



IAN Convention Guide

2023

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Introduction

Throughout the organization you would be hard pressed to find two ships that approach going to a convention the exact same way. This guide is an attempt to bring a number of those ideas together in one place to provide information for chapters to try new things and to improve the overall experience of the convention. Please understand, this is not a “how to” guide but a collection of thoughts and suggestions that you should pick and choose from to fit the people involved and the convention environment. We hope you find insight, encouragement and some new ideas to help you with your next convention planning process.

How to have fun

One of the best ways to have and promote fun is to include others, don't delegate to others, but include them in the planning stages. This creates a sense of ownership for members and encourages them to participate when they see their ideas executed. So plan early to get ideas down on paper.

Also don't be a perfectionist, no plan survives contact with the Con. Department heads will be late in getting back to you. Your panels will be at the wrong time. A crew member who was going to be your security head now will not be attending due to life. Reorganize or find people who can step in and help.

Don't sweat the details too much or you will go nuts. Figure out what the core of your offering is and stick true to that in spirit. If you are dead set on having a well staffed fan table and the party room is an Afterthought or the people running the party room have not responded? It may be time to focus on the table instead.

Lastly One of the biggest stress points is money. Be open and upfront about your costs and where it is going and how it is coming in. This will likely lead to scaling back, but if your team is aware of funding as you go it won't be a surprise when you need to ask for more or cut back.

And remember none of us are professionals at this so mistakes happen. We are all volunteers with lives outside of TRMN and conventions.

Goals

1. Have fun
2. Socialize with members
3. Recruitment

One of the biggest questions when going to a convention is, “What should we be doing?” To rephrase this a bit, “What should we accomplish while at a convention?”

The first and primary goal of any person attending a convention is to have fun. This should be the only motivation to go to a convention. If you are not going to have fun, then there really isn't any reason to go. Another way to look at it is if what you are doing is to have a chance to sustain, grow and be successful, all the members attending the convention need to have a good time. Otherwise, no one will want to continue to do it and anyone you try to recruit will notice and not want to join. So fun first. Also if you genuinely have a good time people will want in on that fun. When you smile at someone they tend to smile back.

The second goal is to have opportunities for group socialization. The biggest problem for TRMN is that we are a large virtual group. Since we don't regularly meet in person it is very hard for us to form strong, lasting interpersonal bonds with the rest of our chapter and greater organization. Therefore, while at the convention we should set aside time to talk with our fellow members and get to know each other. This is a great time for chapter triad members to find out what everyone's hobbies are and what activities they might like to attend. Very few people are ever motivated to attend an activity with a bunch of strangers. Use the fun and common interests of the convention to break the ice and get people talking.

The third goal is to meet new people and expose them to the Honorverse while the fourth goal is to recruit new members. The reason why I list them in this order is because no one who is strong-armed into joining the org will stick with it and be an active member. We already have plenty of members that are on the rolls and do not have anything to do with the organization. What we need is members who want to join and are willing to engage with other members of the organization. Therefore, we should engage new people and introduce them to the Honorverse and the TRMN. This organization is a fan club first and foremost, therefore we should strive to find members who are fans of the books. Once we have this similarity, we can use it to motivate them to join the club by showing them how these books and its author have brought us together to accomplish great things.

Convention Table

The standard activity that TRMN promotes for all conventions. The idea is to obtain a table at the convention where we can set out stuff and have members in one location to meet and talk to con attendees.

There isn't one right way to set up a table. It all depends on the resources at your disposal. The first step is to find out who is willing to bring something to the table, literally. If you can get a number of people to bring an item that can be showcased at the table. You will be able to have a diverse collection of items.

Now let's discuss the basics of setting up a table. The first item is the table cloth. Ideally, I would match the color to the service color of the primary ship, or black will. This can be a simple, and cheap, bed sheet. If you have the time and inclination you could paint the org title

and ship name on the part that would hang over the front. You could also print iron ons and add the ship's crest and org seal. Embellish as you see fit, the goal is eye-catching but not crazy busy.

The next thing you will need is a sign(s). If you didn't embellish your table cloth, then I would get some poster board and create a sign to hang in front of the table. I would also create a banner style sign to hang at the back of your area above your heads. You can also create/purchase a vertical banner to place on either side of your table. The goal is to make sure everyone knows what organization you represent and it is easy for them to spot. Most people tend to either see high things or low things, so having two signs makes sure one is seen.

