

TRANSPORTATION

Convention attendees must travel to and from magic conventions. A vast majority of individuals will travel either by car or airplane. It is generally understood that most convention attendees will take care of their own travel arrangements. However some magic conventions find it prudent to also have a Transportation Chair.

The chair should investigate what local transportation services are available during a convention. The chair should make solid contact with the convention hotel and maybe even the local Convention and Visitor's Bureau to garnish as much information as possible. The Transportation Chair should be familiar with hotel shuttle services, Ubers, taxis, buses, train schedules, and their costs.

The chair should then make information available to convention attendees. Perhaps a special flyer can be included in the convention packet, or the information might be printed in the Souvenir Program, or available at the convention registration booth.

The chair can also have roles when it comes to transporting convention talent. While it may be the Talent Chair's responsibility to inform performers regarding the most expedient way to get to/from the airport and the convention hotel, the Talent Chair may opt to turn these responsibilities over to the Transportation Chair. The Transportation Chair may also oversee the transport of performers and their equipment to/from the convention hotel and theatre. A cargo van that is rented by or loaned to the convention is often handy.

As mentioned in the Talent section, one notable TAOM convention impressed its performers by picking them up at the airport in a full-sized limousine. A special deal with a local limousine service was brokered, and the company made round trips to the airport for a nominal fee per run. In addition, various club members of the host club made donations toward the fees. The cost to the convention was minimal.

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TICKET SALES

Rarely are magic conventions financed solely by convention registrations. Sources of revenue also come from magic dealer fees, advertising space sold in the souvenir program, and other sources. Some conventions that host conventions on a regular basis invest any profit they make into interest bearing money accounts, so that the money grows in preparation for the next convention. Some conventions receive grants and other financial gifts from individuals who support the magic arts.

PUBLIC SALES

A major source of income readily available to magic conventions is money generated from public ticket sales. Magic conventions spend a lot of money for talent, theatre rentals, stagehands, and theatrical equipment. So the question becomes simply, why not fill any extra empty seats with the ticket buying public? Most magic conventions tend to draw 300-500 registered attendees. Most theaters hold anywhere from 800 to 1200 people. Even hotel ballrooms can easily accommodate over 500 seats.

Any magic convention that does not profit, especially when it has an abundance of theater and ballroom seats not filled by convention attendees, is not properly promoting its ticket sales to the public. In fact it is possible to raise enough revenues from public ticket sales that a convention could make a profit even if no one registers for the convention! Tickets can easily be sold to the public for \$20 to \$25 per seat.

Laymen love magic shows. They will laugh, applaud, and "ooh and ah" the performers where magicians won't. Laymen respond like normal people because they are normal. With laymen in the audience at magician's conventions, their magnetic enthusiasm will carry rapport to unimaginable heights.

The Saturday morning stage contest show is yet another convention show that can be sold. Saturday morning tickets can easily be sold for \$5 to \$10 per ticket. Blocks of tickets can be sold at a 50% discount to non-profit groups such as civic clubs, Scouts, and so forth. Also these groups can then mark tickets up 50% to generate funds for their organization.

Show tickets can be sold through an array of different online show ticket brokers. The convention can also sell tickets on its own website. Simple tools such as PayPal buttons can be used.

CORPORATE SALES

A convention might consider selling tickets to companies. Companies often give these tickets to clients, customers, and employees. Companies can buy individual tickets or as a block for a reduced cost. Some companies buy tickets and donate them or have them donated to non-profit groups and humanitarian causes. A company might even sponsor an entire show. In turn the magic convention might dedicate the show to the company or even name the show after the company.

Rather than go after a company's advertising budget, a key to selling block tickets to companies is to focus on employee recreation budgets. When talking to a corporation about ticket sales, it is important to reach the "right person." This is the person who has authority to write a relatively small checks without a lot of company approval. Also host club members that have inroads to the management of companies should be considered.

Companies can write-off donations as business expenditures. Convention program advertising can be given away to corporations as an incentive for them to buy larger blocks of tickets. Tickets can also be consigned to companies through their employee relations departments where employees can buy tickets at special employee discounts.

The local Chamber of Commerce may have guides with the addresses and phone number of the major employers in the city. Posters can be placed in their employee break rooms, on their bulletin boards and other designated places.

A discount fee structure for companies that buy 100 or more tickets can be constructed. Video tape footage (such as that from performer's promotional videos) can be used as sales tools to promote ticket sales. Literature should be created to convey in written form the convention ticket offers to companies. Flyers might also emphasize employee benefits.

OTHER AVENUES

Magic club members can be encouraged to buy tickets and give them to family, friends, and associates. Close-Up magicians can be used during special receptions or "parties" for VIP guests in the theatre "Green Room" or other meeting location before shows.

A tremendous publicity blitz instigated the week before the convention will insure good ticket sales to the lay public. Online and social media advertising, special articles written in the local newspaper as human-interest stories, and discount online coupons can all contribute to the success of ticket sales. Local television stations can provide public service announcements. Theatre marquees can be used to promote the shows. Tickets to the evening shows can be consigned to local magic shops and tickets should be made available at the door before the evening shows.

BASICS OF TICKETING

With the advent of online ticket avenues, the day of printed show tickets have all but disappeared. However even with online ticket sales, basic information on ticket receipts must be provided. This may include ticket prices, dates, times, place of the shows, and seating information.

When general admission tickets are sold to the public (attendees seat themselves wherever seats are available), convention attendees should be allowed first into the auditorium to claim their seats. After they are seated, then the public should enter through a special entryway and take their seats.

As an alternative, sections in the auditorium can be reserved for convention attendees and other sections for the public. Seats for VIP's and other dignitaries can be reserved by using chair back slipcovers, roped off sections, and other designators.

A convention should probably designate a Ticket Sales chair to work the job of selling tickets to companies and to the public. The chair may oversee printing the evening show general admission tickets and help manage online ticket sales. If it is used, the chair usually manages the theatre box office. The chair makes sure that all moneys received from ticket sales are immediately turned over to the Treasurer.

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THEATRE

It is easy for patrons to take their seats, enjoy the evening theater magic show, and never realize the intricacies of what has happened backstage. It is easy to be critical that the stage lights were not right, or that the music was too loud, or that some stagehand missed a cue. It would be good for magicians to realize that the world of technical theater is quite complex and demanding. Include with this the fact that most magic convention evening shows are presented without a dress rehearsal, it is incredible that shows are the quality they are.

STAGE MANAGER

The Stage Manager is in complete control of the theatre stage for all stage shows. His job is to make sure shows run professionally and smoothly. The Stage Manager must be experienced. He must know stage technology and the requirements of magic performance. The manager calls all cues including sound, lights, and curtains. The manager oversees the set-up, tear-down, load-in and load-out of performer's props. The manager makes sure performers have a dressing room and that the floor is swept between acts. The stage manager oversees the all-important technical rehearsal before performances. He also collaborates with union stage crews to determine lowest budgets, tries to minimize overtime, and works as the liaison between union crews and the performers. The Stage Manager has a copy of the contract used to secure the facilities and a copy of the insurance for the performance venue.

To present an example of what a good stage manager does, attached to the bottom of this chapter is a simple document that national SAM convention stage manager Bruce Chadwick used during his continuous 22-year tenure. Chadwick would deliver this document to theatre officials before the use of their theatre facility. Once at the theatre facility, he would have a group meeting with stagehands and go over the document in depth to make sure everyone was on the same page. This document became crucial for Chadwick and SAM show producers Brad Jacobs, Hank Moorehouse, Mike Douglass, John Apperson, R. G. Smith, and assistant stage manager Mike Miller, to finely tune the national SAM convention theatre shows into some of the best shows of the organization's history.

UNION STAGEHANDS

When stagehands are a union crew (typically IATSE affiliated), generally they must be hired through a labor contract, which is a contract separate from the theater facility rental contract. Union stagehands work the lights, follow spots, sound system, curtains, and other backstage equipment under the direction of their union steward and the magic convention's Stage Manager.

Union crew members are professionals. Even if a theatre renter may have limited stagecraft knowledge, union crews can make their shows look good. They know their theatre and equipment. They should be treated with respect. They know that when a show looks good, they look good. While it is easy to ridicule union stagehands as expensive, rarely is this the case when one understands the intricacy of their jobs.

Typically union houses have specified salaries for their union members, have minimum amounts of hours they will work, and have maximum shifts they will endure before going into overtime. For both safety and practicality, they also have minimums concerning the number of crew that must be called for any given show.

LIABILITY

Most theatres require a certificate of liability insurance, listing the theatre as additionally insured. Required insurance coverage amounts vary. Insurance companies have various names for these liability policies. Policies that address "Social Gatherings and Meetings on Premises Not Owned by Insured" is usually the key to find the right

policy. It is wise to check with the administrators of the theatre facility being rented to recommend an insurance supplier that the facility has dealt with in the past and is comfortable using.

If one or more performers will use fire onstage, state and municipal laws regarding the use of fire must be considered. A trip to the local Fire Marshall's office, or a quick perusal of municipal websites regarding the use of fire onstage, is usually the key. A fire permit may need to be obtained. The Fire Marshall may require a fire inspector to attend technical rehearsals and preview performer's fire effects. Fire Marshalls may also require that a fireman be in the stage wings during performances. A convention should be very aware that if fire regulations are not followed, stringent civil and criminal penalties may incur. It is always best to follow the law.

CHOOSING A STAGE

Both labor and theatre rental fees are usually very expensive. A convention planning committee must make the decision early and decide whether to use a rented auditorium or be satisfied with the use of a hotel ballroom stage. Both avenues have their advantages and disadvantages.

Theatres are typically expensive to rent. There are facility costs, costs for the box office, ushers, stagehand labor costs, insurance, and intricate contracts. Therefore when theatres are rented, a convention usually makes a corresponding decision to also sell show tickets to laymen.

The hotel ballroom stage on the other hand is usually much less intricate and less expensive. The caveat is that the audience usually must sit in chairs with flat floor seating. Also theatrical equipment including lights, curtains, and sound must be obtained and operated by the convention.

Both sight lines and audience angles for hotel ballroom stages are big issues. Wings used on the stage, someone seated in the front of the house, far right and left of the wings, may not be able to see the performer due to sight lines. Perhaps more importantly, proper ballroom platform heights are necessary so that audience members seated in chairs can see over audience members seated in front of them.

If a hotel ballroom platform is 36" or lower, many of the patrons in the audience will have difficulty seeing performers onstage because of the patrons seated in front of them. If a hotel ballroom platform is 48" or more in height, the first few rows of audience members will not be able to see performers who move far upstage.

The most ideal height for a hotel ballroom stage is therefore 42 inches tall. Rarely can hotels accommodate stages that are this tall. This means of course that outside sources for stage platform rentals will have to be considered.

Quality platforms must be acquired. Platforms that are not level, rickety, do not meet at the joints, or are not the same exact heights, are all problematic. Not only are such platforms dangerous, but they also inhibit performers who must roll their props around onstage.

