

How To Successfully Plan And Organize An Event

# HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY PLAN AND ORGANIZE AN EVENT

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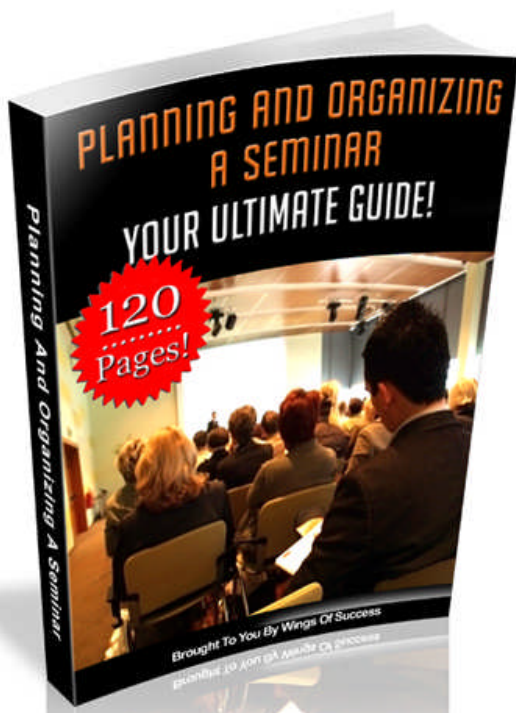
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## Event Planning With A Group

It's party time! You and a group of friends or associates have decided to ban together to host an event. You gather together for an event planning brainstorming session and you can't decide on anything. Every person involved wants different things. Instead of planning the perfect party, you've spent hours debating something as simple as the design of the invitation.

One of the positive benefits of event planning with a group of people is that each person can take on a role. One person can be responsible for invitations, while another tends to the menu and a third handles the decorations. The burden of the event planning is divided into sections and each person can place their full attention on one aspect instead of one person become flustered while trying to remember every aspect.

There are drawbacks though when you have many voices all involved in the event planning process. Differences in opinion might create some conflicts and what one person suggests, another might discount.

There are ways to handle the many varying opinions and still create a memorable event. One way is to decide on a voting method. If there are several people involved, you can agree at the beginning of the event planning process that majority wins. This can resolve any disagreements in a fair and reasonable way. When everyone has had their vote, the most votes win and the decision is final.

Another really effective approach is to discuss everyone's strengths before the event planning discussions ever get underway. If one person enjoys menu planning, this area could be left up to them, if another is very creative, decorations might be their area of expertise. Utilizing people's individual likes and strengths can help guarantee not only a smooth event planning process but a highly successful event as well.



## Event Planning With A Child

Parents love including their children in decisions, especially decisions that directly affect them. Sometimes it can be asking the children what they'd like for dinner or what book they'd like to have read to them before bed. Children love expressing their opinion and feeling as though it's valued.

Another area that children love having input in is the planning of their birthday parties. Even children as young as two or three-years-old can contribute to the event planning process.

One of the favored things at every birthday party is the birthday cake. It's the star attraction and during the event planning of the party, the cake is an important aspect. A parent may choose a cake in the shape of their child's favorite cartoon character or super hero or they may elect to get a plain cake but decorate it themselves with small toys that the child can keep beyond the life of the cake. It's fun for a child though to be included in the cake picking part of the event planning. Ask your child what kind of cake they would like including flavor and design. They'll feel extra special for having chosen their birthday cake themselves. If you prefer a homemade cake, have the child take part in the baking and decorating of it. Again they will feel accomplished and proud for having taken part.

A fun part of children's birthday parties is the treat bag that children generally take home from the party with them. These are often filled with small candies, perhaps a brightly colored pencil and maybe even a small toy. Including your child in this part of the event planning is fun for them as well. They can choose the goodies at the store and be responsible for filling the bags for their guests. Including them helps build their self-confidence and also makes them feel as though they've directly contributed in the success of their party.

## Event Planning And Family Reunions

One of the best things to do on a warm and sunny summer afternoon is to pack up your family and head to a park where you'll find dozens and dozens of relatives you haven't seen in decades. This is the premise of a family reunion; a chance for people who have drifted apart to reconnect with good food and even better company.

Planning a family reunion can be one of the most intensive types of event planning there is. It involves not only contacting dozens of people but finding those people. If you are fortunate you've been in close contact with much of your family and it's simply a matter of either sending out invitations or telephoning them and arranging a pot luck dinner in a park. However, it isn't always this easy.

If you are taking on the responsibility for event planning your family reunion there are a few things you can do to make the job easier:

" Locate the most recent family tree. This will prove invaluable in the event planning because it will give you a rough idea of the number of attendees as well as supply you with their names and sometimes cities of residence, which makes for easier contact.

" Branch out. Just as a family tree has branches, so should your event planning tactics. Ask a family member to contact one half of the family tree while you handle the other. This will cut the time in half.

" If someone asks what they can bring don't say "nothing." People love contributing and even if it's just a basket of chicken or a watermelon it will help. Take people up on their offers to help, it will make the day much more enjoyable for you.

Family reunions can be a great success and a wonderful way to catch up with the people closest to you. With the proper event planning it can quickly become an annual event.

## Event Planning A High School Reunion

High school - the words bring back memories of gym lockers and strict teachers. Ten or twenty years later those memories may have faded a bit, but the fondness for the people you spent time with is still very much there.

High school reunions are a fun way to reminisce about the days gone by when your hair was a bit longer and your stomach much toner. When you attend a high school reunion your focus is on your old classmates and how much they've changed and what they are doing now. It's easy to overlook how much time and energy went into the event planning for the occasion.

Usually when the years pass by and it's nearing the ten or fifteen year mark after graduation, a group of former students will take on the task of event planning for a reunion. They will gather together as much information as they can, based on the names in yearbooks and the people they are still close to, and they'll share the information of the pending reunion, hoping that it will fan out and most former classmates will get word. They may also consider placing small ads in local papers to catch the eyes of the people they once went to school with.

That's only the beginning of the event planning process though and there are still many details to tend to. One of those is finding a venue to host the event, choosing a caterer and possibly even preparing a program that involves speeches and awards similar to those given away at graduation.

With proper event planning a high school reunion can be an evening filled with old memories and new information. It's always nice to look back and it's even more enriching to see how far you've come and to look ahead.

## Event Planning As A Career

Some people love planning parties. They get excited weeks in advance, tending to every small detail and when the day of the function finally arrives, they make it appear as if it came together with a snap of the fingers.

These are the type of people who make perfect event planning professionals. They naturally enjoy every aspect of planning and throwing a perfect event.

There are event planning professionals in every major city. For a fee they will take your idea for a party or gathering and bring it to fruition. All without any worry or stress on your part. All you do is explain the outline of the event, what you hope to accomplish, your specific preferences and you write them a check. After that your job is done until the day of the event arrives and you attend as the host who appears completely organized.

If you've planned major events with success such as your own wedding, the wedding of a friend, a family or high school reunion or even a child's birthday party, than you might be a professional event planner in waiting.

For the people who do this for a living, it comes naturally to them. They revel in the details, and in the excitement of pulling it all together into an impressive event.

If you think you might have event planning blood running through your veins it's worth pursuing; especially if it's something that you truly enjoy. You can talk to some local party planners in your area and get a better sense of what the job involves and if you have the credentials to get started. A background in either catering, sales or marketing would be a great foundation to start from, since the event planning business utilizes all three.

## **5 Pitfalls To Avoid When Planning Your Next Event**

Event planning can be difficult. You have to consider the major decisions and every little detail. In event planning, every problem contains its own solution - a lesson you can apply when planning the next event. Here are some common pitfalls to avoid during your event planning efforts:

### **1. Don't Sweat the Small Stuff - Keep your Head above Water**

Getting too deeply involved in minute details can completely derail your event planning process. The bigger the event, the more vulnerable you are to getting overwhelmed with tiny details, wasting valuable time you should have invested in the major planning issues. During the event planning process, focus on the theme and colors, not the individual decorations. Sketch out the menu rather than planning each dish. Develop a general budget without creating a line item for every supply. Develop a schedule with milestones (caterer contract signed, facility rented, invitations sent, etc.). Don't plan the timing of every activity necessary or you'll spend all your time on your schedule! Consider bringing on someone to help you manage the process - a volunteer from your organization, a friend or family member, or a temporary worker.

Remember that you can't operate effectively if you are under severe stress. Having an emotional breakdown can ruin your event. An important aspect to event planning is keeping your cool. Keep your priorities in order. Use others to fetch, fix, and decorate. You're the planning guru. You're responsible for the smooth, successful accomplishment of major decisions, not the table decorations.

### **2. Invest Time in Planning the Food and Bar - Keep your Guests Happy**

Big events, unless they're staffed by a big group of volunteers, should be catered. Catering includes both the food and the bar. When you select your caterer, be sure to have a detailed written contract that specifically identifies the menu, the bar setup, itemized costs, a clear schedule, and specific performance standards that could influence the amount you finally pay. If the caterer lets you down, you shouldn't be obligated to pay the amount you agreed to in the contract.

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Remember that the caterer will be "invisible" to your guests. If the menu isn't delicious, the setting isn't attractive and appetizing, and the bar doesn't function well, it will reflect on you, not the caterer. If you're planning an event for charity or fund-raising, these things may be critical to success. Be sure your caterer is responsible and that you've checked out their recommendations before signing the contract. Your reputation depends on it.

### **3. Don't Rely on a Handshake - Get it in Writing**

Almost every aspect of event planning should be documented in a contract. No matter what it is - Whether the tablecloths and napkins, the entertainment, the clean-up, the facility, or seating - make sure you have a written agreement with your provider that clearly identifies what you're paying for, what you expect from them, and the precise time they will provide their goods or services. This documents your providers' commitments to you and gives you a clear base from which to assess their performance.

Settling for a friendly handshake will set up you for disappointment and added expense. Without a written agreement, you may find that your provider has overbooked his service or changed his price on you at the last minute. You can avoid this crisis by having written, formal contracts that cover your needs. If the worst should happen, a contract also gives you a strong argument in court proceedings over payments (or lack thereof).

### **4. Don't Go Bankrupt - Successful Event Planning Involves a Budget**

Be sure that you have a clear budget for your event. If you're doing it for hire or for an employer, they'll give you a number to use as your planning base. Of course, they'll respect you if you save some money. If you're depending on donations or paying for the event out of your own pocket, you should have in mind a minimum and maximum amount that you're able to spend. Do enough research to have a realistic idea of what different event planning elements will cost (caterer, entertainment, facility rent, decorations, etc.). Some of these costs will be more flexible than others. You may not be able to do much about the price of the facility, but you can make menu choices that will influence the cost of catering. And you have a lot of room to negotiate for affordable entertainment - anywhere from an orchestra to a one-man band. Decide which parts of your budget are most important and fund those first. Try to buy decorations and other

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supplies from a discount outlet or in bulk. Do your homework during event planning, and you're more likely to get the most out of your money.

### **5. Don't Get Over-stressed OR Over-Relaxed**

In successful event planning, much work is done far in advance. This helps reduce the organizer's stress level. It also assures that the best goods and services are available at a reasonable cost. But sometimes, when things are going great well in advance of the event, it's a temptation to sit back and take it easy for a while. But take care - just the time you think it's safe to sit down, the roof falls in. Keep up on event planning progress by checking in on others, offering to help resolve problems, or making a few important phone calls during those "down times" when things seem really quiet. Don't let things slide until tomorrow, or they may become much bigger problems that demand more time or money to fix than if you had been there to cut it off at the pass.

If your event planning is thorough, and your schedule and budget are well thought-out, you should have some planned times for relaxation. Use them as scheduled, not as they seem to come. Otherwise, you may find yourself in a crisis with limited resources and few options. The time to slow down and relax is usually the day of the event. Everything's set up and in gear. You've done your job, and the event is coming off without a hitch. You can afford to relax and enjoy the event because you were on top of things in the earlier event planning stages.

