

1 AN INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL EVENTS AND SPECIAL EVENT PRODUCTION

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Understand the reasons for special events.
2. Understand the categories of special events.
3. Differentiate among the different jobs that exist within the special events industry and where the event producer fits.
4. Understand the skills and personality traits that make a good event producer.
5. Understand and explain the different phases of the event organization process.
6. Understand and explain the different responsibility areas of event organization.
7. Determine exactly where in the event organization process the event producer works.

What exactly are special events and what is special event production? How are they related? What is the difference between an event producer and an event manager – or between an event planner and event coordinator for that matter? How are events organized and where in the process does production fit? There are confusing terms in the industry today as well as some misunderstandings about the function of the various players. The goal of this introductory chapter is to make sense of the confusion. However, before we can really explain what special event production is all about, we need to start at the beginning.

By definition, a special event is a gathering of human beings, generally lasting from a few hours to a few days, and designed to celebrate, honor, sell, teach about, or observe human endeavors. This is my personal definition and it is intended to be as all-encompassing as possible. Dr. Joe Jeff Goldblatt, a pioneer in special events, has a similar definition, perhaps more general, when he says ‘a special event is a unique moment in time celebrated with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs (Goldblatt, 2002; p. 6).’ Getz (1997; p. 4), on the other hand offers two definitions, from each of the event organizer’s and the guest’s point of view, respectively:

- ‘A special event is a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside normal programs or activities of the sponsoring or organizing body.’
- ‘To the customer or guest, a special event is an opportunity for a leisure, social, or cultural experience outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experience.’

All are equally valid in defining special events as essentially unique and memorable times for people. Often these events are as simple as a birthday party for a child, requiring a few hours – albeit perhaps exasperating hours – of a mother’s time to organize. Others – the ones with which we will be concerned in this book – are very large and complex and requiring not just one person but an entire team of specialists to organize.

Celebrations like this are not new. Not long ago, a colleague made a casual comment to me to the effect that special events have been around for at least as long as the world’s oldest profession. While we cannot yet relate the two ‘professions,’ in fact in the archaeological record, prehistoric evidence has been found for celebratory special events, particularly elaborate funeral rituals and monumental building erection and destruction ceremonies, in various locations around the globe. This evidence goes back as far as 60,000 years to Neanderthals and archaic Homo sapiens. Of course, historical records in the form of hieroglyphs and early writing have demonstrated even more extensive evidence of entertainment and religious–political ceremonies across most civilizations: Egyptian, Roman, Greek, Mayan, Khmer, Chinese, and others. Strange as it may seem, however, the ‘profession’ of special events has really only been present for approximately the last 25 years. It has only been in this time period that the demand for commercially driven special events has been strong enough to enable a growing body of event organizers to actually make a living out of doing what they love.

However, in order to set a course for the next 25 years, like all industries, we cannot operate in isolation. We need to understand who we are and where we have come from, not only to avoid repeating mistakes but also to build on past accomplishments so that we can create more professional and awe-inspiring events in the future. This means we must first explore the past and the common historical reasons for special events in civilizations on every continent. Once we have done this, we will examine the industry the way it is today, looking at the different categories of events, the different jobs involved

in organizing events, how event production fits into the overall spectrum of event management, and finally the five phases of event organization.

1.1 REASONS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

Goldblatt (2002; pp. 8–9) suggests that there are four purposes for special events: celebration, education, marketing, and reunion. While these purposes do indeed encompass much of what we do today in events and present an excellent starting point, upon reflection there appear to be deeper reasons behind most events, particularly historical ones, which in some cases were very clearly non-celebratory in nature. From the distant to the recent past, across all socio-economic strata, I believe that the primary reasons for holding special events can be broken down into five categories: religious, political, social, educational, and commercial. Organizers of any modern-day event would do well to first understand which of these reasons is the primary one for their event. It may not be immediately apparent, but this understanding is critical to getting the correct message across with the event itself. We will examine each of these reasons and how this might work.

1.1.1 Religious

Noted Anthropologist Victor Turner (1988; p. 94) states, ‘the major genres of cultural performance (from ritual to theater and film) and narration (from myth to the novel) not only originate in the social drama but also continue to draw meaning and force from the social drama.’ By ‘social drama,’ Turner means the actions of everyday life. In his interpretation, performance is a reflection of what goes on in everyday life. In ancient times, this meant that the success or failure of crops and the health or sickness of individuals were, to the people of the day, almost entirely dependent on gods, shamans, or benevolent kings who had ‘direct contact’ with the gods. Thus, their special events centered on ritualistic ceremonies designed to appeal to the gods. This was undoubtedly the prime reason for special events in early times. An obvious example in this regard is the ancient Olympics, which began as a religious festival to honor the principal Greek god Zeus.

Even today, religion continues to be one of the reasons for some special events, particularly the affirmation of life events: baptism and confirmation in the Christian religion, bar and bat mitzvahs in Judaism, marriages in all religions, and funerals or memorial services in all societies. Others, like Christmas or Easter events, while certainly extremely important for the believers, are tied more to commercial rather than religious reasons for non-believers. An underlying reason behind some historical religious events has also been to preserve the inter-relationship of king and priest classes (e.g. ancient Egypt), or to affirm the communicative abilities of ancient kings with

the gods (e.g. Mayans). Today, the reason is still present in large international religions such as Catholicism that preserve strong ties with a central governing church authority through regulated, common ritual.

1.1.2 Political

Throughout history, politics has been a prime reason for holding special events, in most cases to demonstrate the power of the ruler or ruling class. In ancient times, there are countless examples: military victory parades; gladiatorial combat in the Roman empire designed for public amusement but sanctioned by the Emperor; the public erection ceremonies of memorial monuments by ancient kings (e.g. Mayans, Chinese, and Egyptians); and even public executions right up to the early 20th century in some countries.

Today, politics does not play as large a part in special events; however, it is still present all over the world. Certainly, presidential inauguration ceremonies and coronations are major special events with considerable organizing and planning involved. Political party fundraising dinners and events are obviously political in nature. Not so obvious are other events that have political motivation as the primary, but more subtle reason. An example here might be a dinner organized by a Chamber of Commerce at which the guest speaker is a provincial premier or state governor purportedly speaking about the future business potential for the region. The underlying reason for the event is **not** the desire of the Chamber of Commerce to communicate good news about business. The reason is to put the premier or governor in a favorable light so that the business community will support him or her in the next election, a **political** reason.

1.1.3 Social

Reaffirming one's status and membership in social groups has been a reason for special events for at least as long as religion and ritual. As postulated by Turner (1988), performance reflects the social drama. Nowhere was this more apparent than in ancient Roman theater where seating placement and the way spectators acted was a reflection of Roman society in general. As Parker (1999, p. 163) states, 'The theater thus provided a specific place and time for all the dramas of Roman society to be played out, with a full cast of characters, to a complete and representative audience. The Roman consciously used the theater as an embodiment of Rome.' Of course, the theater was not always the venue, and today social events continue with celebrations of common cultural and community ties, including not only some of the life milestone events already mentioned, but also reunions, graduations, and public, non-profit cultural festivals. Examples of these abound, from small community picnics on a national holiday to mega-events such as the annual Carnival in Rio de Janeiro.

1.1.4 Educational

One of the most important historical reasons for special events has long been educational. With literacy rates often almost non-existent in ancient societies, special events provided the only means of educating the populace about their own history and also instructing them about the inherent dangers of not vowing loyalty to the governing body or individual or following the approved societal norms (also a political reason). In comparing Aztec ritual human sacrifices to gladiatorial combat in ancient Rome, Futrell (1997) states, 'For the rulers of the Mexica, Huitzilopochtli's power was a divine parallel to their temporal authority, the hearts of the victims analogous to the tribute demanded by the empire. In addition to the autocratic political rhetoric of the ideology, Aztec rulers manipulated the rituals themselves for political purposes, using the spectacle and blood as a means of impressing, and implicitly threatening, rivals with the power of Huitzilopochtli and the state identified with this deity. For example, Moctezuma II invited enemy leaders to his inaugural celebrations in which the best of their warriors were slaughtered by the thousands, surely a powerful object lesson for those concerned.'

Another example lies in the tradition of 'Potlatch' from the northwest coast native peoples in North America, that was traditionally held to celebrate such events as marriages, the opening of a 'Big House,' the succession of a chief, the raising of a totem pole, and others. Relying on oral and visual history for passing on information to friends, neighbors, and future generations, the Potlatch event was central to their culture. One of the main purposes of the Potlatch was to enlist the support of attendees or 'witnesses' who would be able to validate this history. 'Everyone present is considered to be a Witness, responsible to stay throughout the Potlatch, to hear, understand, and remember the proceedings. The entire community, including children, validates the claim of the Potlatch (Chief Robert Joseph and Rita Barnes, Personal Communication, March 27, 2006).'

In recent times, education as a reason for events has taken on a different context. With the 20th century came improved transportation and communication technology, thus allowing easier movement of people and information within nations and between continents. This led in turn to the growth of conferences and trade shows that had as their main reason the exchange or presentation of knowledge, in other words an educational reason, but in different form. Scientific, medical, and industry-specific conferences and trade shows have resulted in a burgeoning meetings industry that is worldwide.

1.1.5 Commercial

Due to technological advances in the 20th century, such as air transportation and the Internet in addition to other influences like the cult of celebrity worship, movies, and mass-appeal entertainment, the primary reason for holding special events has now become almost completely commercial.

Thanks to this reason, the special events industry has come into being within the last 25 years. It has provided work and an outlet for the creative energies of many of us.

When considered, almost every event nowadays comes back to having the primary reason for its existence as commercial. An incentive theme night does not have socializing as a primary reason; it has selling the company products as the reason. A Grand Prix auto race event does not have as its primary reason the competition to see who the best driver is; it is there to sell the sponsors' products, whether they are the event sponsor or the individual driver sponsors. A charitable fundraising event put on by a city business mogul is not there as pure philanthropy, no matter what the organizer may argue; it is there to advance the image and hence the sales of the organizer's products or services. A Santa Claus parade is not created for the good of the children; it is created for the good of the sponsors. These are but a minute sample from our industry.

The key point about understanding the underlying reasons for special events, especially commercial, is that it can affect how an event is organized and produced, especially in the choice of resources such as entertainment, décor, and visual presentations. For example, a producer who has been tasked with finding entertainment for a business leader's fundraising event might recommend featuring the leader in a scripted spoken presentation in order to portray that person in a favorable light and give him or her more exposure. If the underlying reason of commercialism were not known, this opportunity might be passed up. An incentive dinner for a corporation's top sales people might, instead of just having buffet stations with interactive entertainment, incorporate some symbols of the company or its products as part of the entertainment, such as souvenir sheets with the company logo or reference to its products on them drawn by a caricaturist, or small products as part of a magician's close-up magic. A post-Grand Prix race drivers' dinner for the media and VIPs might feature an original song or song parody about the race sponsor especially written and sung by a celebrity performer. A souvenir CD handed to all attendees would make this a lasting memory and enhance the image of the sponsor. While some of these may seem obvious, the intent is to emphasize how important it is for producers to dig deeply in order to understand the primary underlying reasons for any event.

1.2 CATEGORIES OF SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events are now so popular that there is an entire spectrum of different categories of events and accompanying specializations of organizers. Depending on which continent one is situated, the categories may be different. Allen et al. (2005; pp. 11–16) from Australia, for example, categorizes events by both size and content, lumping meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE) into a single category. On the other hand,

Goldblatt (2002; pp. 9–14) divides events into 10 ‘subfields.’ I propose a somewhat integrated approach to this categorization that generally reflects the recognized specializations of organizers, although this does tend to be a moving target as more such specializations continue to evolve. The following are my suggested categories of special events along with the professional designations that are currently available to those who work in them.

1.2.1 Meetings and Conferences

As mentioned in Section 1.1.4, this is now a massive field worldwide. It is a distinct professional specialization, with the designation Certified Meeting Planner (CMP) available through the regulatory body, the Convention Industry Council (CIC). Advocacy bodies include Meeting Professionals International (MPI) and the Professional Convention Management Association. Events that come under this main category include meetings, conferences, conventions, video conferences, Internet conferences, congresses, seminars, symposia, workshops, and retreats.

1.2.2 Expositions and Trade Shows

This category encompasses large expositions, industrial shows, trade shows, professional/scientific shows, and consumer shows. A professional designation for organizers is available, the Certified in Exhibition Management (CEM) designation, through the International Association for Exhibition Management.

1.2.3 Celebrations, Ceremonies, and Spectacles

This category generally corresponds to the various special event organizer designations currently available, including Certified Special Events Professional (CSEP) available through the International Special Events Society (ISES), and Certified Special Event Coordinator (CSEC) and Certified Special Event Manager (CSEM) available in Canada through the regulatory body, the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council. The Canadian advocacy body is the Canadian Special Events Society. This category is large and can be further subdivided into the following components:

- *Public events:* These include such events as parades, festivals, carnivals, sporting events, concerts, and one-off theatrical presentations. Some of these also have separate professional certifications, such as festivals, with the Certified Festival and Event Executive (CFEE) designation available through the International Festivals and Events Association.
- *Private events:* Arguably the area in which the majority of event producers work, this sub-category includes such events as award shows, corporate dinners, theme events, opening and closing ceremonies, incentive events, fundraisers, social and life events, product launches, and reunions.

Of interest in looking at the overall categorization of special events, is that there is often much cross-pollenization among the categories, in spite of different primary reasons for the events. For example, a large conference may have a separate wrap-up theme dinner for everyone at which there may be entertainment, decorations, and an A-V show. Likewise, a large college reunion may have a small trade show, or an international exposition may include a product launch. Each of these ‘sub-events’ would have an accompanying reason of its own for being held.

1.3 THE PLAYERS

Because the event industry is so young, terminology is still developing and the titles of ‘industry players’ often overlap. This leads to confusion and it is one of the general intentions of this chapter and this book to help dispel this confusion. From my experience in the industry as it has developed, the following terms, while not always used consistently, have come to define the people who have a hand in organizing a special event.

1.3.1 Event Manager

This person is the delegated representative of an entity that holds overall ultimate responsibility for the event. This ‘entity’ could be the owner of the event, such as a company, city, non-profit organization (e.g. trade show, charity, festival, association), or an individual. Usually, the event manager further delegates or sub-contracts other specialists in the areas needed to accomplish the event (e.g. to an event producer). The event manager term is most often used in larger events, such as festivals, or large event marketing events such as major sporting events (e.g. Grand Prix races, Super Bowl, etc.).

1.3.2 Event Planner

This term is sometimes used interchangeably with event manager but tends to refer to a person who plans smaller and more private events such as dinners, weddings, reunions, and similar gatherings. Frequently this is an individual operating independently, and not a company.

1.3.3 Event Coordinator

The term coordinator is sometimes used interchangeably with event manager and event planner, but tends to refer to an individual employed by a larger organization or a venue, who is responsible for bringing together all the event participants to ensure they are working toward the same goal. This person is usually not responsible for the creative side or supplier sourcing, but more for simple coordination duties. Examples can be found in convention centers and

arenas that employ event coordinators to liaise with all parties engaged in creating an event.

1.3.4 Event Producer

The term ‘event producer’ is another one that might be used interchangeably with event manager and event planner, but most often refers to the person responsible for coordinating and executing – and occasionally assisting with creating – the event, particularly the technical side that involves design, scheduling, staging, sound, lights, A-V, entertainment, and décor. In most event situations, the producer is not the event manager but is contracted **by** the event manager as defined above, who thereby becomes the ‘client’ of the producer. In situations where the term event manager is not used, the client of the producer may be any one of a number of individuals such as a company owner or internal manager, a ‘middle person’ (e.g. a destination management company or incentive house representative), an association, or non-profit organization executive member, or just a private individual. Since the producer is the focus of this book, let us look a little more closely at this person.

1.3.4.1 Skills Required by an Event Producer

The obvious benefits of advanced – and continuing – education can be found in the skills now required by anyone wishing to pursue a career in special events. The event producer is no exception, and in fact, probably more than any other player, needs to keep abreast of a larger body of knowledge across a greater variety of specialties. For now, let us list the most common and most desirable skills and personality traits.

- *Organizational ability:* A logical mind must keep a myriad of details, times, people, schedules, and tasks in their proper places.
- *Creative ability:* A right brain orientation helps to conceive new ideas, which can be in conflict with the organizational or left side of the brain.
- *Technical interest:* Because of the myriad technical areas coming under the supervision of the producer, at least a general interest of things technical avoids the temptation to keep hands off and simply trust suppliers. The producer must take confident ownership of these areas.
- *Financial acumen:* A working knowledge of financial statements, basic accounting, and budgets is an absolute necessity to effectively manage client budgets.
- *Writing ability:* A concise, creative, and grammatically correct writing style is mandatory.
- *Speaking ability:* A clear, organized, and enthusiastic speaking style is highly desirable for presentations to clients and to production teams.
- *Computer skills:* Familiarity with the most used components of the Microsoft Office suite of software (Word, Access, Excel, and Power Point) is mandatory. Also desirable is familiarity with customer relationship

management (CRM) software such as Maximizer or Act, graphics software such as Adobe Photoshop, computer aided design and drafting (CADD) such as Vectorworks or Vivien, project management software such as MS Project, and finally total familiarity with the Internet, and desirably with Web site design.

- *An ethical and moral grounding:* Because it is not yet fully developed as a ‘profession,’ the industry still harbors a good many individuals who are ethically and morally irresponsible in their business dealings. A producer who ignores the temptations to follow this path and instead takes the high ground may occasionally lose business but will maintain a sterling reputation which, in the long run, is all one has in a service industry.
- *Personality traits:* In order to deal with the many personality styles and demands of the job, the producer’s personality should reflect:
 - a gregarious and outgoing nature;
 - an upbeat, friendly, and positive attitude, even during high stress times;
 - the ability to hide and manage stress and not get upset by it;
 - flexibility in allowing changes to ideas and schedules;
 - a firm and fair management style.

As can be seen, these are widely varying skills and personality traits, a great many of which tend to clash with each other. It is a fine balance and can prove difficult for potential producers who are not used to the constant pressures, late nights, high stress, changing client requirements, and often lower than expected income. The rewards are high in terms of job satisfaction and that often compensates for the other less rewarding aspects.

1.3.4.2 *Habits of Effective Event Producers*

Believe it or not, successful event producers do have much in common with each other. Over the years, I have come to identify several characteristic habits that they exhibit to achieve success. Although not every single producer is the same, here are some of the key habits.

- *Focus:* This is the ability to keep a specific event at the top of one’s priority list. It starts with an understanding of the five main phases in the event planning process, discussed in Section 1.4: Concept and Proposal, Sales and Marketing, Coordination, Execution, and Followup. Throughout each of these phases, the particular event must be at or near the top of a daily priority list.
- *Anticipation:* This is the single most important producer habit that should be applied to every phase of the organizing process, but most particularly during the Coordination and Execution phases. It is the ability to visualize the entire event from start to finish and to determine potential problems before they occur. To do this successfully requires a great deal of attention to detail combined with an ear that listens to the ‘little inner voice’ telling

one to be careful and correct an errant detail before something disastrous happens, in other words an ear that is attuned to intuition.

- *Single-minded purpose:* There cannot be any mixed messages in the minds of any of the production team members. This means that all those team members involved in the event – producer, venue staff, and all suppliers – must understand the goals and purpose of the event passed on to the producer by the event manager or client. The job of the event producer is to ensure that this happens. For example, if an event manager has created a ‘Carnival Fun Night,’ it is the responsibility of the producer to explain to the production team whether the goal of the event is just for attendees to have fun or if it is to build a sales team. Depending on the interpretation, two entirely different events might result.
- *Ability to devote the necessary time:* Producing events cannot be done piecemeal. Each phase requires a certain amount of dedicated time to complete and it is best to work on each phase all at once. For example, it is better to write a proposal over 5 h rather than over 5 days, before moving on to the next task.
- *Ability to block out interference:* At first glance, this would seem obvious, but in today’s harried work environment, it is not as easy as it appears. For example, when writing a proposal where creative thought is required, phone calls should not be allowed to interrupt one’s creative time. Instead, an answering service should be used or someone else in the office should take messages.
- *Ability to address challenges:* Everyone gets them, no matter how carefully an event has been planned. The main thing is that one should stay positive and pro-active. The second thing is being fully aware of all the resources at one’s disposal and whether they can be used to solve a problem in a timely fashion. Lastly, a producer should not be afraid to say, ‘NO!’ if trying to make a change will compromise the quality of the event or the producer’s reputation.
- *‘Show-must-go-on’ mentality:* Every member of the production team must have this mindset. No challenge can be too big or too small. Being on time for everything is imperative. Performing in spite of hardships is a given in this business. One must do what is promised when it is promised. Finally, keeping a positive attitude towards all staff and clients brands one as a true professional.

1.4 THE PHASES OF EVENT ORGANIZATION

Before we can effectively understand the event producer’s job, we must first understand event organization. It is generally recognized by event management practitioners that there are five distinct phases to the event management – or

organization – **process**. Goldblatt (2002; pp. 36–56) and Allen et al. (2005; pp. 282–285) both have defined these phases in different ways but they are essentially the same. Throughout the event organization process, there are underlying, but ongoing and overlapping event **responsibility areas**, or **tasks**. Goldblatt (2002) divides these areas into Event Administration, Marketing, Risk Management, and Event Coordination. Allen et al. divides them into ten ‘knowledge areas’ rather than ‘tasks’ by using a project management approach. Herein lies the source of some confusion for persons new to the special events industry: there is not a clear-cut relationship between these tasks and the actual **process** of organizing the event, although Goldblatt (2002; p. 103) and Allen et al. (2005; pp. 116–125) allude to a relationship. We will attempt to clear up the confusion.

I subscribe to the five-phase model concept of the process, but with slight changes to those models postulated by Goldblatt and Allen et al. These changes, I believe, allow this model to more closely follow the actual tasks (postulated by Goldblatt as the four responsibility areas) that must be accomplished as one goes through the process in logical order. In other words, it clearly ties process and tasks together. Let us now examine each of these event phases and add in the primary tasks associated with each one.

1.4.1 The Concept and Proposal Phase

This phase takes the event from the germ of an idea to the creation of a detailed proposal. The tasks associated with this phase can be further divided into two sub-phases.

1.4.1.1 Preliminary Research

In the preliminary research sub-phase, a feasibility study of the event concept is conducted, including a strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats (SWOT) analysis to determine if the concept is sound and worth pursuing further. Also part of this sub-phase is a site or venue comparison and selection, often requiring site inspections and detailed analyses. These tasks are all associated with the event administration responsibility area.

1.4.1.2 Initial Event Design

In this sub-phase, the first real steps are taken to actually develop the event concept in detail. First, a preliminary program and content are put together. This usually requires the input of key sub-contractors (suppliers) to provide ideas and preliminary costs. Second, a formal budget is prepared based on these costs. Third, an initial creative proposal for the event is written incorporating the coordinated ideas of the event team (i.e. suppliers and staff) and the event budget. All these tasks generally come under the combined responsibility areas of marketing and event administration. This phase ends with the creation of this proposal. It is typically near the beginning of this sub-phase that the event producer will be brought into the picture.

1.4.2 The Marketing and Sales Phase

This phase takes the event from proposal stage to formal go-ahead decision. In this phase, the goal is to sell enough sponsorships and/or tickets to reach the go-ahead decision with sufficient time remaining before the event to allow for detailed coordination. The primary tasks of this phase come under the responsibility area of marketing and include the creation of marketing materials based on the initial event proposal, and the subsequent selling of sponsorships and tickets. Of course, depending on the event, this phase may be skipped entirely. For example, if the event is a private corporate one for which a fixed sum has been budgeted, there is no reason to find sponsors or sell tickets. The event is a 'go' from the beginning and only fine tweaking of the proposal and budget usually remain. Otherwise, this phase ends with the go-ahead decision.

1.4.3 The Coordination Phase

This phase takes the event from the go-ahead decision to the beginning of the actual event setup. It is the most complex and time-consuming phase of the event organizing process, the tasks for which involve risk management (obtaining licenses and permits, assessing risks), human resource management (recruiting volunteers and organizing staff), administration (contracting suppliers, accepting registrations, and reservations), and the commencement of event coordination (production management, contracting caterers, and transportation, etc). This phase ends the moment event setup begins.

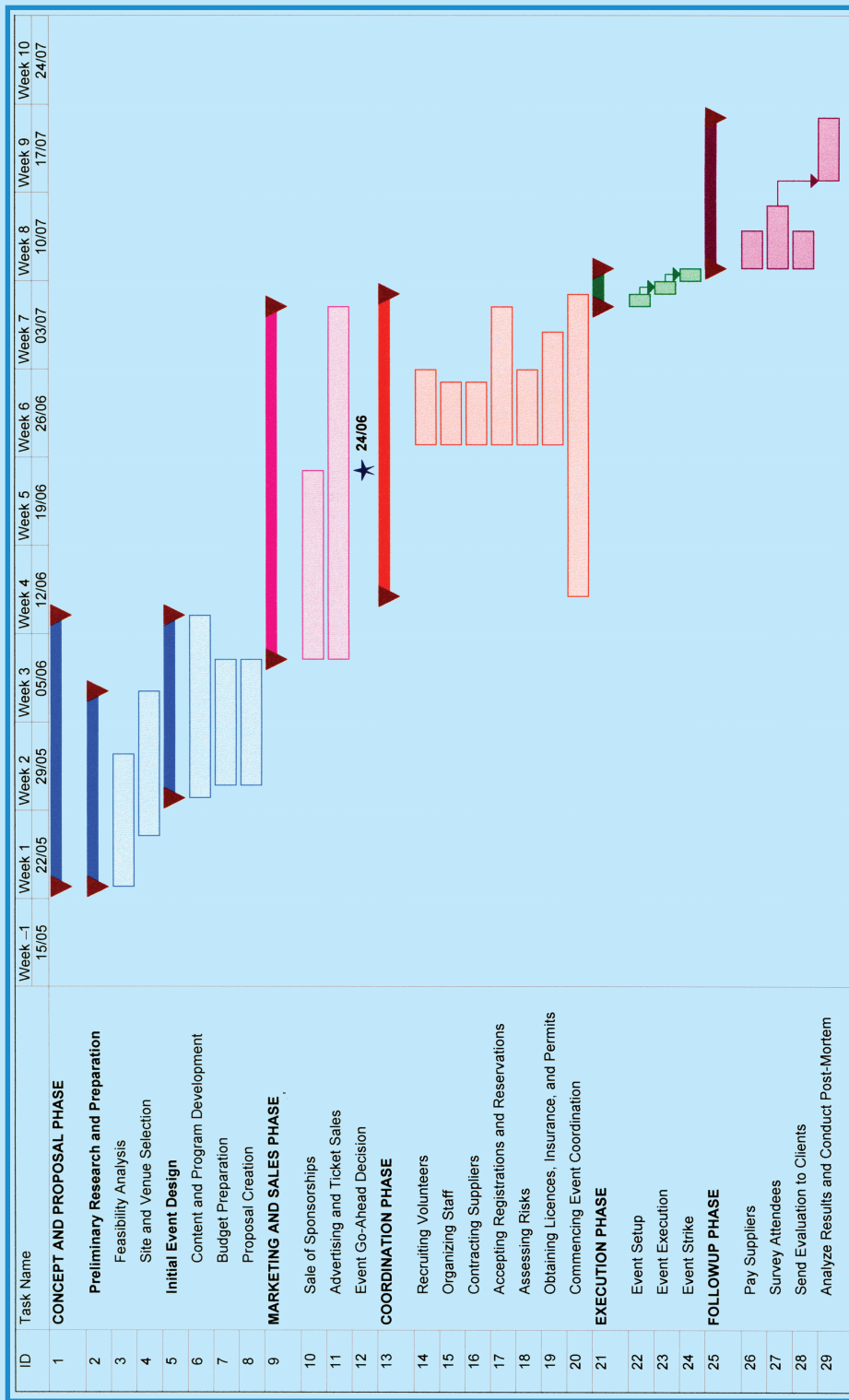
1.4.4 The Execution Phase

This phase is the period that includes event setup, the actual running of the event itself, and event strike. From an event management point of view, the responsibility areas and associated tasks involved in this phase include administration (paying suppliers, coordinating volunteers, and staff), marketing (badging, signage, media liaison, onsite registration, and ticketing), risk management (monitoring risks, security liaison), and event coordination (transportation liaison, catering liaison, onsite management, and production management). This phase ends after strike once the venue or site has been returned to its pre-event condition.

1.4.5 The Followup Phase

The final phase in the organization process is that of followup. This phase begins the moment event strike is complete. The responsibility area for this phase falls under event administration and involves paying suppliers, thanking

FIGURE 1.1
SAMPLE EVENT TIMELINE



Courtesy: Doug Matthews

the client and/or participants, evaluating the event through participant or client surveys, conducting an event team wrap-up review meeting, making adjustments for any budget and contractual changes, and analyzing the event's success or failure. It ends once these tasks have been accomplished.

In order to put the organization process into perspective, we have created a theoretical event in project management software (Microsoft Project) and have output a simplified version of a general project timeline (also known as a *GANNT chart*) as Figure 1.1 to assist with understanding the inter-relation of process and tasks. This chart is plotted horizontally as weeks from the commencement of event planning. In this example, each of the event phases is color-coded for easy reference: blue for the Concept and Proposal phase, pink for the Marketing and Sales phase, red for the Coordination phase, green for the Execution phase, and purple for the Followup phase. Likewise, the tasks within each phase are similarly color-coded and reflect the explanations given in this section. As in most real events, there is overlap in tasks amongst the various phases, some of which is shown here. For example, concept development is going on simultaneously with the initial feasibility studies and site selection, ticket sales overlap event coordination, and so on. Neither are all events equal in terms of the time spent in each phase or on each task. The key is to understand **what** happens and approximately **when** it happens on the event timeline.

1.5 THE RESPONSIBILITY AREAS OF EVENT ORGANIZATION

Now that we understand how the event organization process is laid out, we need to put all the tasks within the four responsibility areas in their proper place and then relate them to what this book is all about, event production. Table 1.1 gives an overview representing some of the generally accepted key tasks that fall under each of these responsibility areas. One change has been made to Goldblatt's four areas, and that is the Coordination area has been re-named Operations and Logistics in order to avoid confusion with the Coordination **phase**.

Of course, as already mentioned, not every event will have this exact division of responsibilities because the final organizational structure and division of responsibilities usually end up as personal preferences of the event manager (e.g. some events may have the risk management tasks assigned to event administration, entertainment under a separate programming responsibility area, catering and transportation under event administration, etc). However, this table gives a good indication of the type of division that has proven successful. For further reference, Goldblatt (2002; pp. 112–115), Allen et al. (2005; pp. 121–125), Rutherford-Silvers (2004; pp. 172–176), and Van Der Wagen and Carlos (2005; pp. 165–167) discuss possible organizational structures that may be used for event management, including the above form of *functional* structure.

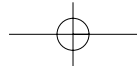


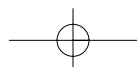
TABLE 1.1
EVENT MANAGEMENT TASK OVERVIEW

Event Responsibility Area			
Administration	Marketing	Risk Management	Operations and Logistics
Event feasibility analysis (SWOT)	Program development	Assessment and control of risk	Catering
Site and venue selection	Sponsorship acquisition	Creation of emergency plans	Transportation to and from the event site/venue
Financial administration and budgeting	Proposal preparation	Organizing emergency services	Onsite management
Contracting	Promotional material development	Obtaining licenses and permits	Production, including entertainment, décor, lighting, audio, visual presentations (A-V), staging, tenting and temporary structures, special effects, electrical power, HVAC, sanitation and waste management, rigging, fencing, technical direction
Staff selection and training	Advertising	Addressing insurance and liability issues	
Volunteer recruitment, training, and coordination	Web site design and maintenance	Analyzing security needs and obtaining security services	
Event evaluation	Media liaison Signage Registration and badging Ticketing Housing (usually for conferences only)		

Courtesy: Doug Matthews

From this point on in this book, we lay out the chapters as if we were undertaking the organization of an event as event producers. In other words, we integrate what we have covered with respect to the event organization process and the responsibility areas and relate them to exactly what the event producer does and when it is done. Let us briefly outline what each of the subsequent chapters in this book will be covering and how they relate to event production.

- *Chapter 2: Creativity.* This chapter reflects the initial involvement of the event producer in the Concept and Proposal phase in which the event manager must study the feasibility of conducting the event and to do so requires the input of key contractors, specifically the producer, who



must submit a creative proposal that incorporates all the technical areas and possibly entertainment and décor as well.

- *Chapter 3: Budgeting.* The producer must accurately budget for the equipment and concepts proposed, again within the Concept and Proposal phase.
- *Chapter 4: Proposals.* This chapter is all about writing an effective proposal by the producer; thus it still lies within the Concept and Proposal phase.
- *Chapter 5: The Production Team.* Moving into Chapter 5, we assume that there are normally no tasks for the producer in the Marketing and Sales phase of event organization. This chapter thus begins the involvement of the producer in human resource management and discusses how to do this with the production team in the Coordination and Execution phases. It parallels the timing of the human resource tasks of volunteer recruitment, training, and staff selection as outlined above for the event administration responsibility area in the same phases.
- *Chapter 6: Contracting.* As shown in Figure 1.1, at the same time as event administration is contracting other suppliers, so too is the event producer contracting technical suppliers during the Coordination phase, as well as contracting with the client (the event manager). This chapter explains how contracting applies to the producer.
- *Chapter 7: Risk Management.* Also paralleling the risk assessment tasks of the event management team in the Coordination phase, the producer must begin to assess any risks associated with the technical production, obtain insurance, obtain associated permits and licenses, and assure compliance with equipment design standards and safety regulations.
- *Chapter 8: Production Management.* This chapter is about coordinating all the production elements as shown on line 20 of Figure 1.1. It begins in the Coordination phase and continues through the Execution phase.
- *Chapter 9: Event Followup.* This chapter explains the producer's involvement in the followup tasks of the event team and of the producer's own responsibility areas.

Once all the tasks have been laid out in logical order in these chapters, we then devote the second book (*Special Event Production: The Resources*) to explaining the theory and background of all the technical areas that may, at some point in time, be the responsibility of the event producer.

PRODUCTION CHALLENGES

1. Describe in your own words the main historical reasons for holding special events and give a modern day example of each.

Continued

PRODUCTION CHALLENGES (CONTD.)

2. Explain how an event producer is different from an event planner, event manager, and event coordinator, and describe some of the tasks that differentiate each of these jobs from the other ones.
3. You have been given the task of preparing and delivering (in person) a major creative proposal for the production of three different incentive events for an important client. Describe the skills you require to complete this task successfully.
4. Explain the difference between the organizational **phases** of an event and the **responsibility areas** of organizing the event.
5. You have been approached by a well-known event manager to act as the producer for a new comedy festival in your city that will take place in multiple indoor venues over a week-long period. You will be responsible for acquiring all the talent and providing the audio, lighting, and staging for all the venues. Since this is a new venture, sponsors must be found. Describe where in the event organization process your input will be needed and what that input will be at each point, assuming that eventually enough sponsors will be found for the event to proceed.

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