

HOW TO CONVINCe YOUR BOSS TO PAY YOUR WAY TO THE 8th ANNUAL FOCUS CONFERENCE

by *Bob Miglino RRT, MPS*

In this era of tight budgets and increased work responsibilities, how can you encourage your employer to pay for, or at least partially subsidize, your trip to the FOCUS conference?

Here below, are some tips that can help you gain your employer's approval and the funds to attend.

First and most importantly, provide a written plan to your boss to demonstrate what you will strive to accomplish by attending the conference. This written plan should include: meeting other professionals who may share expertise and/or resources, hearing about solutions that other organizations have instituted to solve a problem *you* may also be experiencing, learning about new clinical modalities, medications

or treatment options that might improve patient care outcomes, learning about new equipment that might improve patient care or save money (or both), gaining continuing education credits for recertification, and very importantly, learning things that you are then willing to come back and *share* with your colleagues.

Request to attend as early before the conference as you can. Explain the practical uses of the courses offered and how it applies to your job. If you're a manager, emphasize the management lectures being presented and how attending those lectures will simultaneously fulfill the JCAHO requirement that you (as manager) have continuing education in management.

Minimize costs, for example, by sharing a hotel room or by sharing travel expenses with colleagues. Did you know that FOCUS has started a free roommate bulletin board service on its website? See if that bulletin board can save your organization money. Check it out at www.foocus.com

If you think you'll be interviewing for a new job over the next month or so, before the conference, negotiate in your interview for conference funding - or at least *ask* about funding - as a condition to your taking the job. Plant the seed that going to an annual conference to stay up to date is *very* important to you.

Save the conference program and related information when you do get to attend. Record details on the sessions you attended.

Prepare a written synopsis of those lectures to give to your boss upon your return. Record information such as the speaker and lecture title, list of issues discussed and how you plan to use the information on the job when you return home from the conference. Your boss will be quite impressed, something that will bode well for *future* requests.

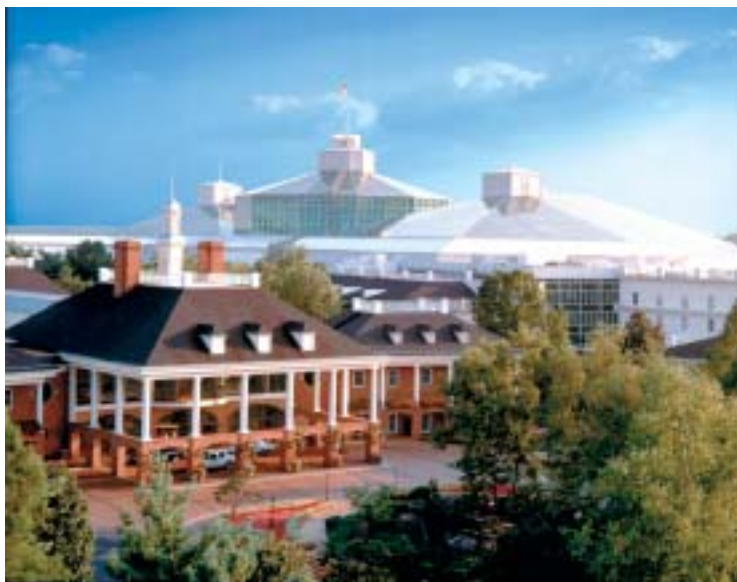
Share what you learn with others. Be on the lookout for ideas that you can pass along to your colleagues later. Tell your boss that you will be happy to present a synopsis of the conference or even a formal in-service lecture to your co-workers upon your return.

Pick up handouts connected to the conference. Pick up new books and pamphlets. These will not only maximize conference knowledge but could also reinforce the importance of the confer-

ence to your boss. Bring these materials home to your boss after the conference, and of course, tell your boss *before* the conference that you will do so. Emphasize the networking opportunities that can be gained by attending, i.e., with exhibitors, presenters, and professionals in other organizations with similar services. Point out to your boss that the Focus Conference is a "selling" show, and that many vendors have significant *sales* on the convention floor that can save the organization significant money.

Remember to *prospectively* thank your boss for approving the funds to go and then thank him/her *again* upon your *return*.

And remember...in the final analysis, expenses such as travel, lodging, food and registration fees involved in going to a professional conference directly related to your field, such as the FOCUS conference, are tax deductible. Thus, it may well be worth the investment in your own career to make the *personal* expenditure to attend, even if you cannot obtain financial help from your employer. Put aside \$10 a week until the next conference and you'll be half way there as regards having the funds necessary to attend. If you can then get at least some of the money from your employer, say, just the registration fee, with you picking up the rest of the expenses, you'll be in good shape and able to attend. Good luck.



The Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee