7 Steps For Successful Church Events

with Deborah Ike

Obviously we all want our church events to be successful and where we see people that attend those events, they grow in their faith, they have an incredible experience, they meet new people and start cultivating stronger relationships with folks within the church. We also want our staff and our volunteers to have a great experience as well. We don't want them stressed out and working crazy hours the week beforehand to pull this thing off.

While it's great to have those goals, those don't happen by accident. We have to put some processes in place to make our events successful, to make them successful and not stressful for the folks involved. That's what I want to really talk about today.

I've had some experience in planning events for churches and also for working in project management in Fortune 500 company. What I have done is taken some of those very structured project management processes and figured out how to apply them for planning church events. Now, obviously it's a lot different from working in a project management software company or software development process versus planning a church event, but there's some stuff that I was able to take and apply from one group to the next.

That's where this process has come from and I've used this process to help church plan events from about 1,200 people at a ladies brunch all the way up to nearly 10,000 people at a community outreach event, so this process works for events of various styles and sizes.

The first part of the process is to **clarify the vision**. What are we trying to accomplish with this particular event? Who are we trying to reach? What do we want the outcomes to be of the event? Do we want them just to receive some help and assistance; do we want to make sure they come back to the church; do we want to see marriages strengthened, etc.? What are the final outcomes and the overall vision of this event? Because we want to know exactly: why are we doing this? Why are we spending all the time, energy, money, resources to make this happen?

If we can't really think of a solid reason or if it's because we've just always done this particular event, we might need to reconsider either refocusing it and making sure we do have some solid purpose and

THE BIG IDEA

Awesome events don't happen by accident. They take intentional planning and organization.

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vision for it or just not doing it altogether. So that's clarify the vision.

The second piece of this process is to **assemble a team**. You need a team of people who are going to come together for the sole purpose of making this event successful. The key person in all this is what I would call your event coordinator. This is the person who's kind of like the conductor of the orchestra. They're making sure that you have all the right people in place, that everyone's playing their notes at the right time at the right volume, and that everyone's working together and everyone's in sync.

This person would really coordinate everything throughout the process and would be your go-to person as the leader of the ministry or the pastor of the church to be able to find out, "Okay, what's going on? What decisions do you need from me?" etc. So step two is assemble a team.

Step three is to **develop your plan** and this really is part of the main role of the event coordinator is to put that plan together. They're not just pulling this out of thin air. They're going to talk with each person on the team to find out, "Okay, what do we need to do to make this thing happen?" They go talk to the worship leader to figure out what songs they need to put together, and how long that's going to take, and when do they need to pull together a rehearsal team, etc.

They're going to talk with your childcare team. If you're going to provide childcare at the event, they all need to do some planning to make sure all of that's put in place. They'll talk with folks that handle stage design and the sound and lighting at your church to make sure all that's going to be tuned in correctly for the event. The event coordinator's going to go around, get all the lists of all the tasks, all the stuff that needs to happen to make this event successful, and put it together in one document, ideally online.

Anyway, they'll put that document, that project plan, if you will, together and it'll show the task, so what needs to be done, who's responsible for that task, name of that individual, and when it's due. It's ideal to also show, okay, if person A finishes this part of the task but this other person needs that information to finish their work, where that hand-off happens. The event coordinator helps work with all of that. So that's developing the plan.

The fourth part is **executing the plan**. This is where you take all that work that you've done on paper and you do it in real life. Again, the event coordinator is working with the team, reminding folks, "Hey, Susie, you've got these three tasks due next month. Can you make sure that you're on track or let me know if you have any questions?" Stuff like that. They're just making sure everyone's on the same page, everyone's on

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target, everything's running smoothly.

The fifth step is to **monitor and report progress.** Now this is where the event coordinator puts together just kind of a one page or maybe even half a page, just quick little synopsis of where they're at, and they send that to senior pastor or the ministry leader over this particular event. Maybe weekly, monthly, whatever you want, just to let you know, "Hey, here's where we're at. Here's any issues that have popped up that we need you to weigh in on. Here's some things that we corrected from last time," etc. Just so you know that, "Hey, everything's under control."

Step six is event day. **Facilitate the day of the event**, make sure everything runs smoothly. Again, your event coordinator's going to be the person walking around, making sure everything's running smoothly. Everyone on the team, at this point, is well aware of their role, what they need to be doing the day of the event. They've already recruited volunteers to help them and ideally, the day of the event is just a culmination of all of the work that's been done the prior few months.

Now, one would think that when event day is over, you're done, but not quite. Almost. The final step, number seven, is to **lead some what I call post-event activities**. Essentially these are just two different things. One is to celebrate. You've just made this big event happen. It was successful, you had a lot of people there, you met the goals that you had set out to achieve when you started planning all this, and everyone was having a good day that day, right? So you want to celebrate that success with your team and show how much you appreciate all of the work that they put into practice to make that happen.

The second part of the post-event activities is just to have a "lessons learned" session. This is where you talk about, "What did we do that went really well that we want to make sure that we carry over into future events? And where were some of the hiccups that, you know, no matter how well we plan, stuff happens, we know." We just want to document those, brainstorm a couple of potential solutions, and then take those lessons and carry them forward for your future events.

Again, recapping real quick: step number one, clarify the vision. Step two: assemble the team. Step three: develop the plan. Step four: execute the plan. Step five is to monitor and report progress. Step six: facilitate event day, and step seven is to lead those post-event activities. I cover all of this in much greater detail in my book, "The Church Event Planning Toolkit." It's now available on Amazon in paperback and Kindle version, so you can take it with you anywhere, and I'd love for you to check that out.

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