

Being an effective club or society

Planning events

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Session planning

Skills Covered

Organisation and planning
Teamwork

Session Planning

Aims of the session

This session aims to raise awareness of the importance of planning ahead and dividing up responsibilities when running a social event. The trainer will need to liaise with the SU Bar and Entertainments Manager (or equivalent) for the final part of the session on systems and resources.

Learning objectives

By the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Identify the purposes of social events
- List things that can go wrong with social events
- Explain the benefits of planning and dividing up responsibilities
- Identify available resources

Method

The session will involve a short introduction in plenary, the trainer will then lead a brainstorm. Participants then work in small groups with a debrief in plenary. This is followed by a short talk, an exercise in small groups, a debrief and finishes with a talk on available resources.

Resources required

- Flipchart & pens
- Worksheet(s)

Suggested timings

Introduction	5 mins
Ideas storm	5 mins
Small groupwork	10 mins
Debrief	15 mins
Trainer talk	15 mins
Exercise	20 mins
Debrief	15 mins
Talk or handouts	5 mins
Summary	5 mins

Total running time = 1 hour 35 minutes

Running the session

Running the session

Introduction

1. Start by outlining the aims and learning objectives of the exercise. Explain how the session will run, i.e. the methods you will use and what skills you will be developing.

Ideas storm

2. Ideas storm with the group - ask them to shout out what they think the purpose of holding social events is for a club or society. Record their answers on a flipchart.

Suggestions may include:

- To raise funds
- As a means of introducing new members
- To mark a special occasion (eg end of term/year)
- To recruit new members
- To create a team atmosphere
- To encourage attendance at another event (eg AGM)

Ensure they have the last suggestion (if they don't, then suggest it and add to the list when they agree) and draw attention to the variety of purposes socials can be used for.

3. Move on to the next part of the session by announcing that in a moment you will be splitting them into four groups. Two of these will discuss the **best** party/social event they've attended and what made it good, the other two groups will discuss the **worst** party/social event they've attended and what made it so bad.

Group work

Split the group into four sub-groups and tell them whether they are working on "*the best party/social event*" or "*the worst party/social event*". Emphasise that each group will need a reporter to feedback on the group's ideas. Ensure groups have flipchart pens and a piece of paper each. Tell each group where they will be working and that they have ten minutes for the task.

4. Allow each group a few minutes to get settled then visit to check that they are underway. Before the end of the groupwork, revisit the groups to remind them to choose someone to give feedback and to ensure they are keeping to time.

Debrief/Discussion

In order to facilitate discussion, start by asking one of "bad" social event/party groups to feedback their ideas as to what made the event such a failure. Then ask the other "bad" group to feedback their ideas. Their presentations should not be more than a couple of minutes long (keep any anecdotal contributions short!). Thank the two groups and stick their flipchart paper to the wall. Ask the other two groups if they have any additions they wish to make to the list.

The list may include:

- Ran out of beer, food etc
- Bad music (stereo broke, wrong theme, etc)
- Party too crowded/quiet
- Didn't know *anyone*/wrong mix of people
- I organised it and ... had things stolen/broken etc
- My girlfriend/boyfriend got off with someone else etc
- I got drunk and ... I lost my keys etc.

Next ask the two groups that worked on good parties/social events to present their ideas.

Again, after both have presented invite additions from the first two groups.

This list will probably not be so long and will have many opposites of the first set, eg:

- Plenty of free drink/food etc
- Great DJ, band etc
- Party just right, with lots of old friends and some nice new people
- I met my current girlfriend/boyfriend etc.

At the end of the debrief there are a couple of important points to make before you move on to the next part of the session.

- a) What one person may see as a great success can be a disastrous experience for another. Eg, a house party where most of the guests have a great time but one of the residents gets cigarette burns in their duvet and has some CDs stolen.
- b) Clubs and societies need to be clear about the purpose and nature of the event and ensure people attending are equally clear.
- c) While a successful event can bond a club or society together, a poorly organised one can lose you members.

Tutor talk

5. Move on the next part of the session and conduct a short talk on planning a social event. You may wish to create and use slides for your talk, or alternatively you can pre-prepare the key points on flipchart paper.

Information to Carry Out the Talk

Display the following on pre-prepared flipchart:

- What?
- Who?
- Where?
- When?
- How much?
- How?
- (Why?)

Explain that these are the key questions that need answering when planning an event.

Run through each one as follows:

- What? – what exactly is the event (eg pub-crawl, debate)?
- Who? – is it for (all students or just your club or society)?
- Where? – is it being held (do you need signs or directions)?
- When? – what day is it on and what time does it start and end?
- How much? – does it cost?
- How? – are you going to ensure it happens (ie have you got the resources – people, time, money, equipment to go ahead)?
- (Why?) – always end up checking again on the main purpose of the event (eg if

the purpose is to raise funds, then will it?)

Do not be afraid to cancel or postpone an event if you believe it will not achieve its purpose and have major doubts at the early planning stage.

Planning is absolutely essential to the success of any event. A few key rules are:

- They must be agreed by all involved in the preparation of the event and receive input from as many as possible
- They should be clear, precise and allow scope for some flexibility
- They should have someone co-ordinating and ensuring problems are not arising
- It is useful to have an action plan.

An Action Plan

An action plan usually has three columns:
What action? Involving who? By when?

The first column describes the activity which needs to be undertaken eg produce posters.

The second column describes the person or people who will be responsible for ensuring the activity/action is completed.

The third column describes the date by which the action must be completed (NB – it is wise to set this date a little earlier than the very last deadline to allow for any problems).

Display on a pre-prepared flipchart the following:

- *break the job down*
- *divide up responsibilities!*

Explain that often the burden for planning, organising and running an event ends up falling on a very small number of people. It is important to avoid this and to attempt to spread the work between an organising group (usually the committee). Break the jobs down into their various constituent parts and then allocate up responsibilities.

For example, rather than just 'publicity' as a responsibility, you might want to break this into:

- producing posters
- photocopying posters
- writing article for SU newspaper
- sticking up posters

It may be that the same person is responsible for all of these actions but ideally the jobs can be divided up or have others in support (eg poster making is a job where generally speaking the more helping, the better).

Finally, assume that Murphy's Law affects everything you do when planning the event. The only way to try and counteract Murphy's Law is to constantly ask yourself "*what could possibly go wrong?*", and to analyse the various possibilities and find ways of either preventing them or dealing with them should they occur.

E.g. the debating society is planning to hold their big end-of-year event. Their starting point is to pick a date – they decide on Monday 22 June at 8 pm. Fortunately, someone checks to see if any other major events are happening and discovers that England are playing in the World Cup.

This then forms the basis of your action plan.

Group work

6. Explain that in a moment you will be splitting the group into three sub-groups and asking them to plan an event.
7. Split the group into three smaller groups, and hand out worksheets 1, 2 and 3. Emphasise that each group will need a reporter to feedback on the group's ideas. Give the groups two pieces of flipchart paper and pens each and tell them where they will be working.
8. Allow the groups a few minutes to get settled, then visit to check that they are underway. Before the end of the group work, revisit the groups to remind them to choose someone to give feedback and to ensure they are working to time.

Debrief/Discussion

In order to facilitate discussion, start by asking the group with worksheet 1 to present their action plan. Thank the group, stick their flipchart paper to a wall and move on to the group with worksheet 2. After their presentation, again thank them, stick their

paper on a nearby wall and move on to the group with worksheet 3.

The key point which needs to come out of the debrief is that the earlier you start planning, the better. (Group 1's action plan should look less crowded than group 3's). Check to see if the groups have planned/timetabled the following:

- Meeting with the other club/society (and are they giving them responsibilities?)
- Activities after the event (eg banking money, reviewing how it went).

Try and draw out good points from each group's action plans.

After the debrief, either:

- Have an appropriate students' union member of staff deliver a 5 minute talk on the resources for the union available to them and the procedure and cost of booking these. For example, a staff member with responsibility for bars and/or entertainments could talk about: purchasing wine, booking staging/pa/a disco and DJ etc.
- Investigate these keys facts and deliver the talk yourself.

Or

- Get the member(s) of staff to put this information down on paper and produce a handout.

Review/Summary

Take five minutes at the end to recap on the main learning points, review the session objectives, and hand out and collect completed evaluation forms. Thank everyone for coming and close the session.

WORKSHEET 1

Background

You are the committee of a club/society with 45 members. You have decided to hold a big social event towards the end of term, so that you end the year on a high note. You have agreed that the event should break even (but you can afford to lose up to fifty pounds) and to hold it jointly with another club/society of equal size.

Task

Decide what issues arise from this scenario and plan how you will spend your time between now and the event. Produce an action plan (with deadlines) to feedback to the other groups.

Today is Thursday, 15 August 2014

You plan to hold the event on Wednesday, 2 December 2014.

WORKSHEET 2

Background

You are the committee of a club/society with 45 members. You have decided to hold a big social event towards the end of term, so that you end the year on a high note. You have agreed that the event should break even (but you can afford to lose up to fifty pounds) and to hold it jointly with another club/society of equal size.

Task

Decide what issues arise from this scenario and plan how you will spend your time between now and the event. Produce an action plan (with deadlines) to feedback to the other groups.

Today is Wednesday, 4 October 2014.

You plan to hold the event on Wednesday, 2 December 2014.

WORKSHEET 3

Background

You are the committee of a club/society with 45 members. You have decided to hold a big social event towards the end of term, so that you end the year on a high note. You have agreed that the event should break even (but you can afford to lose up to fifty pounds) and to hold it jointly with another club/society of equal size.

Task

Decide what issues arise from this scenario and plan how you will spend your time between now and the event. Produce an action plan (with deadlines) to feedback to the other groups.

Today is Wednesday, 20 November 2014.

You plan to hold the event on Wednesday, 2 December 2014.

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