



7 practical tips
to wow your
2017 corporate
events.

Introduction

Today, diminishing budgets and the need to meet wider business objectives means that, when it comes to corporate events, status-quo planning is no longer an option.

Instead, event professionals must measure the success of each and every event. Each and every year.

To help you to do this, we've asked our trusted event professionals for their advice on what makes a successful event. And, in this short guide, we've pulled together this collective wisdom.

By following our range of handy tips, you'll make sure your next event is remembered. For all the right reasons.





Tip 1. Know
your stuff.

Plan for success

"A properly executed strategy is vital when it comes to communicating effectively, and making your events run smoothly".

Peter Forse, Director

Some things to consider:

The bigger picture

Events don't happen in isolation. To be successful, you must have an awareness of the wider social, economic, and political factors that could impact your event and your audience.

Available funding

Never use smoke and mirrors to try and hide serious monetary problems (or anything else!). The sooner you face up to any issues when planning an event, the earlier these issues can be addressed and resolved.

What can you realistically deliver?

Overpromising may make you look good initially, but you're unlikely to win hearts and minds if you break your assurances. Be honest and say "no" when something is impossible (and suggest an alternative if there is one). You'll be less likely to let people down, and gain their trust in the process.

Planning doesn't stop once the event is over

It's important to learn from your successes and failures, and bring these lessons into your future event strategy.



Define your audience

"To understand what your event needs, you first have to know what you want to say, and who you are talking to. The more you know, the more targeted you can be with your messaging and the more successful your event is likely to be".

Paul Ashford, Events Director

What do you need to establish?

- 1. Who are you talking to?** Recognising and understanding your target market correctly is essential to the long-term success of your business. So, it makes sense to use this knowledge when planning your events. If you need to attract attendees, take a look at your existing customers. This is the easiest way to figure out who else you should be targeting.
- 2. What do you want to say?** Once you know who you're talking to, you then need to figure out what to say. Shape your agenda and [find the right speakers](#) to positively influence your audience, so you can deliver those all-important communications in a way that informs, impresses, entertains, and motivates.



Plan for a disaster

"Live events are predictably unpredictable. With all kinds of challenges lurking around the corner to trip up even the most seasoned of event pros. For an event of any size, a failure to plan will cause problems. The 'forget about it now, think about it later' mentality just won't cut it in the precise world of event planning".

Paul Ashford, Events Director

But, without a crystal ball, how do you avoid the unforeseen pitfalls that can derail your event without warning?

- 1. Assume you're the unluckiest person alive.** Imagine that everything will go wrong; from a delegate tripping over and breaking their ankle, to the whole PA system failing half way through your keynote speaker. Make a list of all these disasters and what you can do to reduce the chances of them happening.
- 2. Contingency, contingency, contingency.** Stuff happens. But have you got a backup plan if it does? Don't wait for something to go wrong before figuring out what to do about it. Create a strategy to deal with identified risks and put contingencies in place.
- 3. Have the right resources in place.** Make sure you're prepared in case you fall ill, or need support to get your event back on track if something beyond your control affects your planning.
- 4. Work with an experienced agency.** [An agency that understands the events business](#) will guide you through the pitfalls (because they've seen it all before) and provide the contingencies and additional resource you need if things suddenly head south.
- 5. Keep everyone informed.** If you see something going wrong, it's tempting to keep quiet and try to fix it. While fine for minor issues, if you hit a crisis, you must make your stakeholders aware; especially if there's an impact on budget.

"I got a frantic call from one of our corporate clients whose event started in two days. Their in-house print bureau had let them down, and they needed the contents of a 170-page folder printing from individual Word documents for each of their 345 delegates. Nearly 60,000 prints collated and bound in 48 hrs!"

"My first reaction was to reassure my client and tell them not to worry. My second was to call one of our key suppliers. I have a great business relationship with them and we worked out how it could be done. Every delegate got their folder at registration, and my client got a good night's sleep".

Rachel Kearns, Account Manager



Tip 2. Be
creative.

Look good. Sound good

Absolutely, your event should grab attention. That's why your speakers, location, theming, dining and entertainment are all important.

To add additional wow-factor, consider using interactive technology to help bring your event experience to life.

But, no matter how good it looks, your event is unlikely to benefit your business if it doesn't act as a catalyst for conversations. As such, your event not only has to look good, it also needs to support your wider business objectives.

