

Organising events

Whether you're launching your time bank or organising a regional conference – organising events can be a major headache and when successful a major cause for celebration in themselves. Here's some top tips and a few resources that might prove useful:

My top six tips on organising an event Steve Plews, Events and Outreach Organiser

1. Identify the purpose of the event

Are you trying to raise profile, find new members, have a party to reward/bond existing members, introduce participants to funders, teach something to someone?

2. Invitation list and sending

Work out who you are going to invite (dignitaries, press, potential participants etc.) Obvious stuff like including all the information needed - what's happening where and when and a return address for RSVPs! It is worth remembering that depending on the event you have to invite between four and five times the number of people that you want to be there and once people have said they're coming up to 30% will not show.

3. Plan the event

Know what is going to happen at the event with as much detail as possible. It is good have a timetable of the day (only needs to be draft in advance). This helps to identify and put in to place what needs to happen in the run up to the event - e.g. if you are cutting a cake but make no provision for making or buying a cake before hand it ain't gonna happen! Also be realistic. If you are using different rooms remember that while it may only take an individual 30 seconds to walk between A and B it may take fifty people ten minutes.

4. Plan the weeks ahead of the event

Identify all the tasks that need to be done and work out a timetable for achieving them. Invite people 8 - 6 weeks ahead of the event, make sure that caterers and other suppliers have been booked and briefed well ahead (with caterers estimated figures are fine to start with and give more definite figures close to the event) Make sure that everyone who is working on the event knows what their responsibilities and ensure that there are regular checks to make sure that everything is being done and identify possible problems.

5. Put the punters at ease

Make sure that people know what is happening. Give out programmes if appropriate, have a reception area for when people arrive or an information desk if the event is longer where people can go and ask questions. If something is expected of people give clear examples.

6. Do something differently

Be extra creative and do something that will make people remember the event - an aerobics session to break up a long session of speeches, offer ice-creams during a break instead of coffee (like Happy Computers), give people a gift that's out of the ordinary that will remind them of the event - anything really that makes people think of your event when they go to other events and think "Oh I like the way that Time Banks did that" etc.

This is all really just common sense, but most of event organising is - the trick is to do number six well but not at the expense of the nuts and bolts stuff that make it all run smoothly.

Some additional resources

How to get celebrities involved in your event

See the story on the Society Guardian website at

<http://society.guardian.co.uk/practice/story/0,8115,435745,00.html>

Do make sure you fully brief your celebrity about your time bank to avoid embarrassing gaffs, and take wonderful care of them – so they want to come back another time.

On the Citizenconnection website:

Organising a one-off event (good tips, more from a campaigning angle)

<http://www.citizensconnection.net/PAGECZC%23%23%23%23%23%23%2300000380.vdf>

Get good results from publicity

<http://www.citizensconnection.net/PAGECZC%23%23%23%23%23%23%2300000583.vdf>

How to get media attention

<http://www.citizensconnection.net/PAGECZC%23%23%23%23%23%23%2300000880.vdf>

How to make friends with the media

<http://www.citizensconnection.net/PAGECZC%23%23%23%23%23%23%2300000891.vdf>

And for the events enthusiast

Organising special events for fundraising and campaigning

John F Gray and Stephen Elsdon

ISBN 1 900360-56-X Directory of Social Change 2000 £10.95 www.dsc.org.uk