

EVENT PLANNING

So, you're going to plan a big event, but you don't know where to start. Don't panic. This information is designed to help you through this process and smooth out the rough spots of planning and preparing for a successful and memorable event.

The first step is to determine why you are putting on the event. Some questions that may help you clarify what you are doing and why include:

- What do you want to achieve by having this program?
- What are your organizational goals and how will this event help you meet them?
- What do you, as the planners, want to get out of this experience?
- Is there a current need or an interest in this program area?
- Are other similar programs being offered?
- Has a similar event been held in the past?
- What was the response?
- Are your members enthusiastic about organizing this event?
- Is organizing this program worth your members' time?
- Is there enough time to thoroughly organize, publicize and promote the program so that it will be successful?

Once you have satisfactorily answered these questions, planning the program is really quite easy if you follow these five simple steps:

- Identify Needs
- Develop Program Goals and Objectives
- Organize Program Plans
- Implement Plans
- Evaluate the Event

IDENTIFY NEEDS

Who is the audience and what does the audience want to see or experience with this kind of program? What are the audiences' needs? What method of assessment will you use to determine this (e.g., word of mouth, surveys or a suggestion box)? How big do you want this program to be? Does the type of event you're planning limit the audience size? If so, how will you determine who can attend?

DEVELOP PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

After you have identified your program's audience and needs, which ones do you want to have your event address? Define specifically what you want the participants to learn or experience from the program. This will be the goal of your program or event.

Brainstorm

Brainstorm the type of program and possible themes that will match your goals. Examples: speaker, film, dance, fund-raisers, trip, festival, athletic event, recreation, tournament, quiz bowl contests.

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Be clear about the kind of program you are planning, (e.g., social, cultural, educational or a fundraiser). Identify other resources to help you when and where necessary.

ORGANIZE PROGRAM PLANS

What do you specifically need to do to accomplish your objectives? When do you want to hold this event? Be sure to consider whether or not you have enough time to make all the necessary arrangements and whether or not your members will be able to complete all of their tasks. Many program planners find it helpful to make a time line working in reverse; start at the day of the event and fill in publicity deadlines, facility agreements, etc. This can help you see if you are being realistic or if you are setting yourself up to be unable to meet your obligations. Getting everything down on paper is an arduous process but it can be very rewarding and a great learning experience. It will give you a tremendous sense of accomplishment. For many, this process is as rewarding as the program itself. The Director of Student Activities and Leadership Center can assist you with the process.

Scheduling Facilities

Where and when you hold your program is very important.

Pick a date

- Consult the academic calendar.
- Find a convenient day for members.
- Check on facility availability.

Choose a location

- Project attendance.
- Determine the program needs – chairs, tables, lighting, sound, stage, open space, cooking area, ticket booths.

Decide on a time

Determine a convenient time for targeted audience. For example, commuter students are on campus during the day, so plan a time between day classes for a program. Do not plan a program when major organizations have standing meetings. See the University Scheduling Center section for more information.

Establish A Budget

How much money do you have to work with? Will revenues need to be generated? What kind of resources do you have at your disposal to raise money and/or cover costs? If you plan on charging admission it is important to consider what costs you anticipate this fee will cover as well as how much you can reasonably expect participants to pay.

Other questions to address are: Will there be a reduced rate for early registration? Will students be charged less than faculty, staff and community participants? Will tickets/registration be taken at the event or beforehand?

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Contracts

Another thing to consider is that often times speakers and entertainers will want you to sign a contract. Be sure to read it thoroughly and have your adviser review the contract. If you have questions, make a notation and ask for clarification. (Check with a staff member in the Student Activities and Leadership Center if you have any questions or concerns about a contract; they will refer you to the appropriate person.) For liability reasons, all contracts must be signed by the Vice President for Business Administration.

Publicity

There are many different ways to publicize an event – posters, flyers, banners, newspaper display ads, direct mailings, public service announcements, etc. Other “free” publicity resources are: The Tech Student Raver and Tech Times. The office of University and Public Relations can assist with press releases.

Program Details, Follow-Up and Clean-Up

Be sure to make a list of what needs to be done before, during and after the event. What are your equipment needs? Do you need registration tables? Special power hook-ups for speakers, computers, telephones? Will security measures need to be taken? Be sure to ask your speakers what materials or equipment they need in order to do their part.

IMPLEMENT PLANS

Be very clear in the beginning who will perform what tasks and what roles and expectations everyone has of each other. Be realistic when delegating tasks and responsibilities. Give people enough time to complete their work and assign to them things that are within their capabilities – set people up to succeed.

THE DAY OF THE PROGRAM

- Come early to check on room arrangements and setup.
- Prepare a brief introduction statement. For example, “Welcome to tonight’s performance sponsored by _____. If you are interested in having more events like this one, please talk to a representative of our organization.”

EVALUATE THE EVENT

The evaluation process is three fold: 1) the audience’s feedback, 2) the presenter’s experience and recommendations and 3) the planner’s thoughts and recommendations. Each group should be asked whether they feel the program accomplished what it was intended to. What went well? What could have been better?

There are several different methods of obtaining this information but the most often used one is a written evaluation distributed following the program. When the program planners evaluate the event be sure to find out whether there was sufficient time allowed for planning and implementation. Did the program reach the goals and objectives? What should be done next time that wasn’t this time? Did the anticipated audience attend?

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A well thought out and thorough evaluation is an educational aspect of programming. It allows you to learn from your successes and learn what is to be improved. Evaluations can also serve in a historical file for the organizations and can be a useful reference for future programmers.

Prepare financial statement of actual expenditures. This will help you know how much was spent on what, and what to expect the next time something similar is to be planned.

Send thank you notes to appropriate people. Let them know how much their help was appreciated in making the event happen.

SOME GENERAL TIPS ON PROGRAM PLANNING

- In the ideal program, everything runs so smoothly that the participants may see little evidence of pre-planning or behind the scenes work.
- Don't compromise on details or settle for second best.
- Don't assume anything or allow situations to continue that make you uncertain or nervous. Meet all problems head-on, sensitively and firmly.
- People support what they help create – so involve as many people as meaningfully as possible in the planning process.
- Usually something goes wrong – but if you're properly prepared and avoid panicking, almost any problem can be solved.

Program Evaluation

Program

Committee

Comments on the Performer (quality of show, off-stage personality)	
Comments on the Agent (honesty, cooperativeness, responsiveness)	
Comments on Audience (size, diversity, audience response to program)	
What might have impacted attendance? (calendar conflicts, weather, inadequate publicity, program appeal)	

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Comments on Publicity (what worked, what didn't)	
Would you do this program again? Why or why not?	
What would you do the same? What would you do different?	
General Comments	