

Corporate event planner - How to plan a corporate event

Planning a corporate event can be an effective means of building relationships, enhancing your brand, motivating employees and achieving specific business objectives.

Whether you're organising a conference, product launch, team-building retreat or networking event, careful planning and execution can have a lasting impact on your organisation.

This comprehensive guide will take you through every step of the process, from defining your event's purpose, to delivering a memorable experience, to measuring success.

STEP 01

Defining your event

Establish clear goals and objectives

Before planning the logistics of your event, it's important to consider your reasons for hosting it. Are you looking to launch a new product, strengthen client relationships, boost employee morale or generate leads? Your objectives will influence every decision you make during the planning process.

For example, if you are planning a product launch, your focus will be on generating excitement, attracting media attention, and informing potential customers. Conversely, a team-building event will prioritise employee engagement, collaboration and company culture.

Write down three to five specific, measurable objectives for your event. These might include generating a certain number of leads, achieving a specific attendance rate or receiving positive feedback scores from participants.

Know your audience

Understanding your attendees is just as important as knowing your goals. Who are you targeting: existing clients, potential customers, employees, industry professionals, or a combination of these groups?

Different audience types have different expectations, preferences and needs. For example, C-suite executives may prefer upscale venues and premium catering, whereas a younger workforce might appreciate more casual, interactive formats.

Think about practical considerations, too: Are your attendees local, or will they be travelling? What are their professional schedules like? Are there any accessibility requirements or dietary restrictions that you should accommodate?

Choose your event type and format

Corporate events can take many different forms, each serving a different purpose.

- Conferences and seminars for education and thought leadership
- Product launches for generating excitement and media attention
- Networking events for building professional relationships
- Awards ceremonies for recognition and celebration
- Team-building activities for improving internal relationships
- Trade shows for showcasing products and services
- Board meetings for governance and decision-making

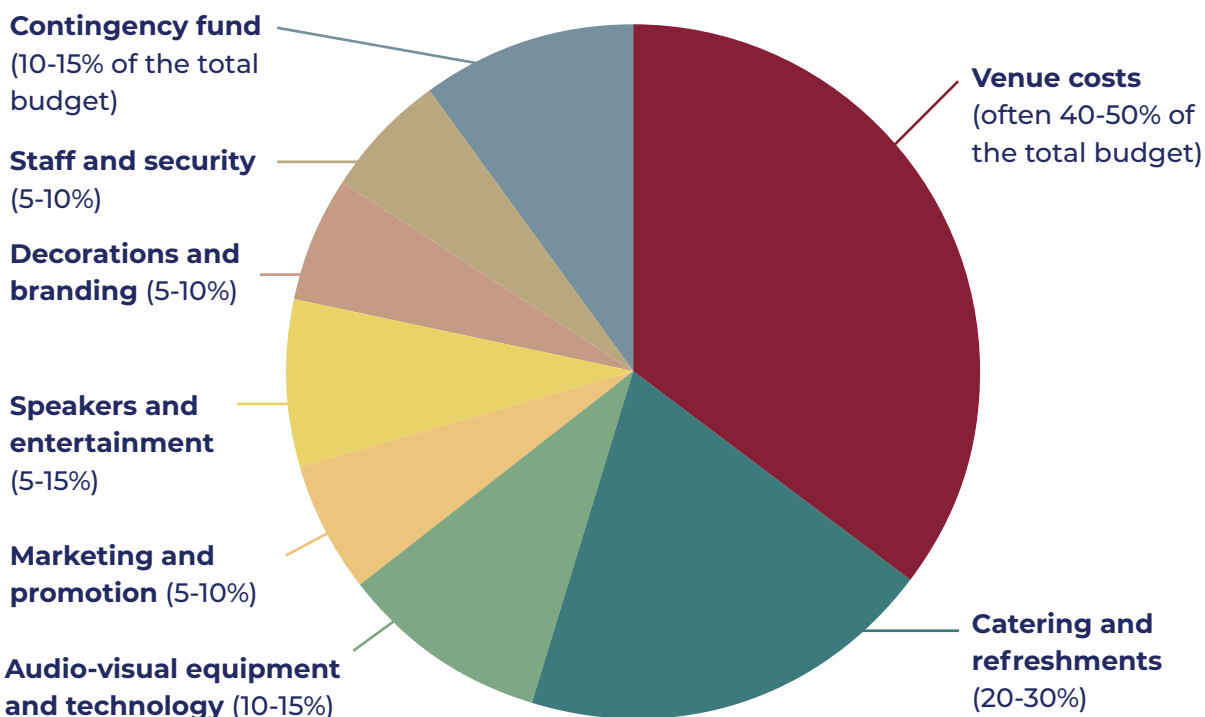
Consider whether your event will be in-person, virtual, or hybrid. Each format has its advantages: in-person events create stronger connections; virtual events can cost-effectively reach wider audiences; and hybrid events offer the best of both worlds.

