TIPS TO SECURE ATTENDANCE APPROVAL FOR THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF ARMA INTERNATIONAL

(author unknown – from 1986? Newsletter of unknown ARMA Chapter)

It is never too early to begin planning for attendance at the Conference. Below are some tips to obtaining approval from your company.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK – Before making your request, determine the effect on your company in terms of costs and your time away. Be sure you are able to clear your work schedule for those days.

BASE YOUR REQUEST ON NEEDS(S) OF THE COMPANY – For example, if your records management program could benefit from an upgrade in procedures or equipment, explain how the ARMA Conference will offer sessions that will provide you with guidelines, plus the vendor exhibits to view the latest equipment.

BE SPECIFIC ABOUT THE BENEFITS – For example, determine how many hours can be saved by attending the vendor exhibit and seeing equipment at one location, rather than meeting with each vendor individually back at the office. Remember that your time is money.

PUT THE REQUEST IN WRITING – In memorandum, outline clearly and succinctly:

- Your reason(s) for attending the conference
- How the company will benefit (be as specific as possible)
- All costs, including registration fee, meals, hotel and travel
- Arrangements you will make to cover operations while you are gone
- Include all promotional information available, and
- Close with the point that attending the conference represents an investment for your company, for which there will be a definite return.

IF THERE IS A DELAY IN RESPONSE TO THE REQUEST – FOLLOW UP -- A reminder in the form of a memo, phone call, or a friendly "nudge" in the hall can help jog memories. Offer to meet with the person at his/her convenience.

POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS AND HOW TO RESPOND TO THEM -- Anticipate possible objections and be prepared to respond as specifically as possible.

Here are some examples of possible objections you might have to answer:

"Let's discuss it next month (or later)"

> "If I am to go, the best travel rates can be obtained now. The sooner arrangements are made, the better the prices."

"It costs too much."

> "While it will cost a total of about $___, I will be able to save at least that through what I will learn about ____, which is a major concern for us now. I will be able to accomplish ____, which should save us at least $____." (Also consider time save and productivity gained.)

"We need you in the office."

> "I have already arranged for ____ to cover for me while I am away."

"I'd rather you attend a more specialized conference."

> "The main advantage of the conference is that it offers a variety of topics with practical information I can use in many areas, not just one. For example,____." (Give examples of sessions and how they will benefit the company.)

SEEK APPROVAL NOW – Do not wait (unless, of course, there is a good reason for you to do so). The earlier you begin planning, the better your chances of gaining approval, since you will have time to overcome objections. Presenting your request in terms of your company's objectives and needs will show your ability to plan ahead and think strategically.

REMEMBER -- If you think the ARMA International Conference is a truly sound investment in both your career and your company's success, it is worth the effort to do a good job of convincing management that approval of the expenditure is to everyone's best interests.