

32 tips for running the perfect PR event

Before, During And After

A successful event can be one of the best ways to get your brand in the media and noticed by your target audience and influential celebrities. Whether you are launching a brand, product or celebrating an anniversary, it is essential that your event has the wow-factor, and runs smoothly.

But with so much to plan and organise, how do you make sure your event runs efficiently and ultimately meets your objectives? We have provided a comprehensive checklist for you to use through planning, executing and wrapping up an event.

THE ULTIMATE CONSUMER PR EVENT CHECKLIST

BEFORE

- Set your objectives and goals
- Who do you want to reach?
- What is your budget?
- It's time to decide the date
- What is your theme?
- Confirm the time of your event
- Decide on your guest list
- Create and send the save the dates
- Confirm your venue
- Create and send your invitations
- What props and marketing material do you need?
- Decide on your catering
- Confirm floral arrangements
- Goody bags
- Confirm a photographer
- Visit the venue and create a floorplan
- Invitation follow up
- Send a photocall notice to photographers
- Create a timetable and crisis plan
- Send a reminder to all guests & confirm numbers
- Book the taxis and couriers
- Debrief staff

DURING

- Is the venue setup right?
- Check the allocation of staff
- Are you getting the best from the photographers?
- Is the event running to schedule?
- Media management
- Make sure your guests are having a good time

AFTER

- Celebrity photo sell-in
- Press follow-up
- Scan the media
- Event debrief document

For more explanation on the points, please see the following pages

BEFORE

○ SET YOUR OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

It is important you think clearly about what you want to achieve from an event. Is it to alert press of a new product launch, or to raise awareness of a campaign? Understanding your objectives is key before you start planning, to make sure you go in the right direction.

○ WHO DO YOU WANT TO REACH?

Think carefully about your audience. If it is not clear cut like a beauty product launching to beauty press, you should think openly about who you want to target. To raise awareness of a particular campaign, celebrities are a great way to get widespread interest.

○ WHAT IS YOUR BUDGET?

It is imperative you decide and agree on a budget based on who you are looking to reach and your objectives. If you are hoping to have high profile celebrities attend your event, you will need to factor some budget in for appearance fees. Remember, venue, invitations, props, catering, couriers, taxis and marketing material, all need to be considered in the budget.

○ IT'S TIME TO DECIDE THE DATE

When deciding on a date, be wary of key calendar periods that will prove tricky for guests. August is a particularly bad time of year for events as many people go on holiday. If you are a fashion or beauty brand, avoid the London, Milan, Paris and New York Fashion Weeks as many press attend these. Check your date in industry diaries such as DiaryDirectory or Celebrity Intelligence to check it won't clash with others. It is good to have a date confirmed at least 3 months before your event, not only to give yourself enough time to plan, but to give your guests a good amount of notice.

○ WHAT IS YOUR THEME?

After you have set the date, it is a good time to plan a theme for the event. It is important to have a 'vision' for the day so you can ensure all material including invitations, decoration and press-collateral are in line. This ensures a streamline and professional impression.

○ CONFIRM THE TIME OF YOUR EVENT

Dependent on the theme you need to decide on the time of your event. If you are launching a product to press, you may want to consider an intimate breakfast or tea; if you are launching a fashion collection perhaps an all-day drop in style would work best for those busy fashion journalists; or if you want to raise awareness of a charity day, an evening party would be perfect for this.

○ DECIDE ON YOUR GUEST LIST

It is time for you to decide who your guests are going to be. Do you have any VIPs to take into consideration? If you are inviting celebrities, remember you will need to go through their agents, so it is important you get their names and addresses.

○ CREATE AND SEND THE SAVE THE DATES

You need to create a Save the Date based on the theme you have set for your event. You only need to give the date, time, and general location like 'central London'.

○ **CONFIRM YOUR VENUE**

Based on your theme and time, you should now decide on a venue. If you are going to run a breakfast event, consider somewhere with lots of light; for an evening event, look to more party-style venues. When looking for a venue it is important to make sure it is in an easy location for press and celebrities to attend. The closer to the newspaper and magazine houses the better, as this will minimise drop out on the day.

○ **CREATE AND SEND YOUR INVITATIONS**

Now you have confirmed your date, time, and venue you need to send an official invitation out to your guests. You could send hand written or printed invites in the post or you could even try more unconventional invites in the form of a gift or edible treat. However you decide to do it, make sure the invites stay in line with your theme and give appropriate RSVP information.

○ **WHAT PROPS AND MARKETING MATERIAL DO YOU NEED?**

An essential part of planning an event is to make sure you have the relevant props and marketing material. Does the venue need any additional furniture, product plinths or red carpets? Consider how you can brand the venue, do you need to create vinyls, step and repeats or posters to make sure your company logo is clear?

