

# *Unforgettable*

*7 critical elements  
to running  
a world class event*



*blue planet · entertainment*

# Unforgettable

Imagine, it's the end of your event. You look back and sigh, that sigh of satisfaction. Wow, it was great!! All too often it's another story! This book will give you the 7 critical elements to running a world class event.

When you are planning an event then it's likely you want it to be great, to be remarkable, to be truly unforgettable!

Events create one of three emotional responses, that feeling among the guests about the experience they had

1. They talk about how horrible the event was, the poor choice of music, the food not being up to scratch, the lack of atmosphere. There is a lot of discussion during and post the event and it's all bad and people are making a note never to do that again.
2. **They Feel** the event was bland and boring. It didn't offend but it certainly didn't inspire, as result there is little discussion about the event and it is quickly forgotten.
3. **All** the guests are buzzing about the experience and the wonderful vibe the event had. People have had a lot of fun, and everything just worked, everyone wants to know when it will be happening again.

As a guest at functions, **haven't we experienced** all three of these emotional responses at some stage. But if you cast your mind back it's likely you are far more familiar with the first two responses than the third.

The question is WHY. Why do so many events fall into the bland, average, nothing special category, often despite the event organisers spending a great deal of time, energy and money in an attempt to create something special. Or worse create an event people disliked so much they actively talk about how bad it was.

The professional event organisers understand that the success of an event isn't dependant on just one or two things working right, but the seamless integration of a handful of critical elements and hundreds of smaller pieces that add up to an unforgettable event. As Jan Carlson suggested in his bestselling book of the same title it's all about "Moments of Truth". Drop the ball in one or two areas and your event can move quickly from being an **unforgettable success to a long remembered disaster**.



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In this eBook I outline 7 of the most critical elements to consider when planning your next event. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list, but rather a solid platform from which to operate. **If you make sure you have these 7 keys in place then you will have taken a big step towards creating that unforgettable world class event that people will remember for years to come.**

You may think at first glance that some of the keys to success seem obvious or too basic for people to get wrong. But believe me, over my thirty years in this industry I have lost count of how many times I have seen people get each and every one of these things wrong. Sometimes it's the simplest things that are most important and they are also often the most overlooked.

I wrote this book because I love helping my clients create and run incredible events. I know the power and impact a great event can have on people. I also know how truly devastating it can be for an individual, family or company when things go wrong. So it is my sincere hope that you will find this eBook of great value to you in the planning phase of your next event and that by applying what you learn here you will be able to create the UNFORGETTABLE event you hope to.

Best wishes for a great event,

Graham Owens  
Director of Blue Planet Entertainment



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## 1. The Right Date

Creating unforgettable event begins with choosing the right date for your event. If you are planning your event to happen during a peak event period on the event calendar, then you will need to allow longer lead in times when considering things such as; availability of venue, entertainment, production and themeing. It can become extremely stressful if you first pick a date and then begin making your plans only to discover the venue you want is booked, or the band you love is already committed to another event. I have had many clients come to me with a short timeline in place and then get disappointed when they learn the venue or entertainment they had their heart set on was unavailable. During peak times the top venues and entertainers are booked months and sometimes years ahead, so if you are having an event in a peak period make sure you plan well ahead.

Here is a short list of date related issues I have seen derail people's events!

- The CEO was not available on the day of the event but no one bothered to check that first.
- Couldn't find a suitable venue for a Christmas Party because it's Festive Season and everything was already booked on that night (December is a very busy time)
- Forgot it was Footy Finals at that time
- Clashed with the Melbourne Cup long weekend
- Grand Prix was on causing huge traffic issue for the people getting to the event
- End Financial Year and people were too busy to come
- Weather – planning an outdoor event and not having an effective wet weather plan in place
- Booked a beachfront venue in Summer and guests couldn't find anywhere to park
- School holidays were on and many people were away on holiday

At Blue Planet Entertainment we have successfully negotiated last minute venue changes for major clients (1200 guests) only weeks out from the function date. This is not an ideal situation to be confronted with, but we got it done!

