MANAGING
THE BUSINESS EVENT

BUSINESS EVENTS VICTORIA

VICTORIA State Government

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

Business Events Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Aboriginal Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pay our respects to them, their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future Traditional Owners.

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MANAGING THE BUSINESS EVENT

This toolkit focuses on managing the business event from a venue perspective. Other operators may find sections and accompanying documents valuable as all can be contextualised to other business types.

Event documentation is designed to allow all team members to understand the needs of the event and the event client and to deliver the service required. Using easy to understand documents help each team (and team member) work efficiently and effectively and provide a seamless service to the client.

Many organisations have standard operating procedures (SOPs) that guide team members to complete tasks according to the organisation's preferred method; this helps to deliver a consistent level of quality.Event documentation is designed for that very same purpose.

The main documents for management of events are:

- Workflow plan – which lists the key tasks that need to happen to plan and resource the event
- Run sheet – usually created by the event manager to 'run' or organise the event on the day(s)
- Banquet event order (also sometimes called event schedule) – usually used in venues to ensure that all set up and service elements are delivered according to the contract or agreement with the client
- Risk management form – to evaluate any hazards or risks and ensure suitable mitigation factors are in place to manage these
- Feedback documentation - including questionnaires that help venues gather satisfaction data and other feedback from customers, suppliers or other stakeholders, all for continual improvement.

Managing Workflow

As an event has many component parts, it can be useful for a venue to identify all the operational processes needed to make the event happen, which will include:

- Identifying the tasks – deciding what activities need to happen and in what order
- Organising – allocating and arranging for the planned tasks to be done and deciding how long is needed for each, the relevant order of tasks, ie. if any must be done before something else happens

- Staffing – organising enough trained, skilled staff to carry out the tasks
- Leading, directing and implementing – supervising the operations to ensure that the tasks happen on or before the required deadline, or taking action to rectify anything that does not occur
- Controlling, monitoring and reviewing – ensuring that the processes are being followed so that the goals can be achieved and the work completed by the deadlines
- Reporting – recording the appropriate information and ensuring that the correct people know about it.

Using a checklist can help team members ensure that all tasks are completed before the event starts and a Run Sheet or Banquet Event Order can help manage the event timings on the day.
Some venues use a Gantt chart for this as it allows the relationship between the tasks to be noted. A Gantt chart can be created using Excel or via a number of open source project management tools such as Monday or Trello (http://www.monday.com/ or http://www.trello.com/) to name only two.

Using a Gantt chart to manage workflow requires a number of stages to be considered and information to be gathered:

- Dates: work out the start and end date of the event project
- Activities: think about all the different activities and their component parts
- Time: decide how long each activity should take
- Relationship: work out which activities are linked or dependant on others
- Create: create the Gantt chart using Excel (or similar) with space for all the activities vertically down the sheet and dates horizontally along the top; these can be in weeks or days depending on your preference
- Populate: put all the tasks into the Gantt chart – you may like to organise these into activity types. Then determine when each should be actioned and use a bar (coloured cells) to show the duration. Milestones or due dates can be added in a different colour

Sometimes it helps to work backwards from when all activities must be completed, ie: the event date or just before. As an alternative, you can use forward scheduling approach where you start with the day the workflow Gantt chart is created and add activities and timelines culminating in the event day or just after for administrative tasks, feedback collection and reporting.

See Sample Workflow Template.

Using a Run Sheet

The Run Sheet is the timing document for your team on event day - it tells everyone what they are expected to do 'behind the scenes' of the event to make the event happen. Some venues use their Banquet Event Orders (BEO) or Event Schedules for this; see below for more information on BEOs.

The purpose of a Run Sheet is to allow the team to manage the event. This is a document which requires sufficient detail to allow an event to run smoothly, so it often runs to several pages.

A good run sheet lists the sequence of steps for running an event:

- From start to finish
- Set out by day and date
- Set out by time
- Including the specific room/location of where the 'activity will take place'
- Includes who is responsible/in charge of each timed element
- Include any equipment or activities required.

An Event Schedule or Run Sheet should have information and detail on who is responsible for each activity and empower team members to ensure that quality and standard is maintained.

This should have enough information and detail so a team member will understand what activities are occurring and when, who is responsible for completing the activity or task and enough details of what is needed that they can operate without constant referral to the event 'owner' or manager. It helps team members take responsibility for aspects of the event whilst ensuring the quality and standard is maintained.

As a run sheet is used by many different team members, it is recommended that the layout and language makes this easy to read and understand. Avoid jargon or short form of words if possible. This is a professional event management tool so bear that in mind when populating the information.

It may be useful to look at the sample run sheet while reading this next section. See *Runsheet Template 1* and *Runsheet Template 2*

Run sheet inclusions

This will always be event dependant but the following advice is based on common activities for many business events.

Summary of the event – Not everyone working on the event will be familiar with all aspects of it, so providing a quick event summary at the start of the run sheet can be useful for team members if used. These may include key dates and details and a summary of main timings so everyone knows what is coming up, even if they're only scheduled for part of the event/day.

Roles and responsibilities - Include key personnel's contact details and note any VIPs attending. It is useful to summarise key responsibilities as this helps everyone know what roles they have and helps the team ensure all duties are covered by someone.

Version control - Add a version number and/or issue date to ensure that everyone is using the most up to date version of this important document. Run sheets do change regularly before the event, so avoid printing this for team members until you have the final document. A printed version is useful on the event day, rather than asking the team to read a large or complex document on a tablet or mobile telephone screen.

Layout and headings - A tabular approach is easy to understand as it categorises activities under key headings such as: Day/Date, Timing, Location, Activity Detail, Who (eg: named team member or operational area).

Timings – Decide on the 24 hour clock or am and pm (either is fine and it's best to pick whichever the team using the run sheet is comfortable with) and be consistent.

Key contacts – Team key contacts can go onto a run sheet in case team members need to contact the customer or supervisor quickly. Another tip is to encourage everyone to have each other's numbers in their phones for the duration of the event for quick contact.

Team briefing - Do this before you start getting ready for the event (ie: before bump in) or before setting up any event areas or doing room checks and always before the event starts and clients or attendees arrive. This lets you brief the team on what they need to do in all areas, rather than field questions as they get on with the tasks.

Room set up – Check room set up making sure the required layout for each room is on the run sheet so checks are easily managed.

Equipment – Add any required equipment to the run sheet (this fits well under the Activity Detail heading), it allows someone to confirm equipment needed is available.Putting this information in this column or space saves the team having to look up the Event Schedule/Banquet Event Order or other documentation to check what is required.

Bump in - Add arrival / bump in time for your team and for the customers. Also note what needs to be done for 'bump in', eg: items may need to be unpacked, banners sourced from loading dock etc.

Bump out - Sometimes customers leave items behind at the end of the day so it is useful to check the space with them before they leave the building at the end of the event.

Audio-visual (AV) check - If you are doing an AV check you can also add what AV has been ordered to ensure it's all there. Eg: projection, lapel or handheld microphone, etc. An AV check by a customer is suggested around 30 minutes for a smaller seminar and 60-90 minutes ahead of a larger conference. Where an external AV provider is contracted, it's useful to let customers know an AV technician's time will need to be costed if an AV check is requested many hours before an event.

Registration desk - The customer may require a registration desk near to the event space.Put this information including location and any set up requests into the Run Sheet. A registration desk is usually manned by the customer's team throughout the event as this is where attendees will come to ask questions and where late comers will go on arrival and where speakers will come to when they arrive to do their session.

Food and beverage (F&B) – All catering should be ready slightly ahead of time or the event risks running over time. It is useful to allocate one of your team to check everything is there in good time (5 to 10 minutes before needed). To enable this check, add a summary of what is to be served, eg: menu items for afternoon tea (tea/coffee/juice/cakes) rather than the staff have to double check another document (ie: Banquet Event Order)

Delegate directing – To help the conference or event run on time, the venue may be asked to have team members available to encourage attendees to take seats/return to plenary rooms/move between concurrent sessions etc. This is also useful if people are unsure where they are going or want to check which session is in which room without returning to the registration desk.

Speakers – It is useful if the venue staff can direct speakers to where they need to go when they arrive (eg: registration desk or where directed by the customer).Speakers are usually asked to arrive by a certain time, eg: at least 30 minutes ahead of their presentation slot so they have time to check their presentation with the AV team and prepare to speak.

Topic management on the day – If there are speakers and sessions, it is usual to have roving microphones for questions to speakers from the audience. The venue may be asked to provide this and it is useful to add this to the run sheet with time to prepare the microphones and ensure they are working and ready and in the right part of the room about 5 minutes before questions are scheduled to begin. The customer is likely to allocate team member(s) to manage this and hand the equipment to and from questioners.

Travel and transfers – If there are any coach transfers, it is helpful if the venue has space for the coaches to park and collect attendees. Note the relevant times so you can check the space is free.

Decorating tables (gala type events) – Decorative table runners should be provided to a venue in advance so they can put these out before laying their table with cutlery/plates etc. A venue will need to let the customer know at what time the tables can be dressed or decorative items added; some venues may have arranged to do this the day before or well in advance. Chair covers and table settings can take longer than anticipated to get right, so allow enough time for this – eg: suggest 1 hour for 120 pax event. Add this requirement to the Run Sheet and the details of the décor so the venue team know to expect that this will occur and who is managing this element of the event.

Dietary requirements and special diets – These don't need to go onto the run sheet but it is useful to note them here, including names of guests, the dietary requirements and their table numbers (if relevant). These will have been given to a venue in advance, but if a venue wants to check (or the person moves tables) you have the information on hand easily. People with specific dietary needs often want to check these have been catered for, so having this on the run sheet does mean any team member asked about this by an anxious attendee will be well informed.

Tidying up and planning ahead – Build time for this into the run sheet as it is a great idea to get everything tidied up and as ready as possible for the next day at the end of the previous day. This includes checking nothing is left behind in any room the last time it is

Used on any given day and ensuring that any other areas are set (if possible) for a quick start on the next day.

Banquet Event Orders or Event Schedules

A banquet event order (BEO), sometimes called an event schedule, is used in venues to ensure that the client's event is set up and serviced accordingly to the contract agreement. The BEO is the ultimate document to make the event/function happen as generally the operations team will only do what is listed on the BEO.

A banquet event order therefore:

- Lists all specific items required for event/function
- Can be sent to client beforehand to confirm arrangements are correct and with sufficient time for any required changes to be made
- Is distributed to all departments that will manage the event, and again with suitable time for the teams to order goods (eg: food and drinks), prepare food or other services and ensure they have sufficient staff rostered. The deadline for this distribution will depend on the organisation
- Includes food and drinks so ordering and preparation can occur
- May include external suppliers if required (eg: outsourced audio-visual)
- Notes the impact the event may have on other guests using the venue (noise levels, access) or other aspects of the business (eg: reserved entrances)
- Can include signage, parking or any other services
- Notes the staffing need to service the event
- Includes any team briefing if required

Some standard inclusions in a BEO are:

- Contact information - event details and name of client
- Space usage – which room(s) are being allocated to the client's event
- Fees - the charge for using the function space
- Event date
- Set-up and start/end times – bump in and bump out as the event may need access to the space well before and after the attendees arrive and depart
- ·Number of guests – details of how many guests are expected and/or guaranteed, and the number of guests a room will be set for
- Room(s) set up including details of the equipment required and sometimes placement directives for that equipment, eg:
- Table setup –number and type of tables to be included as well as the timeframe allocated for setup activities.
    - Décor, linens, and lighting – décor and accessory details (types and quantities) should be listed in the BEO
    - Podium or audio/video (AV) – if a podium or AV is required, it should be specified ahead of the event. If AV is required, the vendor should be listed as well.
- Event diagram or map – this is a broader explanation of the room setup. This is where you'll outline the placement of tables, equipment, lighting, tablecloths, etc for the set up crew.

Important inclusions to allow the event to be managed effectively are:

- Food & beverage – eg:
    - Menu – all menu items should be listed in the order in which they will be served. If there is a buffet, all menu items should be listed along with the station and set position
    - Dietary concerns – any dietary requests such as vegetarian options, gluten-free items, or nut-free meals should be included in the BEO
    - Service times – service times should be clearly listed for all meals as well as additional requests, such as a champagne toast
    - Special service items – includes special requests such as wine or sparkling water on each table
    - Food prices – price breakdown for each item should be included along with a quantity for each item selected
    - Beverage details – this includes a list of beverages to be served during the event such as coffee, tea, soda, or alcohol. When alcohol is served, a list of brands is provided as agreed to by the planner.

- Audio-visual (AV) requirements, eg:
  - Microphones, screens, projectors, speakers, etc with numbers and layout in the room
  - May include price breakdown if the AV components are charged separately or are outsourced to an AV supplier
- Scheduling information with the event timeline for all components such as for bump in and bump out, set up, food and beverage service, etc
- Staffing requirements, eg: number of attendants or food servers etc
- Any parking agreed - logistics need to be detailed in advance in the BEO to ensure an orderly flow of guest arrivals.
- Contract information relating to minimum numbers, deadline for final numbers and deposit and final payment
  - Including a signature line for both organisation (venue) and client.

See: Banquet Event Order Sample and Explanation

BASIC RISK MANAGEMENT – UNDERSTANDING AND MITIGATING RISKS AND HAZARDS

Risk is the possibility that harm might occur when people or the organisation are exposed to a hazard. To get started you need to determine what work activities or aspects may present a risk. When you know where the risks are, you must do whatever you can to eliminate or minimise them. This is called the risk management process.

Risk management involves determining what aspect of an event may present a risk and then do whatever you can to minimise or eliminate the risk.

AS/NZS ISO 31000 is an international standard created by the International Organisation for Standardization. The emphasis in the international risk management standard is on continual improvement through a systematic and structured approach, which is used in all aspects of management.

Venues and event planners tend to think about risk in terms of health and safety and this section concentrates on that area. However risk management can also include consideration of risks to the business or event success due to financial issues, marketing methods and efficacy, poor publicity, implications of staffing (lack thereof or poor hiring choices) and, always the bane of events, poor weather.

The following risks need to be considered if you are planning an event or your venue is being used for one:

Weather – heavy rain or variances of temperature can impact on the safety of the event audience and on people's desire to attend.If you have proposed an outside space, it is useful to have a contingency plan should weather look challenging (ie: indoor room) as this may ensure the event can still go ahead.

Financial risks – from a venue perspective this may be due to change in numbers at the last moment, eg: when food or other services have been acquired and paid for. Setting a deadline for final numbers before expenditure is made will help manage this risk. From an event perspective unforeseen costs, lower than expected revenue (from ticket sales, sponsorship, etc) are common and can, to an extent, be foreseen and planned for. The overall economic situation impacting on event goers' disposable income and their ability to attend is an issue that can make an event untenable but is difficult to change. It is therefore useful for the venue to know s much as possible about the event organiser and attendees to ensure deadlines for numbers and payments are set to reflect possible risks.

Legal risk – this is when disputes between venues and event organisers, customers or suppliers cannot be resolved. It is recommended to have relevant insurance (eg: public liability) for business and personal protection and to ensure that a signed contract exists for all parties. See: *Sample Terms and Conditions*.

Technology related risks – from a venue perspective this tends to be a failure of audio-visual (AV) equipment or WI-FI. Internal AV should be of good quality, up to date and serviced regularly. Ongoing maintenance and replacement of older systems may mitigate this as would subcontracting the management of AV to a suitably expert company which manages the risk by offsetting it elsewhere. WI-FI needs to be robust and secure and able to cope with multiple users at any one time.

Emergencies mishandled – these do not happen very often, thank goodness. However an emergency management plan (EMP) is recommended for more complex events. The event buyer will have some input into this too. An EMP includes event information, site plans, a noted chain of command and both evacuation and communication protocols which can be shared with designated emergency services as well as the team.

Work, health and safety – this tends to be the thing that people think of first when they consider risk. Obligations will include staff, attendees and any contractors or suppliers.

For venues and most events, a safe and secure event would be managed via suitable training and processes. This helps the team understand their responsibilities, ie:

- record incidents and near misses via an incident report
- a response plan should exist that guides actions should there be an emergency – this is particularly important for larger or complex events but all staff should know what is expected of them in an emergency
- work health and safety considerations and processes exist and are followed to ensure team members and clients are safe
- understand the importance of appropriate safety signage
- manage crowds and capacity levels within their spaces
- understand their responsibilities regarding the responsible service of alcohol
- understand their responsibilities to ensure team members, clients and any contractors or suppliers work safely when on site
- have a basic risk management plan and relevant documentation.

Have suitable training and processes in place to create a safe and secure events.

Reputational risk

Mishandling any of the risk factors can lead to reputational risk which is a threat or danger to the good name or standing of a business or event. This can be subjective and therefore very difficult to control but reputational risks tend to be external and often relate to what social media, mainstream media, clients and peers are saying about the venue or the organisation/event.

Areas of risk in events

Not all of these apply to every event but some will resonate with venues and their clients:

Health/Injury/Disease

- Drug affected persons (not including alcohol)
- Alcohol affected persons which can be managed by applying appropriate responsible services of alcohol and training staff to understand the implications of meeting this requirement and having confidence in refusing service
- Fire caused by electrical installations/gas bottles – which can be managed by testing and tagging regimes and controlling equipment used onsite by only allowing reputable and licenced operators
- Marquee collapse - which can be managed by controlling equipment used onsite by only allowing reputable and licenced operators
- Broken glass in the venue or at open space being used - which can be managed by robust cleaning regimes and by only permitting non-glass items
- Food poisoning – which can be managed by ensuring all food and beverage teams are suitably qualified and trained and that records are kept of this.It may also be managed by allowing only reputable and licenced operators on site if using any third parties
- Power and water failure – may be outside of control if the whole area is affected but testing prior the event may mitigate intermittent failing caused by poor maintenance
- Sunburn and/or dehydration – for guests and workers. Operationally you are responsible to actively manage the duty of care for workers but should also consider your guests. The first can be managed by effective briefings, providing water, sunscreen and hats etc. The guests can receive sun smart and other health advice via the event booker or while at the event and a range of services offered from water stations to sunscreen to accredited first aiders
- Trips and falls – can be managed by effective signage for uneven grounds and careful choices of appropriate spaces or activities depending on the demographic attending.

Criminal activity

- Disorderly conduct – can be difficult to control but if expected the impact can be mitigated by suitably licenced, qualified and trained security personnel

- Consumption of alcohol – can be managed by applying responsible service of alcohol procedures but also by slowing consumption through food service items to slow the effects, by managing service through maximum drinks per person limits when collecting from bar and asking people to buy tickets in advance to be swapped for alcohol which limits the speed of consumption if ticket purchase is limited and there are queues for this, though the latter can be problematic or event satisfaction.

Environmental risk

- Weather – too hot, too cold, wind, rain, etc – can be difficult to control but managing attendees and workers exposure to these elements can be handled via provision of shade, indoor spaces, sunscreen etc
- Noise nuisance caused to neighbours – can be managed by strict adherence to noise control levels set by council, monitoring noise levels and providing specific and comprehensive briefing to entertainment and giving ‘leave quietly’ message to attendees
- Excessive litter left at end of event – can be managed by providing a large number of bins in varying locations and giving ‘take your rubbish home’ or ‘leave only memories’ messages.

Legal/Contractual

- Unclean toilets – which both impact on attendees’ enjoyment of the event and may cause illness
- Loss of key contractors – this may pose a risk to the longevity or success of the event if skilled alternatives are not easily available
- Event approval not obtained – from a venue perspective this may mean extended licenses for events out of usual business hours or other approvals from licencing or other bodies (eg: councils) are often required especially for outdoor events or those using council land so failure to obtain these can mean the event cannot proceed; this is not common for most business events which tend to use venue space not requiring permissions from elsewhere
- Privacy of data – data breaches can be expensive legally and reputationally so it is essential to have suitable systems in place to store any retained customer detail
- Contractor licensing – as a venue you are responsible for ensuring that contractors are duly licenced and also insured to avoid the risk of legal proceedings if there is an issue. For example: security, rigging and staging construction, food safety or responsible service of alcohol (RSA) for both contractors and, of course, the venue’s own staff.

Technology

- Backup systems – losing important data and information because of old or out of date software can be time consuming and expensive
- Suitably checked and updated audio visual – to ensure anything the venue provides works effectively and attendees can see and hear the event.
- Any WI-FI should be secure and password protected – this is especially relevant when the customer has on-site registration or are taking bookings at the event (eg: to secure both privacy of information and access)
- Live simulcasts/web streaming – can be interrupted by third parties and so using secure systems for this and enabling access by password for your systems are ways to manage this risk.

Operational/Crowd safety

- Overcrowding – is a significant safety issue especially regarding crush injuries and potential difficulty in evacuating attendees if there is an emergency; this also impacts on the event meeting a venue's fire safety obligations
- Lighting failure – can also be a safety issue if people can't see each other or how to exit the area, not to mention impacts on the enjoyment of the event
- Trip hazards – these are often common when trailing cables are used for electrical equipment but can also be an issue 'behind the scenes' if the customer's event team is working in a constrained space at your event and are negotiating each other, storage boxes and equipment

- Extreme weather – can cause illness, structural damage
- Postponement or cancellation of the event if the venue is using outdoor space to host the activities
- Communications failure – where safety and other messages have been inadequately communicated to team members at the venue and to the customers and when there is an insufficient paper trail to confirm this has occurred. Having clear communication channels and a chain of command or responsibility is a way to manage this risk

- Set up, bump in/out – these times are heightened risk of injury as there are usually many people in the same space at the same time doing a wide range of activities, often both venue staff and customers. At these times people are working quickly and under pressure so ensure that training on manual handling and working safely and providing personal protective equipment is used and that people are physically separated from machinery
- Appliances/Equipment/Machinery – only suitably qualified and licenced operators should use machinery or equipment that is not commonplace; people and machinery do not mix well so separating the two is important**.**

Traffic management

- Lack of parking – adequate parking and parking systems enhance the enjoyment of participants and their safety; it is important that a venue provides clear parking messages and uses trained traffic marshals to assist if needed
- Inadequate access for emergency vehicles – blocking access can occur while bumping in and out, so venues in particular need to be careful to keep access points clear to avoid any ·liability; event set up team need to use trolleys and other equipment to move items from car parking to the venue rather than blocking entrances whilst bumping in and out.

Administration and marketing

- Loss of key personnel – this can be an issue if the key skills are not shared by team members and a key person loss taking knowledge and expertise with them; having succession plans and enriching other team member's jobs by training and giving opportunities to work on all aspects of the event can help with this risk.
- Insufficient marketing of the venue – a venue can ensure that the website and marketing materials are up to date to help potential customers find and gather relevant information about the venue services.

Financial

- Cost blow outs – managing the budget is an important event management skill, regular budget checks and reporting can help recognise and manage an issue early. Venues can ensure that quotations are dated and are valid for a limited period of time only as costs (food, beverage, staff, etc) rise regularly and a customer may confirm after prices have increased.

Attendee numbers reducing

- Changes to numbers can be challenging for venues if costs have already been incurred – a venue should have clear information in their terms and conditions regarding confirmation dates for final numbers and cancellation and postponement clauses, see *Sample Terms and Conditions*
- Longevity of event or needs reinventing – if a venue hosts their own events, they may find that interest decreases over time.When people regularly attend events, the fear of missing out (FOMO) reduces and this is particularly true of annual or regular events. Re-inventing aspects of the event and having new components each time is a way to minimise the risk of the long term event stagnating and audience numbers dropping off
- Cluttered event calendar – competition is commonplace; if a venue is running events at busy times of year, they will be competing with lots of others that will appeal to a similar audience. It may be worthwhile considering moving it to a quieter time
- Target market (prime attendee group) has moved on to other things or event is no longer relevant for them – if a venue knows who visits or uses them, this helps create events or services that appeal to the customer. Conducting research to determine who the target market actually is can be useful as it helps you provide interesting elements for those groups and also ensure your marketing activities are reaching them. This can be achieved through data collected at ticket or point of purchase or by surveying at an event or any visit. It is helpful to incentivise this with a prize draw to encourage participation.

All of these areas can be factored into a comprehensive risk management plan.

Recording incidents

You should have a system in place at your venue to record any incidents, accidents or near misses that occur. It is important that everyone working at the venue or on an event has a clear understanding of how to record incidents and what to do with this record. This can be done during team meetings, site inductions and briefings. The information you will want to capture in your incident report depends upon the nature of your venue or event. Government departments often have a good template for this, eg: Worksafe Victoria.

Work health and safety understanding tends to be strong in venue and event management; especially regarding:

- Duty of care – eg: your own team, attendees, any entertainment, contractors, volunteers, stall holders, etc
- The need to use licenced operators for any equipment/machinery

- Providing sunscreen and sun safe messaging and appropriate hydration
- Training teams to work safely and including this training for any temporary, casual, volunteer or contractor staff too
- Inducting all workers, volunteers, contractors and suppliers on site before they start working
- Appropriate record keeping for all the above

Identifying and controlling hazards and risks

The Risk Management process involves a series of steps – these can be used for evaluating any type of hazard or risk:

- Identify hazards – find out what could cause harm
- Assess risks, if necessary – understand the nature of the harm that could be caused by the hazard, how serious the harm could be and the likelihood of it happening
- Evaluate and assess the severity (consequence) of the risk if it were to occur
- Control the risk in advance by producing strategies (risk management plans)
- Control the risk by writing down what you will do, ie: documents, plans and assign tasks to relevant personnel
- Control the risk by monitoring it, check your plans are working
- Evaluate the risk management plans (control measures) and re-assess the risk for further action.

The most common way to do this is by using a risk management plan which evaluates the likelihood (probability) and consequence(outcome) of a hazard or risk actually occurring and gives it a numerical value, then applies some risk management techniques to try and minimise both. A risk matrix is used and retained as this acts as a record of risk management and can prove useful should there be an incident and a claim against the venue or the event. See *Risk Matrix and Hierarchy of Controls.*

Because the evaluation of risk can be subjective, it is useful to do this with a team or another person and to use any information you have to hand from previous events to guide your decision making.

Risk management - step by step

Risk management usually uses a Likelihood and Consequence matrix to work out how challenging the risk or hazard may be to the event and then applies a range of risk mitigation strategies for each risk, these are broadly termed the hierarchy of controls. It is a step by step system.

Step 1: Gather data or information

This could be via an inspection of the event area, by reviewing prior experiences and documents, asking event managers and team members and brainstorming risk scenarios for each of the areas or the event and/or the tasks that need to be completed. Enter this information into a risk assessment matrix or document.

Step 2: Evaluate the likelihood of risk occurring

Using a risk matrix put a number value on the chance of the risk occurring. This helps to 'quantify' the risk and get a picture off its seriousness. In the traditional risk matrix it is usual to use:

1 = Rare - Will only occur in exceptional circumstances

2 = Unlikely - Not likely to occur within the foreseeable future

3 = Possible -May occur within the foreseeable future

4 = Likely -Likely to occur within the foreseeable future

5 = Almost Certain - Almost certain to occur within the foreseeable future

Step 3: Evaluate the consequence

Using a risk matrix put a number value on the consequence hence the risk occurring. This helps to 'quantify' the risk and get a picture of its seriousness.In the traditional risk matrix it is usual to use:

1 = Insignificant- No treatment required

2 = Minor - Minor injury requiring First Aid treatment (e.g. minor cuts, bruises, bumps)

3 = Moderate - Injury requiring medical treatment or lost time

4 = Major - Serious injury (injuries) requiring specialist medical treatment or hospitalisation

5 = Severe - Loss of life, permanent disability or multiple serious injuries

At this point you have an overall score for each hazard or risk. This is the level of assessed risk.

In mitigating or minimising the risk you are aiming to lower that score. Bear in mind it may be impossible to completely remove (eliminate) the risk,the aim is to lower the likelihood of it occurring and lower the impact (or consequence) of injury or harm should it occur. Add this information to the risk assessment matrix or document.

The assessed risk level is a number value that helps you to determine what level of controls you will need to put into place.In a traditional risk matrix it is usual to use:

- 15-25 = Extreme Risk (E) - If an incident were to occur, it would be likely that a permanent, debilitating injury or death would occur. Activity should not proceed in its current form
- 8-12 = High Risk (H) - If an incident were to occur, it would be likely that an injury requiring medical treatment would result. Activity should be modified to include remedial planning, action and subject to future assessment
- 4-6 = Moderate Risk (M) - If an injury were to occur, there would be some chance that an injury requiring First Aid would result. Activity can operate subject to management and/or modification
- 1-3 = Low Risk (L) - If an incident were to occur, there would be little likelihood that an injury would result. No action required unless escalation of risk is possible.

Step 4a:

Control the risk by writing down all the things you will do to try and manage it.

There are a number of options to reduce risk by using suitable control measures and these are categorised as the hierarchy of controls, ie:

- Elimination – physically remove the risk – this is the most effective but not always possible, eg: whilst you can repair or remove damaged equipment and dispose of unwanted chemicals you cannot remove the rides from a funfair and still have a funfair
- Substitution – replace the hazard – you may change your caustic cleaner for one that is more environmentally friendly and less hazardous to users or put equipment in smaller boxes that are easier to carry than the larger one
- Isolation – isolate people from the hazard – this is common in events where we use barriers to separate audience from certain aspects of the event, eg: spectators and car races, or to isolate them from hazardous areas, eg: fences around swimming pools or mechanical equipment
- Engineering – adapt exposure to the hazards – eg: using cable covers to protect users from electrical cords, using trollies to transport items rather than carry them and placing guards on moving machinery parts

- Administrative – change the way that people work or interact with the hazards, eg: training on how to do things safety, signage warning of risk, ensuring and recording the maintenance of equipment, rotating jobs or tasks to avoid burn out and rostering in breaks for staff
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) – protect the person with equipment, eg: sunscreen and hats for outdoor event volunteers, gloves and aprons when cleaning or using chemicals.

The most effective risk management strategy will incorporate a number of controls for each risk; administration controls (training, information) are used a great deal as this enhances the individuals understanding of risk and its implications and helps change behaviour.

Step 4b:
Add these methods to the risk assessment matrix or document for each identified hazard and then re-evaluate the likelihood and consequence based on these methods being in place.
This should give a revised likelihood and consequence score for most, but maybe not all, of the hazards or risks.
This will also allow you to recalculate the assessed risk level which should also be added to the risk matrix or document.

Step 5:
Check regularly whether your control measures are working and, if revision is needed, apply changes and record those in the risk matrix or document. Accurate record keeping is essential as it is, in itself, a risk management method and also allows you to show you have taken risk seriously and done as much as is feasible to manage it. This evidence is sadly sometimes needed if things go wrong.

Step 6:
Evaluate risk management plans regularly, perhaps annually or before the next event and update based on incident reports, verbal or written information from stakeholders and experience gained from the last event.

A range of templates or risk management are included. See *Sample Risk Assessment Form and Matrix*

AFTER THE EVENT – SEEKING FEEDBACK

It is common for venues to seek feedback on enjoyment, satisfaction and all aspects from the customers. When a venue is hosting an event for an event buyer, then the event buyers is the customer they should ask for this information;some event buyers will share any feedback they receive from the attendees with the venue too. It is also valuable to seek feedback from suppliers and other stakeholders. Any information gleaned through feedback can be used for continuous improvement and to build relationships with the respondent (person giving you feedback).For customers it engenders a sense of being heard and valued and for stakeholders it engenders a sense of collaborative working and can enhance business relationships.

Feedback mechanisms should suit the respondent and it is not a one size fits all approach.

Seek feedback after an event to develop collaborative business relationships with clients and suppliers.

Methods for event buyers who have used the venue for an event

Seeking feedback from event buyers is very important and should be done promptly once the event has finished (eg: in the next few days if possible).Customer feedback can be critical in improving service gaps and they are often full of great ideas or enhancements.

A venue will have already formed a relationship with the event buyer, therefore seek feedback via telephone conversation which allows you to check anything that is said for clarification, ask more questions if needed and gather more in depth information.

Questionnaires can be useful as these are often quick to fill out and the information provided can be easily collated. However these don't replace the more personalised telephone approach which enhances the business to business relationship between the venue and the event buyer.

Methods for attendees at events a venue manages themselves

For events that a venue manages themselves, it can be useful to consider other methods of seeking feedback. Feedback from attendees should be relatively short as longer surveys or questionnaires tend to be ignored or not completed in full. However this is also an opportunity to confirm some demographic information and to check what marketing was seen.

A common method is to send an online survey by email with a link for an electronic survey tool such as Survey Monkey (which, at time of writing, is free if sent to less than 100 people). This link can also be shared on any social media feeds and online platforms can also be harnessed to seek quick (short, 3 or 4 question) responses. Both have value but careful question construction is important to glean useful information and avoid ambiguous answers (see below).

Incentivising participation, eg: via a prize draw for local produce or similar, is often used to encourage people to bother to complete the survey. The added benefit of this is that you capture names, contact details etc which allow you to tailor future marketing activities directly to these people.

Methods for stakeholders (suppliers, partners and clients)

This group should not simply be sent a questionnaire. This feedback should be face to face or by telephone. This is because the objective here should is to gather information on event performance as well as performance of your team from their perspective. It is also an opportunity to build business relationships for future events.

It is still a good idea to ask similar questions of each so you can evaluate the response of different stakeholders, but using these to guide a discussion and make notes rather than sending out a survey is more likely to allow all the objectives to be achieved.

Tips for questionnaire design

If you do want to use questionnaires, especially if hosting any events yourself at a venue, the following tips will help you gather useful information.

Questionnaire length: Short as possible
Between 10 and 15 questions should suffice for most questionnaires as this takes about 5 minutes to complete. If the survey is longer than this, it's worth checking if you will actually use information gleaned from some questions. If the information will be used in decision making, then retain it, but if not, consider removing it.

Simple instructions: Give simple instructions and repeat for each question to avoid confusion
Tell respondents how to complete the questionnaire, ie: please tick, please tick all that apply, please number from 1 to 5 in order of importance where 1 is most important and 5 is least important. If you don't tell people how to complete the questionnaire, they may make mistakes which means their response is invalid and not useful.

Question flow: Build rapport, then be specific and then gather demographic information if needed
The funnel or three-stage approach starts with rapport questions which are generally easy to answer, eg: date they attended the event. The more specific questions come next and may be related to their experience or opinion on the event. The last questions are the demographic ones, which may include information on their location etc. These are left till last as once they get to these the rapport has been formed and they are committed to the questionnaire, whereas if you lead with a personal question first, they may not continue with the survey.

Question types: These usually include a mix of:

- Range or multiple choice questions that ask respondents to rate an item on a numeric or starred scale – these are quick and easy to answer but recommend always using the response same method throughout the questionnaire for these questions, ie: stars or a scale but not a mixture of both.
  - Ratings can also be worded, eg: poor, average, excellent or highly unsatisfactory through to highly satisfactory. If you decide on wording, use this consistently in all questions
- Yes-no questions: a binary question that can be used to funnel them a subsequent more open-ended question, eg:if you answered yes, please go to question 5
- Open-ended questions: these take longer to analyse but can provide valuable qualitative feedback

See *Sample Questionnaire Attendees*

SUMMARY OF TEMPLATES AND SAMPLES

Sample Workflow Template
Run Sheet Template 1
Run Sheet Template 2
Banquet Event Order Template
Sample Terms and Conditions
Risk Matrix and Hierarchy of Controls
Risk Assessment Form and Matrix
Sample Questionnaire Attendees

MEET IN REGIONAL VICTORIA.

BUSINESS EVENTS VICTORIA

VICTORIA State Government

03 7035 5720

INFO@BUSINESSEVENTSVICTORIA.COM

SUITE 201A, MELBOURNE CENTRAL TOWER
360 ELIZABETH STREET, MELBOUNRE, VIC 3000

WWW.BUSINESSEVENTSVICTORIA.COM