

How to make your event go well, and why it is important

Have you ever attended a professional development/learning event that didn't meet your expectations or deliver on its promise? I have, and I bet you have too.



Via Pexels.com

Good events lead to good things

Many organizations put on these events as a benefit to their members, or to provide an interesting take on a hot topic, or simply, to provide a learning opportunity. And events are often a great way to build interest in your organization, and to help increase membership.

But the positive aspects of holding an event disappear if the event is bad. Bad events are events that don't go as planned

and don't offer what they promise.

Bad events lead to bad things

Attending an event that doesn't live up to its billing is incredibly frustrating. You've given up your time, and many times your money, to attend what seems like a waste. You've learned nothing and achieved nothing.

Don't let your event harm your organization

Event organizers, whether professional or volunteer, need to be aware of the negative consequences of having a bad event:

- Loss of trust in your organization
- Decreased attendance to future events
- Reputation damage

Ultimately, organizations could see revenue loss. That should be incentive to prevent bad events from happening.

How to make sure your event goes well

Ensure your next event goes well with proper planning, organization, and communication.

Note that the following tips are not intended as an exhaustive list. Instead, this list reflects solutions to various issues I have experienced in the bad events I have attended.

Planning tips

Prepare your speakers: Explain what you expect them to present, how much time they will have, and who you expect to attend the event.

Review the presentations: Make sure that what the speaker is planning to present matches what you required. Review the slides.

Organization tips

A/V, computer checks: Ensure that the A/V and computer/internet connection are working *before* the event. The time to check is not just as the event is starting. This wastes time, and doesn't allow you to correct problems.

Agenda: Share an agenda, whether printed or digital.

Inform your audience: Set ground rules for your audience, and address common issues (i.e., if and when there will be Q and A, if there are refreshments available, location of restrooms, etc.)

Communication tips

Before the event: Send a reminder to those who have registered. Be sure to include the location address, date and time of the event, and logistical information such as directions, parking availability, etc.

During the event: Properly introduce yourself, the host organization, the topic, and the speaker (s). Make sure the speakers share their title, affiliation and contact information.

After an event: Send an email thanking people for attending. This email can also include an event survey, request for feedback, and sharing of any relevant information (e.g., websites mentioned in the talk, the presentation deck, contacts, bibliography, etc.)

The bottom line is that events are a great marketing communications tool when done right. Done wrong, they can be a disaster for your organization.

Check your calendar before you do anything else

This morning, I got an email from a networking group apologizing for scheduling a lunch during Passover (which starts tonight and runs for eight days). It offered free admission to those observing Passover since they would not be able to eat the lunch offering (people who observe Passover refrain from eating bread and other grains, among other dietary restrictions).



“Fat-ass wall calendar II”
by Geir Arne Brevik on
Flickr

There are many religious observances from various religions throughout the year. Some are more observed than others. While organizers can't always avoid having a conflict, they should try. For observant Muslims, attending a lunch during Ramadan is impossible. For observant Jews, attending a networking event on Yom Kippur is unthinkable. Some Christians would not attend a BBQ on Friday during Lent.

Understanding the importance of holidays to their practitioners should be on communicators' and event planners' agendas. From a practical point of view, why would you schedule and promote an event that potential participants

won't be able to attend? From an inclusive point of view, why would you not be sensitive to different religious beliefs?

But it is not only about religious observance. It's about understanding what is going on when you are planning your event. Will something else affect your turnout? A competing event? A conflict? A major city-wide happening? If there is going to be a race that shuts down various city streets, for example, that might make it difficult for your attendees to get to your event or find parking.

All it takes is to check the calendar *before* you plan your event. Of course, some things will pop up after you have settled on your dates and venues, which may force you to reschedule or adapt somehow.

If you are constantly planning events, then you may wish to invest in Chase's calendar, which lists just about everything, everywhere. Otherwise, if you use Google, you can subscribe to various calendars (religious holidays, US holidays, etc.). Or there is this Holidays Calendar, which lists all major religious and US holidays for the year. For those who prefer paper, most wall/desk calendars list major holidays. And don't forget to check your local resources such as newspapers, local websites, chambers of commerce and others to understand what is going on closer to home.

But having a calendar is useless unless you check it. Make it part of your event planning and promotion checklist.

Wishing a Happy Passover to those who celebrate. It's on my calendar!