

10 EVENT PLANNING MISTAKES...

AND HOW TO AVOID THEM





Your ability to run a successful event is directly related to your ability to juggle. Juggle details, that is.

We've put together this checklist of ten of the things that can really trip you up if you fail to tackle them or, even worse, fail to remember them. The list has everything from the seemingly obvious to the "I never would have thought of that!"

Sometimes even the biggest, brightest, most experienced organizations have forgotten one or more of these critical success factors. And we don't want that to happen to you or your event!

- 1** Failure to set a goal
- 2** Failure to create a schedule
- 3** Overlooking competing events
- 4** Not enough volunteers
- 5** Poorly trained volunteers
- 6** Poor ticketing process
- 7** Poor registration process
- 8** No contingency plan
- 9** No packing list
- 10** Ignoring the little things

1 Failure to set a goal

Most fundraising events have more than one goal. In addition to raising money for your cause, you may want to expand your universe of supporters, cultivate your most important donors, or raise awareness within your local community. Maybe your financial goals are for something specific. Is it your major fundraising or a year-end event to fill a budget shortfall?

Capture all your goals and prioritize them. Make sure all of your stakeholders know exactly what the goals are, including your volunteers. Just as your organization has a mission and a vision, so should your events.

Get as specific as you possibly can in setting the fundraising goal. Break the financial goals down by the source of the revenue: ticket sales, sponsorships, auction proceeds, raffle, paddle up, wine pull, and any other fundraising activity you offer.

2 Failure to create a schedule

This may seem daunting if you've never done it before, but it's wise to start big projects with the end in mind. Whether

you start work on your event three months or twelve months out, this schedule will become invaluable to you.

Populate it with the date of every milestone you have set for your event. From the first meeting until the final thank you note is sent, you'll never lose track of where you are. That gives you time to take corrective action.

Want to sell 400 tickets? How many have to be sold by three weeks out from your event to reach that goal? Put it on your master schedule. Want 100 items for your auction? How many do you have to have by four weeks before your event? Need to order flowers, hire a band, find an event photographer, secure rental audio-visual equipment, train your volunteers? See how this master schedule can keep you on track?



3 Overlooking competing events

Savvy event planners check a universal holiday calendar.

We all know the biggies, but there are lots of holidays that can interfere with turnout for your event.

Don't get caught unaware! You can easily find these calendars online. Next up, big sporting events. Unless your event is Super Bowl themed, don't have it on Super Bowl weekend.

And finally, what else is going on in your locale? Other big charity events, a beloved band's reunion concert, the president is speaking at a local university? Be aware! See if there are any resources in your community for charity fundraisers that publish a calendar listing events.



4 Not enough volunteers

Books could be written about finding, training, motivating, and managing volunteers. A quick Google search on “managing fundraising volunteers” yielded 235,000,000 hits!

You may have a handful of dedicated volunteers who do most of the back-end work on your event, but see if you can recruit extras for specific tasks. Sometimes knowing that you only want them to perform a specific, time-constrained, limited task makes people more willing to pitch in with enthusiasm.

It can also make it easier for you to give very specific instructions. Some specifics you could ask for help with include soliciting items, day of set up, helping register guests, spotting at a paddle up, assisting at checkout, or sending thank you notes.

Try this: “Would you consider helping register guests at the gala from 6 – 7:30 p.m.? I would need you to arrive at 5:30 p.m. for a simple training and you would be done promptly at 7:30 p.m. so you can join your friends and enjoy the rest of the evening.” Who could say no to that simple request?

5 Poorly trained volunteers

Volunteers come with the best of intentions, and you couldn't do it without them. Help them do their best and help yourself by giving them very specific instructions for the task you are asking them to perform.

It's also important to be crystal clear about your expectations. For example, that registration volunteer you recruited? Remember to tell her, during training, that you need her to stay focused on getting everyone registered and keeping the lines moving quickly. People want to know what's expected of them and it's good of you to tell them.

6 Poor ticketing process

This is a quote from a recent event management blog post, if you don't like it, don't blame us. The quote is, "Get out of the Stone Age!" It's an exhortation aimed at organizations that don't sell tickets online.

There are many advantages to selling tickets online. You can capture all the information about who is attending. In some cases, purchase of a ticket registers attendees to bid

in your auction and assigns a bidder number.

This also works out if you are having a paddle up and no auction. Selling tickets online also captures credit card information, which makes registration and checkout go faster.

However you decide to sell your tickets, start early, promote often, and keep track of where you are.



7 Poor registration process

Set up registration in a very obvious place. Make sure you have an attendee list and a system for checking off guests from your list as they arrive. Make sure you have enough volunteers and enough tables set up to receive your guests.

The more that is required at registration, the higher your volunteer-to-attendee ratio should be. Some event management software enables you to set up self-registration stations for those who are comfortable with technology. Don't let your beautiful evening get off to a rough start by failing to plan for a smooth registration process.

8 No contingency plan

What if your event is outdoors and it rains? **This is the most obvious thing that could happen, but there are other things that could go wrong.** Your keynote speaker gets stranded in another city by a cancelled flight, the electricity goes out for the hour of registration and the computers don't work. Tap your inner pessimist and see what else you can come up with.



