



2024-25

# Hunter Business

# FUNCTION GUIDE

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GARRY



SANDIE



JASON

Welcome to the **2024–25 Hunter Business Function Guide**, an annual special coverage by HBR to help business people with planning and running a successful event in the Hunter region.

The Hunter has a well-earned reputation as an ideal location for business functions, with a growing number of local, Australian and overseas business people experiencing the excellent locations and services available.

One of the exceptional strengths of the Hunter is its extremely broad range of venues available, satisfying all tastes and budgets. The Hunter can readily accommodate any type of function, from small, intimate gatherings, to large expos and international symposiums. The locations vary immensely, from the CBDs of major centres, to water-front venues, vineyard experiences and rural retreats.

The Hunter also has a wide range of excellent support services to help ensure that you have a successful event. Whether you need help with just one aspect of an event or someone to take responsibility for almost the entire event, the Hunter has an experienced organisation ready to work with you.

The region is also unique in its range of accommodation, dining options and activities for delegates and visitors.

The Hunter is truly the perfect location for almost any type of business function

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**NEWCASTLE'S PREMIER BEACHFRONT  
FUNCTION VENUE**

# FUNCTION GUIDE TABLE 2024

Venues	Location	Room Capacity					Facilities	Onsite activities	Accom. rooms	See page
		Conference rooms	Max Area/m²	Max Cocktail	Max Theatre	Max Banquet				
<b>Amanda's on the Edge</b>	Pokolbin	2	N/A	75	N/A	75	In house catering	Restaurant	3 Cottages 1 Homestead	15
<b>Anchorage Hotel &amp; Spa</b>	Port Stephens	7	144	160	160	110	AV equipment, screens, whiteboard, flip chart, sounds system and WiFi	Spa treatments at on-site Spa Lucca, cocktail masterclasses, whisky tastings, high tea by the sea, sailing experience, The Galley Kitchen – all-day dining, Moby's Bar – Bar, onsite parking, two pools, one adults-only, poolside Bar	80	2
<b>Bluebush Estate</b>	Lovedale	1	40	80	40	35	Projector and screen, WiFi	Self contained houses with BBQs, Tennis Court, Volley ball, Pool tables, grassed area for picnics and outdoor sports, mobile massage, group yoga, group wine tasting, inhouse chef	16	15
<b>Emma's Cottage</b>	Lovedale	1	92	100	80	80	Microphone and sound system, TV and HDMI cord, WiFi	Lawn games, swimming pool, cellar door & gift shop	5 cottages (35)	8
<b>Fort Scratchley Historic Site</b>	Newcastle	1	246	200	150	40	Data projector unit, screen wired Microphones and lectern, Flipchart, Whiteboard and WIFI, Dedicated hospitality team * fees apply for additional microphones	Guided tours	N/A	7
<b>HIA Home Inspirations</b>	Mayfield West	3	N/A	N/A	80	N/A	Data projector unit, Microphones, audio, video conferencing (Board room only), WiFi	N/A	N/A	14
<b>Hunter Wetlands Centre</b>	Shortland	1	88	N/A	80	N/A	TV display, wireless internet, teleconferencing, breakout room on request/small meeting room	Canoeing, Bush walks, team building activities	N/A	13
<b>Murrook Culture Centre</b>	Williamtown	3	502	600	420	240	3 data projectors and motorised screens, In-room sound system with wireless microphones, Wi-Fi, whiteboards, flip charts, lectern, tea and coffee station in each function room, catering packages available, ample carpark	Cultural Workshops & Training, Sand Dune Adventures Quad Bike tours, Cultural Services, Murrook Café, Cultural Gallery and Interactive Experience Centre, Retail, Parklands.	N/A	5
<b>Newcastle City Hall</b>	Newcastle	7	382	500	805	290	Onsite Catering, private bar facilities	N/A	N/A	7
<b>Newcastle Racecourse</b>	Newcastle	5	600	500	400	400	Hand held microphones, data projector and screens, TV monitors	Race Day functions, lawn areas for outdoor break out sessions	N/A	9
<b>NOAH'S On The Beach</b>	Newcastle	8	382	300	300	200	Lectern, lectern microphone, roving microphone, Data projector, projector screen, wireless internet, whiteboard, flipchart stand	Restaurant & Bar, Free Parking	90	3
<b>Novotel Newcastle Beach</b>	Newcastle	3	166	140	150	140	WiFi and dancefloor available complimentary. All audio-visual equipment can be hired via our preferred supplier for an additional cost, eg, LED TV, data projector and screens, lectern, microphones, flipcharts and whiteboards.	Novotel In balance meetings includes 2 complimentary team activities when taking our day delegate packages. Other team building activities can be arranged at an additional cost via our preferred supplier. Onsite restaurant and bar, room service, secure underground self-parking, gym, spa, steam room.	88	8
<b>Pacific Dunes - Greenhouse</b>	Medowie - Port Stephens	1	270	180	200	144	1 function room can be split in half for 2 smaller functions/ conferences with our soundproof internal wall, full integrated data projector, drop down projector screen, 4 roaming microphones, mic stand, wifi internet, lectern, iphone / HDMI / PC / mac / connectors etc, white board, flip chart, black out blinds, free onsite parking, accessible amenities, covered terrace for break in the kitchen garden, tea & coffee station and catering all available.	Greenhouse - Restaurant & Bar (Breakfast & lunch 7 days a week & dinner Wed-Sat nights). 18 hole championship golf course with practice facilities, fully stocked golf shop, outdoor bar terrace, kids play area, Thursday night trivia, Sunday live music	N/A	11

# FUNCTION GUIDE TABLE 2024

## SUPPORTING SERVICES

The Hunter Region is blessed with a wide variety of organisations that can provide services and expertise to help make your event be a success.

COMPANY	SERVICES	PAGE
Blueberry Events	Event Planners	6
Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association	Hunter Valley Event planners	10
Scion Audio & Events	Audio, visual, staging & event equipment	12



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# TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR NEXT EVENT A SUCCESS

It can be an arduous task to organise a successful event, particularly if it is large. The disappointing aspect for the organiser is that most attendees probably have no comprehension of how much work has been involved. Those without function organising experience often think it is just a matter of booking a venue and sending out the invitations. The organisers are often not really thought about unless there is a really big wow factor or if something major goes wrong.

Every event is different and will have its own requirements; however, the following general tips will help you to achieve a successful event.

## Getting help

There are a range of local businesses that can help with your event, from assisting with one aspect (like catering) to organising almost the entire event.

Even if you gain the services of an event planner, this does not mean that you will have no responsibilities in the planning stages. First and foremost you must have good communications with the



planner and ensure both sides have a clear understanding of the type of event, its goals and its budget. The event planner will also require input from you along the way with necessary information and options requiring a decision. These should be attended to promptly but with due consideration. In the end the event planner wants the event to meet the client's expectations, so your input is important and required.

## Initial planning

The first task is to clearly define what your event is trying to achieve. Finalise the type of event or function it will be – launch, networking session, end of year party, exhibition, seminar, team building etc. Next set the budget available, including both revenue streams (if applicable) and expenses. If it is re-run of a similar earlier event, these stages will be much easier. Make sure to also have realistic and measurable targets.

## Event budget

Set a budget at the start and monitor it as each stage progresses. It is usually best if you can allocate some of the budget for unforeseen expenses as these often occur.

## Date and venue

Much care must be taken when setting the date and venue as it is not usually easy to change these. When considering the date take into account public and school holidays, other major or competing events, staff and equipment availability and any other issue that may restrict the timing.

## Risk management

Create a risk management plan and ensure any appropriate insurance is in place and current. Create a contingency plan for factors outside of your direct control on the day.

