

MiniTec Planning Guide

A MiniTec is a one-day technical program focused on a specific topic that is promoted in a regional area (approx. 200 miles) with an attendance goal of 50 and 100 participants. These programs are intended to be low cost (roughly \$125 to attend) regional events that benefit the local plastics industry.

The information provided is intended to serve as a “blueprint” to facilitate the mechanics so that a SPE Division can organize and work with a local SPE Chapter to host a successful MiniTec. The examples denoted below have been drawn from the experiences of the Extrusion Division, but hopefully are equally applicable to other Divisions or Special Interest Groups.

The following describes the segregation of duties, the various functions and the necessary timing for each.

Division of responsibilities between Section/Division

The local Section identifies a site, interfaces with the hotel, and handles invoicing/registration (including staffing the registration table). The Division organizes the technical program, solicits corporate sponsorships and handles most of the promotional activities. It is important for both the Section and the Division to have a single point of contact with each other to coordinate everything. Revenues and expenses are split 50/50.

Site selection

The location for the MiniTec should be where there is enough industry interest in the subject along with an SPE Section that is willing to staff and support the event. The location (typically a hotel) should have seating for up to 100 (classroom style preferred, theatre style acceptable), be conveniently located (board members and corporate sponsors often fly in, and most attendees will be driving in that morning) and provide catering. Audio/visual requirements typically include a podium, lavalier microphone and LCD projector. Usually, someone from the Division will provide a PC for PowerPoint presentations. An area for tabletop displays must be available for the corporate sponsors which should also be where the breaks and reception are held.

The program is normally dovetailed with a Division board meeting, allowing the board members to be available for presentations. A room block for sleeping rooms is set aside for the Division members and corporate sponsors that will be attending (for the Extrusion Board around 20 rooms). Most, if not all, of the registrants will drive to the event, so additional hotel rooms are generally not needed.

The site selection should occur between eight and 12 months in advance.

Technical program

Typically there are 10 to 12 30-minute presentation slots available, the majority of which are provided by Division board members. A few speaking slots are usually taken by the local Section. The program should not be too narrow, as this may limit the number of potential registrants. For instance, at an extrusion MiniTec the initial sessions focus on single/twin screw extrusion theory and auxiliary equipment. The afternoon session focuses on downstream technologies for wide-ranging disciplines (film/sheet/profile/fiber). The goal is to organize a program that will interest anyone who is involved with any type of extrusion process.

The technical program should be organized approximately four to five months in advance.

Corporate sponsorships

Sponsorships are solicited to fund the event, typically for \$500 each. Sponsorship should include a tabletop display, (2) MiniTec registrations and denotation in all subsequent promotions. The person responsible for sponsorships should, if possible, have pre-existing relationships with potential prospects. The promotion should consist of an email blast combined with targeted phone calls.

The solicitation of sponsorships is critical for success as these funds facilitate the promotional efforts in addition to amenities at the event. Approximately 10 to 15 corporate sponsors are ideal.

The solicitation campaign for corporate sponsorships should occur four to five months before the event, preferably immediately after the organization of the technical program and immediately before promotion of the event.

Promotional flyer/mailer:

The flyer/mailer for the MiniTec contains all of the pertinent information pertaining to the event. The following items should be included:

- Agenda, with talk title/speaker and starting/ending times
- List of corporate sponsors with description
- Event location with map and directions
- Registration form with sign-up directions (acceptance of credit card is recommended; online sign-up is also preferred)

Promotional Efforts

It is very important that advertising for the MiniTec be performed in a timely and repetitive manner, utilizing a number of different mediums. These include:

- Email blast approximately 10 to 12 weeks before the event
- Flyer mailing approximately eight weeks before the event
- A second email blast approx. three to four weeks in advance
- A one-page ad in the SPE newsletter for local and surrounding Sections
- An ad in Plastics Engineering Magazine

It is suggested that other SPE Sections within a 200-mile radius be contacted to participate in the promotional activities.

Also, if possible, a mini-website (possibly embedded in the Section website) should be prepared with the same information provided as the flyer.

Hotel coordination

The appointed Section representative should interface with the hotel to arrange for catering and logistical details. If registration is running higher than anticipated, then the seating can be changed from classroom to theatre. A registration/sign-up desk is needed. It is suggested that morning/afternoon coffee breaks be provided, and a buffet style lunch. Also, a one-hour reception at the end of the day for continued interaction between the attendees and corporate sponsors is recommended. It is important to not skimp on the amenities, as corporate sponsors will remember this and not sign-up again in the future.

All details should be confirmed with the hotel one week and three days beforehand. If possible, someone should visit the hotel and walk through and inspect everything the afternoon or evening before. Those responsible for registration and other hotel logistics should plan to arrive at 7 a.m. in anticipation of registration starting at 8 a.m. The AV setup needs to be checked first, and a backup computer (w/ the presentations) should be available if there are technical problems.

The MiniTec Event

The program generally starts with a brief statement from representatives of both the Section and Division. Someone should be designated to introduce the speakers, direct the attendees to catering events/tabletops, and try to keep everything on schedule. The hotel needs to be apprised of any last-minute schedule changes (program running slow or fast), and monitored to make sure breaks/lunch/reception are ready.