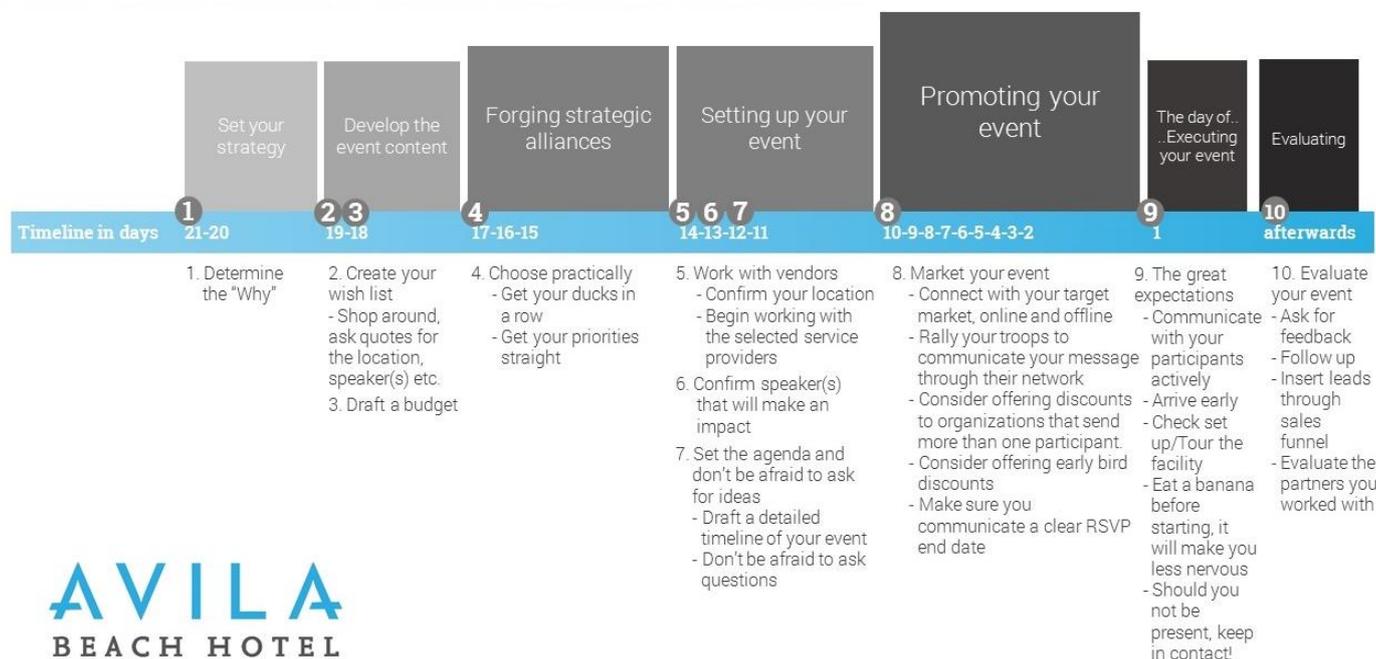


# How to organize your successful event: Step by Step event planning

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Event planning. Everyone who has ever organized one, will surely know this task (which often is done besides your regular work tasks) is highly underestimated and in some situations perhaps also underappreciated. When organizing an event you're always aiming to do your very best to making your company's event a successful one. But what does it take to get to that point? What does event planning involve? What are the best tips and tricks? And more importantly, because your other work tasks won't wait for this "storm" to pass, how can you be as sufficient and effective as possible? Here is a high-level overview of some of the basic steps you'll need to follow when developing an event. We, as two Conference & Banqueting experts at the Avila Beach Hotel on Curacao, together with over 10 years of Wedding & Event Planning experience hope the following provides a starting point for your event planning.

## 1. Determine the "Why"

Sit down with your manager and talk through the end goal of the meeting/event. Is it to generate revenue? Secure new clients? Get publicity? Also make sure that your topic is truly relevant to your audience. Keep this goal in mind as you proceed through the rest of the list. If it's your manager making this final decision, confirm this crucial info before starting the process. Ask how he imagines the setup, amount of guests, budget, global itinerary, date and back up date possibilities.

## 2. Create your wish list

Once decided, define your target audience and establish your seminar size. In an ideal world, what would your meeting/event look like? Jot down details such as location, speakers, number and quality of participants, food, and fun activities. Not only look for a good price but keep an eye on the customer service you receive yourself. That way, you will get a good impression of how your participants will be treated during the event.

## 3. Draft a budget

Make your boss happy by knowing your budget *before* you start planning your business meeting or event, and then stick to it. Follow these tips to help you control costs:

**a.** Shop around, but don't wait too long making a decision about your eventual meeting location. Did you not receive an offer or quote in a timely manner? Chances are this will be happening during the actual planning

of the event as well. Eliminate risks that involve time consuming elements because this eventually leads to more stress for you and a hazard to the level of success of your event.

