



Chapter 3 Putting together your event committee

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What is a charity event organising committee? (*There's no "I" in "Team"*)

An organising committee is a dedicated team that makes sure the charity event is well-planned, achieves its proposed goals and runs smoothly on the day.

Generally, the team is made up of volunteers and/or staff members of a charity organisation. But depending on your budget, you may also wish to hire a professional event organiser, or a group of people to work solely on the charity event.

Unless you prefer to run a charity event yourself (for example, if it's a low-key event like a movie night), having an organising committee is ideal because:

- ✓ Committee members can share their expertise and strengths. Having a strong, experienced and diverse team adds valuable assets and resources to your project.
- ✓ Each member will be dedicated to one aspect of the event (i.e. marketing, logistics or administration) which significantly increases productivity. It allows everyone to focus on specific tasks and work more efficiently while the workload and responsibility of running a charity event can be distributed evenly.
- ✓ There will be greater accountability. By delegating responsibility, you can pinpoint areas that may need more support and you'll be able to nip bad habits in the bud before they can affect the entire project.

Running a charity event requires commitment, enthusiasm and finding the right people for the job. Volunteers can certainly help out during the day or with the organising process, but **only a few key people** should be appointed as head committee members. Having fewer people helps speed up the decision-making process, which will become increasingly more necessary as the event date draws closer.

Who's Who in the Committee: Key Roles and responsibilities

- ✓ **Chairperson.** Like the CEO of a company, the chairperson will oversee the entire operations and organisation of the charity event. They may also need to represent the event during media interviews or to the general public.
- ✓ **Sponsorship and Fundraising.** The person in charge of charity sponsorship and fundraising will usually seek out corporate partnerships as well as ways for the public to financially support the event (and charity). This could mean getting food, electrical goods or clothing donations for auctions and raffles; getting public endorsements from various companies and high profile personalities; or generating funding for the charity event and so on.

- ✓ **Marketing, PR and Communications.** This person is the official spokesperson for the charity event, and will be in charge of communicating to the media, supporters and general public as well as overseeing the “look and feel” of web design, brochures, delegate or participant kits, program booklets, T-shirts, pens etc. Traditional advertising may be considered, while online platforms, such as blogs and social media, are also great ways to ‘advertise’ your charity event.

- ✓ **Logistics.** A lot of behind-the-scenes work will fall into the hands of the Logistics committee head. Depending on what your charity event entails, this role could include: organising catering, getting council permits, devising production schedules, finding security and first aid attendants, overseeing sound and lighting requirements, coordinating setup and breakdown as well as a slew of other responsibilities.

- ✓ **Volunteer Management.** Volunteers are extremely valuable at charity events and need to be well looked after. As such, it is important to have someone in charge of recruiting, training and assigning volunteers to the most appropriate roles.

- ✓ **Project Management and Administration.** From scheduling committee meetings, reception work, taking minutes, project management and general administration, this person is the glue that holds the rest of the committee together.

- ✓ **IT and Web Management.** Not every charity event will need a web team, but for medium-to-large scale events, websites are the best ways to communicate to the public, supporters, corporate partners, potential volunteers and media. Having an IT committee head will ensure your web strategies and online communications run as smoothly as possible.

- ✓ **Treasury and Accounts.** One of the most important roles is the Treasurer. This person keeps the books, ensures budgets are adhered to and holds every member financially accountable.

- ✓ **Legal Affairs.** It is important to obtain professional legal advice before planning your charity event. Having a legal professional, who supports the event, on the committee means they can go over contracts for volunteers, staff, suppliers, performers or venues; advise on taxation and charity fundraising matters and address insurance and occupational health and safety requirements.

Of course, many of these roles can be combined – or separated – depending on your event requirements and the experience of your members. Once you have devised relevant committee member roles, it is much easier to choose the best people for your charity event organising committee. It also means that each committee member will know exactly what his or her responsibilities are.

How to choose the best people for the jobs

Selecting the right committee member is similar to hiring someone in a company. If you’re hosting a large-scale charity event, like a citywide marathon or festival, it is even more important to ensure that every committee member is the right

person for the job. As the pressure mounts, you need to be able to rely on your organising committee to see things through.

These 'key' committee members should:

- ✓ Have relevant skills, strengths and experience.
- ✓ Be familiar with their responsibilities and feel comfortable with what's required of them.
- ✓ Support and be interested in the charity organisation's values, mission and message.
- ✓ Be committed and have enough time in their schedules to work on the charity event.
- ✓ Have excellent time management and interpersonal skills.

Roles within an organising committee will differ according to the charity event. For example, some charity events require a highly skilled web coordinator, while others won't even need a website. So before selecting any committee members, you should decide on the skills and experience you'll require for each role.

Five Tips for Recruiting a Top Notch Charity Event Organising Committee

1. **Be picky, but not too picky.** While it is important to choose the best people for various committee roles, don't be too selective about it. While experience is necessary, passion and commitment for your charity cause are the most important qualities.
2. **Communicate frequently.** Keep your charity event organising team in the loop by meeting up, emailing or calling regularly. This builds teamwork, professionalism as well as morale.
3. **Be clear with expectations and responsibilities.** From the start, it is professional to be direct with your committee members regarding expectations and their responsibilities. That way, there are no hidden surprises for either party.
4. **Show your appreciation.** One of the most important things is to show your team members how much their contribution and time means to the charity, especially if they're a volunteer. Organise outings like lunch, or give them small gifts as tokens of your appreciation.

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- 5. Have fun.** Organising a charity event can be hard work, so it helps to keep things light-hearted to diffuse tension or pent-up stress! After all, you're doing a good thing for the community by putting together the event, so make sure you enjoy the process.

Helpful Hint: If your committee members are a little “green” on experience but great on enthusiasm, **try and arrange for a more knowledgeable advisory panel or mentor** that they can turn to for advice. While your team members should for the most part be able to work independently, it might build their confidence knowing they can call on someone with more experience, especially for more confusing aspects of the process (i.e. legal aspects, speaking with council, media etc). A mentor or advisory panel will give ideas on how to proceed based on their experience without needing to get their hands dirty or commit a large amount of precious time.

Resources:

<http://www.unisa.edu.au/mdi/events/howto.asp>

<http://www.events.nsw.gov.au/eventsstarterguide/beforeyoubegin-organising-askyourself>

<http://www.events.nsw.gov.au/eventsstarterguide/3navigation-checklist>