

SMALL EVENT PLANNING

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What are the steps involved in running a successful small event?

Event ideas often come about by a group of like-minded people getting together and talking about an idea or need they have and which they think others will enjoy. Before going any further you must look at the idea's feasibility.

1 Has your idea any chance of success?

There are a number of fairly obvious areas that you should check before proceeding.

Do you have or can you get:

- Financial support
- The communities and other key people's support
- The facilities and services to hold such an event?

Financial support includes any grants, sponsorship or partnership training funds (some events that provide seminars or workshops may be eligible). The event's eligibility to some of the grants will depend on the group's legal structure. In most cases the group will require a non-profit making status i.e. charitable trust or incorporated society etc in order to apply.

Gaining the support of your community early on is important. Keep them informed of what you are planning in general terms and highlight the benefits that will come to their district from staging this event. Volunteers are an essential factor in any event so keep them informed and remember to acknowledge their help through free passes, thank you letters, certificates etc. Volunteers will also spread the word to other members of the community so it is crucial to keep them happy and positive.

There will be some groups e.g. Local hall committees, district organisations and District Councils from whom you will have to gain permission in order to use their facilities. Gain approval before seeking any financial or product commitment from sponsors and community organisations.

But before you can act on any of these factors, try and think of what will be involved in running this event. It might be useful to think of events you have attended and decide what the key things were that made the event a success. Was

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it the venue, people, professionalism, content etc.? Think of the things that resulted in you enjoying the activities or conversely what were the things that meant you didn't enjoy the event. People enjoy an event that is unique and different to other events. Don't fall into the trap of copying another event's point of difference. There may be areas you like but don't steal the whole idea. Your customer will tire of the same old format over and over again. These and other ideas will start to give you an indication of what's involved in running an event and whether you have the resources and know-how to succeed.

2 Develop your idea

□ What is the event?

First you need to ask yourself, what is the event? The group should further discuss and develop what the event will include and how it will look. There will be numerous possibilities and suggestions. It is important to work through the good and the bad, the pro's and con;s, the weaknesses and strengths of each suggestion.

These meetings really involve a lot of brainstorming. It is useful to write up the ideas so everyone can see them and add to them. Have a person running the meeting (a facilitator), clearly identify, via the agenda and at the beginning of the meeting, what you hope to cover and the steps you will be taking. It is easier to have the meeting like this. In chunks or segments, because then the groups thinking is clearer.

Timing is all-important. A time line or critical path helps to identify key things to be done, by when and by whom. Make sure you have enough time to effectively plan and implement the event. Check there are no similar events on the same day or weekend that you are proposing to run the event. Try not to clash with other events, however sometimes two different events can complement each other and feed off each other.

□ Who is the Event for?

It is important to identify who your customer/participant will be? How will you contact them? To make sure you are providing what these people want it is a good idea to ask a group of potential customers a set of questions. This can be achieved in a number of ways. You can use, for example a written or telephone survey. This way you are not going on your own assumptions, which are often good but should be backed up by fact or research. In some cases what you think the customer wants is quite different from what the research says. For instance, if the research says the majority of people want a basic general introduction to topics or classes within the event, it is no use giving them specific in-depth topics. The group of people surveyed should be varied with people of different sexes, ages, income brackets etc. The questions will help identify whether the date is suitable,

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whether the topics/activities you are thinking of including are of interest to them, whether they would come to an event like this and how much they would pay to do so. You can even ask them what they read, listen to and groups they belong to etc. Analysis of the group will help you get to know your customer better, how you can reach them and it will give you a better idea on whether the event you are organising has a chance of success.