## **6 Factors To Look Out For When Planning The Event Itinerary**

Event planning is successful when guests know what to expect and then get it. You may have lined up the best caterer, the most exquisite decor, and the finest facility. But if people don't know when to sit down for dinner or when to plan a bathroom break, your event will lose some of its glimmer. For organized events involving speakers or specific activities, it's important that event program planning take into account time available, time required, and the inevitable last-minute changes. When you develop the program for your event, consider these details:

### **1. Who's on First?**

Before you write down your event program, the agenda, make a list of every activity you want to occur. Then order everything in a way that is natural and makes sense. For example, instead of scheduling a speaker immediately after the meal, schedule something active that will keep your guests from getting drowsy. Better they dance or do the limbo than they take a nap during an important talk. Don't plan a speaker during the first part of the dinner. If you do, your speaker will have to shout to be heard about the squeaking of chairs and rattle of silverware, not to mention that get-to-know-you chatter you hope to encourage over your catered meal. Don't overwhelm your guests by presenting several speakers or presentations back-to-back. They'll get restless and stop paying attention, both insulting the last speaker in line and losing the impact of his or her presentation. Schedule highly social activities at the beginning and end of your event program. Give people a chance to see who's there at first and to say their hellos. Then let them relax and have a good time before they go home so that they take a great memory with them.

### **2. Timing is Everything**

Once you've established a logical, smooth order to event program activities, make sure event planning includes practical timing. You have an allotted amount of time to accomplish everything, and you don't want your event to move like a freight train. Neither do you want it to progress along in fits and starts. If there's no time for relaxation or bathroom breaks, your guests will not be happy. And they'll be overwhelmed if you try to keep them engaged every minute.



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There's a fine art to scheduling - planning too much or too little time for each activity will leave your guests irritated, bored, or gone.

Including times on your program will give your help your guests anticipate their own choices - when to fill their plate or find their seat, when to take that smoke or bathroom break, when to corner Harry for a special favor or question. It will also help you keep things moving according to plan by giving you check points. A printed program with scheduled times keeps everyone on the same page as the event program unfolds.

### **3. Don't Overbook your Program**

Everything you plan to do doesn't have to be included on the printed program. Keeping a special "surprise" speaker or entertainer on board will allow you to fill extra time if it should come up. Your program doesn't have to be so detailed that you have no flexibility to change things that need to be changed to keep the momentum going. Make sure you include the major activities (the meal, specific ceremonies, keynote speakers, social activities social mixing time or dancing) on your printed program, but don't include every break or announcement. Your program should be structured enough to keep things organized and flowing, but it should be open enough to meet unanticipated needs.

### **4. Be Prepared for Featured Guests to Go Over their Allotted Time**

You may have scheduled 10-15 minutes for each speaker or presentation, but it's human nature to ramble. What if someone takes 5 minutes over their time budget? What if EVERYONE goes over? Or what if it takes longer than anticipated to set up a presentation or a stage? Keep in mind when setting your schedule that even the best plans go astray. Allow slightly more for specific activities than you think they will take. And build in some breaks so that speakers can get their breath or guests can take care of personal needs. If you find you don't need the extra time, keep a "surprise" guests or activity in your back pocket. It'll add some spontaneity to your event and make it less predictable. Your guests will be happy to be "honored" with a special appearance or activity.

### **5. Be Willing to Cut the Fat or Add Some Sparkle**

Be flexible. Nothing will go exactly as planned. event program planning requires give and take on the scheduled program. Perhaps one of your speakers gets lost in traffic or gets sick. Maybe your entertainment can't find a place to park. Be willing to switch speakers and activities where it makes sense to keep the event moving along. Have something extra planned to substitute or add to your program if needed. One great way to accommodate unplanned timing jams is to have an emcee that can fill empty time with jokes and entertaining stories if necessary. The emcee can also drop some planned remarks to accommodate over-times. Be flexible, and don't get stressed when things don't go exactly as you planned them. Maintain your poise and grace, and no one will even know there's been a hitch in your event program planning get-along.

### **6. Always Have Someone Else Review your Program**

Your program documents the event. Avoid misspelling someone's name, and be sure there are no typos on your program. Your program should be attractive and professional. If you developed it, you're likely to miss some errors. Run off a trial copy and ask friends, co-workers, or fellow event planners to review it for you. Very important: double-check the spelling of names. No need to insult a speaker or guest with a casual error like that. When you are comfortable with your program, get it to the printer well in advance of the event. Creating unnecessary panic by waiting too long to have your program printed is an easily-avoided problem.

Event programs can be as simple as a list of activities or as complicated as a formal schedule. In event program planning, the nature and purpose of the event will suggest the type of program you need. The more guests attending, the more structured your program should be. If you have celebrities or community big-shots, you should include their names in the program.

Most important, use your program as a guide while you're overseeing the event. Don't throw your planning away by playing it by ear during the event. Set a reasonable, well-timed schedule that makes sense and provides for both stimulation and relaxation. Be both flexible and disciplined as your event program unfolds. Be prepared to make last-minute changes, but don't turn over the program "apple-cart" by making dramatic changes. Give your guests enough information to know what to expect, and then give them what they expect. Using an event program will be an invaluable tool in making your event a rousing success.

## **7 Key Reasons Why Events Marketing Should Be Part Of Your Marketing Strategy**

Any successful marketing strategy should include events. Marketing is largely a social tool that organizations use to improve their image, to attract clients, or to raise money or sell products. Humans are social animals, and we tend to respond better to in-person contact than to television or radio advertising. And when it comes to telemarketers ... well. Here are some important reasons you should include events in your marketing strategy:

### **1. Events Increase your Business Network**

When you host make an event part of your marketing strategy, you build your network by making new contacts who are interested in your product or service. They may have come to get the free booze or food, but while they're with you, they learn about you. Events will leave a good impression in the minds of those who attend them, and they're likely to talk about you and your event to others. Even if they don't buy your product or sign at the dotted line, you can never predict the positive impacts of broadening your social base on the success of your marketing strategy.

### **2. Events Help you Give Back**

Sharing your success with your community is an excellent way to improve your image and create new friends for your business, a primary goal of any successful marketing strategy. You let people know that the community is important to you, that you respect them, and that you want to repay their kindness and loyalty. Hosting a community event will create social capital for you and your business or organization.

### **3. Events Help you Scope Out your Competition**

Marketing events give you the opportunity to learn about who your competitors are and what they're doing. Inviting competitors is a great way to get a sense of what they're about - their goals, their products, and their strengths and weaknesses. You may also get information on

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what their plans are, helping you formulate and refine your own marketing strategy. You'll increase your stature within your sector and create allies among your competition.

### **4. Events are THE Time to Make Announcements or Introduce New Products**

Critical to a good marketing strategy, especially if your organization is undertaking a new project or releasing a new product, events are the perfect venue for getting attention. If you want press attention, reporters are more likely to respond when you invite them to an event where they may also network and get free food. You'll get more public exposure from them. Because you'll have face-to-face interaction, you'll have a chance to test the response to your announcement or product - to get a sense of how it will be received in the market. Having this preview under your belt, you can make better marketing strategy decisions about whether, when, and how to release your new product.

### **5. Events Mean Exposure**

Your company or organization will always benefit from having your name in the papers and in the minds of your community and clients. Events are an excellent type of "reminder advertising," where you keep your name out front. Even when you're not making an important announcement or releasing a new product, using events as part of your long-term marketing strategy will reward your organization with continued exposure and interest. It will also help maintain business relationships with competitors, providers, customers, and the community in general.

### **6. Events Enhance your Image**

Even when times are tough and budgets are tight, hosting events will give you the appearance of success. People are more likely to do business with stable, established organizations. Even moderate events remind your competitors that you're a force to be reckoned with. They'll assume that if you can afford to put on an event, you're making a healthy profit and maintaining a strong, productive organization. When planning your marketing strategy and building its budget, don't cut events first. Remember that the investment in events as a key part of your marketing strategy pays off handsomely at the end of the day.

### 7. Events Increase an Organization's Pride

One subtle, yet profitable, way to show your employees your gratitude is to host an event for them. It gives you a chance to recognize their hard work and valuable contributions to the organization's success. It builds morale and loyalty, producing a more stable workforce. Hosting the occasional event for your employees also gets public attention. Consistent with any good marketing strategy, press and community leaders will take note, and your organization's reputation as a progressive institution will grow.

These are just a few of the more important reasons your organization should include events in its marketing strategy. Successful organizations are active organizations - they participate in the community, contribute to the industry, and maintain a public presence. Events will win public interest and support for your organization's goals and products. Consider events as an essential component of your marketing strategy, and you will reap rewards far beyond the cost and effort you invest.

## 8 Tips On How To Generate Fun Ideas When Planning Your Event

You may start your event planning with a mountain of event ideas, but there will come that moment when you hit a wall - when you just can't think of anything appropriate. In those times when your mind goes blank, try some of these tips for generating event ideas for your event.

**1. Take a Big Break** - If you can't come up with anything new or interesting, you may need to get away from your event planning session. Step away and do something out of character to change your mental state and spark your creative juices. Maybe a day at the spa, complete with massage and facial, is just the thing you need to refresh and replenish a sluggish event planning brain. Take a day-trip to a local landmark or nature preserve. Get away. Breathe. Exercise. Meet your friends for lunch or a movie. Clear your mind, and new creative event ideas will flood in.

**2. Do Something Social** - Sometimes we get in a terrible rut. Day after day - to work to home then back again. One way to refresh your event planning is to have some rich social contact. Do something different with your family or friends. While you're out, ask them what they think. Remember, two (or more) heads are usually better than one. Use social time to make your companions a sounding board for your old event ideas. They may be able to help you improve what you thought was a bad idea with a new pair of eyes. Keep an open mind when they offer suggestions - you're not the only one around with event planning skills.

**3. Try some Brainstorming** - One way businesses generate new event ideas is to brainstorm. Several people sit down together and throw out ideas. No one can make judgments about someone else's suggestions. Nothing is too stupid or silly. It all goes down on the list. You can try your own version of brainstorming when event planning. Find a quiet spot, sit down with pen and pad, and simply write down every idea that comes to mind. Don't second-guess yourself or form opinions, just write. Remember, in this case, quantity is better than quality. Just get as much as you can down on paper so that you can consider each idea's merits later on.

**4. Try Some Physical Activity** - When your blood is flowing and your heart is pumping, your brain is more active. If you get stuck and frustrated, try some exercise. Go for a walk, do some

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pushups, or clean the kitchen. You may have event ideas while you're active that you wouldn't have had otherwise. After a little healthy exercise, you may be able to look at things in a different light.

**5. Sleep on It** - Sleep is a naturally healing, restorative process. And during sleep, the subconscious mind works overtime. If you are overwhelmed, try to take a short nap. You may be surprised at the great event ideas that will spring forth from a rested mind. If your hard event planning work has allowed you to become exhausted, make a point of getting a good night's sleep before you try again to generate event ideas. A tired brain has tired ideas. Give yourself a better chance of creative thinking by resting.

**6. Seek event ideas from Other Sources** - One creative way to have creative ideas is to feed your brain before you sleep. Plant some subconscious ideas by watching an hour of television or going to a movie before you go to bed. Flip channels so that you don't get involved in the story - just look for great event ideas. Then sleep on it. Your sleeping mind will recombine and recreate what it has taken in. Give it a shot. You can't lose, and you may have some of your most interesting event ideas this way.

**7. Go Surfing** - If television or the movies aren't good enough event planning fodder, try surfing the internet. Search for party-theme tips or read articles on great parties. Find some blogs on relevant topics and see what you can glean from this fertile field. Cast a wide net by doing searches for very simple one-word concepts like "party," "entertainment," or "games." Get a bit more selective using short phrases like "best party ideas," "theme party," or "event activity." You can even search for concepts only loosely-related to event idea planning. Try a search for "great vacations," "cruise ships," "vacation tours," or "public speakers." Anything that will open your mind to new concepts will help you generate more event planning ideas.

