

Planning *your* Events

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INNOVEST SME
Accelerating Small Business

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*For every two minutes of
glamour, there are eight
hours of hard work.*

JESSICA SAVITCH

PREFACE

Creating an event is no small feat. It takes planning and understanding of the process. When planning an event, there are a multitude of tasks to consider. In this book we will explore together how to effectively plan and produce an event.

*By failing to prepare, you
are preparing to fail.*

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN



TYPES OF EVENTS

An event is a planned social occasion. Events can be small intimate family gatherings, or huge galas. You can have an event for charity, or for your baby's first steps. Because the spectrum is so vast, there are of course many different types of events. In this section, we will review the most common types of events.

AWARDS

An awards event, or an awards ceremony, is an event that gives out an award or awards, and awards ceremonies can vary in size and prestige. An example of an informal awards ceremony would be a group of co-workers gathering at a restaurant, and awarding funny awards to each other like "worst tie in the office." An example of a formal awards event would be the Oscars. An awards ceremony is a way to honor a person, or multiple people. You can utilize this type of event in any setting, such as a corporate function, social club, etc.

CHARITY

Charity events are events for a particular charity. These events can be geared towards awareness, or fundraising. Like the other events they can be intimate, like a small dinner, or lavish. Some charity fundraising

events could consist of having a carnival, a car wash, or a fancy 4-course meal. Relay for life is a prime example of an informal charity fundraising event. At this event they raise awareness about cancer, and raise money to fund cancer research. A formal event is a function that is usually a black tie event. These can be dinners, dancing, celebrity auctions, and more. In 2012, George Clooney hosted the most successful dinner in the history of the American presidential campaigns for the re-election of Barack Obama. The event was held in George Clooney's home, and had 150 guests. The dinner was prepared by renowned chef Wolfgang Puck. The price per plate was \$40,000, and they were able to raise over \$15 million dollars for the campaign according to CBS News.com

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

Conferences and seminars are meetings for discussion or training. Usually, they are offered in a large setting, like an auditorium and have speakers. These types of events can have singular or multiple speakers. They can incorporate an open forum or have a question and answer allotted time. A corporation can use this type of event to train new employees, or share new techniques for the employees' job. They can also use this forum to get feedback from their employees on new implemented policies. A group such as a club or non-corporate organization can use this type of event for giving information to its members or getting feedback.

HOLIDAY

Holiday events are basically just social gatherings that relate to a specific holiday. This can include a corporate Christmas party, Cinco de Mayo celebration, or a New Year's Eve masquerade gala. In most cases, these events are made to be fun occasions and informal. Holiday parties usually use themes to make them more interesting. A great Christmas office party could be the highlight of the work year for many employees. These parties can also be coupled with awards ceremonies and charity events.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Jennifer feels like hosting a grand event will help her business gain recognition, and thus increase sales. Jennifer owns and runs the largest organic orchard in the county. On the orchard, they grow a variety of stone fruit and produce what she feels is the best cider in the state. She does a lot of business at the local farmer's market, but she wants to expand. She believes in her product and wants her brand to be a household name. She tosses around a lot of different ideas and finally decides that a charity event would be great exposure for her company. She wants to find a local charity that does something relatable to her business. She does some research and finds a charity in her city that helps the elderly by providing groceries and hot meals. She contacts the charity and meets Lucy, who is just as excited about Jennifer's proposition as Jennifer. Jennifer feels like this would be the best charity to help because she can also donate some of her products to the charity in addition to the money raised.

*He who is ever ready to live
through difficulties with a
calm spirit is never wrong,
but always strong.*

TERRY MARK



BRAINSTORMING

The most important part of an event is planning and organizing. In this section, we will discuss some of the different items that need to be planned. Many aspects of an event need to be thoughtfully planned. When planning, you have to determine the purpose and theme of the event. Determining the date when the event will be held is important. In addition, different ideas should be considered for event activities and decor. These are just a few items that need to go on your planning list, but many more aspects of an event that require planning.

DETERMINE THE EVENT'S PURPOSE

The purpose of an event is crucial, and can make or break an event. The purpose of the event is what makes the attendee want to come. The other aspects of the event are icing on the cake, but the purpose is the foundation of it. If you are throwing a charity event, then your job is easy! The purpose would be to either raise money, or raise awareness. If you are having a seminar, then you just need to decide what topic the participants will be discussing. If it were a holiday party, it would be for the holiday you want to celebrate. Of course, other event purposes could be applicable like: major life events, employee recognition, and awards ceremony just to name a few.

