



WHERE CULINARY ARTS & EVENT DESIGN MEET

#NACEEXP19

**2019 NACE Experience Conference
Convince your Boss Toolkit**

The National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) is the go-to resource and community for catering and event professionals nationwide. Each year, hundreds of catering and event professionals gather at our annual Experience conference for a three-day conference where they explore creative business strategies and fresh ideas presented by industry leaders, trendsetters and innovators.

The event industry is evolving, and professionals like you need to keep up and seek current information. At this conference, you'll connect with colleagues and share the challenges and successes that are faced every day.

We've included some helpful information to demonstrate to your employer the value of attending the 2019 NACE Experience Conference

1. [General tips](#)
2. [Worksheet calculating the ROI of the conference](#)
3. [Justification letter for your supervisor](#)
4. [Value proposition](#)

1. General tips

- Focus on what you will specifically bring back to the organization as return for the investment.
- Offer to prepare and deliver a short presentation and Q&A to your colleagues to share what you learned. That way, others in your unit will get the benefits of your attendance as well.
- Share the program and speaker handouts with your colleagues. As an attendee, you will have access to of the materials submitted by speakers.
- If you are working to obtain or maintain the [Certified Professional in Catering and Events \(CPCE\)](#) designation, remind your supervisor that this is a great way to earn educational contact hours.
- Be ready with a plan of coverage while you are attending the conference.
- Offer to share a room to reduce hotel expenses by finding a roommate.
- Register by the early bird date to take advantage of discounted rates.
- Being a [NACE member](#) offers additional savings on registrations, saving your employer money.

2. How to justify and calculate the value of conference attendance

by Mike Doyle

As a manager, how do you propose any allocation of resources in your organization? You need to understand two components to make decisions:

- Expense (the "investment")
- Return on investment

This article provides some easy-to-use tools to help you calculate the investment and identify your return.

Understanding Your Conference Expenses

Conference expenses are affected by many factors. Before you can begin to justify conference expenses, you need to calculate what those expenses are. To do so, use the following Expenses Worksheet to develop a cost estimate for attending your selected conference. We have included some of the information for you to get you started.

Expenses Worksheet

Expense	Guideline	Cost
Conference Registration (all-inclusive)	\$1,345 (If NACE member and registered by 5/06/2019)	\$
Pre and Post-Conference Class Registration, if applicable	Optional; prices vary	\$
Flight		\$
Lodging	\$171/night (plus taxes and fees)	\$
Transportation: Airport to Hotel	Taxis & shuttles available – share with others to reduce cost	\$
Transportation: Hotel to Airport	Taxis and shuttles available – share with others to reduce cost	\$
Mileage Reimbursement	Driving to conference? To the airport for your flight? Use Mapquest to calculate distances, then multiply miles by 58 cents/mile (IRS standard for 2019)	\$
Parking Reimbursement	At airport for flight departure, or at hotel where conference is located	\$
Food Per Diem	Most meals are included in all-inclusive registration for the conference.	\$0
Subtotal		\$
Total number of employees going		
= Total (multiply subtotal by # of employees attending)		\$

Understanding the Benefits

Let's face it: many benefits from conference attendance are hard to quantify. For example, experts agree that the top benefit of conference attendance is networking value. Where else can you find so many industry contacts facing the same issues as your organization? Are there solutions of which you're unaware?

Although networking is undoubtedly the most important aspect of a conference, it is also the toughest for which to quantify value. On the other hand, if an employee came to you and said, "I want you to fund me for \$4,000 and I don't know what it'll do for you," then you would likely scoff at the offer...and maybe even

mumble a few colorful metaphors about his/her suggestion. When you propose a conference for approvals, don't focus on how much you want to go; focus on what you will specifically bring back to the organization as payback for the investment.

Some specific details you'll need to identify include:

- Session content. What sessions have relevance to your organization's work? Specifically identify:
 - Tools (new gadgets, templates, spreadsheets)
 - Technologies (social media, financial software)
 - Processes (structured writing, single-sourcing)
- Vendor contacts. Will the conference showcase vendors with tools you use or are evaluating for potential future use? Is this an opportunity during which you'll be able to compare competing tools?
- Best practices. Will there be training sessions in areas that will immediately benefit your group?
- Training. Will there be workshops designed to teach attendees a special skill and/or help your team overcome current or future challenges that they might now have access to otherwise?

Quantifying the Benefits

Although you might understand the benefits of Experience, your manager may not. Therefore, to be most effective in justifying the conference, you need to clearly articulate the connection between your organization's knowledge requirements and the conference program.

To support this process, use the following Benefits Worksheet to help you focus on the benefits. Use whatever makes sense for your organization and omit the rest.

