



Seven Steps to Corporate Event Planning

The How's and Why's of Face-to-Face Communication



Seven Steps to Corporate Event Planning

(1) Why Stage an Event?

- a. "Live" events versus other communication channels
- b. What's the idea? Theme? Logo?
- c. Who is your audience?
- d. Messaging/goals
- e. Are you legal?
- f. Who might want to stop your event from happening?

(2) Budgeting & Financial Management

- a. How will you fund your event?
- b. Sponsorships
- c. Registration fees
- d. Income vs. expenses

(3) Site Selection

- a. Where?
- b. What time of year?
- c. How far ahead to plan?
- d. If you can't find a site, stop at this step and go back to #1!

(4) Attendance

- a. Who is coming and why?
- b. How are they going to hear about your event?
- c. How are they going to sign up?

(5) Content

- a. What will be shown/said/performed?

(6) Logistics

- a. On-Site Registration
- b. Food & Beverage
- c. Audio/Visual
- d. Staffing

(7) Events happen

(8) Post-Event

- a. How'd it go? What went right? Wrong?
- b. What did you learn?
- c. Did the attendees get what they wanted out of your event?



WHY STAGE AN EVENT?

- Relationship-building
- Face-to-Face communications
- Share ideas
- Bring like-minded people together
- Raise awareness
- Fundraising

An event is a powerful communication medium with which you can enthuse, persuade, or accomplish nearly any purpose you determine.

Well-executed, it should be a memorable part of your personal life or business resume. Relentless insistence on quality and the upholding of a high standard is key throughout the process; from idea-creation to the actual “live” event. Anyone can put together a bad event. But if you’re going to spend valuable time and money planning one, you should invest all of your creativity and energy into every part and sequence.

If you’re working with a client to produce the event, you’ll need to work closely and be extremely organized along the way. The more planning and detail-nailing you do ahead of time, the higher chance of success (and the more time you might have to enjoy the “live” experience).

FIRST STEP: THE IDEA AND VISION

As the event producer or planner, you must envision the event in full. If you’re working closely with others, you must share your vision and get a complete picture of what everyone wants the event to be like, look like, and feel like for the event attendees. If you cannot get “buy-in” from everyone involved, you may need to change your vision (or your team) – it’s important that everyone be on the same page.

There are many times when you may just be “doing your job” and working on an event being produced by someone else. Well, just “doing your job” means you haven’t spent the time to really understand the purpose of the event. The more you know, the better you’ll be able help the event be a successful one.

Usually an idea for an event springs from a desired result you’re trying to achieve. “We need to raise money, so let’s do a silent auction.” This is crucial, for without a goal, the choosing of the event location, the agenda, and the many details around planning the event could end up betraying the very purpose of the event.

Examples of envisioned results could be: for a corporate party that all employees feel they are part of a great and valuable team, proud to be a part of it, and renew their commitment to the company and its goals. The product of a Fundraiser could be a lot of donations of course, but also its attendees reassured that they are contributing to a great and valuable cause, feeling privileged to be part of this endeavor, and willing to contribute even more. The product of a wedding could be for the bride and groom, family and friends to experience a one in a lifetime moment, be awestruck by it, emotionally impacted, foresee together the best possible future, and of course to have a very good time. The envisioned result of a product launch would be that the attendees want to buy the product, use it, market it further, and have trust in you and in the product. So depending on the type of event, the Event Planner and customer should name together the envisioned result they want the event to result in, as well as its message. The planning of each part and detail of the event will have to align and integrate with this message or envisioned result.

BRINGING THE IDEA TO LIFE

For many, this means developing a logo, a creative theme, or a tagline/line of text that describes the benefit of attending the event.

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The more creatively and succinctly you can describe the event through a text/visual combination, the more quickly you'll "hook" the viewer into your message.

IS AN EVENT THE BEST WAY TO BRING YOUR IDEA TO LIFE?

Maybe yes, maybe no. Nearly every marketing professional out there will tell you that a successful sales or marketing campaign is based in using every available communication channel you can get your hands on (or afford).

