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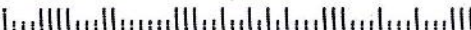
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# Beyond the Convention Center

## Execute Successful Client Events in a New or Existing Market



Guest Advice  
Shawn Rabideau

**A**s companies search for new and innovative ways to get the most out of their marketing and promotion budgets, they are revisiting some tried and true marketing forums.

Take the trade show as a case in point.

While there has always been competition to have a bigger and better show display so as to attract attendees' attention, many companies are moving the competition off the trade show floor. These companies are creating events that attract the attention of their clients in venues outside of the convention center. In doing so, they are able to set themselves apart from every other vendor with a trade show booth by creating an event that will truly stand out and get the full attention of their target audience.

### Asking the Critical Questions

In order to make these events truly successful, event planners need to ask themselves and their client certain questions and take specific steps to ensure that the client achieves the maximum benefit from the event.

To begin the process, research the client and the client's business. Sit down with your client and find out critical information such as:

- What is their target audience? Find out about the demographics of their customers as well as where they are located geographically.
- Who is the competition? Is your client a leader in the industry or are they just getting started? Find out who the major players are in the industry and where your client stands in comparison.
- What does your client hope to gain from this event? While we expect that they want to increase sales, are there other goals that they have for the event that will have an impact on how you stage their event?
- What branding elements does the client want to see at the event? While an upstart dot-com may want a fun, hip marketing campaign that is truly out of the ordinary, a large Fortune 500 firm will tend to be more conservative. Again, you need to know your client to determine what fits with its corporate image.

### Taking the Lead

Once you have learned all you can about the client, it is time to create the event.

One thing to keep in mind is that frequently, companies planning these events work through a committee. So while you may be dealing with one point person, there are likely to be five to 10 other people in the company who have input in this event. Remember to allow extra time during planning, as the decision-making process will likely be lengthier than usual.



Courtesy event ergonomics LLC  
One key to a successful event is taking the lead with your client.

Now that you have gathered all of the information, you are ready to actually plan the event.

In the planning process, always remember that you are the expert and need to take the lead in guiding your client to creating a successful event. While it is important to listen to clients, they are not event planning experts. The successful planner will guide the client to finding the right venue, the perfect caterer and great entertainment and will create a design that will accomplish the client's objectives.

Often your client will have ideas that may have worked in a previous market but that simply do not apply in the market in



Courtesy event ergonomics LLC  
Let the ultimate goal of getting your client's message across to attendees guide your event design.

**Beyond the Convention Center**

which you are working. For example, a successful event that your client may have previously held in Dallas could probably not be replicated in New York City due to differences in the budget and logistics of planning in a suburban setting as opposed to midtown Manhattan.

**The Right Spot**

To make the event successful, first find the right venue.

In selecting a venue for this type of event, it is important to find a space that is easily



Courtesy: event ergonomics LLC

The main goal with entertainment is to be creative.

accessible to your client's customers. If the event is immediately following the close of an exhibition, select a venue that potential guests can walk to. If the event is later in the evening, you want to be where the action is. This means you want a venue that is near nightclubs or restaurants that are a draw for potential guests.

After you have the venue, it's time to work on catering. You want to ensure that not only is the food excellent, but also that the presentation is outstanding. The last thing you want to hear from your client is that guests were complaining about bad food or that there was not enough.

At the same time, be creative with the presentation. Think of opportunities to use the food as a tool for branding. Simple items such as custom platters with the client's logo



Courtesy: event ergonomics LLC

Picking the right venue means looking at how your event fits into attendees' overall schedule.

that can be used as passing trays and a signature cocktail in the color of the client's logo that can be served as guests enter go a long way toward setting the stage for a great event.

Another creative but fun idea is to have an ice luge created in the shape of the client's logo. While this isn't exactly new, it is still a great centerpiece that guests will certainly remember.

**Creativity — the Most Important Design Element**

The next big step is getting entertainment that will wow the guests. Given the number of events that these guests have attended, they have seen most everything. The successful event planner will develop ideas that help the client stand out.

Toward this end, start with a theme. You want to develop an overall concept for the entertainment that is in line with your client's image. Always keeping the theme in mind,



Courtesy: event ergonomics LLC

Trapeze artist, magician, drag queen — creative entertainment will grab the attention of jaded attendees.

bringing in elements that will grab guests' attention and hold it for a period of time. Think about elements that can be seen throughout the venue and take place at intervals during the event. While a simple DJ can provide the background music, add elements such as a trapeze artist, cabaret act, magician, drag queen or other attention-getting entertainment. The main goal is to be creative.

The final step is the overall design of the event and incorporating elements that will properly display your client's brand.

The ultimate goal is for your client's

**“Always remember that you are the expert and need to take the lead in guiding your client.”**

message to get across to attendees. In discussing the catering and entertainment, we have already noted the need to develop a theme and create an atmosphere that fits your client's corporate image. This all ties into the design of the event, which should truly convey to guests what your client is all about. From creative use of the client's logo, to attractive displays that highlight your client's products, the design is crucial to creating a wow factor for all guests.

Your client may also appreciate creating elements that can be reused in future events due to the always-present budget concerns. It may have all been done before, but the successful planner will find a way to make an old idea appear new and unique.

While planning a corporate event can be challenging, it can also be a great opportunity for planners to use their creativity in a way that will win over a corporate client who can provide recurring business for years to come.

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