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in plain **words**

The Value of 'Thinking It Through'

By Deborah Elias, CSEP, CMP

I recently produced three large-scale events three nights in a row for my favorite client. The production time leading up to the events was just six weeks, and I had my work cut out for me. I produced timelines, diagrams and schedules with every last-minute detail carefully outlined.

Three days before the first event, the hotel's audiovisual and electricity quote made my jaw drop. I scheduled a meeting to discuss ways to lower the bill. I was on a logistical roll, halved that bill in no time and was quite proud of myself for going the extra mile and sparing my client thousands of dollars.

The first day went well with no real hiccups. On the second day, however, my ability to adapt was seriously tested. During my money-saving efforts, I significantly strayed from the diagram and moved the stage across the property, which seemed an obvious fix. It wasn't until about 2 p.m. that I realized the stage was now in front of a 50-foot reflection pool, which would make it difficult for attendees to see the screen.

Even worse, this ruined the band's most unique feature: an exciting stage presence that complemented a very hip sound. In a panic, I had the hotel's audiovisual technician implement Plan B and set up a front screen projection placed on a truss. None of this came cheaply in terms of money or convenience.

Event setup for the final night was going smoothly—until a vendor presented a "slight" problem and

suggested a change to the event diagram. Exhausted from a trying three days of too much sun and too many questions, I almost made the change ... almost.

Perched atop a folding arm chair, I emphatically made this statement: "Attention, all my wonderful event vendors in the room. If you come to me with any changes, additions or deletions to the event, please say the following words to me: 'Think it all the way through.'" Having just avoided disaster, maintaining a bird's-eye perspective to circumvent a decision-making domino effect became my first priority.

The vendors gladly settled down and followed suit. Business went on as usual as I absorbed questions and fielded problems, carefully analyzing and implementing a straightforward resolution. The daytime setup was exceptional, and the event itself was phenomenal. Perhaps more important, it forced me to reflect on the value of sound judgment in aspects of life outside the realm of event setup.

Here's why you should think things through in business and in life:

1. If you move the screen, make sure that you can still rear- or front-screen the projector. For a rear screen, you need at least 25 feet. For a front



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screen, you might need to rig the projector in order to display images.

2. If you rent linens from a vendor for a property that already has the tables, be mindful of table size. Most properties have 60-inch rounds; some carry a 72-inch round.
3. Verify your projector's compatibility with other technology components, wires, computer and screen/display size. I recently got a new Mac, and when

I tried to use PowerPoint, I found out that I needed a particular extension to work with a standard projector.

4. Never assume your vendors will share information, even among their own staff. Always verify that the appropriate people receive firsthand information for accuracy, then follow up with a thorough conference call. Despite its convenience, e-mail often leaves too much to interpretation.
5. Electricity availability can be troubling and cumbersome. Be mindful of power/energy/electrical requirements and costs associated with a given project. This can be an expensive mistake that is easily avoided with proper planning and understanding.

These are just a few suggestions. Now challenge yourself to come up with a few more. How easily they flow might just surprise you.