

Hosting A MEXTESOL Regional Convention A Recipe for Success

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Local chapters plan and execute MEXTESOL Regional Conventions on a yearly basis. These events can provide a golden opportunity for EFL teachers to improve their practical skills and theoretical knowledge without the expense and inconvenience of having to travel long distances. But only if there is more forethought on the part of the planners than hindsight. Hosting a successful convention requires a great deal of coordination and hard work. Because there are endless details to remember and tasks to perform, both before and during the full or half-day program, it is essential for those in charge to have a solid plan of action in place from the outset. Below is a step-by-step approach to organizing one of these affairs. It can easily be modified according to individual needs and circumstances. By faithfully following these directions you can ensure that your event won't turn out "half-baked".

Recipe for: A Successful Regional Convention

Ingredients:

- 1) A committee composed of at least four responsible, reliable and enthusiastic members
- 2) A suitable location, preferably a school setting where classrooms and audio-visual equipment will be readily available
- 3) A bank account with sufficient funds to cover expenses
- 4) A well-chosen date in terms of the time of year (for example — weather conditions, holidays, etc.) and the time of month (best after a pay period)

Preparations:

The organizers should allow themselves plenty of time for planning so that things

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can move along steadily and smoothly with an increase of activity as the event nears. An approximate time-line of activities for committee members is suggested here:

Two Months Ahead:

- 1) Determine the hour-by-hour schedule for the event including food plans — a half-day convention will require coffee breaks and a full day will require coffee breaks and lunch for the participants
- 2) Design a flyer for publicity purposes which includes the theme, pertinent information such as the date, location, schedule, prices, bank deposit number, phone numbers of contact people and the MEXTESOL logo
- 3) Draft a letter of invitation with essentially the same information as the flyer
- 4) Draft a proposal form for speakers which includes speaker's topic, biodata, along with choices for type of session, topic area, area of interest, preferred audience size, and audiovisual equipment required
- 5) Fax these three items to whatever schools, book companies, and other MEXTESOL chapters or members that you wish to invite
- 6) Compile a list of schools in the area where you plan to deliver flyers and proposal forms
- 7) Collect estimates from catering services if luncheon is planned

Six Weeks Ahead:

At this point the committee members may want to begin meeting once a week.

- 1) Deliver flyers and proposal forms to schools
- 2) Contact book publishers by phone to confirm their participation
- 3) Request bags, pens and pads from one of the attending book publishers
- 4) Request blocks of receipts and any other necessary forms from National MEXTESOL Office
- 5) Choose catering service and decide on lunch menu

Starting One Month Ahead:

Meetings may need to be scheduled twice a week during this month

- 1) Design diplomas for participants and speakers
- 2) Begin work on program — for example: introductory pages such as title page, list of current chapter officers and national executive committee, and acknowledgment page can be completed early
- 3) Officially request necessary rooms and A/V equipment at the chosen facility
- 4) Compile "tourist information" for your area — list of hotels, restaurants, etc.
- 5) Determine who will give Opening and Closing Ceremony speeches and confirm with them

Two Weeks Ahead:

- 1) Confirm with speakers who have sent proposals
- 2) Finalize program as much as possible with confirmed speakers' talks and bio-data
- 3) Confirm with catering service
- 4) Make arrangements to rent necessary supplies for coffee breaks — coffee pot, table, etc.
- 5) Compose and deliver a description of the event including a sample of the program to the local newspapers

One Week Ahead:

- 1) Finish program — reduce it, copy it, assemble it, staple it (number of copies will vary based on estimated attendance)
- 2) Make signs for registration table, classrooms, notice boards, etc.
- 3) Make list of what A/V equipment will be needed in each classroom and make sure there will be extension cords available
- 4) Purchase name tags for participants
- 5) Choose an "event photographer"
- 6) Make final arrangements with catering service
- 7) Purchase refreshment supplies for coffee breaks
- 8) Make copies of diplomas based on estimated attendance
- 9) Finalize plans for who will do what on convention day — set-up, registration table, refreshment table, lunch, diplomas, time-keeping, etc.
- 10) Recruit other members or students to help out for last minute activities before and during the convention. Assigned students can act as hosts or hostesses on the actual day
- 11) Notify members of the media at local radio and T.V. stations

Day Before:

- 1) Stuff bags including programs, pads, pens, tourist information, book company publicity, etc.
- 2) Set up necessary tables, chairs, tarps, etc, if feasible
- 3) Contact National MEXTESOL Office to determine which book companies have paid their fees to participate
- 4) Fill a box for the registration table with essential items such as the MEXTESOL receipts, calculator, tape, stapler, pens, markers, paper clips, etc.

On Convention Day:

- 1) Allow at least one hour before the event for final preparations — for example: to set-up tables, put up signs, put A/V equipment, flip charts, chalk, markers, erasers in
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classrooms, instruct students in host/hostess duties, etc.

2) Write out receipts at the registration table for all participants including those who deposited their fees in the bank

3) Type in names on diplomas and have them signed by the chapter president before the closing ceremony

4) Ask the book publishers to donate books for a book raffle to be held during the closing ceremony

5) Do whatever clean-up is necessary once event is over

Result:

One MEXTESOL Regional Convention that is "done to a turn".