entrance fee, enclose them for at least one hour standing within a small fence like cattle. Do not provide any toilets, but give them many drinks. This purgatory is especially good for increasing your guests' ability to withstand stress, and their appetite improves. Trust also that the weather will be good so that no roof is needed.
- If someone has booked as a participant for symposium number 9 and has paid the requested fees then you should actually book a place for him on excursion number 9 and send the money and reservations to a wrong place. If he still really wants to join symposium 9, then of course he must pay again for it.
- Instead of employing professional and multilingual secretaries to the staff, let your own and your friends' children make some money at these tasks. They can then shout at the participants to stay in the queue

whenever they have made a mistake or caused confusion.

- Do not worry of somebody complains about your organization. Just spread your hands and say how difficult it was to expect such a problem beforehand. It does not matter what the participants think of the congress. The main thing is that they have paid their fees in Swiss francs. Anyhow you are the person who knows best how everything should be done.

By following these hints you will give to the participants an endless topic for discussion about which everybody will find themselves in agreement. This topic will be: How to organize a successful scientific meeting. Afterwards you can also be sure that all the participants will remember your congress for ever, and you need not organize any new meetings for the next fifty years. After that time nobody will remember all these great experiences, and you can start again from the beginning.

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