

Association events are often planned two to five years in advance and account for millions in revenue to the destination cities.

- Charity and fundraising events require a unique skill set and a focus on financial management, creativity, and public relations.

- Social events include many events from a simple birthday party to an extravagant wedding. Wedding planners are often used to orchestrate the more elaborate affairs and destination weddings.

- Fairs and festivals include small local events, large state fairs, and annual festivals such as Mardi Gras or the Gilroy Garlic Fest. These events require meticulous planning, sponsorships, and manpower.

- Concerts and sporting events provide another avenue for special events ranging from local sports tournaments to massive events such as the football, tennis, or a major concert.

- Mega sporting events bring large amounts of revenue and viewers to the event, the surrounding entertainment, and events leading up to the actual event. Some of the most popular mega sporting events include the Super Bowl, the World Cup of Soccer, and the Olympics.

Traits and Skills of a Successful Event Manager

Learning Objective 3: Describe the traits and skills of a successful event manager.

Special events management, like any other form of management, requires certain skills and abilities. The act of carrying out a successful event takes more than just an idea—it takes leadership, communication, project management, effective negotiating and delegating skills, the ability to work within a budget, enthusiasm, and social skills. The following sections will provide insight into some of these traits and skills.

Leadership

As a leader, the event manager will wear many hats. The first is to inspire others by providing valid reasons as to why they should want to assist in achieving the established goals for the event. In this role, the event manager will also act as a salesperson. The second hat represents the event manager's responsibility to provide tools for the staff and volunteers to achieve the goals. This includes training and coordination. The third hat the event manager will wear will be that of a coach. The event manager as a leader will act as mentor and provide a support system to build a team. Staff and volunteer motivation is an important factor for effective event management. Leadership ability is the number-one skill for successful event managers. The goal of an event manager is to become a leader who can direct a team of employees and/or volunteers who will respect, admire, and follow your direction to accomplish the established goals.

Communication

The success of an event manager greatly depends on the ability of involved individuals to communicate effectively with one another. Communication can take different forms: oral, written, and electronic. It is very important for event managers to become effective communicators in order to maintain clear communications with all staff, volunteers, stakeholders, and other departments.

Written communications are an essential tool for record keeping and providing information to be mass distributed. Communication with other departments, clients, or vendors may take place in person or in an online meeting. Creating a presence for the event on social media is another way to communicate.

Delegation

One person cannot do everything, but managers seldom delegate enough. This contradiction is typical in the events business. The secret is to plan ahead of time and allow time for tasks to be delegated to others to help facilitate the smooth operation of an event. For successful delegation, a climate of trust and a positive working environment are needed. Also required is a committed associate who will complete the delegated task and who will communicate effectively throughout the process.

Negotiation

Negotiation is the process by which two or more parties reach an agreement on the terms and conditions that will govern their relationship before, during, and after a meeting, convention, exposition, or event. Effective negotiators will enter the negotiation with a good idea of what they want.

Before entering into a negotiation, keep the following tips in mind:

- Do your homework. Develop a "game plan" of the outcomes sought, and prioritize your needs and wants.
- Leave something on the table. It may provide an opportunity to come back later and renew the negotiations.
- When there is a roadblock, find a more creative path. Thinking "outside the box" often leads to a solution.

Social Skills

Social skills are an important trait for any management position. Social skills are critical in making those you do business with feel comfortable, in handling situations appropriately, and in eliminating barriers that get in the way of accomplishing your goals. Communication is a critical social skill as is another social skill—listening. Social etiquette is another skill that can make or break a career, and it is a practiced skill that can be acquired. Social etiquette is defined as exhibiting good manners established as acceptable to society and showing consideration for others. Professionals in the hospitality industry, including the special events field, must be proficient in proper social etiquette. Service is one of the largest products offered; therefore, social skills and etiquette are required to be successful.

Project Management

Event planning and management can be time consuming. Therefore, a good planner should have effective project management skills to be equipped to balance all of the elements of one event (or more if there are other events going on at the same time). Project management is the act of completing the project(s) on time and within budget. Project management is a perfect fit for the special events industry, where the entire event or components of an event can be managed as projects.

Enthusiasm

As you've probably heard time and time again, in any hospitality field the risk of burnout is high and the work is demanding. At the same time, however, the rewards are great and so is the satisfaction when the event is a complete success. As perfectly stated by Norman Brinker, past chairman of the board of Brinker International, "Find out what you love to do and you'll never work a day in your life. . . . Make work like play and play like hell!"⁴ Enthusiasm and passion, drive and determination: These are all qualities that will contribute to the success of an event manager/planner. For those with the right enthusiasm and passion, it can be a truly rewarding career path.

Check Your Knowledge

LO 3: Describe the traits and skills of a successful event manager.