

THE TOOLS YOU NEED

TO COMMUNICATE VALUE AND SHOWCASE ROI

This toolkit is designed to provide helpful resources as you plan your attendance. It provides an easy template for framing the overall value proposition, sharing the benefits of attendance and communicating the importance of conference to your broader organization.

Here are some tips for opening the dialogue:

- **Plan your top takeaways** before you even register for the National Conference. Having a solid plan for your participation at the conference helps you get the most out of your attendance.
- **Focus on specifics** you will bring back to your organization as return on the investment.
- **Share the knowledge you gain.** On your return to the office, convey the information you gathered at conference. Options include special presentations, reports, roundtable discussions, etc.
- **Circulate the program** and related materials with your colleagues. As an attendee, you will also have access to materials posted by speakers.
- **Pre-plan** who will cover for you while you are attending the conference.
- **Be creative** in offering cost-saving solutions. For example, some attendees from the same organization share a room to reduce hotel expenses.
- **Review the registration page** where rates are listed to see if you qualify for early-bird rates or discounts. Register on or before September 25, 2017 to qualify for the early registration rate.

STEP 1: PREPARE YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

“The Society for Hospitality and Foodservice Management is an industry-specific association focused on the professionals who manage corporate foodservice and workplace hospitality.”

“Attending their conference will help our organization stay current with service trends and industry benchmarking. As the economy evolves, this is a critical year to monitor innovations and best practices to keep our company nimble, efficient and ahead of the curve.”

“It’s an arena for business knowledge and industry networking we can’t afford to miss!”

STEP 2: CALCULATE OVERALL CONFERENCE VALUE

A proposal for allocation of resources in your organization must include the two elementary components of decision-making: expenses (the “investment”) and return on investment (ROI). This tool provides simple steps for calculating the investment and identifying your return.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CONFERENCE EXPENSES

Conference expenses are affected by a number of factors. Before you can begin to justify conference expenses, you need to calculate what those expenses are. To do so, use the following Expenses Worksheet to develop a cost estimate for attending conference. We have included some of the information to get you started.

EXPENSES WORKSHEET

Conference Registration	\$795*
	*SHFM Member rate. Must register on or before September 25, 2017 to qualify for this rate.
Flight	\$
Lodging	\$244 per night (includes tax and fees) = \$
Transportation to Hotel (Taxi)	\$40 from FLL airport = \$ \$85 from MIA airport = \$
Transportation from Hotel (Taxi)	\$40 to FLL airport = \$ \$85 to MIA airport = \$
Mileage Reimbursement	Driving to conference? Or to the airport for your flight? Calculate distance, then multiply miles by 53.5 cents/mile (IRS standard for 2017) = \$
Parking Reimbursement	\$30 per day for self parking; \$39 per day for valet parking
Food Per Diem	Several, but not all, meals are included in the price of the conference, so total per diem less 7 meals = \$
Subtotal	\$ (times total number of employees going) =
Total	\$

Enter your customized information in the writable fields identified by red text.

QUANTIFYING YOUR CONFERENCE BENEFITS

To be most effective in justifying the conference, you need to clearly articulate the connection between your organization's requirements and the conference program and relationship building opportunities. Do not assume that your manager will be able to automatically make those distinctions.

To support this process, use the following Benefits Worksheet to help you focus on the benefits. Please use whatever makes sense for your particular organization and omit the rest.

BENEFITS WORKSHEET

Your Organization's Benefits	Specific Needs and the Conference Sessions & Events that Meet the Need	Estimated Value
Networking Benefits	This conference provides networking with other professionals and vendors in the industry. We will be able to take the pulse of what is happening with tools, technologies, and processes, and hear new and innovative ideas.	
Anticipated Business Opportunities	[List the meetings that you have set up in advance with potential customers. Also list the potential customers that you will have access to at the conference.]	
Teambuilding (if sending a big part of your group)	This conference will help build our team, providing a forum for team members to discuss tools, technologies, and processes and how we might apply them in our company to improve our information products, workflow, and processes.	
Current + Future Tools		
Current + Future Technologies		
Vendors with Tools & Technologies You Are Exploring		
Others Specific to Your Organization and Based on the Conference Program		
TOTAL		

IT'S ALL IN THE SELLING

After you have identified the specific knowledge benefits, you've provided both the expenses and benefits your manager needs to decide the value of your proposition. Salespeople work the same way. They don't let customers infer the value of what they are selling, they make that leap for them. Sell your conference proposition!

SAMPLE JUSTIFICATION LETTER

< Date >

Dear < supervisor's name >,

I know how much our organization values innovation and efficiency. One of the ways I can contribute to this focus is through industry education — and that's why I'd like to attend the 2017 SHFM National Conference.

This is the premier event for workplace hospitality professionals and will take place in Miami, October 24-26, 2017. It provides industry-specific education sessions that are directly applicable to my work. Many of the presentations are tailored to < your profession > professionals and give information on how to < list benefits to your responsibilities >.

I have already identified several sessions that will give me better insight into how we can improve our processes. Getting the information in a seminar format will also greatly reduce the time and costs < your organization's name > would normally incur in researching the topics. < You will need to insert the session descriptions which most apply to your responsibilities. >

At this conference, I am also planning to meet with <list customers and colleagues> and will have an opportunity to renew or sign new contracts with them. In addition, I will be able to sell our company's services to a number of potential clients, including <list>, and I'm looking forward to networking with industry leaders from around the country.

< All registration fees are listed below. The travel costs vary as well and should be changed to reflect your costs. >

The full price conference fee is \$895, but can be reduced to \$795 by registering before September 25, 2017. Here is the breakdown of conference costs:

- Roundtrip Airfare: <\$xxx>
- Ground Transportation: <\$xxx>
- Hotel: \$244 per night = <\$xxx>
- Meals: <\$xxx>
- Conference Fee: \$895 (\$795 before September 25, 2017)

The total costs associated with attending this conference are: <\$xxx>.

This is a valuable investment in developing better contacts and gaining knowledge in specific areas of < your profession >. And don't worry — in my absence, I've arranged key responsibilities to be covered by < person(s) covering >.

Thank you in advance!

Sincerely,

< your name here >

THE VALUE PROPOSITION

CALCULATING HOW MUCH YOU'LL REALLY SPEND

Sometimes considering your conference options takes a little more than just looking at the registration fee. Other costs like meals, taxis, internet in your hotel room, etc. are generally not initially considered. When presenting this information to your supervisor, be sure to emphasize the value and all that is included.

Below we have illustrated everything that's included in our conference, the hotel costs, meals and transportation so you can make an informed decision about where you would like to make your investment with your time and money.

- **Registration Fee:** **\$795** for Members (prior to September 25, 2017)
 \$995 for Non-Members (prior to September 25, 2017)
- **Host Hotel:** **\$732** (\$244/night, single/double). This includes three nights at the hotel including tax and fees).
- **Transportation:** **\$80** (taxi transportation to and from the hotel is \$40 each way from the Fort Lauderdale Airport).

 \$170 (taxi transportation to and from the hotel is \$85 each way from Miami International Airport).
- **Meals:** **TBD based on per diem** (seven meals are already covered)
- **TOTAL COST:** **[XXXXX]**

Conference attendees are treated to a reception on Tuesday evening, breakfast on Wednesday and Thursday mornings, two luncheons, dinner on Wednesday evening and a banquet on Thursday evening. All of these meals are included in the registration fee.