OVERCOMING THREATS TO AN EVENT

A simple guide to increasing the effectiveness of an event throughout the planning process.

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This guide is designed to help your organisation plan and execute a successful event.

Introduction

Planning an event is relatively more difficult than one would expect. It requires a tremendous amount of organisation and communication skills, background knowledge of the type of event, an efficient network of reliable contacts and most importantly an open mind to enduring last minute changes.

Event planning encompasses a wide range of tasks, which often come as a surprise to the inexperienced organiser. Event planning includes a series of steps: preliminary research, finding a location, arranging transportation and accommodation, budgeting, etc.

An essential (yet often overlooked) part of event planning is the creation of a collection of supportive documents which, if used properly, allow volunteers and team members to understand their role and position. This guide was created to help organisations design, plan and execute a successful event. But what defines the success of an event? A successful event is one that achieves its intended purpose, in which attendees leave with the message intended to be conveyed.

This document entails information to guide any organisation on how to design, plan and execute a successful event. The major element to consider is always time. This resource will provide a guide in how to break up your time in planning for a successful event.

To achieve this, it is imperative that one also understands the potential risks that could undermine the success of the event, and thus ensure ways of preventing those risks and mitigating their effects if they were to occur. This is perhaps reflective of the famous Murphy's Law: "Anything that can, could have, or will go wrong, is wrong all at once." In other words, if something can go wrong, it is likely that it will indeed go wrong. This may seem pessimistic, but if we are aware of this reality, we can work to foresee, prevent and overcome problems along the way.

What could make an event go wrong...

As event planners, we often get so overwhelmed with the planning of the event itself that we forget to plan for failure. However, great event planners back up their back up plan. They have a risk management structure in mind to mitigate and account for risks such as the speakers pulling out at the last minute, the venue being locked or the caterer arriving late. We have compiled some of the main threats that can put an event on the edge of failing, and a method of overcoming each potential threat.

THREAT 1: Not enough experience

Things can get out of control pretty quickly if you don't have individuals allocated to the right roles in the team. Not having the right people in the right place is a recipe for disaster. An event team leader needs to have an overview of the workload and schedules for their team, and coordinate activities therein. Once the team manager understands each team member's capabilities, it will be much easier to get the task done in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Tips on overcoming this threat:

AS A TEAM MANAGER:	1 Lead your team.
	2 Positive reinforcement goes a long way.
	3 Listen to your team members and understand their strengths and weaknesses so you are able to manage them accordingly.

| AS A TEAM MEMBER: | 1 There is no 'I' in team. |
| | 2 Work according to your strengths and ability. |

A TEAM MANAGER NEEDS TO BE:	1 Someone with strong leadership.
	2 Someone who is organised/detail oriented.
	3 Someone who is not afraid to ask for things.
	4 Someone with knowledge of marketing, media relations or social media skills.
	5 Someone experienced with planning events and/or managing volunteers.

THREAT 2: Too few team members

Not every organisation has an event team dedicated to planning their event. Other times it could be that some team members are handling multiple events concurrently.

Tips on overcoming this threat:

1	Ask for help when you need it.
2	Approach or incorporate another organisation (if viable).
3	Recruit volunteers.
4	Be a team player.
5	Time management and good listening skills are key to planning and managing between two different events.
6	Support and acknowledge your team for their efforts.

THREAT 3: Purposeless event

Regardless of how small or large an event is, an event without a 'real' purpose is just another party. Too often, event attendees will only remember the food at the event. Unless you are holding an event about food cuisine, the only memory should not be how good the food was!

Tips on overcoming this threat:

1	Ask yourself "why are those particular guests being invited to your event?"
2	What should your event *mean* to them and what will it bring them?
3	Have an event management template filled out to have a clear understanding of the purpose of your event (refer to our *Event Planning template*).

What could make an event go wrong...

THREAT 4: Poor time management

Don't we all have those "Oh, I could have this done in no time!" moments? Don't we all procrastinate and wish we could go back in time to start planning sooner? While the event-planning checklist is a definite must-have, it is often of little to no use if the associated timeline is not understood. By having a structured checklist, you give yourself and the planning team the understanding of the event as a whole. This helps prioritise tasks according to importance.

Tips on overcoming this threat:

1	Set a short and long-term target to make sure tasks are completed on time *(see our Task Timeline Template)*.
2	Start off with the essential information, such as: venue, event size and what other events will take place on the same day *(see our Event Planning Template)*.
3	Create a detailed run-sheet to give to staff and volunteers on the day *(see our Running Sheet Template)*.

THREAT 5: Unclear budget

Event planners have to reach out to the public, be creative and do more, often with much less. With that being said, working with a small or limited budget is not impossible. You will have to develop tactful ways of steering your plan to success. Always be sure to set a spending threshold to your event so that you don't end up paying for your mistakes after.

Tips on overcoming this threat:

1	Set a clear budget limit for your event.
2	Be clear and upfront about your budget.
3	Track your expenses as you go.
4	Get creative and innovative.
5	Be resourceful in finding more cost-effective suppliers.

THREAT 6: Careless mistakes

Things sometimes slip through the cracks and are forgotten, only to be remembered at the very last possible minute. The secret to preventing simple mistakes in your event planning is to have a solid plan.

Tips on overcoming this threat:

1	Create an in-depth event plan that describes what needs to be done, when it needs to be done and by whom, in details!
2	Make sure you and your team all understand the plan. It is important that the participating team members are committed.

THREAT 7: Anything that can go wrong will go wrong

The biggest nightmare for any event are the last minute changes. Alongside the event timeline, it is essential that a **risk assessment plan** be put in place, which will allow for a smooth transition in case of *last minute changes*.

Tips on overcoming this threat:

1	Complete a risk assessment plan for the event *(see our Risk Assessment Template)*.
2	Identify where changes are most likely to occur or area where event success could be jeopardised.
3	Based on the risk assessment, be sure to have back up plans.

THREAT 8: Too many Apps

Having apps to manage everything is a well-organised skill, but when too many apps are involved, a tool for managing a budget, a tool to track your event tasks, emailing, registration etc, it can often lead to confusion.

Tips on overcoming this threat:

1	Keep in mind, the rule of thumb, less is more. Look for an integrated app as they go a long way in terms of communication and keeping the team updated.
2	When communicating with team members, it's important that you all agree on the best communication method and stick with it.
3	Based on the risk assessment, be sure to have back up plans.

After the event

Just as the components of planning and executing an event are crucial, so is the reflection phase. After an event, the most important step at the end is to gather your teams and your own thoughts, and document the results and feedback that you have received from your event participants.

"We do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience" - John Dewy

In this day and age, it is very common for most people to dismiss the notion of giving extra feedback and going to extra effort, as it has now become a commodity to constantly ask for feedback from the audience. Due to this, most people have had negative experiences in giving feedback; it takes too long, is boring, too complicated, they need to rush off to some other place, and they may have had experience in other places where their feedback and suggestions have not been valued in the past.

One easy way to get feedback on how the event went is surveys or questionnaires. They do not need to be long and complicated. Think about your audience, would they be more willing to submit an online feedback form, or is a paper-based survey a more effective mode? Taking into account your audience and their preferences will increase the willingness of participants to give you feedback.

The next time you hold an event similar to the one you just held, you can look back on the participant opinions and feedback, and in consultation with your own notes on what went well and what did not, you can change your future plans to avoid the same mistakes from occurring again. If you had ordered 10 pizzas but they fell short, for the next time, you will know to order more if expecting that same amount of people. Likewise, room sizes, whether the sound systems worked well on the day, and whether you stayed to your running sheet schedule are all important to note and change around for optimal event performance. Having a site visit before the event where you walk through the venue and confirm all the technological and venue requirements will often prevent issues from occurring in the first place.