"Our event organisers have built circus rings, entire fairgrounds, ice rinks and even the city of New York, inside hotels, marquees, and hangars. We've taken delegates into space, to the casino, on a Beatles Magical Mystery tour and on an ocean liner, all without leaving the conference venue."

Jodie Billington, Project Manager



It's not personal

“While your likes and dislikes matter, without adopting a more strategic approach to event planning, these preferences could actually hinder your success”.

Paul Ashford, Events Director

Making decisions based on nothing more than personal taste is a bad idea. And, with events representing a significant level of investment – not just in terms of the financial cost but also time spent – it's a mistake you can't afford to make.

Of course, your event must appeal to you on some level, and with the right team it can be both beautiful and practical. But if the research and strategy tell you one thing, and your personal preferences another, it pays to be logical.



Be disruptive

"With more and more event planners looking for new ways to stand out and engage attendees, you can be sure that the power of disruption won't go unnoticed for much longer."

Rachel Kearns, Account Manager

People have been talking about disruptive marketing for years, as intense competition has forced brands to shake things up and seek new ways to boost sales. But just what is it?

Put simply, disruptive marketing literally disrupts your attention by doing something different. Something that changes the rules forever.

However, being disruptive takes creativity that goes above and beyond traditional ways of thinking. So, when it comes to events, many companies have failed to adopt this approach.

[Find out how to create more disruptive events](#)





Tip 3. Figure out what success looks like.

Demonstrate success

"Tracking the success of an event isn't always easy, particularly as many are not sales led. But whether you want to boost awareness, share important messages, or make money, you can't measure success without first knowing what this means to you".

Paul Ashford, Events Director

Use these top tips to maximise the success of your events, and deliver that all important return.

- 1. Establish KPIs.** Set out what you want to achieve, and establish targets to make sure your event delivers what you need it to.
- 2. Do the maths.** To calculate the ROI of income generating events, figure how much the event costs you to run. Compare this to tickets sold and/or attach a monetary value to each new customer/lead. Doing this will help you see the tangible value of your events.
- 3. Don't make snap judgements.** Not all the sales generated will be made on the day. Typically, you might need to wait at least six months before determining whether an event was a successful investment.
- 4. Be prepared.** Events are not just about what happens on the day. Wherever possible, pre-arrange as many meetings as you can.
- 5. Invest in technology.** To keep ahead of the competition, [invest in technology](#). Tech doesn't just give you the analytics and data you need to track success, it will also help you to maximise the number of leads generated, enhance the level of engagement with guests, and communicate with these guests post-event.
- 6. Be strategic.** Figure out what it is you want to say, and ensure your event helps you to instigate relevant conversations with your target audience.

Zero-based events

"With zero-based events set to become increasingly important, businesses must do everything they can to demonstrate bang for buck."

Peter Forse, Director

Last year, a number of businesses adopted zero-based budgeting. This means that more and more event teams are now having to justify spending, rather than being provided with a budget based on the previous year's spend.

While this strict cost control measure helps companies to increase efficiencies, zero-based budgeting is not about cutting marketing spend, but making it work more efficiently.

The right partner will help you to create events that look fantastic, which meet your budget, and which are created specifically around your objectives.





Tip 4.
Location.
Location.
Location.

Venue matters

"Picking the right venue is a fundamental part of the success of your event and getting it wrong could make all the difference. And not in a good way".

Jodie Billington, Project Manager

- 1. Is it appropriate?** Booking the Ritz to announce a downturn in business is clearly off the mark. But it's more subtle than that. What's your brand image? What's the reason for the event? And, how does the look and feel of the venue support these? How much does it look like you've spent on the venue? Never mind the actual hire fee, instead, consider what message you'd be sending out about how your organisation spends its cash.
- 2. Can your attendees get there?** Nothing puts people off an event like a long and difficult journey. Take into account how easy it is for people to get to your venue, and get home again afterwards.
- 3. Does it have enough usable space?** Consider projection distances in the main meeting room, and the amount and location of breakout spaces. An event for 200 people on the 12th floor - where the lift only holds five - is really going to mess with your agenda timings.
- 4. Does it have the wow factor?** There are plenty venues that aren't well publicised, but which offer something genuinely different. As an example, we once organised an unforgettable event on a train, running on the track, where the stations were plenary sessions and the carriages breakout rooms!

Researching the right venue is time-consuming and requires experience and insight. You can, of course, do the leg work yourself, but a top quality event management agency will be able to help you with this at minimal or no cost.



Tip 5. Invest in guest speakers and hosts.

Professional speakers

"If you're planning an event, hiring a professional speaker is a great idea. And, where maximum impact is needed, a celebrity can help to wow your guests and add kudos".

Phoebe Bugden, Associate Account Manager

However, while big names are undoubtedly impressive, booking the wrong speaker - however famous - can be a costly mistake.

The trick is to find a speaker that works for you.



Want to sell tickets?

- 1. Find someone relevant to your audience.** A celebrity will generate attention, but a controversial figure such as Piers Morgan isn't ideal unless you know that your audience will love them!
- 2. Consider non-celebrities that are more relevant to you target audience and your event.** With an eye on your bottom line, [your event management partner](#) will provide you with guidance on the most appropriate speaker within your budget.
- 3. If you do secure a big name, exploit their star power!** Use all means possible to promote their appearance.
- 4. Leverage their contacts.** Ask whether your speaker can reach out and tap into their own network to attract a new pool of potential attendees.
- 5. Use the power of social.** Ask your speaker to share your event info through social media to ensure your messages reach a much wider audience.



Want to add appeal?

- 1. Celebrity speakers can be used to entertain as well as to attract.** For example, we recently worked to secure comedian [David Walliams](#) and [Gary Lineker](#) for a client's employee roadshows.
- 2. Figure out what you need.** You might not need a celebrity to facilitate your event, but you do need someone who understands what you are trying to achieve and who will work with you to convey the right messages.
- 3. Make sure your speakers are up to the job.** While you might be great at running your business, not everyone is a natural speaker or facilitator. By employing an expert to look after this for you, you can focus on the bigger picture.





Tip 6. Look
after yourself.

Reduce stress

"Creating a successful corporate event can be nerve-wracking. But, with the right planning and support, it doesn't have to be".

Jodie Billington, Project Manager

Here are our top tips on how you can keep calm and plan on:

1. **Be strategic.** This will make it easier to meet the expectations of your attendees and your employer/client.
2. **Use technology.** Analytics, data, and ROI are increasingly important. The right tech will provide these insights for you; giving you one less thing to worry about.
3. **Be social.** Use social media to help promote your event and boost attendance.
4. **Trust an expert.** [A good event management agency](#) will provide an 'engine room' of back office services and support, bringing all elements of your event together.
5. **Take a break.** You have a million things to do, but stepping away from that to-do list can help you to refocus, reducing the likelihood of burnout.
6. **Don't make it personal.** Making decisions based on subjective reasoning, not personal bias, means you're less likely to become emotionally involved.
7. **Don't get disheartened.** If others don't agree with your event ideas, take the time to rationalise them, setting out the benefits and what they will cost to implement.
8. **Say no.** While you want to do everything you can to make your event succeed, be honest about what is and what isn't achievable.
9. **Stop the interruptions.** Turn off your email for a few hours. If the thought is just too terrifying, include an Out-of-Office inviting those with urgent queries to call you.
10. **Choose the right location.** Get this right and you'll drastically reduce problems later on.

"We had just put the finishing touches to a major 400 delegate, three-day event in London. I was driving and heard about the 7/7 bombings on the radio.

Our client quickly decided that the event had to be moved outside the M25 ring, and we had eight days to find an alternative venue, re-plan the whole event, and communicate the changes to the delegates. Fortunately, we had the experience, resource and capacity to meet the challenge and the event went ahead without a hitch."

Paul Ashford, Events Director



Tip 7. Use
technology.

The future of events

"When it comes to events, quirky tech is always an attention grabber". But it also has to be relevant."

Peter Forse, Director

So, what new and emerging technology should you be using to engage and involve attendees?

- 1. Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR).** AR and VR are being used to create multi-sensory, immersive experiences that have the potential to change the world of events forever. While immersive technology has been around for some years, historically it's only the big brands that have had the budget to deploy it. However, as with most tech, the better it gets, the more accessible it becomes, and we predict that we'll all start to see VR creeping into mainstream events over the next 12 months.
- 2. Facial recognition software, biometrics, and sentiment analysis.** Now more science fact than fiction, these new technologies are being used by some of the world's biggest players to measure visitor mood, engagement, and demographics. But we think it highly unlikely that such advanced technology will be adopted by the mainstream just yet.
- 3. Location-based tech.** Proximity-based technology is already being used to engage with customers at events. For example, apps that use GPS data and beacons to send tailored offers and promotions to customers on their smartphones, based on where they are.