□ Why do you want to hold this event – the Groups Goals

Once it is decided that the idea might be a “winner” you need to identify why you are doing this. There might be a number of reasons; such as, it would attract visitors to the area, it may bring economic benefits to the group and the community and it will most certainly be a challenge for the organisers. What you are essentially doing here is working out your group’s goals. Goals and objectives are often confused in business practice, Often funding applications ask for your groups objectives but they really want to know the groups goals. Objectives can be measures i.e. \$’s or % increase etc. and are over a set time period i.e. by June 2002 or by the end of the year whereas goals may be more Like” to promote and attract visitors to the South Canterbury District specifically Timaru”. You will be asked many times, by the businesses and organisations that you are seeking funding from, what your goals/ objectives are, so it is best to work it out early on. More importantly it gives you direction. You will refer to these goals/objectives consciously or sub-consciously many times during the planning of the event especially when you are budgeting and marketing the event. It is important that everyone involved is thinking about and understands what you are doing and why you are doing this.

Before deciding to proceed you must set the absolute minimum number of participants, volunteers, facilities, finances that you must have in order to run the event. Once you are planning an event you must review whether you are meeting these minimums and if not, the whole event may have to be cancelled or restructured. Better to work this out early on. This will be based on things like:

- How many people you can get into a venue at any one time
- The length of the seminar or activity may determine how often that facility can be used in one day and therefor income generated.

If these answers do not meet your absolute minimums maybe you need to rethink your venue or whether you will hold the event at all. Once the initial budget has been prepared you will have an indication of the absolute minimum finances required to run the proposed event. The next few steps will confirm many of these and whether the minimums can be met.

3 Structure

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□ Legal Structure

If your group has been newly formed you should gain legal advice on the appropriate legal structure for your group. Your legal structure will reflect the group's goals.

A non-profit making legal structure will help you qualify for many of the community trust grants. Ensure you have your legal structure in place before applying for any of these grants. Keep in mind this may take months to put in place.

Some event committees decide to become an umbrella group under another club or like minded group who already have an appropriate legal structure. These are all possibilities and your own situation will determine the structure best for you

□ Organisational Structure

Organising Committee – this might be already determined or may need to be set up, incorporation members from other groups, clubs or organisations etc. this team of people is very important to the overall success of the event. They need to be totally committed to the event and have the time to dedicate to planning the event. The team needs to be set up early and is responsible for preparing a strategic plan. This will encompass the group's vision, goals and outcomes. They will establish policies but leave the day to day management to the appointed event manager. Each member should know what they are responsible for, i.e. have a job description – what tasks they are responsible for, deadlines and whom they report to. This is better written down but at the very least it should be talked about and recorded in the minutes. Focusing on writing a job description often highlights important areas that need to be covered by someone or tasks that would be better done by someone else. As with most planning, task often become clearer and you are less likely to forget things if you write it down. By writing it down you are forced to focus on the task and the steps required in achieving it.

It is also the job of the organising committee to prepare the initial plan and budget for the event. This will look at the issues above but will also give the best and worst case scenarios for the event. They should also prepare a list of duties to be co-ordinated by the Event Manager and make this appointment once you have decided to proceed.

An Event Manager is responsible for the overall management, administration, co-ordination and evaluation of the event. The event manager will:

- Develop an operational plan from the strategic plan prepared by the Organising Committee.
- Recruit additional help

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- Communicate and co-ordinate leaders of different committees
- Foresee and problems and solve them
- Be responsible for reporting back to the organising committee
- Prepare the events critical path and working budget.

They may be assisted in some areas but the responsibility lies with them.

In a small event, the Event Manager will often discuss much of this with the organising committee but will make the day to day decisions taking into account the committee's ideas. The manager will have the authority to make decisions regarding day to day management. Any major decisions should be made in conjunction with the organising committee.

Other committees, volunteers, officials and personnel

You will have already identified the main tasks in running your event. Even small events will need additional people to plan and organise these areas.

Members should know what area they are responsible for i.e. Treasurer, Secretary, a particular activity within an event, etc. Often this is determined by people's skills.

4 Who will support us? – Sponsorship and Funding

With the concept and feasibility of the event now clearly thought out and the organising team and officials, etc. in place, it is time to get a commitment from businesses and other organisations.

