



Event Planning 101

A Complete Beginner's Guide

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Event Planning 101

Planning an event can be one of the most difficult and tedious tasks you face—especially without prior experience. Perhaps your manager has assigned you to organize a company event, or maybe you are planning a party for a friend or family member. Either way, there are a few basics that you will need to know. The most important thing is to stay calm and realize that when it comes to event planning, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Your event will be unique, so you need to take into account several factors that will make it and every event you may plan different. It can take several months and sometimes even up to a year of careful preparation to make sure that your event goes exactly as planned—which makes it all worth it, right?

We here at Channel Audio, have thrown together this clear and concise guide with some important points to consider before taking the first few steps toward your perfect event!

Let's dive in!



Plans are nothing.
Planning is everything.

– Albert Einstein

The Type of Event

The fundamental first step for any kind of event planning is determining the type of event it is. If you're planning a business event, is it an internal function for the employees? Is it a team-building event, training session, a party or award ceremony? If it is an external event, do you need to organize a system to register people? Is it a conference, an informal networking event, or a social event?

Once you know what sort of event you are organizing, you should take a look at your audience. For internal business events involving the employees, you'll probably have a good idea of what they should be interested in. Plus, if you can speak to them firsthand, this always helps clarify your ideas. Is it going to be a causal event or something more formal? After you have an understanding of who the attendees will be, you can make decisions regarding important aspects such as the venue, food, and any entertainment.

The Event's Purpose



You must identify the objective of the event before you begin planning. Every event has a purpose—so recognize why the event is even happening and what you would like it to achieve. Are you trying to build visibility for your company? Are you throwing a party to bring in new clients? Are you launching a brand-new product?

The more you understand and nail down the reason for the event, the clearer it will be to tailor it specifically to meet your objectives. Knowing the event's purpose will keep your plan focused and form the framework for planning, promoting, and executing the event itself.

The Event's Theme



Once you have clarified the purpose of the event, you will need to think about a theme that will attract attendees and highlight the reason for holding the event. The event's theme will impact your decisions regarding decorations, food, and entertainment. This is why it is crucial to establish the theme early in the planning phase. Additionally, the event's theme will act as the differentiator among all other events. It will be used to get the message out and promote the event, so make sure you get it right to create the maximum impact.

The Event's Size & Duration



Size does matter when it comes to events, so you will need to estimate how many attendees are expected and how long the event will go. Anticipated audience count always impacts the cost, so you will need to determine how to achieve the event's goals without going over budget.

The type of event usually influences the duration—for example, a conference could be one to two days, whereas a brand promotion or a networking event may only last for a few hours. For longer timescales, you will first need to establish the level of interest and if that will sustain a multiple-day event.

Create a Budget

The budget needs to be established as early as possible in the event planning process because your budget will dictate what type of event you can even plan. There is simply no point in planning a huge event if the funds are not there to make it happen. Make sure you discuss the budget with everyone involved and make sure a concrete budget is agreed upon.

Often the costs aren't fixed during the planning stage; for example, you may not have decided on a venue or how long the event will last. Keep in mind that you should look at the most expensive options and budget for the maximum you can afford. Then you can set a clear budget and keep costs in check.

Keeping track of the budget is also vital to avoid costs creeping upwards. Make sure you have a good record-keeping system so that the team can keep track of everything they spend, and you can keep a good overview of the budget. Keeping the budget at the front of your mind is important when event planning.

Some of the significant expenses you may need to include in the budget are:

- **Venue:** This total should consist of the venue rental expense and any additional items like insurance or security.
- **Food/Drink:** The budget for food and drinks impacts the number of people you can invite. The type of food will also affect this; for example, a buffet will be less expensive per person than a sit-down, formal meal.
- **Entertainment Costs:** This will depend on the event, but remember to include any additional costs like accommodations and travel that are needed for your entertainer(s) attending the event.
- **AV Production Needs:** This encompasses a variety of costs, from projection equipment to PA speakers. A great AV set up can make all the difference between a mediocre and an unforgettable event, so be sure to give this some consideration.
- **Miscellaneous Fund:** Even the most well-planned event can have a few unforeseen glitches, which can mean some extra costs. Make sure you set aside a contingency fund so you can cope with any that may arise.

Recruiting a Team

Great teamwork will create a great event. Make sure that everyone knows what the event is for and what role they are playing to make it happen. It is up to you, as the event planner, to assign each team member specific responsibilities/tasks based on the individual team member's skills. Make sure to take into account each team member's strengths and weaknesses. Determine which team member is most suited for venue selection, food, entertainment, AV needs, guest list, invitations, and make sure they are allocated an appropriate role. If executed correctly, there will be a significant boost in productivity and efficiency.

A key part of an event planner's day is to communicate with the team, making sure everyone is managing their tasks and addressing any problems as they arise. Great communication is a critical part of an effective team, so make sure the lines of communication are open and that you always deal with the team in a positive, supportive manner. When people feel connected and valued, they are more invested in producing a memorable event.

Choosing the perfect

Event Venue

The venue is one of the most crucial decisions you will make. The venue choice can make a huge difference when it comes to registration. Only after you have a space chosen, can you set the event's date(s) based on the venue's availability.

Remember, the best venues always book up quickly. Even venues used for weddings and social events often have a year's waiting list—be sure to keep this in mind.

If you can hold your event outside of peak times, you are more likely to get the date(s) you want and possibly save you some money on the budget. Weeknights, Friday nights, and Sunday afternoons often have the most availability and savings.

Cost is not the only thing to bear in mind—your venue has to meet all your other requirements, including the look and feel of the event. If you are holding a large event that will go on for several days, then hotels with conference centers are usually the best option. However, smaller single-day events can fit in well with less traditional spaces. If you can find a fun and unique venue that checks all the boxes, your event is much more likely to be successful.



Some of the key things to assess when considering a venue include:

- **Size:** The number of attendees has a direct impact on the amount of square footage needed. If you have breakout sessions planned, you will need to account for the additional space required to accommodate this.
- **Transportation and parking:** If people need to drive to the event, will there be adequate parking available? If people are using public transportation, can they get to the venue easily?
- **Is it accessible?** The venue must be equipped in such a way that everyone feels comfortable and can use it. Look for accessibility in entrances, elevators, and restrooms. Will there be space for interpreters if needed?

- **Insurance coverage:** Check what the liability rules of the venue are, you may need to purchase additional insurance.
- **Audio/Visual:** Always consider the event's tech needs before booking a venue. Will you need PA speakers, microphones, projectors and screens? Does the venue have AV equipment installed in the space? How much is their in-house AV services vs. an independent AV provider? Is there WiFi access? More on AV on [page 21](#).
- **Cost:** This is always a factor. Find out the overall total cost, the deposit, any additional expenses that may occur, and how much you would get back if you needed to cancel.

Most venues have a website and are happy to send out a sales packet or brochure. These are a great starting point, but your research should not end there!

Collect information from multiple sites before narrowing down a shortlist of potential venues. From there, you need to narrow the field down further:

- Always visit a possible venue yourself, preferably with a member of your AV team. If you want top-quality AV content, this starts with a proper venue, and this is critical when it comes to making or breaking an event. If you are looking for standout AV content, then an AV professional will be able to advise on ways to impress your audience without breaking the budget.
- Arrange a personal meeting with the venue manager. Develop a good relationship with them, so they are eager to help you reach the full potential for your event.
- Be clear about what you are paying for. What is included, what is extra, and what is optional? This way, you can customize the event and keep within your set budget.
- If your event requires the attendees to stay overnight, try to check out the service by staying there yourself. Ask the hotel for a complimentary night to check out the facilities. Are the rooms up to your standards? What are the amenities like?

The more thorough your research is before the event, the more likely everyone will be happy with the venue. This is a key factor when pulling off a memorable event.

“

To achieve great things,
two things are needed: a plan
and not quite enough time.

– Leonard Bernstein

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