## 2. The Right Venue

When choosing a venue you need to be across a whole range of variables. You may also need to do a little juggling in the early stages of this process with the date and the entertainment you want. When you have done some research and it's time to go and inspect the venues, it's a really good idea to do the viewing during the same time frame as you are running the event. i.e. if your event is in the evening you should see the venue after dark to see what it will look like before you start adding production and themeing that just might not work. While you're at the venue ask if the lighting has dimmers? During certain parts of the function some venues won't allow the inhouse lighting to be dimmed for OH&S reasons. Not a problem unless you have planned and paid for an amazing light spectacular or a stage



show during dinner. Are there noise restrictions? Some venues have noise meters that can shut down the P.A System and stage equipment mid song, very frustrating for everyone and can lead to serious equipment damage.

- Availability - as already mentioned in the 1st point; the date can have a huge impact here. Look at the time of year you are planning for, see what's out there. We have a specialist venue finding service if required
- Size - it is crucial to know at least your approximate numbers to make sure you don't book the wrong room or just the wrong venue. For instance, if you are looking at seating over a thousand guests there are only a handful venues to consider
- Proximity - Don't make the venue hard to get to for the bulk of the guests. One of our bigger clients hire buses to ferry people from the business premises
- Parking - also often overlooked. You don't want your guests walking for miles from where they park and not being able to hit the dancefloor because their feet are already sore. A lot of venues don't have sufficient onsite parking and public transport is often inaccessible or inappropriate
- Access - make sure the venue is aware how much time you and your production team need for setup and they don't book the room out for a day function. If they do, you need written into your contract what time you have access. This is not the sort of news you need 3 weeks out from the event date. There's nothing worse than having the room still being set and sound checks etc...going on when guests are arriving
- Catering - If your venue is looking after catering, do they have enough well trained staff to keep drinks and food service on time? You can do a bit of research to find out what kind of record the venue has in this area. An experienced event planner will help make sure things stay on track.

Some venues offer tastings and as long as you have the same chef looking after the tasting and function, you get a pretty good idea of what to expect on the night. Are you going for a theme? Make sure the venue is equipped to look after any special Dietary Requirements etc...

- Security - What kind of numbers are looking after the security on the night  
Some venues are part of much bigger complexes and offer quite a lot of areas where you guests can make an 'early start' or 'kick on' after your function concludes. You would like to know your patrons are safe in the establishment you choose. We use security firms we know, and trust are going to look after our clients
- TOD or Tech on Duty Fees - Venues often have their own inhouse A/V suppliers and this fee is more about blocking outside companies from working in the venue. The TOD can come at a substantial cost to the client and is not something you want to find out after you sign up and pay the deposit

There are literally hundreds of venues in and around Melbourne Metro and Victoria in general, We are able to recommend a few that would fit your brief and budget. We can also alert you to some of the pitfalls and hidden fees associated with some of them. This alone can save a huge amount of time! As mentioned earlier. It's a good idea to talk to us before you sign on the dotted line and pay the deposit!!



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### 3. The Right Budget

I'm sure you've heard it all before, you run your own business, work in sales or budget for the family. You don't go to the supermarket and fill the trolley when you have \$50 in your wallet and then start putting things back. Not knowing your budgetary constraints will make things very difficult to get over the first hurdle let alone the finish line. Start with the end in mind, and remember, Unforgettable doesn't have to cost millions, we are dealing with emotions!!

Know your budget!!

And here is a list of the usual suspects

- Venue research: you must be looking for the right sized venue in the right price range to fit your budget. As mentioned we do have a venue finding service to help research
- Entertainment: it's not much use trying to get a 10 piece band if you only have the budget for a trio. We have access to some great duo's and trios that won't break the budget. On the other hand we are able to negotiate great prices from 'Top of the Range' big bands and major recording artists
- Catering - most venues offer tastings. Definitely take advantage of this and make sure you have the same chef looking after the tasting and the function
- A/V and Themeing - Check out No.6 'The Right Production' regarding A/V
- Your whole event can be themed!! i.e. Austin Powers, James Bond, Masquerade, 1920's-Cabaret, Gangsters, Christmas in July, Colour Theme, Movie Theme, Music, Sports, Circus, Fancy dress and many, many more.
- Deposits - Remember upfront funding may be required to start printing place cards, invitations, or tickets and place deposits on venues, entertainers and suppliers in general. Not getting deposits in on time can often lead to big disappointment in the long term. I have seen 1st hand where a company was holding off until the end of the month on the final sign up and deposit for the entertainment they wanted and the act got a 'too good to refuse' offer elsewhere.



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As event managers, we have long standing relationships and valuable partner programs in place with a myriad of performers, venues, production companies and all manner of suppliers you may not have been aware existed. This puts us in a great place to negotiate when going into bat for you!!