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SAMPLE OF GENERAL STAGING SPECIFICATIONS ATTACHED

From Bruce Chadwick
National SAM Convention Stage Manager
August 2001

GENERAL STAGING SPECIFICATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICAN MAGICIANS (SAM) CONVENTION THEATRE SHOWS

CREW: Generally the theatre shows of the Society of American Magicians Convention can be effectively executed with a skeleton crew: Lights, Sound, Spotlight(s), Grand Curtain and/or Rail. We welcome the doubling up of crew responsibilities where appropriate. We will work in accordance with your rules and regulations. We do request that all stage personnel be in place at least ten minutes prior to the scheduled starting time for each show.

HEADSET: We request that all stage crew members always be on headset and in communication with our Stage Manager.

STAGE MANAGER CONSOLE: During the shows, our SAM Stage Manager will need to work onstage, in the wing, at some sort of Stage Manager's console where he can cue directly via headset the stage crew. Please provide the console with **a good reading light** (white is preferred, but amber or blue gel is ok if it is needed) and a **podium or stand microphone** so that he can also make offstage announcements and voice-overs to the audience through the house sound system. Our Stage Manager will also need **good backstage sound foldback** to effectively hear the Master of Ceremonies and performers.

SHOW STARTS: All shows will start at the scheduled times unless there is a hold established by Producer R. G. Smith or Stage Manager Bruce Chadwick. Generally the house will open 30 minutes prior to show time. Our Stage Manager will call for the house to open at the appropriate time. The House Manager should never open the theatre house with first getting permission to do so from the Stage Manager.

DRESSING ROOMS: We would like to use as many of your individual dressing rooms as available. We will use your greenroom or gang type dressing room if necessary. A changing room or booth located on either wing of the stage is useful but not necessary. Please label and reserve the dressing room closest to the Stage Manager's console for use by each of our Masters of Ceremonies. If available, prop tables located on the wings of the stage are also useful.

STAGE RESPONSIBILITY: We will endeavor to direct all questions regarding the use of your theatre facilities to you and your stage crew. Additionally, we request that any questions you have be directed to our Stage Manager. If performers ask you questions, please answer questions the performers ask you, but please clarify with our Stage Manager any matter of significance before executing a performer's request. When our Stage Manager is not in the theatre, you are the ultimate stage authority between the performers and your theatre facility. Please do not allow anyone backstage before scheduled rehearsal times unless Bruce Chadwick or R. G. Smith has arranged with you otherwise. Please notify our Stage Manager of your rules, regulations, work schedules and required work breaks prior to the use of your facility. Please inform our Stage Manager of local fire codes, location of fire extinguishers, etc. In case of emergency, please take command of the situation. Your authority will always be respected.

REHEARSAL TIME: All rehearsal times will be established prior to the conventions by Show Producer R. G. Smith. These times will remain as scheduled unless re-negotiated by Mr. Smith in conjunction with your theatre crew leader.

LIGHTS

GENERIC CUES: Our philosophy in working magic conventions is to establish before the performers arrive a series of 8-10 generic stage lighting cues. These cues will deal with areas and color. Generally we are willing to take advantage of the lights, positions, and instruments already hung in your theatre before we ever arrive (if any). We will have a minimum amount of time to hang and focus lights and therefore a general light plot is advantageous for us.

Rather than ask performers what their lighting requirements are, our procedure is to show performers the lighting cues/lit areas that are “available” and then ask them which of the cues they want to use. Our experience is that this saves a lot of headaches for everyone concerned.

SPECIALS: On rare occasion, a performer may require that special lights or lighting instruments be hung to meet their illusion criteria. If this need is critical to an act and cannot be satisfied any other way, we will comply with their request. Generally R. G. Smith will notify you prior to a given rehearsal day that such requests will probably be asked. Generally we do not make it known to performers that we are willing to hang and adjust lights to meet specific needs. We must deal with multiple performers for each show, each show is comprised of a different set of performers, and limited tech rehearsal time defines these parameters.

AREAS: We welcome the use of your “house lighting plot” (if any) where your lights approximate our basic needs.

- 1) Curtain Warmer: One or more instruments which project a nice glow on the closed grand curtain.
- 2) Centerstage Apron Light: Light centerstage (mid-stage and downstage of the grand curtain).
- 3) Full Apron Light: A well-lit apron.
- 4) No color pink or straw lights in each of the three basic stage areas: CS, SL, SR
- 5) Blue lights in each of the three basic stage areas: CS, SL, SR
- 6) Combinations of the above area.

HOUSE LIGHT REQUESTS FROM THE PERFORMERS: If a performer suddenly calls for house lights (generally to bring a spectator up out of the audience), the light board operator should take his own cue to bring up house lights. Our Stage Manager will endeavor to give such cues over headset, but sometimes if the performer fails to inform us that he will request house lights, our Stage Manager may miss his cue. Inform our Stage Manager over headset as you execute houselights.

FOLLOW SPOTS

Generally we will use two follow spots. Each spotlight should be prepared with at least steel blue, red, and pink gels. On headset, our Stage Manager will refer to the stronger spot as spot number one, and the weaker spot (if any) as spot number two. Unless noted otherwise, both spots always remain on the magician. The spotlight operators should always be on headset.

SOUND

BOARD LOCATION: We *require* that sound control to be in the house so the sound technician can hear what the audience hears and regulate sound levels. Any complaints about sound level should first be directed to the Stage Manager.

TAPES: Most performers will bring their music in digital format, usually on some sort of portable computer thumb drive.