DETERMINE A THEME

A theme of an event is the specific subject or idea on which the design of is based. The theme can make those who are on the fence about coming to an event, jump in! A theme could be a color, a movie, or anything else that you want to use to create the ambiance. A great theme can really boost attendance and excitement for an event. An event can have just one theme, or multiple themes can be combined. An example of this would be Purple Space Pirates. Granted that isn't a great theme, but it is interesting. Here are a few theme ideas:

- Carnival / Circus
- Winter Wonder Land
- I love the 80s
- Vegas / Casino
- Glamour
- Country Western
- Sports
- Victorian Elegance
- Alice in Wonderland
- Craft/DIY Party
- Purple Party

WRITE DOWN & REVIEW IDEAS

Now is the fun part: creating ideas. At this time, you should know your purpose and your theme; now you can start coming up with your ideas. So, what ideas do you need to write down? At this phase, you can write

down ideas about activities, decorating, entertainment, and food. This is not the time to decide everything you want to happen at the event and finalize it. This is the time when you brainstorm all of your ideas. Be as creative as possible. Brainstorming with others can help in this process. After you have gotten all of your ideas out, it's time to edit them. You will start cutting the list until you have a cohesive and attainable list of ideas for the event. When you are cutting these ideas, you want to consider your estimated budget and consider your time frame. If you only have three weeks to plan an event, you probably are not going to be able to get engraved napkins. In that same way, if you have a budget of \$30, an ice sculpture is out of the question.

DETERMINE A DATE

Determining a date can be tricky because there are multiple things to consider. You want to give yourself enough time to reach all of your planning goals but not so much time that everyone forgets about the event. You want to schedule it on a day that is accessible to as many people as possible; most events are held on weekends. When planning the date, it's advisable to avoid holidays because most people will want to spend that time with their families. You also want the time frame to be appropriate to the event. If you were hosting a formal dinner, eight o'clock would be a better time than five o'clock. By eight o'clock, the adults have had time to get off work, get ready, and make arrangements for their children if necessary. The whole premise here is that you are selecting a date and time that maximizes the number of attendees. There is no point in having an event if no one is there to see it.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

(This is a continuation of the practical Illustration from the previous chapter)

Together, Jennifer and Lucy collaborate and come up with the idea to host a fall festival. They decide that they will have game booths, food booths, and an auction to help raise money. The festival will promote the charity, and the theme features the fruits and cider that the orchard produces. Together they decide that a Saturday in September would be the best date, and they want to hold the festival from noon to 7:00 pm. They feel like a Saturday is the best day of the week for a family function to take place, and September doesn't have any major holidays. They want to pick a time when the most people would be able to attend, so they chose the middle of the day. The event would also start late enough so that parents have time to get their kids ready. Jennifer is excited that helping this charity will also help her business.

*Good plans shape good
decisions. That's why good
planning helps to make
elusive dreams come true.*

GEOFFREY FISHER



TYPES OF ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment is an important aspect of any event. Entertainment is enjoyment that comes from playing a game, watching a performer, etc. Basically, it is just something that makes people happy and keeps them engaged. There are many types of entertainment for events; in this chapter we will discuss games, activities, speakers, and performers.

GAMES

Games are a great way to make any event fun and engaging if done the right way. You have to consider your audience. Juvenile games may not be as successful with older crowds as they would younger. You wouldn't want to have a gambling game at a 5-year-old's birthday party. Additionally, considering the atmosphere and making sure that the game relates to your theme is important.

Here is a very short list of games that can be played at events:

Carnival games	Bowling
Cake Walks	Dance Contest
Baby Shower Bingo	Eating Contest
Las Vegas style gambling games	Scavenger Hunt
Bingo	Game Show
Billiards	

ACTIVITIES

Activities are another great way to get people engaged at your event. Like games, you have to make sure they are the appropriate activities for the attendees, theme, and location. The difference between a game and an activity in this context is that a game allows the winner to get a prize. It is a competition. An activity is just something that people do; it does not have any sort of competitiveness. A well selected activity can really highlight your event.

