



HOW TO ORGANISE A SUCCESSFUL THEMED EVENING

Organising a themed evening is a uniquely effective way to thank and reward your employees or your top customers and to build loyalty. But what's the best way to combine creativity, image-building and logistics for an event they'll all remember?

STEP 1 – CLEARLY DEFINE THE OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR EVENT IN ORDER TO DRAW UP YOUR BRIEF

Organising an evening event is a communications initiative in its own right: it should help you meet the goals you have set yourself. In order to achieve this, define the context for your event (celebrating a landmark for your company, a reward for achieving good results, building loyalty among your top customers, etc.), its audience (number and profile) and the message you want to get across.

- The answers to these questions provide the raw material for drawing up your event brief and will be passed on to the managers in charge of organising your project.
- Your brief should be clear and precise: goal of the event, target audience, context, any potential constraints, etc. If you already have an idea of your desired theme, the mood you wish to create or the kind of world you want to immerse your guests in, don't hesitate to describe it. Above all don't forget to specify the budget available – or at least a fairly precise, realistic guideline budget range. Your contacts need this key information in order to come up with the best options for you. It's also useful to include plenty of information about events you have held previously and about your company's operations (activity, sales, main competitors, number and profile of employees, etc.), along with a few internal newsletters and a company brochure. These items will help your contacts get to know you better and come up with an appropriate tailor-made solution for your event.

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STEP 2 – CHOOSING THE VENUE AND THEME FOR THE EVENING

The offer available is vast, ranging from a plain reception room or a neutral space in a convention or exhibition centre through to historic venues and original settings. An evening that cleverly combines prestige and originality will imprint a strong, positive image of your company in participants' minds. Amaze them – and you'll win them over!

- A number of key factors will play a decisive role in your choice of venue – accessibility, the quality of catering, its capacity, etc. A recce is vital to confirm the quality of the proposed offer. This will allow you to meet the teams at the venue, who – having received your event brief in advance – will be able to offer you tailored and turnkey event concepts. Nothing should be left to chance – from entertainment to deciding the appropriate table settings and furniture for the theme of your event.

For more information about carrying out a recce, we suggest that you download our *Practical Info Sheet No. 1: «Carrying out a recce»*.

- When selecting your date, check that it doesn't coincide with any major national events, or with events of a similar kind in your sector. Also avoid holding your event close to a bank holiday, during school holidays and potentially during major sporting events, in order to ensure that the maximum number of guests can attend.
- Send your request to your contact at the venue. If it is possible to put on the event you are hoping for, and if the solutions offered and price meet your requirements, place an option as soon as you can in order to reserve your booking.

STEP 3 – REINFORCING THE THEME OF YOUR EVENING

Whatever kind of venue you have chosen – a neutral structure, or a venue that typifies the mood you wish to create for your evening – make sure that you make the most of all available technical resources to reinforce your chosen theme. Also ensure that you also choose appropriate furniture, floral arrangements and entertainment. These details really do make a difference – pay attention to them and you'll amaze your guests.

- A technical team can very easily add to the atmosphere by varying the lighting effects (colour, intensity, etc.), playing appropriate background music, or creating special sound or visual effects. Anything is possible! Sometimes a small detail is all it takes to customise a venue.
- The furniture should match the theme of your evening. Here, too, a few touches can transform a venue and create a distinctive mood.
- Appropriate floral decorations also play a very important role. Drawing on their expert knowledge and creativity, florists can really bring your space to life, with classical, original or avant-garde arrangements.
- Entertainment is one of the highlights of your event, playing a vital role in keeping your guests entertained during the reception and throughout dinner. Close-up performers who are in tune with the mood of your event can add structure and interest to your programme. And why not offer your guests a digital photo studio, for a truly memorable event? They can pose for the camera as many times as they like, using the accessories and costumes provided, and then they can take away their souvenir photos with them.

STEP 4 – CATERING

Catering plays a vital role in the success of your event. It is important that the quality of the food, the wine and the service should match the prestigious image you wish you convey, as well as the theme of the event.

- A finger buffet or a sit-down dinner? Choose the concept that's most appropriate to the goals of your event. A finger buffet can accommodate a wider range of dishes and presentation styles. It's also less formal, making it easier for your guests to talk to each other and allowing them to put together the meal that suits them. A sit-down dinner places the emphasis on your hospitality and how you've designed your event. Schedule entertainments between courses to structure your evening. And don't forget to prepare a seating plan so that guests can find their place easily when they arrive.
- Traditional French cuisine, ethnic cuisine, something entirely original... anything is possible. With the help of your caterer, choose menus appropriate to the theme of your event. A tasting session is crucial to help confirm your choice: you should try the dishes, check their presentation, and taste the wines you'll be serving. And carefully chosen tableware and decorations can play a vital role in reinforcing the theme of your evening – centre pieces, linen, crockery...the possibilities are endless. Let your imagination run riot!
- Find out about the special dietary requirements of all your guests in advance. Your caterer will be able to offer appropriate solutions, whether your guests are vegetarians, vegans, or have special dietary requirements for reasons of health or religious belief. On the day of the event remind the guests with special menu requirements to make themselves known to the event teams at the venue.

For more information on catering, we suggest that you download our Practical info sheet No.3 : «The art of looking after your guests: Catering»

STEP 5 – GIVING YOUR GUESTS A PERSONALISED, VIP WELCOME

Organising an evening for your employees or your top customers is already a very special way of showing how much they mean to you. Every additional attention you pay them will be greatly appreciated and will ensure that the evening is a memorable experience. At the same time you will be getting exactly the right message across!

- If you offer a gift – whether it's personalised, practical, or original – make sure that it's easy to carry, that it matches your event's theme and that it conveys your company's image effectively. If your reception takes place as part of a seminar lasting more than one day you can also arrange for your gifts to be placed in delegates' rooms – when they return from their evening they will be delighted to discover another thoughtful gesture on your part.
- Your VIP guests, board members, celebrities, competition winners, or guests to a prestigious VIP dinner, will appreciate all the special attentions you lavish on them. You can arrange for them to be driven to the reception venue by limousine, for example – providing newspapers for them to read as well as champagne and appetisers to get them in the mood. When they arrive, greet them in person or ensure that a team is there to greet them. Show them to their table – the best table, of course – and ensure that waiting staff are attentive to their every need.

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