



Chapter 9 The Big Day – Ensuring your Charity Event Runs Smoothly

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It's here. You've finalised your guest list, organised everything with the venue, your signage looks spectacular, and best of all the media's been paying attention and there's plenty of hype. You're expecting a great turn out and all that hard work and planning is finally paying off.

Right before the event, spend some time going over everything once more and running everyone through the execution, as you would a dress rehearsal. A mock run through will get everyone familiar with the order of events, the location and how things could potentially run on the day.

Bump In:

For many events, you won't have access to the venue until the day, so set up - or "bump in" - needs to be quick and efficient. Have everything packed based on where the items will go. For example, if you have a registration table make sure everything such as clipboards, pens, forms, lists and name badges for that table go together. If you have regular staff manning different areas, it's helpful to have them be in charge of organising and packing their materials and making sure they get transported to the venue.

Pre Setup Checklist:

- ✓ **Signage:** do I have all the signs I will need? You want your signs to look as professional as possible to make a good impression (avoid scrawling with a texter where possible). Make sure signs are visible from a distance and if there are any directional indicators, make sure they are correct.
- ✓ **Money Matters:** will you be collecting donations or money on the day? If so make sure you have a secure and lockable cash box to collect your funds and ensure that whoever is looking after it remains responsible. Bring a small receipt book to write out receipts if they are requested.
- ✓ **Uniforms:** Are your volunteers and staff wearing uniforms or T-Shirts? To avoid fitting issues on the day, hand these out to staff beforehand. Take some extras along with you in case someone forgets.
- ✓ **Set up Materials:** do I have everything I will need to set up? Remember things like scissors, box cutters, tape etc. Bring along some extra as there is nothing more frustrating than losing that single roll of sticky tape.

- ✓ **Presentations:** Make sure you have any props and presentation materials ready. Are all power point slides loaded and ready? Are any videos ready to go? Make sure you also have any necessary connectors/adapters for A/V equipment as not all venues or rental equipment will be compatible.
- ✓ **Running Sheet:** have a clear running sheet ready that accounts for every event, including bump in, bump out, cleaners, VIP arrivals, sound testing etc. Put key contact details on these sheets and their area of responsibility. Make sure you have enough copies for all of your staff on the day so that they will know exactly what is coming up. Have some extra running sheets for media and venue staff as well.

The actual time of set up can be a chaotic event as everything will need to happen at once. Make sure your Logistics Manager is overseeing the process and can direct people as needed. Get as much manpower as you can and make sure you have some spare runners who can do small errands off site if required.

It's ShowTime!

Your event begins when attendees and guests begin to arrive, even if they're early. Try and have everything in order about half an hour to fifteen minutes before your advertised start time to accommodate early arrivals.

Communication

Ensure your staff can communicate effectively. Renting walkie talkies might be a good idea, especially if your staff members are spread out across the venue. Have a clear point of contact and have these names written on your running sheet.

Special Guests, Media and VIPs

Once your event gets underway, you'll want to make sure that you have someone attending specifically to any special guests, VIPs, celebrities and media personnel. Assign a responsible individual to be a clear point of contact. Media will be looking to be directed towards VIPs and important guests to conduct interviews and take photos. Ensure that there is a private area that special guests can retire to and avoid the hustle and bustle of the main event. If you have employed the services of a professional photographer or videographer, they need to be looked after as well.

If guests and speakers are volunteering their time, it may be a good idea to present them with gifts at the end of the event to thank them for their participation.

Presentations and Speakers

Regardless of the type of event, you should at some point have a formal speaking session to welcome guests and present the charity and promote the cause. If you have more than one speaker, it's a good idea to have an MC to introduce speakers and direct the running order.

Expect the Unexpected

No matter how careful you are with your planning, something is bound to arise. Be prepared to act quickly and make fast decisions. Push through any hiccups as best you can. Stay positive and relax!

Bump Out:

You're at the home stretch. Once your event has officially ended, it's a matter of breaking down and packing up. If you can, have staff members pack up their areas earlier so you can start moving out as soon as the event ends (i.e. the registration table can be dismantled once all the guests have arrived). Clearly distinguish where things are going to go. Ensure contractors and vendors are there to collect their items or make sure you have arranged a way for them to pick them up later on.

It helps to have a checklist of items (such as computers, equipment, costumes etc) before and after the event to avoid misplacing anything during this process.

The 5 Ps for running a smooth event

Prepare – the better prepared you are, the smoother everything will run.

Predict – manage potential risk and predict difficulties before they arise. If you have good contingency plans in place, you'll be able to act quickly and minimise any setbacks.

Passion – be enthusiastic and passionate about your cause. It sets a good example for staff and will be well received by participants - as well as the general public.

Persist – whatever happens, keep things moving as planned. Even if one particular aspect of the event goes wrong, you can keep everything else going if you push through the difficulties.

Positivity – maintain a positive attitude and don't panic! Keeping a level head throughout earns a lot of respect especially from guests and attendees.

Have you considered?

Making your event clean and green: Today, environmental concerns are taking the spotlight as climate change becomes an international priority. Many high profile events are looking to offset the carbon emissions associated with their event. Consider getting a carbon audit from a qualified assessor and offset the emissions associated with your charity event, or better still, do what you can to cut down on your event's carbon emissions by reducing energy use and minimising waste. It sends a good message to the community at large.

Case Study: Around the Bay in a Day 2009

In 2009, Around the Bay in a Day attracted a record number of 15,000 participants who collectively rode over 2.5 million kms. Managing the logistics around such a large event so that it ran smoothly was certainly a challenge. However, organisers at Bicycle Victoria took a number of important preliminary steps to ensure their riders and staff members were ready for the day with a lot of information available on their website.

- ✓ **Registration Info:** Information for riders interested in registering with information on fees and sponsorship.
- ✓ **Site Maps:** Site maps of the start and finish location, Alexandra Gardens in Melbourne, were available for download on their website.
- ✓ **Rider Kit:** a specific resource kit was compiled to give riders all the information they would need for the day including starting information, where to store bags, toilet facilities, relevant transport and break information and emergency contact information. Appropriate signage helped further direct participants through the event.
- ✓ **Volunteer Kit:** Meanwhile, volunteers were also given their own resource specific to the event. This addressed many of the key issues that would arise including safety, emergency contacts, how to handle media, complaints, reimbursements etc.
- ✓ **Travel information:** Specific travel arrangements were made to efficiently transport participants by ferry. All of this information was made available on the website.
- ✓ **Start Procedure:** A running sheet of what to expect at the start of the day so the event could get underway smoothly and without delay.
- ✓ **Photography:** Professional photographers captured the day. Contact information on how to retrieve photographs was also provided.
- ✓ **Additional Updates:** Finally, additional news and information was available on the website as they arose (i.e. facilitating a jersey exchange). Members were also sent newsletters informing them of any updates and of any logistical information that they would need.



everyone's family

Careful logistical preparations and careful coordination that accounted for many of the questions and situations that would arise allowed for this large scale event to run smoothly and effectively – to successfully help raise money for The Smith Family.

Resources:

<http://sb.business.vic.gov.au>

<http://www.bv.com.au/greatrides/40186/>