



“Invite the kids, they’ll bring their folks”

By: Chris Tempesta, President, KiddieCorp - convention children’s programs

The pitter-patter of little feet used to be a dreaded sound at meetings and trade shows. Now, evidence of these youngsters should be music to your ears. It is reassurance that you have attracted attendees to your meeting who wouldn’t otherwise have come, unless they had somewhere safe and fun to leave their children.

The number of conference-goers who want to bring their children is growing; the baby boomers and generation X ‘ers combined are a formidable population, and traveling with their families is their preference (statistics show they are doing it more and more). So when they have a choice of competing meetings to attend, which one do you think they will choose; the one offering nothing for the children or one that features a highly interactive children’s program? Since children are parents’ number one priority today, you might want to consider the benefits of offering them a solution to their child care dilemma.

By providing child care you can attract a wider audience including:

- Attendees who come, and stay longer because they have child care peace of mind
- Attendees who want their children to experience the meeting destination
- Nursing moms, who are now able to bring their babies with them
- Both parents, who share a profession, and need to attend the conference
- Families who want to stay after the meeting to visit with friends or relatives in the area

Take a thoughtful look at your event. What are the characteristics of your membership or audience? Are there “lost” attendees, who never come that you can “find” through child care? With child care help, would key members or exhibitors be able to participate more? Would it be a plus for you to appear more family-friendly? Or, could this be the exciting new service you’ve been looking for?!

The drawing power of a program increases if your attendees are any of the following:

- Predominantly female
- Ages 25 - 55
- Meeting in a family-friendly destination
- Bringing spouses
- Socializing in addition to conducting business

The value vs. cost of a program might pleasantly surprise you. Most first time children’s programs are very affordable (around \$5,000 US). They can be fully funded by the organization or can be supplemented with parent fees.

To get help with planning a children’s program, contact your convention bureau or destination management companies in the area. Search the web or contact KiddieCorp at: (800) 942-9947 or through www.kiddiecorp.com. Above all else, don’t worry that a program will take too much of your time; professional companies handle most everything for you and include planning, set-up, staffing, supplies, activities, insurance coverage, etc. as part of their services.

In conclusion, children’s programs are on the upswing and are here to stay. Demographics bear out that “have bottle, will travel” is a mantra we will be hearing for many years to come!

Chris Tempesta, the author, is proud to be on the board of ADME, the Association of Destination Management Executives. She has owned her company KiddieCorp, for 17 years. She plans and manages children’s programs for top planners in the U.S. and Canada, and would be happy to answer any questions regarding children’s programs for conworld.net newsletter readers. You can reach her in San Diego, CA at: (800) 942-9947 or tempesta@kiddiecorp.com. KiddieCorp’s website is: www.kiddiecorp.com.