EVENT SUCCESS: How to Create a Memory and Avoid a Disaster

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1. Create Your Event Blueprint

- Map out the reason for the event
- What you hope to accomplish
- How you will measure success
- Who needs to be involved in planning
- Who will sign off on plans and budget
- Create a timeline
Map Out the Reason for the Event

What the event is for, such as:

- Fundraising
- Education
- Celebration
- Recognition
- Re-branding or product launch
- Media attention

Or a combination or one or more above
Decide Who Needs to Be Involved in Planning

- Key stakeholders
- Partners (if nonprofit element, etc.)
- Sponsors
- Key vendors
- Elected officials (or their staff)
- Schedule regular meetings and keep them concise and focused
- Share responsibility
- Build on each others’ strengths
Create a Timeline

- Work backwards from final date
- Set milestones based on order deadlines (*printing, advertising specialties, food, invitations, etc.*)
- Watch the budget
- Know in advance where you can store materials
2. Work the Logistics

Location considerations

- Cost, capacity, technology, parking and proximity to guests
- Do a number of walk-thrus beforehand
- Check contracts closely for cancellation and guarantee language
Food, Drink and Giveaways

- Choose your menu carefully – offer gluten-free and/or vegetarian options and consider the season if you’re outdoors
- Be careful if serving alcohol – consider offering rides home
- Pick specialty items that are practical, interesting and/or cost-effective – look around for deals
- Include a logo or phrase – make the giveaway memorable!
Selecting a Date

- If you have control over the date, check with Chambers of Commerce, the media, other departments, etc. to make sure the date doesn’t conflict with other already announced events.

- For news media, Tuesday-Thursday at 10 a.m. or 2 p.m. are best.
Make It Easy for People to Find the Event

- Add a map to your invitation, evite and/or ad
- Add wayfinder signage to major roadways/intersections
- Have volunteers at the front to direct traffic
- Make sure venue’s concierge desk staff know about your event
- Make sure your event is posted on all boards and/or electronic signage
Keep the Comfort of Your Guests in Mind

- Consider a tent or awning and fan if outdoors in summer
- Consider heat if outdoors in winter
- Make sure there is adequate sound
- Consider astroturf if you’re on the ground
- Decorate as appropriate – but don’t overdo it!
- If you are taking photographs, make sure to get releases and assure they want to be featured in any publicity
3. Organize Your Guests and Speakers

- If you’re inviting prominent business leaders or elected officials, talk with their scheduler and/or secretary as soon as possible.
- Get started on your invitation list immediately.
- Check for updates and duplicates if you’re using an old list or multiple lists.
- Send out a save-the-date email or printed card 4-6 weeks in advance.
3. Organize Your Guests and Speakers (continued)

- Send out printed invitations 2-3 weeks in advance
- Follow up with evites to those whose email addresses you have
- Use the proper form of address and check spelling
Make Sure Speakers Are Prepared

* Get any PowerPoint presentation files in advance to load on computer and test
* If they are expected to answer questions from the audience, prepare anticipated questions; make sure you have microphone(s) handy
* If there is a panel discussion, who will direct answers?
* Brief your speakers in advance on any areas of concern or special considerations
Make Sure Speakers Are Prepared (continued)

- If elected officials, follow proper protocol (federal, state, local, etc.)
- Prepare talking points if needed (double-spaced, 14-point type, 2-3 minutes long)
- Make sure multiple speakers focus on different aspects of same topic
- Offer rehearsals if needed
4. Making an Event Work for the Media

- **Make it visual** if you want TV or print coverage
- **Make it compelling** so they will attend
- **Send out a media alert** to invite them 1-2 days in advance
- **Follow up** with a phone call
- Consider their news cycles and staffing
Know Who to Invite

- Editors, publishers, station managers and advertising managers are fine for formal invitations.
- Media alerts asking for coverage should go directly to editors and assignment directors/assignment desks.
- Understand that breaking news can scuttle coverage of your event.
The Day of the Event

- Have cell phone numbers for all key vendors (just in case)
- Get to the venue early to set up
- Set out all signage early
- Test technology (Audio/Video, PowerPoint presentations, etc.)
- Make sure everything is in place at least one-half hour before event is scheduled to start
- Then, smile and have fun!
Have a Welcoming Committee

- Utilize members of your planning committee to greet honored guests, speakers etc.
- Introduce speakers, key stakeholders, sponsors, donors to each other and make sure they are seated appropriately (designate a VIP section or head table if needed)
Evaluating Your Event

- Use pre-established measurements
- Talk to guests you are comfortable with about their impressions of the event
- Hold a de-briefing meeting with your planning committee and/or vendors and staff
- Write up a summary with ideas on how to improve next time
5 Most Common Event Mistakes

1. **Not enough budget to accomplish what you want** – If this is the case, try to leverage supporters, vendors, partners etc. to provide in-kind donations. Or, downscale your event and your expectations.

2. **Not enough pre-planning** – Pulling off a successful event requires about 6-8 weeks advance planning at a minimum. Remember, invitations have to go out 2-3 weeks before the event.

3. **Lack of a clear focus for the event** – Prioritize your focus. What is most important, followed by what is second most important, etc. Then, plan accordingly.

4. **Not showing up early enough to set up** – This can be really embarrassing.

5. **Being unrealistic about attendance and interest** – This can be disastrous – in terms of costs and outcomes.
Thank you!
Any Questions?

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