



Staging a Corporate Event

Introduction

Staging a corporate event can be a complex task and takes careful planning to organise, but the rewards are many when everything runs smoothly and to schedule.

The benefits of a professionally staged event include:

1. *An excellent way to communicate to a large audience (e.g. incentive program launch, product launch etc)*
2. *Shows the commitment of the host to do things well and in a professional way*
3. *Reinforces values & culture elements*
4. *Provides a memorable experience for participants*

Whether your event is an Awards Presentation, a 'Thank You' Dinner or a Product Launch, there are many things to consider and below is a checklist of items that you will need to consider to make your event successful. A timing schedule is crucial and you will need to give yourself plenty of lead-time to factor in all the elements that will need to be addressed.

The Event

1. What key activities need to be covered during the event?

Even the simplest event needs to follow an agenda. This keeps everything on track and also advises the key personnel of what is going to take place throughout the night.

2. Have you remembered all the suppliers you may need?

Are there any other suppliers that you need to include on your list? Have you included the photographer, musicians, entertainers, staging/operators, and event co-ordinator? They will vary according to the type of event you are holding but they need to be included in your final list with regards to function and catering needs.

3. How many people will be attending?

Your caterers will need to know for their drink and food requirements. The venue will need to know numbers for their table layouts and seating arrangements.

4. Will there be entertainment and/or a guest speaker

Are there any special requirements that will be needed for the guest speakers/entertainers? E.g. a speaker may want to supplement a presentation with power point slides or a video. A band may require an audio set up with their own panel operator.

The Date & Time of the Event

1. Does it conflict with any other major events?

Most venues with multiple function rooms are set up to minimise conflict between simultaneous events but if not checked, other events at your chosen venue may cause unexpected problems such as limited rehearsal time, an overflow of noise from an adjacent room or a conflict of radio signals with staging equipment etc. A major public event may also mean limited accommodation availability (if your guests need to stay overnight).

2. Does your event coincide with a public holiday?

(This will affect your costs). Weekends and public holidays attract overtime charges. It is wise to check the local calendar for these items.

3. What time will it start and finish?

Times need to allow for travel to and from the venue and how this fits in with other elements (say for example a week long conference). Allowance must be made for the type of venue you select and if, for example, you need to show video through the daylight hours you should consider the cost of draping the room to block out the light (if you have chosen a room with plenty of outside light streaming in through floor to ceiling glass windows). There may also be noise restrictions after a certain hour due to local noise complaints (if your event finishes late).

The Venue

1. Will it be able to accommodate all of your guests?

There are many ways to set up your venue and this decision will impact on the space you choose. A classroom set up will not require as much space as a cabaret set up. Staging and Audio Visual requirements will also impact on this space.

2. Does it have a good ambience and the right feel for your event?

Every venue has its own unique appeal and this should be taken into consideration when making your choice. As well as your main function room, a good pre-function area is essential and it should be easily accessible for guests. When choosing your venue you should have planned all of the functions and requirements that will need to be fulfilled on the night and, with this in mind, make your choice on the venue. Some venues may look fabulous but for your special requirements, staging your event may not be possible.

3. Is their adequate parking & loading dock facilities?

If your guests are driving to the venue, is their adequate parking? Does the parking attract a fee? Will the guests be expected to pay for their own parking? Do the staging and technicians have easy access to the venue for their equipment?

4. Does the venue have the right location for your needs?

There are many factors that will influence the location for your venue. It may be that the venue needs to be close to a predefined area or, at the other end of the scale, as far away from reality as possible.

5. Are the power requirements and guest amenities suitable for your event?

Staging, music and lighting can take up lots of power and although most venues have these facilities catered for, it is wise to look at the availability of power points, light fittings, dimmers etc in regards to the function that you will be holding. Every country has different power requirements and this should be investigated before you plug your equipment into a foreign power point. There will also be local rules on some equipment that may be used i.e. some equipment used in lighting e.g. hazers, may require you to provide a fire warden for the duration of your event. Failure to do this could trigger off a fire brigade warning resulting in a very large unexpected expense to your budget!

The Venue

6. Does it have enough area for your staging requirements and pre-dinner requirements?

Ceiling heights and fixed items like poles and hanging chandeliers can affect lighting and AV requirements. Consider the requirements that you need for your event and take into account all the fixtures that cannot be moved. Also consider how big the door entrances are for carrying equipment into the room. If you needed a scissor lift to reach a rigging point in the ceiling, could it fit through the doors of the venue?

7. Does it have adequate rigging points?

Lighting and projectors, in most cases need to be hung from the ceiling or a high point in a room for maximum effect. Surprisingly there are some venues that do not have these facilities and if this is the case, all staging will need to be built from the 'floor-up' which can add considerable costs to your staging requirements.

