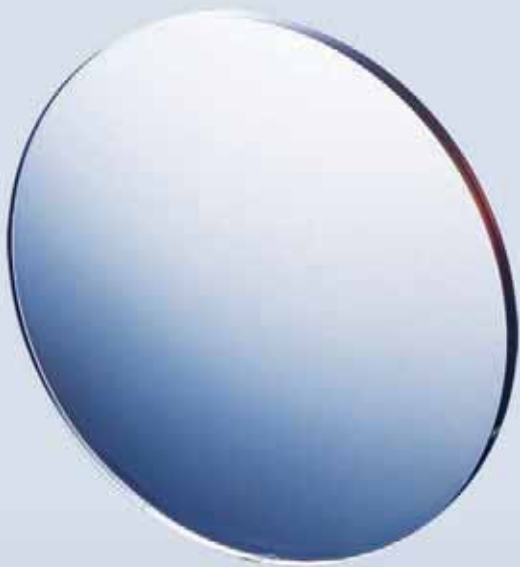


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ITS YOUR BUSINESS

A Step-by-Step Program for Planning Special Company Events

HEDLEY LAWSON
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Whether it's your company picnic, holiday party, employee training, or annual performance awards dinner, managers are frequently called upon as the designated go-to "event planner." Regardless of whether you handle the planning internally or use an outside resource, here are some tips to help you before the year-end holidays are upon us.

1. Pre-planning

Develop a clear budget, with line-items for everything: room rental, food and beverage, marketing, giveaways, employee expenses, and ancillary items. Vendor quotes are quite helpful for creating estimates. Err on over-estimating costs, as it is always preferable to be under budget.

2. Create an action plan

With a timeline and assignment list, delegate where possible. Most people like to get involved in event planning and you will appreciate the assistance. Also, begin to create a checklist of what will be needed.

3. Know your audience

Take into consideration the type of event you are planning. What do you want to achieve? What would attendees get excited about? Providing options and positive experiences maximizes the event's success.

4. Selecting a venue

Convenience should be a key fac-

tor. How will guests get to the venue? Is it easily accessible to major highways or public transportation? For extended events, are there close-by nighttime activities for attendees? Inquire with the hotel on the availability of reserving blocks of rooms for your guests. Do a site inspection before selecting your final venue.

5. Legal review

Signing-off on a hotel/venue contract is the same as signing any other legal document. Venues can be sloppy in putting a contract together. If anything raises a red flag, question it or have your legal counsel review the contract. Ensure that you have policies in place for attendees, including reimbursement for travel, consumption of alcohol or any other potential employer liabilities.

6. Marketing and communicating the event

Regardless of your audience, you may need to market your event to customers, vendors or even employees. Involve others and proof everything with a keen eye. Don't worry if early registrations don't materialize. People need periodic reminders, which will help achieve your goal.

7. Post-event review

Evaluate the event and get feedback on what worked and what didn't for future events. Conduct a de-briefing with staff who attended or were involved. ■■

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