



Putting Fun and Fundamentals into Your Functions

Marilyn Woelk
A Really Fun Person

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Planning an Event

▶ "If You Build it, Will They Come?" LISTEN & LEARN

▶ Assessment

Find customer demand via surveys, suggestions, and data from past events

▶ Scoping

- Attendance projections (size/target/competition)
- P & L projections (baseline, upside, downside)

▶ Venue arrangements

- Food, entertainment, raffles, presentations

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Deposits and Contracts

- ▶ Are you authorized to sign the contract? Did you look closely at ALL fees? EXAMINE:
 - Room, furniture, and linen fees (specify setup)
 - Food costs and gratuity (tax exempt)
 - Server fees for bar/food setup (\$45 per hour?)
 - Presentation fees (internet access, projector, screen)
 - Parking and security fees (provide insurance cert.)
 - Promotional materials/signage fees
 - Coat rack rental/coat room fees

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Deposits and Contracts (cont.)

- ▶ Watch “Guarantees” (fees for unused food, rooms, etc. based on either “minimums” or “lock-down” dates)
 - A contract is the place to START negotiations! It is a “suggestion” until it is signed.
 - All establishments have policies, but most of them will be flexible to obtain business.

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Deposits and Contracts (cont.)

- ▶ Contract *negotiations*: to succeed in passing through, around, or over (as in a hiker negotiating a mountain pass)
- ▶ At its core, a *negotiation* is reaching an agreement...but sometimes you must get around or over policies of the venue that do not meet your customer needs.

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Deposits and Contracts (cont.)

- ▶ Things you might be able to NEGOTIATE:
 - Free hotel rooms for event planners
 - Donations from the venue to put into a raffle
 - Free coffee or tea with a meal
 - Less expensive desserts like cookies (even if those are not on the menu)
 - Free use of the event room if you order meals
 - Free speakers if you buy them dinner

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Deposits and Contracts (cont.)

- ▶ Things you might be able to NEGOTIATE:
 - Better “lock-down” dates (Get these added to your contract!)
 - Smaller events (up to 50 people) -- try to lock at 24-48 hours in advance. Give updated counts at 7, and 3 days in advance. Final lock 1 day in advance.
 - Larger venues - Give count 2 weeks out, then 1 week out. Lock 3-4 days before event.

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Publicity – ANNOUNCE!

- ▶ Small events – 10 days to 4 weeks in advance.
- ▶ Larger events 2-3 months in advance, with increasing frequency until day before event.

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Publicity (cont.)

- ▶ Distribution channels:
 - Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
 - Direct e-mail (Sell sheets, EventBrite, member communications/newsletters)
 - Media (TV, radio, newspapers, info boards, blogs)
 - STC (my STC, conference web site, chapter/SIG web site, personal invitations)

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Publicity (cont.)

- ▶ In all publicity, include:
 - Clean, motivational copy and custom graphics
 - Perceived benefits/ROI (Why should they come?/Why should they send their employee?)
 - **NOTE:** It is not enough to sell the attendee on the event. You must “up-sell” whoever is paying for the event (the ultimate end-user).

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Resistance You Can't Overcome

- ▶ The perceived value is less than the price.
- ▶ There is no money to spend to get the ROI.
- ▶ There are two good choices, and the competing event makes a better business case than you do.
- ▶ The competing event is not a business event, it is a personal one.
- ▶ The weather is bad.

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Summary

- ▶ Your best publicity comes from people who enjoyed past events, so:
 - meet everyone who attends your events if possible,
 - help guests meet others who will build personal and business connections with them, and
 - make your events fun as well as educational.

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Summary (cont.)

- ▶ Negotiate the best value you can provide for a quality event. People remember a good meal spent with “friends.”
- ▶ Warm chocolate chip cookies will make you a hero!
- ▶ *Good-bye, good luck...and let's have fun out there!*

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