Advance Praise for *Freelancer’s Guide to Corporate Event Design*

“This is the most comprehensive guide to the corporate events industry I’ve seen in my thirty-five years in the business. Both newcomers and seasoned professionals will find this book invaluable.”

—Steve Alford, President, Alford Media Services, Inc.

“Troy Halsey has written a well-researched and comprehensive study of an important part of the entertainment industry—the place where many of us earn our rent! Up until now, even the pros could only learn by making mistakes. Many thanks to Troy for providing a better way.”

—Drew Campbell, Author of *Technical Theater for Nontechnical People*
Freelancer’s Guide to Corporate Event Design
From Technology Fundamentals to Scenic and Environmental Design

Troy Halsey
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The industry of corporate event production encompasses a vast collection of event types and specialties. Numerous books have been written discussing the strategies and approaches to developing successful corporate meetings and conferences, but acquiring an introduction to the physical design of such events has been left to on-the-job training and mentoring. Although several trade magazines and organizations exist, few offer a fundamental overview of the industry for the layperson. This book fills that introductory void and provides newcomers with the basic knowledge required to jump-start a career in event planning and design. Whether you are a theatrical designer looking for a steady paycheck, a freelance producer transitioning to live events, or a member of a corporate event planning committee, this book will teach you the fundamental technologies and processes needed to design a successful event of any size. Furthermore, with the knowledge you gain from this book, you will be able to comfortably speak to production teams, technicians, and clients on just about any topic related to the field of corporate events.

The idea for writing this book came to me when I was asked to train a new designer by showing him the proverbial ropes. The corporation I worked for was one of the largest and most respected leaders in the event industry. The company's services covered a broad spectrum, including providing trade show decor and booths, staging and environment designs, audio and video equipment, and any number of additional products or services that may be required by a client hosting an event. This service even included a specialized team that could analyze data to show whether or not an event was successful. This company had almost everything and made 10 figures a year doing it. But a crucial piece was missing: a training program for designers new to the industry.

For years, design in the event industry was seen as a second-class citizen. Not much thought was given to how the placement of banners or drape color selections would impact the attendees. Furthermore, design services were usually given away free as a method for selling more “stuff” to clients. This was especially true for general sessions, the main meetings that occur during events, in which stage and scenic designs were used merely to sell more audio and video equipment!

However, in recent years, the traditional handbook for planning events has been rewritten. Clients no longer want big and flashy buckshot productions; instead, they want precision and strategy to guide their event planning. They want to conserve money and time and get the most they can from their corporate events. For this, a different level of design is necessary, and event companies, like the one I worked for, saw an opportunity to expand their services by adding a specialized creative and strategic design department.
As the design department began to grow, so did the demand for faster and more elaborate designs. More designers were needed to fulfill all the requests. Because most designs were visualized with 3D illustrations, a debate was born. Do you hire someone experienced with 3D software and teach that person the business, or hire someone with experience in the business and teach that new hire 3D software?

As a scenic designer by trade, I believe it is more involved to teach someone the nuances of design theory and explain how those theories are applied to the vast assortment of elements contained in the broad industry of corporate events. On the other hand, as a businessperson, I believe that someone who can make pretty 3D pictures from a designer’s pencil sketch can quickly become productive and profitable. So, despite my philosophical reservations, I suggested we hire 3D artists and teach them the business – the theory being that over a period of time, taking direction from seasoned designers, they would pick up details of the industry at a natural rate.

In some ways this theory worked. After a few years, savvy 3D artists would eventually pick up enough about the industry to begin designing small events on their own – a form of on-the-job training very similar to an apprenticeship. If, however, the demands put upon the design team grew quicker than anticipated, as was the case in my experience, 3D artists were promoted to designers before they had acquired the necessary knowledge of what makes an event design achievable, safe, and successful.

Here is where the missing piece came into play. How do you quickly train someone in a craft that encompasses so many unique specialties and technologies? The only real resources available were trade magazines that were too technical or specialists who were typically on the road working events. So I decided to track down those specialists and develop a training manual of sorts for new designers, and a few years later this book was the result.

This book is written in the same order you would experience the industry as an intern within a small event design agency or production company. Beginning with an overview of the industry, you will gain an understanding of why companies host corporate events and the different types of events that occur. Next, you will study the fundamentals of each specialty within the industry, such as rigging, lighting, video, and audio. Finally, you will learn how design processes and strategies are applied to the industry to ensure that a client’s message is effectively delivered. In the end, you will have the knowledge needed to begin working within an event design team and jump-start your career as an event planner and designer. Best of luck to you in your new career or path, and I hope you enjoy learning about the industry as much as I have enjoyed writing about it.

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