



## MEETING PLANNING 101

# Step out of the information shower

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It's likely that you're already up to your eyeballs in reading material relevant to conducting an effective meeting. How do you integrate yet another insightful article into your schedule? Worse, how do you act on new instructions, insights and recommendations that merit consideration?

If these kinds of issues come up for you over and over again, take heart. You are not alone. Everyone in the meeting industry feels the same way more often than they care to admit. Not one of us comes even close to having a handle on all the developments even for just a handful of issues.

## Evolution, not revolution

To understand how we reached this point, we need to look at the bigger picture of what's occurring in our sociocultural evolution. All industries and professions are feeling the weight of more information, more technology, and more systems and procedures than they can comfortably absorb. Why? The answer begins with the beginning of civilization itself.

## Civilization 101: The short course

Human civilization thus far has witnessed four major ages, including hunting and gathering, agriculture, industry, and the emerging information age. I say "emerging" because it hasn't arrived yet. We've only danced around the periphery in a nether land I call the "over-information era." As we'll discuss, the over-information era is the major root of the problem.

A day is still 24 hours long, but it seems to shrink in the face of having more to do or higher expectations about what has to be done. Five factors, or "mega-realities," are simultaneously contributing to the perceptual erosion of personal time. They are:

- Population growth
- An expanding volume of knowledge
- Mass media growth and electronic addiction
- The paper trail culture
- An over-abundance of choices

Having cited these mega-realities, we come smack dab to the central question. How do we handle the deluge of information that crosses our desks each day, separate the wheat from the chaff and have time to even get back to the wheat? The answer: Get organized, stay organized and study one issue at a time.