

8 Simple Steps to Successful Program Planning

Planning a program doesn't have to be overwhelming when you give attention to the big AND small details. Not only is it fun to coordinate an event that others will enjoy, you will enjoy the leadership journey that you experience along the way!

❑ Step 1 – Assessment

Who is your audience? What do they want? What resources do you have available to you? These are the questions you need answers to before you start planning a program...that is if you want anyone to come to it!

❑ Step 2 – Goals

What is the budget? What is the program theme or topic? What type of format will you use; a speaker, entertainment, educational, etc.? When will you have the program and who will be invited to attend? Goals will help you and your committee determine the vision for the program.

❑ Step 3 – Collaboration

Involve others in the process. Spread the wealth of leadership by inviting others to join you in coordinating the program.

Collaboration ensures that you have a diversity of talents, ideas, and lots of "human power" for the day of the event. And remember, people support what they help create!

Ask If You're Unsure

Not sure what direction to take a program? Unsure about liability and risk management concerns? Run things by your advisor—you don't need to do it all alone!

❑ Step 4 – Preplan

Take the time now and save time later.

- Determine and reserve venue
- Request and complete contracts
- Finalize budget—remember emergency fund for the unknowns
- Consider co-sponsorship if necessary

What Exactly is Backwards Planning?

Start with where you see yourself finishing and work backwards. You are less likely to forget the details this way.

- ▲ Develop a list of tasks that need to occur before, during, and after the event.
- ▲ Determine who is responsible for each of those tasks.
- ▲ Begin at the end of the event and determine the amount of time needed for each task and work backwards.
- ▲ Write each of the tasks and timeline on a common calendar and provide copies to every responsible party.

- Create a programming checklist that includes specific tasks, deadlines, and responsible parties
- Conduct a backwards planning session

❑ Step 5 – Promotion

If no one knows about the program, no one will show up! Brainstorm types of publicity. Spread the word through mediums that students tap into, whether it's social networks, posters, word-of-mouth, or a guy in a gorilla suit passing out flyers in the student center. Consider a budget for each promotional endeavor and establish a timeline.

Survey

Want to know what your target audience is looking for when it comes to programming on campus? Take an informal poll when talking with them. Put together a brief online survey at www.surveymonkey.com. Ask students to fill out a list of topics at a table set up outside the dining hall or during another event. Then you'll know how to focus your efforts.

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☐ Step 6 – The Day Before

This is the day to confirm, confirm, and confirm some more! If you followed steps 1 through 5, everything should be ready to roll. And, if you come across some surprises, today is the day to respond.

☐ Step 7 – The Day Of

It's time to walk through the event. Double check your lists, confirm with any volunteers, pick up equipment, check in on the venue, and meet up with entertainers/speakers prior to the actual event. Once the program gets started, sit back and enjoy!



☐ Step 8 - Follow Up

The most important step may actually be the final step, as it sets the stage for future programming efforts. Thank yous and an evaluation are your number one priorities immediately following the program. Proper etiquette suggests that you should write and send thank yous within 48 hours of the event. Return the equipment and leave the space better than you found it! Ask for feedback and write an evaluation.

What to Include in an Evaluation Report...

- ▲ Identify the goals accomplished
- ▲ Review the positive outcomes and the areas for improvement
- ▲ Provide a financial state of actual expenditures and revenue
- ▲ Attach a list of human resources that supported the event, including co-sponsoring organizations and groups

Take some time
to keep in Mind ...

...the logistics. Keep notes and stay organized. Identify and reserve any equipment you may need. Get handouts copied ahead of time. Take care of refreshments and other materials.

“The Little Things”

Sometimes it's the “little things” that make you and your efforts stand out. For instance...

- Send presenters/entertainers detailed info about where to park and where to go—they may not know the programming space the same way that you do
- Welcome your presenter and help him/her carry materials into the programming space
- Be prepared to turn off the lights if your presenter has a PowerPoint or slide show to share
- Make sure your programming space is accessible
- Have water available for presenters
- Test the equipment beforehand so you're not scrambling when participants get there
- Don't put perishable refreshments out too early—food can go bad and make folks sick
- Offer a proper introduction so your presenter feels welcomed—and valued
- Wrap up the event to give it a sense of closure—lead applause for the presenter, too
- Walk your presenter out and help carry his/her stuff
- Ask your presenter/entertainer for feedback on the event
- Create evaluations and invite participants to complete them following the program
- Have thank you cards in your desk drawer, ready to fill out as soon as the event is over!