## Timeline

Prepare a project timeline with tasks that must be accomplished by specific dates. These may include:

- When to announce the event
- Preparation of promotional material
- Selection of caterer and menu
- Selection of entertainment
- Organisation of audio-visual needs
- Selection and confirmation of speakers
- Selection of accommodation
- Organisation of insurance or permits
- Preparation of a contingency plan for the event
- Organisation of transportation
- Organisation of marketing, signage and social media
- Finalisation of program
- Confirmation of attendees
- Preparation of event material
- Organising set up



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**At the event**

The better the planning and preparation, the better the chance that all will go smoothly on the day. Often it won't go exactly to plan, but most attendees will be unaware. Try to stay calm, even if there are a few hiccups, and finally try to enjoy yourself.

**After the event**

When the event is finished you will need to remove equipment and possibly rubbish from the venue. Depending upon the

nature of the event, sponsors and participants may be thanked and possibly given a questionnaire for feedback. In the days following the event have a debrief session on the event, covering the successful aspects as well as those that could have been improved. If appropriate, a report on the event can be sent to participants and sponsors. Plans for future events can also be included.



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# TRENDS IN BUSINESS EVENTS

**Manda Duffy**  
**Hunter Valley Wine Tourism Association**

The Hunter Valley business events industry is highly regarded and attracts valuable business, both domestic and international. Keeping abreast of the changes over the last 5 years has been challenging however the opportunities we are seeing this year and into the future are exciting.

Length of stay in regional conferencing in NSW remains steady at 2.4 days as an average. Visitation is up by 4.02% YTD versus LY. Expenditure in the sector is also up which is a positive reflection on industry valuing conferencing within own business objectives.

The deeper engagement of the face-to-face conference experience still dominates, with networking and interaction being pivotal. This is well balanced by the valuable flexibility of virtual and hybrid events.

The strongest trend, well suited to this region, is where venues support experiences. Even in more challenging fiscal times, event and conference organisers are wanting venues to support interactive experiences, sourcing unique locations and working with providers who champion experiential events to engage attendees.

In 2025, we will also see more experimentation with AI to develop event and conference planning. Importantly, sustainable, inclusive and accessible events reflect how the attendees see the brand, properties and venues go to great lengths for these accreditations.

When planning your next event in the region, Hunter Valley Business Events is here to guide you every step of the way. Our network of local hospitality experts understand your event objectives and will work with you to create tailored offerings that provide a unique experience for your guests.



With world class landscapes and an abundance of unique experiences available, the Hunter Valley is a perfect conferencing and events destination where you can feel a world away from everything, without the hassle of being a world away.

**For further information contact the Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association on (02) 4990 0900, email [businesssevents@hvwta.com.au](mailto:businesssevents@hvwta.com.au) or visit <https://www.winecountry.com.au/business-events>**

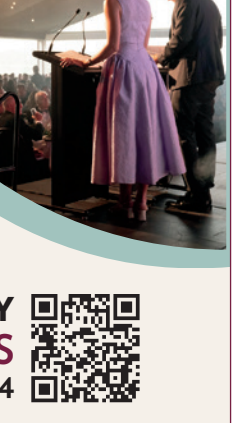


**Manda Duffy** represents the Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association. She commenced her career in logistics and then public relations and recruitment in the RAAF. A final posting into the Hunter Valley saw her pivot into studies to join the wine industry and tourism. Her career in wine business management and regional tourism spans 27 years and has seen her hold various state and local board positions, and represent the region on the global stage in wine, wine tourism and business development.

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# ORGANISING A WORK SOCIAL DAY

The Hunter region offers a wide spectrum of activities for organising a work social day, from adventure parks, race days, wine tours, brewery tours, team building events and many more.

Many businesses organise activities for their staff in an effort to build a more effective team, use it as a reward, to increase job satisfaction and to help get to know staff. Work social days are a great way to achieve these outcomes but if they are poorly organised these activities can fail to produce and even dampen morale if it is seen as just a work obligation.

The following tips will help you with planning your team building activities.

## Decide on objectives and a budget

What is the purpose? Different activities will gain different outcomes. Is it to celebrate a significant business accomplishment, reward staff, let staff get to know each other better without work pressures, help staff see the "bigger picture" or some other purpose? The activity needs to be selected to meet the goals and keep within budget, for example a wine tour would be a great way to celebrate a business accomplishment, whereas an informal lunch is better way to introduce a new staff member.

