
Special Events Timeline

12 months before event:

- Appoint Event Chair(s)
- Determine the purpose of your event. (Fundraiser or donor development)
- Establish a theme for the event
- Establish the BUDGET: expenses and revenue
 - Your event can be priced to attract fewer people at a higher price, or more people at a lower price. Sometimes exposing the organization to a broader group of people is more important than reminding your loyal patrons how wonderful you are. Be sure to consider these costs:
 - Venue & service
 - Labor
 - Publishing costs
 - Special equipment
 - Entertainment
 - Decorations
 - Acknowledgment
- Event chairs determine and appoint Key Committee Chairs:
 - Corporate Relations/Sponsorships Chair (immediately)
 - Volunteer Coordinator Chair (no later than 9 months before event)
 - Media & Public Relations Chair (no later than 7 months before event)
- Event Chair(s) - Appointing specific committee chairs helps distribute the work. However, event chairs guide the overall purpose and vision of the event and cannot avoid working closely with each chair.
 - Schedule timeline:
 - Create a timeline highlighting the important aspects of the event
 - Determine absolute deadlines and plan accordingly to achieve them.
(Example: If reservations must be received by Nov. 24, the invitation must be mailed 4 to 5 weeks earlier. Furthermore, the invitation needs to be to the printer 2 weeks before that, and design time can take up to 3 weeks. So far, this is 9 to 10 weeks out from date event)
 - Determine guest list. (This will influence price per person costs.)
 - Be sure your guest list comprises appropriate people that will realize the purpose of your event. (Example: the more ritzy the event, the more affluent the guests.)
 - Start spreadsheet tracking: formal names, addresses, and phone numbers. This is the start of your guest list.
 - Use names from the organization's general patron list
 - Determine Where and When
 - Establish location, time & date (this is vital to the planning)
 - Book venue: make deposits and sign contracts if necessary

9 months before event

- **Initial committee meetings begin**
 - Appoint last Committee Chairs
 - **Logistics Committee Chair**
 - **Invitation Committee Chair**
 - **Decorations Committee Chair**
 - **Auction Committee Chair**
 - **Menu Committee Chair**
 - **Entertainment/Program Committee Chair**

Individual committees begin to plan the details of each area and adhere to budget constraints determined by Event Chair(s)

- **Logistics Committee**
 - Determine flow and timing of event
 - Determine volunteers needed
 - Brainstorm ideas for new and unique experiences
- **Invitation Committee**
 - Determine style (in-house? paper choice? professional print job?)
 - Choose design Identify printer
 - Choose and order paper. Be sure paper to be used will allow for the desired effect.
 - Determine whether you will mail invitations first class or bulk
- **Decorations Committee**
 - Begin to determine theme
 - Start cost evaluations
- **Auction Committee**
 - Identify financial goal
 - Determine milestones for success (Set realistic goals and evaluate them regularly.)
 - Get lists of past merchant donors
 - Divide list among committee
 - Design a solicitation mailing for auction donations
 - If goal is large:*
 - Include: Letter, Brochure, Return envelope
 - Determine postage needs
 - Be sure to use a clean address list
 - If goal is modest:*
 - Identify desired items and donors
 - Divide solicitations among committee members based on their personal relationships
 - Start asking
- **Menu Committee**
 - Start brainstorming on menu ideas.
 - Work with caterer on costs
 - Some caterers may invite you to taste a sample of the menu options to help with your decisions

- **Entertainment/Program Committee**

Determine amount of time available for entertainment before or during the event.

Determine use of band

- Identify band
- Check availability
- Book ASAP (Some bands require a deposit)

Speaker/Auctioneer/Master of Ceremonies

- Identify personality
- Check availability
- Book ASAP
- Start drafting script

Event chair finalizes all deadlines in each committee and recruits volunteers for their committee.