- b.** Build a 10 percent contingency into your budget to accommodate unexpected expenses.
- c.** What can you charge participants to cover costs and still make a profit (if that is one of the goals)? Make a budget spreadsheet listing the major cost items of your wish list – location rental, speakers, meals, audio/visual equipment, printed materials, giveaways, and fun extras. Don't forget to include costs for marketing the event, such as a (new) website, online (social media) ads. Build in a 10 to 15 percent cushion in case expenses run over.
- d.** Avoid surprises when renting a facility or working with vendors by getting all agreements in writing.
- e.** Limit the number of people authorized to charge items to your master account at the meeting facility.
- f.** Watch out for currency conversions when planning meetings from overseas.
- g.** Question all charges that don't seem to compute.
- h.** Check all invoices against written quotations.

#### **4. Choose practically**

- a.** Cost will obviously be a factor in choosing where to hold your event and what services to provide, but so will attendance. You want to select a location that is centrally located and well known for organizing other successful events.
- b.** A hotel is certainly appealing, with enough meeting and personal rooms, and can help you plan a stress-free meeting/event. Especially, if you have international (keynote) speakers and/or participants it's easy to have them all under one roof.
- c.** Your ideal keynote speaker may be Mark Zuckerberg, but realistically you probably need to go with a less-pricey option.
- d.** Consider polling participants from past events to understand what's most important when attending such an event and make selections based on this feedback.

#### **5. Work with vendors**

So you choose your location. Now, the fun part starts. Begin working with the service providers of the items in your budget spreadsheet as early as possible. Understand what will be provided in each case, and review contracts and cancellation policies carefully (for instance, you need to know if the hotel will provide A/V equipment and support in its meeting rooms, or if you need to bring that in yourself). If you are in need of a specific vendor on Curacao, we have a list of recommended and renowned vendors [here](#).

#### **6. Confirm speakers that will make an impact**

The most memorable aspect of the meeting or event you plan (aside from the food) is likely to be the program. Hiring the right speaker(s) to address participants is crucial. Following are the basics to keep in mind:

- a.** Know the program objectives.
- b.** Understand audience needs.
- c.** Ask for references.
- d.** View a demo video.
- e.** Don't assume that all celebrities know how to deliver an effective speech.
- f.** Provide speakers with good information so they give you what you want. Also make sure you are on top of her travel arrangements and other needs.
- g.** Reach out to your network to identify the speaker(s) who will best help you achieve the event's objectives and are within your budget (do not ask or expect professional speakers to appear for free).

#### **7. Set the agenda and don't be afraid to ask for ideas**

- a.** Draft a detailed timeline for your conference that starts early (8AM is reasonable) and ends around 12.00 PM (lunch time, time to pick of the kids etc.) or 5PM (happy hour time). Be in close contact with the event location. **Assume nothing.** Ask questions, more questions, and still more questions.
- b.** Schedule a mix of formal speakers, small group workshops, and free networking time.
- c.** Plan to feed your participants every few hours, either with a full meal or a break s snack.

**d.** After the day's agenda is complete, consider hosting a cocktail party or dinner at one of our many terraces or restaurant options.

**e.** Plan for success with effortless collaboration and a creative touch. Work closely with the Conference & Banqueting Coordinators/Experts of the meeting location for ideas and inspiration on food and beverage options, room set-ups, decor and anything else you might need for your next event. They'll surely help you execute a distinctive experience designed for people and focused on the purpose of your meeting. Your participants will feel more connected, inspired and accomplished.

## **8. Market your event**

**a.** Create a logo and color scheme for your event, and display it on an event website with online registration.

**b.** Connect via social media, consider online paid advertisements.

**c.** Rally your troops to spread the word through e-mail and guest posts in online media targeted to your audience.

**d.** If appropriate, make use of local event listing websites.

**e.** Consider offering discounts to organizations that send more than one participant.

**f.** Consider offering early bird discounts.

**g.** Make sure you communicate a clear RSVP end date.

## **9. The great expectations**

Eliminate the unexpected. Be in control of every aspect:

**a.** Eat a banana to kick off your day, it will make you less nervous.

**b.** Communicate actively with your participants and vendors in advance so they know where to be and what to expect.

**c.** Get their contact information and make sure they have yours.

**d.** Tour the facility before your conference begins to make sure your staff is in place and everything is in working order.

**e.** As things wind down and invoices come in, review them line-by-line so that you can resolve disputes on the spot.

**f.** And last but not least. Should you not be present, keep in contact! In total with 3 persons; your dedicated colleague onsite who is coordinating the day, your Conference & Banqueting contact person and the F&B Supervisor of the venue who will make sure that everything will happen according to your prior made arrangements.

**g.** Plan for a stress-free "Day Of". Make sure that everything is said and done on the day of the event.

## **10. Evaluate your event**

Congratulations on getting the job done! Now that you are ready to go into the event-planning business full time, let's see what you can learn for next time. Have your participants fill out a paper or electronic evaluation form and look for common pieces of feedback. Don't forget to follow up! Call and/or e-mail each attendee. Insert leads through the "sales funnel". Evaluate the partners you worked with as well.

**Of course it's better to start your event planning as early as possible. However, it's recommendable to schedule at least 21 days in advance. Should you be interested in organizing your event together with the event planning experts at the Avila Beach Hotel, than we would be happy to assist you via [events@avilabeachhotel.com](mailto:events@avilabeachhotel.com). We'll give you all the tools, tips & tricks you need when organizing your event at the Avila Beach Hotel. Just close your eyes, keep in mind these 10 steps and let us coordinate!**