TOPCON Considerations

What Is a TopCon?

- TopCons versus RETECs
- A TopCon/Conference is any meeting for which a registration fee is charged (other than a MiniTec or regularly scheduled monthly meeting)
  - Features a program based on either a single subject or several closely integrated subjects
  - Is designed to appeal to a particular segment of the plastics industry
- Sponsors can be a Division or a Section; both can co-sponsor the same Conference
- Promoted internationally and to multiple Divisions
- A bid for sponsorship, preliminary program, budget, site and committee must be submitted to headquarters when dates are requested. All petitions are subject to review and approval
- RETECs are TopCons by another name

What Is A MiniTec?

- A MiniTec is a one-day (or less) conference put on by a Section or Division, and promoted only within the (geographical) boundaries of that Section or Division. MiniTecs are not approved by the SPE Headquarters Events Department
  - No revenue sharing with SPE Headquarters
  - Little servicing from SPE Headquarters
    - Website listing
    - "Local" promotion to host Division, Section and surrounding Sections
- All other conferences, of any length, are TopCons and must be scheduled and approved through SPE
- Headquarters under the existing guidelines for TopCons.

How Do I Get Started?

- Develop a conference topic/theme
- Recruit interested volunteers
  - Form a Conference Committee
  - Chair, Technical Program Chair, Treasurer, House Chair
- Decide with whom you wish to partner: another Division, Section, SPE Headquarters?
- Select preliminary dates and location
  - Consider unconventional dates
    - Better hotel availability and deals
    - Less competition with other established events

- Develop preliminary technical program outline
- Complete and submit petition paperwork to SPE Headquarters approval

Venue Selection Considerations

- Which geographic area is best suited for your conference?
  - Where are other SPE events held (economies of scale)?
  - Where is there a sizable concentration of SPE members or industry who will be interested in your topic?
- What type of venue/facility are you interested in?
  - Hotel
  - Conference Center
  - Convention Center
  - University
- Where is SPE tax-exempt?

Working with Hotels

- Develop an RFP (Request for Proposal)
  - Schedule of events
  - Number of meeting rooms required, type of seating and capacity
  - Expected audiovisual requirements
  - Anticipated food and beverage (F&B) events and spend per person (pp)
  - Room blocks
    - To have or not to have?
    - What is attrition?
- Hotels submit bids – negotiations begin
- Submit contract to Scott Marko @ smarko@4spe.org
- Conference or House Chair signs contract

Developing Your Program

- Typical TopCons have 30-50 presentations more than 2-2.5 days
- Your program can be what you want it to be
- Invited presentations versus call for papers
- Collecting presentations versus papers
  - SPE Author Release Form
- Conference Proceedings
- Online paper collection available at cost through SPE Headquarters
- Promote early, promote often!
  - Direct mail versus electronic promotion
  - Mailing lists and data via SPE Headquarters

Registration

- No charge for registration processing; email confirmations sent to attendees
- Membership dues and renewal fee is currently $109
- Include one year of SPE membership in nonmember registration fee
- At least $150 between member/non-pricing
- SPE can set up and collect funds from online registration
    - 2.7 percent credit card processing fee
    - Best to keep funds under one roof
- SPE can also collect exhibitor and sponsor funds
- Registration reports
    - Checks can be cut with two weeks' notice to defray advance event expenses
- Processing of on-site registrations
- Final event financial summary

On-site Considerations

- House Chair liaises with hotel/host venue
- Identify two volunteers who will man on-site registration
- Reg.-In-A-Box
    - Lanyards
    - Advance registration badges in alpha order
    - Ribbons (moderator, speaker, sponsor, exhibitor, usher, etc.)
    - On-site registration forms customized for your event
    - Plain white badge stock and empty badge holders for on-site registrations
    - Badge template emailed in advance
- Technology requirements
    - Laptop or desktop computer with Office installed
    - Printer (for receipts and on-site badges)

Identify other on-site requirements needed from HQ; send list to Scott Marko @ smarko@4spe.org.