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BXNews is published by the
Builders Exchange Network
as a service to members.

Our website is: www.bx-net.org

Submissions, articles and other
information for content is compiled
from members of the organization.

Suggestions for topics, member news
or article submissions can be sent to:
info@bx-net.org

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Show them what you're worth!

This past month I had to interact with a purchasing agent for a small, publicly funded hospital who was not all that familiar with construction procurement and was cool to the fact that OCA was hosting their bid opportunity for a window replacement in one of their buildings.

The procurement agent had used a procurement website called Biddingo, which unfortunately has traction in several regions of our province—especially among municipal governments.

OCA received the project bid opportunity from the architect directly. During the tender period, when the mandatory site meeting was held, several OCA members showed up—along with only two bidders who were registered with Biddingo.

I relish the fact that the OCA listing produced more potential bidders than the Biddingo advertisement. The downside was that the agent felt he was losing control. The OCA parallel listing meant that not all firms were registered with Biddingo, which was his designated procurement location.

The agent wrote me an email describing his concerns:

"My concern with bidders who went to OCA and haven't downloaded documents from Biddingo is that they don't have the official tender documents. In addition, they haven't received any addendums that were posted as per my knowledge."

I bet many of you have also dealt with this situation. How you and your staff respond is very important to the future of that buyer and your BX. Don't dismiss the discussion. It's an opportunity to speak to the purchasing agent about how you can address their concerns and why the BX should be part of their future.

Start by reminding the buyer or agent that you as a BX are a highly professional organization that never makes mistakes in posting bid forms and addenda for thousands of bid opportunities. I also showed how other buyers dealt with the concerns this purchaser was expressing by offering a sample "Instructions to Bidders" clause. It features language that dealt with where bidders access their bid documents.

The specific language is as follows:

"If a bidder obtains this Request For Tender (RFT) by any means other than through the XXXXXXX, ensuring the accuracy of the RFT and the receipt of any addenda is the sole responsibility of the bidder. It is the responsibility of the bidder to regularly check XXXXXXX for any addenda that may be issued prior to the tender closing date. Addenda issued by the purchaser prior to the tender closing date form part of this RFT and must be acknowledged by bidders in the space provided in Part H – Form of Tender. Failure to acknowledge all issued addenda may result in the bid being deemed non-compliant and rejected."

I am sharing this experience to pass along a useful response that any of you may wish to include in your conversations with buyers and designers. It's also a segue to promoting the BXNet Annual General Meeting in San Antonio, February 6 to 8, 2018.

Learning from each other is the cornerstone of belonging to BXNet. Our annual conference is huge for your professional development. I say this not just with the relatively green BX manager in mind, but also for the grey hairs like myself. There has not been a conference where I did not leave with at least one nugget or one relationship worth the value of the BXNet conference investment.

This year's conference will again emphasize building up your knowledge base from the experience of others and I encourage you to get registered.

An update from the managers

It's been a busy couple of months here at the BXNet offices, and we're excited to share news with you.

The first and most significant item is that we've finalized the program for our Annual General Meeting in San Antonio, next February 6 to 8. You should have received the document in your email by now. If not, check out page 4-5 of this issue for a detailed description of the program.



If you're planning to attend, please register soon. And please consider sponsoring our program. As an exchange manager, you understand very well the importance and value of bringing sponsors in to help create great events. We're asking you to put the shoe on the other foot for this event and help make it a success.

The second item worth highlighting is the bump in new members that we've seen in the past few months. We have profiled five new members in this issue of the newsletter (see page 8-9), and we're close to securing a handful more. All of which is fantastic news.



On the subject of membership, if you haven't already done so, please remit your BXNet member dues for 2017-18. We were late sending out invoices this year, but you should have received yours by now.



Finally, it was a pleasure to travel down to Louisville, Kentucky for Reporter Training earlier this month. More than 20 people attended, which was fabulous, and they enjoyed two days of insightful training about not just the ins and outs of the construction industry, but also how to transform themselves and their plan rooms from passive aggregators of data into active and dynamic providers of quality information to their members. (See our article on page 6.) Thanks again to the Builders Exchange of Kentucky for hosting us, to Brenda Romano of the Virtual Builders Exchange for delivering such informative and engaging training, and to everyone who attended.

