



Prioritizing risk management for event success

How to assess corporate risk management capabilities in your RFP review

Creativity wins corporate event proposals.

Risk management saves the day.

Your event vision didn't involve an internet outage.

The conference run-of-show never anticipated the keynote speaker getting the flu.

There's no fallback when your venue catches fire weeks before your program.

No one likes to think about worst-case scenarios. **Failing to plan for them?** That oversight puts your event team at fault. Event planners should assess risk capabilities upfront to establish proactive support.

When hosting large-scale corporate events, working with a trustworthy event risk management partner protects what matters most:



People



Environment



Assets



Reputations

WHAT THIS GUIDE PROVIDES

- > Risk mitigation capabilities you should look for in every event RFP and red flags to watch out for.
- > Expert advice for proactively addressing risk factors that could compromise your conference, trade show, incentive trip or other large-scale corporate event.
- > Recovery stories that establish ITA Group as a trusted event management partner.

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SECTION 1

5 risk management RFP questions and responses

Most organizations assess potential partners across a variety of capabilities (e.g., strategy, design, management, F&B, on-site, sponsorship, technology, registration, sourcing). While those are crucial, the best event agencies are also versed in safety and security protocols to make sure you've planned for *everything*.

How do you assess whether a potential partner has risk capabilities covered?
Take a look →

Meet Erica Lalk, Director, Global & Event Strategy

Our strategy team sees hundreds of RFPs each year. We asked Erica which questions consistently come up and how to scrutinize event management agency answers during the bidding process.



1

How do you assess and monitor destination risk from contracting through on-site execution?

► **GOOD ANSWER:** Look for a partner that conducts risk assessments at the time of contract, then again around 90 days and 30 days before program operation as standard practice. The state of the world changes frequently. Direct support and regular contact with a global security agency provides real-time, on-the-ground intelligence.

Once on site, the risk team should regroup to re-evaluate any threats. Know your evacuation plans, where the AED is at the hotel and any off-site venues, and what other events (protests, sporting events) are happening concurrently in the area. Coordinate with food and beverage providers to ensure allergens are clearly labeled.

► **RED FLAGS:** Limited global security intelligence relationships; few details about the on-site inspection process

2

How do you manage risk across hotels, DMCs and other partners?

► **GOOD ANSWER:** An established event management agency can call on supplier partnerships when unexpected emergencies occur. These trusted relationships, built on shared risk, enable faster collaboration, greater influence and better protection for client investments during volatile conditions.

► **RED FLAGS:** Shallow contract history with preferred hotels and DMCs in the desired location; unfamiliar with the hotel's information-sharing policy regarding guest-related hospitalizations or other disruptions

TIP: If you have a strong relationship with a DMC or hotel group, consider asking their contacts about third-party event agencies they like working with and which ones have created challenges.



3

What on-site emergency planning is in place for attendees?

► **GOOD ANSWER:** A strong partner can point to a tested emergency preparedness plan. Customized plans anticipate scenarios and outline emergency exits/escape routes, AED locations, contact details for local hospitals, etc. The event management agency should assign a Lead Travel Director within a broader risk team as the security/emergency contact in the event of an incident, and secure on-site EMT support.

► **RED FLAGS:** No designated safety lead; no established process for continued support if an attendee is hospitalized beyond the program

TIP: Ask for program-specific stories that illustrate an effective response to common crises, like severe weather or a medical emergency. How did they handle the situation? What was the outcome?



4 What in-house expertise do you have for contracts, liability and force majeure?

► **GOOD ANSWER:** Look for dedicated events and incentive travel in-house counsel. Specialized hospitality contract expertise strengthens contract language beyond typical industry standards. When outside influences trigger a force majeure clause, they have contract-negotiation savvy.

► **RED FLAG:** Relies on third-party support and boilerplate contracts

 **TIP:** Many enterprise RFPs frame compliance questions as pass/fail. Look for operational depth in highly regulated industries (e.g., healthcare, pharma, finance) that require specific compliance.

5 How do you communicate risk-related changes without causing alarm?

► **GOOD ANSWER:** The best RFP responses reflect a proactive approach to safety and communication. This includes integrating safety messaging into pre-event communications, asking for texting permissions at registration to enable real-time updates when changes occur, and clearly outlining how disruptions are handled, such as rebooking timelines. Early activation of the risk team prior to the event with clear roles for communicating with attendees signals a partner prepared to respond quickly and consistently when issues arise.

► **RED FLAGS:** Event technology doesn't allow for real-time communications; no protocol to keep both printed and electronic copies of an ICE (In Case of Emergency) list



Successful organizations adopt an integrated risk management approach. Cvent cites that **75% of meeting professionals** say risk and compliance are very or extremely important to creating their strategies.

SECTION TAKEAWAYS

If a partner can't confidently answer the previous five questions, risk mitigation isn't embedded in their event planning process.

Strong answers reveal a partner with significant field experience. They know how to navigate a wide range of disruptions, from medical emergencies to natural disasters. They hold valuable in-house expertise and deep partnerships that bolster bargaining power.

Operating large events and global incentive trips with the right partners, intelligence and safeguards in place reduces program risk.

ITA Group provides **security and risk management capabilities** built for worldwide group movement. With support from a long-tenured global security partner, we receive frequent briefings and prescriptive guidance. Rather than reacting to news cycles, the team translates intelligence into practical, program-level implications. They activate communication channels to convey any necessary changes clearly and calmly.