For some, this means newspaper or magazine advertising, radio spots, television, email marketing, or a good-ol' postcard mailing. Twitter and Facebook can help get the word out too.

Others like to combine both a "live" event with a "virtual" online component. Voila, the "hybrid event" is born! Having an online presence during your live event has become a popular way of increasing overall participation at a relatively low cost. They also enable participation by people who might be unable to attend physically due to travel or time zone constraints or through a wish to reduce the carbon footprint of the event. Generally, the virtual component involves an online representation of the live event. For example, online participants might have access to live audio or video streaming of keynote speakers or workshops alongside their presentation material. Online chat or discussion forums may be open, a twitter feed from the event may be available, and event photos and videos might be readily available via Flickr or YouTube.

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

The best way to determine which communication channel to use is to determine who your event audience is going to be. And don't make the mistake of assuming you've got just one particular audience; broaden your view, and try to figure out if others (older/younger, male/female, business people/athletes) would be interested in your message. If you're producing an event for a client and they are telling you who the audience will be, that's one thing. But if your goal is to raise money or awareness, don't sell your message short by narrowing your focus!

MESSAGING AND GOALS

Earlier you read about the idea and the vision, and bringing your idea to life. Developing a bulleted list of the various benefit messages around your idea is a great way to "stay on course" throughout the production of your event. Sometimes, these simple bullet points can turn into copy for a website, invitation or sponsorship packet. Having three to five key messages also narrows your event's "voice" so that you're not trying to say too much to your audience. Keep it simple and keep them interested!

IS ALL OF THIS LEGAL?

Did you wake up a day or two after your initial idea and say "where have I heard 'Just do it' before? Do some basic research and make sure you're not stealing someone else's (copyrighted and trademarked) idea. Imitation is the highest form of flattery, but you've got to make your event "your own event" or else you'll (eventually) get caught. You probably won't have to go to jail, but you might have to pay someone a lot of money.

It's a good idea to secure a web URL as quickly as possible, and once you have a logo and/or tagline, you might even want to have an intellectual property attorney help you "get legal." There are definite costs associated with doing this, but it's money well spent if your event is not being held under the auspices of another organization, and if you'll be producing more than one event.

THE COMPETITION

Ah yes, the competition. You may not think they are out there, but rest assured, they are. Someone famous once remarked that no idea is new anymore, so chances are, your idea is out there somewhere. Again, do some basic competitive research.

If you're new and the competition is established, it may take awhile for them to take notice of you and your event.

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But once they find out, and if you're taking customers away from them, they might try to stop you through "legal maneuverings." So it's best to have the business side of things all straightened out ahead of time.

Checking out the competition is also a great way to see what works for them (and what hasn't). Check their facebook page, or google the name to see what customers are saying about them; don't just check out their website.

BUDGETING & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- Funding to kickstart your event
- Developing a comprehensive budget; income vs. expenses
- Paying attention to every dollar going out (and coming in)
- Sponsorships
- Registration Fees
- Adjunct ways to raising even more money

Even the greatest event will never see the light of day if you can't get the funding needed to produce the it. Planning a corporate sales meeting with a pre-determined budget is a lot easier than putting together a fundraiser for your local chapter of the Boys and Girls Club.

The good news is that, for most events, you don't need all of the money to cover all of your expenses up-front; just enough to get things started based on your event's cash flow.

CASH FLOW?

When do you plan to start receiving funding for your event? Are people paying at the door to attend? Will you be getting some sponsorship funding several months before the event? Are people paying with credit cards at an online registration site? As the money flows in, you'll be able to pay your vendors for the work they are performing. If you're paying your vendors with a credit card, you are actually giving yourself an extra 30 days of "float" since you won't see your credit card statement until the end of the month. All of these factors play an important role in producing your event.

WHY BUDGET?