Here is a list of possible activities that you could utilize at your event:

Amusement Park Rides	Fashion Show
Arts & Crafts	Hot Air Balloon Rides
Bumper Boats	Karaoke
Caricature Artist	Laser Tag
Dance Lessons	Mechanical Bull
Dunk Tank	Petting Zoo
Face Painting	Tattoo Artist

SPEAKERS

A speaker is a person who speaks to the attendees at an event. The speaker should be very knowledgeable about the topic that you are asking him or her to speak about. An event can have one or more speakers. Speakers can just stand on stage and talk about their subject, or they can use visual aids. Speakers are typically utilized at seminars; however, they can also be used at charity events and awards events. There are a few different types of speakers:

- **Professional Speaker** – A speaker who is an expert in a particular subject, not related to business.
- **Keynote Speaker**- A person who delivers a keynote speech, or keynote address.
- **Instructor Speaker**- A speaker who does training on a skill.
- **Industry Speaker**- A speaker who is an expert in a particular subject in relation to business, or has a respectable reputation for being knowledgeable (or successful) on a subject.
- **Entertainment Speaker**- Someone who is like a host and keeps the event light and people engaged.

PERFORMERS

A performer is a person who publically engages in an action or activity that requires skill or training. There are a variety of different types of performers. The key is to pick someone who is appropriate for the type

of event you are hosting. You would not want to have a charity event with a largely blind audience and have a magician as the entertainment. Here are a few types of performers:

Celebrity Impersonator	Hypnotist
Belly Dancer	Live Bands
Clown	Magician
Comedian	Santa
DJ	Sword Swallower/ Fire Eater
Fortune Teller	Ventriloquist

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

James was recently offered the opportunity to audition with three other individuals to be the event planner for his local historical society. He is new to the event planning world, but he has taken a few classes on it at his local college and he feels like he is informed enough to take on the task. The historical society chairperson, Lindsay, has asked him and the other three candidates to formulate a plan. The plan needed to include what the entertainment, theme, decor, and food would entail. He decides it would be a neat idea to have a party that is themed around the Elizabethan era. The entertainment would include tournaments of jousting and dueling knights. He also thinks there should be jugglers and strolling minstrels. He thinks this is an event Lindsay would host, and he is very sure that she will choose him.

*Productivity is never
an accident. It is
always the result of a
commitment to excellence,
intelligent planning, and
focused effort.*

PAUL J. MEYER



SUPPORT STAFF

You can't have an event with only yourself and the entertainment. Support staff is just as important, and they will help make your life much easier if they are organized. In this chapter, we will discuss a few of the major types of support staff and what their functions are.

SECURITY

Security is important to have at a public event. It may not be necessary for a small children's birthday party, but is necessary for a larger event. Security can escort people from an event who aren't invited. They can help remove people who have overindulged in alcohol or who are being disruptive. A security officer can be contracted with a guard company, or you can hire an off duty police officer. It is helpful for the security officer to have current or former police training and experience, but it is not a mandatory requirement.

VALET

At larger and more formal events, having a valet is a great asset. A valet is a person who parks the vehicles for attendees at an event. A valet can make your guests feel very important, like they are one of the Jones's! Not only will a valet make your guests feel special they also provide a great

benefit to your event. Valets allow the vehicles to be parked in a way that maximizes space, prevents traffic jams, and allows for easy departure. They also ensure the cars will be parked farther away from the venue and save your guests from having to walk a long way. Valets are also able to know exactly where a car is parked, saving guests from wandering the parking lot looking for their vehicles.

WAITERS/ WAITRESSES

Serving staff are important for events that feature food and/or drinks. Whether you are serving a full dinner or hors d'oeuvres, you will need someone to serve them. Serving staff helps pass out and serve food and drinks. They would also be the staff utilized to pick up empty food and drink receptacles. Another function of the serving staff is to educate the guests about the food they are being served. They should be able to tell the guests what the major ingredients are and what preparation methods were used for the items being served. Lastly, the serving staff can be utilized to give feedback to the catering chef. They have the ability to inform the kitchen if the food is received well or if people are complaining about under or over salting, etc.

