

5 insights into event success

By [Samantha Gabriel](#)

15 Nov 2019

The events economy is growing globally. In fact, figures released by the Events Industry Council (EIC) for 2018 show that business events injected a whopping \$1.5tn into global coffers last year. But with a booming event culture comes a more discerning audience. And in a business that's getting more competitive year-on-year, planners need to keep their finger on the pulse to stand out and thrive.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Audiences are looking for engagement – more two-way conversations at events and conferences, rather than one-sided information overload. Events have grown far beyond the old-school approach, where people walk in, are handed a programme or a bag and just wander around.

Today's events are more experiential, more digital. They offer instant gratification in a world where it's difficult to impress due to the oversaturation of media. Audiences crave authentic content that is delivered to them in a way that engages and connects with them. This could be through technology or physical experiences. Either way balance is key.

Right place, right budget, right parking!

Seasoned event planners have learned the hard way that it's not quite as simple as Kevin Costner had us believe in the movie, *Field of Dreams*, when he famously said, "If you build it, they will come".

Before the planning phase even begins, the primary considerations are time, budget, scale, resources and feasibility. And long before the event set up rolls out, when the initial planning is taking shape and the consultation process with the client is being finalised, finding the right venue is crucial. But there's more to consider when you identify your venue than prestige, location and capacity – though, of course, those remain very important.

First, think about the one thing that the modern event-goer prizes above everything else, the Holy Grail of a successful conference or gathering: Convenience. And convenience is less “bigger picture” than it is little details.

Identifying those details begins with the **Planner's Five-Point Checklist**:

- **Parking:** Is it clearly marked and visible from major routes? Exactly how many cars can it accommodate? Is it secure? Is there easy and safe walking access from the parking area to the venue? Parking is the first touchpoint for visitors to your event. It's a point they'll barely think about if it's convenient. If it causes difficulty, however, they're unlikely to forget it.
- **Lighting:** Yes, lighting can be supplemented, but nothing is more flattering and welcoming than natural lighting. Whether you're hosting an expo or a business conference, consider that both the hosts and the guests will have better engagements and attention spans which is beneficial.
- **Catering:** Food is part of the experience and gone are the days of sloppy food. Dietary requirements are a big thing to consider with a growing vegan movement and people looking responsibly sourced food.
- **Service:** Much like parking, people are less likely to remember good service. But they won't forget the bad service. If the venue is unable to provide staff that will service your client's needs adequately, find another venue or bring in your own staff for the purpose of the event.
- **Facilities:** These become more specific depending on the kind of event. And there's a different facility checklist for everyone. Test the Wi-Fi, taste the food, locate the plug points and try the coffee before you book.

Pillars of a successful event organiser

Start with the three C's – Coffee, Candy and Carbs. Then, be methodical and make sure you have a plan that is written down, step-by-step.

Everyone's process is different. Follow yours but also observe others in the industry and take a few pointers onboard. Always be open to new ideas and collaboration. Humility helps. Accept that you can't know everything. Technologies and methodologies evolve every single day.

Value your team and your suppliers. And finally, know when to say yes. But more importantly, know when to say NO. Success comes from two things: passion and perspective. We are hosting events, not saving lives. Learn from your mistakes and start all over again.

It's not as easy as it looks

Many budding event planners think that if they were able to arrange their own weddings, they can quite easily move onto events. Unfortunately, it's far more complicated than that. And when an event goes wrong, the industry can suffer.

Credentials count, and if you are planning on entering the planning space, study first, or at least do a lot of research and find ways of gaining practical experience. Samantha and other established industry experts are leading a movement towards changing perception – both at planner level and with clients. Some clients still struggle to see the value of the management and creative fees for event planning.

They fail to see that they are paying for years of experience and expertise put into practice. If you cancel an appointment

with a lawyer or a doctor, you are still charged for their time. The same should apply for professional planners, because the reality is that events are 90% planning and 10% implementation. So, in many cases, a lot of work has been done upfront, before the client sees palpable results.

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