"The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing" - John Paul

Importance of Using Templates

A template is a sample document, which already has some details in place that can be, adapted (added/completed, removed or changed). Templates serve as a starting point for a new document and save time. Using templates for planning events has the important benefit of maintaining document consistency across the planning process. For an organisation that plans and executes events on a regular basis, having a ready template that is preferred and trusted can help streamline the entire process, which will save time and reduces stress. Also, using templates that have proven to be effective in prior events will help with the overall effectiveness of the planning process and in turn the overall event. It also provides an opportunity to adapt and perfect templates for future events to obtain even better results in the future. A few templates have been attached in the next section below for your convenience.

Reasons you should use templates:

1	Templates save time in planning and make sure all aspects are covered.
2	They are customisable to fit your specific need.
3	Templates provide clarity for all team members involved, and allow for a consistent framework to be in place for organising events in the organisation.

Templates

1   Event Planning Template

This template provides you with the overall framework of the Who, What, Where, When, How and Why of the Event. It is the first template you should fill when organising an event, as it will give you the overarching content and high-level plan of what your event will encompass.

This template will help solidify your thoughts and transform them into a practical and attainable event.

	Event committee Planning and Management tasks	Your Event	Person allocated	Target Date	Completion Date
WHY	**Create Event plan** **What is the purpose of the event?** • Who, what, why, when • Goals • Connection to plan of work • Financial limitations	**Example:** A thank-you event for volunteers to feel appreciated and to meet other volunteers during National Volunteer Week. **Ideas for your event:** • • • •			
WHO	**Target audience**	**Example:** People who have volunteered with the organisation for the last year. **Ideas for your event:** • • • •			
WHAT	**Create preliminary agenda of event** • **What is the title of your event?**	**Example:** Thanking you for volunteering. **Ideas for your event:** • • • •			
	Food and Drinks • Catering • Dietary requirements • Appropriate for event	**Ideas for your event:** • • • •			

	Event committee Planning and Management tasks	Your Event	Person allocated	Target Date	Completion Date
WHAT	**What equipment and furniture do you need?** • Who, what, why, when • Goals • Connection to plan of work • Financial limitations	**Example:** For a volunteer networking event you will need tables, chairs, a laptop, microphone, glasses, plates, pull up banners etc. **Ideas for your event:** • • • •			
	What will your entertainment be? Book speakers • May book before venue, if speaker is more critical than date or location	**Example:** A panel discussion with guest speakers from variety of different backgrounds. **Ideas for your event:** • • • •			
WHERE	**Venue** • RFP • Contract negotiation • Signed contract	**Example:** Local community centre. **Ideas for your event:** • • • •			
HOW	**How will you promote the event?**	**Example:** On social media/Posters around the local area **Ideas for your event:** • • • •			

2   Task Timeline Example

You can fill out this template to assign, keep track of and delegate tasks well before the event takes place!

8-10 weeks out

- Determine the goal of the event and select the appropriate format for your desired message
- Recruit an event committee
- Contact guest speakers and lock them in
- Are you funded by your organisation or are you looking for sponsors?
  - Contact and confirm sponsors if needed

6-8 weeks out

- 1st event committee meeting
- Event brainstorming – what will the event look like?
- Confirm how many people you can involve and how many guests you plan to accommodate
- Determine resources needed
- Outline budget estimate
- Confirm event committee responsibilities and expertise
- Confirm date, time and location
  - Plan B in mind
- Contact facilities to confirm all intended plans
- Determine guest accommodation if they are domestic/international
- Contact catering if needed
- Create material to promote your event
- Develop an invitation list

4-6 weeks out

- 2nd event committee meeting
- Determine activities/talks
- Determine contract/permit
- Determine audio/visual needs
- Room requirements
  - Theatre style
  - Colour of table cloth
  - Shape and size of tables
  - Number of seats per table
- Recruit volunteers
  - Ensure volunteers are committed and have an allocated role
- Order signage and materials