CUEING: Our Stage Manager will assume the duties of talking directly to each performer and taking from them their audio files. Your Sound Technician can expect that each tape will be cued exactly so that when the tape player button is pushed, your Sound Technician should immediately hear audio. We would appreciate it if your Sound Technician would bring performer's media backstage immediately after the show and return it to the performers.

Our Stage Manager will also get all sound cues directly from the performers. He will then call over headset all sound cues. We understand that it is difficult for a sound technician to wear a headset while running a sound board. Still, it is very important that your Sound Technician be on headset to hear our Stage Manager's sound cues.

MICROPHONES: We request that there be **four microphones available** for each show. Ideally, we request that **two of the mics be on stands** (removable hand-held). These two mics should be located on the stage; one on the right wing area and one on the left wing area. If they are not wireless microphones, each mic should have enough cable to reach the opposite side of the stage. We prefer unswitched mics so that only the Sound Technician has the power to make the mics hot or mute them as necessary.

We also request the use of **one wireless lavalier mic** if possible. We would also like to be able to use **one Stage Manager's console microphone** so that our Stage Manager can do offstage pre-show voice-overs, etc. (See *Stage Manager's Console* above).

NOTE: Please provide the Stage Manager console and the performers with adequate onstage foldback.

CURTAINS

FREE PIPES: If possible, we will probably require several free pipes or batons where we can fly performer's scenery. Rarely will a performer have any type of scrim, backdrop, or other rag scenery. When there are items to be hung, they are generally small scenic properties and special hardware for the rigging of illusion effects. Fortunately only a few performers (if any) will have scenic hanging situations.

GRAND: We prefer that there be a grand drape where the Master of Ceremonies (emcee) can walk between the proscenium and the grand curtain to enter and exit the stage. Generally the MC will work off the side of the stage where the Stage Manager's console is located (generally Stage Right). The grand can either travel or guillotine. We require that a stage crew member always be available to open and close the grand drape (the Rail Operator if appropriate). This operator must be on headset or otherwise be able to clearly hear the cues of the Stage Manager. This grand curtain will open and close several times during each show. ***Please do not close the grand curtain at the end of an act until cued by the Stage Manager to do so.***

OTHER CURTAINS: As far upstage as possible (but still allowing for room for performers to get across the stage behind the curtain), we need a backdrop. This curtain will remain stationary throughout all of the shows. Also, if possible, we would like to use a mid-stage curtain (travel or guillotine). Please trim the stage with legs and teasers as appropriate.

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PROMOTIONS

When a product is created, generally a business will go through a four-part identification process. A business will recognize a need, develop a product that satisfies the need, advertise the product to those who need it, and then close the sale. All aspects of this process also apply to magic conventions.

Convention Planning Committees usually do a good job recognizing the need for magicians to attend a quality magic convention and then develop a quality product. Unfortunately they often fail when it comes to advertising the availability of the product and closing the sale.

A convention cannot spend more than the income it collects. A convention must be very careful when signing contracts and making commitments. Otherwise the convention may be destined for financial failure. The process of spending money as it becomes available is sound wisdom for most Convention Planning Committees.

Most of the convention financial success or failure is rooted in advertising and promotions. There is an old saying that “failing to advertise is to advertise to fail.” A Convention Planning Committee can plan the greatest convention ever, but if they do not properly advertise and promote their convention, their convention will falter.

There are many ways a magic convention can be promoted and advertised. Advertising can be relatively inexpensive or extremely costly. Some advertising is effective and other modes of advertising are ineffective. There is no perfect formula. A Convention Planning Committee will have to determine which advertising methods are likely to be most effective and fit within the realm of their budget.

EMAIL

One might think that email campaigns are a given for most conventions. Unfortunately this is not always the case. Email is inexpensive and easier than ever to use. There are an abundance of inexpensive email companies who can make email campaigns a cinch. Companies can help a convention organize its email lists and make it easy for recipients to subscribe or even unsubscribe from the list. These companies often provide templates that can make emails snappy and sharp in appearance. Companies can offer many other suggestions and do the dirty work of keeping-up with current email protocols.

The next question is, where can a convention get magician email lists? Previous magic conventions often have an email database that the convention can use. Often there are magic organization email lists that are available to conventions. Magic dealers often have email lists that they will share. Email addresses can also be gleaned through the magic convention’s website when there is a sign-up block for people to sign-up to receive email notifications.

The five most common types of emails include:

- Newsletter emails
- Lead Nurturing emails
- Promotional emails
- Milestone emails
- Survey emails

Newsletter emails are as their name implies, emails that are sent out in newsletter format. These types of emails work best when they are sent out on a consistent schedule. They often utilize blogs, updates, information about milestones and upcoming events. They can have links to videos that are uploaded online through companies such as YouTube and Vimeo.

Through the dynamic efforts of Judy Hollingsworth and Dal Sanders, the Texas Association of Magicians produces a periodic emailed newsletter called “Magic Across Texas.” The newsletter highlights magic events happening in and around the Texas. It includes news about public magic shows, events, and information of general interest to the Texas magic community. Additionally of course, the newsletter also highlights the next TAOM convention.

Lead Nurturing emails are designed to guide recipients into becoming customers. Typically recipients are not ready to buy, but through a series of systematic emails, the emails nurture recipients into eventually buying.

Promotional emails highlight products or services and then add some valuable content such as a certain percentage off sales or establish temporary sale prices and limited time offers. Marketing surveys show that most customers want promotional emails. The question is at what frequency should emails go out? Inundating recipients with emails two or three times per week may be too often, while emails sent monthly may not be frequent enough.

Milestone emails celebrate customer’s anniversaries, birthdays, and achievements, while at the same time interacting with a company’s brand, products, and services.

