



CJAM's top ten tips for managing a successful event

Managing a successful event means ensuring the event programme is completely on target for your audience. The schedule should run like clockwork and the whole experience should leave attendees eager to learn more and impressed by your level of professionalism. However, behind the scenes at every event there are always unforeseen challenges to keep even the calmest event manager busy! We have condensed our top tips from years of running national and regional events, and created a quick guide to event management. We hope you find it useful.

1. Know your audience

Understanding what makes your audience tick is vital to delivering a well received event. Through regular dialogue and market research, you'll soon get to grips with the kinds of issues and advice that are most likely to interest your audience, and most importantly, the kind of content that will prompt them to leave their busy working day to attend an event.

2. Define the benefits of attending

Your audience should be left in no doubt as to why you're running the event, what key challenges it will address and how they will benefit from attending. Ensure that this is clear right from the first invitation, making sure to spend time researching similar events and identifying what makes your event unique.

3. Set a budget

Keeping to the budget is all important when it comes to managing a successful event. Agree in advance how much budget will be invested and how return-on-investment will be measured. Ensure that any attendance fees effectively cover costs, while any contracted services fit neatly within the budget available.

4. Set objectives and measure your success

Know in advance how you'll measure the success of the event in both financial and marketing terms. What are the key objectives of the event? Select the indicators that matter most to your organisation, whether this is membership enquiries or increasing social media engagement.

5. Use trusted suppliers

We recommend building a database of trusted suppliers whom you can rely on to deliver excellent service, whether it's providing a top notch venue, ensuring audio and visual equipment works perfectly or preparing a great lunch time spread. Everyone looks forward to the refreshments at an event, so getting this right is paramount. Build a good relationship with your suppliers and ensure that you communicate clearly on exactly what's required.

6. Go through the detail with a fine toothcomb

No stone should be left unturned when it comes to planning an event. Make sure that every eventuality is catered for. Inevitably, last minute issues will crop up - agree who will deal with these and put contingency plans in place. We suggest planning in minute detail how the event will unfold, even down to where members of your team will stand to welcome the guests. Try a mental or even a physical walk through of the event to help spot potential issues and find solutions ahead of time.

7. Use confident, respected speakers

The presenters you invite can make or break a day, so make sure they are confident speakers and give them a clear brief as to the kind of content you need. Is the speaker someone whom the audience respects? Speakers who will educate and inspire the audience stand the best chance of boosting attendance levels.

8. Ensure content is on message

All content should be streamlined to fit with your overall communications plan. Develop all event materials to reflect your organisation's key messages. We recommend using professional PR and marketing services.

9. Drive engagement

Drive engagement and audience participation at the event by encouraging attendees to ask questions and to tweet about the day. Create a Twitter hashtag for the event and ask attendees to use it within all tweets.

10. Seek feedback

It's important to seek feedback from your attendees and gauge their perceptions of the event. Make sure that any questionnaires are quick and easy to complete. Attendees should ideally complete them before leaving. Ask questions that will help you to optimise future events.

Case study - Industry leaders gather for Bulk2014

More than 80 bulk-handling industry leaders and 20 major exhibitors gathered at the sector's premier professional networking event, the Materials Handling Engineers Association's (MHEA) Bulk2014 conference, organised and managed by CJAM.

The conference got off to a strong start, with Chris Huhne, former Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, sharing insight and expertise from his current role as chairman of Zilkha Biomass Energy.

Over the two days, we arranged six seminar sessions, chaired by industry leaders, with each session consisting of three topical knowledge-sharing workshops. We also created a comprehensive programme of workshops and presentations designed to generate discussion and share best practice. MHEA presented two awards to industry members for life-time achievement and innovation.

CJAM held a glittering gala dinner on the first evening of the conference, offering delegates the chance to relax and socialise informally in the company of a magician and a former Premiership footballer.

Overall, the event proved a great way for professionals from across the industry to learn from each other and forge valuable connections. Members came away looking forward to next year's event!

Good luck! The CJAM team would be delighted to help with planning or managing any forthcoming events.