CONFERENCE MANAGEMENT

How AVTE held its conference food bill within 2.3% and saved $6,938

356 people, four days, zero guesswork

Association of Veterinary Technician Educators (AVTE)

2026 Annual Conference · Portland, Oregon · Managed by TVDA for six straight years

356 of 358 registrants in the room, just two no-shows	**88%** of the room block filled, so attrition cleared	**$6,938** saved on breakfasts, held to the penny on the final bill	**2.3%** final food and beverage bill against our pre-conference estimate

The challenge

A national conference is an association's biggest financial bet of the year. Food, audiovisual and the hotel contract decide whether it makes money and impact what resources are available the other 360 days of the year.

Most of those numbers get set months out on gut feel and checked once, when the invoice arrives. By then it's too late to change anything.

Budget and negotiate on real numbers

We track registration pace week by week, so the final count is a forecast, not a hope. Every meal gets a per-person cost target and a guarantee set by how many people actually eat it, before a banquet order is signed.

Then we negotiate. A week out we went back to the hotel on breakfast pricing and saved $6,938. We filled 88% of the room block, cleared attrition, used all 17 comp nights and brought home a $6,900 destination rebate.

Execute, then check every line

After Portland we tied every banquet check, room folio and AV line back to the contract. The final food and beverage bill landed within 2.3% of our estimate.

Then we turned it into five reports for the board: the final bill, rooming, catering, attendance and registration economics. The last one showed food and AV take 80% of an early-bird registration, and it's shaping pricing for Denver.

> “A conference budget lives or dies on a few numbers nobody sees: how many people will actually eat breakfast on Sunday. We stopped guessing. It's given us a world of greater detail. We know what's available, and we can be strategic and precise in how we plan.”
>
> **Michele Von Deak, MBA** · Co-Owner and Managing Principal, TVD Associates

WHAT TVDA DID

We run the whole conference, then hand AVTE a smarter plan for the next one.

01 Program and run-of-show

Session grid, pre-courses and add-ons, built with AVTE's volunteer leaders and locked well before load-in.

02 Registration that predicts itself

A pace curve that turns early registration into a reliable final count, so budgets and contracts rest on numbers, not hope.

03 Budget targets first

Per-meal cost targets and attendance forecasts set before any banquet order is signed, then trued up at the 72-hour deadline.

04 Negotiation that holds

Menu pricing, room block and concessions negotiated up front, then checked against the final bill line by line.

05 Onsite, start to finish

Load-in through teardown, with the TVDA team in the room for every session.

06 A plan for next year

Every conference ends with planning numbers for the next city, so Denver starts where Portland left off.

RESULTS

	Before	After
Attendance	Planning count of 345	**356 attended, two no-shows out of 358**
Budget	Numbers checked once the invoice arrives	**Final F&B within 2.3% of estimate**
Negotiation	Menu prices accepted as quoted	**$6,938 saved just on breakfasts, held on the final bill**
Next year	Each year starts from scratch	**Five reports and 2027 targets carried to Denver**

WHAT TVDA CAN DO FOR YOU

Know your real numbers

We read your registration pace and past events so the budget rests on facts.

Negotiate, then verify

We negotiate the contract, then check the final bill against it line by line.

Get better every year

Every event ends with a plan for the next one, so improvement compounds.

Is your conference budget built on guesses? Let's talk.

Book 20 minutes with Todd at calendly.com/toddvondeak, or send us a note at tvdassociates.com.