**8. Do an Informal Survey or Poll** - If you've truly run out of event ideas, you can approach others in some novel ways to generate ideas. Tell people you're conducting a poll and ask them questions like

- What's your favorite social activity?
- What does your family do to have fun together?
- When was your favorite party? What did you do?

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- Who's the best party host or hostess you've ever known? Why?
- In your opinion, What makes a party great?

You may be surprised at the responses you'll get, and your questions may start conversations that lead to new interesting ideas for your event. At the very least, you get to know your friends and family better by showing interest in their opinions.



## **8 Ways To Incorporate Entertainment Elements Into Your Events Without Spending A Bomb!**

There are many ways to get memorable event entertainment without spending a fortune. These tips will not only help you with specific suggestions. They should also give you some of your own money-saving ideas. Entertaining isn't hard, but it does take some serious thought and some hard work, especially if you're on a tight budget. But never fear. Help is here!

Especially if you're planning a charity event, local celebrities can be a great start. You may want them there so you can sell more tickets to your event, or maybe they'll provide some event entertainment for your guests. Local deejays or television personalities love the flattery of being the "star" for a night, and they may agree to emcee your event. You can use their names on flyers and announcements to build up interest in your event entertainment. They may agree to show up for a short appearance, but if you flatter them enough, they may want to give a show. You'll never know until you ask.

Local bands or singers are also great sources of free or almost-free event entertainment. Struggling piano-bar singers or garage bands will be more than happy to appear at your event to get more exposure. You may even be able to hire them for the price of a free dinner. If your community has a college or junior college, you may find a great jazz ensemble or chamber orchestra that would play for a meal, some drinks, and some publicity. College thespians may agree to provide event entertainment, too. Check out the drama department for some starving struggling actors or actresses. Local comedy clubs may be a good source of event entertainment as well. Attend a few open mike nights to find someone who'll tickle your event's funny bone.

No matter how much you pay (or don't pay) your event entertainment, you always have the ammunition of a tax write-off to offer them. They can donate their time for your charity event entertainment, and you can provide them with a formal receipt for their income tax return.

Things to consider when selecting your event entertainment include the amount of time available for entertainment and the size of your facility. A one-man emcee or entertainer will be more flexible on time - they can get on and off the stage (or podium) - providing entertainment a

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little at a time. Being an individual, they won't require much space either. A group like a band will need to take large blocks of time to perform, and of course they'll use more space than one person. You may even have to provide a bandstand or stage for them.

If you have to pay for your event entertainment, there are several options available to you besides writing a personal check. Do you have an organizing committee whose members would be willing to make private contributions to the event entertainment fund? Or perhaps they'd be able to solicit contributions from local businesses or philanthropic organizations that support the event. If you have an event entertainment committee, you might be able to sponsor fund-raising efforts - sales of baked goods, used books or clothing, or bartering individual skills for contributions.

Another way to limit the amount you spend on event entertainment is to limit the amount of time they spend entertaining. Set aside an hour or two for the event entertainment. This allows you to limit the time to your budget.

If you're planning event entertainment, give it some careful thought. You may know more people and have more resources than you realize. Do you know a local artist or musician that may have contacts with affordable good event entertainment? Do you have a neighbor who works at the local college? What about people at the Chamber of Commerce? You may find an abundant source of local talent through these individuals with many, many local contacts. Take advantage of your organizing or event entertainment committee's members. Have a special meeting just to brainstorm entertainment options. Who knows, you may have the talent you need on your committee.

The most important thing is to keep an open mind. Don't discard ideas before giving them a chance. Give yourself a treat check out the local nightlife - visit local clubs and other events to get a sense of what's available in your community. Read the paper! Your local rag may feature articles on local entertainment that's dying to get some experience. You might even find a great street musician that would think an event entertainment gig is a windfall!

## **8 Ways To Work Successfully With Your Event Venue**

Every successful event planner will tell you that there are going to be a few problems along the way. Event planning involves time and effort, thinking about the "big picture" while also attending to minute details. Here are some guidelines that should help you make your event a great event.

### **1. Know your Goals**

Before you even start planning your event, be sure you can clearly articulate what you hope to accomplish. Do you want to make your best friend feel loved and appreciated? Do you want to sell more Tupperware? Do you want to land that million-dollar deal? The more you know about what you want from your event, the more prepared you will be to plan a great event.

### **2. Do your Homework**

Don't rent the first meeting hall you find or hire the first caterer that turns in a bid. Do some research. Know what's available and how much it costs. Be educated enough to make the best, most cost-effective choices. Try to learn from others' experience, and apply their lessons to your event planning process. The better educated you are, the more likely you will be to have a great event that everyone talks about for ages!

### **3. Make Having Fun the Object**

No matter what purpose your event serves, it will have to be a fun, entertaining event to succeed. And you must have as much fun as your guests. It's even important that the event planning process is fun. Be creative. Be resourceful. Remember that events are supposed to be fun, and make your great event the most fun ever.

### **4. Develop and Stick to your Event Budget**

Event planners have learned that you can spend every penny you have on just one great event. But this isn't necessary. The quality of an event does not depend on the dollar investment,

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rather it depends on effective event planning. You've already done your research and, by now, you should have a good idea of what the different elements will cost. Now, sit down and make a list of everything you need. Assign low and high estimates to each item so that you get a range of your total possible cost. Now, with the amount available in mind, go back and inspect each entry. Where can you save, and where do you need to spend a certain amount? Once you've settled on the most affordable combination, go out and do what you've decided. Try not to stray too far from your budget. You can have a great event for as little or as much as you're willing to spend. Deciding up front what that will be will give you long-run savings and make the most of your resources.

### **5. Rely on the Kindness of Others**

Get co-workers, family, and friends to pitch in with the planning process. They'll have some good ideas about getting value services, interesting and affordable decorations, possible entertainment, and a host of other details. There's no need to take everything on by yourself. You'll suffer event planning burn-out, and your event will reflect it. Get people to help you plan and put on a great event.

### **6. Build Them Up, Then Don't Let Them Down**

Try to get people excited about your event, and then give them what they expect. Use colorful invitations to set the mood. Talk to them about the event while you're preparing for it. Ask others to help make decisions along the way. Get them involved, and they'll not only look forward to it, they'll become instrumental in making it a great event.

### **7. Get the Word Out**

Depending on who you want to come to your event, it's important to make sure they're aware of the date, time, and location. Depending on the size of the event, you'll want to make sure the people you're inviting make the time to plan to attending. You can build interest by advertising. Low-budget advertising might consist of posting flyers around the community or making a few phone calls to remind people about your event. More costly advertising methods include newspaper and media announcements, printed invitations and posters, and e-mail reminders.

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Make sure you've focused on the places your guests are most likely to hear about your event, and you'll have a great event they'll be excited to attend.

### **8. Keep Calm, Cool, and Collected**

Event planning is a lot of work, and it's easy to be overcome with stress. But if you're too stressed or exhausted, you can't plan or oversee a great event. As you schedule your event planning activities, build in "me time" to take care of your own physical and psychological health. Try going to a spa or doing some yoga. Or go out and get some physical exercise and sunshine. Don't let your sense of responsibility lead you down the wrong road. It will sabotage your best efforts and keep your event from being the memorable occasion you've worked so hard to create.

Having a great event isn't easy. It requires energy, attention, and careful decision-making. Event planners must cope with changing conditions and lost opportunities. But successful event planners follow these guidelines and are happy to know they've met their goal of hosting a fun, memorable great event.

## **9 Key Ideas To Make Your Event A Successful One**

If you're planning a party or successful event, you'll have a lot to think about and do over the coming weeks. Being responsible for everything from the location to the party favors can be intimidating, but never fear. Here are some basic steps that will help you plan and host a successful event.

### **1. The Plan is the Party!**

The most single important aspect of having a successful event is to plan successfully. Consider all the scenarios - best, bad, and really bad. Now build your event plans to address your best dreams and worst nightmares. First, what is your goal? Are you throwing a bash for a long, lost friend? Are you selling a service or product to your customers? Are you raising funds for a charity? Your purpose for having the event should be the framework for everything you do from here on out.

Plan not only what you want to happen, but what you will do if it doesn't go that way. Give yourself lots of time to do your research, arrange for services, get the accessories, and encourage great attendance. Start with the big picture items like the location, the date and time, your theme, and your goals. Work your way down to the details including, but not limited to, table decorations, menu and specific dishes, space layout, coat storage. Plan flexibility into your schedule, and you're more likely to have a successful event.

### **2. Get and Stay Organized**

Once you've established your plan and schedule, stick to it. Of course, there will inevitably be problems and changes. But make it a point to keep personally organized. There'll be a lot you can't control, but you can control your own time, your health, and your attitude. When you start wandering away from your plan, things will become chaotic, harder to manage. Don't let the ankle-biters distract you. Be flexible, but keep your overall goals and schedule at the front of your mind. Keep your planning materials, contracts, and correspondence organized in folders. Use a day-planner to keep track of your appointments and commitments. And always, always

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plan "me time" to maintain your energy and interest in this project. Staying organized as a critical part of planning and executing a successful event.

### **3. Make the Venue a Driving Decision**

Once you have your plan laid out, your first big decision will be where to locate the event. How many people do you expect to invite? What type of entertainment are you planning? (A keynote speaker will use a lot less space than a 10-piece chamber orchestra.) Are you serving a sit-down dinner, a buffet, snacks? How much space will you need for seating? Do you want to be in a facility where other services are available? How far are you willing to make people travel to get there? Do you want an elaborate, expensive setting? Or will a casual, relaxed environment be best? When you know what type of place you want to use, identify at least three candidate locations and visit each one of them personally. Talk to the facility managers. Ask lots of questions. Find out what they'll provide as part of the contract and what you'll need to provide on your own. Ask for detailed formal bids from the candidates, and be sure to let them know they are competing. That will bring in lower bids. The investment of time and effort in selecting and securing the perfect facility will pay off big time on the night (or day) of your wildly successful event.

### **4. Develop a Detailed Schedule for Event Activities and a Program**

You probably already know the theme of the event if you've established your goals and you've selected an appropriate location. Now you need to plan activities that are consistent with your theme. The larger the event, the more carefully each activity must be planned. For big events, will you have speakers and presentations? Ceremonies? What types of activities are you planning? As a first step, sit down and make a list of every activity you want to happen. Then order them in a logical way that flows. Plan for some unstructured social mixing time at the beginning and end of your successful event. Decide how long you want to allow for meals, speakers, announcements, and entertainment. Allow extra time for your guests to leave for a smoke or a bathroom break. Keep your guests busy, but not so busy that they feel stressed or overloaded. Build in time for fun and relaxation as well.

### 5. Now Turn to the Details

The first major part of your detail planning is food and drink. Food arrangements range from the very complex sit-down multi-course meal to the pot-luck munch-n-go party. You'll need to decide whether you and your helpers can provide the food or whether it would be easier and more appropriate to hire a caterer. If you do decide on a caterer, go through the same process as you did when securing a location. Select candidates, interview them, and get formal bids. Decide what menu you can afford and want to serve you want the caterer to prepare. When you've made a decision on the caterer, sign a contract with your agreements outlined very specifically. Have costs broken out into line items so that, if you have to, you can make changes to adjust to your budget.

Many caterers also provide beverages. Do you want to have an open free cash bar or will you ask guests to make for their own alcohol? Do you want to have alcohol at all? If you decide on serving booze, you may also need to consider hiring some security guards to make sure things don't get out of hand. Again, whether through your caterer or as an independent service, get formal bids and sign a written contract for the beverage service. (Some locations will provide non-alcoholic beverages as part of the rental agreement.)

