



**COLLEGIATE  
EMPOWERMENT**

# **THE EVENT PLANNER & MARKETING GUIDE**

**THE COLLEGIATE EMPOWERMENT EVENT PLANNER** IS A PROVEN SYSTEM TO GUIDE YOU IN PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR EVENTS ON CAMPUS, STARTING WITH YOUR COLLEGIATE EMPOWERMENT SEMINAR EXPERIENCES. HAVING PERFORMED AT MORE THAN 2,500 CAMPUSES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, SERVING MORE THAN 1.8 MILLION COLLEGE STUDENTS & 35,000 PROFESSIONALS THROUGH MORE THAN 5,000 EVENTS, WE UNDERSTAND THE CRITICAL FACTORS OF YOUR EVENT.

SINCE 1995, WE HAVE HAD MANY GREAT SUCCESSES AND FRUSTRATIONS. BASED ON THOSE FRUSTRATIONS, OUR SEMINAR DESIGN TEAM HAS DEVELOPED THIS GUIDE TO HELP YOU AVOID THE COMMON PITFALLS. WE KNOW THAT MANY OF OUR CLIENTS' CORE GENIUSES DOES NOT NECESSARILY FALL UNDER THAT AREA OF "BIG EVENT PLANNER." AFTER ALL, YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR. SO WE HOPE THE SIMPLE SUGGESTIONS WILL HELP YOU. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO FORWARD IT TO YOUR FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES.

ALLOW US TO GUIDE & SUPPORT YOU IN NOT ONLY CUSTOMIZING YOUR EVENT, BUT MAKING IT SUCCESSFUL FROM START TO FINISH. IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT ADS & POSTERS, BUT CREATING RELATIONSHIPS. LET US EXPAND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU SO THAT YOU CAN DO THE SAME WITH YOUR STUDENTS...

# THE 7 DUMBEST MISTAKES TO AVOID IN PLANNING YOUR EVENT, LEADERSHIP TRAINING, OR WELCOME WEEK EXPERIENCE

## DO IT ALL BY YOURSELF

- If you want something done well, do it yourself. The only trouble is, then, you do EVERYTHING, and you do it alone. Stop being a rugged individualist and get some help! Here's a Collegiate EmPowerment mantra for you: "Life's too short to do the things you suck at!" Leave your Superman Cape & Wonder Woman Invisible Jet home. Hire a professional to help you.
- "But an outside speaker costs too much." You might be right. However, being cheap can be very expensive. For example, you try to save a buck or two by having a local community leader come to your campus to speak for free, but s/he gets there late, isn't prepared, can't relate to college students, and doesn't know what to do when the A/V won't work. And you sit there sinking deeper into your front row seat hoping that your VP in the back of the room doesn't see you (you = the one who decided to bring this "expert" to your campus). Plus, your students are sleeping. Great, you saved money. But at what cost?
- This also applies to comedians, hypnotists, variety acts, and even some musicians.

## MAKE IT LOW-ENERGY, LECTURE-STYLE, & BORING

- If your event is boring, people will never remember you. If your event is inspiring, you will never be forgotten. Whatever message you convey must be able to inspire your students. Your mind never forgets what your heart remembers. Whether you work with us at Collegiate EmPowerment, another outside expert, or do it yourself, whatever you do, don't be boring!
- Research has proven the participants retain only 20% of straight lecture. Most "lecturers" focus on content. Not us. It's all about context: the student. People retain up to 90% of what they actively learn through call-backs, journaling, sharing, exercises, games, tools, and reflection. AND, it also has to be high-energy, engaging, interactive, and fun! If you can pull this off without pulling out your hair, then go be awesome! If not, we are ready to make you look like a hero.

## START TOO EARLY & END REALLY LATE

- The best seminar timeframe is from 10am-4pm. You may opt for a continental breakfast; just don't start before 9am; it's simply too early for the average college student. As for the ending time, try to wrap up by 4pm. It's also nice to offer the students a parting dinner or meal.
- This rule can be bent for leadership retreats. The days are usually longer, so schedule plenty of breaks. A "retreat" is a strategic withdrawal into safety or seclusion to reflect and plan. Participants should feel refreshed and energized afterwards.

## PLAN A LOT OF SESSIONS IN A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME WITH NO BREAKS

- The mind can only absorb what the butt cheeks can tolerate. Don't over-program! Keep your session times short: no more than 90 minutes (less than the length of a movie). This is critical for new students and mandatory events. Here's another CE mantra: "In their thirst for knowledge, people are drowning in all the information!" You've got to identify the three primary goals of your event and no more. Teach a lot, learn a little. Teach a little, learn a lot.
- Countless schools over-program for their students. Do not have every single campus constituency speak. It's overwhelming. Remember, your goal is *not only* to have a successful event, but that you are creating an expectation for all of your future events. If you bomb on this one, your students aren't going to look too favorably on any future events that you sponsor.

## PICK A VENUE WHERE IT SUCKS TO BE A PARTICIPANT

- When possible, say NO to gyms and big outside tents. Gyms are intended for sports where participants are meant to sweat. Basketball is not played on a stage; presentations should not be made on a court. Plus, the acoustics in a gym are terrible. And tents are for kids birthday parties and circus acts. Some schools can pull off the tent events – just tell the clowns to stay home. Use the best venue possible so that the event is best-received.

## HERD YOUR STUDENTS LIKE CATTLE

- Students are human beings, not cattle. Please, please, please do not cram 1,000 people into a venue that only holds 800, and don't rush students between sessions. If you treat students like cattle, they will act like cattle and in turn treat you like the cowboy/cowgirl holding a cattle poker. Teach your students how to treat you and your campus community.
- Pick the right venue – a theater, auditorium, or large multipurpose room. If you don't have a venue to support your entire group, consider hosting separate sessions. This might sound like more effort, but trust our experience: it's more effective to create a quality experience for a smaller crowd than to create a miserable experience for a larger crowd.
- And when you usher students through a day/week of sessions or events, provide plenty of time to (1) get from point A to point B, (2) use the facilities or grab a snack, and (3) meet other students and network. Many times we forget that while encouraging networking, the events tend to limit free time needed for networking.

## DO IT ONCE, THEN QUIT

- Student development is like taking a shower...If you only do it once, they'll stink. Funny, but true. If there is one thing that we at Collegiate EmPowerment are dedicated to, it is changing in the model of student development and training from a once-a-year event to a consistent process. Showering, exercising, learning a new language, and most other things in life are a process, not a one-time event.
- Try this: from now on have leadership training FOUR times a year. How? Two sessions in the fall and two in the spring. You will witness major transformations in the students, professionals, and organizations that you serve.

# PLANNING YOUR EVENT LIKE A PROFESSIONAL EVENT PLANNER

## SET THE EVENT UP FOR SUCCESS

- The event is either set up to succeed or set up to fail. All of the important work takes place *before* the event in the planning, customization, and marketing. What is the purpose of the event (in the students' minds)? What are the learning outcomes (in your supervisor's mind)? Do the students know why they HAVE TO attend some mandatory session? Can you promise that the event is going to be dynamic and entertaining? If all else fails, do you have a money-back guarantee? We do.

## YOUR GOAL IS 3-10% FOR LEADERSHIP EVENTS

- Approximately 1-3% of your campus are the top student leaders. They are involved in everything. They show up when you ask them to. They want to make the difference. The next 3-10% are engaged students who attend and actively participate in events on campus. Your goal is to focus on the top 3-10%. Make their college experience better and they will make it better for everyone around them. Then, of course, you'll have a certain percentage of students who want to Facebook chat in their room with their roommate. You can't win them all.
- For orientation events, lecture series, open trainings, comedians, hypnotists, bands, and other variety or novelty acts, the attendance can vary depending on your institution, student population, local community, and culture.

## CAMPUS INTEGRATION IS CRITICAL

- Professionals and departments should be supportive of the events and community you are building. They should encourage their students to attend. They should help in the planning. They should be on your team. The operative word here is "should."
- We know there is a rivalry of sorts between student activities and the faculty. But the truth is, one is no good without the other. You SHOULD invest as much time winning over your colleagues as you invest with the students. It's important for the students to know that everyone is on their side and in support of a greater college experience.

## GET ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- Partner with colleagues, student org's, and other departments to increase the budget, networking, staffing, and impact.
- Seek corporate sponsorships from companies that hire students from your campus.
- Collaborate with professionals from local campuses to gain broader support.
- Charge a nominal fee for each participant in the event.

## PLAN A COURTEOUS TIMELINE

- Avoid starting an event while participants are still eating. These are college students we are talking about; they plan their classes around meal times and naps.
- Avoid announcements or awards before or immediately following the event as this tends to diffuse the energy and/or message presented. Consider having these announcements before previews, during the walk-in, or during a break.
- For Orientation and/or Welcome Week, Orientation Leaders, Peer Mentors, and Ambassadors are going to be exhausted after their intense training leading up to orientation. We cannot ensure training effectiveness when the students are run down. Neither can you. Give them nap time. Seriously.

## BREAK THE ICE

- If ice breakers and team builders are necessary or suggested, they should take place before the event so that students are acquainted with each other and open to participate. If possible, allow the event facilitator to lead or take part in the ice breakers as well to establish rapport and build credibility.

## CREATE AGENDA FLOW (IF THERE IS AN AGENDA)

- Start with a kickoff. Whatever the "first" session is for welcome week or training, it better be really, really good. Use this kickoff to set the tone and build excitement for the rest of the day/week/semester. From there, allow other sessions, trainings, or events to fit within the same theme or context.
- Imagine the session/training/event is a movie. One scene must relate and flow to the next, with everything coming full-circle in the end. For a day-long event, use the kickoff to set the tone and energize the participants to be excited for the event/series itself. Wrap-up with a closing on how the entire event/series ties together and what's next for the participants.

## SUPPORT OTHER PRESENTERS & PERFORMERS

- If there are multiple presenters throughout the day, they should be requested to attend the event because it will set the context for the rest of the day. For example: if the event is a keynote for a leadership conference or the opening session for orientation, this will greatly influence the students' general impression and set expectations for the rest of the day. It's important for everyone to be aware of the content, understand the context, and be on level ground with the participants who attended the keynote or opening session. Otherwise, the day will be disjointed, as will the students.

## BUILD COMMUNITY

- Events bring people together; community keeps people together. Consider any major experience you've been a part of: how long did YOU remain excited and engaged? Now compare that length of time to how long people spend on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, or other social media platforms. These are places where people get together (albeit virtually) to share, learn, and stay engaged with each other. These are not events; they are communities. Now go build yours.

# TIE YOUR HANDS BEHIND YOUR BACK & TRIPLE YOUR ATTENDANCE

Imagine walking into a seminar titled "Tie Your Bands Behind Your Back & Triple Your Attendance." What would you expect? Tips on marketing. Ideas for recruitment. Event planning strategies. Right? But would you think that we were ACTUALLY going to tie your hands behind your back? Probably not. That's exactly why we do it! This metaphor is as real to life as it gets.

Emails get deleted. Voicemails are ignored. Facebook events only go so far. Posters are invisible in a sea of ads. Mailbox stuffers are overlooked. Campus newspaper ads might not be read. Sidewalk chalk gets washed away. Telemarketing sure doesn't get anyone's attention. NOW WHAT? We are flooded with so much marketing that we become numb to it. If you had your hands behind your back, how would you recruit for and market for your event? **USE YOUR VOICE.** Word of mouth is the single best marketing strategy on the planet.

From the Boston Tea Party to Civil Rights to Women's Suffrage. All these movements happened without Facebook. Heck, even Hitler did it before there was a TV in every home. And there's no way the Occupy Wall Street movement would have taken place if people didn't actually occupy something.

There's a saying in marketing that an event has to be pushed seven times in different ways before someone is "sold." If you really want to triple your usual attendance, you need to get people talking about the event. Here's a few ways how:

**BUILD A ROSTER OF STUDENT CHAMPIONS** who are interested to learn, lead, and serve. We know you don't have any "favorite" students (wink wink), so let's call them your champions. Hand-select and train ten students to be your champions for the semester/year. The #1 job of these champions is to make friends and build excitement for the organization/office. Then, when it comes time to market an event, all the champions have to do is invite their friends...the entire campus.

**BUILD A TEAM OF SALESPEOPLE.** The purpose of most businesses is to make money, and without the money, that business cannot follow its vision or fulfill its mission. Thus, salespeople are your most valuable asset. Just like businesses, a student organization has a vision and mission, and also needs salespeople to sell tickets to events, recruit new members, spread the word about a project, or raise funds.

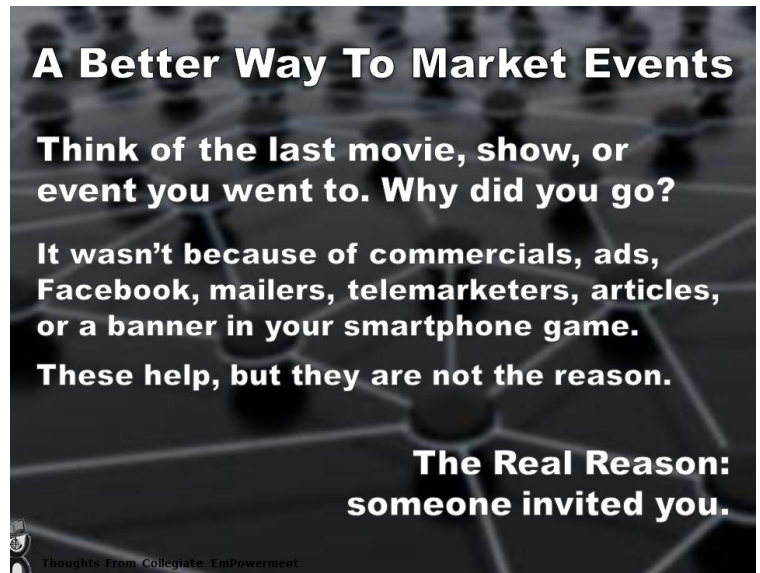
*Everyone* in the organization is a salesperson...and they need to understand that. They are always on stage. They are the face of the organization. It is the responsibility of the salespeople (not posters and emails) to get people in the seats of the event. It is the responsibility of the presenter or act to then keep them in the seats. The event will not be successful or create enough value if we cannot get people in the seats to appreciate it. Everyone wants to know "What's In It For Me?" The salespeople answer this question, set expectations for the event, and share the agenda so everyone knows exactly what's in it for them and why they should participate. Or, in the case of marketing through classes, the professors must know and believe in the reason for the students to attend the event.

**CARPPOOL.** Whether this is for welcome week or student leader training, one of the easiest ways to ensure attendance is to have the students "carpool" to the event. What this metaphor means is that during welcome week, the orientation leaders, resident assistants, and peer mentors should escort/usher the first-year students to the events. Or, if it's student leader training or any planned event throughout the year, have your champions and top student leaders meet up with the other participants and walk/drive to the event together. Just like when we go to an event off campus, we meet up and drive in one vehicle. Except in this metaphor, the "vehicle" is the student leader.

**PROVIDE MARKETING TIME FOR OTHER CLUBS.** What club or organization wouldn't like to have a few moments of face time in front of the audience or a table set up to display its own events? As an incentive for the first three clubs to bring or influence X number of people to your event, give them the opportunity to market their event.

**AND OF COURSE, PERSONALLY INVITE THE TOP STUDENT LEADERS.** Who can forget the power of networking, connections, and the good old "Hey, you are one of the ten people I really want to see at this event." Tell them why you think they are important, what they will gain from the event, and why you are choosing them out of all other leaders. Feeling like a part of a distinguished few would make anyone feel honored. Give them a fine reputation to live up to.

Also, consider how you integrate Twitter & Facebook into the marketing plan.



Then untie your hands. It becomes self-defeating after a while. ☺



← **THIS IS NOT  
A GOOD SYMBOL  
FOR A SPEAKER**



**LEARNING NEEDS TO BE FUN**



**STUDENTS NEED TO BE ENGAGED**



**IF YOUR SPEAKERS ARE STILL BEHIND THE PODIUM  
THEY ARE PRACTICING 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TECHNIQUES**