Benefits Worksheet

Your Organization's Benefits	Specific Needs and the Conference Sessions and Training that Meet the Need	Estimated Value
Education/Training	Two and a half days of general sessions and concurrent breakout sessions offer professional and personal training for all attendees. Checkout the conference agenda online for a complete list and description of all educational sessions.	
Networking Benefits	This conference will allow [specific team members] to network with other professionals and vendors in the industry. We will be able to take the pulse of what is happening for tools, technologies, and processes, and hear brand new ideas. Networking opportunities include all food functions, The Oasis and breakout sessions.	
Anticipated deals	List the meetings that you have set up in advance with potential customers. Also list the potential customers that you will have access to at the conference.	
Teambuilding (if sending a big part of your group)	This conference will help build our team, providing a forum for team members to discuss tools, technologies, and processes and how we might apply them in our company to improve our information products, workflow, and processes.	
Recognition	You, your colleague, or your organization will be publicly acknowledged, potentially awarded, will speak or is involved with an event at the conference.	
Current Tools		
Future Tools Exploration		
Current Technologies		
Future Technologies Exploration		
Vendors with Tools and Technologies You Are Exploring		
TOTAL		

It's all in the Selling

After having identified specific knowledge benefits, provide the expenses and benefits your manager needs to decide the value of your proposition. Salespeople work the same way. They don't let customers infer the value of what they are selling - they make that leap for them.

Sell your conference proposition!

3. Letter to Supervisor

< Date >

Dear < supervisor's name >,

I know how much our organization prospers because of the talented individuals who work here. One of the ways I believe we can continue to excel is through industry education. Attending the 2019 NACE Experience Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, July 14-17, 2019, will provide experimental learning, where I can engage in the creative process of catering and events as well as understand the foundations on which the industry operates.

The conference will enable me to attend education sessions that are directly applicable to my work and will allow me to network with industry leaders and colleagues from around the country. The sessions are facilitated by industry experts who have faced similar successes and challenges. In addition to the many educational sessions, there will be learning opportunities at all food functions – new trends in décor and food and beverage – that I can bring back to <your company>.

The NACE Experience Conference provides the opportunity to meet with current and potential clients and I will have access to the entire list of attendees for future networking and marketing opportunities. I believe my attendance is fundamental to our continued development and success. I am requesting your approval for conference registration, travel and related event expenses. I have included an estimated cost breakdown below:

Registration: <\$1345> Early bird savings if NACE member and registered by May 06, 2019

Roundtrip Airfare: <\$xxxx>

Transportation: <\$xxxx>

Hotel: <\$xxxx>

Meals: <\$xxxx>

Conference Fee: <\$xxxx>

The total costs for attending Experience are : <\$xxxx>

When I return from the NACE Experience Conference, I will provide a post-conference report with key takeaways and a set of recommendations we can start using immediately to maximize our investment. Thank you in advance for considering this request. If I can answer any questions you may have about this conference, please let me know.

Sincerely,

< your name here >

4. The value proposition: How much would you REALLY spend?

Considering your conference options takes a little more than just looking at the registration fee. Costs like meals, taxis, internet in your hotel room, etc. are generally not initially considered. Below we have illustrated everything that's included in our conference, the hotel costs, meals and transportation so you can make an informed decision about where you would like to make your investment your time and money.

All-Inclusive Conference Registration Rates:

Includes a full education package (below) **PLUS** entrance to the Opening Reception, Foundation of NACE Fundraiser, and the NACE One Awards Gala.

Prior to May 06, 2019: \$1,345 for Members **BEST VALUE**
 \$1,645 for Non-Members
 \$800 for Student Members
 \$975 for Young Professional Members

Education Package Registration Rates:

includes all general sessions and breakout sessions, daytime meals and refreshment breaks and admission to the Oasis.

Prior to May 06, 2019: \$895 for Members
 \$1,095 for Non-Members
 \$545 for Student Members
 \$745 for Young Professionals

For further registration option, visit the NACE website.

Host Hotel:

Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza
35 West Fifth St.,
Cincinnati, OH, 45202, USA
Rate: \$171.00 (single/double) \$201.00 (triple) \$231.00 (quad)
Tax: 17.5% per night

What's included in the all-inclusive package? Meals covered in your all-inclusive registration are as follows:

Sunday, July 14

Opening Reception – not full dinner but reception items

Monday, July 15

Coffee and Pastries with Exhibitors
Culinary Experience – Lunch provided
Foundation of NACE Signature Fundraiser – drinks and light food

Tuesday, July 16

Light Breakfast with Exhibitors
Design Challenge – Lunch provided
NACE One Awards Gala – plated dinner