



Get Set for Success with Your Next Big Event

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When I answer the phone and hear the anxious voice of a leader in a client organization, I expect some version of this request: “Can you take over managing our event? I assigned it to (fill in the blank: my Executive Assistant, someone in HR, a staffer who likes to plan parties...), but it’s not going well. We’re way behind on planning. Help!!”

I jump in whenever possible because I know the issue is underestimating the time, hard work, and expertise required to plan and manage an event. Whether it’s a small executive retreat, a big corporate conference, a celebration, or a fundraiser—events typically take more planning, creativity, and problem-solving than organizers anticipate.

Here are top-level suggestions to maximize the success of an event and minimize the time, budget, and headaches it involves.

Start planning early. It’s NEVER too early to start planning for your next event. I suggest planning events at least six months out—even though it seems absurd in April to start planning holiday events. (Yes, now’s the time to start!) I guarantee that the event will take more time and effort to plan than your team expects.

Set clear event objectives. Like any project your team undertakes, ensure that the objectives established for the event are clear and measurable. (Then be sure to measure afterward and act on the results.) Have your team analyze their plans to ensure all event components are aligned with the objectives—not just the event content. Elements like the choice of venue, the pre and post-event communications, event signage, the social activities, etc. should all work to deliver on your objectives.

Be creative. Take risks. Encourage the team setting the agenda and developing event content to think outside the box with content and activities that will fully engage your

participants. Consider alternatives to a parade of speakers with endless slide decks, such as facilitated large-group activities, break-out groups, and innovative team-building activities. Try something different with food and drink for social hours. Getting greater engagement from attendees will help you achieve your event's objectives.

Hope for the best, plan for the worst. A critical part of event planning is setting an emergency plan. I find that clients tend to short-change this step or leave it to the last minute. Ensure your team knows the venue's emergency planning procedures and set your plans accordingly. Make sure your entire team knows the event emergency procedures and can set the plan in action if need be. Don't be hesitant to hire event security if you have any concerns about the safety and security of your attendees, speakers, equipment, or information.

Hire it out. Planning and conducting an event means lots of legwork and handling endless details. An event management pro can save you time, money, and stress in producing a smash-hit event. Their dedicated, professional, behind-the-scenes work will enable you and your team to engage more fully in the event and with your guests, rather than sweating the details.

In a nutshell, treating an event like any other major project—planning, managing milestones and budget, measuring results—will help your organization maximize the results you achieve from your investment in events.

About C.Kay International

C.KAY International creates extraordinary experiences and unforgettable gatherings that deliver solid business results. We've helped powerhouses such as Microsoft, Siemens, Avanade, HP and American Express engage, inspire and energize stakeholders around the globe.

We produce one-of-a-kind conferences and events with flair and flawless execution—always with an eye to the business results required and the memorable experience desired. C.KAY International runs the show, so clients can fully participate in the event, share the experience, and build relationships with guests. www.ckayinternational.com.