Budgeting your event serves many purposes:

- 1) Project your income and expenses – the financial "blueprint" for your event
- 2) Track and monitor your income, expenses and cash flow – this allows you to continually analyze the financial status of your event to offset any financial problems that may crop up
- 3) Determine if and where new revenue or cost controls are needed, especially if income is lower than anticipated, or expenses higher
- 4) Provides information for negotiating – your budget becomes a "financial history" of your event, and a solid base for planning event #2
- 5) Forecast your financial return on investment (ROI)
- 6) Allows for a valid financial evaluation of your event after-the-fact – provides a "black and white" assessment of what went right or wrong

THE STEPS TO DEVELOPING A BUDGET

Much like developing your event idea and vision, you also need to determine your event's financial objectives. Even if your goal is to only raise awareness and not money, you still need a budget to make sure you don't LOSE money. While it's true that the benefit of the awareness may outweigh the loss of dollars in the short-term, it's best to at least attempt to "break even" with the initial development of your budget.

- 1) Determine your event's financial objective:
 - a. Make a profit

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- b. Break even
- c. Incur a loss; consider the event an investment in the future
- 2) If you're developing a new budget for an event that has happened in the past, get your hands on the past budget and actual cost, if possible
- 3) Break your event into segments and determine expenses one segment at a time
 - a. Marketing and social networking
 - b. Creative design
 - c. Printing and production expenses
 - d. Venue rental
 - e. Transportation
 - f. Food and beverage
 - g. Audio/Visual and event staging
 - h. Content development, outside speakers, presentation design
 - i. Entertainment
 - j. Awards, prizes and giveaways
 - k. Registration (including credit card and paypal fees)
 - l. Administrative costs and overhead
- 4) Determine ways to increase income or decrease expenses to meet the financial objectives of your event
- 5) Always forecast income on the conservative side, while expenses should reflect a "worse-case scenario" until you have actual expense costs
 - a. Registration fees for attendees
 - i. "early bird" registration
 - ii. "standard" registration
 - iii. "late registration"
 - b. Exhibit sales
 - c. Sponsorships and grants
 - d. Advertising revenue
 - e. Sales of publications or merchandise
 - f. Commissions or rebates from vendors/partners

NEGOTIATE COSTS!

What if your event expenses are higher than you can afford? Well, you can certainly cut items out of your budget, but you can also negotiate with your vendors to get the best price possible.

- 1) Vendors or speakers/guests who share your vision may provide discounts – For instance, if your event is all about raising money for a good cause
- 2) Hotels may offer lower rates if you have a large room block for your guests.
- 3) Hotels may provide complimentary rooms or upgrades based on your room block size
- 4) If you're using a hotel ballroom as your event location, try to get the rental fee waived, especially if the hotel is catering the event and you have a room block
- 5) Hotels often add gratuities into the costs; try to get them reduced
- 6) Deposits – contracts you sign with vendors may require deposits or payments as your event date approaches. Try to get these reduced or removed to help your cash flow position
- 7) Hiring a transportation company to bus attendees to your event? Try to get a complimentary limo (or two) for VIP guests

CONTRACTS

The larger the vendor you work with, the higher the chance you'll be signing a contract for their services. With a hotel, you're guaranteed to be signing a contract. And they're not all bad; they are in place to protect you as well, and to assure you that you'll have a location to hold your event. Just be sure to read the fine print, and understand everything you're about to sign.

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TIPS TO SAVE MONEY

- 1) Don't buy what you don't need – If event signs or program advertisements don't tie back to your goals, don't pay for them. "Deconstruct" each line item in your budget and pay for only those elements that play to your key objectives. Conversely, getting a sponsor on-board to get their money and not having them align with your goals may not be in the best interest of your event either
- 2) Bundle up – There is savings in numbers. Bundling a series of smaller events into a larger campaign can help keep spending in check and make the effort look bigger than it actually is. Vendors may provide lower pricing if they know you'll be hiring them for several events
- 3) Think "low-glam" – If you have great ideas for full-color advertisements in print publications or a television campaign, take those same ideas and try them out first in lower-cost alternatives, such as a poster campaign or facebook advertisements
- 4) Share – As long as you can do it without diluting your message, it might make sense to stage your event by working with other, likeminded companies, and share some of the fixed costs. If you're planning a sports-related event, perhaps a sporting goods manufacturer is planning their own event, and you can share the costs of the venue if you stage your events simultaneously or back-to-back
- 5) Focus – If you concentrate your marketing/advertising spending within one niche, you stand a better chance at retaining the attention of your target market, while saving money on a "wide target" approach
- 6) Use what you know and who you know – Local events save transportation costs, and you may have a built in attendee database with people in your area

SITE SELECTION

- Where?
- What time of year?
- How far ahead to plan?
- If you can't find a site, stop at this step and go back to #1!