## 4. The Right Entertainment

This is a really important element of your function to get right. A few things to take into account here are: Do you want a band?

16 piece, 10 piece, 5 piece, Jazz, Blues, Latin or maybe a Trio or Duo. There really are a lot of options

If you are thinking about a band, Blue Planet Entertainment take your brief and access the best entertainers to suite your demographic and budget

We have seen cases before where the person booking on behalf of a company liked a certain style of music and demanded that the band play that style. She let go a little after realizing that she and her partner were the only 2 on the dance floor!! Lucky we had great musicians on the job that knew exactly what the rest of the guests wanted. Everyone went home happy (a #3 moment). Much better outcome getting the pat on the back from your CEO or your event team, for organising great entertainment that fitted into the budget and had the dance floor full all night!!

- Insurance - Make sure your Entertainment has suitable Public Liability Insurance
- Costing - Back to budget
- Songlists - Check out the band songlist, make sure you know what they are going to play at you function. You won't need to decide every song but it is important you understand the bands general style
- Production - This is all relative to the size of the venue and guest numbers. Once again, make sure of Public Liability Insurance (certificate of currency) and all gear is appropriately tested and tagged
- Live footage - Make sure what you see and hear is 'LIVE'. Where possible, try and see the act before you book them. We offer a satisfaction guarantee on our acts so you can rest easy on this point

Do you want a D.J.?

Not really appropriate to put a club D.J into a function for the over 50's or vice versa to have an older D.j playing 60's rock songs in a club environment



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Talk to us about your event budget, the location and the demographics of your guests. With over 30 years direct involvement in the entertainment industry, we will help you design your function with our guaranteed entertainment solutions! You will have access to the best entertainers available including D.J.'s, Cover Bands, The biggest and best Recording Artists, Corporate Showbands, Circus Performers, Roving entertainers, Wedding Music, Speakers, Comedians, Magicians and more....Let's make it a memorable event for all the right reasons!!

*Hi Graham*

*Well what can I can I say but just a huge personal thanks. I am receiving great comments from everyone around the entertainment for both bands. Everyone did such a fantastic job to ensure the night was a success right from yourself and your production crew through to the bands you accessed. Can you please thank them all for me.I am sure that having held this one it might become a bit of an annual event and I would love to work with you again.*

*Noreen Booth*

*Stramit Building Products*

At Blue Planet all of our entertainers are proven professionals who always deliver. In fact, we are so confident that you will be absolutely delighted with the entertainment you choose that we offer you an exclusive satisfaction guarantee.



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## 5. The Right Experience

Let's go back to my intro on Page 1 – just in case you missed it!!

What is the experience you are looking for?

*The reality is every event creates an emotional response, a feeling among the guests about the experience they had and that usually results in one of three responses. We read about the responses and all chose #3 (of course) where the guests are buzzing about the experience and the wonderful vibe the event had. People have had a lot of fun, everything just worked and everyone wants to know when it will be happening again.*

The experience covers all facets of the function from the moment you enter the venue, the room reveal, the sound, the lights, the temperature, the food etc... Whether you are using the most contemporary ballroom, the old church hall, the School Gym or a marquee, your event space can be transformed into an almost magical setting that will have your guests feeling full of anticipation, excitement, enthusiasm or a combination of all of these! There are a variety of mediums accessible to achieve the perfect look and feel and create the desired ambiance. Everything from State of the Art intelligent lighting, décor, video presentations, entertainment and of course the food and beverage.

*'As professional event organisers we understand that the success of an event isn't dependant on just one or two things working right, but the seamless integration of a handful of critical elements and hundreds of smaller pieces that add up to an unforgettable event. As Jan Carlson suggested in his bestselling book of the same title it's all about "Moments of Truth". Drop the ball in one or two areas and your event can move quickly from being a huge success to a disaster'*

Hopefully repeating that paragraph relays its importance in the scheme of things!!

Of course a lot of what you do is set up around the style of event you wish to create. A stylish dinner, cocktail party, dinner dance, or a themed event or the possible intergration of more than one of these. Some themes we have covered over the journey: Austin Powers, James Bond, Masquerade, 1920's Cabaret, Gangsters, Christmas in July, Colour Theme, Movie Theme, Music, Sports, Fancy dress and many, many more.

Once again, work with your event manager on this area. He or she has very likely done something a bit similar to your brief before or maybe let them use their creative flair to assist you to produce an amazing new concept for your event!



