THE BUSINESS OF event planning

Behind-the-Scenes Secrets of Successful Special Events

JUDY ALLEN

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This book is dedicated to my mom and dad, Walter and Ruth, to my sister Marilyn and my nieces Natasha and Jasmine, my extended family Hans and Blair, my Aunt Eleanor and Uncle George, my cousin Linda who is in my heart daily, Mykila and Grayson, Uncle Alfred (B), Aunt Dinah, Uncle Alfred (F) and Aunt Rachel, Uncle Rennie and Aunt Gladys, Aunt Lydia, Uncle Arch, Aunt Maria and Uncle Joe, my grandparents Hannah and James Blundon and Emma and Walter Foote, and all my other relatives and friends—both here and departed—who are in my thoughts and prayers more often than they may ever realize. September 11 brought home for all of us the importance and value of family, friends, people we work with and those who make our days a little easier and the meaningfulness of structuring our lives so that we can spend time with those we love and doing what holds significance to us.

This book is also dedicated to all those who I have had the pleasure of working with around the world creating special events. Event planning is truly a team effort and working in this field brings very special people into your lives—business associates, suppliers, clients, guests and those working behind the scenes. Some you will never forget—Rick Sykes, Steve Hughes, Joe Fowler, Mark Merino, Greg Brilhart will always be remembered by those who worked with them.

And to Bernie who reminded me in the middle of setting up an event in Key West to stop for a moment and savor the sunset, Moon who invited me on a sunrise trail ride to see Tucson at its best, John who always demonstrates incredible spirit, Deni, Jayne and David who can make you laugh even in the midst of major setups. To Fran, Carol, Denise and Linda with whom I had the pleasure of working beside around the world—they are the best of the best, and Nina who is an amazing lady who taught me a very valuable lesson.

In event planning, we strive to create memorable events for others and in the process we end up creating wonderful lasting memories for ourselves—if we remember to stop, savor the sunsets and experience the magical moments when the event is swirling live around us.

CONTENTS

Preface **xi**
Acknowledgements **xvii**

Chapter 1: The Strategic Planning of Event Design **1**
External Objectives 2
Internal Objectives 4
Day One Client Itinerary 12
Day Two Client Itinerary 15
Day Three Client Itinerary 19
Day Four Client Itinerary 21
Day Five Client Itinerary 23
Day Six Client Itinerary 24
Day Seven Client Itinerary 25

Chapter 2: Preparing the Proposal **27**
The Proposal Request 28
The Qualification Meeting 29
The Proposal 30
Proposal Preparation: The Initial Steps 31
Making Contact With Key Suppliers 33
Proposal Preparation 44

Chapter 3: The Body of the Proposal **47**
Cover Letter 49
Destination Review 53
Transportation Requirements 59

Hotel Information 63
Day-by-Day Detailed Itinerary 75
Grid 85
Cost Summary Sheet 86
Detailed Program Inclusions 87
Program Options and Enhancements 109
Company Profile 113
References 113
Backup Material 114
Bringing It All Together 115

Chapter 4: Management Fees 119
Four Types of Fees 120

Chapter 5: Contractual Negotiations With Suppliers 143
Negotiating With Suppliers 148

Chapter 6: Client Contracts 171
The Three Rules of Contracts 172
Areas Covered in the Client Contract 173
Payment 174
Liability and Responsibility 177
Dates and Other Details 180
Food and Beverage Hazards 182
Technical Riders and Other Requirements 185
Doing Your Homework 188

Chapter 7: Safety and Security 191
Travel Information 194
Checklists for Out of Town Events 198
Ensuring Client Safety 199
Other Safety Issues 202
New Areas of Consideration for Safety and Security 203

Chapter 8: Event Planning Technology Tools and Emerging Trends 205
Event Planning Technology Options 206

Chapter 9: Multicultural and Foreign Event Planning 221
Local Customs, Protocol and Etiquette 222
Religious Beliefs 227
Local Cultural and Political Matters 227

Chapter 10: Event and Program Branding 231
Establishing a Brand 231
The Branded Image 235
Program Branding 236
The Branding Commitment 239
Protecting the Client's Image and Standards 240

Chapter 11: Conclusion 243

Appendix 247
Sample Proposal/Senior Management 276
Sample Proposal/Incentive Sales Group 312

Index 325

PREFACE

This book is a follow-up to *Event Planning: The Ultimate Guide to Successful Meetings, Corporate Events, Fundraising Galas, Conferences, Conventions, Incentives and Other Special Events*. Whereas *Event Planning* is about how to launch a special event successfully (timing, location, menu planning, transportation, decor etc.), this volume covers all the behind-the-scenes considerations that any planner needs to take into account before actually planning the event itself. *Event Planning* helps readers design a successful event; *The Business of Event Planning* helps them to be successful in their own special events business, as well as with the events they plan.

