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PRE EVENT PLANNING – FIRST THINGS FIRST

Once you have decided why you are holding your event, and have investigated its feasibility, as an event manager, you have to start putting a plan together. There are many factors that have to be taken into account when planning even the simplest event, there are staff to arrange, venues to find, equipment to source and tickets or invitations to send out.

First things first – all good event managers make lists

Over the years – one of the most effective tools I have come across when planning for an event is a simple, handwritten list. Although these days I use my computer to schedule my tasks, sometimes it is still easier to collect my thoughts together with nothing more than a sheet of blank paper and a pencil. It doesn't really matter how you organize these thoughts, it may be chronologically or it may be by section of the event.

The Event Management Framework

Once you have established the initial plan of action, you should start to fill in the gaps and add detail to each of the sections. At the same time you can start to put the action points into an order of priority – with the most important elements first, followed by the less important ones. This planning document will start to form the framework which will help you through the event planning process, and will guide you through how you are going to run the event successfully. This plan will be with you through the entire event planning process, the live event and the evaluation stages. It is important to cover as many areas as possible in this first instance, as the more thought you give to the event at this stage, the more successful and stress free your event will be.

Have you managed this event before?

Many events occur on an annual basis, or are at least similar in some ways to events that have happened in the past? A conference for one client will have many similar attributes to a conference for a new client.

Unless you really have never done an event of this type before (in which case I seriously suggest you find a freelance manager who has) you should be able to look at the planning that took place and use many of the ideas and techniques from the last event.

Not only will this help you to save time in the initial planning stages (as you will have a pre-determined list of all the things you have to do) but it will also help you to ensure you do not miss any of the

elements.

At the end of every event you should evaluate what you did – which will allow you to learn lessons from previous events. These lessons should be both positive and negative – remember for every one thing that went wrong, ten things will have gone right – so learn from the good as well as the bad.

Who is going to do what

Once you have decided which activities have to take place, you need to decide who is going to do them. For a small event, it may be that you manage many of the elements on your own – but on the day of the event it is usual for many more people to get involved.

When planning for your event, you need to see which skills you require, and recruit the right people for the right tasks. Once you have the right people in place, you not only need to let them know what they have to do, but when they have to do it, where they have to do it and why they have to do it – so that they can see where their part of the planning process fits into the overall event planning process.

Planning is one of the most critical elements of event management – and the management of the planning process is even more important. Knowing that every aspect of the event is covered will make the event run a lot more smoothly, and be a lot less hassle for all event management and production staff.