○ **DECIDE ON YOUR CATERING**

It is now important to acquire catering. Many venue spaces, including hotels and bars will have their own catering staff that you will have to use. Event spaces will usually have a list of preferred caterers, but you might not be tied into using these so it is important you do your research. Make sure you communicate the theme of your event so the caterers can suggest food and refreshments in line with the event.

○ **CONFIRM FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS**

This is the time to consider any floral arrangements you may need. Florists are used to creating arrangements for events based on themes, so make sure you clearly explain your vision. Consider small table flowers, and larger floor arrangements to really wow your guests.

○ **GOODY BAGS**

You need to decide what you are going to gift your guests at the end of the event. This is a good time to send a request out to any companies that may be keen to sample in your goody bag.

○ **CONFIRM A PHOTOGRAPHER**

If you have decided to host a large event with many guests, hiring a professional photographer will be an important asset to have.

○ **VISIT THE VENUE AND CREATE A FLOORPLAN**

It is a good idea to visit the venue again to run through the setup of the event and draw up a floor plan. It is a good way to familiarise yourself with the layout and make sure you have everything you need. A floorplan will help the staff at the event setup exactly how you want the space to look.

○ **INVITATION FOLLOW UP**

Don't be afraid to follow up with those who have not yet RSVP'd, press and celebrity agents are very busy and welcome a gentle nudge!

○ SEND A PHOTOCALL NOTICE TO PHOTOGRAPHERS

If celebrities are attending your event and you would like them to be photographed, it is a good idea to send a photocall notice to websites like Celebrity Intelligence or to the picture houses directly. Include the date, time, venue and any celebrities who are confirmed to attend.

○ CREATE A TIMETABLE AND CRISIS PLAN

As the event day looms ever closer, it is a good idea to create a timetable of the day to make sure all staff are abreast of how you would like the event to run. This is also a good time to decide on a crisis plan in case important guests fail to turn up or you have problems with the catering.

○ SEND A REMINDER TO ALL GUESTS & CONFIRM NUMBERS

A couple of days before the event send a reminder to your confirmed guests that the event is coming up and make sure that you have the correct details of those who you are booking taxis for. This is also a good opportunity to confirm numbers to the venue and catering company.

○ BOOK THE TAXIS AND COURIERS

Make sure you book your taxis and couriers a day or two before the event, to avoid disappointment, and save all booking numbers and times on a spreadsheet for easy access on the day.

○ BRIEF STAFF

The day before the event is the best time to brief the staff on their jobs on the day of the event. Make sure they all have an event timetable and guest list and clearly understand the objective for the day.

DURING

○ IS THE VENUE SETUP RIGHT?

Give yourself enough time before the event to walk around the space to make sure it is setup right. Don't be afraid to change things at the last minute if it doesn't look right.

○ CHECK THE ALLOCATION OF STAFF

Are the staff where they should be? Have you considered the flow of the guests arriving, are there enough staff to greet them? If you have any VIPs attending make sure the staff are ready to welcome them and show them to their seat/area. It is important that a member of staff monitors the catering levels, as you don't want to run out of food and refreshments, and another is actively updating social media.

○ ARE YOU GETTING THE BEST FROM THE PHOTOGRAPHERS?

It is important to check both your hired photographer and those responding to the photocall notice are getting the pictures you want them to. Make sure you and your staff help manage the celebrity flow to avoid disappointment.

○ IS THE EVENT RUNNING TO SCHEDULE?

It is important that you event runs as close to your timetable as possible, but it is key not to rush any part of it. Think ahead – if your presentation is late starting, consider pushing the guests' taxis back.

○ MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Have the press got what they need from you to report on your product or event? Have they spoken to the right people? Remember to make a note of every press request on the night so you can follow up in the morning.

○ MAKE SURE YOUR GUESTS ARE HAVING A GOOD TIME

Don't get caught up in how the event is running, and ignore your guests. If you see someone on their own, make sure to talk to them. Look around the room regularly and check guest's drinks are full and they look like they are having a good time.

AFTER

○ CELEBRITY PHOTO SELL-IN

If you have celebrity photos it is important to send these out to the picture desks and celebrity journalists at newspapers and magazines as soon as possible. Don't forget to put your company's name in the credit.

○ PRESS FOLLOW-UP

The day after the event is a good time to send a follow up email to the press who attended, thanking them for coming and answer any queries they had on the night.

○ SCAN THE MEDIA

Make sure to scan any newspapers, magazines and online publications after the event to see if any pictures or information of your event have been featured.

○ EVENT DEBRIEF DOCUMENT

It is useful to create an event debrief document to send to your client, or to keep for your records. Make sure to include a budget assessment, images, feedback from guests and coverage achieved.

**For advice on running a consumer PR event or campaigns, contact
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