Survey emails enable companies to get feedback from customers and potential customers. They are powerful ways to judge the effectiveness of a company’s products and services. They can give a company insight into what they are doing right or wrong and give direction on improvement.

WEBSITE

A good magic convention website is a must. It must be administrated by someone who knows what they are doing. Typically called the Webmaster, this person helps build and then often oversees the website. Websites must have a consistent purpose and an obvious goal. They must be easy to use and intuitive in navigation so that visitors can quickly find the information they need. Websites need an attractive appearance that is aesthetically appealing. They must have good SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and analytics capabilities.

Websites may include videos about the upcoming convention and include snippet interviews with some of the talent. In turn, talent tends to promote the videos to their customers, which also promotes the convention. An entire section is included in this guide on other important aspects of website development and management.

PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS

Although printed newspapers and magazines are becoming scarce, their online presence is booming as never before. Magic Conventions should never overlook the possibility of advertising in magic magazines. The monthly periodicals of the major magic organizations such as the Society of American Magicians and the International Brotherhood of Magicians should be considered.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media advertising is a must. Online platforms are numerous on the Internet. The idea that one person can become an expert on all platforms is not usually possible. A Convention Planning Committee should choose which platforms will serve the convention best and then find experts on those platforms. A convention doesn’t have to use all social media platforms, nor does it have to spend a lot of money on the platform for it to be useful in promoting a convention.

PRINT ADVERTISING

There was a day when magic conventions were promoted primarily with US Mail. Printed mail advertising pieces fell to the wayside for many years due to the less expensive and abundant electronic advertising. However printed advertising is on the rebound. Companies are once again sending out tons of bulk mail, flyers, and postcards through the US Mail. A magic convention can take advantage of this rebound by sending out its own flyers and postcards. Magic organizations often have US Mail lists that can be used.

BROADCAST MEDIA

One might think that television and radio advertising is out of the reach of most magic conventions. However this is not necessarily true because magic has a universal appeal. While paid advertising spots may or may not be within the purview of a magic convention, local radio and television stations are always on the hunt for human interest stories. They desperately need a constant source of local news and information that is interesting and satisfies innate human curiosity. Radio and television stations have many programs where they interview and report upcoming events.



BRANDING

Logos are a very important part of most businesses. Companies spend lots of money to come-up with aesthetically pleasing and eye-catching logos that make company identification almost second nature. The logos for Amazon, PayPal, Facebook, Coca-Cola, Apple, McDonalds, UPS, Starbucks, and hundreds of other major companies pop into a customer's mind when their company is mentioned. Likewise the need for a good magic convention logo is a must. Artwork and motif must be made consistent. Standardization of logo colors and aesthetic appeal is vitally important.

OTHER IDEAS

Advertising and promotions must target specific audiences. For example, a magic convention that specializes in children's magic should primarily be directed to the children's entertainer. A convention that offers theatre evening show tickets to the public must generate advertising specific to reaching the public.

A magic convention may opt to produce advertising memorabilia and other merchandise that can be sold or distributed freely to advertise a convention. The convention organization President or General Chair might travel to area magic club meetings and promote their convention event.

Some conventions have discovered the inexpensive method of leaving their convention advertising flyers on the registration desks of other conventions. Sometimes flyers are inserted into the convention registration packets of other conventions. Magic conventions may find it useful to contact spokespersons in the magic community who do audio and written blogs about magic events. Hundreds of other methods of advertising can be used by a magic convention. It is best to make a list of potential avenues, brainstorm, and explore potential avenues.

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HOUSE

It is the House Chair's job to oversee the theatre or ballroom house for the convention's stage performances. The chair usually secures ushers for the shows and then supervises all ushering procedures. If a convention chooses to use them, the chair may also oversee the printing and distribution of playbills to audience members as they enter the auditorium. The chair may also line-up individuals to sell Convention Souvenir Programs in the lobby at the start of each evening show. The chair should transfer money to the convention Treasurer as soon as possible.

USHERS

Ushers are needed for convention evening shows. Their job is to admit attendees as they enter the doorways to the theatre and help them find their seats.

If the evening shows are to be held in a theatre, the House Chair should contact the theater management and get general information on how their theatre manages their ushering processes. Some theatres have professional ushers that can be hired by the convention. Sometimes theatres require that their union ushers be hired. At other times a theatre may give the convention the option to provide its own ushers.



Where volunteers can be used as ushers, local magic club or organization members are great for the role. A simple sign-up sheet can be used prior to the convention. A convention might also consider using clowns from the local clown alley, volunteers from service organizations, debutantes, and youth from Scout organizations.

It is helpful if the House Chair acquires a ground plan of the theater building and studies it thoroughly. The chair must be able to accurately answer general attendee's questions during the convention. The House Chair should know how to contact police and other emergency services. The chair should know what the policies are regarding fire emergencies or other reasons where the building might need to be evacuated. Note that in legitimate theatres, the theater staff (probably the union steward) will direct major emergencies and theatre evacuations.

PLAYBILLS

Some conventions generate playbills for their evening shows. Ushers hand these programs to attendees as they enter the theatre. These flyers usually list the performers for the evening shows. Simple biographies about the performers are sometimes included.

Playbills should be printed in a simple and easy-to-read manner. They usually dictate that video and flash photography is not allowed. They should also indicate that no unauthorized audio or videotaping is permitted and that theatre patrons should silence their cell phones before the beginning of the show.

Many conventions have found that the use of printed half-sheets work well (5-1/2" x 8-1/2"). Since convention evening shows generally have different talent line-ups, a convention might consider printing each night's playbills on a different color of paper. This helps keep flyers separate from each other.

