

CONFESSIONS OF A CHICAGO CATERER

ILLINOIS MEETINGS & EVENTS

AWARD- WINNING EVENTS!

25 CROWD-PLEASING
IDEAS THAT DAZZLED
THE ISES JUDGES

+ 40
Steps to
a Perfect
Holiday
Soirée!
(page 36)



Industry
Forecast

TOP TIPS, TRENDS
AND TACTICS FOR '05

Extreme
Makeovers

ILLINOIS VENUES SPEND
MILLIONS TO ATTRACT
MEETING PLANNERS

Plus...

55 Money-Saving Tips
FISCALLY FIT EVENTS



MUSICAL NOTES

* LIVE MUSIC OR DISC JOCKEY? FIVE PROS IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY OFFER THEIR WORDS OF WISDOM WHEN HIRING MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE BIG BASH.

Jan Schunk,
Carmel Music and Entertainment

When choosing entertainment for an event, it's important to know what the client is expecting from the music. If the event is a cocktail reception with dinner, background music such as jazz, classical or flamenco is a wonderful choice for almost any size group.

When dancing is the main thrust of the evening and the budget allows, a dynamic variety dance band can deliver the energy and personality that only live musicians can provide.

Prior to making recommendations, agents need as much information as possible about the party, audience, location, expectations and budget. Once those key facts are identified you can make musical suggestions customized to suit specific needs—sometimes it's a band and other times it's a deejay.

Kathy L. Miller,
Total Event Resources

This past year we organized a holiday event for 3,000 attendees and successfully had both a band and deejay. Having both gives you the complete flexibility needed for a diverse age group and traditionally gets more people out on the dance floor throughout the event. If budget is more of an issue, hire a disc jockey. The right deejay will play all varieties of music and many have become much more diverse in their offerings. They can become “interactive entertainment” if requested of them. Call an entertainment producer who can assess the objectives for your event and has the relationships and resources to find the best entertainment fit for your company.



IF THE EVENT IS A COCKTAIL RECEPTION WITH DINNER, BACKGROUND MUSIC SUCH AS JAZZ, CLASSICAL OR FLAMENCO IS A WONDERFUL CHOICE FOR ALMOST ANY SIZE GROUP.

—Jan Schunk, Carmel Music and Entertainment

VENUES

When booking the venue, remember these tips from pros in the hospitality industry: Susan Schoen, special events account manager at [THE FIELD MUSEUM](#); Susan Ellefson, director of public relations at [THE PENINSULA CHICAGO](#); Barbara Siska, director of special events and tourism at [THE NOTEBAERT NATURE MUSEUM](#); Lisa Trumbull, events director at [DUFFY'S TAVERN](#); and Amber Seligman, an event planner at [NORTH BEACH CHICAGO](#).

>>> Venues can negotiate a better rate for your group if you book your event on a non-peak evening, such as Sunday through Wednesday. Contact the venue and ask if they would be willing to offer a discount if you are flexible with your timing.

>>> If you are planning an event at a cultural institution, work with a theme that is enhanced by the beauty and offerings of the building.

>>> Some cultural institutions may offer pre-packaged events such as a unique breakfast experience or drinks at an after-hour cocktail reception and exhibition viewing. These packages may be a more cost-effective, lower maintenance way to host an event in a unique venue.

>>> Many hotels provide valuable meeting package incentives several times a year and will put the offer on their Web site or provide the information when you call directly.

>>> Look for hotels that provide complimentary 800 phone calls, use of the fitness center and wireless access throughout, which all add to the total value of your chosen location.

>>> Plan your event in January, February, March or April. Museums, hotels and other specialty venues offer seasonal discounts on events booked during these winter/early spring months.

>>> Whether it is for a large or a small event, plan at least two to three months (if not a year) in advance for the best prices and selection of locations.

>>> Look for a venue that can provide everything from food to entertainment, saving on extra deliveries and services.

>>> Plan for your group. Choose a location or activity that you know the whole crew will enjoy, or you may not get a turnout worth the preparation.

>>> Be sure to confirm the number of attendees with the number of guests for which you have made reservations. If fewer people show, the venue may still charge you for the original estimate.

*Reprinted with permission by
Illinois Meetings & Events. ©2005*

EVENT MANAGEMENT COMPANIES

If you'd rather turn the entire production over to an event management company, these individuals prove their ideas can save you time and money: Kathy L. Miller, president of [TOTAL EVENT RESOURCES](#); Jennifer Anderson, president of [JENNIFER ANDERSON AND ASSOCIATES](#); Robin O'Neil, director of consolidation initiatives at [PROACTIVE INC.](#); Bobbie Soeder, explorer-matchmaker at [CATALYST RANCH](#); and Ben Meyer, executive producer, and Charles Gebeck, executive producer at [ADVANCE EVENT GROUP INC.](#)

>>> An aircraft hangar is a low-cost location that could add punch to a themed event, while saving on design enhancements.

>>> Use one stage set design for many different events by simply changing the lights and adding small props for a completely different look.

>>> Choosing an experienced event planner will save you time. Well-known planners also have good connections that may provide discounts when acquiring products and services.

>>> Provide a seated dinner service instead of a buffet. It is less expensive to provide exactly the amount of food you will need rather than estimate to fill a large buffet.

>>> Ask your venue if they provide complimentary coffee service, snacks or anything else that you may require for your event.

5 EXTRA TIPS: Improve Your Event Planning Skills

1 Take a training course from [MEETING PLANNING BOOT CAMP™](#) and become a savvy event planner in just two days. Visit www.mpbootcamp.com.

2 Attend as many events as you can to absorb the atmosphere from a guest's perspective and generate planning ideas.

3 Pick up a complimentary copy of the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau's Meeting Planner's Guide at www.chicago.il.org.

4 When you attend events, take note of the decorations, caterer and other details that have been planned out for the particular occasion. Decide what you like and dislike for your own future events.

5 Print out the essential event budget planner to keep you on track at www.thegreatevent.com.