



Fundraising Resources

Special Events

The biggest thing to remember about special events is that they are almost always very labor-intensive, and to do them right they are expensive to carry out. Nonetheless, they have a place in fundraising: they can increase the visibility of your sector, they can help to pinpoint prospective donors, and they can raise money. Your event will likely be more successful if you plan it so that it is relevant to mechanical engineering. Talk to other engineering societies to discover what worked for them. Even if you have decided to do an auction, include items focused on the engineering profession. (And perhaps consider an online auction.)

The real key to having a successful special event is to recruit sponsorship. A sponsor can give you cash to underwrite some of your expenses, and will in return expect recognition at the event and in print materials. A sponsor might also support you with in-kind gifts, including advertising, give-aways, printing, etc. Keep in mind, however, that always, always, corporations expect a return on their investment, whether it is in the form of exposure, publicity, community respect or market share. Also important to the success of your event is recruiting volunteers, including an effective chair of the event.

Here are a few ideas that may appeal to the engineering community.

1. Technical Seminar (probably the most popular among sectors)
2. PE Review Course
3. Golf Tournament
4. Auction (silent, oral or on-line)
5. Athletic event (e.g. run/walk)

Planning your event

- Determine the **purpose** of the event
- Determine a **specific monetary goal** for the special event to give people a concrete target to work toward.
- Plan your **program**
 - Determine what the need is
 - Form a focus group to make suggestions, determine feasibility
 - Contact potential speakers or training company
 - Determine materials/supplies
- Select **venue**
 - Arrange for refreshments
 - If it is a conference or seminar, consider making it “lunch on your own”
- Determine **target audience**

- **Design a budget and be prepared for many upfront costs.** Keep good records of revenue and of expenses. Also record any contributions that might come in on site.
 - Be comprehensive in planning your budget. There are many hidden costs in an event. Consider these, just a few of the many items to account for:
 - Liability insurance
 - Set up/Clean up costs
 - Catering
 - Audio/visual equipment
 - Print materials
 - Honorariums for speakers, special guests
 - Advertising
 - Security
 - Permits
- Consider who might become a **sponsor**
- Form a **committee of well-connected people** and begin planning **at least 6 months in advance**. Have plenty of volunteers – you can't have too many! Some positions on your team:
 - Chair
 - Treasurer
 - Program
 - Publicity
 - Event Logistics
- Prepare a **calendar** working backwards from date of event
 - Schedule frequent, periodic meetings to ensure communication between staff, volunteers ... everyone involved
- Consider **potential conflicts** and create a **backup plan** to handle crises such as inclement weather, a competing event scheduled on the same day, or cancellation of your keynote speaker
- **Publicize** your event beginning several months in advance. Keep a steady flow of information going out in newsletters, e-mails, etc
- Send out **registration notice** and materials a minimum of 8 weeks prior.
- **Evaluate** results when event is over, before important details fade. Involve lead planners and key volunteers.
- **Thank** sponsors, donors, volunteers, staff and others for their support and work.
- Be sure you keep a **database** with the names of everyone who attended and all contributions/sponsorships for future events.

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