

An Introduction to hosting an event: Tips to avoid analysis paralysis and an event checklist that can assist with your planning



CONCORDIA PLANS



Fellowship and gatherings are an integral part of our LCMS community, but who does the planning, coordinating, and execution of these events? Many times this falls to volunteers or church workers who may not have much experience with planning events. This can feel intimidating or overwhelming because we feel pressure to do a good job. Whether you are hosting for four or 400, planning an event has the same basic steps.

HOW TO GET STARTED

The most common obstacle for a host or event planner is called analysis paralysis. Analysis paralysis is when a person overthinks the pros and cons of each choice that must be made and is so overwhelmed by all the possibilities that a decision can never be reached. The best way to overcome analysis paralysis is by limiting your choices to these three options:

1. most cost-effective,
2. best quality, and
3. a "wild card."

For example, imagine you need to hire a caterer for an upcoming fundraiser. Start by searching the internet for caterers in your area and identify three to six with good reviews. To narrow these down, choose the following:

1. One that costs the least amount
2. One that is the best quality
3. One that you think would be unexpected by your guests and has a "wow" factor

Once you narrow the possibilities to these three choices, decide which value is most important for this event. Are you most concerned about cost, quality, or an unexpected or exciting element? After you choose, be confident in that choice, and do not continue to look for different options. Usually our first instinct is correct, and it is best to trust that decision.

Another key to avoiding analysis paralysis is to start planning as soon as you can. A shorter timeframe forces you to make quicker decisions. Putting off planning can lead to decreased availability of your preferred vendors. It can also add cost in the form of rush fees for materials.

No matter the size, the following checklist can help you think through the details to ensure a smooth and enjoyable event.



ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:

- Why are we gathering? This will help you decide among cost-effective, high-quality, or wild-card options.
- What kind of event are we having? Is this a small get together, a luncheon, a large fundraiser, etc.?
- How many guests will there be? An estimate is fine to start with, but the more accurate the better!
- When will the event happen? The time of year and day are important factors to consider, such as if the event can be held outside and if there are other events or holidays near your planned date.
- Where will it happen? The venue is heavily influenced by how many guests you are expecting. The ideal travel time to an event location is no more than 30 minutes for most of your guests.



UNDERSTAND YOUR BUDGET:

If you can utilize volunteers, donated food, or a free space, that frees up funds to use in other areas. It is wise to build in a 10% overage in case there are any changes in plan, or something is more costly than you anticipated. Unexpected tax can also fall into this category. Here's a good rule of thumb to help you allocate your total budget dollars across the various aspects of your event:

- Food/beverage (25%):
- Venue (20%):
- Rental of tables, chairs, china (15%):
- Entertainment (15%):
- Décor (10%):
- Overage (10%):
- Printed materials such as menus, programs, and signage (5%):



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- Parking: assume 1 ½ cars per family or group
- Safety: easily accessible and identifiable exits as well as an emergency plan should be shared with key individual(s)
- General food guidelines per guest:
 - > Protein: ½ pound
 - > Carbohydrates: 1 cup
 - > Vegetables: 1 cup
 - > Appetizers: 3-5 pieces
 - > Dessert: 1 portion
- General beverage guidelines per guest:
 - > Water: 5 cups
 - > Non-alcoholic beverages: 2 per guest for each hour of the event
 - > Alcoholic beverages: 1 per guest for each hour of the event
 - > A licensed bartender can be a helpful resource for attending to guests, ensuring proper service and taking on the liability of serving alcohol

Remember, avoid analysis paralysis by limiting choices and sticking with your choice once it's made. Be mindful of and work within your budget and make sure you ask others for help when you need it. With these general guidelines and a solid plan, you can make your event an enjoyable experience for all!

Morgan Schildt is the Office Manager for Concordia Plans, specializing in company event management both on- and off-site as well as office logistics. Prior to joining Concordia Plans, Morgan worked in the hospitality industry for over a decade, gaining a wealth of knowledge in event planning, catering, and fine dining service. Morgan has a passion for detail and helping others accomplish what they envision.





QUESTIONS?

CALL 888-927-7526 **EMAIL** info@ConcordiaPlans.org

1333 South Kirkwood Road • St. Louis, MO 63122