Since this is our last issue of the BXNet Newsletter for 2017, we'll sign off wishing you all a safe holiday season and best wishes for health and prosperity in 2018. We look forward to meeting you all in Texas in February!



Join us in San Antonio for the 2018 BXNet AGM!



Networking and education in the heart of Texas

We are delighted to announce our full program for the 2018 Builders Exchange Network Annual General Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, from February 6 to 8.

Our meeting begins in the evening of February 6 where we'll gather in the lobby of the Hotel Valencia Riverwalk before taking a cruise down the scenic San Antonio River. There you'll see the best sights of the River City while our guide tells us a bit about the city history. After our cruise, we'll convene in the hotel restaurant and bar for a welcome cocktail reception and some light snacks.

The meeting program begins in earnest on the morning of February 7. After breakfast, we'll gather for a couple of get-to-know you exercises: introductions from the board members and the new network managers, and the popular Exchange Your Exchange session where representatives from each exchange give a quick introduction about themselves and their organizations, and share a few thoughts about what they'd like to take away from this year's conference, and how they might be able to help others overcome their challenges.

From there, we'll talk plan rooms. We've convened speakers from a local general contractor, a trade contractor, a designer and an owner to give us frank and honest insight about plan rooms, and the things our members can do to serve these groups better and retain them as members.

After lunch, we'll convene an executive breakout session. Members will be split into small groups, each of which will be given two topics to discuss for 30 minutes. At the end of the breakout, a representative from each group will be asked to present their thoughts and findings on each subject to the audience.

Day one ends with a deep dive into relations with boards and executives. Sometimes, these people don't understand the work of an association or exchange manager, or even the work being done in your plan rooms. We'll give you tips on how to educate them a little better, and how to recruit and work with new volunteers.

Our evening concludes with a private dinner and tour at The Alamo. Our friends at the Virtual Builders Exchange are generously sponsoring this exclusive access tour. Bring your guests!

Day two opens with two full sessions on marketing. Our BXNet managers James Raiswell and Angela Tristram will kick things off with a session on marketing basics. They'll address questions like, what target audiences are we serving, what's our value proposition, how do we prepare marketing plans, what's search engine optimization all about – and more. After that, the floor is yours. We're asking a handful of members to talk to us about the marketing efforts that work well for them, and those that may have fallen flat. We'll also ask members to share a piece or two of their marketing collateral that's worked well.

Register now!



Registration for this year's BXNet conference is just \$400 per delegate. If you'd like to register, simply send us a note at info@bx-net.org and let us know how many delegates and guests we can accommodate for you.

Sponsorship opportunities are available

Each annual general meeting of the Builders Exchange Network is presented on a not-for-profit basis. We depend on sponsorship contributions from members like yourselves to develop and deliver on our ambitious meeting programs.

Please consider joining the following members in their support of the 2018 BXNet Annual General Meeting:



In exchange for your support, we will acknowledge your organization as a contributing sponsor on all event signage and in pre- and post-conference issues of the BXNet Newsletter. You will also receive direct recognition during the event and have the option of contributing a short profile about your association, exchange or plan room in a forthcoming issue of the BXNet Newsletter.



To sponsor, simply send us an email at info@bx-net.org.

Our next session will touch on Technology in Construction. Our speaker Rex Klein of BarryHund Associates will give us a 360-degree look at the software and hardware that is – or that should be – on our minds and our members' minds.

Our day two lunch will be highlighted by the 2018 annual meeting itself where we review the network's affairs, induct the executive officers for 2018–19 and welcome our new president, Brenda Romano of the Virtual Builders Exchange.

After lunch, we'll convene our second plan room session – this one on metrics. We'll look at the numbers you should be tracking to bring deeper intelligence not just to your own operations, but also to your members and subscribers.

Our final formal session of the meeting will touch on how to find and keep the best people. We've invited a local expert to talk trends in human resources: how to keep people motivated, how to resolve staff issues, and what to do about those millennials.

Our meeting concludes with a closing session led by our new president Brenda Romano. She'll discuss some of the key findings at the meeting, and we'll turn the floor over to you for questions and answers.

For those wishing to stay an extra evening in San Antonio, we've secured a block of tickets to the San Antonio Rodeo for the evening of February 8. Just let us know if you'd like to attend.

See you in San Antonio!



