

THE *brief*

Essential information for accommodation & meetings space buyers



...Events and event management

The Brief is a series of quick reference guides for those new to purchasing accommodation, meetings or events on behalf of their organisations. Each edition provides the essential knowledge on a key topic.

A beginner's guide to events & event management

Why do I need to know about this?

As procurement has strengthened its grip on meetings expenditure, the close connection between meetings and events made consolidated purchasing inevitable.

Historically, event planners would select an event management company and other suppliers to deliver their event. However, the growing involvement of procurement professionals in purchasing events services has changed these traditional relationships.

Many companies are reducing the number of external events they stage and attend in the prevailing economic climate, although this is being partially offset by organisations diverting marketing funds from advertising – with escalating costs and declining returns - into live events that deliver face-to-face contact with customers and prospects.

Whatever the size or nature of the organisation, few procurement people or meeting planners are now without some responsibility for events.

What is an event?

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) defines an event as ‘an offsite (outside of the company offices) or onsite (on the company’s premises) gathering for two or more people, either for internal or external purposes. This could be in the UK or overseas.’

At the higher level, an event could therefore be a product launch or sales conference; at the other end of the spectrum, entertaining a small group of clients at a sporting event or the theatre also qualifies.



What is Event Management?

Interactive industry dictionary www.traveljargon.org defines event management as:-

“The creation, development & execution of an event. It includes identifying the audience, devising the event concept, planning the logistics (i.e. venue, accommodation, staging, lighting, catering etc.), coordinating the technical aspects and the agencies that may be contracted to bring those services together. Pre-event, onsite and all post event management (e.g. analysis, communications and any follow up) are all part of the end to end event management process”.

Despite a perception that outsourcing these services to an event management company instead of doing it 'in house' is the more expensive option, the reality can be very different. Specialist event

management companies can save you money, although the same cannot always be said of using Public Relations agencies for the same purpose.

The key issue is the degree to which event services can be purchased directly with end suppliers, or whether outsourcing to a specialist event management company (such as the BSI Group's Olive 360) is a more cost effective solution.



Event buying policy – best practice

- Formalise & communicate the policy throughout the organisation
- Secure buy-in from senior management.
- Define roles at the outset of each event between procurement, internal meeting/event planners, internal clients and suppliers, to form an 'event team'.
- Develop & agree a detailed specification of requirements for each event.
- Develop a post-event evaluation form, carry out post-event reviews and establish a 'lessons learned' strategy.
- Buyers should meet potential suppliers, ideally at their offices to obtain an impression of their corporate culture.
- Examine suppliers' previous track record of similar events.

Source: CIPS

In-house vs. outsource

Small (and even some medium-sized) event can be handled quite easily in-house. However, large corporate events typically require outside help because of their scope and the potential risk to corporate reputation of relying on the enthusiastic amateur.

Although events can be very costly to stage, time is often more critical than budget. There are more decisions to make and details to manage; the margin for error in planning and execution is small. The time and effort required to organize these events can also be substantial, so those who try to plan an event in their 'free time' can often be distracted from their core activities.

Larger events are too much for one individual to handle. It takes time to bring an in-house event team together, and even longer for them to work together effectively. The group dynamics involved in setting up an in-house event team have to be considered as well as abilities and event management experience.



Another major benefit of using an external event management company is that, as specialists, they already work with a number of suppliers and venues and can therefore organize large events more efficiently. Regular business and buying in bulk also allows event management companies to obtain discounts that can be passed back to the client.

Finding the venue, decorating or theming it, hiring and managing caterers, entertainment, technical equipment and staff are all tasks that can cumulatively require more time than is available or cost effective. Event management companies can handle most of these more efficiently because they already have many established working relationships in place; know what to look for, and where to look, alleviating costs that the inexperienced planner might otherwise incur.

Budget

If an event budget does not have the budget necessary to deliver its objectives, it should be questioned whether the event should be allowed to take place. Every budget should include provision for:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Invitations | Accommodation |
| Transportation/visas | Venue rentals |
| Licenses | Insurance |
| Labour charges | Audio-visual |
| Food & drink | Music/entertainment |
| Speakers | Staging |
| Photographer | Promotional material |
| Communications | Signage |
| Cancellation fees/attrition | Onsite management/staffing |
| Health and safety | Contingency allowance (usually 5%) |

Always expect the unexpected!

Picking the Location

The first and most crucial element in any event is location. The right venue sets the tone for the event, reflects the objectives of the event and enhances the ambiance that makes it memorable.

The key factors in choosing a venue are size, logistics, image, number of guests and budget. These days, there are event venues of all shapes, sizes and type. From conventional hotels to restaurants, night clubs, wineries, historic houses, mansions, academic venues, cruise ships, sports clubs/stadia and parks.

Some event management companies will also help find the most suitable venue for your event. Olive 360 clients have a choice; Olive 360's team can source the venue or BSI's own Conference Desk can handle the brief.

The venue needs to accommodate the number of guests expected. If it is too big, attendees will feel lost (although you can artificially make a space seem more intimate; if it is too small people will feel cramped and the event will be compromised.

