

BOOK REVIEW

Event Planning – The Ultimate Guide to Successful Meetings, Corporate Events, Fund-Raising Galas, Conferences, Conventions, Incentives and Other Events

Second edition by Juddy Allen, John Wiley Sons Canada Ltd, Canada, 2009

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The first edition of *Event Planning* was published in 2000. In the book, readers could familiarize with basic concepts of event planning. The book has been used as a valuable course- book throughout the world and translated in five languages. The second edition of *Event Planning* is a supplement to the first edition, which makes the book more relevant for the increasing changes in the event industry world.

In second edition, the author wants to present the readers how to make the event present in memory. It is the little things that make the event special.

The content of the book is divided in nine main chapters and those are: initial planning and budget, organization and time, location, transport, guest arrival, space requests, which the guests are, refreshment and other essentials. After each chapter there is the overview with questions and answers where the author explained the most important ambiguities and problems related to the subject. After conclusion, the author gave the sample/example of cost list, payment plan and activity list in order to understand better their effect.

In this book, the author is primarily concerned with event goals, vision and budget. Before we start to organize the event we need to know what is the occasion of the event or the occasion of the participation in order to define the goal. A company can organize an event with the objective to improve the production of its staff; another company can organize an event with the objective to reduce the workplace accidents etc. This is the reason why a wide range of different type events arose.

Juddy Allen presents five concepts which have to be taken into consideration before creating the vision of the event:

1. The Elements- all things that make the event
2. The Essentials- necessities
3. The Environment – space and style
4. The Energy- creating the mood
5. The Emotion- feelings

Every event can be organised with the objective to educate the participants, to edificate their cultural and enlighten level, their socialization, create the energy and to entertain.

Event, as business investment is being used for sale production, production of customers' loyalty, production improvement, production raising and profitability. The author uses neologism D.R.I.V.E. to meet these results.

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- D - define the goal of the company and the event
- R - expand event vision
- I - innovate and predict with the help of five concepts and goals
- V - visualize the event, step by step, controlling logistic requests and costs
- E - accomplish in due date

Budget is one of the most important things, that is why one needs to make a list of costs in Excel. Preliminary budget has to involve various costs: invitations, accommodation, transport, space rent, food, drink, flower arrangement, scenery, music, entertainment, teachers, security, lighting, special effects, photographs, presents, promotional material etc.

Subsequently, the author pays attention on organisation and time. One needs to pay particular attention to making activity list. It is used to identify the actions of each person. Filling the list the number of people needed for carrying out the event, their responsibilities, obligations, and the time and place of their appointment. Time management is also important factor of successful event. When organising event, one has to take into account time of year, day in a week as well as time of day. One should avoid saints' days, holidays and other special occasions.

Things that limit choosing the space for carrying out the event are imagination and budget. In addition to hotels, convention, centers and restaurants as the most frequently used spaces for organizing the event; one can rent a yacht, airport hangars, theaters, art galleries etc.

Transportation might include airplanes, helicopters, helium air balloons, limousines, private cars, motorcycles, trains, boats etc. If the guests are responsible for their transportation themselves, the important role in success of the event has parking, its accessibility and availability. One must not let the guest circle in order to find the space, because this makes them frustrated.

The event does not start when the guests enter the facility, but when they arrive in front of the facility. The impression that they arrived in a special place has to be created. The energy that stimulates all senses has to be created. An example for this is music and special effects. When the guests arrive in destination, it is important that they feel the impact of local culture.

The next station is registration of guests. It is here where the guests show their tickets or VIP passes. When the guests register, they get a programme, a seating plan, alternatively promotional material and gift. In selecting areas for maintenance of the facility (carrying out the event), one has to take care that the room is not too small, that people are not too tight , that it is not too hot and uncomfortable. When choosing the space, the floor, the walls and the ceiling have to be taken into account. Door width, ceiling height, field of view, acoustic of the room, the room capacity, heating, security and space condition have to be determined in particular. Before you start seeking a suitable facility, clients', supplier's, guests' and staffs' needs and their total number have to be known. In order to harmonize a style of the event with the guests' needs, taste and expectations, it is important to know the attendants perfectly. You should be sure that 'right' people are there and that it is not merely a room full of people. You need to confirm guests' profile:

- What is the guests' age structure?
- Whether the guests are coming by themselves or with their couples?
- Whether children and teenager are going to attend?
- What kind of energy would there be emitted if you mix different groups of people?

If this is an event that requires the media attention, you need to pay attention on questions such as: How many journals to invite? Whether there will be government members and other important people? People from the media are very busy and you should respect their time. You should enable their access of the area where they could have their private interviews or photograph the guests. With them you should be in a good relationship.

Then, the author pays special attention on designing of the invitation. They should all include certain information: name of the event, description of the event, date, time, venue, directions, parking place details, dress code, and the number of invited guests, address, telephone, and fax of the organizer.

Food and drink may be the main things of the event. You should think of kind of food that is being served. In the registration form you should have questions related to special meal requirements, allergy on certain food etc. which helps in menu planning. You should know in advance how many guests are vegetarians, how many of them are allergic to seafood or other food etc. That is the reason why there are special meals to satisfy specific requirements.

You should give the instructions to all staff, suppliers and trainees in terms of what is going to be expected from them (dress code, protocol, behavior). They make the event successful and they should feel as if they are a part of it. The staff has to be motivated for the success of the event in the same manner as the organizer. You should address them with respect, including simple things such as words: excuse me, and thank you. Being informed and communication is the key success when you desire an event with no incidents.

Entertainment upgrades every event. Here you have some ideas: church choir, casino, folklore, magicians, firework, confetti, games, opera, pianists etc. Only fantasy limits the list. You should consider what is entertaining, new and available. Photographs and videos taken at the event become lasting memory for the guests and for clients a marketing chance when they publish them in the magazines or websites. You should include those in every event organization.

In terms of scenery, you should pay attention on details. What is the colour of the tablecloths? What is the colour of the walls, pottery and glasses? Is everything harmonized? You should pay attention on what feeling and mood you want to create. On the other hand, there are printed materials: menus, table numbers, programs etc. Special effects are not said to be special for no reason at all, they have spectacular effect on peoples' eyesight, sense of hearing, taste buds, smell and sense of touch and they are tightly related to the scenery. Gifts are always a nice way that mark a culmination of every event and they should be symbolic. They don't have to be expensive, but they have to evoke the memory of the event. Some risk evaluation areas are: reduction of guests attended, bad weather, failure of the main speakers, company emergencies, other events and their dates.

As soon as the event finishes, you should remember that only organizer of the event and people connected in planning the event know whether everything was as planned. The event may have the unexpected upturns, but that's the way life goes.

You should find time for evaluation of the event with your staff, but not immediately the next day. You should give time for rest and collecting impressions to everybody. However, the evaluation should be done when the event is still present in everyone's memory. What went well? What to do differently next time? Are the goals achieved? Was the budget appropriate?

Post-event summing is important tool in the event planning for clients as well as for event organizer and it should not ever be left out.

At the end of the event you should give thanks to people who were with the organizer and made the event successful. You should let them know how much their effort is appreciated. You should avoid the unique form of letter of gratitude. It spoils the whole message if two or three people find out that they received identical letters. You never know when you will again work together on another project.

Skills learned while planning the successful meetings, conferences and conventions should be used for other special events. What is learned in one event can help the organization of the other. You should sort and organize the precious collection of telephone numbers, crucial information, business cards etc. in order to be easily accessible next time.

The Event Planning Book gives readers a draft of ways to plan and carry out the event easily and with no headache, thus every successful event organizer must have it on their shelf.