Book your room at the Hotel Valencia

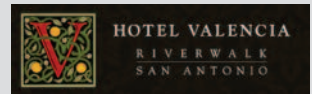
BXNet's 2018 Annual General Meeting will take place at the Hotel Valencia in downtown San Antonio. As part of our program, we have secured a block of rooms at the hotel for the rate of just \$189/night.

Here's how to register:

- 1 Go to www.hotelvalencia-riverwalk.com.
- 2 Enter your arrival and departure dates (available dates are Monday, February 5 through Thursday February 8).
- 3 Under "Promotional", choose: "Group Block"
- 4 Enter our group code: 1802BXNET
- 5 Click "Check Availability"

If you prefer, you can simply call the hotel's reservations line at: 866-842-0100. Just ask to make the reservation under the group name: 2018 BXNET Annual Meeting.

See you at the Hotel Valencia!



Bring your guest



The guest program for the 2018 BXNet Annual General Meeting is light and lively. For just \$150, your guest can join us for the evening events on February 6 and 7, as well as breakfasts on February 7 and 8. We've convened a city bus tour on the 7th for guests to see San Antonio's sights, and we've kept the program open on the 8th for anyone to explore at their leisure or play a round of golf at any of the city's excellent courses. Register now for the guest program and the full conference at info@bx-net.org.

Reporter Training was a **huge** success!

More than 20 people attended and learned a series of important rules about how to pursue plan room leads.

We're pleased to report that this year's reporter training session in Louisville, Kentucky was a great success. More than 20 people from local construction associations and builder exchanges across Canada and the United States attended.

During the two-day session, they learned a great deal about the difference between active plans reporting services and passive data aggregators – and how to move from the second group into the first. They learned about the way our plan room competitors work and how they sell their services to our current and prospective members, and what we as local organizations with professional, trained staff can do to counter the effects of those services on our membership basis.

Along the way, they also learned valuable tips and information about the construction purchasing processes, the various types of procurement methodologies, and the role of builder exchanges in each process. Why and how do we collect pre-bid information? What role can we play when a project is out for bid? What's the value in publishing lists of apparent low bidders, and post-tender information?



Participants from across Canada and the United States attended.



Brenda Romano of the Virtual Builders Exchange delivers Reporter Training.

One of the important take-aways for participants was the need to understand these processes and to be able to speak the language of construction with confidence to owners, builders, architects, engineers and anyone else involved in process. One of the best ways to deter a potential source is to use incorrect terms and ideas, and to sound insecure on the phone, or to resort to email to communicate with construction professionals.

Participants also learned about the importance of building strong relationships with sources, the need to seek out one-on-one interactions with those people, and the value of approaching people over the phone and in person rather than over email. They also played a simulated bid game where they got a taste of the stresses involved during a tender closing.

Thanks again to everyone who participated. Thanks especially to our trainer Brenda Romano of the Virtual Builders Exchange and to our hosts at the Builders Exchange of Kentucky.

Watch for another reporter training session in 2018!

What's your value proposition?

What can you tell current or prospective members about your organization that will make them sit up and take notice?



One of the subjects that will be front and center at the 2018 BXNet Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas next February is marketing.

More than a few members have asked what they can do to market their services better, who they can (and should) market to, and how. On the surface, that's a lot to consider, but the thinking can be made a lot simpler when you understand—and can articulate—your organization's value proposition.

What's a value proposition?

Simply, a value proposition is a statement of the particular products and services that your organization brings to market to address a particular problem that a defined group is experiencing.

A value proposition can be as crude as this:

For contractors in Anytown, USA that want a reliable source of construction project information and regular opportunities to network with peers, the Anytown Builder Exchange offers a plan room service that displays more than 1,000 projects per year, and a lively social program that features monthly networking events.

That's not a fancy statement, but it does two things. One, it clearly identifies the audience being served and the particular needs of that group in the market. Two, it positions our fictional exchange as a provider of particular services in response to that market need.

The key to crafting a good value proposition is to be clear, succinct, and accurate. Get it down to just the details that people need to know, and be precise about the value you're bringing to them. So while it's nice to say that you exist in business to maximize your members' profits, be clear for a moment: that's not actually a promise you can make or a service you offer. You'd *like* to help your members maximize their profits, but you can't make that promise to them.

