



Event Management Guide

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*A simple Guide for Churches and
Christian Organisations on planning
successful events*

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INTRODUCTION

There are two major elements in the preparation of any Christian Event.

- The first (and most important) is the spiritual preparation. This has to be God's idea rather than a good idea. We need to ensure that what we do is in God's plan. We need to complete the work we have been given to do (see John 4:34 and John 17:4)
- The second, which this Guide addresses, are the practical aspects of organising and running the Event, in essence the "How To".

It is therefore my prayer that the material in this Event Management Guide for Churches and Christian Organisations will assist you to make the process of organising any Church or Christian Event a simple, enjoyable and stress free experience.

As a professional marketer and a Christian, I have worked in a variety of organisations and industries. This simple guide is an accumulation of my learning and experiences and is written in a practical manner, free from jargon and theory.

I hope you find it useful.

To God be all the Glory Honour.

Raymond Robinson

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Section 1 - PLANNING

1.1 What is the Objective of the Event?

Before you start organising any Event you have to be clear on what the objectives are for holding the event in the first place and ensure that all those involved understand what the objectives are. This first stage is critical.

For example:

Is the purpose of the event to reach non-Christians?

If so, whom are you aiming to reach? Is it under 18s, Young marrieds, families, the elderly, a mix? An answer to these questions and others can fundamentally alter the “design” of the event.

To assist you answer some of these initial questions I have included a template called “**Planning and Purpose**” in appendix 1. It is not exhaustive, nor is it meant to be, as each church/organisation will have specific and unique needs/circumstances, however it will give you a start.

It is important that once the initial plan/purpose details are completed that your Minister/Pastor agrees to your Plan & Purpose (assuming that the Minister/Pastor has not initiated the idea in the first place). This will then become the foundation stone to build the rest of the Event Planning and Execution.

1.2 Timing.

When you are planning an event one of the major factors is timing i.e., when you intend to hold the event.

The basic advice, no matter the size of the event, is simply the more time you have to prepare, the better. Although not always feasible the general advice is to allow at least 16 weeks planning prior to the event. Over time you should build up to having an annual rolling plan for events.

As in most areas of life, “Time” is your most valuable and limited resource, so make sure you use it wisely.

1.3 Event Team Selection, Roles and Responsibilities.

Once you have the initial Planning and Purpose document agreed the next stage is to select an “Event Manager” who will be responsible for leading a team of people to plan, execute and evaluate the event. This can be either a member of church staff (if you have employed staff members) or a person from the congregation who has the required leadership qualities.

Once the Event Manager has been selected it is their responsibility to select a team of people required to plan and execute the event, in cooperation with the Minister/Pastor. The number of people in this team will depend on the type and size of Event being organised. At this stage the Minister/Pastor and Event Manager should have a “sketch” of the event from the Planning and Purpose document and therefore the initial team members should include people who are “obviously” required.

For example:

If food will be served or a light tea then you will need the person responsible for this area in your church. If it is a youth event, your youth leader should attend etc.

At the first team meeting it is important that the objectives of the event are clearly outlined. At this meeting it is important that team members ask questions to clarify their understanding of the event. I would then recommend that the individual team members be allowed to consider for one week what areas need covered for the event and come back with a list of ideas, recommendations, concerns etc., to the second meeting. At this meeting detailed requirements of the event will be put together in a “**Work Plan**” (at this second meeting it may become apparent that you will have to recruit additional team members to fulfil all the tasks identified as part of the session – you may need people with additional skills).

1.4 The Work Plan

To ensure that everyone on the Team knows what to do and when to do it, a “**Work Plan**” should be created. This is a simple form of project plan, a sort of checklist and will greatly assist in the planning of the event. It basically provides a skeleton for the event and a schedule of tasks that have to be completed so that the event can be delivered to a specific date. To assist you I have included an example of a Work Plan template in appendix 2. When agreeing the Work Plan each Team member should

understand their individual roles, responsibilities, actions and when tasks have to be completed.

1.5 Communication, Communication, Communication.

Remember that a good plan in itself will not guarantee success. A plan will not be implemented unless responsibilities are assigned, dates are established and agreed for the work to be completed. It is important that the Leader of the team holds regular meetings with the Event Team to monitor progress. It is also worth pointing out that a good plan is a flexible document. As you prepare for an event, undoubtedly you will think of other actions that need to be completed. The plan should accommodate these and if you hold regular meetings, the risk of “surprises” is greatly reduced.

After each meeting the “plan” should be updated and circulated to the team.

