

This time line begins eight weeks before the special event is scheduled to take place. Eight weeks is sufficient lead-time for a small event, meaning an event of less than 300–400 people. It indicates specific tasks that need to be performed each week by specific persons.

If you don't have all of the staff indicated, you'll have to redefine who does what—but for the most part, all of these tasks need to be completed.

- Contact master of ceremonies for event.
- Prepare news release announcing event.

### SEVEN WEEKS TO EVENT

#### Development Director

- Recruit additional dinner sponsors and benefactors.
- Prepare flier for mass mailing.

# PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL EVENT IN EIGHT WEEKS

by Annette Meeks

### EIGHT WEEKS TO EVENT

#### Development Director

- Confirm special event speaker.
- Prepare budget for event; share with comptroller/treasurer.
- Confirm and visit location for event. Obtain floor plan and table locations.
- Arrange for hotel rooms for speaker.
- Appoint event sponsor and receive their donation.
- Make travel reservations for speaker and others as necessary.
- Prepare a list of prospects for solicitation and divide up list with time line for contacting donors.
- Confirm location for VIP reception.
- Prepare and fax announcement of event to Board of Directors.
- Prepare time line and event plan; begin to execute.
- Design collateral materials.
- Recruit volunteers for registration.

#### Communications Director

- Obtain speaker bios.
- Begin compiling program information.

- Design and print invitations.
- Design and print tickets.
- Arrange table layout from floor plan.
- Secure caterers for events.
- Secure security, entertainment and sound system for event.
- Recruit volunteers to phone membership for ticket sales.
- Obtain additional names for mass mailing.

#### Communications Director

- Secure location for press conference.
- Edit program; send to printer.
- Mail news release.

### SIX WEEKS TO EVENT

#### Development Director

- Contact board of directors for their pledges; collect checks.
- Arrange ground transportation for event speaker.
- Arrange for special event promotional materials, such as banners, podium signs, etc. to be printed.
- Drop mass mailing.

- Make necessary arrangements for special receptions, including music, sound system, caterers, registration volunteers.

- Mail special VIP invitations, including governor, congressional delegation, legislative leaders, other dignitaries or special invitees.

- Arrange for invocation, vocalist for national anthem, accompanist, color guard.

- Do walk-through of event location with security personnel.

- Begin distributing college student tickets through university contacts.

- Develop event time line; hold staff meeting to brief everyone on their responsibilities.

**Communications Director**

- Write script for MC and other speakers as requested.

- Prepare media credentials for distribution at event.

**FIVE WEEKS TO EVENT**

**Development Director**

- Determine and call those who will sit at head table.

- Follow up on prospective sponsors and benefactors who have not yet purchased a table.

- Mail invitations and tickets to those who have purchased tickets.

- Select menu.

- Select table decorations and any other arrangements for the event site.

**Communications Director**

- Distribute script to event speakers.

- Draft press release.

**FOUR WEEKS TO EVENT**

**Development Director**

- Follow up on sponsors and benefactor tables sales.

- Gather reception RSVP's; compile lists of attendees for security.

- Follow up on VIP attendees; arrange for their table seats with board members and benefactors

- Continue assigning tables as they are purchased.

- Do mass mailing for individual ticket sales.

- Update budget; pay preliminary bills.

**Communications Director**

- Arrange for still and video photographers at event.

**THREE WEEKS TO EVENT**

**Development Director**

- Follow up with benefactors and sponsors who haven't yet purchased tables or mailed in their checks.

- Continue to monitor the progress of RSVP's for private receptions.

- Begin volunteer telemarketing to sell individuals seats.

- Assign single ticket sales to tables.

- Delivery of collateral materials.

- Proof blue lines for program.

- Develop final time line for day of event.

- Distribute time line as necessary.

- Do reminder mailing to registration volunteers with time line of events.

**TWO WEEKS TO EVENT**

**Development Director**

- Follow up with benefactors and sponsors who haven't purchased tickets or tables.

- Continue to monitor RSVP's for receptions.

- Reconfirm: music, color guard, master of ceremonies, minister, accompanist, pledger, sound system, caterers, hotel reservations, car reservations, air reservations, head table participants, award recipients, and other special guests.

- Make last-minute tickets available to legislators and other VIP's.

- Mail scripts to speakers.

- Arrange for gift bags, etc to be delivered to event site.

**Communications Director**

- Draft media advisory for event and press conference.

- Prepare media packet for press conference, including: bio on speaker, background

information on host organization, any VIP's in attendance (and seat location), etc.

- Re-confirm location of press conference.

## THE WEEK BEFORE THE EVENT

### Development Director

- Make final calls to board of directors, sponsors, benefactors.
- Edit final lists of reception attendees.
- Prepare minute-by-minute event script for staff.
- Hold final staff briefing.
- Hold meeting for volunteers to brief them on the event.
- Finalize table charts.
- Print name tags.
- Draft/print thank-you letters to be mailed the day after event.
- Prepare name tags for reception.
- Follow up on special transportation needs.
- Arrange staff parking at event.
- Prepare table cards/markets for sponsors.

### Communications Director

- Make sure event is on AP daybook.
- Arrange for audiotape or videotape of event.

## THE DAY OF THE EVENT

### Development Director

- Set up table headers.
- Prepare nametags at reception and general registration area.
- Supervise decorations and head table preparation.
- Monitor flight schedule.
- Prepare final list of VIP's in attendance for media and recognition from the podium.
- Tabulate final fundraising total (if it is to be announced).

### Communications Director

- Fax news release.
- Hold press conference with media packets.
- Distribute media credentials at event.

- Arrange interviews of president, others prior to event.

- Troubleshoot media problems on site.

## ONE WEEK AFTER THE EVENT

### Development Director

- Mail thank-you letters to: sponsors, benefactors, table purchasers, single ticket buyers, volunteers, vendors, head table participants, others as necessary.
- Mail photos to: sponsors, benefactors, head table participants.
- Mail thank-you note to guest of honor.
- Prepare final profit/loss statement on event after final bills are paid.

### Communications Director

- Mail post-event news release to newspapers with photos.
- Prepare photos and newspaper articles, videos for archives.

Annette Meeks is Director of Government Affairs and Public Programs at the Center of the American Experiment. This article was originally published in the Atlas Foundation's Management Toolkit, available at <http://www.atlasusa.org>.