What factor is most important in selecting a venue for a meeting: Availability? Price? Location? Quality of service? Your answer might vary depending on your plans, but location is key.

For corporate events, places like hotels (downtown, suburb, airport), resorts, conference centers, and universities are common. But museums, sporting venues and public spaces might work just as well, so keep them in mind.

Availability is obviously important. The earlier you begin your planning, the more choices you'll have. Make a list of as many potential venues as possible – you can even reach out to them before you make a final decision, to see if they've got any special deals they can extend to you, and to see who is most interested in gaining your business.

Make sure each venue option can handle your minimal needs. If not, then cross them off your list:

- Accommodations – for staff and guests on-site or nearby
- Transportation – Easy to get to? Easy/ample parking? Buses/trams available? Costs?
- Event space
- Competing groups – Are competing events happening at the same venue, or nearby?
- Costs – Can you afford to do your event at each site? Remember to factor in the hidden costs, like taxes, resort fees, internet access, gratuities, etc.
- Life safety and security – Does the venue have trained emergency personnel on site? If not, can they be hired? What about local hospitals?
- Ancillary services – What other services does the venue provide that you'll need for your event (audio visual, business office, translation services, etc.)
- Renovation or construction – Does the venue have any plans for renovation around the date of your event?
- Site policies – Does the venue have any policies that may impact your event's financial or operational scope?

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CREATE A REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL/REQUEST FOR QUOTE

Sometimes, it's easier (and more fair to competing venues) to create an RFP/RFQ with all of the details of your event in an online document or email that can be shared with all potential venues. Depending on your event, this document can be short or may be quite long. But creating it once will save you a lot of time, and hopefully provide you with an "apples to apples" comparison of each venue you are considering:

- 1) Other Sites – Consider letting all of the venues know who is in the running. This lets them know that they are in a competition for your business
- 2) Date Selection – List the acceptable and unacceptable dates in the RFP; this allows the venue to respond without giving dates that may not work for your event. If you have flexibility in your dates, state the parameters of the dates or days that will be considered
- 3) Budget Range – Do some homework first, to see what other groups may have paid for a similar event at a similar time of year. Still not sure? Provide some parameters for rates that will be acceptable to your group (ask for "inclusive" rates, so you've got any taxes and surcharges included in the response to your RFP)
- 4) Special Requirements – If you've got any needs that are atypical of the standard event, list them out. If you need an amusement park carousel at your event, you're going to want to mention that
- 5) References – It never hurts to ask for references, but try to get them for events of similar size, focus and scope, preferably held within the last 6 to 12 months at the venue
- 6) Proposal Process – Make sure the venue knows dates for when you must receive questions, if you'll be sharing the questions and your answers with all of the venues, and what additional collateral material you'd like to receive with the proposal (Audio/Visual rate sheets, labor charges disclosures, etc.). Of course, they'll need to know the date you need to receive the proposal, and you should also describe your decision process and when they'll hear back from you. NOTE: Most venues will not hold dates until they receive a signed contract, so a response to an RFP with open dates does not mean they will be open when you make your decision
- 7) Complete Event Specifications – Bullet-out all of details of your event (accommodations needed, meeting space including set-up and tear-down time)
- 8) Info Checklist – Providing the venues with a questionnaire or checklist to be completed and returned with their proposals is a great way to be thorough in determining which venue will best suit your event.
 - a. Get info on the owner of the facility
 - b. Weather conditions at different times of the year (high/low temps, etc.)
 - c. Handicap access
 - d. Do you want a "green" event? Ask about energy sources used, recycling programs, composting, etc.
 - e. Charges, taxes and fees
 - f. Transportation and parking
 - g. Distance to airports, hospitals, subways, etc.
 - h. Ratio of staff to your attendees
 - i. Labor (union/non-union, contract expiration dates, etc.)