- Reserve required equipment
- Prepare event flyers/ communications
- Order event supplies and personalised volunteer T-shirts
- Send out invites
- Promote your event
  - Reach out to local organisations
  - Reach out on social media
  - If your budget is tight take advantage of free community calendars in papers
  - Early bird ticket sale
  - VIPs ticket sale
  - Student discount

2-4 weeks out

- 3rd event committee meeting
- Secure all contracts/permits
- Arrange all equipment needed
- Develop Plan B if it's an outdoor event
- Confirm opening and closing speaker
- Develop an in-depth run of show
- Continue promoting event
  - Contact local organisation to advertise your event in store and on social media
  - Volunteers and committee members to advertise on their personal social media accounts
- Keep in touch with volunteers/assign tasks for the day of the event
- Caterers to be given an estimated number of attendees and dietary requirements

1-2 weeks out

- 4th event committee meeting
- Get attendees excited using regular online posts, giveaways and competitions
- Determine who will deliver materials/receive materials
- Confirm time with event speakers
- Determine how guest speakers will arrive
- Confirm volunteer shifts and tasks
- Finalise event run of show
- Update caterers with number of attendees

Week/day of event

- 5th event committee meeting
- Finial social media post the night before event
- Distribute event agenda
- Final walk through with event committee
- Committee/volunteer nametags
- Volunteer instructions
- Guest list and name tags printed and prepared
- Arrive early for event set up
- Do an A/V sound check
- Confirm all set-ups are completed
- Take photos during the event
- Get feedback from attendees

After the event

- Final event committee meeting
  - Recap/evaluate event
- Debrief event as a team (positives/negatives)
- Send thank you note to guests
- Review feedback from attendees
- Discuss areas of success and whether improvements are required

3   Task Timeline Template

You can fill out this template to assign, keep track of and delegate tasks well before the event takes place!

Time till event:	What Needs to be done:	Done ☑
8-10 weeks out	• • • •	
6-8 weeks out	• • • •	
4-6 weeks out	• • • •	
2-4 weeks out	• • • •	
1-2 weeks out	• • • •	
Week/day of event	• • • •	
After event	• • • •	

4 Risk Control Plan Template

In order to mitigate any major/minor risks for the day of the event, it is imperative that a risk control plan is formulated and distributed to all individuals involved in the organisation, from the maintenance workers to the core event manager, all should have this with them on the day of the event.

Name of Event:	Exact Location:
Date and Time of event:	Expected number of attendees:
Event Manager Name and telephone number:	Person completing Risk Assessment:

Task / Issue / Hazard	What could go wrong	Person affected/ Location	Risk Rating (High/ Low) Occurrence and consequence evaluation	Risk Control Measures	By who and When?	Notes
E.g. Crowds	Crushing	Any person at event	This is classified as HIGH risk [As this has a high chance of occurring, and the consequence of crushing can lead to sever injuries]	-Design layout of event to reduce concentration of people in any one place. -Have two individuals assigned to crowd control	Sara and Michael	Volunteers to also assist

5   Event Evaluation Form Template

Part of the event management process is evaluating how the attendees felt about the event. This can give valuable insight into bettering the event in the future. This template illustrates a simple evaluation form structure, which is comprised of a few short answers and a simple rating scale.

Workshop Evaluation Form:	
Name (optional):	Date
1. What did you find to be most useful in today's session?	
2. What did you find least useful?	
3. Was there anything you felt was missing from the session or anything you would like to have known more about?	
4. In what other ways could we improve the session?	
5. Please rate the following:	
6. Please use the back of this form for any additional comments.	

6   Running Sheet Example

To be on top of everything that is occurring in the event, from the set-up to the pack-up timing, it is important that the whole team is aware of what is happening, and who is responsible. This is one of the later steps in the event planning stage, as it is at this stage that everything should be finalised, put into place and confirmed. This is the master sheet of how the event will run.

