



Using Event Marketing to Build Business Success

By Karen Hendrickson

Small companies often fail to consider events as a way to market themselves – they believe that such gatherings are only for big corporations and organizations. But occasions such as grand openings, anniversary celebrations, customer appreciation events and holiday parties can be an important, and really fun, part of a marketing strategy.

Here are a few things to remember:

- ☞ **Start planning early.** The sooner you begin, the better chance you have of getting the venue, caterer or other assistance that you need. It also helps to build anticipation if you can tell your customers, employees, or other invitees as far in advance as possible. Excitement will grow as you drop a few hints about what's to come.
- ☞ **Set goals.** What do you want to accomplish with this event? Relationship building, brand identification, launching a new product, and building employee morale and team spirit are all good reasons to have an event.
- ☞ **Determine your budget.** You need to know what you have to spend before you begin. Have a checklist for each category of expense – food, entertainment, promotion, decorations and favors are just a few items that need to be included. You don't need to spend a great deal, but you need to plan for all expenses.
- ☞ **Decide who you wish to invite.** A formal dinner to thank employees will have a very different, and smaller, guest list than a grand opening at a retail outlet. The tools you use

to invite people will also vary – hand lettered and delivered invitations versus radio and newspaper ads.

- ☞ **Evaluate past events.** If you've done events before, you have valuable information in structuring this one – you know what worked well and what didn't. Check out other events as well, but don't just recycle the same old ideas.
- ☞ **Be creative.** Use your imagination. Have fun. You may want to try an overall theme, such as a game show format, a movie theme party, or an event designed around a holiday. Decor, food, invitations and entertainment can all be coordinated around your theme. A well-planned event will leave a lasting impression.

Although events can be simple and fun to plan, the thought of finding a caterer, booking the magician or musicians, or keeping track of who's invited and who has responded may be overwhelming. If that's the case, consider hiring someone to take all of the details off your hands. Event planners can bring experience and expertise to the process. They can save you time and money and ensure that your event has the maximum impact for your business success.



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