Food and Beverage

How to Determine Seating Capacity for F&B Functions
By Brad Weaber

Nothing is more frustrating to a meeting manager than a food and beverage function that goes awry. Ironically, most of the logistical challenges of a f&b function can be avoided by planners if the proper formulas are applied well before the event. Blocking the correct space is only one of several areas that should be managed for a successful "sit-down" event.

Determining the space needed for the optimal set-up of a banquet is somewhat difficult because of the numerous variables to consider. For example, hotels use three different sizes of banquet rounds. Each of them can have (depending on who you are listening to) three different seating capacities. Some hotels are now using ovals, which, though they use space more economically, make calculations more tricky. However, there is a way to get a good handle on the banquet capacity of a room, and it involves nothing more than common sense. (Since oval tables are still relatively rare, the formulas and charts that follow will refer to banquet rounds only.)

When calculating with round tables in a room, you need to "square off" the measurements. Taking into account the amount of space needed for seated guests as well as space needed for aisles between the tables, yields the "linear feet" needed for each table.

Here is the linear footage needed for banquet rounds:

• 60" rounds:
10 linear feet per table
seats six to eight
• 66" rounds:
10.5 linear feet per table
seats eight to 10
• 72" rounds:
11 linear feet per table
seats nine to 11.

  Once you know the diameter of the table in the hotel's inventory, you only need to get the dimensions of the clear seating area to determine the room's capacity.

  Example: You have a room where the dimensions are 108' x 80', and you are only using 6' (72") rounds. There is no speaker or other activity in the room, and the meal is plated. (As previously mentioned, 11 linear feet is needed for a 72" table.)

Calculation:

108'÷11' clear seating length = nine tables per row;
80'÷11' clear seating width = seven tables per row;

   9 (tables per row)
x 7 (tables per row)
 63 (total number of banquet
     tables at maximum capacity).

Now that you know how many tables fit into a room, determine how many people you want per table. For this example, 10 people will very comfortably fit around a 72" round. Simply multiply the number of tables in the room by the number of people you wish to put at each table:

  63 (total 72" tables in room)
x 10 (people per table)
 630 (total people banquet-style)

(Note: You may put 11 people around the table as well.)

(Be aware, when using this formula, that you may have to eliminate one table near each exit door to comply with local fire laws.)

When dancing and entertainment is to be included, a little extra work is necessary to determine the actual clear seating area after you have accounted for the dance floor and risers. Rarely is everyone on the dance

floor at the same time (except when the "Electric Slide" is playing!). Using the formulas below, you should be able to comfortably determine the square footage required for the dance floor.

Floor Space Needed
for a Banquet with Dancing:

Expected to be on dance floor at one time:	Dance floor square footage needed:
60 percent	3 sq. ft.
50 percent	2.5 sq. ft.
40 percent	2 sq. ft.

Example: Your event is for 300 people with an average dance participation (50 percent on floor at a given time).

300 (total guests)
x 2.5 (sq. ft. needed per dancing guest)
750 (total square feet of dance
     floor needed)

If the dance floor were close to square, its dimensions could be almost 27' x 27' or 27' x 30'. (Note: Most floors come in 3' x 3' sections.)

To establish the table capacity of the room, subtract the number of tables lost to the dance floor space and bandstand from the total the room is capable of holding.

Brad Weaber is senior account executive in the Washington, D.C. area office (Arlington, Va.) of Conferon, the nation's largest independent meeting planning company.

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