STEP
02

Setting your budget

Budget categories

It is essential to establish a realistic budget early in the planning process. A typical corporate event budget should cover the following:



Remember to factor in hidden costs such as service charges, gratuities, insurance and permit fees. It's also a good idea to set aside some money for unexpected expenses.

Cost-saving strategies

There are several ways to maximise your budget without compromising on quality.

Partner with sponsors who can offset costs in exchange for promotional opportunities. Book venues during off-peak times or days to get better rates. Consider hybrid formats to reduce venue and catering costs while expanding your reach.

Negotiate package deals with suppliers, and don't be afraid to ask for discounts, especially if you're planning a long-term partnership or multiple bookings.

STEP
03

Selecting the perfect venue

Venue requirements

Your choice of venue can make or break your event. Firstly, consider the capacity requirements – you'll need space for your expected number of attendees plus a 10–20% buffer for any last-minute additions.

Location is also crucial for attendance rates. Choose venues that are easily accessible by public transport and have adequate parking. Think about what is convenient for your main audience: if most attendees are local, choose a central location; if many are travelling, proximity to airports and hotels is important.

Venue features to consider

In addition to basic capacity, consider these essential features:



Audio-visual capabilities and technical support, since many corporate events rely heavily on presentations and demonstrations.



Consider **catering facilities** or partnerships with preferred vendors.



Breakout spaces for smaller group discussions or networking.



Wi-Fi capacity to handle all attendees simultaneously.



Accessibility features for guests with disabilities.

Site visits

Never book a venue without visiting it in person first. Arrange site visits for the same time of day as your event to assess the lighting, noise levels and traffic patterns. Bring key stakeholders along to ensure everyone agrees on the choice.

Ask the venue about their experience with similar events and request references from recent clients. A venue with experience of corporate events will understand your needs better and can often offer useful suggestions.

Creating your event programme

Agenda development

A well-structured agenda will keep your attendees engaged and help you to achieve your objectives. Begin by planning your main content sections: opening remarks, main presentations, breaks, networking time and closing remarks.

Consider your audience's attention span – most people can focus for 45–90 minutes before needing a break. Incorporate regular breaks and vary the format, alternating between presentations, interactive sessions, and networking opportunities.

For full-day events, avoid scheduling intensive content immediately after lunch, as this is when energy levels typically dip. This is an ideal time for more interactive or lighter sessions.

Speaker and entertainment selection

Select speakers whose expertise aligns with your event goals and who can engage your specific audience. Industry experts, company leaders and motivational speakers each serve a different purpose.

When approaching potential speakers, provide them with clear information about your audience, the key messages you want to convey, and the outcomes you want to achieve. Give them enough time to prepare customised content rather than generic presentations.

If you are including entertainment, make sure that it is appropriate for your corporate culture and audience.



Technology and equipment

Audio-visual requirements

Most corporate events require professional-quality audio-visual equipment. Even the best content can be undermined by poor sound quality or technical difficulties.