SITE INSPECTIONS

It can be very tempting to "skip" the task of conducting a site inspection, in-person; perhaps due to time constraints or your budget. But you really should consider visiting your top choices, to cut down dramatically on the risk that you'll arrive to some significant flaws in the site layout or your plans for the space.

A site inspection also allows you to check out the location/town/city around the venue. You can personally check out transportation options, restaurants in the area, and even potential vendors local to the site. Of course, with a little research, you can also set up meetings with potential event sponsors while you're on the site visit.

HOW EARLY IS TOO EARLY?

You really can't select a site too early, providing you've done your research. The earlier you've nailed the location, the more quickly you can begin marketing the event, confirming sponsors, and opening registration.

ATTENDANCE

- Paid attendees
- “Comped” attendees
- Sponsor staffing
- Volunteers
- Event staff
- Online attendees

TARGET MARKET

Who is coming to your event, and why? This goes back to your initial idea and vision, where you may have already had an audience in mind when developing your idea. For some corporate events, your attendees are known – you’ve got their complete names, email addresses, etc. For charity events, you may have a list of past attendees or contributors you can start with, but you may need to work on developing your list. And for other events, you may not know anything at all about specific attendees.

Depending on your event, you may have people who want to attend, and those that have to attend, so keep in mind that you may have some attendees who will not be happy to be there! Revisit your messaging and goals to develop compelling reasons for your target market to attend your event.

If your target market is a broad one, you can still develop messages specific to each segment within that market, and use different communication channels to reach them. Targeted messaging always beats out generic!

REGISTRATION

You know who your market is, now how are they going to sign up to attend? Even if you are not charging admission, having an attendee count is important for food and beverage, transportation, space, and safety. Plus, you really want to capture at least some information from your attendees, so you’ll have a list for next year. The more information you collect, the more you’ll learn about your attendees, including if you were correct in determining your target market(s).

- 1) Keep it simple – Don’t make the registration process too difficult for prospective attendees (even if it ends up being not so simple for you)
- 2) Speak their language – Look at things from the attendee’s point-of-view when developing a plan
 - a. On-site only with paper name tags and a written list?
 - b. Online registration
 - c. Telephone registration
 - d. Reply cards via U.S. Mail
 - e. A combination of the above?
- 3) Size and scope – Determine exactly what people are registering for... just a cost to enter? Perhaps they can order a T-Shirt in a specific size, or select specific events to attend?
- 4) Discounts – Some attendees may be offered discounts. Keep this in mind when developing your registration plan... do they get a code that expires after a certain amount of time? Is it transferable to someone else?
- 5) Registration dates – How early are you opening registration? And see point #4... are you offering “earlybird” registration up to a certain date? Do you need to offer discounts to encourage earlybird registrations to help with your cashflow?
- 6) Group registration – Can one person “call in” to register several people? What if everyone needs to agree to a waiver or registration contract?
- 7) Credit card payments – How are you handling? Do you have a merchant account that allows you to accept credit cards? Should you use a third party? Can you use your smartphone and swipe cards on-site?
- 8) Badges and registration packets – What do people get when they register? Who will print the badges and put together the reg packets? Are you including sponsor information? How will you reprint badges that have typos?

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9) Be careful of cash – Attendees paying with cash on-site may seem like a great idea, but the attraction for a staff member or volunteer to “pocket” some of that cash far outweighs the convenience factor for attendees. Most people have a credit card they can use, so keep the paper trail if possible

TREAT EVERYONE LIKE YOUR MOM

You can't every be too nice to your attendees, no matter who they are or what they are asking. One bad experience will spread like wildfire, especially if they are connected socially via Facebook or Twitter.

Pre-event, on-site or post-event, you may be asked some ridiculous questions. No matter what: Be polite. If you can anticipate the questions ahead of time, you can even come up with a standard response, helping to keep your messaging consistent from attendee to attendee.

