

## Five Ways to Use Your Convention Calendar

Conventions, meetings and conferences bring an estimated \$60 million to Spokane each year. The CVB's confidential Convention Calendar gives you complete contact information and meeting details for every group that has booked business through the CVB. Whether you use it to promote your products and services or simply to make more informed business decisions is up to you. Here are five of the main ways CVB members use the Convention Calendar.

### 1. **Direct Marketing to Meeting and Convention Planners:**

Begin your efforts by researching groups that are coming to Spokane. Use the Encyclopedia of Associations or search online to gather information that will help you better understand their needs. Next, use the names and addresses provided in the calendar to make contact with meeting and convention planners. (Contact names and addresses may not be provided for meetings that are booked directly with hotels. In these cases, you may work directly with the sales and service staff of the named hotel to obtain contact information.)

While hotel rooms and meeting space may be booked several years in advance, meals, outings, tours, entertainment and other arrangements are often made no more than six months to one year out. Keep in mind, prior to one year, planners are usually working on another convention in a different city.

Although every meeting planner's preferences are unique, they generally prefer to receive unsolicited information by mail, or in some cases, e-mail. Telephone calls are generally discouraged. You may wish to send your information a number of times or in different formats. Repeat mailings can help distinguish your business and act as a reminder of your services. Sending information about your products and services, sends the message that you know how to make a planner's job easier as well as how to improve the experience of their attendees. In addition to large citywide conventions, the calendar lists many small conferences and meetings. Don't overlook the value of marketing your business to these groups as well.

- 2. Information Resource:** Large conventions impact the city in many ways. Often, compression created in the convention core moves transient tourism business out of downtown and spreads it throughout the area. Restaurants, attractions, shopping centers and other businesses regularly experience an increased number of patrons. Use the calendar to keep abreast of the flow of convention business and where that business is taking place, be it the Spokane Convention Center, Fair and Expo Center or Centerplace.
- 3. Direct Marketing to Convention Delegates:** As you review the convention schedule, keep in mind that many delegates will use the services of our

Visitor Information Centers, or consult the visitor information booths set up by the CVB at many meeting sites. Be sure the CVB has an ample supply of your brochures. Consider creating a customized brochure or special offer for specific convention groups. Contact our Convention Services Department and brainstorm ideas to be included on the packet stuffers list. Our staff can help you find out more information about specific meetings and events as well as their special needs.

4. **Scheduling Tool:** The calendar tells you when large conventions will be in Spokane. Consider scheduling additional staff or extending hours to accommodate increased business. The Convention Services Department can provide information that may help predict delegate spending patterns, such as the schedule of meetings and events. To learn more about a specific group, contact Convention Services Manager Amy Cabe at 509-742-9376.
5. **Specific Corollary Interests:** Use the calendar to look for groups that may have an interest in a specific aspect of your business. For example, a horticultural group may be interested in unique gardens, a class on cooking with herbs or a tour of beautifully landscaped yards. Although you can't be all things to all groups, you can think creatively about all you have to offer.

If you have specific questions regarding a convention group and their needs, contact the Convention Services Department at 509-742-9376.

**SPOKANE**

*Near nature. Near perfect.*