Work with experienced AV professionals who understand the requirements of corporate events. They can advise on the most suitable microphone types, screen sizes, lighting needs and backup systems for your event.

If you want to expand your audience or record content for later use, consider live streaming capabilities. While this requires additional equipment and bandwidth, it can significantly extend your event's reach and lifespan.

Event technology solutions

Modern event technology can improve the experience of attendees and provide valuable data.

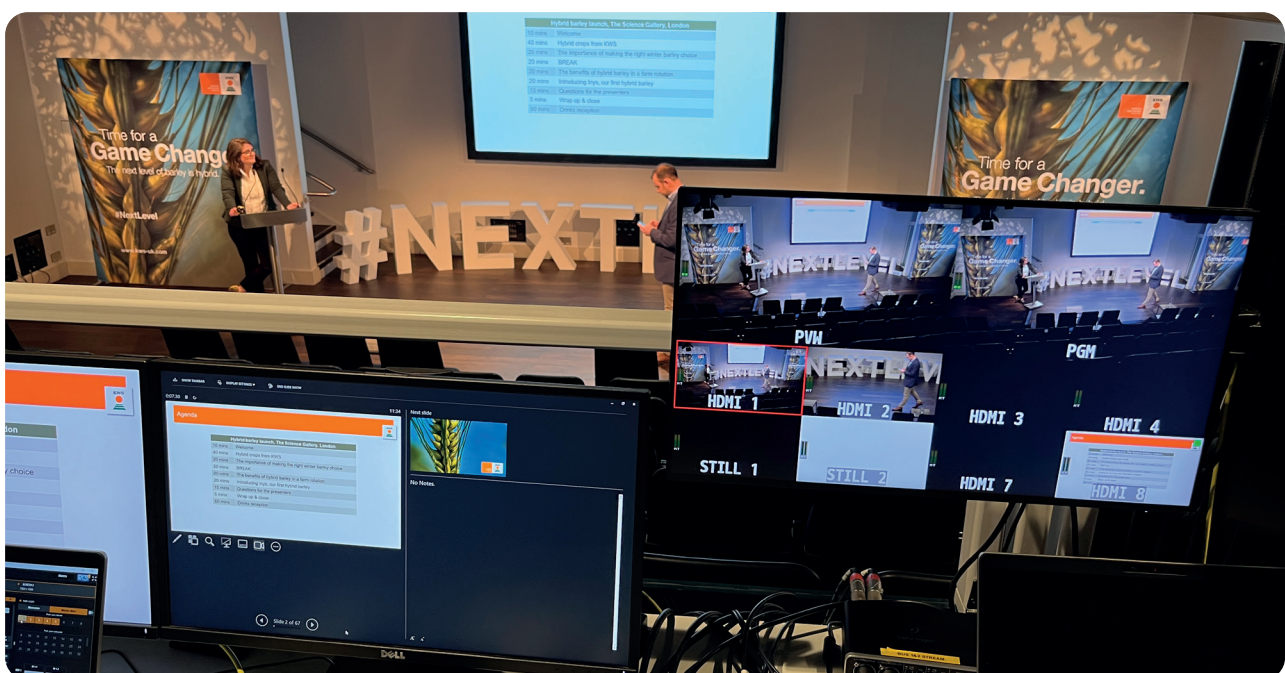
For example, event apps can display agendas, facilitate networking, enable real-time polling and send important updates. Registration platforms can streamline the check-in process and capture attendee data.

Digital feedback tools allow for the monitoring of real-time sentiment and the collection of post-event surveys.

Backup plans

Technology failures can have a catastrophic impact on corporate events. It is therefore essential to have backup systems in place, such as spare microphones, alternative internet connections and printed materials, in case digital displays fail.

Assign technical support staff who can troubleshoot issues quickly and efficiently without disrupting the main programme.



