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**How to Plan a Conference/Retreat/Event**

***by Kris Swiatocho***

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Holdinga conference, retreat, or another event can be one of your ministry's most fun and rewarding times. However, to guarantee success, there must be some planning. Your goals, the size of your ministry, and your event's location will affect what you do and what happens as a result. We've prepared this guide to help you through the process of planning your next event.

Because there is no way we can address every situation in this article, if you plan a conference/event and need additional help, please call 919.434.3611 or email swiatocho@gmail.com

**Get Your Priorities Straight**

Before you get started, it's beneficial to think about why you're planning this event. There are some great reasons to host an event—and some wrong reasons to host an event.

**Reasons you *should* have a conference/event:**

* To grow and disciple your existing ministry
* To grow and disciple your existing ministry leadership team
* To outreach into the community
* To build friendships

**Reasons you *should not* have a conference/event:**

* We are supposed to because it's expected
* Because we are a large enough ministry, we should put one on
* We have had a singles ministry for a while now, so we need to have an event
* Because the church down the street has one

**Plan for Success**

Once you've determined that you're doing this for the right reasons, it's time to start. Here are some helpful ideas to help you plan for success.

**Define Your Purpose**

Pray and ask God to help you clarify the purpose of your event.

**Get Some Experience**

Consider being a co-lead or co-sponsor for an existing event to get experience before planning your own.

**Network with Others**

Call people who have led a conference or event, go online and read books and articles. The idea is: to gather as much information as possible to make good decisions about your event.

It's great to involve other churches/ministries in your event. Whether you want help planning and leading or including them as a part of your target audience, spreading the word to other Christian groups is always a good idea.

**Identify Your Goals**

Establish a mission statement and write out your goals for your event. Be prepared to evaluate your progress to see how well you reach your goals.

**Identify Your Audience**

Pick a life stage (or age range) on which you believe God wants you to focus. Spend your time and energy figuring out how to reach that particular group.

**Name Your Event**

Name your event with an understanding of your purpose and goals.

**Establish a Budget**

If this is your first conference, you may want to keep it small (100 people or less). And realize that with 100 people, a local band, some donated food, advertisement, donated door prizes, and a speaker, you could easily spend $3000-$5000. If you can't get food donated, providing lunch for 100 people will likely cost around $1000.00.

If you have an annual budget for all your ministry's operating expenses, you'll need to decide as early as possible what to set aside for your conference.

Some ministries have a separate budget (or can even ask for a separate budget) for their conferences. To help figure out know much to ask for, establish the basics of your event (like your mission, target audience, and so on); going through that exercise will help define your budget needs.

Ask what other churches have spent on conferences. Ask them where they spend the most money. Where would they have cut costs if they could do it over again? Some churches with huge budgets are satisfied with only 100 attendees, while others can hold on to a conference for 500 people for less than $1000 with lots of donations and creative thinking.

Let's say you put on an event for 100 people. This event is a Saturday-only conference. Let's take a look at what you might expect to spend.

$350-$500 Breakfast of donuts, coffee, and paper products at least

$1000 Lunch

$350 Snacks

$0 - $2000 Speaker (Cost can vary due to the speaker's experience, popularity,

and availability. Well-known speakers can cost up to $10,000.) You might use someone from your church or someone who would take a love offering.

$0 - $3000 Band (Most churches use house bands)

$350 Materials, registration, nametags

$100 - $1000 Decorations

$100 - $2000 Advertising (Costs can vary depending on whether you use TV and radio, social media, or just flyers and word of mouth.)

Free Facility can be free if held in a church or other donated space.

Free Door prizes can be free if they're donated.

A few other tips and caveats:

* There are always hidden expenses; plan to give yourself a little bit of a buffer.
* Be careful to keep track of everything.
* Have one person in charge of all the funds but a second person for accountability.
* Only allow authorized team members to spend money.
* Encourage team members to get as much as they can get donated. You might even assign this to one person to lead.
* When reimbursing team members, they require receipts for everything.

**Obtain Pastoral/Church Support**

This means more than just a nod of enthusiasm. You want tangible support such as:

* A budget to help meet expenses
* Sincere and practical encouragement
* Prayer support
* A willingness to let you make announcements from the pulpit
* Advertisements on church grounds, in the bulletin, Facebook, website, etc.

**Develop a Leadership Team**

For every 100 attendees, you'll need at least ten team members to help you, so plan accordingly. We'll say more about choosing your team wisely in just a moment. For now, suffice it to say that the people you surround yourself with can make or break your event.

**Create a Timetable**

The more time you have to plan an event, the better. In most cases, you'll need to start at least six to nine months in advance, as many speakers, bands, and facilities book up six or more months in advance.

Put together a timetable of what you need to accomplish each month. Then write a week-by-week timetable of what you need to do and when. Remember that some things can be done weeks ahead (like getting door prizes). The design of your advertisements and, as was just mentioned, the booking of speakers/bands also can be done ahead of time.

Next, put together a team and begin meeting regularly. Initially, you may only need to meet monthly and only with certain parts of your team. (Email can keep the rest of the team informed.)

Once you've decided on a date for your event, send out a "Save the Date" email/postcard/Facebook/Twitter notice to your database of potential attendees.

**Develop a Leadership Team**

The saying goes, "You're only as good as your people." When you consider the teamwork involved in pulling off your event, it's easy to understand why the team you choose is so important. Here are some tips to help you assemble the best possible team.

* Pray and ask God who should be on your team.
* Seek a co-leader to whom you can delegate important tasks and who will support you as you lead your team.
* Assemble your team from the target audience you are trying to reach. If your team is made up of 50-somethings and you're trying to get 20-somethings, you will have problems identifying with your audience.
* Be open to team members of different maturity levels. The planning of your event could be a great training opportunity for helping team members grow, no matter where they are in their walks with God.
* Value your team members' time. Assign team members to various responsibilities, being sensitive to their level of commitment. For example, single parents and those who may have other obligations should not be assigned a role that requires a significant time commitment. Keep in mind that some people on your team won't be needed until the end (for example, video/audio), so they don't need to attend many early meetings. Similarly, you may hold topic-specific meetings for sub-teams (for example, the registration or marketing teams).
* Pray with and for your team.
* Keep the lines of communication open. You must communicate with your team not only in meetings but by phone and email as well.
* Consider incorporating a short devotional time into your meetings so they can be multi-purposed.
* Make resources available. Do all you can to ensure your team members have access to all the resources they'll need to perform their tasks.
* Be diligent in following up with each team member as they complete each task.
* Encourage your team, love them, and thank them.
* Delegate, delegate, delegate. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
* On the day of the event, ensure that each leader has a name tag that identifies them as a leadership team member. Give a different nametag to other volunteers and all the event's attendees.

**Pastoral Support is Key**

Stay in touch with your pastor throughout the planning process. Occasionally email updates explaining what you are doing and sharing specific prayer requests. Ask your pastor to talk about the event to the church to help promote it. On the day of the event, encourage your senior pastor to visit. Ask him to open prayer events to show his involvement and support. You might even consider involving married folks to help with food, greeting, prayer, etc.

**Organize Your Event**

**Decide on a Date**

People often ask when they should hold a conference or event. The answer depends on whether your goal is "outreach" or "inreach."

* Outreach - Unless you promote a special concert or a beach or mountain event, summer is difficult to gather the unchurched. For the greatest turnout, plan for a fall and spring event.
* Inreach - Summer is an excellent time for inreach events, particularly if held at a vacation-like venue (such as the beach or mountains).

When considering a two-day or weekend event, remember that folks will arrive late on a Friday night, may have traveled a long distance, and be tired. As for when to wrap things up on Sunday, people may have to drive a reasonable distance to get home. If your event ends on Saturday afternoon, plan an event on Saturday night for people who want to continue meeting with each other. For example, you could have a get-together at a restaurant, attend a movie, or host a game night.

**Secure a Location**

When you're ready to secure a location for your event, here are some key issues to keep in mind.

If your event is held at your church, your most significant expenses will be food, marketing, speaker(s), and music (band). Of course, without excellent food, great marketing, knowledgeable speaker(s), and fantastic music, overall attendance and involvement will suffer.

If you're planning your event for a location other than your church, your most significant expense will be securing the venue. Getting away to a new and exciting venue is excellent for building relationships, providing more intense training, and creating opportunities for trying new things. Remember that additional planning, excellent organization, and more responsibility will be required.

Whether you meet on- or off-site, here are some tips and helpful ideas to help your location be the best it can be.

* Be ready to help decide what the facilities can and can't do. For example, you need to know about technical limitations such as sound/PowerPoint, table/chair availability, traffic issues, lighting, props, setting up, when you need to be cleaned up and out, etc.
* Plan your parking strategy, including assistance in bad weather.
* Round tables are the best to encourage conversation and note-taking. Also, if you have fewer folks than planned, spread your tables and use fewer chairs around each table.
* Check with your speaker ahead of time on the placement of the podium, what type of mic they may want to use, whether they will need to show a video or PowerPoint, and whatever other needs they might have.
* Gyms may be great places for playing basketball, but they are horrible for concerts and conferences as the acoustics make it difficult to hear.
* Background music should be playing between sessions.
* Decorations are critical to the overall feel and experience of your event. Consider all aspects of this when planning. Center arrangements on tables make great door prizes.
* Be aware of the location of additional equipment, chairs, tables, etc.
* When setting up exhibitors, be sure to have extra power cords.
* Consider what has to be done to clean up for the event. If an event finishes too late on a Saturday night, it will be hard to prepare for Sunday morning.
* Ask people at the event to help with clean-up.

**Define—and Stick to—Your Budget**

People often ask, "Should I charge a fee for my event?" You should always charge for your event. Why? Because it creates a sense of value for event attendees. And it reinforces to people that investing in their growth in Christ is worthwhile. Remember, you can consistently offer scholarships and discounts to those who need additional help.

Provide discounts for those who register early and for senior adults, students, and children. Remember that getting people to write early won't be motivating enough if the discount isn't attractive enough.

Decide ahead of time where you can save money. For example, using your church's praise band, and local speakers, finding someone within the church who can do your marketing materials, and having the church provide a meal vs. buying food are great ways to save money.

**Registration and Orientation**

**Early Registration**

Did you know that you will increase your registration by as much as 80% or more just by offering online registration? If your marketing plan doesn't include an online presence with the ability for event attendees to register online, you should consider adding that capability.

You will need to work out a system on how to count registrations online and by mail, organize them for the day of (this can be done by the last name, including who has paid and who hasn't), and determine whether you need to ask for the entire amount prior to the day or have them register and pay the day of. Note: If your church does not have a way to do online registration, you may consider using Eventbrite, Facebook, Meetup, or another online tool.

**Registration on the Day of the Event**

Set up your registration area in an easy-to-find area. It should be out front, not inside the area of the event. Assign a point person available during your event to handle late registrations, questions, first aid, and other unexpected issues.

Here are some additional tips:

* If you have a large event, you must have a system that lets people register on the day of the event without waiting too long. For example, break last names into small lines.
* Be sure to have adequate cash to make a change.
* Decide whether you can take debit/credit cards for the day off and checks. Have a sign that says to whom the checks are made. Note: The "Square" resource used on Smartphones is a great, quick, easy way to take credit and debit cards.
* Make one person in charge of handling all money.

**Welcome Packets**

Upon arrival at the event, each attendee should receive a welcome packet. You need to decide what should be included in this packet and how it should be packaged/presented. Here are some ideas to consider:

* A folder, large envelope, or notebook. Folders and large envelopes are less expensive.
* Include a name tag, pen, giveaways, coupons, and information about area church or ministry brochures.
* Include a schedule of the day, a list of speakers, a bio of speakers and bands, list of topics to be covered.
* Include an area map and one of the event's locations (hotel, church, etc.).
* Always list hotels, area attractions, and things to do for those visiting from outside. Check with the local Chamber of Commerce to get free brochures.

**Name Tags**

Name tags need to be done ahead of time. You can pre-print with the logo for the conference. Printing each attendee's name adds an extra bonus if you have time. Print the first name very large, with their last name small. You may add their church/city name. (If you offer pre-registered break-out sessions, you can also put that information on the nametag.)

Remember that peel-and-stick name tags only work for one day, so you will need to give them out each day of your event. For a multi-day event, plastic holders are best. At the end of your event, ask for the holder's back to being used for another event. Have each name tag attached to a packet to help save time.

**Greeters/Security**Greeters should be friendly, have a great smile, and be informative. Greeters will help in everything from holding doors open to helping with registration to assisting speakers/bands. They can also be security in disguise. Tell your greeters to:

* Wear a name tag (it should identify them as a greeter).
* Arrive early and stay late.
* Stay informed on all aspects of the event.
* Be as helpful and friendly as possible.

**Market Your Event**

Note: Kris Swiatocho, with The Singles Network Ministries, can design a logo, website, and marketing materials if needed.

Remember that the overall look of all marketing materials needs to be consistent. Your logo, signage, web page, Facebook, brochures, T-shirts, and decorations, must be graphically attractive and consistent.

This is such a critical area that it often gets forgotten. Marketing is neglected because of a lack of skill, resources, finances, or all of the above. The number one way to get people to a conference is by inviting them one by one. However, marketing to them in multiple ways has been proven effective and establishes the overall feel of the event.

**Logo**

Your logo must be clean and easy to read—no more than two colors for cost-effectiveness when printing. Stay away from logos with photos in them, logos that are too long or tall, or use dated graphics or fonts. You must also consider your audience. A too-edgy logo will not appeal to an older group and vice versa.

**Website**

When putting your event on the web, consider the design, accessibility of the links, ease of use, and graphical appeal. Your website needs to reflect that if you are trying to reach an audience under 40. If your links don't work, there is missing information, there aren't any pictures, and attendance will suffer.

As stated earlier, registration will increase by 80% or more when you offer online registration. Make sure your website will allow people to register quickly and easily.

That said, get your website up as soon as possible—even if you don't have all the information yet.

And don't forget about email. Early on, send out a save-the-date ad for your event. And start to develop a database of email addresses to promote the event. A database is a great way to follow up on your event, promote other events and invite people to church.

**Brochure**

Your brochure needs to include the event logo and a picture on the front of who the target audience is. The content needs to be simple and to the point. Point to the website for more information. Other items to include:

* An opening paragraph with the intent of the event
* Details on where, when, the sponsor, the schedule, the speakers/band (and perhaps their bios), cost, discounts, and contact information.
* Photographs are great because they give the audience an idea of what to expect.
* They can mail a tear-off registration form; however, ensure you can also take registrations online. The registration needs to include their email address printed, how many children and ages (if you are offering childcare), address, phone, and church name. For networking purposes, you may also obtain information on whether they are staff or lay leadership in a church.

**Bulletin Inserts, Flyers & Posters**

Another great way to get the word out is to provide inserts for your church's bulletin and flyers for its hallways. You may also offer these to other churches to help promote your event. Keep a minimal amount of information, so it doesn't get too busy. Be sure to have your website/contact information large.

**Postcards**

It's a good idea to mail out a save-the-date postcard with instructions to go to the website for details. Then later, a reminder postcard. You can also email a save-the-date jpg of the front side of your postcard. This jpg could be clickable back to your website.

**T-Shirts**Some events print T-shirts for the leadership team and other volunteers. You may also consider selling them to help raise additional support or donations for a worthy cause. Keep in mind that you want the T-shirts to be attractive enough to be worn outside of

the event.

**Signs**

Outdoor signage to promote an upcoming event, directional signs on the day of the event, and signs for the bathrooms are critical. One of the best ways to advertise is by putting a banner/sign out front weeks prior to the event.

Use bright colors, high-contrast, and keep it simple; something like:

Jesus First Conference, August 10th, www.FirstChurch.org

Having a banner at your event helps to tie everything together. You may blow up your logo on a board and paint the design to save cost. You may also use PowerPoint to project your image on a screen.

**Advertising Your Event**

Ads in local papers, websites, flyers/brochures to tack up at coffee houses, word of mouth, announcements at other churches, and sharing your event with similar associations are great ways to promote your event. Also, don't forget about social media. Be creative with fun videos, interviews of speakers, the band, etc., that can be shared.

You want to equip your team and church with what they need to help get the word out. If this is your first event, you might want to keep your costs down by only doing word-of-mouth advertising. Be aware that placing ads can get very expensive. Make sure you budget for this ahead of time.
If you are not charging for your event, you can usually get a free Public Service Announcement on the radio/TV. However, if you are charging, you may have some limitations. Some stations have local community shows that might allow you to be a guest. Also, ask local media outlets to come to your event to promote community awareness and future events. Note: Be sure to visit our website for a free list of 50 Ways to Advertise.

**Decorations**

The decorations for your event should be consistent with your overall theme and the look of your marketing materials. For example, if your theme includes a tropical or ocean theme, your marketing materials and decorations should tie into that theme. Don't forget to be creative with your theme by having extras like:

* Tabletop items
* Packet contents
* Banners
* Giveaways and door prizes
* Pens

Note: Oriental Trading and Group.com offer great give-a-way items for your event. Balloons scattered around the room will quickly make a room feel decorative while keeping costs low.

**Door Prizes**

Door prizes can be anything from gift certificates to local restaurants and gift shops to books and tapes. Ask your speaker/band to donate an item. And be sure to let folks know who donated the item. You may opt to include their names in the packet of information. Remember, supporting and publicly thanking our door prize donators is very important. Go the extra mile: send a personal thank you to all donors after the event.

**Piecing the Puzzle Together**

All your planning and preparation are getting ready to pay off. Whether you're holding a conference, a retreat, a workshop, or another event, your event will be a great success! Some of the topics in this section may not apply to your particular event; feel free to take the topics that apply to you as you piece together your one-of-a-kind event.

**Alter Call**

Whether or not to have an altar call is a personal decision. Having an altar call may be normal in your church; however, working with other churches that might not have altar calls could be uncomfortable for them. When establishing your mission and goals, keep this in mind. You may offer an invitation and state that counselors will be standing by (all counselors should identify name tags).

Alternatives to a traditional altar call are:

* Decision cards on the tables or in attendee packets.
* Prayer request/suggestion box.

**Audio/Visual**Because some facilities may have an audio/visual person on staff, you may tap that person's expertise. It might be a good idea to assign an assistant to that person (not only will they help the primary a/v person, but they'll also receive some valuable training that you could use for future events). Here are some other things to consider:

* Will you want your event recorded?
* Will you need a PowerPoint or another program? Keep in mind that not every tech person knows how to run PowerPoint. You may have to bring someone in to do this.
* Will your speaker prefer a headset or lapel mic? As a rule, a stationary mic offers less flexibility and ease of use.
* What about your band? What kind of mics do they need? Sound?

Don't forget to check all sound, video, and lighting before the event's start time. And remember, because of the nature of technical equipment, you must have access to backup equipment in the case of a problem.

**Breaks**

Allow plenty of time for breaks. Remember, conferences typically attract more women than men—and women usually need longer bathroom breaks! Be sure to allow for plenty of time. You might even opt to change some of your male restrooms to female for your event.

**Childcare**If you decide to offer childcare, understand that some states require care workers to be licensed. Decide the ages you'll accept (how young/how old) and if you will charge for their care. You will need to think about keeping children occupied for the duration of the event. Meals and snacks should be provided. You may opt to have children join parents for lunch.

Remember, also, that single-parent families have the most inflexible use of their time and money. Keep this in mind as you plan.

**Disabilities**Some events should include a sign language interpreter. You may also need to arrange accommodations for individuals who are in wheelchairs or have visual impairments. Also, you may need to allow for service animals.

**Emcee**You may opt to have an emcee for your event. Good candidates are your singles pastor, a single adult, a comedian, or a bandleader. This person will help to keep the mood lifted and energized. They could announce door prize winners, conduct prayer, make announcements, and introduce speakers.

**Exhibits**

Decide ahead of time if you will allow exhibits at your event, and be clear about the purpose of each show. For example, some companies/ministries promote or sell items with nothing to do with your ministry, such as insurance, gym memberships, cell phones, etc.

Are you going to charge exhibitors? If the exhibits create additional value for event attendees, it's appropriate for exhibitors to pay for exposure. If an exhibitor also attends the event, will you discount event registration fees?

Consider that if an exhibitor brings helpers who are not planning to attend the conference, you'll need enough food to accommodate them. Get a headcount in advance and decide whether you'll charge these people for meals.

To facilitate your exhibitors, you should:

* Offer layout options for exhibitors on your website or in an exhibitors' packet; communicate the height or space limitations they will have.
* Provide electricity, a table and skirt, and chairs.
* Allowing them to play music and video, display their signage, and hand out food, drinks, candy, and other giveaways.
* Include set-up and breakdown time for exhibitors.

**First Aid**

Have a first aid kit(s) available, and make sure all your team members know where they're located. You may opt to have a paid nurse for more significant events.

**Follow-Up**

Encourage your attendees to review their handouts later to help them remember the conference/event.
-Consider a going away gift to help them remember the conference
-Have a plan in action to follow up with visitors/attendees
-Evaluations are critical to an event. Include one in their packet (or give it out at the end). You may also send them a link using one online.

**Food**

This area is very critical, so you should take the time to plan it out. The quality of the food you provide can make or break your event—if meals are lousy, cold, old, or dry, attendees may not remember much else about your event.

Here are some tips, advice, and "lessons learned" to help manage this important area of your event.

* Consider box lunches, which are easier to deal with than hot food.
* Always provide snacks and other refreshments on the tables. This doesn't have to be elaborate; a bowl of candies or bags of chips is sufficient.
* Be sensitive to people who have dietary restrictions.
* Be aware of anyone who might need assistance.
* Consider having food lines that people can walk down both sides.
* If space is limited or you need to use the buffet area immediately after the meal has been served, consider asking attendees to eat in another location or outside. Many churches and hotels have courtyards, lobbies, or unused meeting spaces that could be used for this purpose.
* Always allow your speaker/band members to go first when eating. They may have additional time to prepare for the next part of the conference/event.
* Be aware that where you eat, there will be clean up. If your event is multiple days, you will need a team to set up and clean up to disturb the rest of the conference/event.
* Always provide a meal on location, as it will keep your attendees there and provide opportunities for relationships.
* Consider having a leader's table. This allows the visiting leaders to network and interact directly with the speaker.
* Don't be shy about asking for food donations or discounts. Always ask.

**Icebreakers**

Icebreakers, skits, and warm-up exercises are great ways to energize and connect with your audience. Again, be sure to stay consistent with your overall theme. Be creative and have fun.

**Prayer**

We've already talked about having a prayer team as part of your event's preparation. Here, we're talking about the visibility and purpose of prayer at the event itself.

It's essential to keep your event focused on God. Prayer is one great way to do this. Here are some ways to incorporate prayer into your event:

* You could have prayer request boxes located throughout your event site. Make sure to let people know they are checked at every break and that they will pray for them.
* Assign a prayer partner for each speaker and band member.
* Have this same team praying during your event, covering each aspect of the day in prayer.
* You may organize a group of counselors for the actual day of the event.
* You may work with the follow-up team for prayer for those who attended, including those who accepted Christ or would like to do so.
* Ask local churches to be in prayer for your event.

**Small-Group Discussion**Allow small group discussions at your event is always a good idea. It helps to build community. You can facilitate this by encouraging folks to sit with people they don't know. You might even plan to mix up your audience for special break-out sessions. To help these sessions run smoothly, train some small group leaders to facilitate conversation and help keep the discussion

on topic.

**Speaker/Band**

When choosing a speaker or a band, make sure they will connect with your audience. If you hire a married speaker, they must know how to relate to single adults. If you hire a band that is too edgy, they might not relate to your audience and

vice versa.

Be sure to communicate what you want and expect. For example, if you would like your speaker to accept questions or stay after to sign books, be sure to ask for these things. Know ahead of time if your speaker/band charges a fee. Agree on a figure in advance. If you book a speaker/band, stand behind your verbal agreement even if you have not received a written agreement yet. Insist on paying a deposit to protect you and the speaker/band.

Take care of your speaker/band. Here are some ways to make sure you accommodate them adequately.

* Have water for them when they are getting ready to speak/sing. Ask if there are any other special needs.
* Provide a hotel (not someone's home) for your speaker/band. Also, ensure they have access to transportation to and from the event.
* Ask ahead of time if your speaker/band needs a product table and assign someone to operate it.
* Assign a prayer partner. This prayer partner could call or email your speaker/band during the planning process.
* Assign a personal assistant. This assistant can do whatever is needed and be available to the speaker/band throughout the event. Sometimes speakers/bands need someone to help in crowd control or a monopolizing fan.
* Be aware that your speaker/band may need some downtime between speakers/playing. Have a room that they can go to. Provide refreshments, couches, computer with internet, etc.

A few words about logistics: perform sound checks early to adjust the volume. Arrange the type of mic, podium, stage props, and materials your speaker/band needs. Be sure to ask your speaker/band permission if you plan to record them audibly and visually.

**Checklists for Before, During, and After Your Event**

**One Day Prior – Checklist**

Tomorrow's the big day. And you've got a lot of work to do before then. Here are some important things to be sure you get done today.

* Make sure registration packets/folders are done and ready to give out
* Set up and decorate the facility
* Place all signage (including directional signs for parking and entrance)
* Make a final call to your food vendors to confirm when the food will be delivered
* Perform mike/soundcheck (may include band/speaker)
* Make a final call to speakers/bands (they may be arriving early; if so, arrange to meet with them if needed)
* Pray over your event

**Morning of Your Event – Checklist**

Before the first attendee walks up to the registration/check-in table, you need to be sure to take care of these things.

* Take care of last-minute decorations/signs (such as helium-filled balloons)
* Perform final mike/soundcheck
* Schedule a time for prayer about one hour before the event's start time; ask your band, speaker, and a team of volunteers to join you
* Allow time for band warm-up about one hour prior
* Make sure greeters/ushers are in place at least 30 minutes prior
* Allow the speaker to warm up about 30 minutes prior
* Set up refreshments about 30 minutes prior
* Play music in the background
* Open all doors about 30 minutes before the event's start time

**During Your Event – Checklist**

You and your volunteers must take care of these things throughout the event.

* Assign greeters everywhere to help people find their way
* Keep reducing people at your registration area until just one person is operating the table
* Clean up as you go
* Empty trash as you go (including bathroom trashcans)
* Keep refreshments up to date
* Keep water available for your speakers/bands
* Keep the music playing during breaks
* Be as flexible as needed

**After Your Event – Checklist**

Before attendees begin filing out, make a point to do the following.

* Close in prayer
* Thank and acknowledge your team in front of everyone
* Thank everyone for coming by and saying it to people as they leave
* Ask all attendees to fill out evaluations
* Start to break down (you may have a different team for this as most of your team will be very tired; you may also opt to do some now and some later)
* Connect with your band/speaker as they leave; ensure they have their checks and help them get to the airport, hotel, etc.
* Set up a follow-up time with your team to go over evaluations

Bring Kris to your city to speak at your next event in person or by zoom. Call her at 919.434.3611.

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