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**GUIDE 2019**

**How to  
organise a  
successful  
event**

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# Organising a successful event

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cathy Hayward is managing director of Magenta Associates, and a communications specialist with more than 18 years' experience in a range of journalistic, publishing and marketing roles. She founded Magenta in 2011 after a journalistic career spanning a number of different titles including *FM World*, the award-winning magazine for the British Institute of Facilities Management, *Marketing Week*, *Financial Management*, *Soccer Analyst*, *Supply Management*, *Unions Today*, *People Management* and *Director*. She holds a Masters degree in journalism, as well as the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' post-graduate diploma in PR.

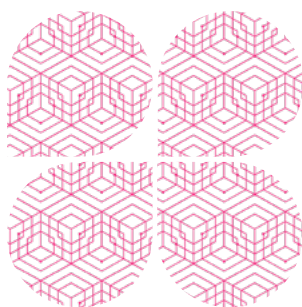
## Introduction

There are a host of business events taking place every day up and down the country, and all of them, large or small, have been organised by a dedicated team of people.

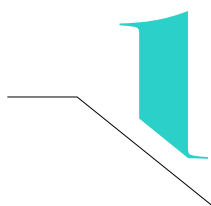
An event can vary in size; whether a huge awards ceremony with hundreds of people, a small networking evening with around 50 people or a roundtable debate with fewer than 20 attendees. They might be held to raise money for charity, to reward and recognise individuals or organisations within a sector, as an internal communications exercise within a single organisation, or as a revenue and brand raising event.

Putting together an event can be a daunting prospect, but with careful preparation and planning, they can be a memorable and reputation-building occasion.





# This short guide takes you through the process.



## Organising the event details

**Confirm the event title:** You may need to keep this as a broad title at first, if for instance you need to establish the key themes of a conference.

**Confirm the date and time of the event:** Check first that it doesn't clash with another competing occasion. The average lead in time to begin organising events will vary depending on their size and scale; for a large event with an external audience, you'll need to start planning six months in advance and with a smaller networking event, around eight weeks minimum.

**Confirm the venue:** Visit it to ensure its suitability and negotiate the minimum number of attendees with the venue events manager. Aim to book venues that will entice people along, such as a landmark building, one with spectacular views or with an amazing fit out; for example, a lot of people would love to look round the latest media or tech companies' brand new headquarters.

**Confirm the theme and content of the event:** This may require your first carrying out some research within the target market to determine the commercial viability of an event and ensuring it delivers suitable related content. Ask potential delegates what they need to know and who they would like to hear speak.

**Confirm target audience:** For conferences and seminars in particular, it's important to check there is enough interest in the subject to ensure you've enough of an audience. Very niche markets/topics will attract fewer delegates.

**Confirm the cost to attend:** For paid for events, you'll probably want to offer early bird discounts, which are typically around 20 per cent off.

**Create an event budget:** This should include venue, catering, speaker, publicity costs; plus any revenue from sponsors, attendees/delegates. The budget should be based on the expected number of attendees; so for example, there will be a different cost line between 100 delegates and 150 people, as venue and catering costs will increase with delegate numbers.

**Confirm audio-visual requirements:** what kind of AV can the venue supply and at what cost? You may need to employ a specialist production company for even the basics – so



allow around £3-5K a day on something simple. Also you'll need to determine, will they be producing all your screen slides and any other graphics or will you do this in-house?

Catering requirements: Decide on and agree catering timings with the venue and confirm that number with the venue a week before the event. If using external caterers ensure access and egress is secured to the venue to allow the caterers to set up and clear down.

Service requirements: Caterers will usually hand out food and drink and the venue may supply staff too, but you may need some of your own people to welcome attendees, hand out tags/information packs and even help put away coats. You'll need to allow at least five people for as few as 50 people.



## Event Speakers

Organising the speakers is crucial to the delivery of a successful event, so once they're confirmed their contribution ensure they're kept up to date with the process. Based on your research into the sector/topics confirm the themes and timings of individual presentations with each speaker.

Send an introduction note to each speaker with background information about the event; what the organiser needs from them and by when. This will typically include a biography, high res picture and presentation notes. Encourage your speakers to help publicise the event and pass on marketing material such as brochures, videos and LinkedIn posts.

Obtain PowerPoint slides or other presentation packages (for instance Keynote or Prezi) from speakers and ensure they conform to the brief/theme of the event.



## Event Sponsors

Some smaller events may not require sponsors, but the majority of conferences, networking sessions and awards ceremonies will require some additional funding. You'll need to agree the sponsorship package which may for example include an exhibition stand, a speaking slot or a number of free places for the sponsor's people. Obtain high resolution imagery and logos for the marketing material and allow the sponsor to check and approve the lay out/content.

Send agreements to the appropriate people within the sponsorship organisation, which should also outline your commitments to them and what happens if they pull out or you cancel the event.

Sponsors often need a lot of management so be very clear on logistics such as when they can access the building and where they can send any material in advance.



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## Event Marketing and promotion

Getting people along to an event requires a lot of effort, so this process should begin as soon as possible. Firstly you might need to decide whether the event is by invitation only (for instance a small roundtable seminar) or is open to a wider audience.

Once you've agreed the announcement text ensure it is promoted through the organiser's website; through partner organisations, speakers, the venue and the press.

