

## Persistence

Beverly Ingle, an independent marketing consultant and experienced event planner, tells the following story of a near-miss at a major event:

**“In the mid-1990s, the destination management company I worked with won the contract to produce the events for the American Automobile**

**Association’s (AAA) annual convention. As the event production manager, I was tasked with putting together, among other things, the closing party for approximately 800 delegates in my city’s largest hotel.**

**The client requested indoor fireworks as part of the festivities. Through due diligence, I contracted a pyrotechnics contractor my company had worked with on other projects. That contractor had experience working with the city as well. My ducks were in a row, our paperwork for permitting was ready, and all was rolling along as expected. Until the day before the event.**

**Both the pyrotechnics contractor and I had left numerous messages for the fire marshal regarding our plans and confirming that all would be approved, with nary a return phone call. We even faxed over the plans indicating where the pyrotechnics would be positioned in the room in relation to the stage and the ballroom’s fire exits.**

**Fully expecting to pull the permit the day prior to the function, as was the status quo in my city, my pyrotechnics contractor headed down to the fire department’s main office. The call I received at about 3:00 p.m. made me ill. The fire marshal refused to issue the permit, saying that because of the city-wide events planned during the same time, his department was short-staffed and could not properly supervise our activities.**

**Tourism is the number-two industry in the city I live in, and you just don’t tell AAA no. I burned up the phone lines for the next three hours, calling the fire chief, the mayor, the director of the convention and visitor’s bureau, the director of catering at the hotel and any other heavyweight I could think of. The bottom line: the pyrotechnics *had* to happen. Fortunately, the pressure from someone who these powers-that-be didn’t know from Eve worked. The fire chief even admitted that his fire marshal was remiss in not returning our previous phone calls and was short-sighted in helping us produce what was an important event for our city.**

**The show went on, with fabulous pyrotechnics that the crowd loved. And the fire marshal assigned to our event was the same gentleman who never returned our calls.**

**To this day, as far as I am aware, I am the first and last person to ever receive permission for indoor pyrotechnics in this city.**

**What did I learn? Never settle for the status quo. Pester the heck out of someone if necessary to get your permits and any other required documentation in hand well before the event. And NEVER be afraid to call in the big guns, whether you know them personally or not.”**

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