- **Corporate Relations/Sponsorships Chair**

- Begin sponsorship solicitations
 - Mail packets and meet potential sponsors in person
 - Get high powered, influential people involved in the ask
 - Follow-up bi-weekly until you get an answer
 - If corporations are uninterested in sponsoring the event at-large, ask them to commit to purchase a table at the event or several tickets

7 to 6 months before the event

- **Event Chair(s)**

- Begin monthly meetings for all Committee Chairs (Keep this a standing date to insure attendance.)
- Each committee reports progress and expresses needs
- Reconcile Budget
 - Go over budget with the Committee Chairs keeping close tabs on what each Committee spends

- **Corporate Relations/Sponsorships Chair**

- Continue with sponsorship solicitations and table/ticket sales
- Start to collect sponsor logos for use in P.R. and signage
- Ask sponsors to participate in volunteering for event

- **Media & Public Relations Chair**

- Write press releases
 - Continue to hold monthly committee meetings
 - Include Date, Time, Location, name of organization holding event, volunteer groups involved, purpose of event, celebrities involved, contact information, sponsors
 - Working with the Auction Committee Chair actively solicit large auction donations
 - Items such as cars, trips, art, etc. usually require formal requests

5 months before the event

- Event Chair(s)
 - Start early ticket sales with board members and high end donors- use their names on the invitation later (be sure to get their permission)
 - Send letter with benefits of early purchase if necessary
 - If you plan to list on invitation, be sure to list a deadline for printing purposes
 - Continue to hold monthly committee meetings
 - Go over budget with the Committee Chairs keeping close tabs on what each Committee spends
- Media & Public Relation Chair
 - Fax press releases to all newspapers, radio stations & T.V. stations
- Corporate Relations/Sponsorships Chair
 - Mail second invoices to corporate sponsors (if necessary)
- Invitation Committee Chair

Plan invite to drop in the mail 4-5 weeks before the event

 - Begin working with invitation design
 - Choose and order paper (be sure paper to be used will allow for the desired effect)
 - If you are using bulk mail be wary of busy mailing times: Christmas, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day; this could slow down your mailing
 - Including a return envelope will make the RSVP process easier for guests, but will increase expense of invitation.
 - Mailing envelope should have a "return service requested" statement. This will be more expensive, but all erroneous addresses will be returned to organization for correction.
 - Don't forget to use your organization's logo if possible

4 months before event

- **Event Chair(s)**
 - Begin cleaning up mailing list for invitations
 - Visit event venue
 - Continue holding monthly committee meetings
 - Go over budget with the Committee Chairs keeping close tabs on what each Committee spends
- **Corporate Relations/Sponsorship Chair**
 - Report your progress to sponsors
- **Decoration Committee Chair**
 - Order necessary decorations
 - Finalize decoration details with Event Chair
 - Order necessary party favors
- **Auction Committee Chair**
 - Start collecting donated auction items
 - Keep an excel spread sheet going with all collected items and information
 - Make sure to keep all props to return to the donors

3 months before event

- **Event Chair(s)**
 - Start bi-weekly Committee meetings
 - Go over budget with the Committee Chairs keeping close tabs on what each Committee spends
- **Media & Public Relation Chair**
 - Fax second round of press releases
 - Report progress to sponsors
 - Include any new/ early ticket or table buyers
- **Logistics Committee Chair**
 - Get volunteers committed for the day of the event
 - Clarify any parking issues that might be attached to using the venue
- **Invitation Committee Chair**
 - Finalize invitation designs- last chance for early sponsor opportunities and tickets purchases!
 - Send to printer within two weeks
 - Allow one week for proofing and approval by committee and organization
 - Start early label printing if necessary
- **Auction Committee Chair**
 - Continue to collect the auction items
 - Determine bidding procedure for larger items:
 - Live - be sure to book an auctioneer
 - Sealed - start promoting items to guests
 - Send out booklet of items collected before the event
 - Silent - Generate bid sheets and determine minimum bids on all items
- **Menu Committee Chair**
 - Begin to focus on menu options
 - Work closely with caterer
 - Don't forget to consider special dietary needs of guests
 - Make menu match the season
 - Set up time for tasting of the menu if necessary
- **Entertainment/Program Committee Chair**
 - Final considerations
 - Sound systems
 - Transporting heavy objects
 - Get all information to the invitation committee for publication

