

Business hotels and sales conferences

Getting started

Discuss the questions below in small groups. When you have finished, find a partner from another group and report what you decided.

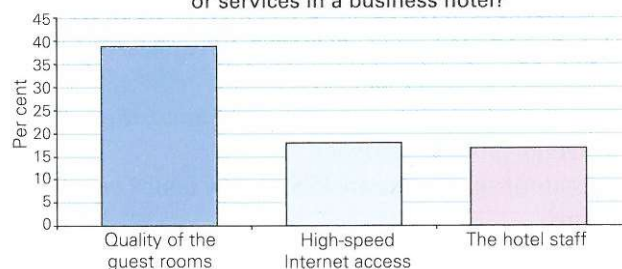
- How is the business traveller different from the ordinary tourist?
- If you were choosing a hotel for a business trip, which of these amenities would you consider more important and which less important?
 - guest rooms
 - general decor
 - lobby and other public areas
 - meeting rooms
 - business centre
 - restaurants and bars
 - room service
 - gym/health club
 - hotel staff
 - high-speed Internet access
 - wi-fi Internet access
 - other
- Do you have a favourite hotel?
- How important do you think the hotel's cost is when business people make their travel plans?
 - very important
 - quite important
 - not important

The results of a survey

Writing

- 1 Look at the graph (top right), which shows the results of a survey of American business travellers, and complete the paragraph below it by writing one word in each gap.

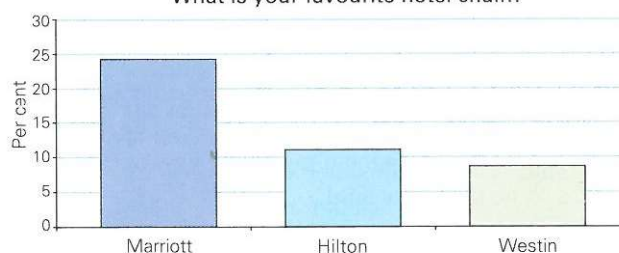
What are the most important amenities or services in a business hotel?



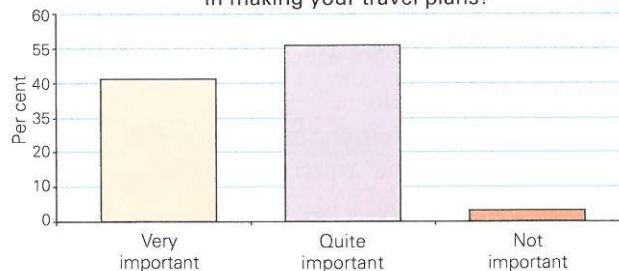
In our survey of 1,200 business travellers, 1 found that 39% considered the quality of the guest rooms 2 the most important amenity, whereas 18% rated high-speed Internet access 3 the most important, and 17% valued the hotel staff 4 highly.

- 2 Write similar paragraphs for these two graphs. When you have finished, compare your paragraphs with a partner.

What is your favourite hotel chain?



How important is the hotel's cost in making your travel plans?



Useful language

Contrasting ideas

While/Whereas 25% of respondents valued room service, only 10% rated the quality of the beds.
However, just 3% considered the business centre to be an important service.

➤ page 80 (*While* and *whereas*)

Business accommodation

Reading

- 1 Read the article below about business hotels. In each paragraph, underline the key phrase(s) which give the main idea of the paragraph. This will help you to see the clear line of argument which runs through the text.
- 2 Choose the best sentence (A–H) from the list below to fill each of the gaps. Make sure the sentence fits with the main idea of the paragraph where you want to put it.

Home Sweet Hotel

BY CHRISTOPHER PALMIERI

We turned to the smartest business folks we know – our readers – and asked them to name the best places for the business traveler to stay. Nearly 1,200 subscribers participated in this, our first hotel survey. They logged on to BusinessWeek.com and told us where they like to stay – and why. The results were revealing.

It was virtually impossible to find the single best hotel. We asked readers to name their favorite property and got almost 1,200 different answers. **1** The hotel staff and health club were also high on the list, but the real surprise was high-speed Internet access, which came a strong second.

We had no problem identifying the top chain. Marriott International, with 24%, was the winner by a wide margin. True, Marriott is the largest hotelier in the world, and its range of locations gives it an advantage. **2** “They never provide an unpleasant surprise,” said one reader. “In every Marriott throughout the world, the staff is always caring,” gushed another. One person recalled how a Marriott staffer in Wichita made some sandwiches at no cost after the kitchen was closed.

Such attentive service is no accident. “We spend well over \$100 million a year on training,” says J.W. Marriott Jr., chairman



and CEO. **3** I tell our people: “We don’t manufacture anything. We provide experiences.”

Consistency and number of locations were also reasons. 12% of the respondents picked Hilton Hotels – the No. 2 finisher in the survey. **4** This allows members to earn points for each stay in both an airline frequent-flier program and the Hilton plan. The number of brands under the Hilton umbrella was also a plus. “I can stay at a Hampton Inn and earn points toward Hilton stays,” one subscriber noted.

No. 3 on the best-chain list was Westin, something of a surprise since, with just 120 hotels worldwide, it’s much smaller than many of its rivals. Readers cited Westin’s exclusive Heavenly Bed – a custom-designed bed – and its Heavenly Shower.

Readers’ picks of their favorite loyalty programs came up much like their favorite chains, with Marriott first and Hilton second. Here again, readers chose these programs for the number of locations and variety of brands under one plan. Last summer, Marriott tweaked its program to allow frequent guests to earn free stays 30% faster than many of its rivals. **5**

Some 85% of respondents said their company didn’t require them to stay at specific hotels or chains. About 60% said the hotel’s cost was only somewhat or not important in making their plans.