CLEAN UP CREW

The set up and cleanup crew are another important part of planning an event. Whether your event only has a few chairs and tables or an intricate entertainer display, you need to have people who can put it together and clean it. Depending on the needs of the event, the set up and cleanup

crew can be the same people, or two different sets of people. The set up crew is the crew that is in charge of building any displays, setting up seating, and any other preparations. They would help with placing the predesigned decor of the event. Once the event staging has been done, the cleanup crew would come in and make sure that the area is clean, free of dirt and debris. After the event, the staging needs to be taken down, and everything needs to be cleaned.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Laquinda and Brian are recently engaged. Laquinda decides that she wants to have a huge, lavish wedding in three months. Brian is on board with whatever Laquinda wants but he doesn't want to spend a lot of money. Laquinda wants the event to feel luxurious and decides that she will splurge on the food and décor. She decides she can cut costs by having very few support staff. Altogether, there are 500 people invited to the event. The frugal couple then elects to only hire three servers and no other employees. They feel like they can do all of the other job functions required for the wedding themselves. On the day of the wedding, the happy couple and their family are hard at work setting up the venue. The wedding starts late because it took so long to set up the venue. After the ceremony, the guests are very hungry. Many of them are annoyed because no one could find a waiter to check on their food. When the reception is over, everyone leaves at once. This causes many traffic jams because hundreds of people are trying to leave at the same time. Before leaving for their honeymoon, the newlyweds and their family have to stay after and clean up the venue.

*Plans are nothing;
planning is everything.*

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER



ENJOY
THE
MOMENT

TECHNICAL STAFF

Your technical staff is just as important as your support staff. These people will set up, test, and fix the technical applications of your event. Technicians vary in their specialties and the necessity for each technician will vary.

VISUAL TECHNICIAN

A visual technician is also called a lighting technician. They facilitate the lighting effects for events. Their job duties vary, depending on the needs of the event. The lighting effects of an event can range from laser shows to just a basic spot light. Some of the visual technician's duties include:

- Setting up the lighting equipment.
- Checking that the equipment is working properly.
- Setting up generators.
- Creating the vision of the designers lighting plan.
- Programming light shows or changing the colors of the lights.
- Accessing the best place to run cables for the lighting.
- Packing up equipment after the event.

MEDIA TECHNICIAN

A media technician is a person who runs the website, Facebook, Twitter, or any other social media applications for the event. This can entail making a whole website, posting an advertisement on Facebook, or providing hourly Twitter updates. These technicians are great for getting the “Buzz” started about your event. Having a website, especially for a charity event, is a great way to get information out that may be too lengthy to explain during a presentation.

AUDIO TECHNICIAN

Audio technicians are the people who deal with the sound at an event. Their job includes cleaning and repairing audio equipment. They are responsible for making sure the microphones work and are at an appropriate volume. If there is a video presentation, the audio technician is also in charge of the sound equipment for that. The technician should be able to diagnose and resolve any audio issues that the event is having. Basically, if it's sound related, they are the go to people.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT TECHNICIAN

A specialized equipment technician is basically like the “miscellaneous” of the technical staff category. This is an individual who sets up, maintains repairs, operates, and takes down specialized equipment. This technician, in some cases, can be the performer themselves. A magician's props would fall in to the category of specialized electrical equipment. If part of

your entertainment included aquatic animals, the tank would be included in this category of specialized equipment.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Monique is going to have a huge event for her husband Jeremy's company, which specializes in dancewear. At the party, the couple plans to have professional dancers performing exotic dance moves. Some of the dancers will need to be in harnesses so that they can be lifted into the air. They want to have a light show during the performance that highlights the dancers. They also want to have a live band at the event, which needs a separate light show to highlight the singers. Her husband, Jeremy, tells her it would be great to advertise the party on the company website and Facebook. She really has her plate full, but she knows it will be a great event.

*Failing to plan
is planning to fail.*

ALAN LAKEIN



VENDORS

A vendor is an outside company that works with an event. They can provide food, equipment, or services. Utilizing vendors is key to a successful and cost effective event. These vendors can pitch their ideas for the event, and they can submit estimates. Usually, you can have a few different companies bidding for the same job, which gives you the option of getting the best price possible.

FOOD VENDOR

If you are going to have food at any event, you are going to need food vendors. Food vendors are catering companies or chefs who prepare the food. Food vendors can also be the providers of the actual food that is being cooked. This type of vendor would include the bar. Bartenders would be part of the support staff, but there would need to be a food vendor to provide the spirits for the event. When selecting a food vendor, it is important to select food that is appropriate for the event. Also, ask around and see what the reputation of the vendor is among former clientele.

EQUIPMENT VENDOR

An equipment vendor is a vendor who supplies the equipment necessary for the event. If you have floating dancers, the harnesses and apparatus that hold the dancer in the air would fall under this category. This would also include lighting and audio equipment. If the caterers do not have their own equipment, you may be required to use a vendor to provide that equipment for them to cook at the event. Depending on your event, the equipment vendors needed may vary.