- 4. Gamification.** Gamification is being increasingly used to help event organisers and attendees meet their objectives. By using intelligent technology and interactive devices, participants are encouraged to achieve event related goals – be that networking with particular people, checking into a certain number of sessions, and/or engaging with exhibitors. With the latest technology also offering a competitive edge, with leader boards and incentives, gamification is taking the collaborative event experience to a whole new level.
- 5. Data and advanced event marketing automation.** Helping you to maximise attendance, engagement, and leads, data integration and marketing automation can also help you to communicate with attendees post-event.



Social media

"There's lots of pontificating about how great social media is when it comes to events. But the truth is, social media is drastically underused, and, in many cases incorrectly managed."

Phoebe Bugden, Associate Account Manager

However, with businesses increasingly expected to do more with less, and technology delivering more and more business benefits, social media should be a key weapon in every event profs' armoury.

But a word of caution before you dive right in. When it comes to social media, setting up a Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook account and posting random updates simply won't cut it in today's competitive world. Proactive social media is about more than seeing what sticks.



1. Start by listing your event goals and consider how social media is going to help you to achieve these.
2. Relationships don't happen overnight. To deliver results, you need to use and manage social media correctly. And that means investing time and effort into building an engaged social media following throughout the year.
3. Forget all about amassing huge numbers of empty followers and focus on quality rather than quantity. And make sure you choose the right platforms. You don't need to be on every social media channel.
4. Promote your event presence. Use images and videos (and tag these accordingly). Create bespoke content and encourage people to share it. Use the event hashtag to make it easy for people engage with you.
5. Encourage visitors to your event to share their experiences on social media (with the established hashtag). But don't leave all the work to your attendees, make sure that your team is also providing live updates throughout the day,
6. To maximise results keep engaging with attendees after the event is over, encourage them to share feedback, images and experiences.



Online registration

"Cloud-based registration platforms are a compelling and cost-effective solution. You can use them on a pay-per delegate basis, and manage your budget with regular recurring payments. But to really make them work for you, consider putting them in the hands of an expert; so you benefit from the best quality software and an experienced pair of hands to take all those annoying niggles away."

Rachel Kearns, Account Manager

Helping to remove some of the burden from your busy shoulders, automating your event management promises to free you from time-consuming manual processes. So, it's no wonder that [event registration software](#) is being used to create more and more successful events.

But, even the best online registration software requires a degree of management. And, when you have a million and one things to do, even that can seem like too much work.

So, wouldn't it be better to simply trust someone else to look after the routine stuff for you?

The truth is, outsourcing your event registration does more than free up some time it can also help you to add value.

[**Find out more about what to look for in an outsourced event registration partner/solution.**](#)



Apex. Your
trusted event
partner.

Why partner with Apex?

Event planning is a bit like gardening. If you want to do everything yourself there's no shortage of advice and products available to help you to do it. And if you have the time, enthusiasm, and green fingers you'll do a fine job.

However, if you get an experienced gardener in to help, not only will they do all the legwork, but they will also have the best quality tools, and the wisdom that comes with looking after their clients' little spots of heaven day in-day out.

This means they can respond to and solve any unexpected problems that might arise, and even give you advice on how to make your garden look nicer. So, you can relax and enjoy the results while maintaining the overall say in what the garden looks like.

That's where we come in.

Apex creates and delivers objective focused corporate events that look fantastic.

With 30 years' experience in events and exhibitions, our philosophy is based on exceptional service, expertise and innovative solutions.

We know the journey towards a successful event is seldom straightforward, often stressful, and usually challenging. Our team of account managers, creative designers, organisers and project managers are there to support you and your team from the initial design and development phase to organisation, set-up, delivery, and beyond.

We also help you to win customers and give you a return on your investment, whatever your budget.

Contact us today on +44 (0)1625 429370 or email mail@apex.co.uk to find out more or for an exploratory conversation.



We take time every week to post industry news, new innovations, updates, and pictures for those involved in the industry. Click on any (or all!) of the links below to connect with us.