8. Does it have adequate catering facilities?

Most venues will have a catering department that will guide you through requirements for your venue. Some venues will require you to hire a caterer as these facilities are not provided, so you should consider the amenities provided by the venue and make sure they are suitable for your needs.

Entertainment

1. Will there be a Master of Ceremonies to facilitate the night?

A good MC will not only introduce your speakers and presentations etc in a professional way but will also ensure that the function is kept on schedule and to time. There are many MC's who double as entertainers / comedians and therefore can add valuable input to a successful night.

2. Your Entertainment & Music

Music sets the mood for your venue and careful consideration should be given to background music and to the entertainment (if needed) for the sort of event you are holding. This depends on the type of audience, their ages and cultural mix. There are many professional entertainers that will provide the right mix of music for you. Selecting the wrong entertainer or musicians for your audience can with a negative outcome. Entertainers and musicians will also have certain requirements that will need to be provided to assist them in performing. For example, an entertainer may need a designated room to change costumes or a panel operator for special music, sound and/or lighting requirements.

3. Special Guest Speakers?

As with music and entertainment, the right guest speaker can add another dimension to your event, but needs to be selected carefully based on the type of audience. Professional speakers also have their own staging requirements and usually expect facilities to run a video and power point presentation. As with entertainers and musicians, professional speakers need to be booked well in advance and their requirements discussed and documented by you well before the event.

The Event Timeline

The event time line should be started well before the date of your event. Include all the key activities, and consider them against key milestones: E.g. A suitable venue should be selected before engaging a staging company for your event.

Below is a suggested timeline that you could use to plan your next event:

1. *Decide what sort of event is to be held and an estimate of how many guests will attend*
2. *Establish a budget for the event*
3. *Plan a rough agenda of what is required for the event e.g. The night may involve a 3 course presentation dinner with a guest speaker before main meal, a video presentation after main meal and some dancing after dinner.*
4. *Work out what equipment and personnel will be required to stage the night*
5. *Select your venue with the above points in mind and include decisions on selecting a venue as discussed earlier*
6. *Contact each person responsible for specific elements (e.g. Caterers, Staging Companies, Entertainers etc) and outline services required for the night using your rough agenda as a guide. Establish costs.*
7. *Compare costs to your budget. Do you need to re-look at your numbers? Maybe the 16 piece orchestra is overkill for the event...*
8. *Tighten your agenda and assign specific times to each segment.*
 - *Work out who says what and when*
 - *Will you need to organise power point or videos for the night?*
 - *Will some speakers bring their own material?*
 - *When will you serve entrée, mains etc?*
 - *Are the awards/gifts organised?*
 - *When will they be handed out?*
 - *Who will hand them out?*

Remember too that all well planned events include rehearsals and this needs to be factored into your schedule. 'It will be right on the night' is not the way to approach a professional event. You will find that your professionals will ask for a rehearsal at your venue (even if they have performed for many years) as they realise that all situations are different and a pre-run familiarises them with the technical crew and the equipment they will be working with. This should apply to any of your guest speakers or performers. All these elements need to be documented in an expanded run-sheet (as you progress these run sheets will be expanded further to incorporate audio visual, lighting and staging instructions. If your event is a large one you may use the services of a technical director to co-ordinate & direct your production & staging crew.

The Event Timeline

9. *Send your revised agenda to the key people who are providing the services for each part of your event. It is important that they have a clear picture of the role they play in the agenda and be able to feed back any questions or queries that may have.*
10. *As the deadline approaches, all the pieces of the pie should start to fall into place. Tidy up any loose ends. Always follow your verbal conversations with a confirmation email so all aspects of communication are clearly understood by all involved. Reconfirm deadlines for all your printed material & props as well as your catering and staging elements.*
11. *The day before the event, make a courtesy call to all involved.*
12. *When your event finally arrives you will find that all your hard work & planning has produced a well run and executed event. There will always be a time when something does not go as planned and it is a good practice to have a contingency plan in place for those segments that you may not be totally comfortable with.*

Of course there is much more to staging your event than is documented here but this should be a valuable guide to get you started. For a less stressful approach and to guarantee that your event runs as smoothly as possible, we would suggest that you work with the team at Results Plus who will take care of all the fine details for you, from your initial brief right through to the staging and running of the event.

About Results Plus

“Our mission is to research, develop and implement performance improvement programs to help organisations achieve improved results and reach specific outcomes. We value lasting relationships with our clients, built on trust and a shared vision of seeking opportunities for continuous improvements.”

Results Plus Pty Ltd was established in 1989 by Harry Coomans, Neil Southwell and Steve Dunne.

With a unique blend of specialist consulting, creative and communication skills between the three partners, Results Plus has developed considerable expertise in the design, implementation and management of programs which have helped organisations across a wide industry spectrum achieve increased performance.

Our current clients include high profile multinationals, and working with these companies over the years has given us considerable experience with franchised organisations and businesses with large distribution channels ... valuable experience that we can offer you.

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