DECORATIONS AND FURNISHING VENDORS

Decorations and furnishings can also be purchased or rented via a vendor. These items can be as small as a tea light votive, or as big as new flooring and a raised stage. The most common items would be the tables, chairs, and seating areas. If the venue you have chosen does not have a stage and the event you're planning requires a stage, these vendors would be whom you go to build it. The key is deciding how you want the event to look and then figuring out what you need to make that happen. Depending on the vendor, you can rent or buy the products, and some may include installation in the price for the bigger items.

PHOTOGRAPHY/ VIDEO VENDOR

Another vendor you may want to consider hiring would be in charge of the photography or video recording. Depending on what you want your event to include, you could potentially hire both of these vendors. A video recording vendor would supply the video recording equipment,

record the event, and edit the video with the requested amount of copies. The photographer would be in charge of taking pictures at the event, providing the equipment, editing the photos, and providing the requested or agreed upon number of prints.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Paul was trying to plan a big event to celebrate his 10th wedding anniversary. He really wanted to show his wife how wonderful the last 10 years have been and how lucky he felt. After he started planning the event, he realized how huge of a task it was. He decided that he needed to hire a professional. A friend recommended Donna, who has been Paul's event lifesaver. He told her about some of the ideas he had for the event, and Donna made them possible. Donna was able to understand the different types of vendors they would need for the event, and had good working relationships with those vendors. She consulted with food vendors, and equipment vendors. She had a grasp on necessary items that Paul hadn't even considered. He was so thankful to have help. On the night of the event, they had a great time. His wife said the anniversary party was almost as special as the day they got married.

*One important key to
success is self-confidence.
An important key to self-
confidence is preparation.*

ANURAG PRAKASH RAY



FINALIZE THE PLAN

At this point you have made a lot of preliminary plans, but now it's time to put pen to paper and finalize your ideas. Your choices here are very important. At this point, you will want to pick a venue, the entertainment, the décor, and the food. You're also going to figure out the registration process for the event. All of these are the key factors to an event, and the right choice will bring success.

VENUE

The venue is the place where the event is going to take place. The right venue can really make an event, but the wrong venue can break it. When picking the venue, you want to have a place that meets the needs of your event. It needs to be big enough to accommodate your guests and whatever the entertainment is going to be. No one wants to go to a cramped event; so, make sure it's big enough. In that same respect, you don't want it to be a lot bigger than what you need because then it will look sparse. It will look like no one is attending the event. If possible, try to find a venue that falls within your theme. If you are throwing a party that the theme of royalty, a great idea is to use a castle.

REGISTRATION

The registration process is another important aspect of an event; it allows you to know who is going to be in attendance. First, you need to determine if you need to charge a registration fee for the event. Depending on the event, you may need to charge for attendance. In addition, you need to determine how people will tell you that they are attending. If they are buying tickets, then you know they are going to attend. If you are not charging for attendance then you need some sort of RSVP or other system in place to allow guests to notify you of their attendance. RSVP is a French term that means *répondez s'il vous plait*. In English, it means, "Please respond."

Here are a few ways to facilitate registration:

- Online (web) registration
- RSVP by mail
- RSVP by email
- Purchasing a ticket
- RSVP by phone

ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment is another important aspect of an event. This is what is going to engage your guests. The right choice of entertainment is important. You want to make sure that whatever is chosen is age appropriate for the guests attending. It is also beneficial to make sure that it follows the

theme you have set for the event. Entertainment can lend itself to a wide range of options.

Here are a few different types of entertainment:

- Performers (e.g. singers or actors)
- Games (e.g. poker or carnival games)
- Speakers (e.g. motivational speakers)
- Activities (e.g. crafts or tattoo artist)

CUISINE AND DÉCOR

The last two items to choose for your event is your cuisine and décor. For both of these items, it is important to follow the theme of the event. If you were having an event with a Hollywood Luxury theme, you wouldn't want to serve hotdogs. The food at an event is important, because it can be entertaining and can stimulate conversation between guests. Typically, when people leave an event, the top two items they discuss are the food and the decorations. The décor can take a plain space and make it really special. The key to decorating is having different textures and colors so that the eye has a lot of visually stimulating items to look at. The décor can also help guests get into the theme of the event. When it comes to the cuisine and the décor, be creative, and stay on theme!