## Select an activity suitable for your whole team

If you have less active members, it is not a great idea to organise anything too strenuous. Don't select an activity that is likely to have an extreme range in abilities. Don't let the activity be overly competitive – you can have winners if you want, but make sure that others don't feel like losers. Also not everyone drinks alcohol or feels comfortable around people who are drinking.

## Pick a convenient time

Employees will be most receptive to an activity that is during work hours and does not interfere with their personal time. When scheduling the activity, keep your employees' schedules and personal obligations in mind. If you have employees with children in day care or school, make sure that the social day does not interfere with their pick-up schedule or require them to plan additional childcare.

## Ease work pressure

Make sure that you reduce the employees' workload that typically gets done during the scheduled team building time so that they do not have to work nights or weekends to get their jobs done. You may need to hire temporary staff. Take into account the downtime when setting schedules and targets.

## Consider help

Ask possible venues for tips, what has worked before etc. You can even consider hiring an external professional to organise the whole or some of the activities.

## Don't forget travel time

You may find a great location, but staff may not be happy if they have to travel an extra hour or two each way. If you are really set on a location a little more distant, consider hiring a mini-bus and also use the travel time effectively.



## Provide food

Make sure food is involved in the planning as no one is happy if they are hungry or if finding something to eat is a chore.

## Don't make it about the business

Don't bore staff with speeches or work-related talks. Make the day interesting and memorable. The best activities are those a bit different, not something many of the staff do on a regular basis.

## Encourage staff to mix

Forget about staff hierarchy. Make all staff feel like they are on an equal footing. If you have a large number of staff, consider nametags with just their first name. If the activity involves teams, try to have teams comprised of staff members that normally don't work closely.

## Get post-event feedback

After the event, have employees provide anonymous feedback on the team building day. By knowing what your employees liked and disliked about the event, you can better plan team-building activities in the future. If you planned the day for a specific reason, evaluate the outcome after the event.

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# SCION AUDIO CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Scion Audio celebrates 50 years in business this year. Over the years so much has changed – not only technology but what we do, how we do it and the customer base that we look after.

Starting as a rock and roll hire company in 1974 Scion was one of the very first touring companies in NSW and every Thursday afternoon all the Pantech trucks would come out and be packed for the weekend of concerts ahead.

50 years later we are still here as Scion Audio and Events and our weeks are full of events ranging from conferences to gala balls and large outdoor concerts. It is safe to say that I love working on events. Before I bought Scion in 1999, I had worked in public relations, hospitality, theatre and nightclubs. It was always about events and to this day the passion remains.

Since Covid we have seen an enormous increase in the number of events that we work on every week and I don't think that we could have managed this without this passion, plus the years of experience that we have,

This is what you need to see in your events team - from your Audio-Visual supplier, your florist, your decorator and your entertainment provider plus any other stakeholders. We like to explain everything to our clients in person – sometimes an email is just not enough. The more information that we all share the better the outcomes.

Even as an event co-ordinator you may not know all the questions that your event professionals need to ask. I always say talk to me – phone me and that way I can ask the questions but explain why we are asking them. That way people learn what we do and why we do it. This communication will build a trust between the client



Photograph courtesy of AJM Photography

and the supplier and enable them to work together to create an event that is on budget yet looks great and will run without a hitch.

Speaking of hitches, we all need to be aware of suppliers being compliant. Risk assessments are a necessary part of all our lives, and they do indeed save lives. As an event co-ordinator you need to make sure that your suppliers carry the right insurances like Public Liability and Workers Compensation. You want your event to be safe so asking for a risk assessment is a necessary practise. Each industry will have varying risks – eg all electrical leads need to be tested and tagged so that no-one is electrocuted, manual handling rules need to be in place, PPE needs to worn and trip hazards need to be addressed. There is so much to cover and having a compliant supplier reduces any risk to event guests.

We are so proud that Scion Audio and Events has reached the 50-year milestone even through the tough times of Covid, and we are equally proud of our staff for their passion and knowledge in helping us create a business with such a high care factor for each and every client. For Anthony and I we believe that our staff is our biggest asset.