### 6. Focus on Entertaining Your Guests

Once you are settled on the facility, the theme, and the food and drink, you'll need to pin down your entertainment. For more serious gatherings, you may want to hire a keynote speaker or ask for presentations. For more social gatherings, you should consider a band or orchestra, a DJ or comedian, or other entertainers. Will your entertainment involve dancing? You'll need to be sure you have the space for that. If you're using an emcee, DJ, or comedian, a small podium will probably work. But if you're having band or group of entertainers, you'll need a stage. You may even want to have structured games or entertainment (ever heard of the murder mystery party?) that your guests can participate in. If you're holding a fund-raising event, you might consider an auction or competition designed to get bids. Whatever entertainment you choose, make sure it's appropriate for you theme. And time the presentation of entertainment after dinner or snacks. If you have a keynote speaker, have them start their presentation about half-way though the meal so that they don't have to compete with the hustle and bustle of getting people seated, early dinner conversations, and the tinkle of glassware and silver.



### **7. Cultivate your Providers**

To have a successful event, you must develop and maintain positive, productive relationships with your vendors. The first step is selecting reputable, dependable vendors that come with good recommendations. Avoid vendors who can't or won't get you in touch with their other clients. Be very clear with them about what you need and what your expectations of them are. Always get your agreements down in writing to avoid confusion and disappointment later on. Be kind and considerate with them. Don't think that because you've hired them, you can treat them without respect. Your successful event may well depend on the nature of the relationships you've built with them. Remember that important point as if your successful event depended on it ... it does.

### **8. Take Care of Yourself**

No matter how busy you become or how difficult the job may be, you absolutely **MUST** take care of yourself. Stress can cause illness, and the last thing you'll need is a bad cold or the flu as your planning is underway. If you can afford it, hire an assistant to help you with the smaller details. Or get others in your organization to volunteer their time. Have someone you trust to be a sounding board for your ideas and plans so that you don't go off on some tangent that doesn't make sense. Two heads are almost always better than one.

But more than anything else, build time into your plans for self-care. Give yourself time to take a day off at the spa or the local nature preserve. Build a time into each day for meditation, reading a novel, playing with the kids or your pet, or visiting with friends. Do what you enjoy. Make sure to eat properly and get plenty of rest. Aim for 8 hours of sleep every night, and take naps in the daytime if you need to. Plan social time too. Go to lunch or dinner with your friends. Ask your partner to go to the movies. See a play or go to a concert. Do things that keep you interested and positive in life generally. That will maintain your physical and psychological health and your ability to cope with the myriad of decisions, activities, and events that will inevitably come up during the event-planning process.

## **8 Ways To Get Attendees To Your Events**

What if you threw a party and no one came? Event planners want to get the best possible event attendance for their investment. Even the most elaborate event will fail to meet its goals if event attendance is not good. Careful, thorough event planning is essential for success, and that includes the guest list and invitations.

The first step in getting good event attendance is giving plenty of notice so that your guests can plan to attend. For large events, sending out your invitations a month before the event is appropriate. Smaller, less formal events do not require as much lead time, but you still want to give your guests plenty of time to arrange for baby sitters, coordinate their own schedules, and plan their transportation.

Here are eight things you can do to maximize event attendance at your next event:

### **1. Get Their Attention from the Get-Go**

Spend the time and money to create attractive, interesting invitations. You want your guests to open the invitation when they receive it. And you want them to want to come to your event. Printing an attractive invitation, including a distinctive envelope, will go a long way toward raising interest and boosting event attendance. Using thematic colors or familiar logos will help them identify your organization before they open the invitation. Simple but attractive artwork and design will create the impression of a well-grounded, capable organization and build expectations for a fun experience they won't want to miss.

### **2. Back Up the Invitation with Publicity**

Your invitation is a personal way to let your guests know you desire their presence. Follow-up advertising will remind them the event's coming up and maintain their interest, assuring maximum event attendance. Depending on the size and budget of your event, you should make sure the date, time, and location are well-known. For local and community events, use flyers and posters in local retail centers. Develop a few short public service announcements and send them to radio and television stations. For big elaborate events, buy advertising space in the

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local paper or run 30-second ads on radio and TV to keep your event in the front of people's minds to get maximum event attendance.

### **3. Reinforce the Invitation with Follow-up Communications**

Especially if you're having the event to raise funds or sell something, good event attendance can make the difference between failure and success. You'll want to let people know a little more about what you expect of the event. You can send short e-mail updates as the time draws near, explaining how to get there or telling them about special activities or entertainment. If you have a big enough budget, you might hire a telemarketing firm to make follow-up calls asking if people still plan to attend or giving them a bit of information about what to expect.

### **4. Keep People Talking about your Event**

Talk up your event for maximum event attendance. Whenever you get the opportunity, talk about what a great time people are going to have. Drop a few names or hints about entertainment or special announcements. Let people know if there'll be a band or other types of entertainment. The more you talk about your event, the better event attendance is likely to be.

### **5. Use Word-of-Mouth Advertising for Great Event Attendance**

Ask your co-workers, family, and friends to tell their friends about the event. Make sure they know if celebrities (local and national) are onboard. Tell them about the menu and beverage service. Tell them why you're hosting the event and what people will gain from attending. Of course, you'll want to be sure they are on the invitation list. Get them excited about it, and encourage them to share that excitement with others and build event attendance.

### **6. Use the Community to Build Up Interest**

Make sure you post flyers and posters at local churches, libraries, stores, and schools. Prepare a simple, eye-catching flyer with the important information (time, date, location) and at least one reason people should attend. When your invited guests hear others talking about your event, they'll be more likely to come.

### **7. Make a Splash**

If you can afford it, do something outrageous to get their attention. Hire a sky-writer or hot air balloon to carry a message to the community. Use your local Fast Signs store to create banners to hang around the community. If it's appropriate, dress people up in thematic costumes and have them carry signs at intersections. Use lots of color and great big letters that grab the attention and won't let go. The more people are thinking and talking about your event, the better your event attendance will be.

## Having Mascots, Minglers, Entertainers At Your Next Event - How To Find & Work With Them

Planning a part or event doesn't have to be that difficult. If you want to improve your events, find a way to make them really special. One way to do that is to introduce a little spice into the mix - in the form of entertainers - break the ice and get things moving.

And what more entertaining spice can you think of than a good entertainer. Whatever their role, be it mascot, mingler, or in the spotlight, a good entertainer can make people feel relaxed and comfortable and add flare to an otherwise dull event.

When you use an entertainer to improve your event, think about the type of party you'll be hosting. Of course, you must first identify your goal. Are you welcoming home a long lost uncle? Trying to sell a timeshare? Increasing your network of professional contacts? And what are the characteristics of your guests? Are they business people, families, students? What type of party will it be? A small, intimate affair for a few friends or a big bash for the whole neighborhood? When you've established who'll be there and what you'll all be doing, you can begin to search for the perfect entertainer to brighten up the affair and improve your events.

How will you use your entertainer? A DJ is perfect for a party where people will be dancing. A comedian makes a great emcee or stand-up performer. A public speaker can not only entertain, but motivate and inform. Dancers can teach while they entertain, and exotic dancers (like belly dancers) can keep the place sizzling. Musicians, including singers, are a wonderful addition to most events. Here is a list of types of entertainers you may not think of without a little help:

- balloon twisters
- face painters
- hypnotists
- Elvis impersonators
- puppeteers
- clowns
- impersonators
- magicians
- mentalists
- ventriloquists

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Musical entertainment doesn't have to be a rock band or chamber orchestra. What about a barber shop quartet, folk singers, hip hop or rappers, or even a small gospel choir. It all depends on the people and the party.

You can probably find a number of choices by visiting your yellow pages or checking on the internet. The options are almost limitless. Most of these entertainers work at very reasonable prices because they're either just starting out and need the experience, or they've already retired and want to keep active in their beloved profession.

If your budget won't support a professional entertainer, you might think about bringing in someone who will mingle with your guests to get and keep the conversations and laughter going. Do you know someone who's outgoing and funny? A good mingler is comfortable with all types of people and is a great conversationalist. If you bring someone in with that purpose in mind, it will probably improve your event and bring the best out in your guests. Of course, as host or hostess, you'll want to play the role of mingler as well, making sure your guests are comfortable and involved.

One approach to party entertainment is to have activities in which the guests participate. A hypnotist can use your guests as subjects and keep everyone laughing. Impersonators can play role-playing games - what would you say to the President at a fun event? A local dance teacher can keep everyone involved in learning a new dance step. There are also theme parties where everyone has a role. One of the most familiar is the murder mystery where guests have to solve a crime. Casino or poker parties involve your guests in challenging and fun activities for hours!

And, of course, there's the traditional costume party where your entertainer can play a specific role (like Caesar or George Washington). You can turn your costume party into a casual version of Trivial Pursuit, where the entertainer/character asks guests questions about his or her life or events of that day. You can offer prizes for most answers. Be creative! People love to get outside the old party box. A professional entertainer will give your party a special flare and improve your events.

Bringing in a professional photographer is a great way to get people excited. Few people don't like to have their picture taken. Now, imagine them having their picture taken with Caesar, George Washington, or George Bush!

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There's only one down side to this approach. Once you've spiced up your party with a professional entertainer, your guests will expect all your events to be as much fun! They'll be talking about you and the party for years to come. So, if you've run out of ways to bring smiles to the faces of your friends, family, and business acquaintances, consider introducing an entertainer into the mix. They'll make your party a smashing success and improve all your events!

## How & Where To Find Suppliers That Will Move Mountains For You!

Getting an event supplier who is committed to your success can be a challenge. Successful event planning may depend on your ability to build a strong personal and long-term professional relationship with your event suppliers. You always get more and better service when you're a trusted regular customer. This is as true for event planning as it is for your local market. But the first task is finding the right person or company to meet your needs.

When shopping for goods or services for your event, you can find dozens of candidates and a few dependable providers. Locate potential companies by first canvassing your local yellow pages. Ask co-workers and friends about their experiences, and ask if they know dependable providers. Conduct telephone interviews with your candidates, asking each the same set of questions so that you can compare their responses. Always, always ask for references and reviews. Good catering companies are likely to have received positive write-ups in the local newspaper. Do some research before you make a commitment to hire.

Based on the results of your telephone interviews, make appointment for personal interviews with at least three top candidates. When you meet with them, clearly outline your needs, expectations, and schedule. Describe your goal and theme, and let them know what type of people will be attending the event. Before asking for a written proposal, ask them to give you a verbal summary of your requirements to be sure they've clearly understood you. Clarify points of confusion and emphasize the most important needs. Be sure to identify specific elements you'd like to see in their proposal. Try to structure the proposal outline so that you can compare your candidate's bids.

When you make your selection, agree on the wording of a formal contract. Be sure your contract addresses specific products, delivery dates, pricing elements, and ways to make last-minute changes should they become necessary. It's a good idea to include some terms and conditions for payment in the contract. The fewer misunderstandings that arise later on, the more positive your relationship and the more successful your event will be.



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Now, focus on a positive, productive working relationship with your event supplier. Communicate with them frequently to keep them up on your status and to assure they are on schedule. But don't contact them so often as to become an irritant. Walk a fine line between being accessible and demonstrating trust in their abilities. If problems do arise, refrain from losing your temper or speaking to them in a condescending tone. If you are upset about a particular issue, wait a few minutes, do some deep breathing, and then speak to them in a steady, calm voice. Temper tantrums are the quickest way to ruin a relationship and sabotage your successful event.

Remember that your event supplier is running a business. They have other customers, and you will have to be patient and respectful of their priorities if you expect the same treatment. Courtesy, however, doesn't mean kissing up. You don't have to compromise your own needs or integrity to satisfy an event provider. Common consideration is sufficient. Positive interactions and polite conversation is the rule. The trick is to make positive comments personal and negative comments about your event supplier's performance more general.

If you should have the misfortune of hiring a disrespectful or inconsiderate event supplier, remember that you deserve respect as a professional event planner. Point out their unwanted behavior, and ask them to change their tone or language. Let them know you are aware that you're not their only customer, but make clear to them your expectations for professional conduct. Again, do not lose your temper or become abusive. This will only feed the fire and make matters worse. You might think of including professional conduct as a component of your written contract so that you can refer to it as a contractual obligation if it should become necessary.

