

EVENT MANAGEMENT

The University of Alabama
Center for Economic
Development

PLANNING A FESTIVAL/EVENT



TIPS AND INITIAL STEPS

Do not be afraid to outsource.

For example, use a specialized music production company for sound equipment, speakers, stage, etc.

Start small.

Do not bite off more than you can chew. A smaller, well-organized festival is much more enjoyable to attendees than a chaotic big one.

Take plenty of time to plan.

So many details go into a festival. Give yourself enough time to deal with unexpected issues

Create a committee.

You do not have to undertake this huge task by yourself. Create a dedicated committee to delegate tasks to.

Create an objective and purpose.

Why would people want to come to this? From this, choose a theme and name. This may affect the date, if the festival relates to certain flowers blooming, for example.

Make a budget and stick to it.

Consider fundraising, finances and sponsorships. Selling or giving away booth space (entertainers, vendors, etc.) percent of sales. Food, beverage or souvenir sales. Admission fee, parking fee. Corporate sponsorships, in return for logo placement on the festival grounds.

Plan the space.

Use an aerial map and an online program like Word/PowerPoint or write on it, but plan out where tents, attractions, restrooms, First Aid, information booths, etc. will all be set up

LEGALITIES AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Have security.

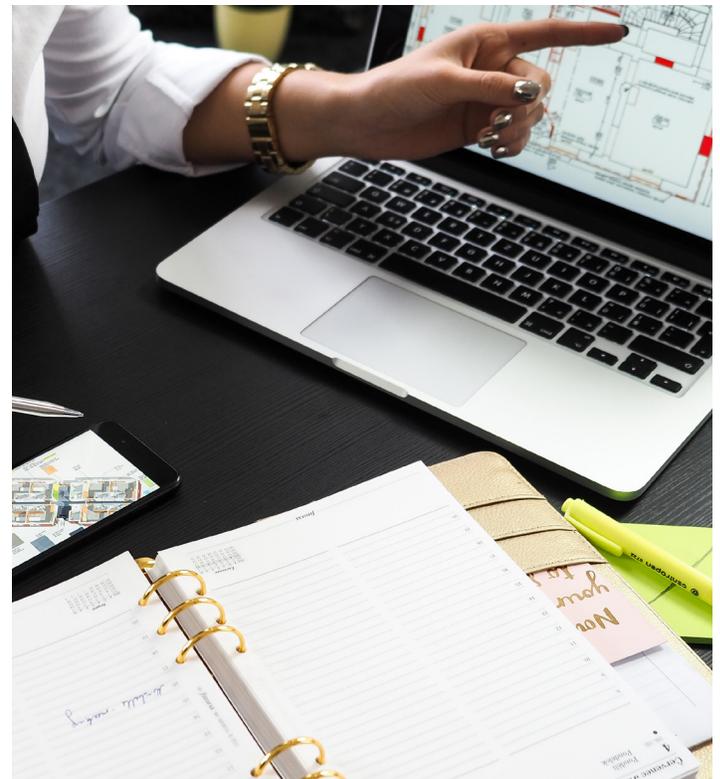
Check with your city, as there may be rules in place about police patrol at public events.

Get the right permits.

Work with local city government to learn the appropriate processes to secure the correct permits, including **Health Department** permits for food and beverage sales.

Apply for tax-exempt status.

Consider registering as a nonprofit corporation. May protect against lawsuits and some permits may require it.



SOCIAL MEDIA



HOW TO UTILIZE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MARKETING

Make yourself knowledgeable and do research.

- What demographics are on what platforms?
- When is the best time to post for each platform?
- What type of media belongs on each platform?
- What are your competitors doing?
- There are numerous articles online with best practices and tips for maintaining a quality social media presence. Read to stay up-to-date on current trends.

Choose the best for your business.

Do not hop on the bandwagon for the latest social media platform if it does not align with your company's values and vision. This is where knowing the demographics on each platform becomes helpful; find where your audience spends their online time.

Be consistent and plan it out.

Create a social media calendar. This is an Excel spreadsheet or a normal calendar where every social media post is planned. Categories in the columns may include platform choice, written content, any media (videos or photos) in the post, what day and time it will go out, and any other notes about the post. By planning ahead of time, this removes the stress of coming up with daily posts.

Make sure all posts are "on brand."

This means that each post belongs. The posts that advertise or represent the company are in line with the persona/messaging of the brand.

Get on a routine within each platform.

Some platforms allow you to post multiple times a day, and some prefer posts a couple times a week. This also varies based on your company's needs. Remember, quality trumps quantity.