If you cannot decide between holding your event in the UK or overseas, there are additional considerations. Apart from transportation costs, visas may be required, adding time & more cost. In dangerous times, the nationality of your speakers may create additional difficulties getting him or her into the country. Don't forget the weather - it may be too hot, or



cold for your delegates' comfort, as anyone who has tried holding an event in the Middle East during the festival of Ramadan will attest.

Check availability too; there's no guarantee that the venue will be able to accommodate your event on the dates required.

Venue selection - key considerations

1. Ease of access including local transport issues
2. Type of mood to be created (including time of day the event is to be held)
3. Theme of the event
4. Indoor or outdoor – and availability of indoor room in the event of bad weather
5. If it is outdoors, is there an indoor room available if it rains?
6. Number and nature of audience
7. Venue cleanliness
8. Range, standard cost of food and drink
9. Whether music/dancing/entertainment is required
10. Parking facilities available on/off site
11. Guest security requirements
12. Competitive events in same location/close proximity
13. Ability to provide/manage overnight accommodation
14. IT capability
15. Costs



Venue selection - key questions

1. Can I bring in my own caterer, equipment and entertainment?
2. What are the venue's policies regarding smoking, liquor, insurance and security?
3. Do I need any permits and who provides them?
4. What are the venue's hours of operation?
5. When can we set up and break down?
6. What is the venue's cancellation policy?
7. Is any deposit refundable, and if so over what period?
8. What is the venue's sustainability policies and ECO rating?



Food, theming and entertainment

As dining out has become the norm rather than the exception for the population, good food reflects more on the venue than the event. However, theming and entertainment are both critical.

When preparing the budget for your event, allow equal amounts for food/drink and theming/ entertainment. Décor and speaker/band/act creates impact, but under-catering is usually fatal to the event. If costs preclude the allocation of a similar amount on theming and entertainment, allow at least 30% of that allowed for F&B.

The choice of venue has a major influence on the choice of theme, decor and design. For example, far-away venues may mean additional transportation costs; if there is no stage or set infrastructure these will have to be constructed.

Larger venues will also cost more to theme because the area to be decorated is bigger or because access to set up and take down may be restricted and crew have to be paid overtime. Not to mention the venue having to be hired for longer than the day of the event itself, resulting in additional costs.

Planning the Event

As the old saying goes, 'prior planning prevents poor performance'. Here are some key steps to follow when planning your event.

1. If you are using a facility for the first time, ask for setup recommendations for your event. Visit the venue when it is setup for a similar event.
2. Consider the logistics of placement. Noisy areas, such as main halls and dining areas should be located away from lounge areas and seminar rooms. Showcases should be located in a high-traffic area.
3. Place enough large, clean, concise and visible signs outside to direct traffic to your location.
4. For outdoor events, check areas for obstacles and holes and remove all debris. Find the most level and open area in which to setup. If your company has a safety/security manager then get them to check the venue over with you.
5. Clearly mark any areas of possible risk or hazard.
6. Look at every facet of your event, and then decide how much space you need.

Risk assessment

Assessing risk is an integral part of event planning. However large or small the event, a risk assessment must be undertaken. For further help on how to carry out a risk assessment, visit the Health and safety Executive website at www.hse.gov.uk

If an event management company is employed, it must carry out its own risk assessment for every activity - such as a firework display – taking place during the event, and provide the relevant documentation to prove that the requirements laid down by the authority are being met.



Event insurance

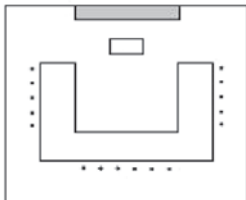
The Corporate Manslaughter Act (in Scotland called the Corporate Homicide Act) created the new offence for an organisation where a gross failure in the way activities were managed or organised results in a person's death. This is certainly bringing the overall issue of insurance to the forefront of people's attention.

The fact is that event insurance is no longer an optional extra for others. Any responsible insurance provider will help you make educated and informed decisions. It is not a defence to be unsure of the conditions or warranties of insurance contracts.

The broker should be responsible for ensuring that all clients understand the conditions of their policies, especially Liability insurance policies as some may have warranties making the client responsible for checking other parties/contractors Public Liability cover. If there is any doubt that the client has not checked adequately the insurers could repudiate a claim, so you'll also need to evidence your checking processes.

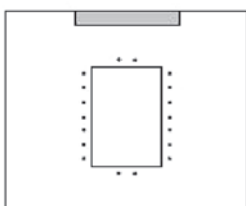
Meeting room layouts

Deciding on the best room layout for an event is crucial. Here are some options.



