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**social and
recognition events:
how to inspire
your attendees.**

SOCIAL AND RECOGNITION EVENTS: HOW TO INSPIRE YOUR ATTENDEES

Your social program is just as important as your business program. Attendees get as much from an event as they relax and mingle with each other as they do from the business proceedings. Recognition events such as Awards Ceremonies and Gala Dinners are often the highlight of an event and they need to reflect the esteem in which they are held by attendees.

An engaging dinner event provides attendees with enjoyment, a chance to unwind and the opportunity to build relationships or celebrate with their peers. This is an important step in building a stronger business or staff community.

Each night the dinner event can be used to build on that day's activities and create anticipation for what comes next. The dinner event on the first evening is typically more casual, with the aim of welcoming the group. It will create networking opportunities, welcome newcomers, re-establish bonds, and build excitement about the days ahead.

Subsequent dinners provide the option for contrasting styles of dinner events. These could be anything from a market stall and roving meal, dine-around at local restaurants, or visiting an offsite venue for some local flavour or a customised themed dinner function.

An Awards Ceremony or Gala Dinner is usually the finale of the conference and provides the opportunity to emphasise the conference theme and wrap-up with key messages. It also allows attendees to celebrate their recognised successes with their peers and partners. Theming and technology are crucial to a first-class evening, which is another reason the destination's infrastructure is an essential element in the decision-making process.

Wellbeing and health are increasingly standard operating procedure with events. This can take the form of energy foods during breaks, morning yoga or exercise breaks, providing maps of local walking trails, even competitions for the most steps taken in a day by attendees. Achievements can be celebrated each evening and so add to the spirit of the event.

making a difference

“ I love to hear ‘this was the best night, how are you going to top it tomorrow night?’ Little did they know we had a dinner planned in a quarry, hosted by the Outback owners. It included Indigenous entertainment from atop the mount with sounds of the didgeridoo echoing down into the valley, personal fireworks and stunning animated projections on the rock face throughout dinner. When you get to know attendees year on year, you get to create a strategy that grows with the business, and you also know what will excite and delight the guests with experiences that are really unique and will have an impact. It empowers them to go back to their business with a renewed focus and really look forward to being a part of the next conference and journey of discovery. ”

EXPERT TIPS

Choose venues that showcase the destination and provide an interesting platform to host your event, such as a marquee on the beach, a restaurant overlooking a marina, or setting up a big top tent for a Cirque or Carnivale experience.

Attendees also enjoy a progressive treatment that builds throughout the evening. Consider the entertainment and guest interaction leading into the welcome and dinner service. Use each stage to create excitement and engage the crowd with further entertainment spots and interactive components throughout the night.

Create interesting (event-branded) selfie hot-spots so attendees can take photos and post them to social channels. Employ a professional photographer to roam the event and take random as well as posed shots. Use these on social media and in montages on main-screen displays to open the event the following morning.

Build a theme for the event that is suitable for the venue, audience, and program agenda. You can include themed clothing for all attendees, such as shirts, hats, scarfs, even sarongs in island locations.

Utilise lighting to set and change the ambience as well as provide special effects throughout the night. Incorporating LED patterned backdrops or lighting panels helps enhance and support the mood or to deliver the entertainment.

Group interaction and participation with a magician or illusionist can be great fun, but only if you have a group that does not mind a bit of engagement and peer entertainment. Be sure you know your audience when considering booking entertainment of any kind. And brief the entertainer, as you may not want them embarrassing the CEO, clients, or staff, in front of a crowd.

Seating plans can aid with group networking, client relationships or to get new people mixing with more senior members of the group. Create the seating plan based on the objectives for group networking and the desired outcomes. In this diverse world you may also have to be conscious of religious or cultural sensitivities when seating people together.

Serving an exotic menu might not appeal to the tastes of the broader audience, however there are options for creating interest and a point of difference. Tasting plates with smaller portions and sampling enable you to incorporate the flavour of the destination, while allowing attendees to try new things without committing to a meal they may not enjoy. Always have vegetarian and possibly vegan options available too.

There is an industry adage if your attendees are well fed and watered, they'll put up with most other issues, but if the food and drinks don't cut it, everything becomes a problem. So, invest in quality meals and snacks during breaks as cutting corners here can prove an unnecessary disaster.

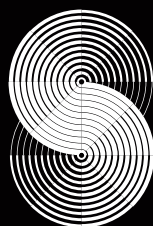
Take advantage of cost-saving measures when negotiating a contract with a venue. Many venues have themed décor items (though basic) that can be used free of charge if you ask for them. Room hire fees should be offset by food and drink spend, if the catering is done in-house. Consider the consumption patterns from past events, and assess whether it is more cost-effective to have a drinks package or be charged based on consumption.



**we create events that awaken, ignite
and motivate your people, building a
renewed sense of connection and
commitment to your organisation.**

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SPEAKING TO YOU!

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