Most conventions produce Souvenir Programs (see a chapter elsewhere in this guide). These are usually distributed to convention attendees when they pick-up their registration packets at the beginning of a convention. If a

convention is allowing the public to attend shows, sometimes conventions print additional Souvenir Programs and have ushers sell them in the foyer of the auditorium or ballroom. The House Chair will need to secure additional usher volunteers to help with sales.

TICKETING AND SEATING

In place of printed tickets, convention badges are usually the credentials used to allow attendees into convention events. Sometimes when a convention is using assigned seating, attendee convention badges may also have the attendee's aisle and seat numbers printed on them.

Many conventions that sell advance show tickets to the public (non-convention registered attendees) sell some form of printed tickets. This can be something as simple as modified business cards or other tickets printed on cardstock. Most magic conventions also sell evening show tickets online and then customers print their receipts and use them as "tickets" for the shows. This is very similar to the method many movie theatres currently use for online tickets sales.

Rather than use assigned seating, there is a growing trend for magic conventions to use general admission seating, meaning patrons sit in the auditorium wherever they want. This technique is described more fully in the Registration section of this guide.

For the admittance of the public to evening shows, they should be allowed into the auditorium only after convention attendees have had a chance to enter the auditorium. If possible, there might even be specific doors designated only for the ticketed public.

It is also important to have some seats and open areas designated for handicapped attendees, such as for people in wheelchairs, scooters, and walkers. Also an area for the hearing impaired might be prudent. A battery powered light shining on the person performing sign language for those with hearing issues is important. It is also important for the person signing to know they are to turn their lights on and off in parallel with theatrical lighting blackouts.

The House Chair should be informed if a backstage "Green Room" will be used. Some conventions use this room as a hospitality room for pre-evening show parties or for special guests and dignitaries. The chair should also work closely with the Ticket Sales Chair to make sure efforts are coordinated. Most theatre shows usually open the theatre or ballroom house to convention registrants about thirty minutes before showtime. However the House Chair should always get permission from the Stage Manager before opening the house. Typically the Stage Manager will have to make sure the theatre is ready to receive patrons.

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HOSPITALITY

Some conventions assign a person as the Hospitality Chair for the convention. This individual is essentially a “problem solver” for the convention. The person must be knowledgeable about all aspects of the convention and be prepared to address any troubles or concerns. The officer is usually equipped with a cell phone so he can keep in good communication with the convention chairs and hotel management. The chair’s “headquarters” is usually set-up in or near the convention registration booth. Sometimes the chair works out of the Operations Center, which is described more fully in the Registration section of this guide.

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CONTESTS

There's nothing like sitting at home in one's living room with a prized first-place magic contest trophy sitting on the fireplace mantle. Convention magic contests have become big business. From the national SAM and IBM trophies, Las Vegas competitions, to the international FISM competitions, contest trophies and sometimes prize money that comes with them are highly sought after. Many famous magicians got their careers jump started by winning prestigious magic competitions.

While some magic conventions don't offer magic contests, many others do. In fact there are numerous conventions that have magic competition as their sole purpose.

There are no general competition rules that all conventions follow. However most contests have categories such as comedy, stage, and close-up. Most competitions require that an act not exceed certain time limits. Sometimes there are age considerations with categories for junior and senior contestants. Sometimes contest winners are decided by a set of judges, while at other times the winners are chosen by the audience.

Contestants are usually judged by a varied criteria including stage setting, general appearance, eye appeal, attractiveness and appropriateness of dress, props, tables, and equipment. A performer may be judged by stage presence, poise and confidence, intelligible speech, and whether there is a direct and understandable theme.

Entertainment value may be evaluated based upon audience reaction, appreciation, and overall enjoyment. Presentation, personality, projection, routine, continuity, professional presentation, and technical ability may be included. Certainly original content is a big part of most contests.

Most convention contests have paper or PDF applications that must be filled-out and then returned to the convention. Other times applications are done online. Sometimes for eligibility, contestants must submit a video or letter of endorsement from a local magic club. Almost always there are deadlines to submit applications.

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CHURCH SERVICE

The category of Gospel Magic is a branch of magic illusion that many magicians engage in for ministry purposes. As such, there are numerous Gospel Magic conventions held each year, from the ministries of the Fellowship of Christian Magicians to the ministries of various regional gatherings. However secular magic conventions rarely provide much in the way of ministry emphases.

Secular conventions often have convention days on Sundays, the day many people worship and go to church. Therefore the idea of having some sort of Gospel Magic Service is sound. Usually held on Sunday mornings, contents of services vary. Sometimes events mimic traditional church services with hymns, testimonies, and sermons. At other times services may include special Gospel Magic speakers, preachers, sermons, and lectures.

If a convention decides to offer a Gospel Magic Service, it is important to have a quality event. This means the Convention Planning Committee must find good leadership. The leader may either direct the service or find someone else to administer. Attendees can be welcomed, prayer requests can be offered, hymns can be sung, and presenters can present. With a little planning, the service can be a professional and welcome addition to a magic convention schedule.

Some conventions add a Chaplain to the convention leadership family. Convention attendees sometimes have family emergencies, accidents, or become hospitalized. Someone associated with the magic convention and available to console and minister to individuals and families is a positive and advantageous move.

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COMMITTEE PROFILES

1. GENERAL CHAIR
2. REGISTRATION
3. TREASURER
4. TALENT
5. DEALERS
6. CONTESTS
7. BACKSTAGE
8. PROMOTIONS
9. LECTURES
10. TICKET SALES
11. HOUSE
12. HOSPITALITY
13. SOUVENIR PROGRAM
14. CLOSE-UP
15. TRANSPORTATION
16. YOUTH ACTIVITIES

1. GENERAL CHAIR: Responsible for the planning and execution of a magic convention. Chair of the Convention Planning Committee and its organization.

