



LOST PINES LEATHERNECKS DET 1384
DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS
MARINE CORPS LEAGUE
 P. O. BOX 366
 BASTROP, TEXAS 78602



DATE: NOV 3, 2022
 FROM: FALL CONFERENCE COORDINATOR
 LOST PINES LEATHERNECKS DETACHMENT 1384
 TO: DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS CONVENTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
 SUBJ: AFTER ACTION REPORT 2022 DEPARTMENT FALL CONFERENCE

1. The following After Action Report (AAR) is provided as a summary of the 2022 Fall Conference hosted by Lost Pines Leathernecks Detachment 1384 (LPL).

This document is long for two reasons. First, it covers the major elements that describe the successes and challenges that LPL 1384 experience in the planning and execution of hosting the 2022 Dept Fall Conference. Second, it is a teaching documents to help detachments in the decision process of hosting a Conference/Convention.

During the 2021 Convention and Conference, not a single Detachment submitted a Bid to host the 2022 Fall Conference. LPL began planning for the Conference soon after the May General Meeting to host the Fall conference.

2. Metrics

a. A total of 97 members registered with 73 members who took advantage of the Online registration program and 24 who registered via email, phone, and onsite.

b. A total of 78 meals were paid for via Dept Online registration, email, phone calls, and walk ups.

c. Financial summary expense of hosting the Fall Conference.

Revenues	Expenditures	Net Profit
\$17,279.14	\$13,779.98	\$3,517.26



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c. Accommodations

According to the "VISIT BASTROP" Event Coordinator there were 71 room nights utilized. LPL discovered that there were members who made lodging arrangements that were not visible to the Coordinator. There were also 7 B&B nights, and 6 RV nights.

3. Hotels

a. There was one primary hotel (the Hampton Inn) and two secondary hotels (Comfort Suites and Best Western).

b. Registrants had to pay \$130 to \$170 per night range even with the "block".

c. October had several obstacles that added to the high costs.

(1) Inflation, price of fuel, and overall cost to host a conference.

(2) Austin City Limits and its influence upon Bastrop to increase room rates.

(3) Corporate attitude to recoup lost revenue from two years of flat to weak sales due to COVID.

d. Split Venue

(1) There are two schools of thought, (1) combined venue and (2) the split venue. Bastrop had a split venue. Requires the need for a primary and one or more back up hotels. LPL had three hotels that participated in creating a "Block" of rooms with two other hotels.

(2) Due to limited major populated area options that offer the combined venue, Detachments in smaller populated communities such as Bastrop may offer a split venue option and thus increase capabilities to support a Conference/Conventions.

(3) Bastrop is a town of ~10k in population and does not have a combined venue that encompasses a hotel and the convention center.



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(4) Created the challenge with the location for the Dinner. LPL paid for the Convention Center which would provide two rooms that each would hold 250 very comfortable. However, it would have required the attendees to drive back to the Convention Center that would require additional expense. On the other hand, the Hampton Inn had a great Ballroom, but it came with additional cost.

(5) Because of predisposition attitude, LPL estimated that at least 8 members stated they would not attend a split venue concept.

e. Hotel Occupancy Tax Funds

(1) LPL submitted for and was awarded HOT Funds to offset 98% (\$3200.00) of the expense to rent the Convention Center. Contact your "Visit [city]" or Tourism Department for information.

f. Hospitality Suite

(1) Historically, the Hospitality Suite is a room or Suite in the primary hotel. LPL became creative and utilized the Ballroom as the Hospitality Suite for each night. It met the objective but pushback by a few resulted due to the 10:00 PM securing and closing of the room.

(2) It achieved something very special which would not have been accomplished in a small, cramped hotel room. It was successful because of the ample room to sit around tables in comfort and enjoy the camaraderie with old and new friends. The positive comments far outweighed the few Attendees who were not happy with the restriction of the 10:00PM closure.

4. Dept of Tx District 4 Support

(a) As the uncertainty of inflation, fuel costs, and increase in hotel rates, hosting a Conference/Convention will always be a challenge. The economy now will become the primary planning factor for a Detachment's decision to host.



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(b) LPL asked the Dist 4 Vice Cmdt and all the Detachments assigned to Dist 4 for possible support. Several Detachments pledged to provide support if requested.

(c) In 2018, Cen-Tx help LPL with the Dept Convention by supporting the Hospitality Suite responsibilities. In 2022, Cen-Tx again stepped up and took complete control of the Hospitality Suite for a second time.

(d) Cen-Tx's support contributed immensely and met the objectives of the Entertainment Plan. They purchased all items, had TABC certified servers, and monitored the members alcohol consumption. As a result, they were key to the success and deserve special recognition which will be taken care of by the Dept Sr Vice Cmdt.

5. Convention Center

a. The Bastrop Convention Center is an excellent facility, and the Staff are top rate. It provided seating availability with two main room of 225 per room and four separate rooms that provide seating availability for 35 per room.

b. Through coordination, each room was set up properly and had outstanding AV support.

c. LPL 1384 utilized one of the smaller meeting rooms for a Hospitality Suite by providing coffee, tea, snacks, and other beverages throughout each day. It was well utilized by attendees.

