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Article:

Six Steps To Planning A Corporate Network Event For Your Business

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Before you attempt to organise, manage, or operate any corporate event, especially a big one, there are a number of questions that need to be asked. The following provides an introduction to the event planning process and will provoke a thought process that will enable you to manage and plan events of all sizes - from the very first steps, to the actual event itself.

Six steps to planning an event for your corporate network

Step 1 - What are you doing this for?

One of the keys to working on any event is to ask the fundamental question 'what is this event for?' Now this may seem like a stupid question - isn't it obvious what the event is for? - Well no, not always. The best way to organise an outstanding event, is to ask some outstanding questions.

Some contact network events are organised 'in-house' (where the people who want and need the event are the same as those organising it) and others are organised by external event planners or managers, from an event management agency. No matter who the event is for, it is critical that all of those involved, from the business contact manager to the receptionist, know what the event is for.

Why is this important?

It is important to understand the reason for the event so that everyone knows what the needs of the event are going to be. The needs of the event will include all elements of the event planning process - from the beginning to the end - as well as external elements, such as marketing, finance, technology and human resources.

It is also important that the event needs are written down and kept as guidelines for all those involved. Many event projects take place over several months, and it can often be that the original need for the event can be lost as the project gathers momentum.

By establishing your desired outcome, you will help yourself to identify and answer some of the most important factors and questions relating to the event.

For example, the desired outcome of a sporting event (such as the British Grand Prix) will be very different to that of a charity ball, or a sales conference, or a network contact business event.

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Step 2 - Planning the Management of Tasks

The management of tasks is the most important element of planning events. It is even more important than the actual tasks themselves. You see, the way you manage the things you have to do, is what will make the difference between a good event organiser, and a GREAT event organiser.

There are many different ways to manage information, and to keep track of the items that have to be undertaken. With the advances in technology, email and mobile communications, information is bombarding each of us all the time.

One of the simplest ways to manage events is to keep a 'To-Do' list. This list may be used to manage every last element of the event or may be used to manage just a small part of the event. The 'To-Do' list can also be used to run elements outside the event - both office-based business tasks, and personal tasks. This 'To-Do' list can be a simple piece of paper, with items added as they arise, and items crossed off as they are completed - others use whiteboards – and others use computer software to manage their tasks.

Project Management Software

Many Event Organisers use project management software to help them manage their events. This software allows the business contact manager to see how long tasks will take to complete - and see which ones need to be achieved before others. There are also many Event Organisers who don't use this kind of software - myself included - as I have always been of the opinion that it takes longer to update the software, than it does to actually manage the event.

No matter what system you use, it is always important that all people in the team know who is doing what - the collaborative event management process will allow you to make the best of the resources available to them - as well as allowing the team to cross-check each other's' work - to ensure that nothing has been missed.

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Step 3 - Having an Overview

The difference between good event organisers and great event organisers is having an overview of the event. This means that the event planner does not focus purely on their own management responsibility, but also has the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the factors that will impact on the event as a whole.

When working on events large and small, there will be different people or groups who have different ideas and suggestions. These people may get so engrossed in their own area, that they lose their focus - that the event has to be successful as a whole. As an event organiser or business contact manager, it is important to have a view over all elements of the event - both internally and externally.

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Step 4 - Working with your Team

Even the smallest event will require a number of people to make them a success. It is how well the contact networks team work together that will determine how well the event is managed.

Due to the nature of events, it is often true that the people working within the event planning team do not all work for the same organisation. Some will be working for a client organisation, some for a contact networks agency, some for technical contractors and some for the venue (to name but a few). It is critical that all of these people are working together for the common good of the event.

People are the key to a successful event - so spend time and effort building up a bank of network contact people that you know you can work with and trust on events - even when things are going wrong - you need to be able to rely on them.

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Step 5 - On the Day

Although there are many different types of events, and each is managed and run in its own way, there are several lessons that are true to all types of event, no matter what is happening.

Fail To Plan, And Plan To Fail

A sign of a great event organiser is one who has nothing to do during the event - this is because all of the hard work has been done before going to site. Event management is all about pre-planning - get everything done before you start at the event and it will make the event a lot easier to manage.

The more items that have been completed before you go to site the easier the process will be - there will be enough changes and problems once on site that leaving things until you get there is a disaster waiting to happen.

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STEP 6 – Event Evaluation

It is always really important to evaluate your event, so that you can learn from what happened. Many people will concentrate on only the bad things - the things that went wrong - but it is equally important to concentrate on the areas that went well - particularly if you introduced a new system, which improved the event planning process.

Whatever you learn - you should always make sure that it is noted and communicated to all those involved - there is no point in evaluating what you did if you do not learn from it and use it to take your business or career forward. It is almost always the case that you will learn more from the things that go the most horribly wrong than from the things that go well. As long as you LEARN - and don't do the same again, then it has been a valuable experience.

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