

Event management

Event management: two words which fill all but the most fanatically organised with dread. But it doesn't have to be an intimidating task.

Proposing events of all shapes and sizes to clients is a regular part of public relations strategy and campaigns.

And for the large-scale, multi-location, big budget events specialist event organisers are invaluable; Tribe has been lucky to work with event management companies on fantastic awards road shows and parties both for the company and clients, including A:live Communications in Bedfordshire and Felicities in Norfolk.

But it's not always necessary to get the event organisers in, and in these budget squeezing times agencies and clients should stop and consider whether it's really necessary to source additional outside help.

For PR teams, taking on the planning of an event can be a rewarding and cost-effective experience.

If there's one top tip I can share it's that event management is ALL about the planning. And with a sensible, thorough checklist any event will be a great success. All the preparation in the world may not prevent surprises and issues cropping up, but your preparation will mean you're well equipped and confident to deal with anything the day can throw at you.

Event management can vary so widely that there is no set formula to guarantee a smooth run evening, day or week. And while preparations will be unique for each occasion, I hope the following list can help form a basis for any plan, both in the run up to and throughout any event.

Event manager

- Every event needs someone to take control. Nominate someone to be the coordinator – ideally yourself. Your event may involve multiple partners, so someone needs to assume control of making final decisions and sending out information to all others involved. If it's not going to be you, make sure all involved know who that person is.

Timeline

- A timeline is essential and helps keep you on track. Create a simple Excel spreadsheet with all important steps highlighted.
- Include all key milestones, dates and critical stages in your plan such as:
 - When venues need to be booked
 - When deposits must be paid

- Deadlines for finalising guest numbers or cancelling bookings
 - Deadlines for notifying media of the event
- Don't forget to build in some time for 'hiccups' to prevent last minute panics.
- Stick to the timeline!

Partners and contacts

- Find out who you'll be working with:
 - Suppliers
 - Colleagues
 - Partner organisations
 - Venues
- Pull together contact details for everyone at the start and keep them in one place.
- CHECK contact details work. You don't want to be at your event with a missing photographer and no working number to contact them!
- Keep in regular contact with all involved, whether by phone or a weekly update email to ensure everyone knows what stage planning is at and what decisions have been made.

The legal bit

- Don't underestimate the importance of making sure things are done by the book, no matter the size of an event. Work with venues or partners to cover all the possible health and safety or legal requirements:
 - Does the venue have a PRS licence for playing music if required?
 - Does the venue have a licence for serving alcohol if you plan to do so?
 - Are there fire exits/public toilets/disabled access routes?

You don't have to know everything...

- ...but people will assume you do.
- As the event manager, you'll feel much more in control if you can answer the likely questions which delegates, members of the public or every man and his dog will ask you!
- Don't be afraid to go to others for help. If you can't answer a question about the venue, make sure you know where the manager is; if you don't know how to fix an audio visual system, have a technician to hand to sort out issues.
- Visit venues or locations before the day to familiarise yourself with the surroundings and the staff you'll be working with.
- Make sure you know the basics:
 - Where the toilets are
 - Where people can hang their coats
 - If there is a smoking area and how to access it

- Where fire escapes are
- If vegetarian food options are available and how to get them
- What parking is available

And finally, you can't over prepare!

- If it gives you peace of mind to take a copy of every email from the planning process and a whole phone book along, do it!
- Ideally, prepare a key contacts sheet which can be sent to all parties involved prior to the event. Collate all the contact information you gathered at the start, and keep it with you at all times.
- Take a 'bit box' – you may not think a ball of string and a can of deodorant are necessary but when a pop up banner is blowing over in the wind and your key interviewee is suffering an attack of nerves, you'll be glad of over-packing the car.
- Have access to funds for last minute coffee runs or emergency umbrella purchases.

When you know you've ticked all the boxes, you can sit back and enjoy a successful event. By planning and feeling confident in your own knowledge and preparations, putting together an event can be rewarding, cost-effective and a sure fire way to impress clients, partners and the people that matter to them.