

A Basic Event Plan for Success

1. Determine event goals and objectives.
2. Identify potential dates.
3. Administration plan to include staff and duties, framework for checklists.
4. Confirm event location, create floor plans, confirm catering and logistics plan.
5. Prepare a Marketing Plan.
6. Organizational chart identifying human resources, supervision and volunteer requirements.
7. Prepare an Event Budget.
8. How will you evaluate the event and determine its success?
9. Visit our Event Planning Blog for on going educational articles on event planning.

The best part of our hospitality industry, is that we truly are unlimited with what is in the realm of possibility, and your own creativity is the only barrier. I hope that over the next few months that I can share some of my experiences with you to assist with your planning and at the very least provide you with some entertaining insights to our fantastic industry.

Now I am sure that as most people believe that they are “people persons” that you have your company holiday parties and events already in the planning stage. If you haven’t, not to worry, there is always time for the creative mind. Whether you are planning an event for 25 or 2,500, it is always good to plan in advance. The typical process includes; securing a venue, establish your budget, and plan your food & beverage requirements, planning out items such as décor and entertainment. This order can certainly change pending on their importance to your organization, but in the end, they all need consideration.

Securing your venue: our region offers a variety of great locations for events, from hotels and banquet centers to centre stage and areas surrounded by beauty. The first priority is to pick something that truly suits your needs. Fitting 300 people into a space for 250 certainly may be possible, but more than likely this will not assist in quality service and provide a positive experience to the guests. If you are unsure, most venues will hold space for a limited time, or until another client has interest in the space for the same time, then it becomes decision time. Unfortunately there are only so many Saturday nights in the month of December, so planning for this needs to be timely. Many companies have been creative and create their seasonal events in January and February. In doing this in many cases allows them to have more flexibility in dates, rental fees and from the comments of many of these individuals, provides them some excitement in a typically blue time of year, and frees up their guests time during a busy time of year.

Establishing your budget: We all wish for a bottomless pocket, which is rarely the case. Beginning your planning with even a rough budget in mind will help with all the decision making that you have to do. An old school of thought of not giving suppliers working budget numbers thinking that you would get more from them unfortunately is not



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the case. Quality suppliers of services want to do the best job for you and exceed your expectations, and having this guideline assists them with providing you quality advice and suggestions in an expeditious manner. Please don't forget, a working budget is just that, a working budget, which can be changed any way you instruct it to be.

Planning your Food and Beverage Requirements: When you are presented with sample menus for review remember they are examples of the most popular items. It is your party and you can certainly request any items that you wish. In most cases throughout the year, only 50% of clients actually select menus from presentation kits. The creativity of menu design is the exciting part of the party and our business, so why not incorporate your food selections into your theme? Your hospitality provider is working with you in the planning stage to listen to your vision of the event and to assist with suggestions. Also in some cases, they may not recommend items for various reasons. Professionally we are trained not to say no to clients, but your hospitality provider is also responsible to assist you in looking after your best interest for a successful event.

Planning your décor and entertainment: Have a clear vision of your event. Décor and entertainment can be subtle to round out the experience of the event, or they can be the focal point for the evening. A clear vision and direction that you give your suppliers will assist in guiding you through this section.

When you really stop to think about it, is your event to provide a meal for your guests? Or is it to provide people whom you value a memorable experience to say thank you and to enjoy each others company on a joyous occasion outside your normal environment?

Fundraising Events: Achieving More Than the “Same Old, Same Old”

Without question, attracting support to a fundraising event is becoming ever more challenging in our busy and competitive world. A person could potentially fill his or her entire schedule with open houses, golf tournaments, dinners, roasts, auctions, and more. Choosing between charitable events that benefit equally meritorious community projects can be very difficult.

To draw exceptional support to your event, you need more than a worthy cause—you need an exceptional event that people will want to attend. Even the most creative planners face the danger of creating events that reflect their prejudices about what people want and need. To attain the exceptional, planners need to create exactly what supporters of a cause are looking for.

Measure the market that you are trying to attract, and then sell directly to it. A shotgun approach works no better in fundraising than it does in any other endeavor. Commercial firms spend enormous amounts of time and money to understand the “X generation,” the “why generation,” and so on. Why would these principles not apply to the fundraising environment? The 30-year-old demographic has habits different from those of the 50-year-old demographic, and both groups are significant targets for your fundraising efforts. Watch the trends. Just because a particular approach has worked for the last five years, doesn’t mean that it will succeed for the next five. Properly planned and executed change can significantly multiply your fundraising revenues.

Gifting can be a terrific tool to show appreciation. But don’t undermine your objective: make sure that the gifts are both appropriate and useful to your expected guests. A contributor may feel uncomfortable leaving an event with items that will never again see the light of day, knowing that the money used to buy them could have gone towards the fundraising goal.

People are nearly always ready to open their hearts and their wallets for a good cause. Success is there for the taking. Are you ready to seize it?

Five Common Pitfalls in Event Planning - And How to Avoid Them

You don't have to be new to event planning to succumb to the supercharged atmosphere of your own unfolding event. Even seasoned professionals can use the following five reminders to help keep their feet on the ground as they execute a project:

- 1) **Be conscious of the program timing.** Guests can absorb only so much information and sit for only so long. Never schedule a program to run past 10:30 pm on a weeknight: not only will some people walk out of the program before the end, but the rest will leave en masse at the close. When a great event comes to an end, the guests will clearly be in no hurry to leave. Also, you can't expect a 90-minute dinner to be served in 45 minutes; make sure to budget the appropriate amount of time.
- 2) **Review all your contracts and documentation twice—if not more.** You are intimate with the details of that project that you have been working on night and day for months, but you may have met with your hospitality suppliers just two or three times. It is easy to take some of your arrangements for granted because they have been on your radar from Day 1. Any details that are important to you and to the event are important enough to document in the paperwork. Remember, you and the client are not alone in this project; make sure that your whole team is in the loop as they work to help meet your objectives.
- 3) **Do not leave any arrangements till the last minute.** Last-minute changes increase your risk of missing the mark. Advance planning not only gives you peace of mind; it also permits your hospitality partners to make all the arrangements necessary for a smooth and trouble-free event.
- 4) **Create a checklist of items that are vital to your event.** Share this list with your suppliers at the start of each planning meeting. Checking through the list is a great way to see exactly where you are and what remains to be done. Most importantly, the list will help you avoid those "I wish I'd thought of ..." moments during your event. Overlooked items are often the simplest and most basic—ones that got lost while everyone was focusing on larger issues.
- 5) **Help your hospitality suppliers to coordinate.** In dealing with your suppliers one-on-one, you can easily forget to relay a few details. Organize some joint meetings that bring all of your suppliers together. Those meetings will help them to understand the "big picture" and the ways in which they need to work together. Last-minute missteps can be prevented if everyone is clear about their needs and expectations.