

Common problems faced when organising event!

It's that time of year again where friends, families and work colleagues are all getting together to celebrate Christmas, or company success or just using the festive season as a chance to get together and have a good time.

Whether your event is a Christmas party for 100 colleagues or a business meeting for 50 employees, there are some common challenges you will be faced with. These can be easily overcome with other ideas and work-round solutions, if you know where to look and what to do!

So, make your Christmas or 2009 events a success, by avoiding the pitfalls and by following the advice below from Nicole Martin, managing director of Pinpoint Marketing Consultancy Ltd:

I have a limited budget, how can I keep costs down?

As the recession talk heightens, here are some top tips in keeping an event cost down.

- If your event is intended to be purely social, this is not a taxable benefit according to the Inland Revenue (IR). If you then arrange to have some kind of training or add in some business matters to the agenda, this will be treated differently by the IR.
- Secondly, the Inland Revenue will not seek tax on the relevant benefit arising to each employee where the expenditure is modest. In this context Tax Offices will treat expenditure of up to £75 per head per annum as modest. This per head cost refers to the cost of the function, including VAT and any transport or accommodation provided by employer.
- Will you be offering food at your event, buffets can often be more cost effective than sit-down meals
- Regarding entertainment, D.J's are generally cheaper to hire than a band. Using the venue's in-house/preferred D.J can is also cost effective.
- Hire a coach to take the staff to and from the office to the venue to save on expense claims for mileage and car parking.
- Arrange the function on a night when the hotel or venue is not normally as busy. You are much more likely to negotiate a discount on a week night than on a Friday or Saturday night.
- Cut back on the additional extras such as table centre pieces, flower arrangements and branded/personalised items. You can however make your own centre pieces or print your own menus and table plan.

Who should sit with who?

This nearly always causes headaches for companies and individuals alike. There are various ways to decide on the seating plan

- Have no plan, let people sit where they like with whom they like
- Draw names out of a hat and decide in advance
- Sit people down in teams/departments
- Seat people according to language e.g. if your staff are from all over Europe, it is important to seat those for whom English is not a first language together.

Should we make the bar a free bar?

This is a tricky one. Whatever you decide though, as a company or organiser, it is your responsibility to encourage your attendees to drink responsibly.

- If you decide to offer this generosity, ensure the bar staff are briefed not to serve the high costing drinks such as Malts or Doubles or expensive Cigars and tobacco.
- If your budget won't stretch to this, have only the pre-dinner drinks and wine at the table free.

A lot of the staff are new to the company, how can we break the ice?

- Depending on the budget and venue layout, you could make a display of company photographs taken throughout the year or perhaps show some video footage.
- Name badges are always a good idea, or perhaps name stickers to avoid pin holes in posh outfits!
- Arrange some games between courses such as heads and tails, bingo or a raffle. Or you can arrange a quiz with questions on table to be completed over the duration of the meal. A prize can be handed out at the end.

The workforce are all different ages, how can we keep them all entertained?

- Ensure the band or D.J. plays a variety of music from the 60's right through to today's charts.
- Have a theme at the event for example, Black Tie. People of all ages enjoying dressing up and looking glamorous.
- Other themes could be a casino night or race night. Having casino tables set up in a room for people to play before or after the meal is a good ice breaker and a way of entertaining all ages.
- Play some of the games mentioned in the point above.

How can we make the event memorable

These suggestions are very much dependant on the event budget, but here are some top tips:

- Hire a photographer to take pictures of the whole group, of couple, teams, families etc.
- Have a table gift per person e.g. a photo frame, chocolates, a piece of company merchandise and so on.
- Inviting partner of the staff is always a popular choice, leading to a memorable event.
- Arrange to present some awards to deserving staff members. Speeches are also memorable, and motivating.
- Make sure the main areas people congregate such as the dinner tables, dance floor and the bar are close to each other or ideally in the same room. This keeps people together which heightens the atmosphere of the party.
- Have a theme e.g. fancy dress, 007, casino etc.

Pinpoint Marketing has over 8 years of experience in arranging meetings and events. For more information on how we can help with your events, get in touch:

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