1.6 To Ticket or Not to Ticket.

For each church / organisation this is an individual decision. There is no right or wrong answer. Some churches, due to their constitutions and local legal requirements do not charge for events. Others take collections/donations at an event. Again, some issue and charge for tickets and some issue tickets and do not charge for them. The decision is part of the “Planning and Purpose” discussions. Ticketed events have one advantage in that they give the organisers an indication of the number of people who will be attending. In some cases, for example, a Church dinner, this is important for catering requirements. The recommendation is that you choose which method is appropriate for the event you are organising.

Section 2 – THE VENUE

Most Events will take place in church premises, however there will be occasions when the Event may be held at an External Venue. In this section I will highlight a few key issues with regard to Events on Church premises and address in detail issues regarding External Venues.

2.1 Using Church Premises

Each church will have different facilities available. Some will have modern church halls, sound systems, catering facilities etc., and some will not. However with regard to event planning there are a few common areas that each church will have to address. These are as follows:

2.1.1 A Risk Assessment

Your country's Health and Safety legislation will apply to all events. The risks associated with an event should be assessed beforehand and the appropriate control measures put in place. Catering and public health matters must also be considered as part of this. Organisers will always retain a "duty of care" to people working or visiting an event and safety must always be an important feature before, during and after an event.

There are many issues to consider and the simplest way to address them is to carry out a risk assessment. To assist you in this process you must contact your local Government Health & Safety / Risk Officer for professional advice. They are there to advise you.

2.1.2 Licence

In general terms in the UK, religious occasions/meetings are usually exempt from applying for a Licence to hold the event. However, you should contact your Local Government Office who can advise you in this.

2.1.3 Insurance

It is important in that each church has the appropriate and adequate insurance cover. You are advised to

contact your Insurance Company/Broker for professional advice on insurance for all events.

2.1.4 Fire Safety

Your church should have the appropriate fire safety policy and fire evacuation procedures. In addition you must ensure that fire safety equipment is in the correct location and in an operative condition as a matter of course. If you do not have the above or need questions answered, I would advise that you consult your local Fire Safety Officer for professional advice.

2.1.5 Police Requirements

The general advice with regard to informing the Police about your event is that if it impacts the “public domain” outside the boundary of your church premises, either in the preparing for, the running of or after the event, you should contact your local Police Office and discuss your event with them. Even if you do not believe that there are any impacts, the Police Service is happy for you to contact them to discuss the event.

2.1.6 Medical Facilities

The provision of on-site medical facilities and the need for Qualified First Aiders, or the local Medical Services will depend on the type of event, the number of people expected to attend, the risks identified as part of the risk assessment and your insurance company requirements. As a minimum for any event you should have Qualified First Aiders attending.

If you are fortunate to have doctors/nurses attending your church you could consider appointing one of them to organise/coordinate medical provision at your events.

2.2 Using an External Venue

If you decide to use an external venue for specific events all the items in section 2.1 should be in place by the venue owners. However it is worth confirming this with them in writing.

2.2.1 Costs

External venue rates are always negotiable so do not accept the standard rates at face value. Either negotiate a discount or negotiate free items e.g., free Tea/Coffee on arrival etc.

2.2.2 Visit the Venue

It is always important to visit a venue before you confirm it, even if you know the venue well (you never know what changes in staff or layout have taken place since your last visit). If you plan to have food served as part of your event, ask the venue to prepare a selection of food for you to sample. Do not wait until the actual event to experience poor food and service. To assist you with this point and others I have compiled a basic venue checklist, which is attached in appendix 4.

2.2.3 Confirm everything in writing.

There is an old saying, which is, “a verbal contract is worth the paper it is written on.”

Once you have completed the venue visit and are satisfied with the location and arrangements send a confirmation letter setting out the basic details to the venue.

A detailed confirmation letter outlining precise requirements should be sent to the venue approximately two weeks before the event.

2.3 Using Specialist Suppliers

If you have to use specialist suppliers e.g., caterers, sound and lighting engineers/equipment etc., a few basic rules apply:

1. Firstly define exactly what it is that you require (in writing).
2. Select a number of reputable suppliers (minimum of three, for service and cost comparisons)
3. Contact the suppliers and send them an outline of your requirements as defined in 1 above, in writing. Ask the suppliers to reply in writing and also to provide evidence of their

credentials/references (e.g., are they members of a recognised body).

4. Once received meet (interview) each supplier and if possible arrange to see some of their services being used at another venue. Remember to also sample the food the caterers will be supplying.
5. Once you have assessed the suppliers thoroughly and are satisfied, you must decide on which supplier to use. Agree terms in writing.

Section 3 – CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES

Many of the Events organised by churches and Christian organisations involve children. As a responsible Christian community we must ensure that children are protected at all times and in this regard many churches implemented “child protection policies”.

In the USA an excellent resource area on “Aids for Developing Church Policy” is available through the Oxford Document Management Company at the web address www.oxforddoc.com/church.html.

