

VisiCon 2009

How to Justify Your Attendance to

VisiCon 2009: TriTech's Annual User Conference

Justifying your VisiCon attendance to management can be challenging in these economic times. Much discussion is focused on the legitimacy of attending conference and trade show programs. The reality is that VisiCon is the most cost effective and efficient method of obtaining education and information and in establishing a professional network.

Why Attend VisiCon?

VisiCon sessions allow you to:

- Learn first hand from fellow users their keys to successful implementations
- Keep up to date on new and emerging technologies from TriTech
- Get immediate answers and solutions to issues within your organization
- Discover new products and techniques that can improve productivity and streamline operations

Benefits of VisiCon's Exhibit Hall

VisiCon features a full exhibit hall showcasing the latest technologies from TriTech's business partners for integration to your VisiCAD-VisiNet system. The exhibit hall allows you to:

- See the latest in public safety technology
- Hear new product announcements
- Visit all of your vendors in one locations
- Do some comparison shopping
- Seek solutions and find new technologies
- Talk with others who are using or considering a product or service you are researching

Reviews from VisiCon 2008 Attendees:

"Gave me great ideas to bring back to my dispatchers."

"Great practical applications for a part of the system that we haven't used very much yet!"

"it sounds like EVERYONE learned a lot of things they didn't know before."

"Relearned some old stuff that was forgotten."

Who Attends VisiCon?

VisiCon sessions organized by tracks related to your specific job function such as Dispatch, Mobile, RMS, Tech/System Administration or GIS. Some of the titles of attendees include Executive Directors, IT Directors, IT Managers, IT Specialists, Systems Analyst, IS Analyst, System Administrator, Systems and Programming Manager, Operations Manager, Communications Chief, Communications Center Managers, Communications Center Supervisors, Lead Dispatcher, Training Coordinator, Dispatcher, CAD Coordinator, Division Chief, Deputy Chief, Captain, Lieutenant, Sergeant, Officer, President (Officer's Association), GIS Analyst, GIS Specialist, and GIS Program Manager.

Why Should You Attend?

To justify the cost you need to understand the purpose of your attendance. Make a list of the things you would like to accomplish:

- Is there are current issue at your agency for which you are seeking a solution?
- Are there developing technologies you feel would benefit your agency?
- Are there issues you would like to talk to TriTech or your third party vendors about?
- Is your agency looking at implementing new technology (such as GEO, Mobile, RMS, or Hardware Refresh)?
- Would you benefit from expanding your personal and professional network?

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Presenting to Your Management

The first and foremost communication should be your company's standard request form or a formal memo directed to your manager requesting attendance and why (See sample Justification Letter). It would be helpful to include the return on investment and cost savings for attending. Schedule a follow-up meeting with your manager to discuss the request.

In your letter and follow up meeting focus on how attending the conference is relevant to your company and/or your team goals and future projects. Here are some talking points to help you make a case for attending:

- I am going to look for a solution for "this" problem
- I believe "this new technology" could benefit the company and I would like to learn more about it.
- I want to plan effectively for upgrade or incorporating new technology
- I plan on meeting with "x" vendors to discuss these issues
- I am going to talk with several users for ideas on how they working around "x" issue

It is only natural for a manager to ask, "How can we justify spending money to participate in a conference when we are facing budget reductions?" The answer lies in the value of the conference's content and the focused interaction it provides. Sometimes learning one new piece of information or gaining better understanding about only one process can justify the entire cost of attending VisiCon. And making one professional contact can be worth much more.

As agencies decrease training budgets, they still require their staff to do more with less. As companies increasingly turn to technology to compensate for minimized resources, the needs for up-to-date training become more important.

By offering hands on lab, peer-to-peer discussions and various training session, VisiCon 2009 offers you the knowledge of multiple TriTech staff, fellow users, and third party vendors that are focused on the effective use of VisiCAD-VisiNet system to increase your ability to meet the challenges facing your agency.

The Conference Costs:

One complimentary registration per agency

Early bird registration; \$695 (*only charging early bird to reflect \$100 savings*)

Hotel: \$193/night plus 15% taxes x 3 nights (*renegotiated from original \$214/night for a savings of \$21/night*)

Travel: \$500 approximate (*airfare and cab to hotel*)

Meals: \$100 approximate for five meals (*Many meals are included in conference registration, so over the course of four days, you only need to cover Tuesday Lunch & Dinner, Wednesday Dinner and Friday lunch*)

Total: \$1960

Your Return on Investment

To help you create your ROI statement I've compiled a few items and assigned values to them. Use these as a starting point, and feel free to modify the information as you see fit.

Research Time:

37 Hours x \$70.00 per hour = \$2590 per product

How much time would you spend research all the available products, which companies have them, how they work, their costs, and see demos? For example, if you were researching add-on software products, how much time would it take to find all the available products, and setup times to see demos. You could spend a good day to day and a half just looking for the available products and scheduling demos.

