



# BlackBallotPower

## Special Events: A Birdseye View

1. WHERE DO WE BEGIN?
  - Brainstorm with small group who will run event.
  - Give them \$\$\$ goal; decide on type of event, theme, date, place.
2. WHO SHOULD BE ON THE COMMITTEE
  - Start with Directors, volunteers, their friends, major donors, business leaders, community leaders, political leaders, etc.
  - Make sure committee is a group of workers - enough to pull off event.
  - Tell the committee what you want them to do and by when it must be done.
3. WHO DO WE INVITE?
  - Get names and addresses from committee.
  - Include all your donors, members, volunteers, vendors, everyone interested.
4. HOW DO WE GET PEOPLE TO ATTEND?
  - An attractive invitation with response card and envelope. Hand address; have committee write personal notes when appropriate; use first class mail; mail 6 weeks before event.
  - Be prepared to have committee do follow-up phone calls.
5. WHAT DO WE CHARGE?
  - Charge the highest amount the committee is willing to sell.
  - Have varied ticket prices; up-front sponsors; other sources of income (such as a raffle, silent auction, ads in the program book, etc.)
6. WHO SHOULD WORK AT THE EVENT?
  - People you trust and who are good workers.
  - Staff can volunteer.
  - Be choosy and rehearse carefully. Tell them not to drink too much and how to dress. Make certain they know work comes first.
  - Use committee as hosts to greet people.
7. WHAT SHOULD WE PRINT FOR THE EVENT?
  - A program book with scheduled events, something about the people involved or speaking, a list of committee, a list of the Directors and executive director, thank-you to sponsors and for in-kind donations, and something about your organization.
  - Send out press releases, set up press conference on day of event.
8. HOW DO WE THANK EVERYONE?
  - Gifts for the hardest workers.
  - Party for the committee.
  - Send program book to everyone who sent money and did not come.
  - Send a program to all advertisers.
  - Thank-you notes to everyone....absolutely everyone



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## Twenty Tips to Success

1. Get a **WORKING** committee of givers and getters.
2. Think big.
3. Leave plenty of time to plan.
4. Scrounge: get everything donated and discounted.
5. Be creative.
6. Get all the publicity you can.
7. Use unconventional facilities, or make conventional facilities unconventional.
8. Make your invitation stand out.
9. Find a celebrity, if you can.
10. Don't charge too little – this is a fundraiser.
11. Plan for everything that can go wrong.
12. Plan for everything that can't go wrong.
13. Borrow great ideas.
14. Assume nothing – confirm everything in writing.
15. Meet your volunteers and give them job descriptions.
16. Be direct.
17. Keep records on everything and everyone.
18. Keep the evening's program short – don't bore your audience.
19. Have fun.
20. Thank absolutely everyone



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## What Now?

### 10 Rotten Situations and How to Handle Them

**This is a Special Event--therefore something will go wrong.  
Don't panic! Assume the guest will never know.**

- 1) It's one week before the event and you have not filled the house.**
  - a. Get your committee chair and members on the telephone selling tickets. They do not want a failure either.
  - b. If possible, make the room look smaller.
  - c. Make sure there are no empty tables.
  
- 2) The program does not arrive from the printer on time.**
  - a. Write out the program in block letters and place in appropriate place (or places). Hand them out during intermission, or when the guests leave.
  - b. If they arrive the next day and it is the printer's fault--do not pay.
  - c. If they arrive the next day and it is your fault, mail them to your guests as a souvenir.
  
- 3) A guest arrives without a ticket and is not listed and insists on being admitted.**
  - a. Get them out of earshot, apologize for the error, and let them in.
  - b. Even if you know that they are wrong? YES! If you don't make any money, you can only make a friend.
  - c. Do not forget to get their name, address, and telephone number.
  
- 4) There are many empty seats in the front row or at the front tables**
  - a. Seat the volunteers, the staff, and the ushers.
  - b. Sit down yourself.
  
- 5) Your guest of honor fails to show, does not call, cannot be reached.**
  - a. Say the guest is held up at the airport or caught in a snowstorm – whatever is plausible.
  - b. Do not say that you were forgotten.
  - c. Get a five-minute storyteller on stage, or some other special guest to fill in.
  - d. If the crowd has a good time, they will focus less on the catastrophe.

**6) Your musician arrives late.**

- a. If you cannot fit them in scratch them.

**7) You notice guest making off with centerpieces that were borrowed from a fancy shop for the evening.**

- a. Say nothing.
- b. Ask the shop for a donation or a discount.

**8) Your working committee is not working.**

- a. Set written deadlines so you can cancel event if committee really will not work.
- b. If it is too late to cancel the event you must use all your might to get them working. Tell them what the consequences of a failure will be.
- c. If this fails, see if the agency will help save face and money.

**9) Your invitations arrive from the printer two weeks before the event**

- a. Set up a phone-a-thon for the committee to follow-up the invitation three to four days after they are mailed.

**10) You are extremely nervous and are not sure you can keep it together.**

- a. Breathe. Take slow deep breaths and remember that you have organized a well-planned event.
- b. Put your public face on. Never let them see you sweat.
- c. Do not drink alcohol. An alcoholic beverage tends to loosen the tongue. Remember these are your donors and invited guest. You never want to say anything embarrassing.