Adapted from *Business Week*

- A “For customers, the bottom line is how soon they can take their families on a free vacation,” says the CEO.
- B Although business people do not appreciate having to mix with ordinary tourists.
- C As a result, profits are up by nearly 30% this year.
- D But respondents almost universally praised the company for its consistency.
- E But they did center on what really counts (after price and location, of course): 39% said the quality of the guest rooms was the most important thing.

- F Every day, there is a 15-minute exercise on things like how to greet a guest, how to handle a complaint.
- G Good hotels need to be able to provide good meals as well.
- H They often singled out the company’s loyalty program.

- 3 When you have finished, compare your answers with a partner. If you don’t agree, explain why you chose your answers.

Vocabulary

Find words or phrases in the text which mean the following.

- 1 people who buy a service or a magazine on a regular basis (paragraph 1)
- 2 visited a website (paragraph 1)
- 3 a company with many different branches (paragraph 3)
- 4 member of staff (paragraph 3)
- 5 paying a lot of attention to customers (paragraph 4)
- 6 always being the same quality (paragraph 5)
- 7 mentioned specially (paragraph 5)
- 8 competitors (paragraph 6)
- 9 changed slightly (paragraph 7)
- 10 the most important factor (in a decision) (paragraph 7)

Presenting your opinions

Talking point

- 1 Work in groups of about three. Your company is considering changing its policy about business travel, and you have been invited to a meeting to discuss this. You have been asked to make a short presentation.

Each of you should choose one of these questions to talk about. Spend one minute preparing what you are going to say.

What is important when choosing a business hotel to stay at?

Think about location, amenities, etc.

What is important when preparing a foreign business trip?

Think about local customs, local working hours, etc.

What is important when choosing an airline to fly with?

Think about prices, schedules, etc.

- 2 Make your presentation to your group. You should speak for about one minute. When you have finished, your colleagues should say if there is anything they disagree with, and why.

Conference problems

Listening

- 1 Read this list of things (A–I) which could go wrong at a conference and discuss what the problem could be in each case.

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| A the access | F the conference rooms |
| B the accommodation | G the programme |
| C the dates | H the staff |
| D the keynote speaker | I the technology |
| E the location | |

- 22 2 You will hear five colleagues in a meeting complaining about things which went wrong in different conferences they attended. Listen and choose what each speaker is complaining about.

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1 Candice: E | 4 Harry: |
| 2 Igor: | 5 Susan: |
| 3 Paola: | |



- 3 Complete these sentences from the conversation you have just heard.

- 1 They us to South America or the Far East or something.
- 2 She had a PowerPoint presentation prepared, but she couldn't make it work. She really a bit beforehand.
- 3 They one of those purpose-built conference centres.

- 4 Which speaker said which sentence?

- 22 5 Check your answers by listening to the recording again.
- 6 Discuss in small groups what the organisers could/should have done to avoid the problems mentioned.

➤ page 80 (Modal verbs: perfect forms)

Planning a lively sales conference

Reading

Read the article below about how to plan a sales conference and choose the best word to fill each gap.

Company background

Kimberly L. McCall is the president of McCall Media & Marketing Inc. (www.marketingangel.com), a business communications company in Durham, Maine, USA.

McCallMedia
& Marketing, Inc.

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By Kimberly L. McCall

Bye-bye BORING

You can plan a lively sales conference without breaking the bank.

For a sales representative, there are few things more boring than being asked to endure three days of sales meetings. But because sales conferences are an excellent **1** for reps to discuss a new product launch or get new ideas, there are many powerful **2** to plan a gathering.

Would you like to pull together a lively sales conference that will **3** your reps to sell better, bond and share their most **4** selling practices? Here are a few great ways to plan a conference.

Create a mix of fun and focus. Schedule a keynote speech from a speaker the sales staff respect. And when **5** activities, remember: one salesperson's idea of a fun experience may be another's waste of **6** time.

Planners should create a menu of entertaining activities and let people decide. While some may choose golf, **7** may go for a massage and a manicure. A well-

planned meeting should be a mixture of 25 per cent fun and 75 per cent education.

Book well and **8** money. Rio during Carnival may make you bankrupt, so **9** booking a great resort in the off-season. Think Maine in March or Dallas in June. You'll get wonderful facilities at **10** prices – and probably a lot more attention from the hotel staff.

If you are on a tight **11** , you should be especially careful at the development stage. Plan and get competitive bids from **12** providers. Analyse the costs **13** to your goals, and organise the meeting so that it will be as cost-effective as possible.

Engage your **14** Motivate reps before the conference by giving them an assignment, such as reading industry articles they should be **15** to discuss, or sharing the finest proposals they have ever written.



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- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 A position | B point | C place | D area |
| 2 A reasons | B intentions | C needs | D advantages |
| 3 A force | B inspire | C move | D involve |
| 4 A capable | B effective | C certain | D able |
| 5 A doing | B thinking | C making | D arranging |
| 6 A costly | B pricey | C worthy | D valuable |
| 7 A one | B another | C others | D any |
| 8 A save | B keep | C spend | D pay |
| 9 A think | B plan | C consider | D arrange |
| 10 A lowest | B exclusive | C falling | D bargain |
| 11 A estimate | B budget | C quote | D spending |
| 12 A few | B varied | C distinct | D various |
| 13 A next | B similar | C relative | D near |
| 14 A attendees | B attendants | C assistants | D attention |
| 15 A pleased | B supposed | C ordered | D prepared |

Planning a conference

Talking point

Work in pairs or groups of about three. Your company has decided to hold a two-day conference for people from your company and you have been asked to help plan the conference.

Discuss the situation together, and decide:

- what kinds of activities should be organised for the main part of the conference
- what entertainment could also be provided
- where the conference should be held.