Name of event: E.g. Islamic Discussion Panel
Location: E.g. Hall 123, 456 Epping Rd, Epping
Date: E.g. 1/2/18

8:00 AM	Arrival of event team at the main foyer • Hold a quick meeting with event team to get everyone on the same page • Do an A/V sound check • Organise registration tables at entrance with materials (signage, banner, show bag and information booklet). • Organise tables in main foyer for give-away items • Organise morning tea tables in the foyer outside room GS303 • Organise prayer room and place sign outside the door • Review volunteers allocated positions
9:30 AM	Registration Opens • Registration open • Volunteers separate to their allocated positions • Speakers arrive to venue
EVENT OPENING	

10:00 AM – 10:10 AM	Welcome event attendees (we expect that all attendees and guests have arrived).
	• 10:02 AM – Person A welcomes attendees
	• 10:04 AM – Event committee welcome/ instructions
	  - Why the event needed
	  - Program for the day
	• 10:07 AM – Person A welcome guest speakers
	  - Ust. Ahmed
	  - Ust. Bilal
	  - Hamza
	  - Subboor
	  - Dalya
	• 10:10 AM – Introduce first speaker

10:10 AM - 10:40 AM	First speaker (30 min) • Guest Ust. Ahmed • Person A welcomes guest on stage • Speaker Assistant with speaker at all times • Timing Keeping Manager to keep an eye on time • Person A to ensure next talk runs smoothly • Media Committee photographing and snapping videos • Registration Team to ensure late attendees enter smoothly and quietly • Crowd Control Team has Q&A under control.

6   Running Sheet Example (cont)

10:40 AM – 11:10 AM	Transition Person A to transition smoothly and introduce new speaker Second speaker (30 min) • Guest Hamza • Person A welcomes guest on stage • Speaker Assistant with speaker at all times • Timing Keeping Manager to keep an eye on time • Person A to ensure next talk runs smoothly • Media Committee photographing and snapping videos • Registration Team to ensure late attendees enter smoothly and quietly • Crowd Control Team have Q&A under control • Talk ends at 11: 43 AM
11:10 AM – 11:15 AM	(Person A to introduce the discussion and give a short talk/message while transition takes place) Quick change over break (5 min) • Attendees making their way to their registered workshop or staying for the discussion • Speaker Assistant to accompany the speak to the workshops • Crowd Control Team to make sure noise is minimised Transition Team make sure crowd move smoothly

11:15 AM – 11: 45 PM	Discussion between two speakers • Guest speakers Hamza and Subboor • Crowd Control team present • Speaker Assistant present • Media Team present • Q&A from Talk 1 and 2 answered here • Guest to return to main hall	Workshop 1 • Guest speaker Ust. Ahmed • Crowd Control Team present • Speaker Assistant present • Media Team present • Guest to return to main hall	Workshop 2 • Guest speaker Dalya • Crowd Control Team present • Speaker Assistant present • Media Team present • Guest to return to main hall

11:45 AM – 11:55 AM	Transition time (5 min) (Person A to introduce spoken work and give a short talk/message while transition takes place)
11:55 PM – 12:10 PM	Spoken words (15 min) • Person A – welcome the guest on stage • Timing keeping manager to keep an eye on time • Media Committee photographing and snapping videos • Prayer team to organise prayer area • Break Team to help crowd control once spoken word is finished • Munch Team to organise lunch area

12:25 PM – 01:10 PM	Break (45 min) • Dhuhr break • Lunch break • Once prayer is over, prayer team to clear the area • Speaker Assistant to organise lunch and private room of needed • Guest Speaker to meet and great if interested • Timing Keeping Manager to keep an eye on time • Person A to make an announcement
01:10 PM – 01:40 PM	Third speaker (30 min) • Person A introduce guest speaker/welcome speaker on stage • Guest Speaker Subboor • Speaker Assistant with speaker at all times • Timing Keeping Manager to keep an eye on time • Person A to ensure next talk runs smoothly • Media Committee photographing and snapping videos • Registration Team to ensure late attendees enter smoothly and quietly • Crowd Control Team have Q&A under control
01:40 PM – 01:45 PM	Person A to introduce student panel and give a short talk/message while transition takes place)

