

Module 2 Introduction to the Event Planning Process

Following completion of this module you will be able to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- Understand the role of event planner and the market that they operate in.
 - Be able to demonstrate the attributes for a successful event planner
 - Understand the code of ethics.
-

2.1 The event market in Great Britain

The conference and event market is a very diverse market, covering everything from small company board meetings, through to private parties to large out door events or exhibitions. The conference and event market in the UK alone is estimated by the British Association of Conference Destinations (BACD) at £8 billion in 2007.

There are four main types of events:

- Conferences and meetings for associations, corporations and the public sector
- Private events with catering such as birthday parties, weddings and christenings
- Outdoor festivals and events such as music festivals or parades
- Exhibitions – trade exhibitions where suppliers demonstrate and promote their goods.

The BACD compiles an annual survey that shows how the industry is performing. It has identified the main trends as being:

- a shift away from residential conferences towards one-day conferences
- A shortening of lead times – clients are looking to book venues closer to the date of the event
- Greater pressure on client budgets with clients demanding greater value for money
- Increases in demand for special dietary requirements
- Greater awareness of the environmental impact of events
- Drop in attendance at large trade shows, both from exhibitors and attendees
- Increase in trade shows that involve pre-booked face-to-face appointments between supplier and clients
- Public sector and association conferences now account for 52% of all meetings and conferences
- City centre venues dominate the industry – reflecting the importance of transportation needs
- Increase in video-conferencing and web-based technology.

2.2 The role of the event planner

People are likely to use an event planner for the following reasons:

- Clients require an event in a different area from where they are based or require an event abroad; using an event planner would help avoid long journeys and allow the client to tap into local knowledge.
- Clients are short of time - Planning an event, sourcing and negotiating with suppliers, attending fairs, and managing the event in the run up to, and on the day, is a big undertaking. Many people do not have the time to do this effectively as well as carrying out their normal day-to-day roles.
- Clients wish to get the best value for money - Event planners, by the nature of their business, are able to ensure that clients get the best quality for the price quoted. Event planners are able to attend appointments on the clients' behalf and ensure that suppliers can deliver to the specifications requested by the client.
- Knowledge of suppliers - Event planners are able to offer their clients good quality suppliers who have a solid reputation of delivering results.
- Unique ideas - Event planners are able to suggest novel and interesting ideas into an event to help make the event memorable. They are also key in making sure that the client's requirements are realistic and deliverable!
- Event planners may be also able to access software programmes designed to support the industry.

2.3 Key competences of an event planner

Once a client has made the decision to employ the services of an event planner there are a number of key areas that you must show great competence in. The key areas of competences are listed below:

Planning and organising - The event planner must be meticulous and ruthlessly efficient in keeping all activities on time and to the agreed budget. Detailed records should be kept so the event planner is always aware of which stage any of the activities are at. The main reason that clients employ an event planner is to save them time and remove the stress of planning and executing an event.

Introducing new ideas - It is essential that the event planner is able to bring new and exciting ideas throughout the planning process. In order to be successful in this area regular attendance at trade fairs and familiarisation visits to venues will be required, as well as keeping themselves up-to-date with trends and fashions.

Dealing effectively with problems - Due to the high number of individual suppliers and companies that the event planner must coordinate there is a large risk of problems arising. Contingency plans and well negotiated contracts become essential to the smooth running of the planning process. You also need to have the ability to roll up your sleeves and pitch in if things are not going to plan, whilst all the time keeping a cool head.

Art of compromise - Sometimes monetary constraints restrict the requirements of a client or the wishes of a boss are at serious odds with the requirements of the booker. In these situations it is essential for the event planner to balance the available resources and the needs of all parties to produce an outcome that is acceptable to all those involved in the event organisation.

Assistance with mundane processes of planning an event - Event planning does have a glamorous and enjoyable side, but there is also the mundane and tedious side of event planning such as sending out invitations, coordinating responses, following up non-replies, arranging transport and accommodation requirements and dealing with high maintenance members of the party. The event planner should assume responsibility early on in the planning for all these process to allow the client to concentrate on their other roles.

Negotiating with suppliers - The client's perceived value of an event planner will be greatly enhanced if you are able to deliver substantial savings to the client. This can be achieved either through discounting or value-added. Discounting is when the event planner gets a lower price than the client could have achieved by going directly to the supplier – for example, a venue would discount their rates by 20% from their published price. Value-added is where the event planner negotiates a better quality of service or product for the same price – for example, a venue will offer complimentary upgrades on accommodation for the events clients.

2.4 Event planner code of ethics

In the meeting and event industry there are a number of professional organisations that help to ensure that standards are upheld. Two of the most well known organisations are the Meetings Industry Association and the Hotel Booking Agents Association.

In order to maintain high standards in the event planning industry, as well as providing reassurance to clients and potential clients, it is advisable for you to follow a voluntary code of conduct:

- Respond to enquiries within 48 hours
- Respect client confidentiality
- Disclose all suppliers that you have a vested an interest in
- Always pass discounts and/or commissions onto the client
- Never give client details to any third party unless for the sole purpose of the event being undertaken
- Respect copyright of all planners, coordinators and related suppliers
- Represent each client fairly and honestly

Abiding by this voluntary code of conduct will ensure that your business will maintain a good reputation, resulting in recommendations from both other event planners and past clients.



