



## Chapter Event Planning Essentials

### Overview - Things to remember

- The type and number of events will vary from chapter to chapter depending on the size of the chapter and the interest of the alumni. There is no magic formula for the number of events to host in a year.
- Your alumni come from diverse backgrounds and have varied interests. Host a diverse calendar of events that will appeal to various interests. Don't make one event the catchall – one event can't appeal to everyone!
- Take advantage of what your community has to offer and what makes your community unique. You don't have to plan all events from scratch – piggyback on events already occurring.

### Best practices – tips for success

- Survey your members to find out what types of events appeal to them.
- Select the date well in advance and start promoting the event early and often.
- Offer unique events – something they can't do on their own.
- Keep the event cost reasonable. A relatively high price will prevent alumni, especially young alumni, from attending.
- Silent auctions generally work better than live auctions. If you do decide to have a live auction, limit the number of items to 3 or 4.
- Keep your program as brief as possible. An hour-long program with your guest speaker or other activities plus an hour for dinner is generally long enough. Don't try to accomplish everything in one event! Your attendees will become restless with a long, drawn out event.
  - If you can't say it in an hour, put it in the program. This is a good place to include annual chapter re-caps.
- You can never have enough help! Make sure to have a committee of volunteers to help with the planning and promotion. And make sure to have enough volunteers on hand at the event.
- Designate chapter volunteers to serve as greeters at the event – this makes everyone attending feel welcomed.
- Have music at the event, it livens things up. This can be as simple as background music during the registration time.



### 3 keys to event programming

#### *Questions to ask yourself when choosing an event*

- Selecting an event
  - Consider the following when deciding to host an event:
    - Event Objective
      - What is the objective of the event? Is it social, networking, family friendly, volunteering in the community or a combination?
    - Target Audience
      - Who is your target audience? Who do you want to attend this event? Who has attended similar past events?
      - Will this event attract new participants
    - Past events
      - What events were successful in the past? What do you think made them successful?
- Selecting a date
  - Consider the following when choosing your date
    - Conflicts with other events in your area or holidays
    - Location availability
      - Are you flexible on the location or is it important to the success of the event?
    - Time of the event
      - In a big city, does the start time leave enough time for alums to arrive after work?
    - Lead time
      - Is there enough time to successfully promote your event?
- Selecting a location
  - Consider the following when choosing your location
    - Centrally located venues are ideal
      - Survey your alumni to find out which area of town works best for them
      - Will the venue be hard to get to at that time of day?
    - Unique locations will draw people to your event
      - Alumni will attend an event if it's at a venue that they don't usually have access to.
    - All costs involved
      - Rental fees, catering, equipment rentals, parking fees, etc
      - Does hosting the event there justify the cost you will need to charge to cover the expenses?
    - Set up of the facility
      - Is the room large enough to accommodate your expected number of attendees?
      - Is the room too large? Events that are held in venues that are too large tend to seem emptier than they are.
      - If it's outside, is there an alternative rain plan?
    - Parking
      - Is it easy and accessible?



## Communicating the Event

### Promoting the event – how to get them there

- Promotion is essential to the success of an event – if they don't know, they won't come!
- Ways of promoting your event
  - Website
    - Update your website with any new, upcoming events. Make sure to include all pertinent information – date, location, time, cost, if applicable.
    - Don't just include the basics – make the event sound fun!
    - Update your website with write ups and photos from past events – this showcases your successes and speaks to those alums who have not attended events in the past.
  - Emails
    - Texas Exes will email event notices for chapters on a weekly basis.
    - If you are trying to promote a large event, send that event out in a stand-alone email, rather than part of an email newsletter.
    - Emails can be segmented by demographic information. We can send emails out based on graduation year, for example. This allows you to customize your message.
    - It's always a good idea to send a reminder email (“Know Before You Go”) a day or two days before the event.
  - Paper mailings
    - Invitations for events should be in mailboxes at least 3 weeks prior to the event
    - Send all paper mailing requests to the Texas Exes 3 weeks prior to your target mail date – this will ensure they hit mailboxes in plenty of time.
    - Standard mailings are either a postcard or a tri-folded letter size self mailer. We can help design the mailing to suit the event.
  - Local papers or magazines
    - Advertise your event in the local media. Lots of local newspapers and magazines have calendar listings of local events. Generally, those listings are free or carry a nominal fee.
    - If it's a larger event, consider purchasing an ad in the local paper or magazine. This will help attract alumni that are new to the group.

### To make your communications most effective make sure to include the following:

- Name of event
- Description of event
- Time of event
- Location of event
- RSVP deadline
- Cost per person
- Event details – dinner, cash bar, etc.
- Parking information
- Information on attire
- Contact information for questions
- Information on speaker, if applicable



## Event Expectations, Guidelines, and Resources

- Expectations
  - Chapter events cannot take place during Association events in order to ensure Longhorn coordination and cohesiveness as opposed to competition. Events include: tailgate parties, happy hours, serious minded content events, etc.
- Guidelines
  - Only use insured, licensed and bonded bartenders to serve alcohol during chapter events.
  - For tax deductibility reasons, the fair market value of the ticket must be stated on the invitation.
    - The fair market value is what the individual would normally pay for the food, goods, and/or services.
    - Example: if a restaurant would charge \$25 normally for the meal being served, then \$25 is the fair market value.
    - This amount does not necessarily have a direct relationship to the amount the chapter is paying for the food, goods and/or services being provided.
  - Raffles
    - Chapters are limited to charitable giving raffle laws depending on their own state
    - The raffle prize cannot be cash.
- How we can help
  - Provide mailings based on your chapter category
  - Provide weekly email updates to both members and non-members (number of emails determined by chapter category)
  - Chapters are covered under the Texas Exes liability insurance. If you need proof of insurance, please request it through Texas Exes.
  - Provide nametags
  - Banners
    - Groups can order banners through the Texas Exes.
    - Send requests to Texas Exes.
    - The chapter/network is responsible for the cost.
      - A standard 2 x 4 banner runs approximately \$50.
  - Serve as a sounding board for chapter ideas and a resource to help insure the success of the event.