

“Successful Event Management”

The best way of engaging with clients and prospects is face-to-face. Events provide a great way of delivering face-to-face opportunities but they aren't easy to get right. 4sight's Hayley Fletcher has project managed many events for major clients such as BT and has some pertinent advice on ensuring their success.

Setting Objectives

Whether you are planning a customer facing sales event, a webcast, sales conference or training workshop the first and most important task is to define your objectives.

They will provide clear guidance as to the type and nature of event you need to organise, and the kind of content that will need to be used. Agreeing target figures (e.g. number of customers needed to attend) will help to:

- Set expectations of bosses and colleagues
- Determine the number of people to invite.
- Provide the basis for setting an event budget
- Clarify who needs to be involved in the event management process

Creating Interest

Even the most lavish event in the world will fail if there is not some 'pull' for the attendee. Your event needs to have sufficient value to overcome all of the reasons **not** to attend from a busy delegate's perspective.

In a business environment the "pull" should come from the event content. This could be the launch of a new product, or the unveiling of exciting new research. You can also offer new insights and angles on existing subjects by, for instance using guest speakers such as business gurus or well-known journalists to help extend the scope of your topic.

Sometimes, however, you may need to admit that factors such as the venue, catering, or post-event entertainment have equal or possibly greater appeal than the event's content!

In these circumstances go for the best that your budget can run to. 4sight's greatest success was to organise a business security seminar in the Tower of London, hosted by a Yeoman who also gave delegates a private tour of the Tower. In this case not only was the seminar fully booked but more importantly the perfect platform for presentations, debate and one-to-one discussion on security was created.



The Tower of London. One the best event venues 4sight has used.

Thinking Ahead

Timing is a key event management issue. Check out the national calendar of events within your business sphere and make sure that your event does not coincide with any relevant industry exhibitions or clash with competitor activity.

Avoid holding face-to-face events (i.e. requiring delegates to travel) on a Monday or Friday and always aim to start and finish at times that you know will suit your audience. Don't try and run events during school holidays.

Get Bums On Seats

Getting people to actually turn up on the day is a major sales exercise.

Your invitation needs to project the major benefits of attending and should be of the highest quality possible. Invites need to be sent out 6 weeks in advance.

It is a good idea to have in place a proper process for registering delegates and to resource it appropriately.

Once delegates have registered, ensure that relevant information such as directions and an itinerary are sent to them in good time. A phone call the day before the event is a useful reminder and where appropriate, hosts should arrange a meeting just prior to the event to keep delegates out of their offices.

On The Day

By the time the big day comes the peripheral parts of the event like signage and availability of hot coffee should have been sorted out with the venue and other suppliers.

The other item that should have been addressed beforehand is the matter of rehearsal. It is vital that everybody involved gets a feel of the venue: how big is the room, where will the audience be, are we using microphones? Your audience will quickly tell if you are "winging it".

It is definitely worth thinking about using alternatives to straight presentations to hold the attention of your audience and create a positive impact. Think about hands on product demonstrations or video clips but if you do require enhanced presentation facilities then use an audio-visual specialist to ensure they work.

Finally always allow time for networking. Your clients may see the opportunity to talk to you and their peers as the best reason for attending.

Measuring Success

Your measures of success should of course be driven by your objectives. But they are no good if you don't put in place measurement processes. In some cases you will have to liaise with sales, customer service or billing to find out, for instance, if attendees placed orders or how much business was won.

For more focused measurement of event implementation be prepared to provide questionnaires on departure or email surveys after the event. Simply chatting to delegates and hosts to get anecdotal evidence is also a good way of determining how things went.

It is worth capturing a diverse set of information to enable you to evaluate the event from many angles. Checking on relevance of content, quality of speakers or accessibility of venue, for instance, provides input into tailoring future events and can even justify future marketing spend.

Finally any event is only as successful as its follow up. Create an action database to ensure that leads are tracked, interest/enquiries are logged and contacts are pursued. Then chase the people responsible – the hard part!

TOP TEN TIPS

1. Define objectives and target audience
2. Build your event and its content, style, theme around the above
3. Mail invites 6 weeks in advance
4. Secure speakers/key personnel prior to the invitation dispatch
5. Use a venue/location that is appropriate and accessible for your target audience
6. Set up an efficient registration process
7. Consider the use of demonstrations, exhibition stands, and partner presence. And rehearse
8. Use a professional Audio-Visual company to handle the presentation of finished content (video, autocue, lighting etc)
9. On the day peripherals make a big impression: think carefully about
 - Catering
 - On site literature
 - Post event entertainment
 - Event competitions/gifts
 - Delegate registration/badging
 - Accommodation/Parking
10. Work out a plan for obtaining feedback, analysis and chasing post event actions



About The Author

Hayley has lots of expertise in directing and managing marketing communications programmes across the business-to-business spectrum. Her experience covers the planning and implementation of many forms of communication, from business-led events and webcasts through to corporate literature production, copywriting and direct mail.

Contact Us

4sight has helped companies like BT, Digica, Dynistics, ITNET, Ramesys and Telewest. For further information on how we can help you please contact Hayley Fletcher on 01384 444899 or by email at hayley.fletcher@4sighttd.co.uk

Or visit the 4sight website for more information at <http://www.4sighttd.co.uk>