Marketing and communications

Pre-event promotion

Start promoting your event six to eight weeks in advance for local events, or three to four months in advance for events requiring travel. Use multiple channels to reach your target audience:

- These include email campaigns to your existing database, LinkedIn and other professional social media platforms, your company website and blog, industry publications and newsletters, and partnerships with relevant organisations.
- Create compelling event descriptions that clearly communicate the value that attendees will receive. Use strong call-to-action language and make registration as simple as possible.

Registration management

Implement a streamlined registration process that captures all the necessary information without being too long. Consider offering early-bird discounts to encourage prompt registration and assist with planning numbers.

Send confirmation emails immediately after registration, followed by reminder emails containing practical details such as venue directions, parking information and what to bring.

Communication timeline

Develop a communication schedule that keeps attendees informed without overloading them with information.



Logistics and operations

Supplier management

Corporate events usually require the involvement of several suppliers, such as caterers, AV companies, florists, security providers, and transport companies. It is important to establish clear contracts with delivery schedules, payment terms and cancellation policies.

Create a master contact list with primary and backup contacts for each supplier. Arrange regular check-ins as the event date approaches, to confirm arrangements and address any changes.

Staffing requirements

Decide which members of staff you will need on the day, such as registration desk attendants, technical support staff, general event coordinators and someone to liaise with suppliers.

Brief all staff thoroughly on their roles, the event schedule and how to handle common questions and issues. Give them contact lists and emergency procedure information.

Timeline and run sheet

Create a detailed run sheet covering the setup, the event itself and the breakdown. Include specific timings for each element, the responsible parties and their contact details.

Share this with all key stakeholders and suppliers so that everyone understands their role within the overall timeline. Allow for extra time to account for any unexpected delays.



Day-of-event management

Setup and final preparations

Arrive early to oversee the setup process and carry out the final checks. Test all technical equipment, verify the catering arrangements and make sure that the signage and branding are in the right place.

Hold a brief team meeting to review roles, timings and contingency plans. Ensure that everyone has the run sheet and key contact numbers.

Managing the event flow

Maintain visibility and accessibility throughout the event, while avoiding micromanagement. Trust your team to fulfil their responsibilities and focus on coordinating the event as a whole and troubleshooting.

Keep track of the timings and be prepared to adjust if sessions overrun or finish early. Have a plan in place for managing late arrivals and early departures.

Real-time problem solving

Despite careful planning, issues will inevitably arise. Stay calm and decisive when they do. Have solutions prepared for common issues such as technical failures, catering delays or speakers not attending.

Any significant changes should be communicated to attendees clearly and promptly. Most people will be understanding if they are kept informed about what is happening.



Post-event follow-up and evaluation

Immediate follow-up

Send thank-you emails to attendees within 24–48 hours, while the event is still fresh in their minds. Include any promised resources, contact details for new connections made and information about future events.

Thank speakers, sponsors and key partners personally. These relationships are valuable for future events.

Data collection and analysis

Gather feedback through surveys, social media monitoring and informal conversations. Ask specific questions about the quality of the content, satisfaction with the venue, networking opportunities and the overall value.

Analyse attendance data, engagement metrics and how well you achieved your original objectives. This information is crucial for demonstrating the value of the investment and for improving future events.

ROI measurement

Calculate your return on investment based on your original objectives. This could involve factors such as leads generated, deals closed, employee satisfaction scores or media coverage achieved.

Document the lessons learned and create a post-event report to guide the planning of future events. Include details of what worked well, areas for improvement, and recommendations for next time.

Building long-term relationships

Use the connections made at your event to develop long-term relationships. Connect with attendees on LinkedIn, share relevant content and keep them updated about future events.

Consider setting up an alumni network for regular attendees to help maintain engagement between events.

Need help with your corporate event planning?

We've got your back! We can help you to create memorable corporate events that will help you to achieve your business objectives. From strategic planning and creative design to full event management, our experienced team is ready to bring your vision to life.

Reach out to us today and let's take your event planning to the next level!

01763 877110
hello@c4bmedia.com