Features and benefits

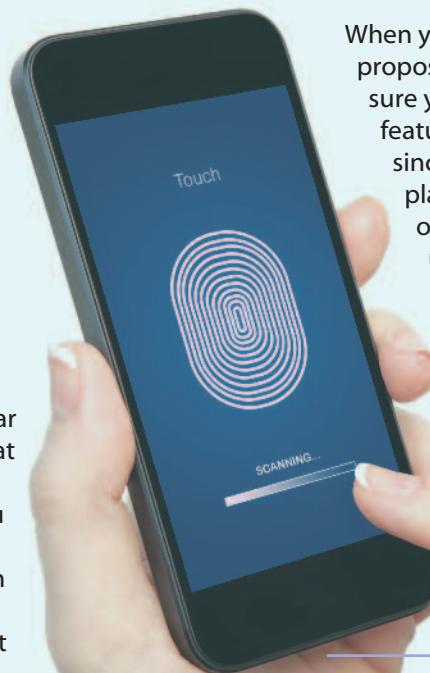
One of the important distinctions to make in your value proposition is the difference between a feature of your exchange and the benefit it offers to its members. Most people think they understand the difference between a feature and a benefit, but they usually fail to bring both forward clearly in their value propositions.

Take your mobile phone for a second. It has a number of features, like a fingerprint ID button, a strong case and a fast processor. Those are features of the device. They're things the device does or has on board to make the user experience better.

The benefits of those features are as follows. The touch ID adds security. It allows you and only you to unlock your phone. The strong case means your phone won't break if you drop it. The fast processor means you can stream movies and play games without interruption. Those are benefits of the device.

When you craft a good value proposition for your exchange, be sure you're clear on not just the features of your group (in business since 1932; now with an online plan room) and the benefits it offers (experienced staff who understand construction; 24/7 access to all the latest project data in the state).

Good luck!



Welcome

to our newest members!

We are delighted to announce that five exchanges have joined our network in recent months. Please join us in welcoming the staff and managers of the Duluth Builders Exchange, the Construction Association Network of Saskatchewan, the Salem Contractors Exchange, the Arizona Builders Exchange and Master Builders of Iowa. Their profiles are below.

If you know of a nearby exchange that might benefit from being a part of the Builders Exchange Network, please let us know!

Duluth Builders Exchange

Incorporated in 1902, the Duluth Builders Exchange (DBX) is a member-driven non-profit association dedicated to providing timely construction project leads and information to our 400 member companies.

For 115 years the DBX has specialized in:

- providing plans, specifications and information covering projects to be constructed, repaired and remodeled,
- compiling, maintaining and distributing timely information about the construction industry and its participants,
- partnering with architects, engineers, developers, government agencies and members of the design community to introduce their projects to the largest pool of qualified bidders,
- promoting fair and equitable bidding,
- promoting the skill and services of our members, and
- cultivating friendly, social and business relationships among members of our industry.



*DBX executive director,
Don O'Connor*

The DBX was among the first group of exchanges in the nation to offer an online plan room, and in 2017

we introduced Intend2bid, the first social media platform specific to the construction industry.



www.duluthbx.com

Arizona Builder's Exchange



*AZBEX owner,
Rebekah Morris*

The Arizona Builder's Exchange was started in 2010 by owner, publisher and fearless leader Rebekah Morris. Everything we do is done with one goal in mind: helping our users and subscribers easily identify the freshest and best project and business-development opportunities. To that end, we produce an extensive and search-friendly database with regular updates, a twice-weekly industry news magazine, and multiple conference-style industry events to serve our users.

The AZBEX database has listings of nearly every project in the state, including project-specific contacts and documentation, and with more projects added every week.

The AZBEX digital magazine publishes project and industry information from more than 30 state, national and industry news outlets – as well as extensive original content and commentary from our expert in-house editorial team – to keep readers abreast of the latest project and trend information.

Our signature events bring together industry leaders, owners and experts from both the public and private sectors to educate and network with attendees about the state of A/E/C in Arizona.