- **Sponsorship** – You need to ask yourself “ Who could benefit from this event?”.

It is good to be able to identify businesses that are committed to the idea as well as being financially committed. Large events can attract sponsors who will promote the event while promoting their own products and services. This means that not only is the event's promotional budget getting the message out but also the sponsor's budget. It is harder to get such committed sponsors for small events especially if you are still gaining credibility. Some businesses will be happy to give you a few hundred dollars and be happy with the benefits you have highlighted for them but will not look at how they could tie this in to their own in-house marketing. In small towns, businesses are constantly being bombarded for sponsorship. You will need to be professional and clearly list the benefits of being a sponsor if you want to beat off the competition. Sponsors are looking for benefits such as increased business awareness and exposure to their customers and

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potential customers. They are looking for increased sales or opportunities for their sales people.

There are two types of sponsors:

- ❖ **Principal Sponsor** – may get naming rights to the event as well as promotional opportunities in brochures, poster, web-sites etc. and at the event with banners etc, They should be acknowledged each time the event is promoted.
- ❖ **Other Sponsors** – may get sponsorship connected to particular seminar buildings are marquees, courtyards, competitors, entertainment etc. This sponsorship class may be broken down into silver sponsors and bronze sponsors or similar titles.

How to approach sponsors

To begin with you will need to find out as much as possible:

- About the business
- Their CEO or marketing manager's name
- What they have sponsored before
- What they are currently promoting or going through (i.e. restructuring) and how they are doing this.

The more you know about them the easier it will be to tailor benefits that will be useful to them in achieving their own objectives.

To come up with ideas and benefits for the sponsors you will need a brain storming session with your committee. To develop this list of benefits you will need to look at the event's goals and other points that the team thinks is important as well as addressing what you envisage or know the sponsors will want (from your initial investigations). The event will give sponsors an opportunity to gain exposure and to communicate with a specific audience. Being involved with a specific event can communicate to the community and to the event's participants a number of things. For instance it might communicate that a business has wholesome products or is a good corporate citizen.

It is important to highlight the type of people who will be reading/seeing your promotion and who will be at the event i.e. female or male, age group, income brackets etc. You will need to highlight the points that are most important to each specific sponsor. Think laterally when seeking sponsorship. For example, a region's rugby team might think of gaining sponsorship from a washing detergent business.

After listing the benefits you will need to prepare a sponsorship proposal specific to each sponsor, You may have had the chance to meet with the potential sponsor earlier and have found out where they are going and how they see their

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involvement. Use this information to create interest in the event. You may have had the chance to mention ways they could build on their sponsorship investment and gain greater exposure. For example, any other advertising they have planned, could be designed around their association with your event, or they may decide to have a prize using the free passes you have supplied (part of sponsorship package) for their staff's incentive program. Merchandise and other promotional goods, that the sponsors may have the right to, may encompass the event logo. If this occurs you will need to work closely with one of their representatives so they understand the event concept and therefore there is consistency with promotion and image. This type of information would be included in the sponsorship agreement.

When it comes to writing the specific proposal, describe the event, list the planned promotion that will occur and the amount of exposure that was received at the last event (if applicable). Provide details of how much you would like them to invest (\$) and list the benefits to them of supporting the event. Be open to suggestions, keeping in mind your own preferences.

Agreements

Once you have secured support from a sponsor it is important to provide an agreement with them. The agreement will state what both parties have agreed to provide and by when. Ask the sponsor to sign the agreement and send them a copy of the signed agreement.

Ensure both parties are happy with the payment date. Naturally event organisers would like payment as soon as possible but sponsors like to be able to keep their money as long as possible. A compromise will be necessary. You will need to keep in mind the event's cashflow when setting this date.

Keep them Informed

Once you have successfully gained support from sponsors always send them a letter of thanks and try to keep them informed as you proceed with planning. If they are supporting you through their own promotion then this will become even more important.