Did you check the legalities of the raffle you want to run? It may seem overwrought, but ask yourself, what could happen that we could get sued for? Check to make sure your venue has liability insurance.

Ask your hotel or venue what happens if the workers go on strike the day before your event. Just remember, the ice sculpture may melt and no harm is done, but if someone trips over an errant electrical cord and is hurt, it puts a damper on the whole affair.

9 No packing list

No self-respecting professional event planner forgets the event packing list and neither should you. This list includes things like sharp scissors, Scotch tape, duct tape, packing tape, extra markers, notebook, a mini stapler, a mini sewing kit, a calculator, aspirin or other pain reliever, paper towels, self stick labels, a measuring tape, a couple of screwdrivers, a stain remover stick, and Superglue.

What else can you think of? If you don't use anything from your event bag, so what? But when you need duct tape and you don't have it, it's a problem. You'll look like the smartest person in the room when you whip out that mini sewing kit and save the day!



10 Ignoring the little things

When you ignore the little things, they can become big things. For instance, what's the parking plan? Valet? Is there a parking lot at the venue? Is the entranceway completely cleared of ice or snow? Did you arrange for a free coat check?

And, finally, not to be indelicate, but whatever you do, make sure the restrooms stay spotlessly clean throughout the evening. Make your venue take a pledge to do that for you!

You're on your way to a great event!

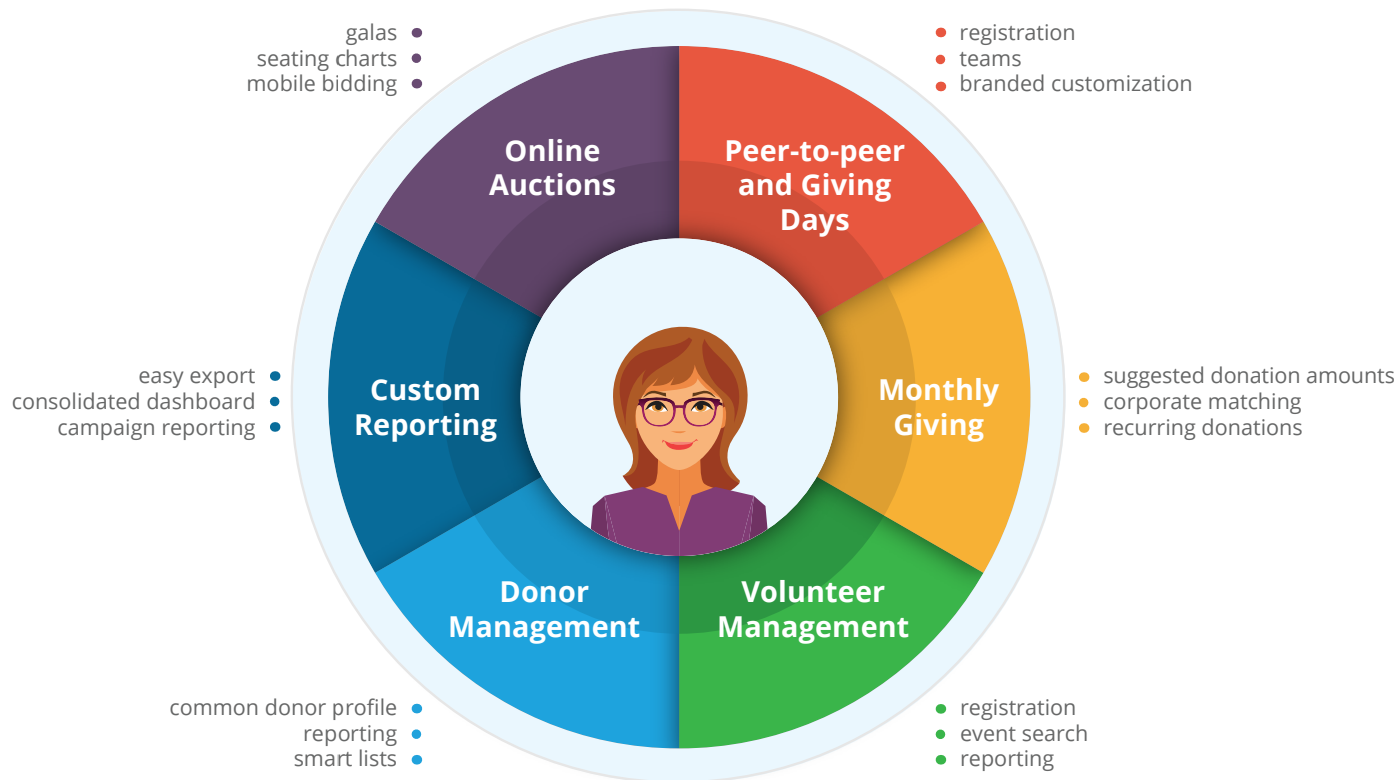
Every event is fraught with peril for its organizers. And more often than not, it's the little things that cause the most trouble. We're confident that if you follow the advice we've offered here, you will have avoided some of the biggest, and seemingly littlest things, that could make your event less than great.

[Click here](#) to schedule a call to learn more!



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