Whether it's the database, the magazine, an event or just a general inquiry, the AZBEX staff of industry experts is always available to answer our subscribers' questions and help them enhance and expand their potential opportunities.

www.azbex.com

Salem Contractors Exchange



*SCE director,
Kay Evans*

Salem Contractors Exchange was founded in 1950 by contractors and architects to bring together the projects to be bid on in the area. The exchange is a not-for-profit corporation that exists for the benefit of its members. We are run by a board of nine directors, and we have four events a year: our annual member meeting, our banquet, our golf tournament and our membership BBQ. We receive projects for all of Oregon and southwest Washington, and our members are located throughout Oregon.

Several years ago, we sponsored a health insurance association which covers most of Oregon.

The program delivers large-company prices to small companies. It has been successful and continues to grow, despite the changes that are constantly taking place in health care. Our exchange also sponsors scholarships for construction-oriented students and is constantly looking for ways to be of value to our members.

www.sceonline.org



*MBI director
of sales and
programming,
Micah Loveless*

Master Builders of Iowa

The Master Builders of Iowa's Construction Update Network provides the most comprehensive bidding information available in the midwest. From pre-planning to award information, we search out the information and report it to our members accurately and completely. Our services are beneficial to owners, architects, engineers,

general contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers. By utilizing our services, companies will experience more opportunities for growth and obtain the information they need to succeed in today's competitive construction industry.



Construction Association Network of Saskatchewan



*CANet manager,
Matthew Farthing*

The Construction Association Network of Saskatchewan (CANet) was founded in 2008 as a separate non-profit to govern the project information services within the province of Saskatchewan in Canada. We serve over 1,100 member companies. CANet's Board of Directors was responsible for the migration to an electronic planroom service which included pre-tender research as one of its new initiatives. In May 2016, CANet hired its own team, demonstrating the importance of enhancement to the association information services.



The new direction of CANet has allowed Saskatchewan to renew its focus on enhancing services and the local procurement environment. This approach has fuelled consultant community engagement in the province – and resulted in more projects and greater use of industry-supported procurement methods like the Saskatchewan Bid Depository.

We have several new initiatives also underway, including:

- pre-tender services that are directly integrated into the planroom application,
- private plan room services for general contractors and that are integrated with the association,
- implementation discussions surrounding electronic bidding,
- promotion of best-value procurement, and
- a renewed focus on generating quality project opportunities from conception to contract award.

"As a new member of BXNet, I look forward to collaborating with like-minded colleagues. What a fantastic opportunity to learn from each other's successes and failures to offer industry leading services!"

www.constructionnetworksk.ca

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Be sure to visit the "Vault" at www.bx-net.org to view copies of the BXNet newsletters, slides from past Annual Meeting presentations, articles of interest, sample documents and much more!

USERNAME: ibmember PASSWORD: 2015BXnet

Why re-invent the wheel? Have sample documents or information you think would be helpful to your fellow members? Simply email it to info@bx-net.org to be uploaded into the vault.



Are you doing your job?

“There is no success without a successor.” – John Maxwell



If you are in a leadership position, your job involves being a coach, cheerleader, doctor, encourager, trainer, mentor and visionary, to name just a few. But have you ever heard that your job is to be replaced... on purpose? You are to create an organization or platform that doesn't include yourself at some point in the future.

I heard John Maxwell say several years ago, “Every leader's job is to work himself or herself out of a job.” If you are not creating people to take your place, your leadership only exists for you... and it will die with you. If you have to check your messages by email, text or written notes to make sure people the people under you are making you look good, you need to check your leadership motives and methods.

I meet employees as I travel who don't have “permission” to put people over policies and wind up angering people. The CEO cares more about the bottom line (or should care if he or she wants to remain the CEO).



Move up or move out

Your job as a leader is to grow yourself and stop being the lid on the pressure cooker of your organization. One day it is going to blow! If you are empowering your staff to take authority (not responsibility) then you will be free to grow yourself and morph into a new position and leader. Failure to do so will stagnate you in your current role forever. You can't move up if you are still tied down to the same tasks that others are neglecting or doing poorly.

“But Jim, I can't give these people authority! They are a bunch of incompetents!” A CEO said this to me in a conference a few years ago. “Who hired these people?” I asked him. “Well... I did!” he exclaimed. Then that's not my problem. You hired people you knew couldn't handle authority and you knew they weren't capable of taking on tasks without your micro-management, so now you are paying the price for that decision (or string of hiring decisions). If you exercised more leadership in staffing, you would have to do less management now.

