



Begin with the **End** in **Mind**

BY EMILY KOSA | IMAGES PROVIDED BY DNA CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A good formula for a successful event starts at the very beginning. It's important to take the time to develop a clear concept of what your event is and what it should do for your organization or company. Simply having identified goals can save you a lot of disappointment...and money.



Before you sign a contract or place an order, consider this:

What is the brand for my event? Brands are much more than logos or promotional items. Companies should use special events as PR tools; each needs its own identity, strategy and purpose. Having a cohesive theme for your event often makes for the most memorable experience.

What will the event accomplish? Whether it's raising awareness for a product or money for a cause, having measurable objectives gives you a basis against which you can compare event options. Beginning with a metric of success is the clearest way to justify your budget and prove your performance to higher-ups.

Who is the audience? This answer should be at the forefront of your event planning. Who do you want at the event? How do you reach them? What would entice them come? A tech-savvy theme wouldn't mesh with staid snail-mail invitations. Events should always exceed the guests' expectations. To know what they expect, you need to identify and get inside the head of your audience(s).

How formal is your event? The formality of your event impacts everything from décor to location to even the time of day. Simply, if it calls for high heels, avoid a grassy outdoor location, or if it's more formal than business casual, give guests time to change after work.

How much will you spend? Not having a specific budget can be the greatest pitfall in planning events. There really is no end to how extensive (read: expensive) an event could potentially be. You need a final limit and at least 10 percent of that should be allotted for miscellaneous. That term may seem insignificant, but it's the little extras that can collectively surprise and overwhelm you in the end.



BRIEF CASE STUDY: a commercial real estate company needed a high-end event to celebrate the opening of a new facility that offered it all. The theme: "Living the Good life." The event exuded luxury - from delectable desserts to a fine art gallery to a wine tasting to onsite spa massages - but all within a budget. The business casual evening drop-in was tailored for commercial real estate agents - as sellers themselves, it takes the extra steps to impress, so the event went beyond the standard reception. It was successful in building interest that translated into sales leads and, shortly after the event, in leasing the space.



These five brainstorming questions only scratch the surface of your event's "discovery" period, but answering them will put you well on your event planning way. After all, the path to a successful event is paved in clear intentions. **GBM**

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