



## **Decode Your Event:**

### **Where to Start When It's Your Responsibility to Plan a Successful Event**

Planning a truly successful event can be stressful, but it doesn't have to be if you start with a solid plan. Begin by answering two essential questions:

#### **WHO? And WHY?**

The what, where, when, how and everything else will fall into place once you've clearly established the "WHO & WHY."

#### **WHO?** Learn everything you can about the WHO:

- a. Number of guests attending \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Age range \_\_\_\_\_ Median age \_\_\_\_\_
- c. % male \_\_\_\_\_ % female \_\_\_\_\_
- d. % of guests w/spouses or dates \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Where are guests from? (local, national, international) \_\_\_\_\_
- f. % of guests who know each other \_\_\_\_\_
- g. % of guests who attended this event last year \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Relationship to host/company sponsoring event \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY?** Next, learn everything you can about the purpose of this event, both externally and internally:

There is almost always an **external, advertised purpose** for an event:

TO EDUCATE sales teams, dealers, distributors

TO AWARD outstanding achievers  
TO MOTIVATE employees  
TO HONOR incoming/outgoing V.I.P.s  
TO RECRUIT new members  
TO CELEBRATE a company's great year or anniversary  
TO SHOW APPRECIATION to top clients/customers  
TO MERGE two competitors bought out by another company

However there is also an unspoken **internal purpose**:

Ask "What is the intentional experience that you, or the powers that be, want to create for these guests?"

It's important at this juncture to understand that no matter what medals, plaques, trophies, or accolades with which you shower your guests, those objects serve only as half of the equation. The other equal if not more significant half is the EXPERIENCE they have. While gifts are an explicit expression of appreciation, they can't touch the power of a truly memorable experience—a gift that lasts forever. In the end, it is the quality of the experience that determines how successful the event has been.

#### THE REST OF THE PUZZLE

By knowing everything you can about the "WHO & WHY," you can create a solid framework that allows the rest of the puzzle pieces to easily fall into alignment.

That initial checklist might look something like this:

1. Venue options (Where)
2. Date options (When)
3. Billing of event (What)
4. Room/space layout options
5. Timeline/schedule options
6. If event involves food, options include:
  - ✓ Hors d'Oeuvres only

- ✓ Buffet only
- ✓ Sit-down, plated meal

7. AV/sound/light options
8. Vendor/supplier options
9. Décor options (or no décor)
10. Theme options (or no theme)
11. Speaker options
12. Entertainment options

Also, within each category are a multitude of options. With your focus remaining on who your guests really are and on the specific intention of your event, you can double-check every choice you have with this one qualifying question:

“Which option most supports our guests and that integral ‘intentional experience’ that we want to create?”

In every category on that checklist, without exception, there are dos and don’ts, ideal and less-than-ideal options. But when held up to the light of your framework and that one qualifying question, the correct choices will quickly become apparent.

For example, if your event is designed to encourage and allow guests time to network and connect with each other, you wouldn’t choose to have them sitting at round tables of twelve with gigantic centerpieces that restrict conversation, as pre-recorded music blares down through the house speaker system so loudly that they can barely hear themselves think. Just remember: if at any moment the overview begins to overwhelm you, simply take a deep breath and know that you have that clearly defined framework to fall back on.