Keep in mind the basic needs of human life: Food, water and bathrooms. This goes for paying attendees and staff as well. Hiring freelancers or vendors to work for 12 hours on the set up of your show without giving them food and drink is just not very nice. Same goes for people traveling several hours to your event: Most likely, they'll be needing something to eat and drink when they arrive, so keep that in mind.

And remember: Volunteers and vendor staff members are extensions of your core team. To attendees, their interaction with them is a direct reflection on your entire event!

CONTENT

- Marketing content
- On-site content
- Speakers
- Entertainment

For many events, the content is the heart of matter, and the reason you'll have attendees sign up to be there. If you decide to have subject matter experts or celebrities at your event, the extent to which they convey your envisioned message might be the single biggest determinant on whether attendees deem your event a success or failure.

But even before your “live” event, you need to have a handle on your content as soon as your marketing campaign begins. Be as consistent as possible with your messaging, and carry that throughout all elements of attendee communications. When people arrive on-site, they'll already know what they are there for; now you just need to “wow” them with how you tell your story!

WHERE CAN I FIND A SPEAKER?

- 1) Speakers Bureaus – Do a google search and you'll find many speakers bureaus. You can search base on subject matter, geography and price. Some speakers will provide discounts for charitable events. Keep in mind that you'll also need to pay for airfare, transportation and hotel accommodations for a professional speaker
- 2) Professional associations – Think about joining a professional association such as the American Society of Association Executives or the National Speakers Association. Even if you don't ever plan on attending a conference or meeting, they are great resources to assist in your search. You can even check with associations you may already be a member of. For example, you are planning an athletic or youth related event, and you work out at the local YMCA. You may be able to find an appropriate speaker through your connection to the Y
- 3) Other events – You may have attended another event where you heard a great speaker. Or perhaps an event is coming to your area and you can register just so you can hear someone speak and perhaps introduce yourself afterwards
- 4) Educational institutions – Depending on your event, you may want to call a specific department at a

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university. Professors have great expertise, may be relatively inexpensive, and are typically comfortable speaking in front of an audience

Remember, too, that most professional speakers have specific requirements; they may not allow video recordings or still photography, or may require a video projector and sound system. Be sure to know your on-site plan and communicate that to potential speakers to avoid any problems when they arrive at your event.

WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO HAVE A PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER?

If having a professional speaker is not in your budget or won't help get your message across, that's totally fine. But something will be discussed or displayed at your event, so make sure you are on top of that messaging.

Perhaps you're planning a reception where attendees will mingle with your staff. Be sure to have a staff meeting prior to the event to discuss key points for everyone to make throughout the evening. Everyone should be on the same page in terms of content!

If you are planning a charitable event for a children's cause, you may be able to find a local children's theater that will stage a performance at your event.

ENTERTAINMENT

What type of entertainment do you want to enhance your concept or tie back to your theme? Are rehearsals required? If so, do you have the time in your event schedule? Does your entertainment have specific set-up requirements?

- 1) Bands
- 2) DJs
- 3) Look-alikes or celebrities
- 4) Dancers/singers/actors
- 5) Comedians
- 6) Characters (mimes/clowns, etc.)
- 7) Casino games
- 8) Carnivals or circuses
- 9) Game shows
- 10) Musicals/dinner shows

CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT?

Plan on controversy! If you're covering a topic that is in any way controversial, you'll want to have a back-up plan in place. From demonstrators and pickets at the front of your event venue or hecklers in the audience; make sure you and your speakers are at least aware of all possibilities.

LOGISTICS

We've covered many "logistical" items throughout the previous chapters; now it's time to review them all to ensure flawless execution before, during and after your event.

Logistics really boils down to the day-to-day management of all elements of your event. While it may lack the creativity of developing an event theme, or the interest of selecting event entertainment, it is the backbone of the entire event, and will involve most of your time in the months ahead.

One great roadmap to managing the logistical planning of your event is the budget. If you've created a budget and divided it into segments, you can more easily keep track of everything. Depending on how many people are

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on your event team, you can also divide up the segments.