Before any thought is even given to the timing or location of the event, before the menus are selected and the decor designed, there are strategic objectives to be determined, proposals to be written, fees and contracts to be negotiated, and safety issues to be considered. *The Business of Event Planning* takes you behind-the-scenes of organizing special events and explains every aspect of the business and the strategy behind successful events. This book will be of value to both the professional event planner and to clients who are hiring and working in partnership with professional planners.

This book covers all the behind-the-scenes aspects of special events, starting right from the beginning with determining strategic objectives for any event. It follows with client proposals—how they are prepared, what they should include, how they are laid out, and why certain elements will influence client decisions and win planners the business. From a client's perspective, the book will help them understand what exactly the proposal that they hold in their hands is, and how to assess it. The book also covers the psychology and strategic thinking that plays a part in how management fees are determined. There are pros and cons to the various methods of calculating these fees, and each serves a purpose in telling you more about who you will be doing business with, whether from the standpoint of the event planner or the client—and who you should walk away from.

Other strategic and business issues covered include: contractual negotiations, client contracts, and event branding, as well as designing events in multicultural settings or for multicultural guests, which requires heightened sensitivity and awareness when planning meetings, conferences and special events

The event planning principles and procedures that I have designed can be adapted and applied to any kind or size of event in all industries from a multimillion-dollar stage extravaganza to a local school affair. The industry language and content material will change but the planning principles and procedures remain the same. Although the book appears to address only professional event planning companies, that was done for convenience and not meant to exclude everyone else. The solid foundation that is outlined in each chapter of the book provides the blueprint on which to build your event regardless of the field you are in. Both *Event Planning* and *The Business of Event Planning* cross over from corporate events (award presentations, product launches, premieres, conferences, conventions, incentives) to social entertaining (gala fund-raisers, society events, weddings, anniversaries and other personal celebrations) and address the needs of the event planning industry as a whole.

That industry is made up of many facets. What exactly is event planning? Who are event planners? What type of events do they plan? What industries do event planning? Who is hiring? These are questions I am frequently asked by those starting out in the business as well as by experienced event planners looking to change direction, to transfer their planning skills from one area to another or who are looking for hidden event planning niches that match their interests and

passions. Each is seeking a gold mine of information regarding associations, courses and certification and related industry publications they may not be aware of that can provide direction in the planning field of their choice.

An event has often been defined as an occurrence, a significant gathering or activity that takes place often in a social setting. And planning is the method worked out beforehand for accomplishing an objective. It is a systematic arrangement and assignment of elements or important parts. Event planning is like performing a high-wire act without safety nets. Once your event starts there are no second chances. It is done in one take, and there are no dress rehearsals. You cannot predict how your guests and suppliers will interact and react when you bring them together, but you can plan, prepare and be prepared for the unexpected. Event planning is a creative and challenging undertaking, whether you are staging an event for thousands or a handful of guests. The goal is the same for all event planning—to produce a meaningful and memorable event that meets and exceeds the event objective and to eliminate unexpected expenses and surprises.

Event planning and management covers a wide spectrum from major award presentations such as the Academy Awards, to the intricacies involved in the development, timing and logistics of the next reality TV show, anticipated fashion house launches, or the local school fund-raising drive. Each in its own way is an event to be thought out, planned, managed and produced. Events can be held locally or anywhere in the world, which requires an additional set of planning skills. Out of country events are more complicated because added into the design of the actual event the planner has to factor in the timing and logistics of transporting guests to and from the actual destination. Guests can be departing from one central location or arriving from multiple departure points from around the world.

In the field of event planning you will find professional in-house event planners, event planning companies, freelancers, suppliers and volunteers. In-house event planners are those who are full- or part-time employees of the company they work for. They handle all of their company's event planning requirements internally or may work in partnership with an event planning company and suppliers. Event planning may be their full-time responsibility or just one part of their job description. The responsibilities of in-house event planners may include the coordination of meetings, conferences, conventions, incentives, award presentations, product launches, corporate-sponsored events and other