6. Dept Fall Conference Web Link

a. The Dept Web page was well designed and had all the required links and information that help the individual registered.

b. LPL requested their QR Code be added, and the connectivity worked as expected. Individuals with smart phones were able to access directly documents located on the LPL Website.

7. Agenda



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- a. The one pinnacle document for the Conference/Convention is the Agenda. It is not the responsibility of the Hosting Detachment to develop the Agenda for a Dept Conference/Convention as it is the Dept Staff.
- b. Each year the Dept Staff begins with the Agenda from the previous year and make additions/corrections base on the desires of the Dept Cmdt and them pass the completed Agenda to the Hosting Detachment to assist with their planning requirements.
- c. The objective of this paragraph is to allow the Dept Staff to begin the process earlier and hand off the final product at least four months out from Jan/May.
- d. We owe it to our future Hosting Detachments to give them the tools to do their job, get out of their way, allow them to plan, and provide the occasional guidance and or clarification. It is unfair for the membership to keep asking questions and the Hosting Detachment to be waiting for the Agenda.
- e. The Dept Sr Vice will send a more detail par 7 to the Dept Staff for consideration and action.

8. Dept Online Registration Program

- a. LPL utilized the Dept Online registration program. There were 73 members who took advantage and utilized the Online registration program and 24 who registered via email, phone, USPS, and onsite registration.
- b. Those who used the Online Registration process successfully during the 2022 Convention did not have any problems registering for the Conference. As more members began to register, LPL received a small number of emails and phone calls reporting issues.
- c. First, some individuals did not want to establish another account with the Dept Web page and preferred to register via USPS, so, procedures were written. Second, they reported that the years of service box was not working, and procedures were written. Third, a very small group either did not want to use their credit card online or could not



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finish the payment step. These individuals were contacted and assisted to complete the registration process.

d. The Online Procedures were identical to the 2022 Convention. LPL asked for some additional buttons to capture additional information for the Conference Badge which may have contributed to some of the above-mentioned problems.

e. As we move forward, we will continue to have members who will not establish an account with the Dept Website, disclose their credit card online, or will only submit their application via USPS. So, plan for it and prepare accordingly. LPL would still use and continue to recommend the use the Dept Online Registration program if given the opportunity to choose.

9. Badges

a. A benefit of the Dept online registration process is the ease of accessibility to utilize the data gathered by the online registration to generate the badges. A benefit of the online registration process was not having to reinvent the wheel by manually inputting registration data on the master registration spreadsheet. Without this data, it would have required hours of precious time to collect, input, and generate the master registration spreadsheet.

b. Using the Master Registration Spreadsheet, LPL created macros to populate and automatically print the registration info onto the badge by utilizing the Avery 8522 card stock. About 75 badges were preprinted, inserted into the vinyl holder with lanyard, thus saving time to focus on the attendees checking in. Corrections were made on the spot (less than one min) and handed back to the Attendee. New registrants' badges were also printed on the spot.

c. Everything (only a suggestion and not mandatory) was purchased on Amazon Prime. The first was the "PLAMAS Zipperless Name Badge Holders (XXL, Fit 4"x6" Inserts), Vertical, Easy Load ID Badge Holder Without Zip, Vinyl Plastic VIP Badge Holder, Clear Back Stage Badge Holder Bulk (50 to a pack)". The second was the "Lanyards Premium



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Cruise Lanyard Nylon Badge Lanyards for ID Holder Perfect for Office, Kids, Teachers, Bulk (50 to a pack)". The third item was the "Avery Vertical Name Badge & Ticket Inserts, 6" x 4-1/4", 100/box Inserts (8522)".

d. The unit cost (paper, ink, and badge supplies) was estimated to be \$1.38 per badge. Remember, the Conference registration fees are \$10.00 per person and should be used to cover registration issues. Any remaining fees is profit.

10. Program Guide

a. Designing of the program guide

(1) The front cover should make an iconic statement of the Hosting City. LPL used the old Bastrop Bridge and McAllen used the Veterans Memorial Monument. It should also include the following seals on the cover: National MCL, MCL Auxiliary, National MODD, MODD (Fleas), Dept of Tx, and Det logo.

b. The program guide consisted of 24 pages. The outer cover consisted of 4 pages and 5 inserts (consisted of 20 pages). All pages (cover and inserts) were the same type of paper, and in color.

c. Timelines

(1) There are four major issues pertaining to the printing of the program guide. The first is the Conference Agenda, second is the actual timeline of selling ads, third developing each page, and fourth, the last day to submit to the printer.

(2) Most Vendors will require 5 to 10 working days before delivery. Ask the vendor when the last day is to turn in your electronic book copy. As a recommendation plan 3 days prior to the due date so you can let the Vendor review your pages to identify, eliminate any problems, and still meet the delivery date.

(3) One common error to prevent and understand is the ads that must be sequential (or next to each other). LPL recommends that you save each page with a title and the page



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number (i.e., "Dept Cmdt page 2" and "Dept Ad page 3"), so that the Vendor will know how to rearrange the files to match the print sequence.

d. Ads

LPL pushed the concept of looking not only at Detachments/individuals but for vendors to purchase ads. We fell short with vendors but were able to still make 3X the cost to print and 100 copies.