The next step is the display of items. Once you know what you will have to display and where your signs will go, you will need to decide how to lay out the stuff. The basic goal is to have items that will grab peoples attention but not have so much stuff that their brain cannot differentiate what is at the table quickly enough and choose to ignore everything. Group similar things together and place some space between items. Single items can be placed by themselves to really help them stand out. If the table ends up full, pull some of the items off the table and rotate them back onto the table every hour or two. Also, if you have a dozen different books, feel free to remove some and keep the ones with the most eye-catching artwork. They don't have to be on the table for you to grab them and make reference to them.

If you have freebie items ie badge ribbons, cards, candy, etc, don't put them all out at once. Put out 4 to 6 at a time and the rest being the table. This prevents some one from knocking them down and prevents someone from running off with every thing. Also it creates a sense that you are a popular table and can foster a sense of scarcity. This can draw people in.

The last part is the people. Do not get a table to set up and leave unattended. This is a waste of time and money. You should make sure you always have two people at the table at all times. First, this means that there will always be someone around if a bathroom break is needed. Second, it means there is an automatic witness to all interactions and safety in numbers. Third, built in moral support for those you are not very outgoing. Fourth, you can play the game I like to call Rake and Catch.

Rake and Catch is a simple game. The idea is that one person stands in front of the table. Their goal is to engage as many people as possible and pull their attention into the table. where the second person will be waiting to further discuss the organization in detail, give them kitsch and even sign them up. The raker will need to talk to many people to get a few to come to the table, so they need to be free to be out talking to the new people. The person behind the table then knows that they have interested people and focuses on talking to them and introducing them to the different aspects of the books and the organization itself. After 30 to 60 minutes the two can switch. No one wants to join an organization that is being promoted by two people sitting behind a table engrossed in conversation or on their phones. Someone needs to watch for new people

and always be ready to engage. See previous section on discussions about what to say and how to say it.

The Raker should try to be eye catching. Use lines like "Come Join the Imperial Navy...no the other one...no the other one." Or "The Queen's Navy needs you. She's not picky she took me."

The person behind the table should be knowledgeable about the Org, and the ships represented so they can direct potential recruits to the right person.

And don't push recruitment. Get to know the person and let them get to know you. Our rolls are filled with sensor ghost. Really talk with them, don't be elitist or exclusive but feel the person out, talk to thier interests and relate it back to the org. This is where knowing X chapter does minitures, y chapter does charity, z chapter is mostly administrative. It they fitnthy fit if not move along.

Also be aware of eachother there are times when someone just wants a captive audience to talk about what ever it is they want to talk about. And since you are there on shift that's you.

Also TRMN Myers tend to gather around the table. This can help as a check in center for members, where you can fill volunteer spots and spread information if Cell service is bad. But don't let it turn into a conversation area for members, get members to move to another location.

Party Room

This is a great way to socially interact with people and introduce them to the organization. I know a number of members who have had great success recruiting new members at a party room. But beside recruitment, this is also a great time for members to hang out and get to know one another. Remember people join an organization based on interest or novelty of the group but they will end up staying and participating with the group because of the people. So the goal of a room party is to socialize. Have fun and get to know as many people as you can. The more you know and who knows you, the tighter the organization can become.

Some additional things to think about when organizing a party room:

Water - Make sure you have plenty of water for general consumption. Most people will be going from room to room drinking alcohol. Having water available will help with their recovery. Don't be afraid to offer it often.

Snacks - You can purchase a box of random assortment of small snacks on Amazon and have it handy. Put out a handful or two at a time and when you start running low get another handful. A little sugar, starch and salt to keep people going for the night will be greatly appreciated.

Missile Pods - this is our signature drink and so much more. If you have a party room, you probably need to consider having at least a few rounds of missile pods. People will have heard of them from other conventions and will want to participate.

The true goal of the missile pods is interactive theater. It needs to be made into an experience that is capped off with a unique drink. It is also a good idea to have a non-alcoholic alternative and some other alternative for food allergies on hand. Here is a rough outline of what to do:

1. Form a group of people into a circle (10-12 is a good max size).
2. Introduce the drink by telling them the contents and how it is layered.
3. Then introduce them to their role. They are all missile techs on board a queen's vessel and give them instructions on how to launch a missile.
 - a. extend armature
 - b. receive ordnance
 - c. retract armature
 - d. open hatch
 - e. launch on orders
4. Once everyone is finished, collect the cups and pass around a donation jar.
5. Missile Pod rolls should not last more than 5 mins.

