

Planning an evening event

Please note:

This checklist assumes that you are planning an evening event to which a select group of participants has been invited and for which no participant fees will be charged.

Step 1:

The goals of an event point the way to success.

- Why is the evening event being held? What is the occasion?
 - Is it an anniversary?
 - An evening event following a higher-level event (e.g. a conference or a trade fair)?
 - An event meant to maintain customer loyalty or acquire new customers?
 - An event expressing appreciation and/or thanks to employees?
 - A reward to celebrate a cooperatively achieved goal (e.g. the conclusion of a project or the introduction of a product)?
 - A tribute, e.g. to long-serving employees?
 - An award presentation?
 - etc.

- Who will be attending the evening event?
 - (Former) employees with/without partners, with/without children?
 - Business partners with/without partners, with/without children?
 - (Potential) customers with/without partners, with/without children?
 - The people from a specific department?
 - A group of executives?
 - A project group?
 - etc.

- About how many people will be attending?

- What dates would be ideal?
 - Please note: If the evening event follows a higher-level event (e.g. a conference, team-building session, trade fair etc.), the date of the evening event is of course determined by the date of the main event.
 - Alternatively, is this an independent event with a specific purpose? In this case, you must decide on the most suitable date for this evening event.
 - On which days would you have the largest possible number of participants? It's essential to take vacation periods and holidays into account!

- What would be the best starting time, and how long should the evening event last?
 - The best starting time and the event's optimal length will depend on its content and structure as well as the external circumstances (e.g. the time when the previous event ends).
 - Open-ended or with a fixed ending time?

- Where should the evening event be held?
 - Where will the main event (e.g. the trade fair) take place?
 - When selecting the venue, must you consider where the guests will be coming from?
 - Should the event be held at the headquarters of the host company or institution?
 - etc.

- What location should you choose?
 - Type of location (hotel, event location, the company's own premises, a tent etc.)?
 - Requirements for the location (premium or basic, number of stars etc.)?
 - Does the type of location (urban, seaside, historical, futuristic etc.) match the theme/motto of the evening?
 - Available facilities — are they suitable for the number of participants and the event's structure, timetable and requirements (e.g. is it a casual get-together or a gala)?
 - Are additional spaces needed for supporting programmes (e.g. children's programmes or exhibitions)?
 - In certain cases, will additional tents be needed?

- Must overnight accommodation be available?
 - If the meeting is held at an event location, you may need to reserve hotel accommodation nearby.
 - Will upgrades for VIPs be needed?

- Will transfers or shuttles be needed for groups or individual participants?
 - From the airport or train station and back?
 - From the hotel/back to the hotel?

- What will be the tone of the evening event?
 - Will there be an integrated official ceremony?
 - Is it a party?
 - A festive gala?
 - A get-together with networking opportunities?

- Casual or formal?
- Which structure would be ideal?
 - The event should have a well-structured and discernible flow, and the guests should always be informed about the timeframe in advance (unless there is a surprise programme).
- What would be the ideal programme for achieving the aims of the evening event and conjuring up emotions and lasting memories for the target group?
 - A programme in line with a certain motto?
 - A formal reward programme or an award presentation on the stage?
 - A show programme?
 - Speakers?
 - A central stage programme or a decentralized programme among the guests?
 - Activities in various rooms (party area, lounge, special activities etc.)?
 - Music: dinner, party, DJ, band, a certain theme (Irish, Brazilian, classical etc.)?
 - Presenter?
 - A children's programme?
- What kind of catering should be chosen?
 - Reception?
 - Buffet?
 - Menu?
 - Premium quality?
 - What kind of drinks?
 - Motto?
- How should the participant management and the overall communication, from the invitations to the feedback questionnaire, be organized?
 - Does a motto/key visual/central theme already exist, or must it still be developed?
 - Should a corporate design be taken into account?
 - Which aspects should be analogue, which should be digital?
 - Would an event website and/or an event app with information about the event be desirable?
- What is the available budget?
- Will the event be planned and organized in-house or with support from an agency?

- Would partner companies like to participate in the evening event? (E.g. as a sponsor)?

Step 2:

The key elements of event planning: Conception & calculation.

- Develop a conceptual guideline with creative and logistical elements. This will answer the “W” questions in Step 1 and define the basic concept behind the evening event’s ideal profile.
- Develop a concept for the staging (dramatic structure, flow of events).
- Carry out research to find the location that best fits the event profile (hotel, event location, the company’s own premises) in the destinations you’ve decided on.
- Carry out research on content that matches the event’s profile (performers, speakers, interactive elements, presenter).
- If appropriate, carry out research to find partners (catering, equipment, decorations, technology etc.) that are needed and available.
- Send a detailed briefing to the possible partners to inquire about the event elements you’ve developed, so that you can receive customized responses and offers.

Please note:

As you carry out your research concerning the initial concept, focus on the basic cornerstones that will determine the meeting’s success, such as the location, your concept for the staging and the dramatic structure, compelling content, and show programmes. At this point, certain details such as the precise choice of a menu or the table decorations are not yet significant, as a rule.

- Check the offers that are sent in and compare them.
- Draw up a concept: Create a draft concept (e.g. a PowerPoint presentation) that brings together the elements in question that match the evening event’s structure, date, budget, your concept for the staging and the dramatic structure, and the framework requirements you have worked out (Step 1).
- Prepare a cost calculation/a budget based on the offers you have received (ideally in an Excel spreadsheet).

Please note: In your cost calculation, take into account the elements that are absolutely essential for staging the evening event. The detailed costs of other elements can be added later on the basis of your experience or a budget. They don't have to be included in your plan just yet.

Elements that should be included in your cost calculation:

- Communication (graphics, invitations, all print materials, presentations, website, app, possibly media costs)
- Location, including all related additional costs
- Furnishings, equipment, amenities
- Room and table decorations
- Technology (stage, ambient and show lighting, sound system, projection)
- Catering (food and beverages), crew catering
- Programme: Speakers, entertainment, show, possibly an interactive programme, presenter
- Branding, stage design and route information
- Human resources (hostesses, services, security, construction and dismantling, paramedics, fire brigade, cloakroom, restrooms)
- Documentation: Video production & photographer
- Giveaways
- Participant management
- If appropriate, travel costs for the guests
- If appropriate, hotel accommodation
- If appropriate, transfers
- Miscellaneous: GEMA (German Authors' Rights Society), artists' social insurance, insurance policies, transportation and travel costs, expenses of the team and the protagonists, performers
- Definitely factor in a financial buffer to cover any unexpected costs!

Step 3:

Does everything fit together? Checking to ensure you've made the right decision.

- Coordinate the content and cost of the concept with your client/team. Do the concept and the elements you have researched match our framework of preconditions?
- Make a date for an on-site inspection of the possible event venue so that all the details can be thoroughly checked and confirmed.
- The most important partners must participate in the inspection of the venue.

- Date for the inspection/location check:
 - Parking opportunities?
 - Special bus drop-off points?
 - Facilities?
 - Are there possible problems that couldn't be seen before (pillars in the hall, layout, newness of the equipment, cleanliness etc.)?
 - Safety (fire protection, escape routes etc.)?
 - Barrier-free locations?
 - What is available (equipment, technology, stage)? What must be rented in addition in order to meet the requirements?
 - Where can the various services be positioned (registration, cloakroom, reception area, catering, buffet areas, stage, programme)?
 - Delivery area?
 - Smoking area?
 - Restrooms?

- Discuss the details of the event with the location operator, technology companies, outfitters etc.

Step 4:

Professional & well-planned processes — event organization.

- Make your final decisions about the service partners and commission them to implement the concept you have developed.

- Design, do layouting and send (or arrange the dispatch of) Save the Date messages and invitations.
 - What information must be included in the invitations?
 - Analogue or digital?

- Organize the participant management.
 - Set up the registration procedure for the participants.
 - If appropriate, set up a hotline for questions and changes.

- Create set-up plans.
 - How will each room be equipped, fitted out with seating and decorated?
 - Technical equipment and lighting effects?

- Create flowcharts.
 - List all the individual programme points in a timeline, complete with all the related information
 - Event direction plan (programme point, projections, microphones, background music, lighting effects)

- Ask all the protagonists about their technical requirements, plan these and inform your technology partners.
- Make to-do lists for any elements missing from the flowchart. Flowcharts show where gaps still exist in the event planning.
- Plan the construction and dismantling periods.
 - These plans must ensure smooth logistics for the specialized workers doing the construction and dismantling.
 - Equipment: Which equipment will be provided by which companies and when?
- Make a “Branding, route information, signposting” list.
 - The list should include information about the locations, content, dimensions, materials, and producers of the materials.
 - Take the stage design into account.
 - Have the graphics and content produced according to the list.
- Plan the catering.
 - Select the food and beverages
 - How many people should you order for?
 - Must special allergies/religious customs/food intolerances be taken into account?
 - Catering for the crew and the performers?
- Plan the table decorations.
 - Define the desired table decorations and order suitable sketches or photos of possible decorations.
 - Prepare a set-up of a table.
 - Will you have seating plans? If so, work out the seating plans and make place cards.
- Briefings for all the specialized workers, speakers and performers.
 - A general briefing about the event.
 - Information about arrival options and other framework conditions.
 - Precise areas of responsibility.
 - Times and periods of duty.
 - Catering for the crew

- Human resources & team planning and briefings for the staff.
 - A general briefing about the event.
 - Information about arrival options and other framework conditions.
 - What is each person's area of responsibility and the place and time of his/her work assignment?
 - Clothing.
 - Catering for the crew.
 - Cloakrooms.
 - Breaks.
- Make phone lists that include the name, company, function and mobile phone number of each participant.
- Submit and receive registrations and authorizations
 - Insurance policies.
 - GEMA (German Authors' Rights Society).
 - Artists' social insurance.
 - If appropriate, contact the building authority for specialized uses.

Step 5:

Finally there: Staging the event.

- The construction and dismantling of all the elements should take place according to a detailed flowchart so that all the specialized workers can coordinate their activities with one another.
- Check all the constructions once again according to the lists and plans you have prepared (this "acceptance inspection" should be carried out at a realistic time so that all the specialized workers can do their work undisturbed).
- Personnel assignment — make sure all individuals are in their places and know their exact areas of responsibility.
- If appropriate, furnish a back office for the organization team (this will be necessary only for large and elaborate evening events).
- Set up and assign the cloakrooms for the performers.
- Use an intercom for communication between management, the stage and technical support.
- Hold a run-through meeting with all the specialized workers so that you can once again go through the evening event's flowchart point by point and check to make

sure everything has been taken into account.

- Conduct the rehearsals.
- Coordinate the entire flowchart through the project managers.
- Stage and manage the event according to the flowchart.

Step 6:

After the event is over, your work is far from finished: The follow-up

- Send thank-you notes to everyone involved (partners, supporters, speakers, guests etc.).
- Place photographs/videos on the (internal) website.
- If appropriate, publicize the event via social media — but only if this is consistent with the aims of the event.
- Follow-up media coverage (intranet, company news, trade press etc.).
- Monitor the incoming invoices and the payment process.
- Compile a final budget.
- Send out and evaluate the feedback questionnaires.
- Evaluate the event so that you can perform even better in the future.
 - Which aspects were successful?
 - What kind of feedback came from the guests?
 - Reflect on the feedback and potential improvements.

Version: 2019

Masthead:

Cologne Convention Bureau

KölnTourismus GmbH, Kardinal-Höffner-Platz 1, 50667 Köln

Tel. +49.221.34643218 | www.locations.koeln | convention@koelntourismus.de

Responsible for the content:

welcome Veranstaltungen GmbH

Frauke Landsberg

www.welcome-events.de

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