Have a purpose with your posts.

Include a call-to-action, hashtag or a link back to your website. Don't do this every time, as you don't want to just be pushing your product constantly (see the next tip!) but you do want to make sure your audience knows what to do or where to go if they are interested.

Be prepared to interact with, not just talk at, your audience and customers.

Interact with your audience. Unlike traditional advertising and marketing, social media allows the audience to converse with you. They can also bring complaints or compliments your way. Be ready to listen and respond appropriately and compassionately. At least acknowledge every mention.

Get on the good side of influencers.

Many people follow certain individuals, called influencers. Their opinion is respected and they can lead people to like/dislike a brand based on their opinion. Find influencers who have quality audiences and might like your products or services. Build relationships with them - do not just gift them with a product once and then never talk - truly build and nurture a relationship.

Evaluate and change course if needed.

Track your changes on social media or you will not know how you are doing. Every week, record the number of followers, interactions, etc. Most platforms provide analytics for this.

EVENT MARKETING PLANS 101



Marketing plans are crucial to a successful event in order to recruit partners, volunteers, and attendees. Considering each of these points can take the success of an event to the next level.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook.

- Create an event page/ start promoting your event from your existing organization page.
- Create a “cover photo” (banner) for your profile page that promotes your event.
- Video is pushed to top of the feed, so more people see it and you get more exposure

Twitter.

- Does your organization already have a Twitter handle?
 - If not, create a new handle.
 - Will you be promoting it through your existing handle?
- Create a hashtag specifically for your event.
 - #LucyJordanBa112014, #RelayForLife2014
 - The hashtag can also be used on Instagram.
- Tweet pertinent information to your attendees.
 - If you have a registration process, be sure to tweet registration deadlines.
 - If you have an RSVP date, tweet that as well.

Instagram.

- Does your organization already have an Instagram account?
 - If not, create a new account for your event
 - Will you promote it from an existing account?
 - Make sure you link your Instagram account with your Facebook and Twitter accounts so when you post something to Instagram, all your friends and followers will see it on Facebook and Twitter

(hence: more followers).

- Before your event, Instagram photos of your promotional flyers and invitations.
- If it is a themed event, maybe Instagram a picture of decorations being set up to raise excitement.
- During the event, Instagram pictures of guests, speakers, etc.

Helpful Hint:

Post-event social activity: Now it is time to share stories, say thank you and stay connected with.

Thank you tweets, sharing visitors’ photos and sharing information. In the days after the event, listen for tweets, mentions and blog posts from others. The hashtag makes this easy.

LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS

Television advertising.

- Powerful driver to consumers when **introducing a new brand** or product to the market.
- People, who enjoy watching sporting events and/or other live events, mostly watch them on TV versus watching through a streaming service; **TV ads are not “skippable.”**
- **Fragmented Attention Span:** Reports say that 70% of people use mobile devices when they are watching TV; Since most viewers have their 2nd or 3rd screens (laptop and/or mobile device) nearby them while watching TV, they are **more than likely to do a**

search on either the commercial they saw or the product **if it's relevant to them.**

Radio advertising.

- According to Nielsen's recent "State of the Media: Audio Today" report, **more than 90% of adults listen to radio**; adopting the ways they listen with **online streaming and smartphone applications.**
- About **92% of Millennials listen to radio each week**, according to Nielsen's report.
- Radio personalities connect with listeners in a way many other kinds of media simply cannot. Listeners begin to **rely on radio personalities as trusted sources of information.**
- Local radio stations are **involved in the community.** Stations, hosts and personalities connect with their listeners both on air and off, and are often "woven into the fabric" of a community.

NEWSPAPER/LOCAL PUBLICATIONS

- **Add your event to the community calendar.** Find by searching Google for "event calendars" in your city.
- **Let the press know.** Contact them with an invite, press badge or offer of a relevant article. If you successfully get their attention, you may get a bit of press!
- **Longer shelf life.**
- **More purposeful readers** that are in a different state of mind when they choose to engage with print rather than digital, from task-oriented to leisure.

EMAIL CAMPAIGN

- If you have a list, email marketing may be your best channel. Ask partners to mention the event in their emails
- **Subject lines that inspire** awe, anger, and anxiety lead to more opens. "5 things you miss if you aren't at this event."
- Consider **sending an email on the weekend.** Since few companies do it, open and click through rates may be higher/may be in a social mood and even invite a friend.
- Plan to **send an event marketing email several times.**
 - First send out **save the date** and speakers/highlights
 - then **early bird** rate registration
 - then **agenda** and then closing of early bird rates

BILLBOARDS

- Captive Audience – studies have found an average of 20 hours per week in car (driving/passenger)
- Hard to miss and evoke a call to action.
- Clear, easy to read messages perform best – hire

professionals.