Invite sponsors to attend the event, provide some or all of sponsors refreshments, depending on their investment. You might like to provide name tags for them and a sponsors pack so they are aware of what is on, where and when etc. Try and include sponsors in presentations and other events where media will be present, especially photographic opportunities.

Report Results.

After the event, prepare an evaluation report for sponsors and other organisations that supported the event. These results may come from a participant's feedback survey, committee member's evaluation reports and promotion summary reports.

Try to think of the information they will find useful and include statistics that show the success of the event. For example:

- The number of people attending the event

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- The number of people pre-enrolled
- Where these people came from
- Ratings of individual activities as per participants survey
- The percentage of people who enjoyed their overall experience
- The number of nights people spent in the district
- Participants age group and sex etc.

□ **Funding**

Contact your local tourism office for suggestions on community organisations that fund events. Some suggestions are:

- Council and/or Local Tourism office
- Polytechnic – partnership grant (if training seminars, workshops are included in your event program)
- Local and regional community Trusts
- National community Trusts especially for those disbursing gaming proceeds to the community
- NZ Lotteries Grants Board
- Creative Communities of New Zealand 0 if your event is art related

Remember to present your application

- ◆ Professionally and answer all the questions
- ◆ With all requested information and quotes etc. Check and double check - You only get one chance.
- ◆ With an itemised budget.

5 Do we Proceed?

Once you have obtained sufficient sponsorship and grants, obtained key people and received permission to use facilities, the event manager and organising committee need to decide whether the event can proceed. The best and worst case scenario budgets will need to be updated. Try not to rely heavily on gate sales. This could be a bonus. Not something the event is depending on, especially in the inaugural part of an event when predictions of numbers is difficult. Re-look at the absolute minimums you prepared earlier and make a decision from here.

□ **We have decided to proceed, what's next?**

At this stage the event manager and organising committee will need to have another look at the event's critical path. Analyse and update as required. Key people involved in the event's planning will need to be made aware of the overall deadlines etc. Timing is very important.

Volunteers and staff responsibilities

You will probably need help from volunteers. Volunteers are a bit of a rare commodity these days. Life is very busy and people are quite choosy how they spend

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their free time. Often people who are interested in the theme of the event will be quite happy to help if asked. Generally only a small number of people will offer their help after reading about it in a local newsletter, paper etc. It is important for all the people involved in the event to ask people, friends, friends of friends, clubs etc. for their help. It is best to talk about the people you will be approaching first so you don't overlap.

Now is the time to designate everyone, including the volunteers, a job. They should be clear as to their duties and when and to whom they report.

Areas they may be responsible for could be:

- Finance
- Stalls
- Operations – hiring facilities and equipment
- Promotion including brochure, press releases, advertising
- A particular activity/event within the event.
- Catering
- Sponsorship and fund-raising
- Programmes etc.
- Signage including placement, installation and removal
- Rubbish and hygiene

There will be other areas depending on the type of event you are running.

These people should then prepare a plan, with input from the event manager (Critical path) and organising committee. This plan will include the key tasks needed. Under each task heading identify and prioritise the steps to be taken to accomplish the task. Often steps are inter-related and the next step cannot be taken without completing the previous step.

It is important therefore to give yourself plenty of time and set time-frames. Have start and finish dates for each task. It is sometimes difficult to keep the pressure on when you feel things are going well and you think you are ahead of time. However, you can be sure at some stage during proceedings that other people i.e. volunteers, sponsors etc. will be slow in getting back to you and you will be pleased you had plenty of time up your sleeve.

Try and get these people to think about their requirements for running that particular event i.e. equipment needed, finances, volunteers etc. Make sure the people in charge of these particular areas report to the event manager and to anyone who needs their information.

Make this reporting a regular thing so that nothing gets left out. Often with a smaller event people will report back to the organising committee meetings (preferably with a written report) but if the organisational structure is larger they may report back to their team leader or committee chairperson. The chairperson would then use the information in their report to the executive committee or organising committee.

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The event managers role

The event manager need to keep tabs on everyone. The manager needs to know what's happening, who's doing what, by when etc. By using the group's minutes or by producing a separate worksheet a record can be made of who is responsible for each task and what their deadline is. This helps people get on with their set tasks because it is there in black and white and people don't like to let the team down. There will always be times when something happens that prevents a person completing their task on time, which is another reason to keep the whole event up to speed.

- **Tip:** The event manager should keep in mind, it is not worth setting a task if you don't check that it has been done.

The event manager's job for a small event seems to include a bit of mediating and smoothing ruffled feathers. Good communication will often prevent a lot of this and experience from a previous event will build trust and reassurance. Try and act on misunderstandings as soon as possible to prevent ill-feeling, which can only hinder the whole planning process. Try to refocus on why you are running the event and on the agreed goals so that you can all keep the misunderstanding in proportion. Remember to listen to all points of view and do not allow a dominant figure to sway the group. A strong team will learn from these differences of opinion and be able to move on.

6 Tasks involved in planning an event

Every event will be different so it is difficult to suggest exactly what details you will need. You may need to invite speakers, if you are planning a weekend of seminars and workshops, you may need to advertise for entries if you are running a local A&P show, you may need to inform sports people of a particular sports meet etc. but generally you will need to let them know a description of the event, the dates of the event, a list of the variety of seminars or classes available for them to enter and the event's entry fee/s.

You will need to find out:

- If a speaker/tutor – their fee (if appropriate), the dates and times that they will be available, their name, address, phone number, fax number, email, mobile number
- If a participant – what event or class they want to enter, what they have paid, what equipment they will require, any other suggestions.
- Collate in speaker database and later, the registration database with all relevant details.
 - If your event uses speakers, tutors, athlete's etc. then, once they have confirmed, you will need to get more information in order to set the timetable for event, to include details in brochure and to include in budget. This will include such things as the confirmed topic, the maximum number of participants they can have in their presentation (especially important in smaller workshops), their confirmed fee, travel cost, equipment required etc. You should also ask for their personal resume to include in the brochure.

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When registrations come in, confirmations and receipts should be issued along with other information such as a map and directions, site plan, materials to bring, entry fee, times for set-up and opening hours etc.

Areas that will need to be looked at by the appropriate committee person may include:

- Electricity requirements – do you have enough supply. Caterers often use a lot more than you expect.
 - Water Supply – Especially important in rural areas. Will it cope?
 - Speaker Systems
 - Rubbish and Hygiene – rubbish tin placement, disposal etc. Number of toilets, delivery, placement, cleaning and emptying of the toilets during the event
 - Security for event
 - Insurance
 - Registration tent/ticket office
 - Equipment for event e.g. Trestles, staging, chairs, stands, scoreboards, whiteboards etc. including hire, purchase, delivery to event, storage and movement during event.
 - Parking/gate keeping
 - Signage
 - Seating areas
 - Medical facilities i.e.St Johns
 - Catering
 - Programmes/Information Boards
 - Accommodation – what is available and where, booking of accommodation
 - Transport of participants
 - Grounds – mowing, fencing etc.
 - Technical requirements i.e. Are you following the official rules set down by your governing body, do you have appropriate consents for marquees, food preparation etc.
 - Have you thought about OSH requirements/notices.
 - Preparation of an evaluation form or some other evaluation system
-and much more

Contingency and emergency planning

All events should have contingency and emergency plans if they would be detrimentally affected by any of the following:

- Rain
- Snow
- Wind
- Electrical cuts
- Communication cuts
- No shows – What will you do if the speaker, athlete, main attraction doesn't turn up?
- Transport strike
- Emergencies such as fire, earthquake, or accident

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.....and much more

□ **Finances**

Earlier in the planning an initial budget should have been prepared. This would have meant obtaining quotes and estimates in order to get as accurate as possible picture of the expenses of the event. In addition you would have used previous event records if available, to prepare the initial budget. **Budgets are important but need to be kept up to date and you need to keep to them.** Changes can be made during your planning but remember any significant growth on expenses must also be balanced by securing additional income. Initially it is good to have a “what you expect” budget and a “worst case scenario” budget.

Do not be tempted to over estimate sponsorship and remember that gaining sponsorship costs money (postage, binding, lunches etc.) It is equally important to not under estimate expenditure. A general rule is to add 10% to expenditure to cover unexpected costs. Cash books recording actual income and expenditure should be kept up to date so regular reviews of budget is possible. An example of a budget may look something like the form below.

Each activity of the event should be costed so that you are aware of what costs will be incurred by that activity, both direct and indirect, as well as determining the activity's breakeven point. Examples of indirect costs are areas such as administration, co-ordination and promotion etc. Each activity should have to pay a proportion of these general costs.

Once the budget is completed it is important to work out when the money will be coming in and going out. This can be clearly seen in a cashflow. Many people running small events will now have access to a computerised cashbook. Preparing and updating budgets and cashflows using this method is easy once you get used to the program. Accurate book keeping is essential. It is good practice to have you accounts audited not only for your own peace of mind, but money received from community trusts, disbursing gaming machine money, and other government agencies can be audited by Internal Affairs.

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INCOME		
Sponsorship	- cash	_____
	- Products & services	_____
Grants & Donations		_____
Investment income		_____
Registration Fees		_____
Other income e.g. Stall fees, brochure adverts etc.		_____
Total Income		_____
EXPENDITURE		
Advertising and Promotion – promotional material		_____
-Design		_____
-Printing		_____
-Distribution		_____
	-Website-design	_____
	-Upkeep	_____
	-Photographer	_____
Administration	-Office expenses	_____
	Postage	_____
	Photocopying	_____
	Telephone	_____
	Accountancy	_____
	Legal	_____
	Bank Fees	_____
	Meeting Costs	_____
	Subscriptions etc.	_____
Rental	Premises	_____
	Equipment	_____
	Contract Fees and staffing costs	_____
	Individual event activity costs	_____
	Specific costs e.g. prizes, speakers fee	_____
	Catering	_____
	Insurance	_____
	New Assets	_____
	Commission	_____
	Volunteer costs	_____
Total Expenditure		_____
Total Profit / Loss		-

□ Getting the message across – publicity, promotion and advertising

An important part of any event is advising participants, spectators, media and sponsors what your event is all about and other vital information. This can be achieved through publicity, promotion and advertising. The key thing is to know the difference between each and not to promise anything you can't deliver.

Publicity is when you get the story across to your supporters via the media through no cost to you. Publicity is usually generated using:

- Media releases to newspapers, magazines, tourism offices, radio, television etc.
- Media interviews
- Inclusion on different organisation's event diaries e.g. Tourism boards, information centres and magazines. Include on radio, community notice-boards etc.

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- Invite members of the media to different pre-event activities as well as during the event.
- Local newsletters

These forms of publicity are very effective if done correctly and should be what you initially concentrate on because they are generally free. Other costs-effective ways of getting your message across include:

- Contacting people who attended the event in previous years using your registrar's database, you could use other organisations' databases if they are willing to disburse your promotional information to their members (Expenses would have to be covered by the event.)
- Public speaking to clubs and organisations, that may be interested in funding or attending the event.

Promotion and Advertising should be used when publicity is no longer enough to get the message across.

Promotion is used to:

- Identify the name of the event and the name of the group organising it.
- To attract more participants
- To attract more media attention
- To acknowledge the support of your sponsors.

It can include basic promotion tools like:

- The events letterhead
- The event's leaflet, brochure, poster etc.

But can also include activities such as:

- Celebrity attendance at function, game etc.
- Entertainment or demonstration at event.
- Promotional material on a blimp or banners
- Big cut out information boards in unusual shapes
- Discounts or coupons given out with information or registration packs.
- Quiz/ questions on the radio about the event, winner will win free tickets
- Registrations before a certain date gets a weekends free holiday at a nearby resort
- The 500th registration wins a prize etc.