For social media promotion; create an event hashtag and make liberal use of Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn

If you're using a marketing database ensure that the save the day email invitation is followed up with a reminder with more details, such as the speaker line-up and a final email goes out to confirm the themes or in the case of awards the shortlisted nominees, key speakers for the event.

Publicity materials may include goody bags which will have to be sourced by an agreed date filled and handed out on the day.

Arrange enough staff to man a table/ stand with the organiser's publicity materials.

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## Administrating the event

Once you've arranged the event you've still got quite a bit of administration to do to get people to the correct venue and make sure they've got all the materials they'll need to enjoy the experience.

A lot of organisations now opt to using website formats such as [www.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk), which include order forms that ask for name, job title and company name for every attendee.

The main administration duties should comprise:

- \* Creating an event agenda, that as far as possible is the same as the programme.
- \* Map and directions sent out to confirmed attendees,
- \* Preparation of full presentation slides, including introduction, housekeeping,
- \* Preparation of attendee list and name badges
- \* Agenda document that includes timings, speaker presentation synopses, speaker bios, sponsor details, organiser details.
- \* Either a hard copy feedback forms for distribution or survey monkey tool to send out to delegates
- \* Organise photographer/ videographer/ social media reporter
- \* Agree who will write report from the event
- \* Agree who will hand out name badges
- \* Checks with the venue re requirements for AV (microphones, screens etc) and wifi password.

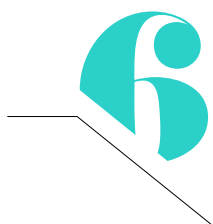
On the day before the event:

- \* Contact the sponsor by either email or phone with any final reminders
- \* Contact the speakers with any final reminders
- \* Make a final call to the venue to check all ok



### On the day

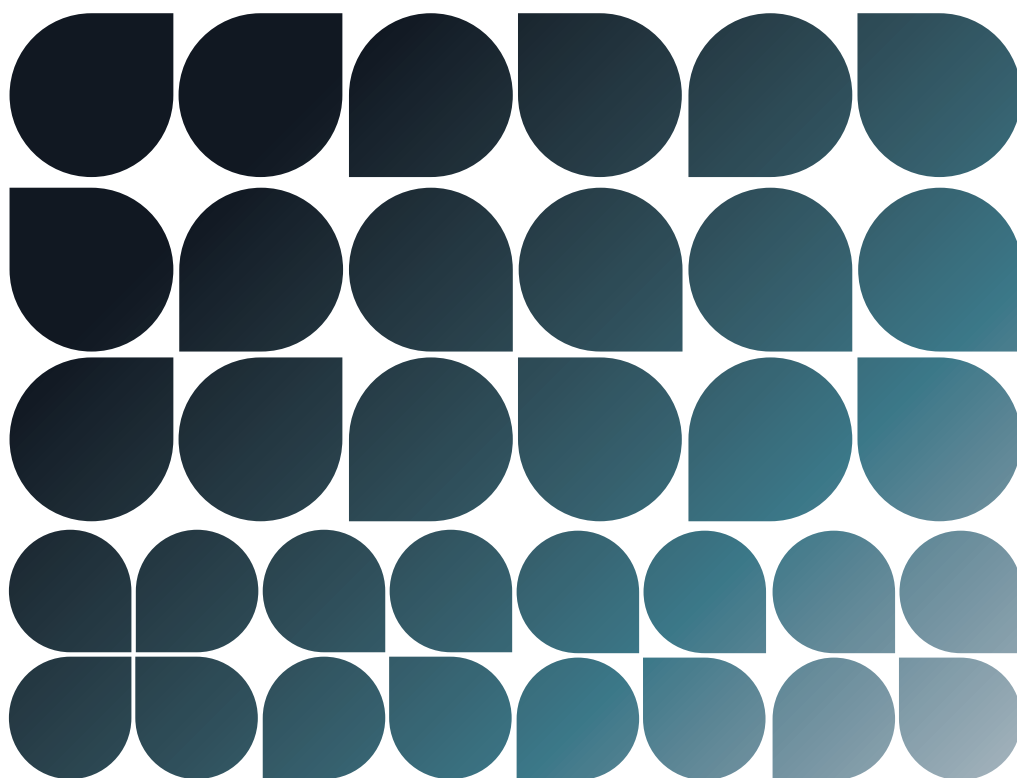
- \* Manage registrations and queries and ensure all speakers, sponsors and organisers are handed name badges
- \* Where possible give all the speakers a chance to rehearse;
- \* Announce wifi password and twitter hashtag;
- \* Collect feedback forms on the way out or arrange an online survey.



## Post event

- \* Evaluate feedback forms
- \* Ensure any photography/ video of the event is posted online or sent to the relevant people, though first check that they have agreed to the use of their imagery.
- \* Send out an event report to the press or relevant parties, for instance members of the association which hosted the event
- \* Host event report on your website
- \* Ensure that a post event email is sent to all attendees thanking them for their participation and including feedback requests and any other relevant material from the event
- \* Send thank you messages to sponsors, speakers and any other relevant people
- \* Send email messages to non-attendees to remind them of what they missed.

Finally, it's good to hold a 'wash up' session following each event to discuss how it went and lessons learned. This should include some feedback on what could have been done better, what worked well and whether you're fully prepared to do it all again!







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