Alcohol - This can be the most expensive and complex part of creating a party room. Some people like to have mixed drinks and others like to have the basics like beer and whiskey. The best advice is to use the same idea for a restaurant and keep the offering simple. Don't try to have a little bit of everything cause you will spend all your time mixing drinks. Drinks are the bait, not the goal of throwing the party. The best parties I have seen have some type of premixed drinks that can be quickly poured and served. And then some version without alcohol as well. This may not be exciting but it allows you to have planning and control over how much alcohol you will need for each night. This is especially good if you are on a budget. It also means everything can be produced in batches. If you think it will be a small con, start off making small batches. Remember unused alcohol can be saved for the next con or a ship's party so don't feel it all has to be consumed.

Drink Tickets - This can be a great way to limit the amount of alcohol that you need to have on hand and have some other positive side effects. Don't sell the tickets. Give away the tickets at the door. One or two per person. If they don't want them, they can always give them to someone else. Great for a conversation starter. Also, give away a limited number of tickets as you walk around the con or at the table. This will help drive traffic to the party.

Games - It might also be a good idea to have some bar games handy that people can play while talking. Nothing complex or fancy, just something simple and social.

Important to remember have some one checking IDs at the door. Use different color wristbands for each night. And members on shift need to be sober themselves, at the discretion of whoever is in charge.

Other Convention Activities

Beside the table and party there are a number of activities that one can include while at the convention to get non-members to interact and learn more about the organization. Here is a list of some activities that you might find fun and useful for your convention:

Artemis - This is a basic ship simulation video game that requires multiple computers to be networked for proper play. In some areas our org is known for being willing to bring this to the con so that attendees can play. The first step is to obtain the software and user license. Then you will need to obtain a minimum of four computers and install the software on each. One of the computers will be the host and actually runs the game while the other computers act as different ship stations that players control. Navigation, engineering and weapons are the 3 primary stations that need to be manned. Then you fly around and battle with known enemies. It requires a lot of teamwork, communication and can be a lot of fun.

Raffle - This activity is where you collect information from a person in exchange for an entry into a drawing for a prize. The key here is to understand your audience and balance the effort needed to win does not exceed the perceived value of the prize. If the prize has no real value then people will feel like it's a waste of their time to sign up for the drawing. This does not have to happen at a table, but can be done at a party room or with members in full uniform in a con suit or wandering around the convention.

If you wish to collect money, most states will consider this as gambling and you will need a license to proceed. A gambling license can be difficult to obtain, as it is tightly regulated, and will require an organization to hold the license. As only the President of the TRMN, Inc. can legally sign for such an item, this will make obtaining a license a non-starter. Therefore, don't collect money for a raffle, the benefits do not outweigh the headache.

Convention Volunteer - Many people are needed to make a convention work. Most of the time these people are working behind the scenes to make sure people and equipment arrive at their designated location on time, people eat, and everyone stays safe. Consider volunteering as a group and in uniform for the convention.

Shore Patrol - This is when a team of TRMN members volunteer with con security, or agree to run con security, in uniform. This is a great way to get visibility and positive interaction with con leadership.

Gift Bag Giveaway - One of the more simpler ideas that can be used if you do not have a table. Basically, file a number of small bags with TRMN swag (stickers, pen, name tag ribbons, etc) and a card with the organization's website, a contact email and the urls for the first two books. Then walk around the con, strike up conversations and hand out the bags to random people. It is

best done with members in uniforms. Each member should only get a handful of bags at a time and have a designation location when people can be restocked.

Scavenger Hunt - The hard part for this event is finding items to give away that motivate people to participate. When combined with a raffle style giveaway makes for an interesting adventure for con attendees no matter when they start the quest.

There are multiple ways to configure a scavenger hunt. You can have a series of riddles that leads people to a final goal. Or you can have people collect things (I would strongly recommend pictures or signatures). Once they have completed the task they can turn in the list for verification and entry into the prize. You might also think about having 2 to 3 different sets of equivalent tasks that can be completed for multiple entries and so that you don't have all the groups doing the exact same thing.

A couple of examples of scavenger hunts:

- Signatures of different TRMN things or members(i.e. a flag officer, enlisted member, members of different services, etc.) This will require uniforms for best effect.
- Find the location of different signs around the hotel and/or con space.
- Take pictures doing certain actions at different locations
- I would try to involve the merchants somehow. They might be willing to play along for some increase in traffic.