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Charlie and Samantha are best friends who decided to go into business together. Samantha is an interior decorator; she is creative and loves to make a space unique. Charlie is a chef; he enjoys taking simple foods and making them into something extraordinary. They decide to start an event planning business because they figure that they have the two most important bases covered for events. Samantha and Charlie both have experience as consultants for other event planners, so they feel like they have a good grasp on the requirements. A friend of theirs is hosting a charity dinner and hires them to plan the event. Together, they come up with a theme. They are lucky that the client already had the venue chosen. They pitch their theme ideas, providing examples of the décor, entertainment, and cuisine. Their friend is very impressed with their choices and approves them all. Samantha and Charlie are so happy for the opportunity their friend has given them; they feel like they can really do this as their business.

*Cakes are special. Every
birthday, every celebration
ends with something
sweet, a cake, and people
remember. It's all about
the memories.*

BUDDY VALASTRO



ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS

The administrative tasks are kind of like the vegetables of event planning. They may not be the most fun part, but they are very necessary. This is where you concentrate your event. In this section, we will talk about creating a budget, branding and marketing your event, and obtaining your permits, insurance, and contracts.

CREATE A BUDGET

A budget is the amount of money that is available to spend on an event. Usually, the event planner has a ballpark amount that the client wants to stay under. The event planner would calculate the costs of the items needed for the event and submit that to the client. Sometimes the client will set a budget. There are times when an event can have a fluctuating budget; the client will specify that they can allow the budget to fall between two different amounts. When creating a budget, make sure to round up, not down. You want to make sure that you are generous with your budget because it's better to under spend than over spend. Also, you want to include a contingency plan for unknown costs that may present themselves.

BRANDING AND MARKETING

Branding and marketing may not be necessary for small intimate events, but for larger functions like charity events, it is imperative. Branding means creating a theme or image that can attract the attention of potential attendees. Not all events require branding, but some events may. When choosing a brand, it could be something related to the theme or something related to the purpose of the event. Marketing is the advertising for the event. When you're marketing the event, it can be something as simple as sending out an invitation or as grand as a television advertisement.

INSURANCE AND PERMITS

When you plan an event, it is important to be knowledgeable about the types of licenses and permits that are needed. It is advisable to consult a lawyer to determine what permits or licenses you are going to need. Permits are official documents that give people consent to do something. For example, an event that requires the street to be blocked off would need a permit. A license is an official document that gives permission for a person to own or use something or proceed performing a trade. Most people have obtained a license, our driver's license. Another prime example is a person serving liquor who needs to have a liquor license. You may not personally need to obtain the license or permit; it may be that your employee requires one. In this event, it is still your job to ensure that the permits and licenses are ready in time for the event. It is against the law for you to proceed without the proper licenses and permits. Doing so can result in hefty fines from the city or get your event shut down.

CONTRACTS

Lastly, you want to obtain all of the required contracts for your event. A contract is a legally binding agreement. Having a contract solidifies that the people you are in the contract with is going to complete their task and that you are going to pay them. It is a great way to outline exactly what you need them to do, how much you are paying, and when the task should be started and completed. Contracts can be obtained for:

- The Venue
- The Entertainer
- The Vendors
- Technical Staff
- Support Staff

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Sierra and Jocelyn decide they want to host an event to celebrate their favorite professor's 30th work anniversary. They have never planned a big event before, but feel like they could still go forwards without a professional event planner. They decide that they would have the event in a banquet hall of a local hotel. They want to have a stage so that they can present him with a gift at the end of the night. They also decide that they would like there to be a string quartet that will perform during dinner. Sierra finds the tables that she loved at one vendor's location. Jocelyn finds the dining chairs at an alternate location. The night of the event comes, and

they are in trouble. The caterers are there, but the food vendors where nowhere to be found. The tables are in place, but there are no chairs, and the stage hasn't been put together. They had forgotten to get the permits for the street to be shut down for the valet services, and no one on staff has a liquor license. Because they don't have any contracts for the vendors and other staff, none of them have an obligation to show up. They end up having to cancel the event last minute.

*Expect the best,
plan for the worst, and
prepare to be surprised.*

DENIS WAITLEY



GET ORGANIZED

A successful event planner is three things: organized, creative, and a problem solver. Without organization, there is no way to complete all of the tasks necessary for an event. Organization will help you know what you still have left to complete. Being organized will also reduce your stress level. Everyone knows that before the big show actors are nervous wrecks, the same is true for event planners! Get organized now, save yourself stress later!