2 months before the event

- **Event Chair(s)**
 - Continue with bi-weekly committee meetings
 - Go over budget with the Committee Chairs keeping close tabs on what each Committee spends
- **Invitation Committee Chair**
 - Get invitation volunteers together to assemble
 - Check on available postage first class bulk o Mail invitations
- **Entertainment/Program Committee**
 - Confirm entertainment

1 month to 2 weeks before the event

- **Event Chair**
 - Begin collecting reservations
 - Seat guests according to their priority. This can be determined by donation level, profile in the community, etc.
 - Final arrangements made and approved for decorations
 - Reconcile budget
 - Volunteer coordinator should meet with each committee chair to determine needs
 - Reconcile Budget
- **Corporate Relations/ Sponsorship Chair**
 - Start to design signs for sponsors
 - Be sure to use the most updated logo
 - Report progress to sponsors
- **Media & Public Relations Chair**
 - Send another round of press releases
 - Be sure to get local society reporters to cover the event (you may need to comp their tickets)
- **Decorations Committee Chair**
 - Order flowers
 - Make sure decorations have been finalized
- **Auction Committee Chair**
 - Continue to collect auction items
 - Print all necessary bid sheets for the auction
 - Mail mini-auction booklet to confirmed guests to promote items (if budget allows)
- **Menu Committee Chair**
 - Confirm menus with the caterers
 - Be sure all rentals have been requested
 - Make sure all beverages are set including non-alcoholic beverages

The week of the event

- **Event Chair**
 - Fill empty seats with potential donors/sponsors, dedicated committee members or staff from the organization
 - Finalize the seating chart
 - Call each committee chair to check status
- **Logistics Committee Chair**
 - Confirm volunteers - tell them where to be and when
- **Decoration Committee Chair**
 - Coordinate final plan to deliver decorations
- **Auction Committee Chair**
 - Account for all auction items and bid sheets
- **Menu Committee Chair**
 - Confirm catering
- **Entertainment/program Committee Chair**
 - Confirm entertainment
 - Confirm arrival times
 - Emcee
 - Entertainment
 - Volunteers

Day before the event

- **Event Chair**
 - Print out guest list in alphabetical order for the check-in volunteers
 - Generate checks for entertainment and caterer if required
- **Media & Public Relations Chair**
 - Deliver signage to event site (any other items that can be delivered early should arrive in the late afternoon)
- **Entertainment/Program Committee Chair**
 - Be sure all necessary sound equipment is delivered early on the day of the event in case of problems

Day of the event

- All Event & Committee Chairs
 - Arrive for set up
 - Work in shifts
 - Be sure all aspects are in place before leaving to get ready
 - Return to the event (dressed for the evening) 45 minutes before guests arrive
- Logistics Committee Chair
 - Have volunteer coordinator lead his/her troops
 - Keep timeline close at hand all evening to check the status
- Decoration Committee Chair
 - Check the quality of the decorations
- Menu Committee Chair
 - Walk through event one final time with the caterer
- Entertainment/Program Committee Chair
 - Have feature entertainment and speakers in place 20 minutes before you need them

Post-event follow up

Take time to evaluate your event especially if you plan to repeat it! Don't forget one of the most important aspects of your event: saying "Thank you" to everyone that participated in the event.

- **Event Chair**
 - Reconcile budget
 - Collect any outstanding money or pledges
 - Mail or deliver all expenses from event
 - Send thank you notes to all committee members
 - Send a report to all sponsors with a thank you
 - Consider having a follow-up thank you party for everyone who participated
 - Send follow-up communications to all special guests encouraging them to continue to support the organization
 - Collect all articles and press clippings
 - Meet with individual committees 2 to 5 days after the event for evaluation
 - Discuss all successes and challenges of event
 - Offer suggestions to remedy problems
 - Offer explanations as to why certain things did and did not work
 - Evaluate whether the event served its purpose
 - Decide whether you would do the event again
 - Save all notes and compile a notebook for reference to future chairs
 - Include all budget to actual information
 - Include receipts
 - Include planning notes from each committee chair
 - Include all press releases
 - Include sample letters sent to sponsors
 - Include sample invitations
 - Include guest lists