Once you have a good experience with an event supplier, stick with them. Let them know you plan to use them for more events. Inform them when you have recommended them to someone else, and offer to write a formal recommendation for them. If you're extremely satisfied with their service, you might even post a note to the local newspaper or neighborhood newsletter. Giving them free advertising will help cement loyalty and respect. If you are confident in their continued good service, you might even enter into a long-term contractual arrangement, using them exclusively unless contract terms are violated. If you do sign a long-term agreement, be sure it includes an avenue for "escape" should they fail to consistently meet your needs.

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An event supplier who anticipates future business from you, who is confident that you respect and admire their service, and who believes you regard them highly will move mountains to meet your needs! They'll respond to you quickly, and they'll be willing to work with you cooperatively. They may even offer suggestions that will improve your event or refer you to other event suppliers with equally high standards. Further, having long-term event suppliers onboard will save you much time and effort when working on future events.

Building a strong, productive, and professional working relationship with your event suppliers is essential to long-term success as an event planner. Event suppliers come in all shapes and sizes, but not all offer equal quality. Careful research, frequent open communication, and mutual respect will go a long way toward building productive long-term relationships with your important event suppliers and assure your events are successful.

## How To Create Effective Team Bonding At Your Events

Effective teamwork is the single most important factor in having a successful event. Whether you're planning a small, informal gathering of family and friends or a grand gala for hundreds of VIPs, your event team will determine how much work you end up doing and whether or not you meet your goals.

Selecting your event team is the first step. Base your decisions on their abilities, not your personal feelings for them. Whether selecting from co-workers, subordinates, or a set of willing volunteers, your event team should have combined skills covering the full array of event activities and requirements. While individuals will have their own unique skills and talents, every one of your event team should be goal-oriented, energetic, positive, and flexible.

You'll find very different responses and motivation within a team that's being paid and volunteers. Team-building will probably be more difficult with volunteers who do not depend on you for their paycheck or performance evaluation. That's where your interpersonal skills become important. You need to know how to talk to people, get them to talk to you, and maintain solid, respectful relationships, especially with volunteers.

Your first challenge will be bringing these individuals together to form an effective team. Team bonding is the order of the day. One way to assess their skills is to give them a simple task and then observe how they complete it. Leadership qualities, personal conflicts, decisiveness, and personal quirks will quickly surface to help you decide how to make assignments and on whom to place your reliance.

Once you have a good sense of how you'll use individual event team members, it's a good idea to involve them in some team-building exercises. You might have them pair off and then ask each pair to discuss a different aspect of the event to come up with ideas and proposals. Or you could divide the team into two groups to formulate two different proposals for a particular aspect of the event. A little friendly competition will keep energy and interest levels up and keep people involved.

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Building an effective team requires that you relinquish some control to them. Your event team should have a sense of independence and autonomy. When you make assignments, identify an individual who will report to you. After you've made your requirements, preferences, and schedule clear to them, let the team work out its own methods for achieving your goals. If the team seems to be falling behind schedule, check in first with the leader to see if you can identify and resolve problems. If delays or conflict become a serious barrier, you may want to sit down with the whole team to talk through the issues that are holding them back.

There are occasions when one negative person is sabotaging the event team's efforts. Don't be afraid to let someone go if they are not contributing to a positive outcome. But be careful to explain your actions to both the person you let go and the remaining team members. Continue to stress how important effective teamwork is to the event, and recognize team achievements and successes often.

It's best to follow an "open door" policy with your event team. Make yourself available to them to talk about both individual and team problems. Be a sympathetic ear or crying towel in times of great stress, but be a disciplinarian when your event team loses focus. Keep their attention on a successful event outcome, and be sure to acknowledge how important they are to success. Thank individuals for extra effort, and recognize their contributions. Refrain from discussing problems with one person with the rest of the team. As far as possible, let your team resolve problems without interference from "above."

Encourage your event team to be creative and innovative. Let them know they are personally responsible for failures and successes. Help them build strong personal relationships and encourage partnerships. Make sure your event team has opportunities to have fun together. Impromptu lunches, outings to the movie or a concert, or casual happy hours are great ways to bring them together away from the stresses and demands of event planning.

If your event team is effective, positive, and productive, your event will be a success. Your job is to help them bond - to help them transform from a group of talented individuals to a cohesive, complementary team with a single mutual goal.

## Managing An Event For 10 People Versus 100 !

There is a huge difference between planning a party for a small group as for a crowd. If you're considering throwing an event, be aware that your time, money, and stress investments will vary according to the size of the event you're planning.

The biggest difference is in the details. A small, intimate gathering of your closest friends is a breeze! Whether it's the food, the decor, the entertainment, or the location, a small party requires less time and money to be a success. But a big event for everyone you know will take weeks of planning, lots of money, and careful thought if everyone is to enjoy the occasion.

Take the small casual event - the gathering of kith and kin. Call your friends and family a few days before, and the event is on. You can change your mind about the food, the dress, the music, and most of the party details up until the day of the party. And you can make as big a fuss as you want - or as little. Your budget is controllable - have a pot luck dinner where your guests bring the food or their own booze. Have a come-as-you-are bash where no dress code applies. Let your guests choose the entertainment after they arrive. Go with the flow! It'll be fun as long as you are happy host or hostess.

But be prepared for the large event - the fancy reception or gala ball. Invitations will most likely be printed and delivered at least a month in advance. You'll have to rent a hall or find a location with plenty of space for dining and dancing, not to mention storage space for coats and purses. You'll probably want to hire a band or chamber orchestra. You'll need flowers and coordinated decorations. A caterer will save you a lot of work - no guests bringing their own food to this bash! But your caterer will need a well-planned menu and no late changes of mind. You'll want to provide libations, perhaps an open bar.

If your event involves a sit-down dinner, you'll have to think seriously about seating arrangements. Best not to have two people who can't stand each other at the same table. You'll need to settle on table decor, tableware, serving processes, waiters, cooks, and that oh-so-special dessert.

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With small events, you can attend to every detail with little stress. You can choose to spend as little or as much as you can afford. But with large events, you can't handle all the details. No matter who makes the decisions, the event details will have to be decided far in advance of the actual event. You'll have to get others to volunteer to help, or you'll have to hire professionals to make the event a success. Your budget is likely to be substantial, although you may be able to take advantage of bulk discounts on many items. Professional party planners may be able to get special deals for you, especially if you're likely to be a good reference later on.

With smaller events, you can take it as it comes - decisions may change from day to day with no consequences. But for a large event, your decisions early on will dictate costs, and changing your mind may get very expensive. Ask yourself why you're throwing this bash. Do you want to win a new client? Impress the future in-laws? Get your name in the social section of the newspaper? Make your long-lost uncle feel welcomed home?

Once you've established the purpose of your event, many of the decisions will be made for you. If you haven't taken on a large gathering before, it's probably a good idea to get advice from a professional event planner. You can hire them as a simple consultant to save money, or let them handle everything to save stress. Though your expenses will be substantial for any large event, your energy level and the willingness of friends and loved ones to help can save you a bundle.

Think. Think. Think. Your event expresses your personality, your taste, and your ability. The more thought you put into it beforehand, the more successful your event is likely to be. Most of all, let them leave laughing!

## Marketing Managers: 10 Reasons Why You Should Organize Your Own Events

Marketing managers may find it more effective to organize their own marketing events. When you do it yourself, rather than hiring an event planner, you have more control, and you more clearly see how effective your event was. Organizing your own event allows you to identify what works and what doesn't, better gauge the impact on clients and guests, and better coordinate your event with your overall marketing strategy.

1. Control is an important issue for managers in general. When planning a marketing event, a marketing manager makes all the decisions. They don't have to wait for contractors or service people to get an answer for them. They are in direct communication with all service providers and can better coordinate the event planning process.
2. Organizing your own marketing event also saves money. Saving the cost of a professional planner allows you to invest more in the facility, the decorations and accessories, and in your entertainment or speakers. You may even want to reinvest your savings into other areas of your marketing strategy.
3. It's much easier to make changes when you organize your own marketing event. If you've signed a contract with an event planner, you're tied into the agreements you made with them. When you are the event planner, you have greater flexibility to make adjustments in your schedule, furnishings, entertainment, and food and beverages. You can respond more quickly than can a contracted service to changing conditions and requirements.
4. You have "creative" control over the event. Often, event planners interject their opinions and tastes into the event. These may not reflect your company's policies or image. When you plan the role of organizer, you can rest assured that your organization's goals will be reflected in every aspect of your marketing event.
5. When you organize your own marketing event, you can create and place advertising that reflects your company's message and intent. Leaving that task to a professional event planner

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may result in mixed or confusing messages that do not support your organization's goals. The consequences of possible miscommunications like this are lost revenues and bad feelings.

6. When you are the event planner, you have the reassurance of knowing that everything is being done properly. Even when you hire a professional event planner, you are still responsible for the results, and you are the one who is accountable to your stockholders and senior management team. Organizing your own marketing event is a form of career control - you protect your status in the organization by making sure everything works as it's supposed to work. Be aware, though, that failures are YOUR failures. You can't blame the professional event planner for your mistakes.

7. As the manager and event organizer, you can choose to delegate as much or as little of the work to your subordinates. You can assign minute details to your staff and reserve the serious decision-making for yourself. Since they report to you, you will still know the exact status of every activity taking place to make the marketing event a huge success. You won't have to "trust" the professional event planner who assures you that everything's all right. You will know it's all right.

8. One popular theme in business today is "no surprises." When you organize your own marketing event, there will be no surprises. Of course, in an event, there will be last-minute changes and the momentary crisis. But as the event planner, you will be in a position to learn of problems immediately and resolve them quickly. You will also be able to communicate with your stockholders or senior management team about problems from an informed, assured position. You won't have to depend on the promises of a professional event planner who is, in the end, not accountable to you except through a contract.

9. Being able to adjust your spending to meet contingencies and changing requirements is the final, but not least important, reason you should manage your own marketing events. When you contract out every aspect of the event, your budget is committed to specific purposes. Whether you under- or over-utilize a particular service is irrelevant. You've made the agreement to pay a specified amount. When you are the event planner, you have more flexibility to shift funds from one area to another.



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Deciding whether to organize your own marketing event is not easy. You already have a mountain of responsibilities in your role as marketing manager. This article summarizes for you some of the advantages of doing it yourself. Hopefully, it will make your decision-making easier and help you produce a better marketing event.

## The Nuts & Bolts Of Events Logistics

Planning successful events can be a daunting task. It involves making some major decisions that will largely determine your event's results. You'll also need to handle hundreds of details to be sure you meet your goals. These are the most important aspects of event planning. Take care of business here, and you'll have a better event.

### **Start with Good Organization**

Successful event planning doesn't just happen - someone has invested a huge effort in pulling together a great facility, providing food and drinks, lining up entertainment, and making sure people get to the party. Coordinating each of these event planning elements involves careful attention to details and a lot of paperwork. Your first positive step toward successful event planning is to organize the paperwork, thereby organizing your event.

Use a binder to keep your notes and records. This way, you'll know where things are and will be able to get to them quickly. It will make your planning materials portable. You can take the binder with you as you inspect potential locations, interview service providers, negotiate contracts, and order supplies.

With your paperwork organized by topic, you should review all of your plans for a specific need (for example, the food and drinks) to assure your approach is consistent with the goals for and theme of your event. Then develop a back-up plan that will help you meet any problems that should arise.

Example: you had lined up a facility, but just before signing the contract, the facility manager backed out. If you're well organized, you can refer back to other facilities you considered to quickly find a replacement. Your notes will remind you of the pros and cons of your candidates and contain contact information, allowing you to pick up the negotiations quickly, without having to go through the details a second time. Maintaining an up-to-date, complete binder will help you stay on track and plan a successful event.