2. REGISTRATION: In charge of the convention registrations and promptly turns over to the Treasurer money received from registrations. The chair also secures badges for convention, oversees the assembly of souvenir packets, helps assign or administrate the evening show theatre seats, and oversees the staffing of the convention registration booth.

3. TREASURER: Establishes and administrates convention financial account(s). The chair works closely with the General Chair and Talent Chair to work up a convention budget, disburse all funds according to the budget, and provide financial accountability. At the beginning of a convention, the Treasurer usually provides the Talent Chair with checks made out to each performer. Only the General Chair and the Treasurer should have power to write checks or otherwise disburse funds. The Treasurer usually terminates or otherwise retires convention financial accounts after the conclusion of a convention and all bills are paid. The Treasurer should provide periodic and final written financial reports to the Convention Planning Committee as requested.

4. TALENT: Hires and negotiates written contracts with all convention performers. The chair works with the Treasurer and General Chair to determine a talent budget, works within the talent budget, and provides the General Chair and the Treasurer with information regarding all talent contracts. The Talent Chair schedules all lecturers and arranges for the dealers at a convention. The chair has the responsibility to make sure each performer is paid immediately after their services are rendered, or in accordance with their performance contract. The chair must work closely with the Lecture and Dealer Chairs.

5. DEALERS: Oversees the Dealer's Room at a convention. The chair may help design the Dealer's Room floor plan. The chair coordinates with the hotel to make sure booths are laid out properly, and that tables and chairs are placed correctly in the booths. The chair works with the convention to provide appropriate signage for each booth, is the monitor for the dealer's room during open times, and manages security during all open and closed hours of the dealer's room. Also the Dealer Chair usually maintains copies of all dealer contracts.

6. CONTESTS: Administrates the contests for a magic convention. The chair coordinates with the Stage Manager and House Chair to arrange and facilitate the stage and close-up performance facilities. The chair secures and

administrates all emcees for all contests. The chair also generates and disseminates the contest application form and other literature that conform to the convention contest rules, oversees communications with contestants, is the recipient of all contest applications submitted back to the host club, and thereafter notifies applicants of their contest acceptance or rejection.

7. BACKSTAGE: The chair works as Stage Manager for the convention. The manager oversees the theatre stage for all stage shows (evening shows and stage contest show). The chair secures all stagehands or otherwise collaborates with union stage crews. When dealing with union crews, the chair works with their management to determine lowest budgets and minimize overtime. The Backstage Chair maintains copies of the contract used to secure the theatre facilities, stage crew, and insurance for the performance venue.

8. PROMOTIONS: Responsible for administering the website for the convention. The chair stresses emphasis on pre-convention promotions and is responsible for promoting and advertising the convention to potential convention attendees and the lay public for the public shows. The chair also works closely with the Souvenir Program Chair and the Ticket Sales Chair, oversees a convention's social media campaigns, and the creation of a graphic logo for the convention.

9. LECTURES: Manages the lectures at a convention and is the ultimate person-in-charge of the lecture hall during each lecture. The chair is the main contact for all lecturers and sees to their individual needs. The Lecture Chair may introduce each lecturer before his/her lecture or otherwise secures an alternate emcee. The chair makes sure all lectures start and end on time.

10. TICKET SALES: Works to sell theater evening show seats to the lay public through individual and block ticket sales. The Ticket Sales Chair is also in charge of printing the evening show general admission tickets or overseeing any other ticketing system chosen by the convention. The chair is also in charge of the theatre box office for the shows to make sure it is properly manned. The chair makes sure that all moneys received from ticket sales are immediately turned over to the Treasurer. The chair must work closely with the Promotions Chair and the Souvenir Program Chair.

11. HOUSE: Oversees all audience entry and seating for theatre or ballroom shows. Secures ushers for all shows and oversees all ushering procedures. If used, the chair also oversees the printing and of playbills for distribution by ushers as audience members enter the theatre for shows. The chair secures individuals to sell Convention Souvenir Programs in the lobby of the theatre prior to the start of any show open to the public, and then immediately turns in to the Treasurer all moneys received from these sales. The House chair must always get permission from the Stage Manager before opening auditorium doors and allowing attendees to take their seats.

12. HOSPITALITY: Works as a liaison between the convention hotel, performers, and conventioners. The chair is the contact person if needed regarding any hotel/attendee problems that develop. The chair is usually stationed in the convention's registration booth. The chair keeps up with the hotel room master account and hotel comp room list. The chair should also work with the Dealer Chair to make sure the dealer's room always has security whether open or closed. The Hospitality Chair works with the Stage Manager and House Chair to arrange for special handicap services during the shows of a convention.

13. SOUVENIR PROGRAM: Oversees the layout, publication, printing, and distribution of the convention souvenir program. This chair also oversees and promotes the sale of all souvenir program advertising space to supporting businesses, block ticket sales purchasers, magic dealers, and so forth. The chair invoices advertisers, receives all payments, and then immediately turns all payments over to the Treasurer. The chair provides the souvenir programs directly to the Registration Chair and assists with the assembly of registration packets. The chair also provides the House Chair with ample copies of the souvenir program for sale in the lobby of the theatre for public shows.

