

Your Event Planning Survival Guide

Part I: Planning

Presented by Ali Collins

Director of Meeting Planning, Goldman Association Management
February 10, 2022



SHRINERS
INTERNATIONAL

EDUCATION FOUNDATION



5 Common Event Planning Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

2

1. Blowing Your Budget
2. Assuming Event Success
3. Not Making it Easy for your Attendee to Attend
4. Being Unprepared for the Unexpected
5. Complacency

Pitfall # 1: Blowing Your Budget

3

A common problem event planners face is staying on budget. It is very important to set your budget at the very beginning.

- Will you charge admission?
- Will you have to pay out funds before money comes in?
- How will vendor deposits be made?
- Who will have the authority to make requests and changes that impact the budget?

Pitfall # 1: Blowing Your Budget

4

Budget Considerations:

- Are there relationships or contacts in the community that could make donations and/or become sponsors?
- Be flexible. Check with Vendors for potential discounts, like using the same menu as another event is using at the same time. It may be more economical for them to order larger quantities and can pass that savings to you.
- Understand and use contracts whenever possible for vendors and sponsors.
- Consider including a 20% contingency fund for unexpected expenses.
- Assign a treasurer to each event who keeps a spreadsheet that can be shared and reviewed with the committee.



Pitfall # 2: Assuming Success

5

It is so easy to assume just because the event happened you didn't hear any complaints that the event was a success. However, this could lead to ongoing deterioration of your event.

- Soliciting feedback from your attendees and sponsors can help you implement improvements that may be minor but will increase the success of your future events.
 - Feedback is a gift and should not be looked at as a criticism. There is always something to be learned.
- Solicit feedback from those who did not attend your event to find out what barriers to their participation may have occurred.

Pitfall # 2: Assuming Success

6

Know in advance how you will measure your success.

- Will success be defined by how much money was raised, how many tickets were sold, how many new members were recruited.
- Set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) before the event so you will be able to measure how your event went.
- Use the information received through soliciting feedback to re-evaluate your goals and KPIs and make adjustments for the next time.

Pitfall #3

Not Making it Easy for Your Attendee to Attend

7

To have a successful event, it is critical that the event provides the best experience possible for your attendees. Avoid frustration and negative feedback by informing your attendees in advance.

- Use signage or people at the event to help guide attendees.
- Ask the hotel to help with signs along the walkway or outside the room.
- Start on-time and keep your event on-time to the extent possible.
- Inform attendees of any schedule changes or pop-up announcements as soon as possible.
 - Example, for a multiple day event, announce at the beginning of the day.
 - If using some type of mobile communication, let them know that is where they will find important announcements.

Pitfall #3

Not Making it Easy for Your Attendee to Attend

8

Think about the questions your attendee will have, then compile this information into a “What to Know Before You Go” communication that can be emailed and posted.

- Name of the event (so they can look for signs)
- Location of the event - Address, Room Name. If it is outside, will it be rain or shine?
- Do they need to check-in and where that is located
- Where is Parking (is there a cost) or How do I get to the venue from the airport
- What is Dress Code (consider including forecasted temperatures)
- What is schedule of events - What time does it start; what time can I check-in and pick up my name badge
- Will there be meals or functions with food? If not, inform attendees what is nearby.
- Any special instructions, such as the COVID protocols that will be followed.
- Contact of person on-site or location on-site where they can go with questions.

Pitfall #4

Being Unprepared for the Unexpected

9

You can never be prepared for everything, but if you think of key things in advance and have answers then you will not be flustered if something happens and you will be able to react swiftly and calmly.

- Before the event: do a walk through with a venue staff member. Find out where the group goes if there is a fire drill, where the rest rooms are located, if there is a security team on site. Find out the venue's protocol for medical emergencies.
- Inform Attendees: During opening announcements consider including a statement about what to do if there is an emergency and introduce a point person people should alert.
- Inform Staff: Make sure staff knows the protocols to follow in the event of an emergency.
- Name Badges: Consider asking attendees to provide an emergency contact name and phone number on the back of their name badge.
- Weather: If you are holding the event in winter or hurricane season and there is a possibility for a weather disruption include on your Know Before You Go that any weather decisions will be made at least 24 hours in advance of the event and will be communicated via email.

Pitfall #5

Complacency

10

“Because we always do this event,” is no longer a valid reason for keeping an event that may be outdated and no longer interesting. It is important to review events and event feedback from time to time to make sure we are not doing the same old thing because we always have.

- As part of the strategic planning have you considered the following:
 - What is the business justification for having the event?
 - What are your assumptions, risks and competition for the event?
 - Are we willing to lose money on an event to keep having it for the declining number of people who are interested?
- Remember that one of your Key Performance Indicators should be soliciting and acting on feedback. What are your members asking for, have you integrated their feedback into future versions of your event?
- You want attendees excited about your events, wanting to return to your events, creating a good buzz about your events and through that increasing attendance at your events.