### **Use Contracts to Secure Goods and Services**

Contracts are essential to assuring that vendors and service providers meet your expectations. Be sure that your agreements about details, pricing, and payments are captured in writing, signed by both parties, for your facility, your caterer, your speaker or entertainment, and your set-up and clean-up service. Contracts should contain detailed descriptions of what the vendor will provide, a timeline scheduling delivery dates, itemized pricing for components, terms and conditions for payment, and steps to be taken in case services do not meet your expectations. You may even want to include back-up agreements in case vendors are unable to meet their commitments timely. This gives them some flexibility in meeting your needs.

It is critically important to maintain positive, professional relationships with your providers. When they feel respected and trust that you will follow-through on your commitments to them, they'll be more likely to go the extra mile for you. Take out your frustrations on your home exercise equipment, not the vendor. Once you've found a good provider, use them again and recommend them to your associates. You will build a loyal, productive relationship with many future rewards. Remember that contracts are an important tool for establishing your requirements and for settling disagreements in court after the fact. Your positive working relationship will be the single element that carries you through the event as it unfolds.

### **Secure a Great Venue**

The facility and location for your event set the stage for the entire event. You'll want to be sure it has the appropriate set-up for the number of people you invite, areas for off-line chats and smoke breaks, adequate bathrooms, storage for coats and personal items, and space for your speaker or entertainment. If dancing is involved, you'll need space for both a stage and a dance floor. While a speaker requires only a podium, a band requires a stage.

The place you choose for your event should reflect the type of event, the type of guests, and the general theme of the event. If you're having a charity ball where you hope to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars, you'll want an elegant, formal facility with plenty of additional accommodations. If your guests are coming from out of town for the event, you should probably find a place near or in a hotel. If your event is a smaller, casual get-together for neighbors or family, a community club house is appropriate.

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Many facilities will provide additional services as part of the rent. For example, they may agree to provide items for breaks (coffee, tea, sodas, cookies, etc.) as part of the rental fee. They may offer set-up and clean-up with the rental agreement. They may provide audio-visual aids like a laptop and viewing screen or microphones and speakers. Facilities that are used often as event venues will have more of the additional items you need than will the local club house. Think about your event goals and your budget as you negotiate for space. Visit at least three candidate locations, and make them compete with each other for your business. Be sure to personally walk through potential locations, and feel free to make frequent follow-up calls with questions about details. Finally, be sure to set out your agreements in a formal contract.

One more element to consider is the location of the venue. How far are you willing to make guests travel to get there? If you're in a large urban area, is there adequate parking nearby? Or can your guests use public transportation, like a subway or local train, to get there in the absence of parking? Provide clear, detailed directions to your guests when you invite them.

### **Focus on Food and Drink**

Next to an attractive, inviting venue, you should focus on the food and beverages. If you're having a multi-course sit-down dinner, menu planning will become a major part of your planning process. A professional caterer will be able to make many helpful suggestions for a coordinated menu that appeals to a variety of people with different tastes. Remember that a formal dinner will involve more people to serve dishes and pickup dishes for each course. Serving staff should be professional and courteous at all times. Make sure to get references from your catering candidates for this level of service. You'll also have to plan table set-up and seating arrangements.

You might also consider a buffet or less formal way to provide appetizing treats for your guests. A buffet cuts down on staffing requirements, as you can forego servers. And you can offer more choices in individual food items. Of course, guests have to carry their own plates. Seating may be at tables, but for buffets they are not essential. You can have a less formal seating layout, and you do not have to assign seats for your guests.

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Food can be as informal as snacks. Fruit and vegetable plates, finger food, chips and dips, cheeses, and varied desserts are appropriate for this purpose. In this case, your guests don't expect a full meal. Snack-type food service is good for afternoon and late evening events. Much less expensive, snacks take less space and require fewer people to serve and clean up.

About the beverages - your first decision is whether or not to serve alcohol. Consider type and purpose of the event and the characteristics of your guests in making this decision. Also do research on the types and costs of licenses and fees to have alcohol at your event. Decide whether to offer an open bar with unlimited free drinks, a ticketing system where guests are given tickets for a drink or two each, or a cash bar where guests pay for their drinks. If you are serving alcohol, you may also want to consider getting the services of a security guard in case a guest becomes too rowdy. Though alcohol is a normal part of most event planning, it involves more work and expense. It also introduces greater risk to your guests' safety. Don't assume you have to serve alcoholic beverages.

### **Entertain your Guests**

You already know the purpose of your event. Whether your honoring a local hero, welcoming home a long lost uncle, making an important announcement for your organization, introducing a new product, or simply providing a good time for people you appreciate, consider entertainment appropriate to your purpose. You may want to bring in a motivational speaker, an expert in a relevant topic, an emcee to keep things moving smoothly, a professional entertainer to amuse and astound, or musicians to play background music for your activities or provide for dancing after dining. Make sure your entertainment is appropriate to the purpose, the venue, and your budget. There are many different options for finding and securing good dependable entertainment. Whether they'll be working for the entire event or for a portion of it, be sure to have a contract outlining your expectations and the role they'll play.

### **Attend to Details**

We've covered the major facets of event planning. Once you have settled and secured what you need in these areas, you'll have lots of work to do to make sure everything is properly coordinated and consistent with your theme. You'll want to plan and create invitations and an event program and have them printed at least a month before the event. You'll need to decide

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how to publicize your event. You may want to identify local or national celebrities who can add a bit of excitement to your event and help meet your goals.

You'll need to select decorations that support your theme, table settings, and equipment for entertainment and other activities. You'll want to plan event activities and be sure you are set up for them. You'll need to identify a group of volunteers or paid assistants to welcome and assist guests and help you oversee the event as it unfolds (including later clean-up).

Be sure to include notes and paperwork for the most minute details in your organizing notebook. Document every step in your event planning process. Review your notebook at least once a week to assure you're on schedule and to avoid leaving anything out. Follow-up promptly and be sure your agreements with providers are documented in a written contract. Keep your contracts and any supporting notes or communications in your notebook. Keep a record of all phone calls and conversations related to your event planning.

One final, and very important detail is taking care of yourself. Event planning is hard work, and it's easy to overload and over-stress. Build special times into your schedule for personal breaks. First, take care of your health. Get exercise, rest, and relaxation to keep a positive attitude and a productive energy level. Make time for social contacts so that you don't become isolated. Remember your friendships and your family. If you do become overwhelmed, take a day off. Go to the spa or the local nature preserve for some well needed quiet time. In the long run, caring for you will help assure a successful event.

## What To Do When Things Don't Go As Planned During Events

Planning an event can be difficult. There are a mountain of things to be done and not enough time to do them. You will be rushed and anxious much of the time. Remember, though, that nothing will ever be perfect. When planning a big event, assume there will be problems, and plan to accept and solve them with grace.

Murphy's Law says that anything that can go wrong will go wrong. Event planning is no exception to this rule. Successful event planners accept the fact that there will be last-minute problems. Their plans include enough time and resources to deal with the problems that arise.

As when you go to the grocery store, you'll always forget something. Even when you check and double-check your schedule and plans, something you didn't think of will rear its ugly head at the most inconvenient time. The best way to meet this challenge is to allow extra time for quick fixes and identify people who can help you at a moment's notice.

The first question you will have to ask yourself is: "Is it really that important?" Problems arising from an unfortunate choice of colors or a centerpiece that is just a bit too big may not be serious enough to bother with. When an issue comes up, ask yourself if it's critical to the success of the event. If it's not critical, perhaps you can afford to let it go.

One way to avoid these ankle-biters is to make a comprehensive checklist. The list will include every action, every product, and every person you need to assure a successful event, in the order you need them done. As they are finished, you can get the self-satisfaction of checking them off your list. And the checklist will help others who are involved in the event preparations as well. If you're not available for questions, they can consult the checklist.

Especially in those last days and moments before the event, you'll have to be flexible and creative to solve problems. Again, ask yourself how important it really is. If you can let it go, let it go. Better to skip a small detail than to sacrifice something critical because you were involved with the little hitch. Keep your mind open to innovative and unusual solutions, too. And take advantage of the people around you. You don't have to come up with all the answers to find the appropriate solutions.

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If the event's already underway, try to find a solution that doesn't disrupt the flow of the event. Certainly, you won't want to draw a lot of attention to a problem that might not have been noticed. Make a judgment call - will anyone be injured in any way if the problem isn't solved? Does the problem have the potential to ruin the occasion? Is there someone available who could fix things quickly and quietly? Rely on your co-workers and friends to help you catch potential problems before they develop. And trust them to solve them. Don't feel that you are the only person in the room who can do it. That's simply not true, and maybe a very costly assumption.

The most important thing you can do when a problem pops up during your event is to keep cool. If you panic, you will be much less likely to find a solution. And if you panic, your guests will know something's up. They may even become anxious or overly concerned. If you stay cool, calm, and collected, you'll be in a better position to judge the severity of the problem. Is it something that will likely go away by itself? Is there, in fact, an urgent need for you to take action?

The biggest thing that you need to do when you see that something is going off course at your event is to not get upset. You want to be able to stay calm and use your resources that you have to fix the problem. Keep your perspective. One mis-step will not ruin an event. Don't over-react. Relax and let your intuitive side take over. The answer will come, if you let it come. It's really very simple. Don't sweat the small stuff. Fix the big stuff. And have fun! The number one ingredient to a successful event is that the person hosting it has a good time!



## 10 Ideas On Creating Exciting Event Themes

If you are struggling to think of a theme for an event then here are a few good ideas to get you going. Once you have started there'll be no stopping you.

First of all, take a big pad of paper or a roll of lining paper and some marker pens. Write down all the ideas that occur to you.

Secondly, consider the age of your guests. Some themes will work well for small children but not for pre-teens or teens. Teenagers are probably the most difficult group to please. They love to seem sophisticated but given a chance will go back into their own childhood favorites.

Little girls invariably fall for fairy themes. Tiny cakes decorated with colored icing and candies go down well at this kind of party. Every girl can come as a different flower fairy. The dresses don't need to be expensive. A gym leotard dressed up with tissue paper, shiny foil and a few sequins will go a long way in transforming a crowd of little girls into fairies. You might even let them do this at the party. Warn the parents in advance so they can come in their regular clothes.

Small boys are another matter. They will never attend a fairy party. But dinosaurs are a favorite. Cereal boxes and other cartons make excellent dinosaur masks. It involves a lot of noise and a lot of rampaging so remove any breakables.

Pre teens and teens abhor all such frivolities, or so they say. A Gothic theme may go down well with this age group. It is remarkably similar to a fairy theme but requires more black fabric - dress lining fabric is ideal - and black icing although green is sometimes acceptable.

Magic, not necessarily Harry Potter, but probably, and horror are good choices. Be guided by the children's favorite books when theming a party. Look through their bookshelves to get some ideas.

There is a point in the teenage years when the main theme of the party has to be you not being there. This may seem like it is not a theme but it is and it requires just as much work from you. You have to make sure that everything necessary is there without seeming to have interfered in

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any way. This is probably the hardest kind of party you will ever have to organize. Oh and do make sure the emergency phone numbers are displayed somewhere prominently by the phone, and do warn the neighbors.

Some themes will cross any age divide. A pirate theme is one of these. It will suit a party for small children or adults and any age in between. Pirates make a great theme because it allows everyone to dress up. Both men and women, boys and girls can wear the most extrovert clothing and make up. Even teens will turn up to this kind of party. I suppose we have Johnny Depp to thank for that.

Thirdly, think of the season of the year. A summer party has different options to a winter party. A barbecue may work in winter but it's a sure winner in the summer.

Somewhat related to the season is the fourth question of anniversaries and festivals. Your party could be themed on some great event of the past such as the American Declaration of Independence. Or it could celebrate one of the lesser known festivals.

Events in the life of an individual can also become themes for a party. If it is a birthday party then blow up pictures from the family album showing the different phases of that person's life. This works best with seniors but can also be done for children.

