

Staff Corner

By David Schraub

The ERM Symposium is the Joint Risk Management Section’s “baby.” And just as it takes nine months from conception to delivery, we take just as much time to grow and nurture this symposium for our attendees. This year, the ERM Symposium will be ready on April 19 for all to experience and enjoy.

About nine months prior to the meeting, the dedicated committee of volunteers is formed. In doing so, we look for a diverse makeup—U.S. and Canadian members with both P&C and life backgrounds, veteran members, and also new blood. The location for the meeting has been set. Discussions start on the philosophy of the meeting—the unique message we are looking to weave through the meeting to make the trip to the ERM Symposium a renewed experience for our attendees. This year, we are looking for fresh content that has not been presented in other venues, as well as looking to dedicate a significant time for Q&A to increase audience participation.

About seven months out, the committee articulates the number of sessions needed for each broad theme and issues a call for proposals to leverage potential great ideas existing outside the committee. About four to five months prior to due date, sessions or the proposals are selected. Presenters are notified. Recruiting starts to pick up, leveraging the proposals but also the collective knowledge of committee members. Similar themes are merged and necessary counterpoints are provided. Sponsorship packages are getting finalized.

About three months prior to due date, the skeleton of the symposium is getting shaped. This means staff is gathering (almost) final titles and descriptions for all breakout and general sessions. This also means the session line-up is getting finalized, where we ensure each time slot has a variety of session options for each type of potential attendee—for a life technical actuary to a P&C C-suite risk manager and everything in between. We are also ensuring two breakout sessions that will appeal to the same audience do not conflict. We reach out to potential sponsors and articulate the benefits of the visibility at the ERM Symposium.



Some staff make a visit onsite to better visualize the space for sponsor table tops, signage and other room settings.

About two months out, the last remaining open slots should get filled with speakers. Marketing emails should be flying. Sponsor contracts finalized and we monitor the registration in order to estimate the crowd for each breakout room. Will a setting with five round tables fit this room? Do we have space for the arm chairs and the podium for the CRO panel?

The last month should be much quieter for staff, as the main tasks are to monitor the registration and the presentations coming in . . . unless there are emergency issues to deal with, with a session to be built using our backup plan.

There is much planning that both committee and staff do to ensure a smooth delivery and a great experience for our members. The committee is a group of 15 volunteers, and many staff members at the CAS and SOA work jointly on the project. The SOA ran the symposium in 2017 and will do so again this year, passing the baton to the CAS for 2019 and 2020 to perform the majority of these tasks. This alternating pattern is pretty seamless, proving once again the solid partnership between our actuarial organizations to deliver great content for the common benefit. This is what the Joint Risk Management Section is all about!

We hope to see you at this year’s ERM Symposium! ■



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