01:45 PM – 02:15 PM	Student panel • Student to speak about experience/struggles they have – practicing Islam etc.... • Crowd Control Team present • Speaker Assistant present • Media Team present • Guest to return to main hall	Workshop 3 • Guest speaker Ust. Dalya • Crowd Control Team present • Speaker Assistant present • Media Team present • Guest to return to main hall	Workshop 4 • Guest Speaker Subboor • Crowd Control Team present • Speaker Assistant present • Media Team present • Guest to return to main hall

02:15 PM – 02:20 PM	Person A to introduce fourth speaker and give a short talk/message while transition takes place)
02:20 PM – 02:50 PM	Fourth speaker (30 min) • Person A welcome guest on stage • Guest Hamza • Speaker Assistant with speaker at all times • Timing Keeping Manager to keep an eye on time • Person A to ensure next talk runs smoothly • Media Committee photographing and snapping videos • Registration Team to ensure late attendees enter smoothly and quietly • Crowd Control Team have Q&A under control

6   Running Sheet Example (cont)

Time	Details
02:50 PM – 03:20 PM	Transition Person A to transition smoothly and introduce new speaker Fifth speaker (30 min) • Guest Ustadh Bilal • Person A welcomes guest on stage • Speaker Assistant with speaker at all times • Timing Keeping Manager to keep an eye on time • Person A to ensure next talk runs smoothly • Media Committee photographing and snapping videos • Registration Team to ensure late attendees enter smoothly and quietly • Crowd Control Team have Q&A under control
03:20 PM – 03:35 PM	Transition Person A to transition smoothly and introduce spoken words Spoken words (15 min) • Person A – welcome the guest on stage • Time Keeping Manager to keep an eye on time • Media Committee photographing and snapping videos • Prayer Team to organise prayer area • Break Team to help crowd control once spoken word is finished • Munch Team to organise afternoon tea
03:35 PM – 04:05 PM	Break • Asr break • Afternoon break • Once prayer is over, Prayer Team to clear the area • Speaker Assistant to organise afternoon tea and private room of needed • Guest speaker to meet and great if interested • Time Keeping Manager to keep an eye on time • Person A to make an announcement

Time	Discussion between two speakers	Workshop 5	Workshop 6
04:05 PM – 04:35 PM	Discussion between two speakers • Guest speakers Ust. Bilal and Subboor • Person A introduce guest speaker/welcome speaker on stage • Crowd Control Team present • Speaker Assistant present • Media Team present • Q&A from Talk and 2 answered here • Guest to return to main hall	Workshop 5 • Guest speaker Ust. Ahmed • Crowd Control Team present • Speaker Assistant present • Media Team present • Guest to return to main hall	Workshop 6 • Guest speaker Hamza • Crowd Control Team present • Speaker Assistant present • Media Team present • Guest to return to main hall

04:35 PM – 04:40 PM	Person A to give a short talk/message while transition takes place)
EVENT CLOSING	
04:40 PM – 05:00 PM	Closing ceremony • 04:42 PM – Person A thank/praise Allah and introduce guest speakers to stage for closing speech • 04:44 PM – Guest Hamza giving a closing speech • 04:50 PM – Guest Subboor giving a closing speech • 04:55 PM – Person A thank you to all attendees • 05:00 PM – Event attendees depart
05:00PM – 07:00 PM	Pack up • Speaker Assistant and Person A/ other committee to give gifts to guest speaker. • Speaker Assistant to assist with guest departure • Event team to check-in and prep for final clean up • All depart after a successful event

7   Running Sheet Template

Name of Event:				
Date and Time: E.g. 10:30 am – 1:00 pm, 30/07/18				
Location:				
Organisers:				
Emergency Contact:				
Time:	**Duration:**	**Action/Task:**	**Who:**	**Notes:**
E.g. 10:00AM -10:15AM	15 mins	Set up Room	Safia, Bilal, Adam	- Make sure all the decorations and streamers are up. - Take out refreshments and lay out on the tables - Set out the plates, spoons and napkins

Notes

Notes

Notes