In the past our ancestors used to have sewing bees and knitting circles. They would meet together to work on their own pieces of needlework or on some joint project. This would make a great theme for an event. The techniques would have to be simple so that everyone could take part. But it would be possible to knit or sew a patchwork blanket in an evening if enough people took part. The finished result could be donated to charity or raffled for charity.

Not only could we recover the old sewing bees but we could revitalize the barn raising. A party of neighbors, friends and family could get together to participate in some worthwhile communal activity such as a litter pick and then finish off with a barbecue.

A final suggestion for a communal event would be a sponsored walk, run or bike ride themed on the cause for which you aim to raise money. Not only would you raise money but you would raise awareness of the issue concerned. You would have fun and make a difference to the community at the same time.

## 4 Key Things To Remember About Event Planning

Professional event planners do it all the time and they develop skills and expertise in planning events. If you want to emulate them as an amateur then you must make sure that you plan your event thoroughly.

Begin with a brain storming session. There is nothing to beat this. Get a big pad of paper and write down everything that you can think off that is connected with your event.

List everything from guests to food, seating and lighting, to entertainments and favors. Leave nothing to chance. As you begin to make your lists then you will concretize what you need and what you have forgotten.

The secret of a well planned event is to ensure that everything that you need is ready. There is nothing worse than the entertainer or the caterer turning up and needing something that is not available.

Check in advance what all your contractors need. Some caterers turn up with everything they need. Others expect certain facilities on site. This may influence your choice of a contractor. Get several quotes and see which contractors offer the best service and the one that most suits your needs.

You must have a time chart. These are sometimes known as Gantt charts. They consist of bars running across the page. Each bar represents one activity or part of the project. Color the bar in or shade it according to how far it has been completed. For a complex event they are essential.

The importance of a chart like this is that something cannot be done until others have been done. They have to be done in order.

There are so many things to bring together at the right moment. Timing is a vital part of event planning. If one things goes off plan then it can throw a lot of other things out too.

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Another option for a time chart is a single line like a graph. You can then add post it notes along the line at key points. This works best for a simple event without too many different activities to co-ordinate.

Mark key points on your chart when things have to be done. If you need a wedding cake it must be ordered in time for it to be made. But it can't be made until you have spoken to the bride and groom about what they want.

The same can be true in the simplest of events. Timing is vital. Even if you are making a few iced cakes for a children's party then your efforts will benefit from planning. If your children demand ten different colors of icing then you had better get planning. Plan when you will do the shopping and plan when will do the baking because you have to fit this in around your regular chores.

You may organize a children's party several times a year but don't give up on the planning because they change with every child and every child changes every year. A little thought to games, dressing up clothes, and attractive unusual food will make your children's parties really memorable.

The less formal an event is often the more planning it needs. When you have guests just stopping by at unknown times and extra guests turning up is when you need to be prepared for any eventuality. Major holiday seasons are like that. There is no reason not to plan them. Spontaneity works better when there is cake in the store cupboard and extra chestnuts to toast.

The secret is to keep your lists and time chart for informal events hidden. This is one of the advantages of computers. You are like the swan on the water: graceful on the surface but paddling furiously underneath.

Finally remember that unlike a professional event planner you are participating in this event so don't forget to relax and enjoy it. The purpose of your planning is to make the event a pleasure for everyone not to make their lives a misery. Planning should be almost invisible. If everything works well then the planning will never be noticed.

## **6 Ways To Promote Your Events To Your External Customers**

Events can be a valuable way of winning business and keeping business. Your event can become a way of fixing your company image in the mind of your customers. By attending your event your customers develop a bond with your company that goes beyond an individual deal. Your event should be part of the process of establishing a long term relationship with your customers.

**1. The invitations are vital.** They must be sent out in plenty of time so that your prospective guests can arrange their diaries. This means that your planning must be done well in advance of the event so that you can specify what kind of event your guests are being invited to attend.

**2. Make sure you have listed everyone who is relevant.** Perhaps there are customers with whom you have not done business recently an invitation may remind them of your company. Any one who has done business with your company and is left off the list will quite rightly feel offended. People working in a similar area of business tend to talk to one another and you cannot afford to have negative things being said about your company.

**3. Where possible send an invitation to a named individual.** That will make them feel special and show that you have knowledge of their company and its needs. If you don't actually know someone check them out on the company website. If the person you used to know has since left then the company website should tell you who has replaced them.

Always extend the invitation to partners. The neutral term is vital these days and will not cause offence. Having partners around always widens the conversation and is useful at business events because common bonds can be found in non-business related activities.

**4. Make sure the theme of the event is relevant to your customers.** There are some general themes that are relevant to everyone. A party is after all a party. But some themes have more impact in particular industries.

If there is some new government legislation then a seminar addressed by experts and followed by dinner may be a good way of bringing the guests along to the event. Your guests will feel that

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the event meets a definite need they have to understand the new legislation that affects their industry or line of business.

A day themed on the subject of environmental questions as they relate to your industry may appeal to your customers. This is an increasingly important area. You could begin with breakfast, followed by morning seminars, then lunch and more seminars before dinner.

The social aspect of such events will give your guests opportunity to ask informal questions and build up useful connections. They may meet just the person to handle their recycling issues.

**5. Chose an attractive venue for the event.** A local hotel may be fine but something more interesting may attract more people. Perhaps a zoo or ancient property would be an added attraction. These business events must be something to talk about if they are to generate interest. A seminar and meal in a chain hotel is simply not different enough to be different. There are so many business events organized in this way that yours may look like a clone of all the others.

**6. Make your events different from others.** They must stand out from the competition. Look at what other companies are doing. Their websites will tell you what events they are organizing. If something catches your eye then see if you can reproduce it with a few changes that reflect your company.

## **7 Pitfalls To Avoid When Planning Your Event Itinerary**

When you are planning an event there are certain ways of avoiding the common pitfalls. The top two must be timing and budget. These are the two areas where events planning most often goes wrong.

**1. At the outset you must establish a time line.** By the outset I do not mean two days before the event. I mean several months in advance. The length of time depends on how many things you have to bring together. The bigger the event the more things there are to co-ordinate and the more that can go wrong if you do not have a time line.

A Gantt chart is the best kind of time line. It is a chart used for many kinds of complex projects in construction and building. But they work equally well for planning events. You will find templates for them on line.

**2. A Gantt chart has a horizontal bar or line for each task or process that goes into your event.** If invitations have to be printed then you draw a bar for them and mark off key events. When the design is done mark that off on the bar. When the proofs come back from the printers mark that off too. This way if something fails to happen then you will notice.

keep your chart up to date and everything should come together at the same time. Any problem areas can be identified and worked on.

**3. Keep you time chart available to all those who are working on the event.** They can be shared on your company network. Anyone who notices a problem or has a query can add a comment or email you depending how you set it up.

Coordination of the human resources involved in the event are vital. This is true of those inside your company. All departments need to be kept informed, And it is true of outside contractors who need to know what is expected of them.

**4. The other major area where problems occur in event planning is budgeting.** To some extent time planning relates to budget planning. If you know what tasks must be done when then you are less likely to run over budget because something crops up at a late stage.

**5. Establish a spread sheet that covers all the areas on your time chart.** The amount spent on designing and printing invitations can then be accounted for in conjunction with the data being entered on the time chart. It should become second nature to you to go from one to another. When a task is completed then the implications for the budget are included on the spread sheet. If a task overruns then its impact on the budget can also be accounted for.

**6. In the same way that the time chart is available to all the colleagues who are collaborating then the spread sheet should be shared too.** All those involved in the project should understand the budgetary implications of what they do. They will get to see the cost over runs that are caused by delay.

**7. When the event is over don't just wipe the time chart and spread sheet but go over the whole project and see what you can learn from it.** Everyone makes mistakes the important thing is to learn from them. By working out where you went wrong you can improve next time. If an event goes well then it is still important to assess it critically because there may be helpful lessons to learn about why it went so well.

An online or face to face session after the event will always be helpful in developing good relations between the team members and in learning from experience. It will focus the event team on their areas of strength and weakness. New members will learn from more experienced ones and even the most experienced may get some new ideas.



## 7 Reasons Why The Need For Teambuilding At Your Offsite Events

Event planning is a team affair. Successful event planning is never a one man, or woman, band. It takes many skills and talents to produce a memorable event that goes without hitches. Team building is the key to achieving this.

Your team includes both your colleagues in the company that is planning the event and the outside contractors from which you source services and supplies. You need all these people to be on your side and pulling together if you are to plan and effective event.

Those most closely associated with planning the event in-house must be kept informed of developments. This can be done by sharing your time chart with them. Each part of the team should be able to see where their input fits into the whole project.

Outside contractors need to know the information that is vital for them to perform their function. If they are kept informed they will be more willing to make that extra effort when problems unavoidably arise. They need to feel a commitment to your event if they are to give you their maximum effort.

But it is your in-house team that you must devote most attention to building. This is the team that will go on to plan future events. If you can develop a sense of cohesion among them then they will stick together and build up an expertise that will put them ahead of the competition.

Your event planning team needs to feel some ownership of the project. They will respond better if they understand the event in its totality and do not see the dead lines and other demands you place on them as purely arbitrary.

At the outset of the process of event planning you should create a time chart that describes all the tasks that need to be done for the event to go ahead. The best kind of chart for this is the Gantt chart that is widely used in all areas of construction, engineering and complex planning.

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This kind of chart allows a number of processes that need to be brought together at specific times to be visualized. Event planning is about bringing different processes together in that way. Different parts of your team will be working on different tasks. When they view the chart they will be able to grasp where their particular role fits into the whole.

The event planning time chart should be shared among the team. Team members with responsibility for particular tasks can then record their progress on the chart. Other members can identify problems that relate to their function.

It is vital that the budget is established at an early stage in planning the event. Every member of the team needs to know what part of the budget is their responsibility. If the budget spread sheet is shared between the team then they will see the impact of any overshoot on one part of the event planning process on all the others.

Face to face meetings are important in team building for event planning. But most of your collaboration can take place on line. The time chart can be updated and reviewed by every team member without ever meeting in person. This makes the process of team work more efficient than if meetings have to be organized and time is wasted in chatting.

Face to face meetings come into their own in the process of reviewing the whole project after the event has taken place. A fairly informal meeting in which team members can discuss their experiences and the problems they encountered with the event will help to generate new ideas that will prove useful in future events.

A team that has learned to trust one another's abilities in this way is a highly creative force in event planning. Event planning demands that diverse talents are harnessed and that places the emphasis on horizontal rather than hierarchical relationships. A genuine event planning team must learn to work in this way.

Finally, don't forget to acknowledge the work of your external contractors. Let them know that you were pleased with their efforts. Testimonials from you may get them other business. Make a point of developing a long term relationship with good companies. They are a part of your event planning team too.

## 7 Tips On How To Find The Right Venue For Your Next Event

1. When you are looking for a venue for your next event give some thought to what kind of event you have in mind. The venue can play an important role in creating the right atmosphere. So consider what the character of the event is. It may be that you want a dignified atmosphere. Perhaps something more cutting edge is required. An informal atmosphere might be appropriate for some events.

2. Not all events are the same. The same kind of event organized for different clients may be entirely different in character. No two weddings are the same. Or at least they shouldn't be. An event should reflect the personality of the client.

That is true even when a company is the client. Companies have their personalities too. An event organized for a long established company with a certain gravitas would be very different from an event designed to reflect the image of young company in a new industry.

So draw up a profile of your client before you begin. Schedule a meeting to talk over their needs and preferences. Remember it may be that they have very little idea of what they want. They may have developed their ideas of the event from others that they have attended. You need to develop the skill of assessing their character and matching an event to their personality profile.

3. Certain venues can become popular. Suddenly everyone is having weddings on the same Caribbean beach or every corporate client wants its annual dinner in the same hotel. There is a certain inevitability about this. But you need to be aware of the venues that are not yet popular but will become so. You need to be leading the trend not just following it. Not everyone will want to be a bit different but some clients will be excited by your proposals to go with some new.