- 1) Marketing and social networking
- 2) Creative design
- 3) Printing and production expenses
- 4) Venue rental
- 5) Transportation
- 6) Food and beverage
- 7) Audio/Visual and event staging
- 8) Staffing and volunteers
- 9) Content development, outside speakers, presentation design
- 10) Sponsorships
- 11) Entertainment
- 12) Awards, prizes and giveaways
- 13) Registration
- 14) Administrative items – licenses, permits, vendor payments, etc.

BE ORGANIZED

Develop a comfortable approach to being organized. This may include print-outs of various contracts, marketing pieces, or prize samples, all dumped into a three-ring binder. It may include electronic documents filed by budget segment. Whatever it is, be sure to have a back-up copy available, in case you lose your binder or your system crashes.

The more organized you are with your first event, the easier it will be to manage your second event. And if you leave the organization, your successor will have a fantastic roadmap for carrying on in your place.

DELEGATE

Don't be afraid to let others assist with the logistical items. As mentioned above, the larger your staff, the better chance you'll have the resources to assist you. For example, perhaps you have a "foodee" on your staff, and they are interested in managing the food and beverage catering part of your event. Make sure they are "on board" with your theme and vision and your budget, and let them begin the process of gathering budget figures and potential catering vendors for you. Consider having regular event meetings, so that the entire team can share knowledge as your event gets nearer. Remember: Delegating does not mean losing touch with each task!

POST-EVENT

No matter how successful (hopefully!) your event, it's important to take a few steps back after the event and assess the entire program:

- Did you reach your goals?
- Did the audience get what they were looking for?
- Were your vendors and partners valuable contributors to the success of the event?
- Did the venue meet your expectations?

Depending on the type of event you are producing, you can also ask attendees to complete a few survey questions or an event evaluation, to capture more targeted information around specific event aspects (food, entertainment, cost, parking, etc.). This can be done on-site via paper or handheld devices, or sent after the event via email or U.S. Mail.

Be sure to share the results of any survey with the entire team – people need to hear the good and the bad if you want improvement in the future.

FAILING ELEGANTLY

This is a fancy term for doing a crappy job. Most of us get embarrassed if we perform poorly in front of others.

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Some of us may be concerned about losing our jobs. So many of us might try to find a way to “hide” our results. If you’re planning on doing your event in the future, don’t “cover up” a poor performance the first time around. You need a solid base to grow your event in the future.

Don’t set impossible goals in the first place. If everyone knows they are unattainable, you’ve already set everyone up for failure! This doesn’t mean you need to have easy goals, but keep this in mind when developing your event’s vision.

It’s great when you and your event team complete easy or fun “to-do’s” on your event list, but don’t lose sight of the difficult tasks that may require more time to complete. As the leader, make sure your event team is redirecting energy to the appropriate tasks that need to get done.

Don’t ask for justification. If something has gone wrong, you don’t have time for excuses; you just need the work to get done. An event has a finite beginning and end, and everyone must work together to make it a success. People make mistakes, so make them aware of any gap between their expected and actual job performance, and move on to get the event completed.

PREP FOR NEXT YEAR!

It’s never too early to plan for next year. If you’ve developed a theme, created a budget, and organized your event activities, your work for next year is 50% complete. Tweak elements to make them better; use survey results to enhance the event (and let your attendees know you’ve listened to them!), and start booking/reserving your venue and vendors for the next event.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pete Lecours is Co-Founder of Brainium, Inc., a full-service event management agency focused on helping create, manage and stage world-class corporate events. Since 2000, Brainium has helped manage countless events for numerous companies locally and nationally, including sales conferences, awards programs and road shows.

Brainium works with clients on every aspect of corporate event production, including marketing, logistics, staging, design, registration, and onsite management. For more information, visit brainiumevents.com or facebook.com/brainiumevents.

Pete is also the Co-Founder of the Renegade Playground Challenge, which organizes and stages mud/adventure races across the country. He has been in the event business since the day after his college graduation in 1988. His first business trip took him to Pebble Beach, California and it's been downhill since then. But seriously, it's been a great ride, and he's been able to visit some fantastic places all over the world.

When he's not working – OK, so that's not very often – Pete likes to spend time with his lovely wife and daughter and enjoy the company of friends who can handle his sarcastic and sardonic wit.