



ESSENTIAL

EVENT TIPS

YOU CAN'T **FORGET**



ADVICE FROM THE PROFESSIONALS



At HELEN MILLS, we work with talented event professionals every day. This eBook combines their expert advice and the extensive experience of our in-house team to bring you the latest advice and tips to help you make your event unforgettable. Happy planning!

EVENT ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment can make the difference between a unique and memorable event and one that guests forget once they step out the door. Never considered having entertainment at your event? Read on for recommendations and a Q&A from event entertainment expert Brian Rosenbaum.

DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT WITH ENTERTAINMENT:

- **Draw crowds with a professional speaker** – In addition to having your CEO speak at the event, hire a celebrity or professional consultant in the industry to speak. Invite a speaker who will draw attendees to the event, and make the event memorable.
- **Energize guests with live music** – Hire a band. Bands can be surprisingly affordable. Live music will energize your guests, making them more likely to stay for the whole event.
- **Invite Guests to Take a Ride on the Mobile Bandwagon** – Encourage your guests to interact with the event by using mobile technology. Some ideas to consider:
 1. Set up a projection screen with a twitter wall of live tweets from the event.
 2. Set up a projection screen that displays photos taken at the event in real-time.
 3. Set up a hashtag print station where guests can print photos from the event that they have posted on social media. This type of interactivity will keep your audience engaged throughout the event (as well as publicize your event on social media).
- **Host an Auction** – Plan a live auction to get all of your guests involved in the bidding action.
- **Think outside of the Box** – Hire entertainers that your guests won't expect. Some crowdpleasers include dancers, acrobats, stilt-walkers, magicians, graffiti artists, and balloon artists. These entertainers will liven the vibe of your event, and make your event stand out.
- **Hire a DJ** – Work with the DJ to create a playlist that will appeal to guests. Ask your DJ to ensure that their sound system will work well for your venue. Inquire about dance floor lighting and décor.



Q&A WITH A PROFESSIONAL BRIAN ROSENBAUM

WHAT ARE SOME UNIQUE/UNCONVENTIONAL ENTERTAINMENT YOU HAVE USED?

We've had aerial performers with high ceiling venues. We've also done indoor ice-skating for winter themes, complete with professional ice skaters doing performing a show for guests.

WHAT IS ONE THING THAT PEOPLE DON'T THINK ABOUT WHEN PLANNING ENTERTAINMENT?

Entertainment has to fit into the flow of the event as well as entertain your guests. Always remember that the more entertainment items you add, the less time guests will spend engaging with other parts of the event. Too many entertainment elements can definitely detract from dancing if dancing is the focus for the event. When planning entertainment, make sure the DJ or MC won't have to compete with performers, video games, or other side entertainment items throughout the event.



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WHAT ARE THE MOST POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS?

Tech savvy photo booths have shot up in popularity. Photo booths no longer just print photos. They also can broadcast them through social media in a way that's faster than was ever possible. Photo booths also feature options to take short videos as well as still shots. Casino tables, Interactive Horse Racing, game rentals, comedians, magic & mindreading shows, and karaoke recording booths, are always big hits.

ENTERTAINMENT OPTION YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE THOUGHT OF?

Strolling performers are great when there are a lot of people at an event. These performers are like the street performers you see in New York City. They are extremely talented and will circulate throughout the room, doing a number of performances a night for small groups of people. They create intimate performances that don't disrupt the flow of the event.

BRIAN ROSENBAUM

President – The Entertainment Company, Inc.

Brian has been in the entertainment industry for over 25 years, and sees entertainment as just one part of a holistic vision for an event. He is President of The Entertainment Company, which has provided entertainment and event planning services for 1000's of clients over the past two decades.



EVENT CATERING

As many people who have planned events know, catering can be one of the biggest expenses. Having good quality food is also one of the most important elements of a successful event. Poor food can leave guests with a literal bad taste in their mouth, and complaints that might ruin guests' overall memory of the event. We spoke with Jessica Alton of Thomas Preti Caterers for advice on how to have food that will make your guests happy and your event a standout.