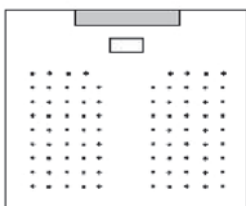
U-shape

- Seating around three sides of the room - good for presentations from front
- Square layout conducive to discussion
- Presentationspace in the middle of the room



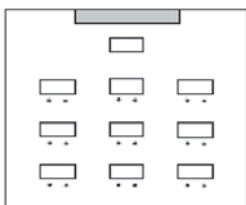
Boardroom style (can be adapted to a hollow square layout)

- Centrally located table
- Classic layout ideal for debate and discussion
- Popular for smaller meetings



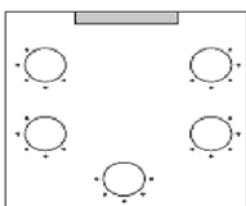
Theatre style

- Used for product launches, presentations, displays
- Used to present to large numbers of delegates
- Allows for optimal room occupancy



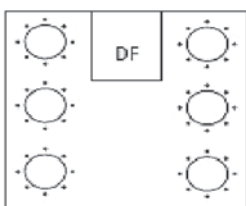
Classroom style

- Used to present to small to medium groups
- Delegates (in ones or twos) have own workspace
- Ideal for testing and individual training



Cabaret style

- All delegates facing front - centre on round tables
- Large space in the middle of the room
- Ideal for small group work



Dinner/dance layout

- Tables around the outside of the room
- Dancefloor in central area
- Used mostly for weddings and evening entertainment

**Checklist –
some essentials for event planners**

1. Event objectives
 - Rewards (clients, sales force)
 - Incentives (sales team, sales force)
 - Launch of a new product (clients, prospects)
 - Business meetings (management, sales teams)
 - Informative (seminar, conference)

2. Type of event
 - Study Days
 - Seminar
 - Conference
 - AGM's
 - Dinners
 - Special events
 - Incentives
 - Corporate Hospitality

3. Number of participants
This will establish the programme contents and timings, as well as the choice of accommodation. More participants mean a greater risk of long periods of inactivity.

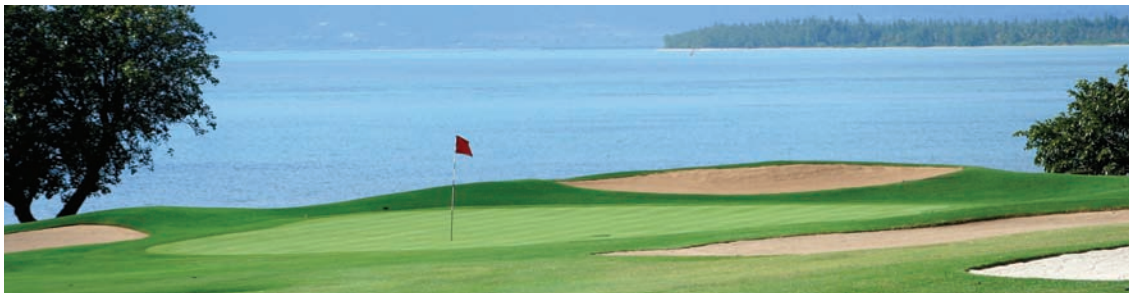
4. Date & duration (nights and days stay)

5. Venue type
 - Hotel
 - Convention and Congress Centre
 - Important attraction
 - Other

6. Attendee accommodation
It is preferable to accommodate all the participants in the same hotel. If this is not possible, use the minimum number of hotels and plan the transfers between hotels and venue carefully. Also double check
 - Reservation conditions
 - Option terms
 - Cancellation policy
 - Confirmation of Reservation

7. On confirmation of the booking, re-confirm the following to the venue in writing.
 - Number of rooms – singles, twins, doubles, suites, plus any free room ratios
 - Breakfast type and whether included or not
 - Other services (e.g. badges or gifts at check-in or in bedrooms)
 - VIP welcome in specific rooms
 - Concierge services
 - Signage (logos, notice boards, banners) & locations (e.g. Hospitality Desk, corridors etc)
 - Meeting rooms
 - Plenary room capacity
 - Committee room number & capacity
 - Configuration of meeting rooms
 - Banquets and meals
 - Equipment for meetings
 - Services (secretariat, fax, photocopier, translation, cloakroom etc)
 - Special security arrangements
 - Decoration
 - Complementary WiFi
 - Set up/strike times/access
 - Cancellation/attrition terms (and any terms about competitive events at the venue)
 - Agreed dates for onsite planning meetings/walkabouts to meet key venue personnel

8. Supply the rooming list to the hotel(s) several days before arrival to help facilitate the allocation of rooms.
9. Ensure you have all the equipment for Meetings Flipchart, screen, projector, internet connection, television, video recorder, DVD, microphones, PA system, simultaneous translation equipment etc
10. Leisure Time
 - Coffee breaks (timings, composition)
 - Cocktails seated or standing (dedicated/shared facility)
 - Meals (menus, timings, duration, special menus etc)
 - Outside Catering
11. Activities
 - Sports
 - Aptitude/ability of participants
 - Equipment requirements
 - Personnel
 - Organisation
 - Management and announcement of results
 - Cups and medals
12. Transfers
 - Entertainment
 - Type of entertainment and shows
 - Choice of supplier
 - Interactivity with the participants
13. Provide delegates with plenty of information
 - Pre-event - type of event, accommodation, travel to the destination etc
 - Event Programme - programme for each day, times & places (meetings, meals, outdoor activities, transfers etc)
14. Remember – providing participants with detailed information before the event does not prevent you from organising a few surprises.



For help in preparing your next event...

Please contact Stuart Tandy, Sales & Marketing Development Manager, BSI

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