The demo itself might take two hours. If you assume you will also lose 30 minutes before the demo getting prepared and then another 30 minutes after the demo writing up your notes about the demo and your impressions, that is three hours per product.

You also have the research on implementation which could take three or four days per product just to understand how you would integrate the new product into your existing systems.

Now this is just for one product or tool. If you are planning to look at all the different tools and their competitors, then multiply this by the number of vendors available.

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Troubleshooting Time / Open Tickets:

25 Hours x \$70 per hour = \$300 per issue

At VisiCon, you can work alongside Technical Services to help understand and troubleshoot open issues. By scheduling time with Support and Project Management, you can get more in-depth answers to your questions.

Training And/Or Continuing Education Hours:

24 Hours x \$70.00 = \$1680

With three days running five tracks of educational sessions and a hands on lab, you could spend a minimum of 24 hours or more in dedicated product-specific training. With the advantage of face to face time with the speakers and presenters, you are getting the benefit of additional training, which can normally cost over \$5000.

Intangibles:

Software Investment

Your agency has already made a sizable investment into its CAD, Mobile and RMS software. By continuing to invest in training and maintaining your existing system, functionality and efficiency will be improved. You have to invest in training and software exploration now, so that in the future, even just two to three years from now, you can plan effectively for changes in operations or incorporating emerging technologies.

Professional Networking

Professional networking is one those items that is hard to quantify. User groups and online forums have taken over some of this, but sometimes you can be more productive just meeting and talking to people in person. You may find another agency that has the same problem, or has already solved the problem you have, that you would not find anywhere else.

Some attendees find they learn a great deal from talking to one another because they are talking to someone that has already solved the problem versus someone who will help you solve the problem. If you have to place a value on this, then I would look at it as consulting time.

Make The Most Of Your Conference Attendance

When discussing your attendance with your manager, be sure to share how you will make the most of your conference attendance. Here are a few things you can do to get the most out of the conference:

Before the Conference:

1. Match a list of session topics to specific challenges your business faces.
2. Develop a complete cost justification
3. Set up meetings with your Client Account Manager, Technical Services or Project Management

During The Conference

4. Network with fellow VisiCAD Users to understand how to solve specific business challenges.
5. Attend training sessions and hands on lab
6. Meet with third party vendors for additional products to enhance operations
7. Request one-on-one consulting with the speakers, product experts, executives and account managers to discuss your needs.

After The Conference

8. Create action reports with detailed content, form execution teams, take the necessary action and follow up.
9. Train others and give a presentation to co-workers on what you learned.
10. Implement at least one performance change you've learned.

Conclusion

VisiCon 2009 is one of the best places to get VisiCAD-VisiNet education and product information. The Return on Investment will include operational changes and enhanced usage of our systems to provide a positive impact on our agency.

Reviews from VisiCon 2008 attendees:

"Good information...got a lot of questions answered."

"Even without having mobile up yet, gave a lot of ideas on modifying our own system."

"Good preparation for our future upgrade."

"Lab was excellent. I was able to get 2 great ideas that I will try at my comm center."

"Lab was great way to resolve issues."

"Got me thinking of different ways to use the system."

Dear <insert-manager-name-here>:

I would like to represent our company at VisiCon 2009: TriTech's Annual User Conference, September 15-18, in San Diego, California. My attendance would benefit our agency by ensuring effective use of our investment in TriTech's technology and software. The conference features an expanded technical program and workshops that will enable me to gain additional product knowledge and expand administrative and user functionality.

VisiCon's comprehensive program provides clients an opportunity to engage in interactive sessions of user functionality, participate in hands-on training, and network with fellow TriTech clients and employees. Conference sessions are focused on administrative and user functionality with sessions organized by tracks related to your specific job function such as Dispatch, Mobile, RMS, Tech/System Administration or GIS. Additionally, Technical Services Consultants and Engineers manage an on-site fully-equipped hands-on computer lab for additional training and technical support.

The training program and networking opportunities with fellow TriTech users is designed to improve user skills and enhance productivity. And if I can share those improvements with the rest of our organization, the return on our conference investment would be multiplied. The investment of attending VisiCon would greatly enhance the overall operations of our agency.

Attendance benefits include:

- Hands-on training with TriTech Technical Services to proactively manage user and system performance
- Overview of TriTech's Product Roadmap and direction so that we may adequately prepare and plan for any changes that will impact our organization
- User Group meetings to discuss functionality and development aspects of TriTech's product offering so that we may have a voice in upcoming features and enhancements
- Learn what's new and exciting in the industry from TriTech's third party vendors to see what new tools and solutions could improve our processes

If you have any questions about the technical program or any other aspect of VisiCon 2009, please let me know, and I will share the conference literature with you. I hope you'll agree that my attendance at this training and management event would make a significant positive impact on our organization.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

<insert-your-name-here>