CATERING TIPS TO INSPIRE:

- **Alternative Beverage Service Options** – Depending on your event, you may not need a full premium bar. Most of your guests will not specify a liquor type anyway, so it may not be worth the additional per person charge for a premium bar for the couple of guests who do. Instead, consider a standard bar with mid-tier liquor options. For more savings, go with a wine and beer bar, and you could always add one specialty cocktail to tie in with your event theme.
- **Creative Dessert Table** – Instead of serving traditional desserts, which are costly and usually go uneaten, win over your dessert lovers with a fun dessert table. Some crowd pleasers include a chocolate fountain with dipping treats, a candy bar table for guests to fill small bags, or mini cupcakes on a pedestal. All of these options require little staffing, and create a 'wow' factor, while being cost effective.
- **Consider Stationary Hors D'Oeuvres** – Stationary hors d'oeuvres can also save on your catering bill by minimizing your staff count. Instead of having one waiter per tray of passed hors d'oeuvres, you can have one waiter per table of hors d'oeuvres. Additionally, guests often prefer hors d'oeuvres stations to passed hors d'oeuvres, because they do not have to wait until something they like comes around on a tray.
- **Remember That People Eat with Their Eyes** – If your caterer cares about how their food looks, you can rest assured that they care even more about how their food tastes. Confidence in flavor typically leads to confidence in presentation.



Q&A WITH A PROFESSIONAL: JESSICA ALTON

HOW CAN YOU MAKE A BIG IMPACT AT AN EVENT ON A LIMITED BUDGET?

Take one detail and make it special. For example, rent a fun napkin or napkin ring, a special plate or a large charger with a unique look to it, or a glass with a gold rim to add something unexpected to an event from a presentation perspective. You can also play around with color, which usually doesn't affect the price. A special treat at the end of the meal can also add an element of surprise and delight your guests. They're not things you have to do, just things you can do. Walk around and give people an ice pop or little fried donut with some caramel dipping sauce. It added a little 'remember that' moment. Remember, the little surprises make a difference for people. All these elements will keep things fresh and unique without costing a lot more money.

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WHAT'S A CATERING CONVENTION YOU THINK SHOULD BE CHALLENGED?

Often clients are looking to do choice entrees or duet entrees. We recommend not offering a choice (we always have a silent vegetarian option) and providing instead a wonderful meal that you select for your guests. As you are the host, this shows your guests that you care about them and have chosen for them what you think they will enjoy.

WHAT ARE SOME POPULAR CATERING OPTIONS RIGHT NOW?

We're always out there looking to create new things. Some great ideas include:

- Fun, thematic cocktails. It works great to match your cocktail with the menu, season or the preferences of the guest of honor
- Presenting things in a mason jar - it's fun and people love it.
- S 'mores are everywhere. S 'mores cupcakes, cookies, brownies, open faced and cheesecakes.
- I'm a fan of black and white cookies. It's a perennial favorite. They're always going to be fabulous.

JESSICA ALTON

Event Director – Thomas Preti Caterers

Jessica is the proud mom of three daughters and has been with Thomas Preti for 12 years. She is laser-focused on the art of creating great events. She is involved with client relations and event sales and has done it all for Thomas Preti. People who know caterers choose Thomas Preti for the events that matter.



EVENT PLANNERS

Hiring an event planner is often more than just a nice-to-have service. Today, the costs and complexity of planning an event have many people turning to a planner, helping them save time and have a better event for their investment. Why? Read on for details and words of wisdom from Lindsay Landman, founder of Lindsay Landman Events.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING AN EVENT PLANNER

- **It may not be so expensive** – This is the opposite of what most people expect. An event planner may be able to help you develop a more efficient budget to achieve your goals because of their experience and contacts in the industry.
- **You will save money** – This is the opposite of what most people expect because the assumption is that by simply having to pay an event planner, you're spending more money. Not so. Once you develop the budget with an event planner, the planner can save you money by working with vendors to cut costs in a variety of ways.
- **The event will look better** – Its an event planner's job to make events look good. The right event planner will make your event look incredible, in ways that you didn't think were even possible.
- **Piece of mind** – When planning an event, trying to do everything yourself is a huge job. Hiring an event planner will give you piece of mind, knowing that all of your event details are being taken care of by a professional. Having an event planner will allow you to focus on the bigger picture of the event.
- **Better vendor and venue selection** – Planners have a rolodex full of partners, a wealth of knowledge about their pricing, and advantages/disadvantages. This knowledge will save you hours of time when planning an event and insure you get what you need to fulfill your vision at the best price.