This article was submitted to BXNet by Jim Mathis. Jim is a speaking professional who focuses on helping leaders compete in a changing and challenging global marketplace. For more information or to subscribe to Jim's monthly e-newsletter, send an email to subscribe@jimmathis.com with the word SUBSCRIBE in the subject line or visit jimmathis.com.

METRIC SYSTEMS

What stats and figures are you tracking in your plan room, and how are you using that data to improve your services?

Plan rooms will be an important subject of discussion at February's BXNet Annual General Meeting. In light of that, we're drawing attention to a particularly under-studied, but very valuable, aspect of plan room operations: data capture and analysis.

Your plan room can be a source of valuable intelligence not just for your members, but also for your own operations. There are layers upon layers of data you can and should be tracking to help you understand who uses your plan room and for what purposes. Mined properly, this data is information you can feed back into your own operations to make them better, or feed back into the purchasing chain to make your services even more valuable.

Here are just a few of the metrics you can and should be tracking in your plan room.

Total projects reported

Start with the basics. A simple, regular count of the number of projects you're reporting on—whether it's monthly, quarterly or annually—tells you and your members about your standing in the community, and the worth of your group to the industry at large. Just about every exchange, association and plan room tracks this metric. Unfortunately, many stop there.

Projects reported by type of owner/issuer

Mine deeper to extract more intelligence. Start by tracking projects reported by type of purchaser. Doing so allows you to understand where your projects come from, and what are the regular trends in these sources. Numbers will fluctuate from quarter to quarter or year to year, but significant changes should give you good reason to do a couple of systems checks. The first question to ask is whether your relationship with your source has changed. Call them. Are they souring on you or the services you offer? Or is a drop in project volume simply due to a smaller-than-usual building program? It's important to know.

The other question to ask is whether the quality of your reporting is still up to snuff. Is your team capturing all the leads that are out there, or have they fallen into the trap of rounding up just the usual suspects?

Projects reported by region

Slice your data another way by looking at where in your region your projects are located. Dive as deep as county by county to get a better understanding of where your

reporting is strongest and where opportunities for improvement lie. This data is also useful for sharing with members and those that are considering joining your group.

The most popular projects in the plan room

If your software can record the number of unique hits each project receives, you've struck a rich vein. By understanding which projects are most popular with members, you can focus your reporting efforts on those jobs with the greatest value. Put another way, if a lawn-mowing tender attracts only two hits, and a school renovation job gets 50, why bother chasing down another lawn-mowing project next month? Project popularity allows your reporters to focus on project quality rather than project quantity.

Apparent low bidders and contract award

Your work as an exchange doesn't end once a tender closes. There's plenty of information on apparent low bidders and post-tender awards that some of your members can put to good use. A list of apparent low general contractors lets bidding subs know which projects they might be carried on and which to let go. Contract award notices tell certain kinds of suppliers which generals to reach out to for sales leads. That's all valuable information to some people.

User activity

Some interfaces will let managers build detailed profiles of member activities while in the electronic plan room. How long did they spend on the site? What pages do they usually visit? How many projects do they view?

One BXNet member tells the story of a non-member subtrade that was paying their exchange an average of \$1,600 per year in user fees to view documents in the electronic plan room. When the exchange staff told the company they could join the exchange for less money and view the plans for nothing, the deal was sealed!

There's gold in them hills

Believe it or not, data is the new dollar. Exchanges that are able to harness data from their plan rooms and extract real, valuable intelligence—metrics such as these, but also many others—can feed all that information back into their own operations and to their members to make their services all the more meaningful. Isn't that what we all need?

BXNet
Builders Exchange Network
2018
**ANNUAL
CONFERENCE**

Tuesday to Thursday.
February 6 to 8, 2018

Hotel Valencia, San Antonio, Texas

PROGRAM:

Tuesday Feb 6

BX Net Board of Directors
Afternoon Options - City Tour or Golf
Opening Welcome Reception

Wednesday & Thursday

8:30 am to 4:00 pm
Educational Program
Wednesday evening social function



*U.S. News &
World Report's
Best Hotels in the USA,
San Antonio, 2017*



HOTEL VALENCIA
RIVERWALK
SAN ANTONIO

Registration Fee: \$400 Delegate
Hotel Deluxe Room Rate is \$189 before taxes
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