

PITTCON 2020 FINAL REPORT

ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Committee Chair: Marla Kruth
Committee Chair- Elect: Marc Hubert

Committee Staff:

Helen Boylan
Jessica Sarver
Karen Johnson
Kelly Colopietro
Mike Shatlock
Rose Ann Clark

CWS:

Iona Black
Gail Varine
Anabelle Johnson
Ed Zovinka
Patrick Varine
Mara Letterle

The Activities Committee was responsible for the following areas: Committee Food/Beverage (outside of Committee Arrangements), After Hours Activities for Attendees (outside of Pittcon Party), Pittcon Store

Committee Food/Beverage (F&B)

In an effort to reduce costs, each committee was asked to carefully review their F&B costs in previous years and consider reducing or eliminating their orders. Letting the chairmen know the real costs of ordering food and beverage seemed to help.

In Chicago, basic catering costs were:

ITEM	COST	UNIT
Coffee	\$69.65	Gal
Tea	\$57.51	Gal
Soft Drinks	\$4.15	Ea
Bottled Juice	\$5.11	Ea
Chips	\$5.11	Bag
Cookies	\$44.73	Doz
Donut Holes	\$26.84	Doz
Bagels/cream Cheese	\$54.32	Doz

In addition, water coolers cost more than \$100/day, varying with the number of times they were refilled.

In an effort to control costs, all CWS members (not students) were issued an "I-Care" card from the hall caterer, Savor. The cards had an initial value of \$50 each and could be used at restaurants, carts and kiosks in McCormick Place, with a few exceptions. Additionally, each card had a 65 cent activation fee. 156 cards were purchased. 9 were not distributed.

The total charge for all I-Care cards was \$3492, or an average of \$23.76 per person for the entire week.

Additionally, CWS did a very good job of carrying cups of coffee in thermal/reusable cups. Many people filled their personal cups with beverages at breakfast and lunch for use during the day.

Recommendation: Use of a prepaid card should be considered for future Pittcons. If the hall doesn't offer one, a pre-paid VISA may be a consideration.

The Committee F&B that was purchased cost us approximately \$30,000. This included approximately \$10,500 for water coolers. Committees that ordered F&B included Camp Pittcon, Media, Short Courses, and Program. President's Office, Treasurer, Registration, and Security ordered water coolers only.

In addition, the F&B total included approximately \$4100 for the Sunday Poster Mixer and \$15,000 for the Monday Welcome Reception.

Recommendation: Continue to evaluate the need for catered F&B for each committee function, reducing as much as possible without eroding customer service to our attendees.

Recommendation: Investigate negotiating water service (coolers, stations, bottles) as part of our future hall contracts in an effort to decrease costs.

Recommendation: Calculate the cost of providing F&B as part of Short Courses, and adjust course registration cost to reflect at least part of the expense of providing F&B during breaks.

After Hours Activities

Two after hours activities were offered, "Pie and the Sky" and a Beer Tasting. Several factors contributed to the decision to only offer two events:

Chicago rush hour traffic/ transportation costs to events

Chicago weather

Competing events on Sunday, Monday and Wednesday

Shortened Conference Week

Feedback from 2019 attendees regarding cost of events (keep costs under \$50/ event)

High costs for dinner events in Chicago

Several venues were investigated, including a ping pong lounge, an escape room, several restaurants, a bowling alley, a chocolate tour, and a tour of Michigan Avenue.

"Pie and the Sky" was an event that was organized at Giordano's Pizza. The event was \$45 and included transportation to the event, dinner, and a self-guided tour of Willis Tower (formally the Sears Tower). It sold out very quickly, with 55 attending.

Recommendation: Consider adding capacity to events that sell out quickly, or adding a second night for the same event, if possible.

The Beer Tasting was held at Row 24, two blocks from McCormick Place. The event was not held at McCormick due to the high price of beer, and the limits that they placed on the brands that could be served. Additionally, beer could not be donated or brought into the convention center.

