

Creating Visionary Events that Make a Difference

One of the challenges that all of us have is; how to create impact with the events that we put together; whether they are training, evangelistic, apologetic, academic or even simply a great party! What is required to ensure that events work and that the right people know about them and come?

This 90 minute practical workshop will help you develop ideas to create events that are transformational. It should help us grow in confidence as to what is possible and to consider some practical ways of increasing the chances of success. At the end of the seminar we should have put together an outline for events that we want to see happen within our own areas.

The following notes are to act as prompts for thinking about all the possible aspects of organising a great event.

The ideas are expressed as generically as possible but will not apply to every setting. It is not intended to be followed slavishly. Take what is useful and ignore the rest.

Some of these steps will be done intuitively without much thought. Some of them are applied common sense. There are six aspects of creating effective events that are covered. These include the early stages of creating a vision for what the event will achieve, choosing and using the most suitable venue, creating and building the interest to ensure that people will want to come. Ideas around the financial aspects of the event are discussed and then the details of the event itself and the resulting follow-up are covered.

Vision Development

Initial Vision

- What might God be calling you to do?
- What type of event will it be?
- If it is amazingly successful, what does the outcome look like, feel like?
- What are people saying about it as they leave the venue/after one week?
- How is God's kingdom advanced through it?

Setting Courageous but Realistic Expectations

- Be bold!
- Think about the art of the possible
- What would be the best possible outcome that might happen?
- Don't be squashed by negative thinking too early on
- Consider issues, not problems
- Be positive!

Recruiting 'Board members'

- Identify potential supporters/inspirers/influencers for the Vision
- Meet with them and develop the vision with them, so that they feel a sense of ownership/commitment
- Ask for specific support (patronage, name, advertising, money, consultancy, chairmanship)

Identifying Blocks

- Who would want this event to fail?
- What are the external factors that could cause problems (weather, traffic, other competing events)?
- What would be your worst nightmare?
- What action can you take to manage, break through the blocks?
- Request prayer support into areas of challenge

Risk analysis

- Outline the key risks
- How can they be managed?
- Do you need to change the plan?

Testing the Vision

- Go to people who would be in the target audience and test their interest
- Ask if people would be prepared to come
- Ask what they would like to get from the event
- Reset expectations to below your hopes ...
- Under-promise and over-deliver

Finalise Vision

- Based on all the analysis, planning and feedback finalise what you hope to achieve and concentrate on doing it
- Continue to pray into the vision and asking God if this is in-line with his will

The Venue

Dynamics of a venue

- Consider symbolic buildings (cathedral, town hall, lecture theatre)
- What is the message associated with the venue – how does it align with the event?
- How comfortable/practical is it?

PA/Audio Visuals

- Get the best quality you can afford
- Check out existing facilities to see if they are good enough
- Think of a back-up if something goes wrong
- Sound check beforehand

Refreshments

- Consider quality
- Consider the social environment you are creating
- Who provides/serves – Who pays?

Health and Safety

- Capacity - action to take if numbers are too high
- Fire drill
- Air con/heating
- Any potential hazards (cables etc.)

Greeting

- Signage
- First impressions on entering
- Meeting/greeting – directing to seats
- Smile, warmth, identification

Building Interest

Create the Story Line

- What is the 3 sentence description of the event for the attendees
- For the Board/Sponsors
- For the Press/PR
- Planting ideas for the type of event, ‘Wouldn’t it be good if we could ?’ ‘Have you ever thought about?’

Identifying the Networks

- Communicate who is (hopefully) going to be coming – from the networks
- Using church/organisation newsletters
- Word of mouth promotion

Using the ‘Board’

- Using credible sponsors to build credibility with specific groups
- Get specific endorsements
- Get more introductions from the Board

Using every Channel

- Advertising
- Posters
- Radio/TV
- PR
- Web
- Mailing lists
- SMS – Text Messaging

Building Interest (cont.)

Communicate Communicate Communicate

- Status reports for 'Board' and Sponsors
- Focus for prayer requests
- Keeping the event in people's minds
- Keep ensuring commitment and clarity of responsibilities

The power of recommendation

- Lack of trust, without personal experience
- People invite people
- Advertising – acts as supporting information but rarely in itself is sufficient
- 3 events better than 1 ... chance to build up momentum

Giving Credit

- Find every opportunity to thank/praise people
- Give credit away liberally
- Don't seek personal glory

Managing the Finances

Initial Budget

- Calculate rough estimate of level of cost during the vision stage
- Consider if this is appropriate for the benefit/vision expectations

Sources of Funding

- Donations
- Sponsoring organisations
- Underwriters
- Tickets Sales
- Video/Tape Sales
- Refreshments

Confirmation of Budget

- Finalise budget before committing
- Ensure expectations and commitments are understood
- Keep a running total as budget/turns to actual expense
- Adjust the plan – as the finances become clearer

Delivery of Financial Plan

- Cash collection
- Payment Methods
- Legal structure
- Accounting responsibility
- Independence and Oversight

The Event

Pre-event Confirmations

- Assume nothing
- Get everything confirmed, in writing/email
- Re-confirm expectations/responsibilities
- Ensure timings are understood

Chairing with Charisma

- Warm welcome
- Strong introduction – give the speaker(s) a platform
- Setting expectations of the event
- Keep to time
- Prepare closing/summing up
- Thank and honour visitors and guests

Honour the Speaker(s)

Speaking at these type of events, especially those involving international travel can be very demanding for the speaker. We should try and make the trip as stress-free as possible.

- Take personal care for the suitability of the accommodation?
- If staying with hosts, will they have time/peace to prepare?
- Ensure all details of being met and transfers are fool-proof and stress free
- Ensure responsibilities for all expenses are agreed in advance
- Provide gift/honorarium as appropriate – be generous within your constraints
- If possible do a celebration dinner with speaker and helpers
- Try and anticipate a potential need and to meet it.

The Follow-Up

Call to Action

- What is the actual response that is required from the event?
- How will the response be solicited? (e.g. response cards, call to the front, provide email)
- How will this be carried out and responded to at the meeting or after?
- What level of follow up will be provided, by whom and when?
- Build a community of interest

Video/Audio Materials

- What will be produced?
- How will it be published?
- How distributed?
- Permissions
- Revenue agreements

Lessons Learned

- Analyse feedback forms as appropriate
- Do focused review with the 'Board'
- Consider the actual outcomes vs. the intended
- How would you do it differently next time?