Advertising is when you place an advertisement in a newspaper, magazine, on the television or radio etc.

Whether you are attracting attention through publicity, promotion or advertising firstly, you will need to identify which media you will be using. Once you have decided this you will need to identify key people in key positions in each organisation to contact(preferably in person). You will need their addresses, phone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses. This will form the basis of a media list that you will use repeatedly to distribute event information during the lead up to your event, during the event, and after the event.

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Try and make an appointment with key people from radio and television stations, newspapers, business and community newsletters, information centres, tourism offices etc. Explain who you are and what event you are representing. Be prepared with key facts and remember that everything you say can be used in an article, so be careful what you say. Explain you would like to provide them with press releases about the event, but understand that they are very busy and so you are checking their deadlines, the type of material they are interested in and what sort of photos they use i.e. black and white etc. Don't argue with them, as you are unlikely to get publicity now or in the future if they don't like you or your style.

Media Releases should include:

- "MEDIA RELEASE" at the top
- Date of release
- You can provide a short title but be prepared for this to be changed
- Double spaced
- Be brief, preferably one page. If you go to second page, type "MORE" on first page.
- What, where, when, who why and how in the information.
- Include key information in order of priority because if they decide to trim your story it will usually be from the bottom and readers often only read the first few paragraphs
- Principal sponsor's name if not already included in your event name.
- Photograph
- Contact name and contact numbers
- Type "END" at finish

If your event has a brochure or programme then send the media contact a copy when it is printed. Send them another copy closer to the event included in their media pack which will include other useful information such as statistics, map, site plan, and activities at the event that would be good photographic opportunities etc.

If your event does decide to produce a brochure, leaflet and/or poster there will be a number of things to remember to include. When you are writing the copy or words try and think of the event from the first time participant's point of view and always communicate with participants in a simple clear way. What your group may believe is obvious, is sure to confuse at least some people attending. So keep it simple.

- **Tip:** In all publicity, promotion and advertising, to keep it effective, keep the message clear and make sure you have included these points: i.e. what the event is, who it is for, where it is, how do they get more information or how do they get there; why you are holding and why they should come. Also remember to include the names of the principal sponsor or sponsors. These points also need to be considered when preparing a brochure, leaflet, poster, web site, media release etc.

Try and continue your brand and image through in all promotional vehicles i.e. letterhead, web site, brochure, leaflets, media packs etc. Use the same colours and other branding techniques. When using the internet to promote your event you have

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the option of using various web marketing businesses. There are also some useful articles and people around to assist you with marketing on the web. Use them.

Not much time now! The countdown is on!

There is no “**luck**” in running a well – organised event. At this stage in the event planning process you will need great communication and excellent co-ordination. Every part of the plan should have been gone through several times, rehearsals have taken place if appropriate, emergency and contingency plans have been put in place, everyone should know what they have to do and when etc. Each activity should have a plan of how it will proceed on the day.

Event Managers role

Go through what the event will look like and play it out in your mind. Try and think of every detail and think of the event from the perspective of someone who has never been there before. For example:

- Do they know how to get there?
- Is the signage in the best places?
- When they get to the event can they find the parking easily?
- Is it obvious where they will register or enter?
- Does everyone assisting have basic information about activities, food, toilets, registrations etc. in case a participant asks?
- Are the venues clearly signposted and included on site maps, is it clear what activity is on in each venue?

Often activities will need stage changes etc. so your earlier planning should have highlighted this and organised people to do it., **At this late stage you are just checking that nothing has been missed and that people are aware where, what and when they will be needed.** There is so much to think of!

Remember to check if you are providing what you agreed to provide for the sponsors, speakers, judges, participants etc. For example: Erection of sponsor’s banners, lunch for the speakers, free passes for the judges etc. Has the evaluation form been prepared and included within the participants registration pack? This type of work can be carried out prior to the event or in the days leading up to the event.

