



## What to look for when on a site visit

**The importance of a site visit cannot be underestimated. Experiencing a venue, the atmosphere, surroundings, travel time, service and finish can only go so far when presented with images. It's very easy to get swept up in the logistics and minute detail, so remember when viewing a venue to place yourself in the attendee's shoes to give yourself the best vision of their forthcoming experience.**

### Preparation prior to arrival

Firstly, bring with you the proposal details you have received from each of the venues. This may include rates, floor plans, capacities and details on the proposed spaces. Be sure to arrive with a vision in your mind of how the event will flow and use this as a starting point. If you're looking to get measurements bring a tape measure with you in case the venue doesn't have one to hand.

Secondly, arrive with an agenda detailing the various items and specifics you wish to see and experience. Prepare yourself a list of questions in advance. It's easy to get swept up in the flow of the site visit as you gather more information on the venue, therefore forgetting to ask some of the vital questions you wished to establish.

Lastly, ensure the right people are conducting the site visit. The organiser is a must, however consider taking the final decision maker, if available, or your AV supplier, when appropriate.

### Location

You will inevitably take the easiest route to the venue based on your origin, but is your route the most likely direction the delegates will take? If not, endeavour to take the time to walk / drive their route to best place yourself in the delegates' shoes. Ask the venue about all modes of transport – nearest (major) train stations, parking on site, restrictions on coaches pulling up etc.

### Analyse your surroundings

Who else is in the venue? Is it considered a business or social venue? Does this fit the vibe that you are looking for? The people within the venue are the ones who create the atmosphere. Take time to analyse the wider personnel, rather than just your own.

### Service levels

Immediately on arrival you start to experience the levels of service a venue provides. The first impression is the lasting impression. See if the venue go above and beyond – they should be asking if you wish to put your bags down first, taking coats, offering a drink and so on. Does your venue contact (or persons conducting the site visit) know enough about the venue? Does this reflect the amount of training the venue conducts and how will this affect your event? Is the right person leading the show round?

If possible, it's always best to ask to meet the Operations Manager, who will be present at your event. Operations staff know what can and cannot be done within the spaces. This also gives you a flavour of their approach and hospitality – this will be vital on the day.

### Look at all areas

Even if you are not using all public spaces within the venue, take the time to view them. It may be that your agenda changes and you now require these. This also provides the opportunity to experience the atmosphere and analyse the surroundings and venue as a whole.

Moreover, ask to view all the remaining meeting spaces. As above, if your requirements or numbers change you'll be glad you saw alternate space and saves you that second site visit. This can also provide an opportunity to change your mind on your existing room proposed, should the space be free.

### Continued overleaf...

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### Analysing a room / space

- **Max capacities** – ask about capacity in various set ups, not just your desired layout. Venues have a tendency to quote max capacities, so ask what is a comfortable capacity without packing out the room(s).
- **Presentation area** – how large is it / is there room for your AV when thinking about capacity?
- **Pillars** – what is the line of sight like for all delegates? Stand or sit in various places around the room to test the visuals. If you feel comfortable, then chances are they will.
- **Natural daylight** – do they have any curtains or blinds to block out the daylight if required? How will the direction of the sunlight affect your delegates and your presentation on screen?
- **Ceiling heights** – is the ceiling height large enough for your set? If the ceiling is lower in places detail down all ceiling heights and their locations.
- **Powersockets** – where are they located? Are there enough for your AV / presenters / delegates? Detail this on your floor plan if it isn't already; it's a detail easily forgotten.
- **Dividing walls** – ask how soundproof they are. A very small percentage of dividing walls are fully soundproof. Consider your content when deciding what goes where.
- **Entrances** – if you have valuables which will be kept in the room overnight, can the room be fully locked? Look at all access points, even through storage cupboards. Who will have keys or access to the room overnight? Does the venue have CCTV or security guards to oversee the space?

### Furniture

If possible, get sight of the chairs and tables that will be used with your event. Too often than not do we see aged conference chairs which immediately ruin a space. Do they cloth their trestle tables and if not, are they aesthetically pleasing? Ask if there is other furniture you can use, not just for conference elements but soft furnishings as well – it's a lovely touch to a tea / coffee or lunch space.

### Signage

Start from the very beginning and look for directional signage to the venue itself. Analyse how easy it is to see or find. Once arriving at the venue, place your delegate hat on and walk towards the meeting space. Is it obvious from first arrival? Look at all elements of signage – bedrooms, lifts, toilets, reception etc. Most importantly, query with the venue what signage you are allowed to put up yourself. Do they allow banners, and if so where and when can they be put up? Do the venue have bus stop signs you can use? If so, how many and what size are they? Try to get a visual of these so you know what to expect.

### Take pictures

You will be taking in a lot of information and you'd be forgiven for not remembering every minute detail. Pictures will jog the memory and provide you a reference when planning an event. Take pictures of every space, you never know when you will need them!

### Other miscellaneous questions:

- When was their last renovation?
- Are there any future renovations planned that may affect your event?
- What other events are taking place at the same time as yours?
- How will these other events affect yours – see if you can get their timings for lunch and breaks.
- Do the venue have any suggestions themselves that they have seen on other events? This can relate to anything from signage to layout.
- When will you have access to the spaces?
- When do you need to be out of the space by?
- What are the local amenities  
e.g. pharmacy, local convenience shop etc?