



one

Southbank House  
Black Prince Road  
London  
SE1 7SJ

## **ONE'S Tips: Planning an event**

When deciding to hold an event, before booking venues and choosing menus, a lot of preparation work is required.

### **Preparation**

Information Officers should begin by setting themselves the **objectives** of the event. Without clear measurable objectives it is impossible to measure the event's success. Ask yourself why you are running this particular event and clearly outline what you hope to achieve.

It is crucial that you decide upon budgetary constraints early on and to include a contingency in your costing, so any minor changes can be dealt with internally. Also be prepared to justify the costs that you have quoted.

### **Planning**

Once the brief has been established, the planning can start.

Choosing the right geographical **location** for an event can contribute enormously to its success. When choosing a location, Information Officers should consider the following:

- Choose an easily accessible venue in regards to your attendees.
- Wherever your event will be held, if you want to invite attendees from other parts of the UK or even abroad, hotels near the venue will have to be considered and researched.
- Check where the nearest car park is.
- Try to select a location that is easily accessible for journalists from your local press.

**Timing** is very important to your event - when you are choosing a date for your event, make sure you consider all factors that might impact the number of attendees. This includes avoiding school holidays, press deadlines and clashes with any other major news-related events.

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T 020 7463 2020  
F 020 7463 2008  
info@oneismore.com  
www.oneismore.com



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Choosing the right **venue** is crucial. It needs to fit comfortably with the image of your province. The venue needs to convey the right messages and of course, entice people to attend. Other considerations to be taken are issues such as lighting, heating, air conditioning and décor within the room.

The **guests** to your event must be selected carefully, making sure that the people you invite are relevant, whether they are journalists, members or members of the public. Specialist speakers can add something to your event. For example, Information Officers could approach a famous or an influential community figure to say a few words.

Other considerations at the planning stage are:

- Develop a timeline
- Check for other events and make sure that your target media are not already attending another event

Once these issues have been agreed, **invitations** need to be sorted out:

- Ensure your provincial logo is clearly visible, the design of the invite should also reflect the type of event.
- Clearly state the day, date, month, year and time of the event.
- Give full details of the address.
- Include the dress code.
- Remember to include a RSVP and contact details - email and telephone number.
- Always give directions to the venue.
- Highlight any important guests, i.e. keynote speakers.

**Catering** can make or break an event:

- Tailor the food to your event - for black tie event you would normally have a three-course meal and buffets are preferred for informal networking events
- Think about food storage at the venue and transportation
- Always make sure that you have enough food and drink

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It is not just about the catering, the drinks served are equally important. Check with the venue if drinks will be paid for on a consumption per head basis and if there are any limits or a minimum amount. Some venues will allow you to bring your own, but check the corkage costs. Make sure that you have a variety of drinks including non-alcoholic drinks, such as orange juice and water, as not everyone will drink alcohol. Lastly, make sure the wine or champagne you choose compliment the food that is being served.

**Entertainment** can also be an option, but it needs to be relevant. Check with the venue that the entertainment does not breach any health and safety requirements.

### **Promoting your event to the press**

#### **Before the Event:**

##### **- Invite a selection of key journalists to attend**

- Personalise all invitations. Find out names - do not address simply to 'The Editor'.
- After the invitation has been sent, **send a general press release** to the journalists you have invited via email. The release should highlight the following;
  - o Purpose of the event (theme)
  - o Location & Time
  - o List of important attendees
  - o Why this event is important to the community as a whole.
- **Follow up by phone**, some journalists may or may not have received or paid any attention to your invite or email. Therefore a follow up call is essential in order to bring it to their attention and encourage attendance.
- If they cannot attend, ask if they would like images from the event to be emailed to them the following day

**- Select key spokespeople** - these will be people of importance who will be able to provide comments for journalists. Make sure to brief all spokespeople in advance. Your written brief should include the following:

- o A list of all journalists who will be attending
- o A list of possible questions, and recommended responses

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- o A list of the key messages that you want to get across

- **Hire a photographer;** take pictures of the event's activities (remember to write captions, and make sure to brief the photographer to do this in advance).

- Pictures must be 300dpi and digital, also ask for all photos to be made available to you ASAP. Daily publications will need them the next day - any later than this and it's old news.

#### **During the event:**

- At the event personally introduce the journalists to all your key spokespeople.
- If they interview a spokesperson, stay and observe, this way you can interject if they struggle to answer a difficult question.

#### **After the event:**

- Write a **follow up press release**. The press release should be a summary on the event, and must be sent out the very next day.
- Note at the bottom of the press release that pictures are available upon request.
- Send this out to all key press, not just those who attended.
- Follow this up with a phone call to confirm receipt and to offer images and spokespeople for interview.

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