



Inspired Incentives

Fulfillment Partner vs. Strategic Partner

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Fulfillment Partner vs. Strategic Partner

There are plenty of decent fulfillment partners out there for your meeting/event/group incentive travel needs. A fulfillment partner provides support and executes based on the specific instructions you provide. Those instructions might include the following:

- Book 100 rooms for the nights of April 3 – 7
- Find a buffet menu for 200 people for \$150 or less
- Book airport transportation for all attendees

If you have an experienced internal events team, this fulfillment model might work well for your organization, and be less expensive than hiring a more strategic meeting/event/group incentive travel partner. If not, you should really consider hiring a partner that's going to strategically look at your requests and provide feedback/recommendations. For example, a strategic partner might respond to the same instructions with the following questions:

- Book 100 rooms for the nights of April 3 – 7
 - We checked with the hotels that met your criteria and the nightly rate is \$20 less if you do April 2 – 6.
 - There's a city-wide convention over those dates, so flights may be limited /more expensive.
 - How many suites and how many staff rooms do you need?
 - Do you want to book and pre/post extension rooms?
- Find a buffet menu for 200 people for \$150 or less
 - At this hotel, plated menus are actually less expensive. Is that an option?
 - Does that \$150 need to include a reception with hors d'oeuvres and cocktails?
- Book airport transportation for all attendees
 - It would be less expensive to do a shuttle to the airport on the group departure day – departing every hour. Would you consider that?
 - Do you want portage available for attendees at the airport?
 - Do you want bottled water and/or cold towels in the vehicles?

If you're paying for meeting/event/incentive group travel support, you might as well be getting the experienced and strategic insight of the vendor providing those services. You should be able to get a lot more out of a strategic partner without much of a price difference. It might be hard to figure out in an RFP situation which company will be more of a fulfillment partner vs strategic partner. Some things to look for:

- Do they ask a lot of questions? Asking questions means they want to really understand what you're trying to do.
- Do they provide advice/recommendations in the RFP stage? A strategic partner shouldn't be afraid to provide free advice – even if they aren't sure of winning the business.

So, are you working with a fulfillment partner or a strategic partner? It might be time to ask yourself (and your vendor!) that question.

To learn more about how incentive programs can make the difference for your company, contact TIMBR - HMI!