85 people attended, and the beer was donated by Inbev/Anheuser Busch. The speakers provided their services free of charge. The cost to attendees was \$15 each. No transportation was provided to the event, as it was within walking distance of the convention center.

The Beer Tasting event was held in conjunction with the Program Committee's beer seminar on Wednesday afternoon, and it ended in time for people to attend the Pittcon Party.

The cost for this event, including snacks and room rental was approximately \$3350. We knew that we were going to take a financial loss on this event (approximately \$2000), but part of the reason for having it was to have attendees stay through the end of the Program schedule.

Recommendation: Consider a higher price per attendee for this kind of event, especially if higher priced spirits and transportation are included.

Recommendation: Work closely with the President and Marketing to determine (earlier) which nights are best for after hours activities.

Sunday Night Poster Mixer

This event was held at McCormick Place in conjunction with the ACS poster session. Estimates of attendance were correct as the planned number of attendees was 250, and 229 drink tickets were redeemed. The overall cost of the event was approximately \$4100.

Dry snacks were provided in addition to one drink ticket per person. For this event, only domestic beer and wine were offered. The reason for this was to differentiate it from the Monday Welcome Reception that included higher end food and imported wine and beer.

Monday Night Welcome Reception

This event was held at McCormick Place, and included entertainment. Patrick Varine (CWS) played guitar and sang while attendees enjoyed food and drink. Photo ops with Dr. Pete were also provided.

Fruit, crudité, chips, dips, cheeses, and baked goods were provided in addition to one drink ticket per person. The event was catered for 450 people, and a total of 342 drink tickets were redeemed.

The overall cost for the event was approximately \$14,500, plus an additional \$400 for the photo backdrop. This expense was unforeseen as the backdrop that was intended for the reception was left behind in the Pittcon office.

Recommendation: Have a checklist of all items to be taken from the office for events such as receptions, presentations, etc.

Pittcon Store:

It has been several years since a Pittcon Store was present at Conference. The location of the store was very good: near Registration and the International Visitors' Center.

A variety of merchandise was sold, all with profitability in mind. In addition, the office was gleaned and approximately 35 items that were found were also sold, most at bargain prices.

PITTCON embroidered items were ordered from Awards and More in Gibsonia. By using this local vendor, shipping and sales tax were avoided. Ladies' red quarter zips, mens' blue polos, and navy blue ball caps were available, but did not sell very well. Approximately \$1780 in merchandise is available to sell if/when the next Pittcon Store is established. These items are stored at the office.

A mascot, "Connie, the Pittcon Penguin" was also purchased. Sales tax was avoided by choosing a manufacturer in Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, a minimum purchase of 500 did not yield a profit. Approximately 200 penguins will be donated to childrens' hospitals and shelters as soon as it is practical to do so.

Recommendation: Eliminate the plush mascot, or find a vendor that will custom print a smaller number.

Ed Zovinka's book was sold at a 38% markup and we sold out! Ed was also kind enough to allow us to host a Meet the Author/Book Signing Event at the Welcome Reception.

A large number of items were purchased on Amazon (Prime) and were sold at 20% markup. Whenever possible, the items were 'personalized' using clear Pittcon logo stickers. Virtually all of the items ordered sold well.

The Pittcon Prime account could not be used to make purchases this year because 'too many items purchased on the account' had been returned. Additionally, the account still accrues sales tax. Lastly, shipping delays (China/coronavirus) made it harder to restock popular items (like baby bibs) than was anticipated. Our Savor contact, Morgan, was kind enough to allow us to ship to her office in McCormick Place, avoiding receiving/holding fees at the Sheraton. A few items had to be returned to Amazon, and a warrant will be issued for those items.

Activities Committee members provided ideas as to items that should be sold, and they had great items to consider.

Recommendation: Get the Pittcon Amazon account to a stable enough position so that it can be used in the future.

