

Academic Event Professional 2010

Roundtable Luncheon Discussion Cost Saving Tips

Catering

- Reception before program offers heavy hors d' oeuvres then have program. Later, serve dessert with pre-function -- eliminates staff staying late & additional china
- Change Event from dinner to lunch or reception

Florals & Décor

- Centerpieces/Door Prize -- purchase on sale door prizes, put in center of tables. Draw for door prizes, 70% off door prizes averaged \$9 per table. President's wife draws the winning tickets, President reads name/number, Director of Special Events hands to winner
- Purchase standard, nice vases. Candles, decorative beads to reuse for all events. Save BIG on centerpieces!
- Purchased plants instead of renting. They decorate our offices and have been used for almost 12 months - small investment wholesale grower
- Sell or reuse florals after main event
- Collect landscape cuttings from grounds & maintenance workers and plan to use for a particular event with the help and direction from your floral company.
- Popflowers.com – plastic flowers that can be used over & over
- If you have multiple events on a day or weekend, recycle your arrangements & use them again. Our campus also has a retirement home so after the event we take the arrangements there, which equals good PR & extra donations to us.
- Send handwritten thank you notes to vendors. They are more willing to help you/give discounts the next time
- Buy vs. rent
- Do your own florals – buy them online and assemble yourself
- We use your agriculture department's floral design class to help with centerpieces at some of the smaller events
- Use black landscape fabric instead of pipe & drape to accent different areas
- Consider non-floral centerpieces
- Partner with a floral design school in your area – students need an outlet for practice and event professionals & guests feel good about the source

Equipment & Rentals

- We traded some decorations to our rental company in exchange for linen & chair rentals
- If you start buying lighting gear consider LED. The upfront costs are higher, but the upkeep & maintenance costs are low. Bulbs last thousands of hours.
- *Purchase* "must-have" items for events versus renting+service+labor!
- Electronic signage that can be updated/changes
 - For example, LED TV connected to a laptop with an interactive powerpoint
 - Can include photos, video, sponsor ads – more value for those you are trying to thank
- We bought a high-def video camera so University Relations can produce our videos and webcasts in-house

Strategy/Planning

- Create generic event signage that can be used over and over
- Use student volunteers & interns

Invites & Communications

- Eliminating paper contracts & records by using email & PDFs
- In house (university marketing or myself) design, printing
- In house design, management of web profiles of events
- Send hand copy invites only to group that doesn't have email and/or have given over a certain amount
- Trinity University uses Twitter to promote events and drive people to our website with links to news release
- We use e-cards when we don't have the budget for printed postcards/postage
- Going with online registration for all events. No mail-back response cards

Location & Scheduling

- Coordinate events across campus to maximize use of expensive location setups
- Keep all events possible on campus rather than using other venues
- Shift from sit down dinners to heavy appetizers or buffet stations
- Beer and wine only
- Make generic way finding signage – no year/event name
- In lieu of flowers make gift to charity (that is less \$ than flowers!)
- More frequent, smaller events
- Events held before a show/musical in theater
- Events on campus
- Switched venue to one with built-in AV so we don't have to spend extra on setting up AV

Other

- Be smarter, use ideas outside the box that increase WOW but cuts cost
- Establish great relationships with vendors – use them to stretch your value to dollar when necessary
- Using recycled paper & binding them with glue/adhesive as note pads for advertising/office notes. Our duplicating dept produces these for minimal cost
- Capitalize on academic environment for external events for profit during non-academic periods
- Solicit industry partners for product donations
 - For example, sponsors for lunch, liquor
- Let vendors know what lower rates you have received from others
- Do more things in-house
 - Example: make your own lemonade for small events; be the server; arrange your own flowers
- Re-scrutinize your previous years budget & look to see where you can cut percent-wise
- Be creative in your layout/floor plan
 - Change the entrance
 - Change the size of tables
 - Change your focal point
- Every event has a development component & even graduations – combine resources
- Repurpose all event items
- Use underwater light for florals
- When you hire new staff, discover their "secret" skills – photography, musician, flower arranging, etc...
- Events Councils on Campus – great for sharing information and resources