FORM A TEAM

There are many sayings about teamwork like: “team work makes the dream work” or “it takes a village.” Basically, you can work more efficiently if you have people to help you. Form a team of employees or volunteers to whom you can delegate tasks. As a planner, you have to have your hand in everything, but you don’t necessarily have to perform the tasks yourself. A team can help take on some of the workload and get more done in a quicker fashion. Surrounding yourself with a trustworthy team of people can make your life and job easier and efficient.

TIMELINE

Rome wasn't built in a day, and your event won't be either. Planning an event takes time, and you have to know how to budget that time. A timeline is a graph or a list of tasks that are sorted by when they need to be completed. Knowing what tasks need to be completed each day will help you stay on track. You will want to create the time line in weekly, monthly, or daily intervals. As the event gets closer, you may need to change your intervals to days instead of weeks.

Items that could be on your timeline include:

- Determining a budget
- Picking a venue
- Picking vendors
- Sending out invitations
- Assessing staffing needs

CHECKLISTS

A checklist is a very special thing to the organized individual. A checklist is a list of items that need to be accomplished. Having this list you can “check off” what has been completed. Depending on how organized you are, you can also note who completed each task and when. The tasks on the checklists can have subcategories; these can be as involved as you want. They are just a way for you to organize everything that needs to be

completed on paper. Checklists are similar to timelines, except that they are more detailed and do not necessarily have due dates.

BACKUP PLANS

Maybe you have been lucky in life and everything has gone exactly to plan. Most of us know that unexpected things happen, and you can either wallow in sorrow or break out plan B. A backup plan is an alternate plan, in case the first course of action doesn't work out. Event planning is like life, sometimes things do not go the way they are planned. The singer gets laryngitis, the caterer's car breaks down, or the venue gets flooded. Having a backup plan is the only way you can protect yourself from disaster. Little things, like napkins, may not require a backup plan. The major aspects of the event, however, like the venue, food, and entertainment will need a backup plan.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Camille is friends with Sabrina. Together they spent three months planning a wedding shower for their good friend Allison. They decided that they didn't need anyone to help them; surely, they could pull this off between the two of them. They worked diligently and planned every detail of the wedding shower. They were so excited and had so many things they wanted to do for the shower. Before they knew it, the shower was a week away, and nothing had been set into motion. They had planned everything but hadn't contacted any of the vendors. They suddenly scrambled to find vendors and staff for the event. Unfortunately, because of the late

notice, most of the wonderful ideas had to go by the wayside. There were no caterers available for the event, and they had to take a venue that was their last choice. They convinced one of their friends to have his band play as the entertainment, but their friend got sick the day before. Camille and Sabrina had a feeling this wedding shower was not going to be a good one; they were very disappointed in themselves.

*Have fun. Do something
nobody else had done
before, or has done since.*

PAUL PRUDHOMME



POST EVENT ACTIVITIES

Well, in theory, you have had a wonderful event, but it is not time to rest yet. There are a few post event duties needed. These last few tasks are helpful to both you and your guests. For anyone in the hospitality business, we know that customer satisfaction and feedback are key. Sharing that your event was fantastic doesn't hurt either!

SURVEY

Surveying is a great way for you to understand how you can improve your process. Surveying means asking people questions in order to gain information about the opinion of most people. Survey your guests, see what they thought of the event, and discover what could have made it better. Constructive criticism is the best way to hone your skills. Surveying is not just for the guests; you should survey your employees and vendors. This helps you become a better boss. Surveying your employees and vendors also helps you find ideas you may have never thought of before. The survey could be done orally, on paper, by email, or on social media. Try to keep it short and light. This will help motivate people to complete it.

SHARE MEDIA

Hopefully, you have had the event photographed or videotaped and have some great pictures or video to share. Don't hoard it; share your media! Facebook, twitter, and Instagram posts of the event are great ways to share with your attendees and to get people excited about your next event. It is also a great way for you to show people your work, which will help people think of you for their next event. Tagging people in photos is another way to recognize your guests and get the buzz out about your events. Posting the event media helps your guests feel like they were a part of something special, helps promote you as an event planner, and promotes the special event.

