

**Bon Jovi, The Quasi Meetings Industry Expert**  
written by Chaunsea Keller

As I am sitting on a plane coming back from an industry event, I can't help but notice Bon Jovi songs keep blaring in my ears and I begin to wonder if I have downloaded every single song of theirs over the years. As I am reading the titles of the songs that occupy valuable storage space in my iPod, I start to see several parallel themes between his songs and the meeting industry.

**"Bed of Roses"** – I'll admit, if a planner resides to her/his room, and there is a bed of roses from the sales person, that would be awkward! However, think about it. How awesome would it be for a hotel sales person to go the extra mile in doing something unique in his/her room for the planner that is there for a site? On the flip side, how great would it be for the planner to leave unique, personal in-room amenities for the group VIP's. The concept of someone preparing a bed of roses is that he/she took extra time and genuinely cares about the other individual. Just don't circle #4 on the in-room amenities just to have something in the room – take a bit more time and think through it! Don't just think outside of the box, pretend the box never even existed!

**"Brokenpromiseland"** – Someone should reach out the CIC and ask them to please add this as a synonym to the word "Attrition" in their meetings dictionary. Let's get the elephant out of the room a face this - is a huge problem on both the hotel side and the planner side. I completely comprehend the headaches that is causes Rev Managers and the headaches that the planners are dealing with attendees booking out of the block (which, I am ashamed to admit that I just did with this conference because I wanted my points!) In fact, one of the meeting planners that was on the panel referenced that this is the #1 problem that she faces as a veteran association planner. I truly wish that I could say something that would be a solution, but I just don't know the answer. Historically, though, I can let you know that clients that have conducted email marketing campaigns with us and have offered No Attrition or reduced under 15% have had very good results! So, hoteliers, this may be something you want to consider as a valuable booking incentive.

**"Have a Nice Day"** – When I found myself saying "my pleasure" to my 5 & 3 year olds after they told me thanks for letting them stay up late to watch one of their favorite shows, I had to giggle at myself – did I really just say that? I guess you can take the girl out the hotel, but not the hotel out of the girl. My point is that we are in the HOSPITALITY industry – it is our job to be hospitable to our clients, guests, internal clients, attendees, at all times. It's seems blaring obvious, but it is not always happening!

**"I'll Be There for You"** – It was interesting listening to the planner panel as question after question was basically answered as his/her job completely relies on relationships with suppliers (not just hoteliers, but also third party experts, National Sales Offices, CVBs, caterers, airline & rental car partners, A/V, and so on). Obviously, there is no way a planner can be at all places at all times, and it is absolutely imperative that the partners are her/his eyes and ears at all times. For suppliers, make sure that you know exactly what the planner's goals and objectives are and do not assume you know the answer. For planners, make sure that you communicate with your partners exactly what you need them to know about what you expect from them.

**"Johnny B. Goode"** – It seems that for every industry event I have been at over the last 15 years, I can remember those instances where an individual had a little too much fun. There is one at every event. Remember – this industry is actually very small – it is great to have a good time, but remember that you are always in a job interview whether you are looking for a job or not when you are amongst industry peers.

**"Misunderstood"** – Just like in any relationship, whether it is personal or professional, communication is key. Take advantage of pre-cons. Ask questions to the planners and planners ask questions to the staff. When everyone walks out of that room, there should not be any questions about goals and objectives for the meeting/convention.

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**“Please Come Home for Christmas” & “Who Says You Can’t Go Home”**– Don’t allow yourself to get burnt out! It is so easy to do as both a supplier and planner – go home from the office before 10PM, spend an extra day at your meeting location for yourself, go see your family at Christmas, you get the message. I am a self-proclaimed workaholic, but I see the value in taking a break from time to time. And just because you are home, that doesn’t mean that you need to roll over and check your phone at 3AM to see if you have any emails that you need to tend to – yes, I’m guilty, but I am consciously trying to get better.

**“She Don’t Know Me”** – There are actually two points I want to make on this. We’ve all heard of instances that a sales person does a call without doing research and insults the planner by assuming they know who the planner is. For example, asking for a sample of chocolate to a Fannie May planner, when actually she is with Fannie Mae financial. Don’t let your ignorance cause you to be the subject of training material in Master Connection’s hospitality training sessions!

The second is on this is why are so proprietary on information about a planner or a specific event? I have had several planners tell me that he/she wishes that suppliers would share info about the event so that planner doesn’t have to repeat herself every time she works with a new supplier. Granted, this isn’t always easy, as meeting needs change, etc, but for events that are similar from year to year, why not pick up the phone from CVB to CVB (or even hotel to hotel) and let them know the good, the bad, and the ugly about the event. I guarantee to you, you will impress the planner and he/she will consider booking with you again because you are truly showing partnership value.

**“We Gotta Get Out of This Place”** – Early check outs – Again, I know this is a big problem on both sides and again, I don’t have any earth-shattering revolutions on how to resolve it. Grated I completely understand the attendee wanting to get home earlier, but if you could create something that is completely not to be missed in the closing session, etc, it only helps everyone. Early outs put the hotel in a bind to sell the rooms last minute (or even worse, they have to hang them because they can’t get them flipped in order to resell that night) and of course they hurt the planner because it’s one less night that go to the total rooms consumed, which of course effects attrition.

**“(You Want To) Make a Memory”** – Need I say more?

As my plane ride is coming to a conclusion, I will too. All of us are in this together – we all strive to keep the meetings industry alive and I believe one of the best career choices one can make. As thousands and thousands of us rely on it for our livelihood, don’t forget to look in strange places to keep reminders of the basics! Because without the basics to build on, you can’t be progressive!



About the Author: Chaunsea Keller is Vice President, Business Development for E-proDirect. She has over 15 years experience in the hospitality sales and marketing field. In Her role with E-proDirect, it allows her to see daily interaction between suppliers and planners; therefore, is a good gauge on the meetings industry as a whole. She resides in College Station, TX with her husband and two children.

E-proDirect is a consulting firm for the hospitality and events industry. They provide a variety of products including Email marketing which allows the industry suppliers to reach our database of over 80,000 Meeting Planners; MeetingMart which allows the industry suppliers to market their services and products and allows Meeting Planners to research needed suppliers and destinations for their next event; and EproMeetingApps which is a mobile app that can be customized for any meeting or event and/or for a destination to enhance the attendees experience while allowing organizations to generate additional revenue.

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