

Tips & Ideas on HOW TO PLAN & DELIVER AN ASSOCIATION EVENT

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Event planning can be challenging, especially if you're new to the Association sector, or if requirements are escalated from standardised, medium sized events to large format, 'international' congresses. It's a whole different ball-game, but with the right approach and support, you can be guaranteed success. Based on our experience, we've pulled together some tips which may help, and we've also highlighted the type of support you might need to deliver effectively:

1. DEFINE CLEAR OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

Tip: Start with a clear understanding of what you want to achieve with your event. Whether it's networking, education, engagement, attracting new members or fundraising or sponsorship, having well-defined goals will guide your planning process.

Support Needed

Stakeholder Input: Engage with key stakeholders, including board members and association leaders, to align on objectives, processes, timeline and budget.

Event Planner or Consultant: Finding a professional individual or team can help you clarify and prioritise your brief, confirm your key objectives, manage your resource, streamline your processes and work more effectively, whilst bring you up to speed with new ideas, fresh content and trends and the latest technology and applications.



2. KNOW YOUR EVENT

Tip: Having a clear vision of your event is vital. Its purpose, who it's aimed at, what you want it to feel like, what you want to communicate or share, what your goals are and the value you want to deliver to your membership? These are the best building blocks on which to create a solid foundation for a brilliant event.

Support Needed:

Key stakeholders: Meet with your key stakeholders and get them to clarify what they're hoping to achieve and any 'must' and 'must not' wishes. Share your thoughts and get their feedback. Then write down a brief and re-share it with them. Take on board their feedback and ideas accordingly.

Event Director/Producer: If it's not going to be you, then find an Event Director and/or Producer with relevant experience asap. Share your vision and objectives with them, bring their ideas on board, finalise your event brief.



3. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Tip: Understanding your audience's preferences, needs, current challenges, and their expectations from *their* professional association is really important. This will help you in tailoring content and activities – ensuring your event is relevant and delivering real value, as well as ensuring all logistics solutions meet their needs.

Support Needed:

Survey Tools: Create well calibrated surveys using tools like SurveyMonkey or Google Forms to gather insights from potential attendees. Share your survey with your database, social media groups and other relevant organisations to get the broadest possible feedback, and a comprehensive view of your audiences' feedback and opinions.

Data Analysis: A data analyst can help interpret survey results and demographic data to inform planning decisions.



4. CREATE A DETAILED PLAN AND TIMELINE

Tip: Liaise with your team and suppliers to develop a comprehensive plan that includes all aspects of the event, from venue selection and speaker arrangements to marketing, production and logistics. Use the plan to create a timeline that ensures all tasks are completed on schedule, and to communicate to all parties so they are aware of all key deadlines across the team - to avoid clashes or hold-ups.

Support Needed:

Project Management Software: Management tools like Trello, Asana, or Monday.com can help organise tasks and deadlines. However, specialist event platforms like EventsAir and Cvent offer a wide range of modules that include event registration, website and event app creation, speaker and exhibition management, and virtual event adaptations as well.

Event Professionals: It is always better to work with event professionals or partners who are experienced in using these technology tools/platforms effectively – especially if you are delivering a complex event.



5. BUDGET BROADLY & WISELY

Tip: Create a detailed budget that accounts for all costs, pre, during and post event. Break each area down into sections and then list all the elements that would be relevant to your event.

- Project development & event delivery time
- Venue hire, catering, transport and accommodation
- Event marketing & promotion
- Registration, websites, event app
- Venue search & contract negotiation
- Pre-event management time & event tech management
- Onsite logistics support including registration & badging
- Production and A/V design including slides & video
- Speaker sourcing & management
- Sponsorship & exhibition opportunities
- Accommodation sourcing (delegates & crew)
- Dinner venues
- Safety & Wellness
- Transport & Security
- Contracts, legal, currency transfers etc

Support Needed:

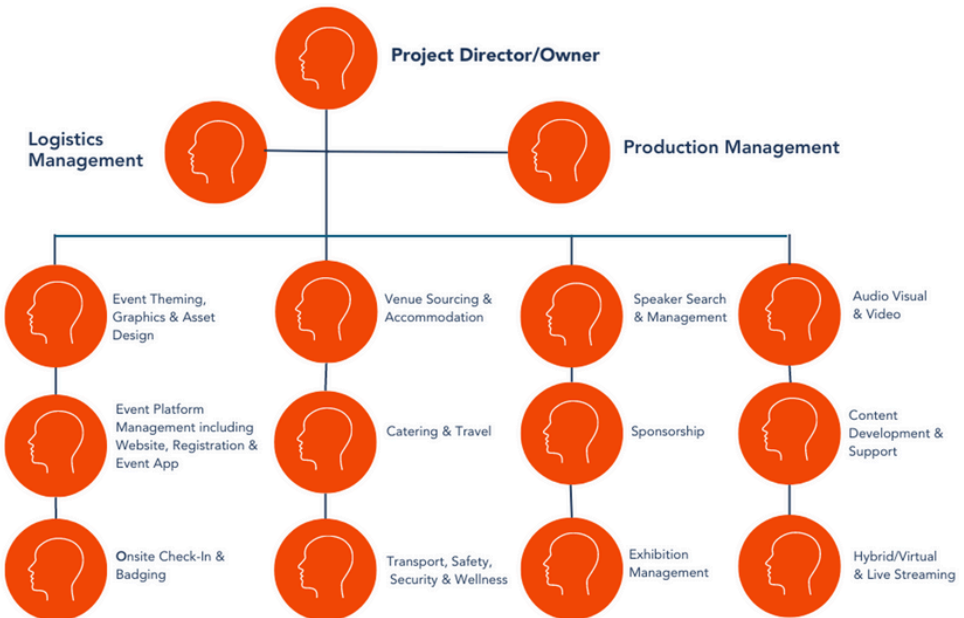
Strategic Financial Planning: Assistance from an adept financial event planner or accountant will help in budget planning and management.



6. WHO DOES WHAT?

Tip: The key to successful event delivery is being clear from the start what needs to be done, and who could/should do it. Scoping out your event delivery by area/role or specialisation gives you a clear overview and then based on your available resource and budget you can identify and allocate who will be doing what.

This will help you to leverage maximum value from your budget, ensure you put people in the right roles for their skill sets and experience and deploy specialist partners to deliver efficiently on your behalf - which will save you time, money and provide a higher level of service than trying to muddle through yourself.



7. FOCUS ON ENGAGEMENT AND EXPERIENCE

Tip: Referring back to point 2. allow the survey feedback to provide insights and cues as to the type of content attendees are looking for. Over and above association business, focus on highly relevant content that incorporates respected plenary speakers and interactive and engaging breakouts, workshops or activities. This will ensure the attendees stay engaged and feel you have provided genuine value and insights to its members. By using event technology you can also really enhance the event experience - pre, during and post event - aby incorporating event apps, live polls, and virtual networking opportunities. You should also use the event as an opportunity to really understand what your membership audience is thinking about, their challenges, objectives and aspirations.

Support Needed:

Event Technology Provider: Companies that offer event management software, apps, and virtual event solutions.

Content Creators: Producers, writers, designers, and videographers can help create compelling content for sessions and promotional materials.



THE TYPES OF SUPPORT YOU MIGHT NEED

1. Venue and Logistics

Venue Management Team: For coordinating logistics, room setups, and on-site needs.

Travel and Accommodation Services: Assistance with booking travel and accommodations for speakers and attendees.

2. Marketing and Promotion

Marketing Specialist: To develop and execute a marketing strategy to drive attendance or ticket sales, using channels such as PR in industry media, membership database, social media, and advertising.

Graphic Designer: For creating promotional materials like flyers, banners, and digital ads.

3. Registration & Websites, Event Apps

Event Tech Management Platforms: There are some really good, comprehensive, customised digital platforms to manage your event end-to-end including EventsAir, CVent, Hopin, Eventbase, VFairs and many more.

Specialist Resource: Individuals or teams who are experienced event tech users + hands-on event managers - who can deliver an enhanced delegate experienced.

4. Speaker & Exhibition Management

Event Tech Modules: Most event tech platforms will offer modules that help you manage speakers and exhibition suppliers.

Project Manager: with event tech capability and experience of manager VIP's and suppliers

5. Audio Visual and Tech Support

AV Technicians: To manage audio-visual requirements for presentations and live streaming.

IT Support: For handling technical issues, especially if the event includes a virtual component.

6. Programme and Content Development

Content Producer: An experienced person, with in depth experience of your industry, brimming with ideas on how to create an appropriate event environment and really valuable and engaging content for your audience.

Interactive Technology Experts: Using audience engagement technology throughout your event can really give them a voice, pre, during and post event. You can use events apps or more specialised solutions such as

Speaker Bureau: Asking for input from industry colleagues and engaging with a high-quality speakers bureau can be a real game-changer in finding the best possible speakers for your event

Workshop Facilitators: Take the time to research, ask industry colleagues etc, to find facilitators who have something fresh and exciting to bring to your interactive workshops and breakout sessions.

7. Staffing

Project Director: If this isn't you, find someone with relevant experience by asking for recommendations via colleagues or events based social media platforms.

Project Managers: You may have in-house resource or regular freelancers that you like to use, or ask your Project Director who they like to work with.

Event Partners: With a large or complex event you cannot always manage with in-house resource, so a specialist event partner may be the answer - a team that can lift an entire area of delivery off your plate, whilst you feel confident that everything will be delivered to the highest standards.

Event Staffing:

Recommendations are best, or a well-respected event staffing supplier who understands your brief. Volunteers are an option, but a good briefing book and a couple of training sessions on relevant technology will ensure that tasks are completed confidently and efficiently.

8. Sponsorship & Exhibitions

Sponsorship Manager: Congress sponsorship generally contributes to the overall event budget. Finding interesting and relevant sponsors is vital, and from a members perspective, access to these sponsors and suppliers will enhance their event experience. Using an experienced Sponsorship Manager is therefore a wise investment.

In Conclusion

By leveraging these tips and seeking the appropriate support, you can streamline the planning process and ensure a successful, engaging association event.

MICE Concierge is a full service events company, and association events experts. The MC Team combines expertise and professionalism, enhanced service and depth of experience working across a range of event tech platforms. MICE Concierge are also EventsAir Super-Users.

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