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“We pulled that off... who knew?”

If you can't be flexible during an event, you're going to be miserable, and worst, your guests will probably be miserable too. If the flowers arrive and they're not exactly what you had ordered, ask yourself if it's really going to make a difference to your guests. Chances are, when something goes wrong only the organizers are aware.

Events don't have to be stressful. If you start from the point-of-view that there are going to be challenges during your event then your job as an event planner becomes simply ... or sometimes, not so simply ... how you deal with them. If you remain calm and polite you will deal with a situation quicker and more effectively, while alerting fewer guests to the fact that there is even a problem.

In closing, assume nothing, confirm everything and treat every guest as a VIP.

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- 10. Don't provide scripts for your volunteers or staff.** "He forgot to mention our major sponsor ... and he's sitting with him!" Ensure all the important aspects of the event are scripted for your emcee (a short Chamber infomercial, introductions of dignitaries, sponsors, speakers, etc.).
- 11. Don't remain calm, polite and rational during the event.** "Was that the event guy in the straight jacket?" If handled politely and calmly some of the things that go wrong at your event (and they will) won't even be noticed by your guests.
- 12. Don't evaluate your event.** "We pulled that off... who knew?" Often, you are just grateful everything ran smoothly and it's over. From a logistical point of view, everything may have run extraordinarily well, but did your sponsors get what they expected? Were your guests happy? Your suppliers? Feedback is a great opportunity to further improve your event.
- 13. Don't thank anyone.** "I'm not helping again!" Acknowledge all the contributions of volunteers, staff, speakers and dignitaries. Thanking your vendors and suppliers improves relations and makes them remember you.



Don't let this happen to you...



Events are one of the most important elements of a Chamber. Not only do they provide critical non-dues revenue, they allow the opportunity for your Chamber and volunteers to shine.

When planning the event imagine yourself as a guest: arriving at the venue; wondering where to go; where to hang your coat; noting the sponsor sign as you walk into the room; being greeted; and, directed to the registration table.

Making your guests feel welcome and comfortable from the moment they arrive is your top priority. Have volunteers or staff in place as this will free you up as the planner to deal with all the other details.

And as your event gets underway, take a deep breath and put on a calm, polite and rational demeanor.

“perhaps we can find some crayons”

Refer to #6 Don't ask for speakers requirements



Be prepared to take on the battle

- 1. Don't prepare a budget.** “We got some, we spent some ... do we have any left?” Ensure all staff and volunteers responsible for any element of the event, know their spending limitations. Budget at least a 15% profit.
- 2. Don't develop a critical path (checklist).** “I thought you were doing that?” Prepare a critical path by date, track your contacts and assign duties. The more details you have planned before the event, the more time and energy you will have to deal with the unexpected things that will undoubtedly come up.
- 3. Don't pick a date or venue until two weeks before.** “Well ... it WAS going to be there.” Choose your date and venue carefully. If possible, ensure there are no other events in your community which conflict with your date or impact your attendance.
- 4. Don't approach potential sponsors until the last minute.** “We have an event in two weeks and were wondering ...” Secure sponsors months in advance, preferably prior to their budget cycle. Proper recognition is critical to sponsors. When sponsors come onboard at the last minute, they miss out on many of the benefits and will miss some of the promotional opportunities.
- 5. Don't market your event.** “We'll throw up a couple of posters and people will flock to our event.” Once you've completed 1-5, start marketing your event. Collect names of people and companies who attend your events and keep telling them about subsequent events. Do as many mail outs for your events as your budget allows. Take advantage of sponsor relationships, reciprocal agreements, social media and other free media opportunities to advertise.
- 6. Don't ask for speaker's requirements.** “Perhaps we can find some crayons and a flip chart.” Your speaker may need a wireless mic, a podium, screen, LCD projector, laptop or mics in the audience to take questions. Get a picture and bio for your marketing material.
- 7. Don't get anything in writing.** “Well ... he said ...” If vendors or suppliers don't have contacts confirm all verbal agreements in writing (e-mail is great). If nothing else, you can pull out contracts and e-mails if you have a discrepancy.
- 8. Don't get someone to take care of your audio-visual equipment.** “Has anyone seen the facility guy?” It's important that someone is designated to take care of adjusting volume levels and general trouble-shooting throughout your event. Waiting 10 minutes or more, while the banquet manager is tracked down to fix an audio-visual problem is unprofessional.
- 9. Don't invite dignitaries to your event.** “The Mayor speaks next ... did someone remember to invite him?” Your event may be just the kind of opportunity a dignitary would like to attend and it will add more credibility and prestige if they do. Send an invitation and tickets.

Events