SECTION 2

Client risk resilience and recovery stories

Earning industry awards is only part of ITA Group's story. What often goes unnoticed is the behind-the-scenes hustle when unexpected disruptions threaten clients' events.

[Hear the stories from our experts →](#)

Meet Diane Drey, Senior Director of Travel Services

In her 30-year career at ITA Group, Diane has planned, managed and overseen countless corporate events. We asked her to share advice for event safety and stories of tricky situations she's encountered in her remarkable event management career.



Q: What memorable challenges have you handled during large events?

A: We've had people bitten by camels and lemurs when exploring the destination on their own. We've had people drink too much and end up in jail. We've had to deal with stalkers. We've had an overturned airboat.

Recently, an LED light blew in the general session, and the sparks started a fire. We activated our evacuation policies to get everyone out safely and worked with the venue on a timely return.



Q: Weather is a common risk factor. Tell us about one instance you overcame?

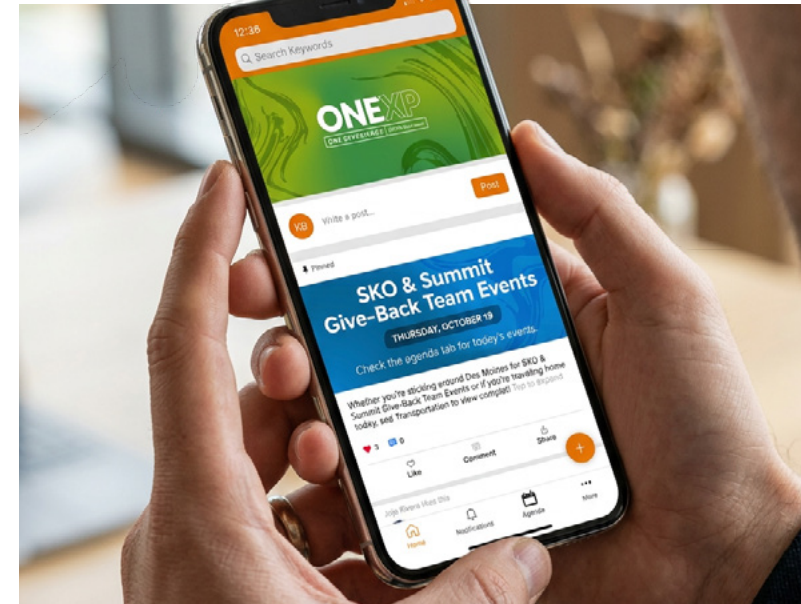
A: An ice storm in Dallas downed power when we were hosting two large groups of 1,800 and 2,500 attendees across 12 hotels. We met with our client three times a day to triage. At each update, we'd present the options available for each scenario.

One hotel was on the same grid as the hospital, which guaranteed power. It was nice and warm, so we brought people there for meetings and would package food for them so they would be cared for overnight.

Q: What's commonly overlooked when planning large-scale events?

A: This sounds simple, but printing food labels that document allergens saves lives. If an attendee has a severe nut allergy, that's a liability.

Including the address of the hotel or venue where attendees can easily reference it is another basic but important tip, especially for programs where they have time on their own. It's surprising how many people don't know how to get back to where they started. If there's an event app, include directions to the nearest pharmacy and hospital, too.



Q: Given all the situations you've encountered, is hosting large scale events worth it?

A: There's always a reason to bring attendees together. Whether you're bringing in your top salespeople, channel partners or independent agents to sell more of your product, or other reasons, face time matters. You want that interaction. Everything is better in person.

You just have to be smart about planning everything and preparing for anything. I think **the clients we've seen through hospitalizations and disruptions are far more loyal to us because they know that they can count on us.** They know that we will have a solution. If something doesn't work, we're going to keep going until we make it happen. That is part of our brand promise.

[Read more of Diane's advice using data to plan for attendee safety and procedures to document incidents.](#)



Meet Lou Ebinger, ITA Group General Counsel

In the past 12+ years, Lou's legal team has reviewed thousands of event supplier agreements and contracts, including hotels, convention centers, stadiums, catering partners, DMCs and entertainment/performers with riders. We asked him to share contracting stories and advice.



Q: What is the most unusual contract rider you've included?

A: You'd be surprised! But three unusual ones are engaging flamingos to serve as "ambassadors" for a function, a contract to conduct armadillo races and another agreement to set up a petting zoo in the middle of a hotel.

Q: What is your biggest tip for securing favorable conditions?

A: Book early, even years in advance. The hotel is less likely to exert pressure and limit your bargaining power for concessions when there's less competition. We can also win more effective risk allocation and attrition provisions on the contracting side when you're not bumping up against the end of the hotel's fiscal quarter or other deadlines that create strain.

However, that doesn't mean plans can't pivot. Just weeks prior to the scheduled departures of five global incentive travel events, we needed to relocate 1,200 participants to a closer-to-home locale due to destination risks. **And we saved our client \$750K in the process!**



CONCLUSION

Uncertain times call for consistent support

Planning global events amid geopolitical tensions, climate change, regulatory updates, technological advancements and rising expectations isn't easy. Including risk management and safety and security capabilities into your corporate event RFP ensures you have the right team in place to prevent costly recoveries.

Book a call with our
events team to help evaluate
if you have the right risk
management plans in place.