SEND THANK YOU NOTES

A thank you note is an old concept, but it is still a great route to go. You can send thank you notes to your guests, to the entertainment, or to anyone you feel should receive one. Sending thank you notes just lets the people know that you appreciate them being at the event. You can send them via electronic communication or use regular old pen and paper. You can have special thank you notes printed up that match the theme of the event, or you can just write you thanks on a simple piece of paper. Either way, it shows the recipients that you took the time to thank them, and that makes everyone feel great.

START PLANNING THE NEXT EVENT!

Now that you have planned and produced this wonderful event, it's time to start thinking about the next one! Event planning is a lot of work, but it can also be a lot of fun. If you want to become an event planner, you need to keep looking for the next event. Be organized, creative, hone your problem solving skills, and have fun! Remember, no event is too big or too small, and an event of any size can be awesome.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Kelly is a struggling event planner in her town. She is over shadowed by her competitor, Glenna. Kelly doesn't understand what makes Glenna's events so much better than hers. She receives an invitation one day from Glenna's company, inviting her to a charity dance. Kelly, who usually declines these invitations, decides she will accept and go to the event. She thinks maybe she could see what it is that make Glenna's events so much better than hers. The night of the event, Kelly shows up and is greeted by a valet and a red carpet. She walks into the event and it was beautifully decorated in vintage 1920's Hollywood art deco décor. There are sparkly strands of what look like diamonds coming from beautifully ornate chandeliers, and the band plays smooth jazz music. Kelly feels like she had been transported in time. It is a fantastic event. Glenna has thought of every detail. In a room off to the side, there is an area where people can dress up in the fashions of the 20s and take pictures. In another room, they are teaching people how to do the Charleston. Kelly has a spectacular time, even though she wanted to hate the event she

can't. She loves Glenna's attention to detail. After the event, Kelly receives a hand written note from Glenna expressing gratitude for her attendance. She now understands how she can be a better event planner.

Events stress people out so much. I suggest you keep it simple and try to have as much fun as you can.

GIADA DE LAURENTIIS

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- **Buddy Valastro:** No matter what the recipe, any baker can do wonders in the kitchen with some good ingredients and an upbeat attitude!
- **Tom Colicchio:** If I'm doing an event, if it's a charity event, where it's a walk-around event, where I got to put a thousand small plates out in the course of a four-hour event, I got to make sure I can do something that I know I can produce, that's going to be consistent and good all night long.
- **Colin Powell:** There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.
- **Thomas A. Edison:** There is no substitute for hard work.
- **Lucille Ball:** Luck? I don't know anything about luck. I've never banked on it and I'm afraid of people who do. Luck to me is something else: Hard work - and realizing what opportunity is and what isn't.



Rick Chisholm made history when he single-handedly changed the professional Audio Visual industry by breaking all the rules and capitalised over 50% market share in Australia with very little capital, no partners, mergers or lenders and set up the first franchise operation of its kind in the world in the late 1990's and early 2000's.

As a 7x founder of companies and 30x businesses such as Innovest, AI Machine, Lightsounds, LSW, Light Emotion with revenue in excess of \$300 million and having employed more than 1,000 staff over the last 35 years. Rick is known as the Start-Up and SME Guru and is Author of a number of books including Business Success for Life. Unlike many mentors, he actually walks the talk and has a number of businesses under management in such areas as Automation, Events management, Importing, Distribution, Retailing and E-commerce.

His BIG passion is Business Education empowering Businesses Owners through knowledge and skills. Whilst Rick has experienced great success, he has also endured many failures. Rick has faced and overcome the exact same challenges you are facing now.



Tala Chisholm is an SME specialist who has owned and managed several small to medium sized businesses in the last 20 years, several of which were eventually sold. She has extensive experience in the fields of retail, franchising, licensing, dealerships, education, importing, distribution and consulting.

Her expertise lies in building and implementing customised cross-platform database and software solutions for businesses, automation, IT, web marketing, advertising, graphic design, business administration, process refinement and implementation. Her business experience ranges from bricks-and-mortar Giftware retailing to highly technical fields such as Security, CCTV, Entertainment Lighting and Audio sales, hire and installations as well as e-commerce.

Throughout her career she also trained and mentored Franchise business owners as well as internal division managers. Some areas of training included retail operations, management practices, business strategy, accounting, cash-flow, marketing, customer service and IT. She has also headed up the drafting of Operating Compliance Manuals for Franchise operations and implementation of all the elements involved.



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