11. Marketing Plan

a. Inflation, high fuel costs, and an increased in hotel rates, impacted our attendance numbers. LPL had to take a different approach by developing and utilizing a Marketing Plan that focus on three groups. (Note: The HOT Funds Application required a Marketing Plan as one of the conditions to receive funds.

(1) The first group targeted was the First Timers to a Conferences/Conventions.

(2) The second group targeted were the veterans' League Members who have been to numerous Conferences/Conventions who have seen everything and developed the attitude "been there, done that, so why attend?"

(3) The last group represented the main body and would attend regardless, but who are looking for something different.

b. Since the Training Sessions is the easiest part to plan, LPL focus on the Entertainment Plan that would allow attendees to experience something different other than going downtown.

12. Entertainment Plan

a. Because of the development of the Marketing Plan, it forced the committee to look at each evening as a separate theme. This was accomplished through deliberate and intensive planning.



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Future potential Hosting Detachments must focus more energy and assets on the 6:00PM to 10:00PM as we owe our Attendees to become more engaged with each other after the 8:00AM to 4:00PM sessions.

b. Thursday:

LPL specifically designed the Social Meet and Greet to begin at 5:00PM and end by 6:30PM in the Ballroom at the Hampton Inn. There were about 40 to 50 attendees throughout the evening as they popped in and left or returned from dinner between 5PM to 9:45PM. Members of LPL made a variety of appetizers and passed out free samples of our new addition, our special “shot cakes” with small amount of alcohol for the Attendees to enjoy and catch up with friends. The intent was to allow the early arrivals to head into town and experience the nightlife. LPL did this same concept in 2018 for the Convention and it was a surprise and a great opportunity to eat light and then head into Bastrop for dinner.

c. Friday:

LPL specifically designated 5:00PM to 6:30PM to allow the Attendees to go into Bastrop for Dinner. During this time, LPL ensured the Ballroom was ready for the Mixology Contest, the special “shot cakes”, a couple of prize drawings, and the main event was the regional band “Clutch Kings”. The plan worked and was a great success. We had about 50 to 65 attendees, but the volume of the band was a bit too high until they finally reduced it to an acceptable level. The plan was for the attendees to go into town to have dinner and then return. We had to adjust the plan and ordered pizzas for those who did leave for dinner. Regardless, everybody had a great time and were surprised and impressed.

d. Saturday:

The theme for Saturday was “Buffet Dinner with live Auction”. We had 78 in attendance that was helped by the Live Auction that followed. The Auctioneer was Myers Jackson who was the auctioneer on the Construction Reality Show call “Texas Move and Flip”. He brought about 30 personal military items from the estate of Gunny R Lee Erney and



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General Vandergrift (18th Commandant of the Marine Corps). LPL had about 12 items to auction as well. We all remained until 9:45PM when we had to leave and prep the Ballroom to close.

13. Media Plan:

a. LPL developed several 60 to 120 second video Blogs specifically produced to target certain aspects of the Entertainment Plan and posted to multimedia.

b. We utilized the attendee's email addresses who attended the 2022 Dept Convention plus individuals who completed an online registration. Updates of the evolving developments to the Entertainment Plan were sent to both groups to inform and to forward to their network of friends to generate interest and excitability of the upcoming Conference.

c. LPL and Dept believed that by targeting specific groups, advertise, and the Entertainment Plan resulted in larger registration numbers not only the main Conference but the Saturday Buffet Dinner.

d. Events and picture were uploaded to the Department and LPL FaceBook pages.

Here are the links:

<https://www.facebook.com/departmentoftexasmcl> and

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100077460850610>

e. QR Code

LPL utilized a QR Code to not only allow the Attendees to access more information that consisted of the agenda, list of Restaurants, Bars, Entertainment, Activities, and a map of downtown Bastrop that encouraged them to "Visit Bastrop" and save pages in the Program Guide.



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f. LPL did work with the Dept PAO (Public Affairs Officer) who provided guidance and suggestions. LPL failed to fully maximize, capitalize her capabilities, and expertise.

14. Summary:

a. It is critical that Detachments step up to the upcoming Conference/Convention to make a bid to host and have the full 12 months to develop a successful Dept Conference/Convention. LPL volunteered with only 5 months to meet all the requirements and expectations to put on a successful Conference.

b. The Convention Center venue was top notch, and the Ballroom at the Hampton Inn met and exceeded all requirements of the bold Entertainment Plan.

c. Due to inflation, high fuel costs, and the unexpected cost of the hotel rooms, it was a challenged for some of our members to attend.

d. The Dept Conference Webpage was easy to navigate and transition to the online registration, hotel links, and the QR Code.

e. The Online Registration worked except and provided registration data that made the badges easier.

f. Downtown meet and exceeded the expectations of all three target groups.

g. The Entertainment Plan met the expectations.

h. The Marketing plan was essential and key in achieving 97 registrants, 78 Buffet attendees, Master Plan, Marketing Plan, and Entertainment Plan that produced a successful 2022 Conference.

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