14. CLOSE-UP: Responsible for the execution of the professional close-up shows (in conjunction with the Talent Chair). The chair arranges for emcees in each of the close-up rooms, makes sure each room is set-up properly for each show (that is, tiered seating, table for the performers, and so forth), and makes sure each room is labeled

properly (i.e., Room 1 of 4). The Chair should work closely with the Contest Chair to see that the similar needs of the close-up contest are met. The chair may also generate kiosk maps showing the location of close-up rooms.

15. TRANSPORTATION: Responsible for anything dealing with the transport of performers and their cargo to/from the airport. The chair lines-up transportation for other individuals who need to be transported to/from the hotel. The chair also arranges and coordinates with busses if convention attendees need to be bussed to/from the convention hotel and the theater. The chair might also be the person in charge of coordinating or arranging for limo and van shuttle services.

16. YOUTH ACTIVITIES: Responsible for planning and executing activities for youth (teens) at the magic convention. The chair is also responsible for enlisting all the help needed to implement the activities. The chair must coordinate all efforts with the General Chair so that youth activities do not interfere with the main body of scheduled convention activities. As well, the Youth Activities Chair should make sure planned activities do not take youth away from other regularly scheduled convention events that they might enjoy. The chair must work closely with the Talent Chair, Souvenir Program Chair, and Registration Chair.

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THE TAOM

Texas Association of Magicians conventions are usually planned and executed by one of the organization's host clubs, although there is the rare occasion when the TAOM organization itself hosts a convention. Conventions are always held on Labor Day weekend, usually starting around noon on Friday, continuing all day Saturday and Sunday, and then concluding on Monday around noon.

The President of the Texas Association of Magicians is typically a member of the TAOM member club, which hosts the upcoming convention. This President serves either as the General Chair to oversee the club's magic convention planning, or otherwise oversees the delegation of the role to another host club member.

Both the TAOM President and Vice-President are nominated by their clubs. Their nominations are then voted upon and ratified by the TAOM Board of Directors. The new President is officially installed toward the end of the previous year's convention and serves a one-year term, and through most of the convention his club hosts.

The Texas Association of Magicians organization has specific protocols regarding how conventions are administered, such as the proper use of the convention logo and so forth. Much of this information is contained in the TAOM Bylaws, which can be downloaded from the official TAOM website. The Bylaws should be carefully absorbed by Convention Planning Committees as they plan and host a TAOM convention.

When a club determines that it wants to host a convention for a specific year, it usually sends a written request to the TAOM Secretary/Treasurer who then delivers the request to the TAOM Board of Directors. The Board then votes to ratify or deny the convention hosting request.

The organization requires that convention years be systematically assigned. In other words, a convention year cannot be assigned if the previous year or years are not already assigned.

Conventions are usually held in the city where the host club meets. Clubs then host their TAOM convention autonomously from the TAOM organization. Clubs plan their conventions as they deem appropriate, arrange talent, and determine their own convention schedule. Conventions traditionally are comprised of various lectures, evening shows, a dealer's room, and other special events.

The TAOM organization does require that certain meetings and events take place at each annual convention. These include the Friday TAOM Board of Director's Meeting and the Sunday morning TAOM General Meeting.

The TAOM organization also requires that various stage and close-up magic performance contests be held during the convention. The requirements and specifics of the contests are delineated in an appendix of the TAOM Bylaws. The TAOM Vice-President works in collaboration with the TAOM Trophy and Awards Committee to oversee the contests.

It should be clearly understood that when a club hosts a convention, the club is completely liable for the finances and other responsibilities of their convention. If the host club is profitable, the club benefits. If the club does not profit, the host club is solely liable for any deficit.

The TAOM organization does provide a host club with "seed money" to use in jump starting a convention. These amounts vary because the money comes from the interest-bearing accounts of the TAOM organization. If a club makes profit from hosting its TAOM convention, a small portion of the profit is paid back to the TAOM organization. If a convention uses a Souvenir Program, the statement "This convention was partially funded by the "Renerick "Ren" Clark Memorial Trust Fund" must be included.



A host club starts accepting convention registrations one year in advance of its convention, at the tail end of the previous TAOM convention. The TAOM Board of Directors are generally allowed to register for the next year's convention first, at the conclusion of the TAOM Friday Board of Director's Meeting. Overall registration for other attendees starts on Sunday morning at the conclusion of the TAOM General Meeting.

The TAOM Secretary and spouse receive complimentary convention registrations. Life Members also receive complimentary convention registrations and are exempt from paying TAOM membership dues.

Clubs typically use some sort of registration booth at conventions. This provides an area for registered convention attendees to check-in for a convention, get their names badges and so forth. This is also the place where walk-in attendees register for the convention. The booth also gives the next year's host club an area on Sunday morning to start registering attendees for their convention.

It should be noted that with modern online convention registration ability, paper registration forms are typically no longer used. Some TAOM host clubs use the convention registration software provided through the TAOM organization's www.taom.org website, while other clubs prefer to use other software or online shopping card check-out systems. Some host clubs put all their other convention information on the TAOM organization's website, while other clubs prefer to build their own website. They ask for a link on www.taom.org that directs registrants to their website.

Individuals become TAOM members by paying TAOM dues. A host club collects TAOM dues as part of each convention registration. This includes all performers, magic dealers, and even those who receive complimentary convention registrations. Either the individual or the host club may pay the dues for complimentary registrants.

Dues for registrants is then forwarded to the TAOM organization Secretary/Treasurer. Also forwarded is the directory information for all registrants so the TAOM membership roster can be maintained, and the Secretary/Treasurer can generate TAOM membership cards. Magicians who do not attend an annual convention pay their annual dues directly to the TAOM Secretary/Treasurer as per the instructions on the TAOM organization's website.

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