The committee and volunteers need to know where and how they can get help. They need to know how much authority they have in case of an emergency that needs immediate attention. Hopefully your emergency and contingency plans will prevent any unplanned actions having to be made, however if this occurs it is important to have people you can trust in these positions.

8 The Event – it's finally here

Check that the key personnel and volunteers are in place and that they have their notes, plans, rosters, contact numbers, timetables etc. These people are ambassadors for the event and so they should have good general information regarding the event i.e. Where to purchase tickets, where the toilets are etc. the administration/ registration office/tent should have copies of all volunteer rosters, committee rosters, contact numbers etc.

Schedule regular meetings with key players during the event to ensure everyone is kept informed and they have the opportunity to air concerns and solve any problems. It is also an opportunity for the event manager to remind people of the atmosphere you want to create (e.g. friendly, helpful) and the level of professionalism required. Reassure people of how they can communicate with each other (E.G. walkie talkies, phones, beepers etc.) and when they will next meet. The event manager and key committee members need to be accessible and approachable.

Ensure all vital components are working on the day e.g. Electricity and water. Check or have someone check the parking attendants are in fact doing their job correctly. If a parking problem occurs early on, you can be sure the people arriving will continue to make the problem worse. Other key times will generally be early on in the event when activities occur for the first time. For example be on the alert:

- When the first activity begins, is everything working as it should? Is the power, sound system and lighting working? If there are no problems at this stage then it should work for the following activities.
- When the caterers arrive and begin to draw off the power supply
- At lunch time, are the caterers coping, is the food area being kept tidy etc.
- When people begin to leave. Are the parking attendants in the right place?

It is important to have someone on the grounds such as an electrician and/or plumber in case of an emergency. Smaller events may get away with having these areas checked out prior to the event by specialists and then having a handyman(person) on duty throughout the event. Make sure you get contact numbers for the respective specialist (both work and after hours numbers).

If a problem does occur, in any area of the event, make sure you clearly define what the exact problem is. It is easy to mis-interpret problems when under pressure. Often problems are easily sorted when the true situation is uncovered. Look at the alternatives, get advice if appropriate, look at the consequences of each alternative and then make your decision.

DON'T PANIC!

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9 After the event

After the event (when you are enjoying the praise and accolades from participants, sponsors and volunteers!) it is important to provide feedback to key players such as sponsors. You will need to”

- Evaluate participants evaluation forms and other evaluations and prepare statistics and conclusions from them. These can be used for subsequent event planning, sponsors and media.
- Prepare media release
- Thank sponsors
- Analyse whether sponsors benefited in the way you and they thought they would.
- Thank volunteers and anyone who helped in any way. Make sure they receive the appropriate recognition. You will need them again next time.
- Pay accounts including suppliers, speakers and judges etc.
- Analyse each activity within the event for success both for participant interest value and financially. These results will help you decide which activities you will have next time.
- Ensure that all money has been collected and received.
- Return all equipment and sponsors banners promptly and correctly.
- Take down all signage soon after the event.
- Analyse your mistakes, are there areas for improvement in the evaluation process
- Prepare an Operations Manual with key statistics, prices, phone numbers and anything that will be useful next time and need to be found easily, It's worth the trouble!

Every event will have areas that could be improved. You will probably receive some less positive feedback that can depress you. But although you need to take this on board, try and keep this in proportion. Remember that the majority of people enjoyed their experience and try and learn from criticism.

10 Conclusion

Running a small event is exciting and challenging. It involves all areas of general management but is different because you are preparing for a single event that may only last one or two days. Even though the event's duration is short the preparation is long in the making. A successful event is very rewarding for everyone involved.

Happy Planning

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References and more information

“ Event Management – Module 8” produced for the Hillary Commission by Dave Bamford of tourism Resource Consultants

“The Event Management and Marketing Institute” 1988, written by David G Wilkinson of Ontario,Canada – a great book if you are running a scale event.