For the UK an organisation called the Churches’ Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS – www.ccpas.co.uk) can support churches and groups in preparing and implementing child protection policies for their church and group activities. They are the lead Christian child protection agency in the UK.

For other countries please contact your local Government Offices for details on the legal requirements relevant. However if you do not have a legal requirement in your country I would still advise that you create your own procedure. This is to protect all individuals both within and externally.

If you operate a well-developed Child Protection Policy please ensure that in your event planning all the necessary policy guidelines are adhered to.

Section 4 – EVENT MANAGEMENT ON THE DAY

It is the responsibility of the Event Manager to ensure that:

- there are sufficient numbers of adequately trained personnel for the safe management and stewarding of the event;
- event personnel clearly understand the roles/responsibilities they are required to undertake;
- event personnel have a detailed knowledge of the venue;
- event personnel are fully briefed on the event timetable and details;
- event personnel are organised within a defined decision-making management structure.

During the planning process, the number of personnel required to manage and steward the event, their roles, responsibilities and the management structure will have been identified and documented from the risk assessment.

It is important to emphasise that there must be clear lines of communication and one person who is in overall charge. It is recommended that the person who has overall responsibility for the management of the event is dedicated to that role and not involved with any event activities.

It is also recommended that an “**Event Day Timetable**” is produced and issued to all event personnel.

After the event finishes, or after each day of a multiple day event, it is important that you complete an evaluation of the event itself. Not only should you evaluate against the original objectives, you should evaluate the management and execution of the event.

Did it run to plan?

What went well and not so well?

Where there any surprises?

How do we improve next time?

Encourage each other with constructive feedback and minute the recommendations.

Section 5– CONCLUSION

I hope and pray that this short guide has been helpful.

May the Lord richly bless all that you do in obedience to His will for you and His Church.

God Bless

Raymond.

APPENDIX 1

PLANNING & PURPOSE TEMPLATE

PLANNING and PURPOSE TEMPLATE

Section 1: Name of Event

Event Name	
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Section 2: Objective / Objectives of the Event

Event Objective	
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Questions – what are you trying to achieve through the event? What is the Key message / messages you want to get across?

Section 3: Target Audience

Target Audience	
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Questions – who are you trying to reach through the event? What age profile? Male and/or Female? Christians and Non-Christians?

Section 4: Timing

What is the proposed date / dates for the event?	
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Questions – what is the proposed target date for the event?

Section 5: Costs

Costs	
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Questions – are there costs associated with this event? If Yes (in as much detail as feasible at this stage) what are the estimated costs?

Prepared By:	Date:

Authorised By:	Date:

CONDITIONS:

Conditions	
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Questions – are there any conditions to the approval? For example – does a detail budget need to be submitted before final approval?

APPENDIX 2

WORK PLAN TEMPLATE

WORK PLAN TEMPLATE

When completing this work plan keep in mind the following points:

Is the plan simple?

Is it easy to understand clearly?

Is the plan specific?

Does it include specific actions and dates?

Is the plan realistic?

Is it manageable?

Is the plan complete?

What have you not thought of?

Section 1: Name of Event

Event Name	
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Section 2: Objective / Objectives of the Event

Event Objective	
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Section 3: Target Audience

Target Audience	
-----------------	--

Section 4: Date / Dates for the Event

Date / Dates	
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Section 5: Budget

Budget	
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Section 6: Event Manager and Team

Name	Role	Contact Telephone	Email address
	Event Manager		

ACTIONS AND TASKS

Initially this will be a brainstorming / ideas session to capture all the tasks and make sure all the right people are involved. Once complete tasks and actions can be placed in chronological order.

TASK / ACTION LIST

Description	Date to be completed by	Person responsible

APPENDIX 3

VENUE CHECKLIST EXAMPLE

VENUE CHECKLIST EXAMPLE

This is a suggested list of high level basic questions. It is not exhaustive. You will add your own questions, depending on the event type and style to add.

Basic Questions:

Is the venue appropriate for our church/fellowship/organisation'?

Will the facilities meet our needs?

- internally (for example, is the venue large enough to accommodate your maximum number of people for the event) and;
- externally (for example, car parking, easy to locate)?

If you are using the venue's sound / projection system ask for it to be set-up for you to listen to.

If you are using 3rd party contractors, are there adequate facilities (power/telecom) for external contractors you are employing for the event (for example, sound, lighting, recording, and broadcast)?

If you are using the venues catering facilities test it. Will the venue prepare the catering you are using for you organising committee so you can evaluate it objectively?

Have the venue experience of running similar events? If yes do they have one coming up that you could visit to see how the venue owners manage the event?

What responsibilities will the venue manage and staff? How will they do this?
What will be their staffing levels for your event?