Recommendation: Avoiding sales tax by filing paperwork with Amazon should be investigated.

A local manufacturer of molecular jewelry and candles, Sorcery Science, was also a vendor. We were able to avoid PA sales tax. Over \$830 of jewelry and candles were sold, at 100% profit. This vendor allowed us to purchase her goods at wholesale price (50% of retail) and on consignment. Unsold goods will be returned to her in April.

Dollar Bank provided credit card readers that were easy to use. Unfortunately, because the readers required a secure network connection, we had some IT issues in McCormick Place. Thanks to Heather Juzwa and John Sember, we were able to establish a hot spot and process charges correctly within a few hours of learning about the problem.

The Store did not make money. Because of the unsold clothing and mascots, we lost approximately \$800 on merchandise sales. If the Conference had been able to be at full attendance, projected sales would likely have been above break even.

Total sales were \$6841. Total expenses were approximately \$7750 for merchandise. Approximately \$1780 in clothing is available for sale at a future store.

Recommendation: Keep the Pittcon Store in 2021. Continue to use the Amazon Prime model for purchasing merchandise. Purchase clothing to supplement the leftovers (i.e., T-shirts and sweatshirts).

Recommendation: Keep the Pittcon Store in 2021. It serves as an additional/ad hoc information booth, giving attendees a wonderful first contact, and directing them to everything from Lost and Found to Registration to local restaurant information.

Recommendation: Keep the Pittcon Store in 2021. It will be awkward to have it in 2020 and 2022, but not in 2021.

Recommendation: Keep the Pittcon Store in 2021. Marketing can advertise a number of the items for sale. This was supposed to happen in 2020, and photos of the mascot and embroidered clothing were provided, but it isn't clear whether they were ever used in advertising/marketing communication.

Conclusion and Comments:

Thank you to all of the Conference Committee members and CWS who worked for the Activities Committee during the year and during Conference Week. Thank you to Marc Hubert for his help with so many details.

Our students did a very good job. They were professional and were a joy to work with.

It was difficult to coordinate requests for assistance with some members of the office staff. Shelley, Joe, Valarie, and Becky were accessible during CW for discussions, requests, etc., and did a really good job. Unfortunately, the Marketing group did not assist with matters regarding any of Activities' events, in spite of requests prior to CW and during the week. This led to communication breakdowns, inefficiency, and confusion.

Communication regarding the Monday Welcome Reception could have been better. Unfortunately, a clear picture of the event wasn't really formulated and communicated until January. It was important to understand the differences between this event, the Sunday mixer, and the Pittcon Party. We'll have a clearer idea for 2021, no doubt.

New Orleans should present more opportunities for after hours events because of better weather and the opportunity to take trolleys or walk to venues near the Morial Convention Center. Unfortunately, there will be one less night to work with.

Thanks, too, to President Jane Chan, for the opportunity to serve and to promote Pittcon, its mission, and its people to Chicago and the world.

A timeline for the Committee is attached.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marla L. Kruth
Activities Committee Chair
Pittcon 2020

ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE TIMELINE

August 2020

Brainstorm and collect ideas for 2021

September 2020

Finalize after hour event details and estimate costs

October 2020

Work with Marketing and Registration office liaisons regarding details of after hours events
Start purchasing process for imprinted materials (if having a Pittcon Store)

Establish preliminary contracts
Establish transportation needs

November 2020

Solicit F&B requests from Committee Chairs
Begin discussions with on-site and off-site caterers
Establish preliminary contracts for after hours events
Establish transportation needs
Start purchasing process for imprinted materials (if having a Pittcon Store)

January 2021

Determine sponsorships as necessary
Complete warrants as needed

February 2021

Complete warrants as needed
Finalize menus for events

March 2021

Get event rosters
Establish CWS hosts for events

POST CONFERENCE

Review itemized invoices
Survey attendees as needed
Complete and submit final report