Q&A WITH A PROFESSIONAL: LINDSAY LANDMAN

ITEM WHICH IS MOST WORTH THE MONEY?

I think the best investment in an event is staffing. It enhances the guest and client experience in every way. I would rather have a limited bar that is well staffed, than fewer bartenders with a full bar that the guests can't reach. The product has no value without gracious service.

CREATIVE WAY A CLIENT CAN SAVE MONEY WITHOUT SACRIFICING THE QUALITY OF THEIR EVENT?

Strategic use of color. Color is free. You can rent a white tablecloth or a red tablecloth and it's the same price. White is great but it has to be used well. You have to make great choices using white – like matching the flowers, menu and tablecloth -- so it looks intentional. Whatever color palette you use, the more you focus on the palette, the more impact your décor will have on the whole.



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On the logistical side, a lot of people waste money being indecisive. Create your budget, own it, stick to it, and make your choices with as much time as you can. This will eliminate money wasted on overnight shipping and late/rush fees. It's owning the psyche that there are tons of amusing beautiful things to choose. You are going to have to make hard choices but there will be more events to plan in your future.

WHAT'S A COMMON MISTAKE PEOPLE MAKE?

People are often limited by money without knowing what things cost. I have to educate clients all the time about what the investments really are. Don't make the assumption that red costs more than purple. Don't let what you think are the costs limit your imagination - when you're first planning, think, if money were no object, what would this party look like?

LINDSAY LANDMAN

Founder – Lindsay Landman Events

Lindsay founded Lindsay Landman Events in 2001 and plans a mix of social and corporate events, teaches at the Event Leadership Institute, and is on the Board of Directors for the non-profit Wish Upon a Wedding.



SIGNAGE

Great signage can transform how guests feel at your event. Signage is an essential element in branding a space and when done well, can encourage guests to share their experience beyond the walls of the venue. If you're unsure where to start, read on as Peter Zalezsak of Atlas Print Solutions provides essential tips and examples of state-of-the-art signage.

HOT TIPS FOR SIGNAGE:

- **More branding is better** – The more opportunities you take to brand a space, the more likely guests are going to see and understand your message and ultimately share it with their friends – whether through pictures or word of mouth.
- **Signage comes in many forms** – signage can take many forms other than posters. Consider ordering or reusing swag items as signage, décor or favors for guests on their way out. It will be a welcome surprise.
- **Use step & repeats** – This tool encourages people to take photographs and share them on social media. The best part is that your signage and that of your partners will be a constant backdrop.
- **Keep the venue in mind when creating signage** – Consider the special layout and architecture when creating signage, the most unique signage takes advantage of the venue where it's displayed.
- **Hashtags are all the rage** – Hashtags can be made of adhesive cut-outs and then placed on mirrors, in bathrooms, along walls, at the bar, etc., and remind guests to share their experience.
- **Mix digital and print signage for maximum impact** – Consider mixing video displays with print signs for the ultimate combination of cool, interactive and effective.



Q&A WITH A PROFESSIONAL: PETER ZALEZSAK

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE SIGNAGE AT AN EVENT?

For clients that use print signage for all of their events, signage is a no-brainer because in a way it becomes a free advertisement for their brand or product or service. Increasingly, guests and event photographers alike will share photos on social media, resulting in countless impressions on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, to name a few. When you have your logo or branded elements placed around the venue, it increases the chances they will be photographed and shared and ultimately the people who see that branding will span well beyond the confines of the venue and your guest list.



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HOW DOES DIGITAL SIGNAGE FIT INTO THE MIX?

Digital signage is increasingly a part of the event marketing mix, along with print, depending on how tech savvy the company is. We did the Guess? fashion week event and it was like no other show we'd ever been a part of...They had digital signage elements that included two huge screens – maybe 30' x 10' - playing a montage of video clips on the screens that you couldn't really achieve through print. But not everything was digital. We also printed 40' x 15' high panels of step and repeats with a hundred polaroid's printed on each, showing the Guess? lifestyle. If you got up close to it you could see each individual one and people were really engaging with this graphic. Digital and print met and succeeded.



PETER ZALEZSAK

Senior Account Manager – Atlas Print Solutions

Peter has spent his whole career in the print and signage industry and loves the variation in the signage, events, and projects he works on a daily basis. Atlas Print Solutions is a full-service print production and design services agency that has served customers from a wide range of industries for more than 15 years.