Bingo - Very similar to the scavenger hunt but instead of obtaining a complete list, fill a board bingo style. This one will take a bit more prep as you will want to have a huge number of random things to find and then have to create a series of random boards that can be filled out. Each completed board is a new entry into the final drawing.

Award Ceremony - A great form of propaganda. Ideally, you will want to get a room with convention and have it listed in the program. Then get every member in attendance to show up in uniform or at least con min. The event is basically a public recognition of what the members have been doing and accomplishing for the organization. Non-member will then get to hear what we are doing and see how we recognize those that accomplish things within our ranks. Win win. Ideally, you should plan ahead, find out what awards will be coming out for the members in attendance and have certificates printed out (or even have actual awards available to hand out). Then make sure to do your homework and know what each person did to receive their award so that you can read the citation and even embellish it a bit. It's a great time to put on a show and celebrate all that we do for each other.

To find out about awards you should contact the service heads or the Awards Director well in advance to obtain the necessary information so that they agree to hold off making the announcements ahead of time. Surprising members with awards is always worth the extra effort. This is easier if it comes from a Fleet CO.

Also Having a "Captain's Box" can make this easier. A box with divided compartments that can stay separate even when not right side up. Have rank pips, beret flashes, and common ribbons

from Armed Forces Servic Ribbon up to The Conspicuous Gallantry Medal us a good spread. Then members can trade in old ranks. The initial investment is big but start small and pass it on.

Also if you can't get a room do it in a public space.

Parade - You will need to gather some flags and a number of members in uniforms and then have them march around the con space. Line everyone up by rank, lowest to highest. Have the flags lead the procession. When you get to your ending spot, have a short speech, discussion on future plans for the area chapters, an awards ceremony, or some other short activity that all can participate in, that is a moment of bonding.

Blood Drive - Most blood collection organizations will not send people to an event without a guaranteed number of pints. Therefore, you will need to schedule some people ahead of time to meet and preferably exceed the guarantee and then have open slots that can be filled by walk ups at the convention. Additionally, you will need to provide a number of volunteers to help staff the event. This is a great event, if you can pull it off, but probably not for the novice.

Charity Drive - Have a closed container that people can drop in donations for a chosen charity. It's good to have a charity to show how our org does a variety of activities including philanthropy.

Panel - Who doesn't like the idea of getting 3-5 friends together to debate the positive and negative aspects of your favorite SciFi topics. This is exactly your opportunity to do so. Also, you can set up a Q&A session with members of TRMN to talk about their experiences and involvement with the group, and how others can get involved.

Trivia - Hold a trivia contest based on the Honorverse with prizes for the winners.

Screening - Host a screening or viewing party of a classic or beloved science fiction film or TV show, with an introduction or discussion led by TRMN members.

Arts and Crafts - Organize a workshop or hands-on activity that allows attendees to participate in a group project or activity related to the fan organization's interests, such as building a robot, designing a spacecraft, or creating a cosplay outfit.

Workshop or Demonstration - Host a workshop or demonstration focused on a particular skill or craft related to the fan organization's interests, such as prop making or special effects or miniture painting.

Gaming Tournament - Host a gaming tournament or competition that focuses on science fiction-themed games or challenges, with prizes for the winners.

@Random - Remember having fun, it doesn't all need to be planned. While waiting for the parade to start, start a sing-a-long. If you have metal chest metals walk up to another member and shake your rack make it jingle. Engage with other fandoms, show that you can play in others spaces. Do a pod roll where you attack the Death Star or a Borg Cube, or a red dragon. If there is a pirate walking around engage with them as a member of a Space Navy.

If you stay insular and isolated and make others engage only on purpose terms that will cause a bad impression. But if you "play" or "yes and" other fandoms you foster good will in the community, also it is fun! And if we have fun others will want to join in that fun.

Conclusion

In conclusion, participating in a science fiction convention as a member of the TRMN is an unforgettable experience for any fan of science fiction. You will have access to a wide range of activities and events that will allow you to connect with fellow fans, explore new and exciting aspects of science fiction, and celebrate your shared love of the genre. From engaging panel discussions and workshops to cosplay contests and social events, conventions offer something for everyone. Additionally, participating as a member of the TRMN can provide opportunities to grow as an individual, develop new skills, and build lasting friendships. So if you're a science fiction fan who wants to take your passion to the next level, consider gathering a group of members and contributing to the fun of the other event goers by adding to the list of activities.