4. The key to spotting new trends is to keep yourself up to date with developing trends. If ecological issues dominate the media then look for venues that have an environmental resonance. Your clients will be aware of the trends and will respond to your advice if you can reassure them that they are not going out on a limb. The client wants to be sufficiently different to stand out from the crowd but not so different that they seem bizarre in their choice.

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A wedding in a community garden in the heart of a city might appeal to a couple who object to creating a giant carbon footprint by flying to a tropical beach. A company that is planning an event may want to polish its green credentials by hosting an event at a nature sanctuary.

5. Look out for venues that are being newly developed or redeveloped. A venue that is just beginning to establish itself and build its profile in the events market may offer you and your clients a good deal.

A newly refurbished museum or historic home may provide the ideal venue for a whole range of events.

6. If you are venturing into new areas in your search for venues then it is vital that you check that the venue you have in mind can provide the facilities you need. Obviously, you can load everything up and take it to the venue. If you want to organize an event in the middle of wood it is perfectly possible. But some water and power always makes things easier.

7. Get a clear idea of what is available if you opt for an unusual venue. A couple may like to the idea of being dropped by helicopter on the top of a mountain to be married. They may be too in love to think about the practicalities. But their guests will require bathroom facilities.

## 7 Ways For An Easy & Hassle-Free Meeting Planning

1. Preparation is the key to any effective meeting. Adequate preparation will prevent problems arising. You must be familiar with all the matters that you want to discuss. You need all the relevant information at your fingertips. Inevitably new information may be raised in a meeting but you need to be able to integrate this in an established framework.

If you are making a formal presentation then the best practice is to put your main points on power point slides or a similar program. The effort devoted to this process is never wasted. Some of the slides will be useful at more than one meeting. But even if they are specific to one meeting the effort will be worth it. The act of preparing your power point slides will help you clarify your ideas.

Few people can listen to a presentation that is long and complex without some visual aids. The slides will enable your audience to focus on what you are saying. If your points are very complex then prepare hand outs for your audience. Detailed figures are often best handled in this way.

2. You may be making an informal contribution to the meeting but it is still worth working through your ideas on power point first. You may not use them as slides but you can print them out as a series of cards to guide your presentation.

It is easy to wander off the point as you are speaking or to dry up and forget what you meant to say. A series of speaker's cards will jog your memory and keep you on the point.

3. You must draw up an agenda that covers all the necessary business of the meeting. A meeting can easily become focused on one issue to the exclusion of others that are very important. If everyone knows the subjects that a meeting must cover this is less likely to happen.

An effective meeting always needs an agenda even when it is informal. Otherwise it is just a conversation. Informal meetings can be very effective but they must be businesslike.

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4. Keep proper minutes of all the main decisions. Minutes do not need to be a detailed verbatim report of what everyone said. But it is important to record what you all agree to do as a result of the meeting. That way it is possible to review those decisions at the next meeting. You can see what things were done and what was not done. If problems are emerging then they can be identified.

5. Whoever chairs the meeting should keep order and not let the participants argue with one another or allow one person to dominate the proceedings. A meeting should allow every participant to make a contribution if they have something to say. Participants who are shy and retiring may be reluctant to speak if a few of the more assertive individuals do all the talking. Those more, reticent people may have useful knowledge to contribute and should not be excluded.

6. A meeting should have a definite time set aside for it and participants should shut off their cell phones. This is important even when the meeting is informal. You may be meeting in a coffee shop rather than an office but you should still define the time as specifically for the business of the meeting.

Increasingly modern businesses are working without offices and it not unusual to meet in common, public spaces such as coffee shops. This makes for enormous savings on expensive office rents but requires a high level of discipline on the part of the participants.

7. Online meetings present special challenges. Without eye to eye contact the formal disciplines of a meeting become more important than ever. But they are often difficult if not impossible to enforce in a hierarchical manner. It is necessary for every member of the group to be familiar with proper meeting etiquette.

## **8 Key Factors Of A Successful Event Planner - Learn To Pick Wisely**

More and more people are hiring a professional event planner. Whether it is a corporate event or a big personal event such as a the celebration of a wedding professional event planners are in demand.

Companies do not necessarily have the staff in house to organize their own corporate events in today's lean business environment. It would simply be impossible for them to delegate staff to plan an event. Their hands are already full with their regular work.

Individuals who lead busy working lives do not necessarily have the time either. They prefer to turn to a professional who can handle all the planning for their big event rather than run themselves into the ground trying to manage their day job and event planning. Few bosses will be tolerant if an employee spends work timing ringing up caterers.

When choosing an event planner make sure that you are getting a professional. Check if they belong to a professional body and find out what that professional membership really means. They should have qualifications that represent a generally recognized industry standard. It is preferable that they have insurance in case anything goes wrong.

You need to find out what experience your event planner has had in the past. Find out what events they have planned previously. Get formal references from previous clients. If you are talking about a major event that involves a big budget then get references from their bank.

You need to know that any money you may pay up front is going to spent on your project and not on another event that just happens to have run over budget. A company that works from hand to mouth is going to be unreliable. Your event planner has to have a proven record of good financial management.

When your event planner presents you with bills for different phases of the event planning then you need to know that the work has been completed. They should be able to present you with a time chart showing work completed and work in progress. This time chart should demonstrate

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that your event planner is keeping control of all the different aspects of the planning of your event. Each progress report should explain where the event planner has got to in the total process.

Friends and colleagues may be able to recommend an event planner. It is always worth hiring someone who has worked successfully for people you know. This can be one of the best guides to getting a good event planner. If the event planner has already worked for people in your own social network they are more likely to understand your needs.

Getting an experienced professional is not the only question to consider. Working with an event planner is a highly personal relationship. You have to be able to get on with them. It is important that you can sit down together and discuss exactly what your requirements are for the event.

But remember this is a professional relationship not primarily a personal one. This is not just someone to chat to about the event. This is costing you money and you want definite things out of the relationship. So try to work out what you want before your first meeting.

If you already know, in outline at least, the kind of event you have in mind then your first meeting with the event planner will be more productive. No event planner is a mind reader and you must articulate what you need.

Your event planner should be able to provide you with a carefully worked out budget. Every aspect of the event should be itemized so that you know exactly what you are getting and how much it will cost.

A detailed budget is the only way to avoid costly disputes about what was agreed. If changes have to be made subsequently then that should be factored in too. One of the purposes of hiring a professional event planner is to keep the budget for the event under control.

An event planner should be imaginative but not subject to flights of fancy. They need to have their eye on the client's budget at all times. That way they will avoid cost over runs.



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Price is important when hiring an event planner. But it should not be the deciding factor in choosing who to hire. An event planner who claims they can bring an event in at a low price may not be the best for you.

They may have no experience at planning the kind of event you want. They may not have the connections in the industry that you need. An event planner for a company event must be able to publicize your event properly. Someone planning a wedding needs to be familiar with the best caterers and florists.

So get a number of estimates on price but don't necessarily go for the cheapest. Take other factors into account.

## 9 Ways To Organize Your Events On A Shoestring Budget

When you want to have a great event, but you have to do it on a budget, you will want to make sure that you are finding ways to cut your expenses. There are many different things that you will have to pay for and you will want to make sure that you are able to get all that you need with the money that you have set for the party.

The first thing that you will need to do is figure out what your budget is and what you need to do to stay on it. There are many ways that you can stray away from your budget and you will want to make sure that you stay on track and keep your budget in play. Here are a few ideas when creating an event on a shoestring budget.

1. You will first want to find ways to save money. This is most important. However you do not want to go too cheap if you do not have to. You want to stay on the proposed budget and not take shortcuts that you do not have to.
2. The next way to save money is to find all the friends and family members that you can to help you out with your party. You do not want to have to hire people unless you have to. If you can save money by having volunteers help, you should take advantage of it.
3. Shop wisely. You will want to try and bargain shop any time that you can. This will help you save money so that you can get the materials that you will need and not have to spend all of your budget on the things that you need. You will also want to shop as much as you can so that you can find the discounts that will help you with your shoestring budget.
4. Donations are a great way to save money. If you know someone that can help you with your party, you should ask them for a contribution. This will help you raise money that you find necessary to get the things done that you need. You will find that a lot of people like to help out for a good cause.
5. You need to find a location that will be very inexpensive. You want to get a location that will make your party great but also save you money in the long run. You will want to make sure that you are first finding out if the location that you have is going to be the better place for the event.

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You will want to shop around until you find the price that fits your budget as well as accommodates all your needs.

6. Make the food for your event. You need to have food and appetizers for your event. You will find that you can save a lot of money for your budget when you decide to make the food. Buying or having someone make everything for your event can sometimes be expensive. You will want to make sure that you are allowing enough in your budget to get all the food that you need to make your event a great success.

7. Advertising can take up a big part of your budget. You will want to try and get your event out there for the public to know about. However you will not want to over spend on your budget for this. You want to try and find inexpensive ways to get your event advertised. You can use the local newspapers or make up your own flyers to hand out.

8. There is nothing wrong with trying to make a deal with the things that you need. You will want to try and get the cheaper price for just about anything that you are going to need. This will be a good way for you to save money and get the better deal that will fit your shoestring budget.

9. Ask for support from your community. You will want to try and find the support that you need to make your event happen. You can ask anyone that you know to help out as much as they can. This will give you a break and let you relax a little more when it comes time for the event to happen.

## Things To Remember When Planning Your Next Off Site Event

An off site events inevitably needs more planning than an on site event where you will all that you need already to hand. So when you know that you have an upcoming off site event devote a little more time and care to the planning. It is the only way to be sure that everything will go well.

This is true whatever the event is. If you have to plan an formal event such as a wedding or an informal event such as picnic or barbecue you must leave nothing to chance.

When you are going off site you must check out the venue first. Are there enough tables and chairs if this is to be a formal dinner? What are the kitchen facilities like? Some catering companies demand certain minimum standards and others bring everything they need with them. So the facilities available at the venue will influence which company you ultimately hire for the occasion.

You must also think about issues such as access and parking for the guests as well as the catering company and any entertainers that you may have booked.

If there is to be entertainment then find out in advance if there is somewhere for them to change. An after dinner speaker may not need a dressing room but few clowns like to negotiate traffic in full costume. Also check out matters like microphones.

Electronics really becomes a major question when you are planning a conference. If the projector system and the microphones break down then you are in real trouble. Find out where everything is in advance and liase with the technical staff.

It is important to find out how far in advance you can have access to the venue. If you have to decorate the room work out just what is involved. Elaborate floral arrangements for a wedding will take more time that displaying a company banner.

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The arrangement of the venue is a matter for careful consultation with your client. Aim to draw up a plan with them. If possible visit the venue together. List exactly what they expect and what you agree to do. That way there can be no confusion and no hidden expenses for either of you.

Go through the same process with the menu. Do not simply agree to a cold buffet in general terms. Itemize what you are proposing to have on the menu. This may take a little longer but it will make your client think about what they really want. You may be able to suggest some interesting options that enliven what might otherwise be a rather routine menu. A lively ethnic buffet would give a slightly younger appeal to an event and many start up catering businesses are keen to get custom.

The greatest problems come with the most formal events. These must be planned with military precision and attention to detail. Clients still expect an occasion to be perfect even when it is organized in a tent in the middle of a field. The less facilities you have on site the more you need to plan in advance. Work out exactly what you need down to the last teaspoon. Make lists and pack everything you need in boxes that have labels.

A word of warning with the tent in a field scenario - check the power supply. Candles may be romantic, but they are impractical. A generator may be necessary. In which case site it well away from the marquee. They are noisy. Your marquee contractor should be able to help with lighting and other power issues. Talk it through in advance.

You must know all the possible pitfalls of the offsite venue and how you intend to solve them at an early stage in the planning process. Then you can give your clients a realistic estimate of the cost. There is nothing worse than losing money on a contract or surprising your client with unexpected expenses at the last moment.

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