Clients include: CondeNast; Pop2Life; A.Lange & Söhne; Guess?



EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY / VIDEOGRAPHY

Choosing an event photographer and/or videographer can be challenging – they must be able to tell a strong visual story while capturing important moments. Taking the time to evaluate your needs is essential and will pay off after the event when you not only have your memories preserved, but also a compelling story to share with others. Photographer Zev Greenfield of Milk & Honey Productions outlines questions to ask and things to keep in mind when recording your next event.

TIPS FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

- **Ask to see their portfolio** – This can seem like a common sense tip, but it is often overlooked. What percentage of their business is shooting similar events? Does their style and approach match your event’s branding and image? Ask for references for clients with similar events.
- **Everything needs to be easily sharable** – From signage to venue setup, make sure your event lends itself well to being photogenic and easy to share on social media. In this day and age, lots of photographers offer interactive photo-sharing technologies so attendees can share photos on-site during your event. If you want guests to share photos during the event itself, be sure to bring this up during your initial conversations to see if this is an option.
- **Set expectations before the event** – Make sure the photographer is aware before the event of what moments you’re looking to capture, if there are any attendees to focus on, and when and how you’ll need the images post-event. If you have a media plan to share the event after it occurs, make sure the photographer is aware and can meet these deadlines.
- **Take advantage of great photographs and video to extend the life of your event.**
Events are a huge investment – Make sure to get the greatest return. Have compelling photographs and beautifully told stories on video to make the event memorable and engaging for guests who weren’t able to attend. Photographs can help to increase interest in future events.
- **Make sure they have insurance** – If something happens to your photographer or their equipment during your event while they are at your conference, you do not want to be held liable.
- **Create the right budget** – Photography is one area where choosing the least expensive option can really cost you. After you’ve poured countless hours of work into your event, make sure the photographer is capable of capturing the important moments. This is especially important if photos from an event will be used in corporate marketing efforts.



Q&A WITH A PROFESSIONAL: ZEV GREENFIELD

WHY HIRE A PHOTOGRAPHER FOR AN EVENT?

Events require large investments of both money and time. Recording your events allows you to get the most out of it and creates assets for publicity, social media, thank-you's as well as being able to show previous events in order to sell future events. The most important thing is you have someone you have confidence in and that you feel comfort with. They shouldn't dominate your event or create the pictures.

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WHY INVEST IN VIDEO?

Video is often a second thought, however, people should consider using a videographer for any event where there's a speech involved or a message being given to people. While it's easier to upload and share pictures and videos, video captures words, emotion, movement and sound in a way that photography simply cannot. It takes skill and expertise to tell an event story. It's easy to shoot images but to tell it in such a way where there's a thought process, beginning to end, and also convey a message, that takes talent and experience.

HOW CAN GOOD PLANNING ENHANCE EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY?

Plan how and when you'll use your event photos before the event. People often want photographs and video immediately. Go in knowing the timing you'll need post-event and be clear about this schedule with the photographer.

ZEV GREENFIELD

Co-Founder – Milk & Honey Productions

Zev has been an event photographer and videographer for over 20 years and sees himself as an artist first that brings his talents to photography. Milk & Honey combines a unique story-telling focus and cinematic style to capture important moments for their clients.

Clients include: HBO and the BBC.



EVENT FURNISHINGS

Event furniture can contribute significantly to the feeling and flow of an event and completely transform a venue. Using a variety of unique and comfortable pieces will impress your guests and allow them to circulate effortlessly through the event experience. Rhonda Cosaluzzo of AFR Event Furnishings fills us in on the latest in event furnishings and ways to be creative when planning for your next event.

CONSIDER THIS BEFORE FURNISHING YOUR EVENT:

- **Know your audience** – The goal is to create an event that is talk worthy and exciting. Whether it's color and layouts or classic furnishing, there's not a one-size fits all for every situation. Know your audience and you'll know how to design your event for furnishing.
- **Seating centered around the goals of your guest** – Before you decorate and design your event, know what you want your audience to do. Maybe they will be listening to speakers without much time for socializing. Maybe there will be time for networking and socializing before speakers. Or maybe you do not have presentations. All of these situations should factor into your decision of how to arrange the furnishings.
- **Save money by spending it on something expensive** – Take the "centerpiece" concept and apply it to the room. Instead of using 20 floral arrangements at \$50 per table, sink all the money into one dramatic floral arrangement in the center of the room. People will not notice that you have scaled back on the tabletop pieces, but rather the extravagant piece in the center of the room could be a conversation starter.
- **Consider Casual Furniture** – A lot of today's corporate companies have become more casual, meaning, the look of their offices, the dress codes and even the language spoken amongst colleagues and clients. Depending on who the event is for, a casual ambience could work well for many events by using cocktail tables, sofas and ottomans, rather than traditional upholstered chairs. Even social events have become more casual by not providing formal seating for birthday parties and Bar/Bat Mitzvahs. Instead, a lot of these parties are standing cocktail receptions with room for interactive activities.



Q&A WITH A PROFESSIONAL: RHONDA COSALUZZO

MOST UNCONVENTIONAL USE OF FURNITURE?

With one of our tradeshow booths, we turned cocktail and end tables on their side and stacked them to make a beautiful backdrop. We stacked sofas to make an entrance to the booth. You always have to think outside the box in the event industry. We're always experimenting in our warehouse. We all put our heads together and figure out what works. Some of our experiments have resulted in a few broken pieces but it's worth it to try new things.



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WHAT CHANGE ARE YOU CURRENTLY SEEING IN EVENT FURNISHINGS?

Many of today's top companies like Google and AOL have gotten away from the traditional chairs and have gotten into sofas and little ottomans where people can put their feet up. The day of sitting in a conference chair is over. Companies are now focusing on creating a welcoming, social atmosphere at their events. It's a much more casual atmosphere, with corporate and social events alike.

HOW CAN CLIENTS SAVE MONEY ON FURNISHINGS WITHOUT SACRIFICING THE QUALITY OF THEIR EVENT?

I'm always working within some type of budget. I think incorporating ottomans instead of a sofa is great. You're sitting the same amount of people, but one option is more cost effective. It's also a good approach to mix and match pieces. For example, if you're creating a social area, consider using some higher-end pieces and other more cost-effective pieces.

RHONDA COSALUZZO

Rental Consultant – AFR Event Furnishings

Rhonda helped start AFR's event furnishing business in the NYC market 7 years ago and has worked on events across the country, sourcing furniture from AFR's nationwide network from Miami to Dallas to Chicago to New York.



LIGHTNING ROUND

WHAT'S THE ONE THING EVERY EVENT NEEDS?

Brian Rosenbaum – A Coordinator. Someone who's good at coordinating to make sure the event is successful and going in the right direction.

Jessica Alton – When you plan an event, you're designing an experience for people. It's really a combination of elements that make an event 'great'. It is the surprises and the personal touches in terms of food or entertainment that set an event apart. The setting (lighting and music), the orchestrated flow, professional and friendly service, and thoughtful menu are all the elements that come into play not to mention the right mix of guests along with an engaging host. Lastly, some cocktails never hurt!

Lindsay Landman – A strategy. I always want people to take a step back and establish their goals - when the party is done what do you want to accomplish? If you can only have one thing, what is it? If money were no object, what would this party look like? People are often limited by money even when they don't even know what things cost.

Peter Zalezsak – Three elements of organization: coordination, communication and a plan. This should detail how the event is going to come together before during and after the event and should include all the parties working on the event from the planner to the event marketing team to the signage designer and printer to the day-of staff.

Rhonda Cosaluzzo – Every event needs a production person or event planner.

Zev Greenfield – Lighting. You can take a room and put a thousand roses in it and you'll have a room with beautiful flowers. You can take a room and light it beautifully and take one rose and you will make much bigger impression.

ABOUT US

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HELEN MILLS is one of New York City's most unique venues, featuring a spectacular street-level Event Space and an adjoining 140-seat Theater & Screening Room. Each space offers state-of-the-art sound and digital-video projection systems, high-speed, wireless Internet, a dedicated A/V technician, and catering packages to suit your needs. The staff is committed to excellence and providing flawless service, before, during, and after your event.

We were established in 2005 by real estate entrepreneur and arts patron Helen Mills, who has a passion for creating beautiful spaces with the idea of bringing people together, whether in business, celebration or for the arts.

We pride ourselves on hosting events that take many forms for clients from the corporate, non-profit, social, and arts worlds. Our years of experience have made us experts in anticipating their needs. We are committed to excellence, integrity, ingenuity, and teamwork to make our clients' events the best they can be.