

CONVENTIONS GROUP RELEASES ANTI-PIRACY RESOURCES



BY KATIE BASCUAS / JAN 30, 2015

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Meetings professionals have a new set of resources, courtesy of the Convention Industry Council, to help stop attempts to divert meeting attendees away from recommended hotel room blocks. Such room “pirating” has become a significant business challenge in the meetings space.

The Convention Industry Council is taking on pirates—“room block pirates,” that is. This week, CIC announced a new set of resources to help meetings professionals combat companies that poach attendees away from recommended hotel room blocks.

The resources were compiled by a 10-member workgroup CIC put together as part of its Accepted Practices Exchange (APEX) initiative. To come up with best practices and tools, the APEX Room Block Poaching Workgroup conducted research among meetings professionals and found, for example, that 73 percent had events or meetings that were targeted by pirate companies. Roughly 70 percent of those survey respondents also had not developed best practices to prevent piracy.

The group also held a Poaching Summit of industry experts in Las Vegas.

“When we first came together to approach this vexing issue, we did so with open minds and looking for new resolution to an age-old problem,” MaryAnne Bobrow, CAE, said in a statement. “The volunteers who worked on this project, including the workgroup and those who participated in the December 2014 Summit in Las Vegas, contributed greatly to the work products being launched on the CIC website and offer new strategies for avoiding, coping with, and combating piracy and poaching. ”

Pirate companies use a number of methods to divert meeting attendees from room blocks, including contacting attendees with false room offerings at sometimes discounted rates. They may, for example, claim that a meeting room block is close to selling out and that they can get the attendee a better rate outside the meeting’s hotel block.

Even if attendees figure out that they have been scammed, they may be subject to high cancellation fees that often accompany pirated rooms. Pirating also has adverse consequences for associations and groups holding meetings, which may be monetarily penalized for not fulfilling their room-block commitments.

Other groups, such as ABTS Convention Services, have also taken on the pirating issue. Last year, after finding that 20 of the medical associations it serves had lost \$50 million annually because of “around-the-block” booking, ABTS launched a campaign to educate meeting attendees to the potential effect on associations as well as the general meeting experience when they book outside the block.