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## 6. The Right Production

The production includes most of the elements you need to create that perfect atmosphere and ambience. This is a really important area for us, almost the backbone of the event. We like to work with a regular team rather than the big inhouse A/V companies. This way we know exactly who is doing what and aren't dealing with who happens to be on the roster that night!!

A bit of a checklist - make sure you check for a clean power source before you plug in as much as a toaster!!

- When sourcing power for all your electrical equipment, it is wise to check that the power outlets are safe and correctly wired. For your standard power points there are many simple devices that light up red or green to let you know if socket is safe.  
When it comes to pro audio, greater levels of power are required. This is generally sourced from three phase power.  
To distribute power to all the different types of equipment used in an audio system, and lighting rig we need to use a power distribution (dizzy) board or unit. This plugs into a three phase socket and distributes power to multiple standard power points. A good unit will have light indicators to let you know if power is safe or if there is a fault with the earth or the neutral.  
I was at a huge gig to see one of Australia's greatest rock acts. As soon as the faders went up 200 lights went bang - certainly wished they had checked the power more thoroughly that day!
- P.A System / Lectern  
The P.A system can be a couple of self powered speakers on poles, a mixer and a microphone if they are just required for a speech or a D.J in a small room for 80 guests or less. On the other hand you may be running events for hundreds or thousands when it becomes really important to know exactly what it is you need. For the average person a quote from a production co. may as well be written in another language and can be a very expensive exercise!
- Lighting: Dancefloor Lighting/Table lighting (Pinspots) Lectern Light, Stage Wash  
Again, make sure you view the venue in the night time to be sure of what it is you need to gain the desired ambience
- Stage: Some venues don't have a stage and you won't realize you need one until you come to book the entertainment
- Dance floor: Relative to guest numbers
- Insurance: make sure suppliers have the relevant certificate of currency
- OH&S: the venue will in most cases give you access to the necessary guidelines or forms required to complete
- Testing & Tagging is required in most venues for all electronic equipment being brought on to the site



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## 7. The Right Event management

Why do we need to employ a specialist event manager when we have very capable staff that can certainly make a few phone calls to book the things we need for our event??

In the long run, delegating a team or an individual outside your ranks to take care of all the areas discussed in headings 1 to 6 will definitely relieve a lot of stress otherwise given to an individual in your organization that (unless specifically working in an events role) has little or none of the skill sets required to run or organise an event and leaves your staff to focus on the job you hired them to do.

As event managers we have long standing relationships and valuable partner programs in place with a myriad of performers, venues, production companies and all manner of suppliers you may not have been aware existed. This generally puts us in a much better place to negotiate better deals for you.

Our Guaranteed Event Management system begins with a thorough planning process that begins with the initial meeting. The brief from this meeting enables us to develop a clear vision of your goals and objectives. We like to meet on a pretty regular basis where possible to make sure we are all on the same page and don't lose sight of the objectives set up in these early meetings. During this process we will focus on putting in place the Running Sheet/Event Order/Checklist: Event managers will guide you through this very important part of the process leading up to the event and give you options on where and when things are placed throughout the course of the event by coordinating:

- Supplier Bump in and out times
- Staff Briefing
- Sound Checks
- Guest arrivals, Doors open
- Seating Plans
- Catering Schedule, Speech times
- Entertainment Schedule etc...

This often changes as the process rolls along but on the night it will be the map we follow to make sure everything runs smoothly and is stress free for you, the Client!

The event order will also contain other important details

- Emergency contacts
- Film Crew/Photographer
- Tech Support
- Entertainers
- Key Staff at the Venue etc...



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A few things to look for when engaging an event management Company!

- Are you going to be in direct communication with the organiser
- Is the person you will deal with via email and speak with on the phone for weeks and sometimes months prior to the event going to be there on the night,
- Are you dealing with the decision maker or the 'Gatekeeper'
- Make sure you are very clear on who is 'responsible'; one person overseeing the entire operation is a good outcome. That person will know who is operating all the different elements of the function to ensure a smooth ride

Whether organizing a company Christmas Party, Conference, Corporate Awards Night, Fund-raiser, Product Launch or Promotion, a Wedding or just a Party!

Our mission at Blue Planet Entertainment is to provide you with a one stop solution for your entertainment and event requirements

We guarantee to make your event unforgettable for all the right reasons!!



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