- Below are some numbers to consider from The Arbitron National In-Car Study, 2009 edition, according to the study, "billboard viewers make shopping decisions while in the car."
 - 58 % Learned about an event they were interested in
 - 58% Learned about a restaurant they later visited
 - 56% Talked about a funny billboard
 - 27% Noted a phone number or Web site address written on an outdoor billboard
 - 72% Frequently or sometimes shop on their way home from work
 - 68% Make their shopping decisions while in the car
 - 38% Make the decision to stop at the store while on their way home
 - 24% Say they were motivated to visit a particular store that day because of an outdoor ad
 - 24% Said they have immediately visited a business because of an outdoor ad message
 - 32% Visited the retailer they saw on a billboard later that week
 - 50% Reported receiving directional information from a billboard

Helpful Hint:

If you do not have the budget to hire professionals, **offer free admission (or even a table in the event space) to a pro photographer or videographer in exchange for services.** Make sure they commit to providing you with assets in a reasonable timeframe. Make sure you give them good exposure in exchange for their time.



EVENT MANAGEMENT



HOW TO RUN A MEETING

Decide the frequency of these meetings.

- Daily, weekly, monthly annually? This will affect what you talk about, in what detail, and for how long.

Write an agenda beforehand.

- Know what you want to talk about and in what order. Plan for the time allotted.
- Write things out clearly and do not be vague. It helps people to see what is coming up, form an opinion about topics, look up facts or numbers they may need to discuss the topic, etc.

Make the attendance policy clear.

- Is it mandatory? RSVP? Show up if you can make it? Make sure both you and attendees are clear on this, so everyone can better plan.

Take notes.

- Either take notes yourself or have someone do it for you as you speak.

Consider discouraging technology.

- Depending on the room setup, number of people and meeting purpose, technology like laptops and phones may be distractions that cause the meeting to derail.

Send minutes after the meeting.

- Clarify what happened so everyone is on the same page and has the same interpretation.
- Include time (beginning and ending), date, where it was, who led the meeting
- Name all agenda items and decisions reached
- Include any responsibilities given, tasks delegated or deadlines assigned.
- Time, date and place of the next meeting

Close on a positive note.

- Thank people for attending.
- Mention the next meeting date and time.

HOW TO BUILD A COMMITTEE

Define the purpose.

Find the right members.

- Does the committee need members with a financial background? Connections? A certain interest?

Appoint the committee chair.

- This person should have strong leadership skills and be very well informed about the purpose of the committee. Whether it's you or someone else, these are the general responsibilities of a chair:
 - Translate the committee's purpose into actionable steps
 - Delegate tasks to members

Communicate.

- Communicate with members and the board to make sure everyone is on the same page

Set meeting times in advance.

- This allows people to plan around the meetings.

Always have a printed agenda.

Always have a sign in sheet.

Appoint a note taker.

- Always have a **note taker** and email the notes with **action items** and who took responsibility.

TIMELINE

8-12 MONTHS

- Establish event goals
- Determine budget
- Develop planning committee and assign roles
- Choose a date
- Choose venue
- Create website
- Create a broad plan for marketing and promotion
- Determine an estimated number of guests
- Create a general outline/agenda
- Brainstorm branding/design process
- Send save the date notice

6-7 MONTHS

- Develop key communication messages
- Initiate program and invitation design
- Discuss AV needs
- Send invitations/open registration
- Confirm entertainment and/or speakers
- Start promotion
- Confirm venue

3-5 MONTHS

- Arrange travel and accommodations for out-of-town guests/participants
- Sign vendor contracts
- Confirm agenda
- Select menu

1-2 MONTHS

- Confirm speakers and gather their biographies
- Confirm vendors
- Discuss day-of-timeline with vendors
- Create a supply list and order as needed
- Reserve security
- Confirm AV
- Close registration
- Design and print signage
- Send reminders to participants
- Send directions, map and parking instructions to participants

DAY OF

- Arrive early to check setup and troubleshoot issues
- Bring registration materials and extra copies
- Walk through the event with all staff and volunteers
- Check weather

POST EVENT

- Collect feedback
- Send thank yous to participants, staff and volunteers
- File all materials to assist in future event planning

DAY OF SCHEDULE CHECKLIST

- Set-up
- Start time
- Networking time
- Speakers
- Meals
- Breaks
- End time
- Breakdown/clean up

NOTES: