

Broadway Meets Business | Theatrical event production



Planning a business event is exactly like directing a theatre production; the audience will be highly critical, unless every detail is in place and delivered flawlessly. Hannah Chissick draws on her theatrical experience to ensure that her corporate audiences have a damn fine time..

Having directed some 40 shows, in the last 10 years, in theatres, nationwide, I maintain that the same principles can be applied to business events. Whether my productions were small scale fringe, in makeshift auditoriums, or a cast of thousands, in a 50,000-capacity stadium, I had to deliver a faultless and memorable experience.



I noticed that there was a trend towards businesses investing in talent, aligning their products with authentic performers. And I saw that the corporate world could benefit from true, artistic skills in a win-win, cross-fertilisation. From stage & poster design to the soundtrack & lighting, a more tailor-made “show”, that could speak one visual language from beginning to end, down to the smallest detail, had to be of more commercial benefit to businesses / brands? Importantly, instead of a disjointed, isolated ‘incident’ of live entertainment, I wanted to provide an all-encompassing package that had true relevance to the rest of the event.

Applying the same philosophy that contributes to the success or failure of any theatre production, I always refer to this test, for an event:

▷ ***Is the entertainment integral?*** The overall theme / vision / message of the event comes first, then, the choice of entertainment, to ensure that this is integral. (One wouldn’t cast your actors before choosing a script!)

▷ ***Is there only ONE Director?*** A stage show operates with only one director, who is ultimately responsible for bringing all elements together, from the artwork on the program, right up to the last music played, when the audience leaves. Not to mention being responsible for the stage performances, sound quality, the set, props and visual / lighting effects. Too often in event planning, these various elements are delegated to different individuals, and the result is incoherent and ultimately unsatisfactory. By clients trusting one person to act as the “Director”, they ensure that all of the diverse elements are drawn together, into one, cohesive whole.

▷ ***What will my audience’s overall experience be?*** It is essential to consider, in the finest detail, what the audience will experience from the beginning to the end of their evening. From the soundtrack playing on arrival, to the look of the cloakroom on departure, no individual element is insignificant. Audiences definitely respond to the entirety, if it has been carefully co-ordinated. And by having a clear theme, that all elements for your event can be tied into, you will transport your audience to another world; one they won’t forget, in a hurry.



▷ ***Is the client actively engaged in the role of Producer?*** When I am directing a stage show, I am ultimately responsible for every element of the production, but the Producer always has the final say. In event planning, the client is the Producer, to the Director, and must approve every detail, while still allowing the creative space for the director to bring their best, before finally, coming in with a guiding hand. When this relationship is supportive and creative, it can bring the show alive, in ways, which both the “Director” and “Producer”, had not foreseen.

▷ ***Is the ‘talent’ cast, and co-ordinated, appropriately?*** My clients often previously used booking agents or agencies for their entertainers and technicians, usually with no control over the content or relevance of their performance. Even a strong entertainer can frequently feel like a square peg in a round hole, when their material is not specifically suited to the particular event. I find it so much more beneficial, by having direct access to top artistes and technical support, and then, uniquely, being able to tailor-make the acts, in an integrated, consistent and creative manner. The result is always a highly original, more coherent and, in my opinion, a superior quality event.

From a Christmas party to a large trade show, event planning is usually stressful and demanding but with the right collaborations, it can, and should be, a creative, exciting and extremely rewarding process.

Like all good productions, working with the right team, in creative partnerships that encourage imagination, excellence and, above all, attention to detail, you should have your audience demanding, “Encore!”