As an event co-ordinator you rely on your suppliers for their experience, their creativity and their passion to put together your dream. They need to be on your wavelength to create your dream in a safe manner and come in on budget. If you surround yourself with an event team of professionals that you trust, then you have nothing to worry about.



# SELECTING YOUR VENUE

One of the most important decisions when planning a business event is the venue. Assuming you do not have suitable in-house facilities, you will likely be faced with a range of venue options and these must be evaluated early in the process.

The following are factors to consider when you are deciding upon the venue for your next event:

**Location** – The venue should be easy to get to for participants and attendees. It is usually good to be located close to most of attendees to minimise travel time and increase attendance. If you think many will use public transport then these links should be evaluated. If most will be driving then close-by parking facilities will be an important consideration.

**Venue suitability** – Obviously the venue must be the right size for your event. If it is too small you will not have enough room for everything you need as well as attendees. But if it is too large, it may feel quite dead and empty. If the venue is not air-conditioned or is set outdoors you should consider ventilation or heating options, particularly if the event is being held in summer or winter. If extensive setting up is required, such as in an expo, then ease of access to the venue can be important. The venue also may need to be available for ample time before and after the event. Wheelchair and invalid access may also be a consideration.

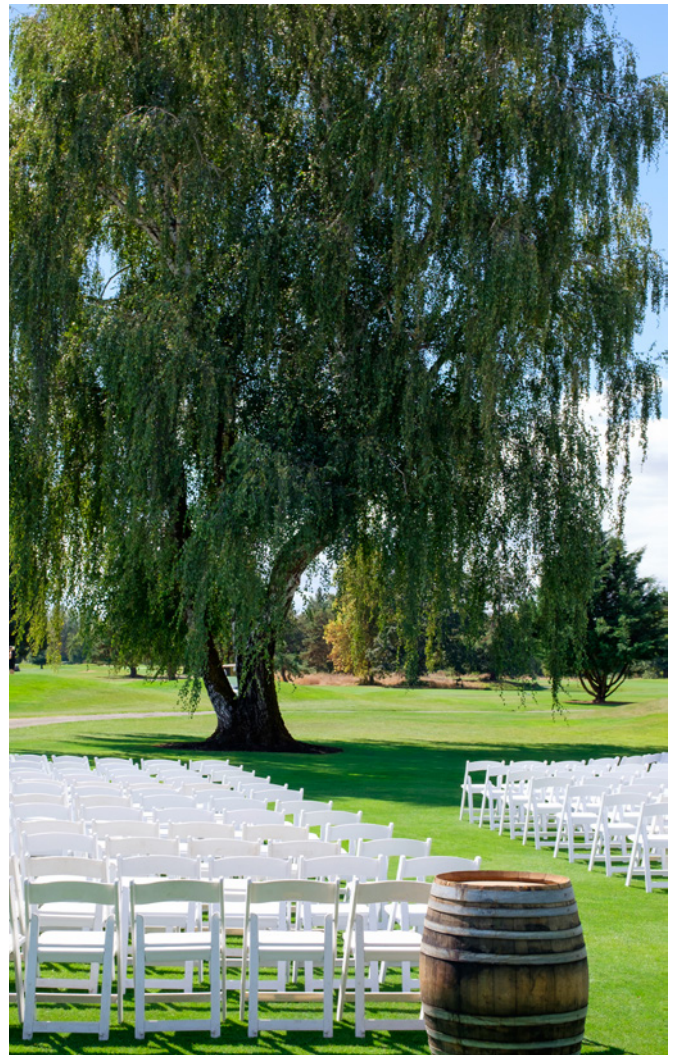
**Facilities & services** – The available facilities and services provided by a venue can be of major benefit in the quality of an event, the total cost of an event and the ease of organisation. Check there is sufficient chairs and tables (if required). These days' microphones, audio visual facilities and internet access are essential for many functions. If food and drink facilities are not available, or not available to the desired quality, then there are a number of excellent caterers available in the Hunter that can help.

**Availability** – The venue does of course need to be available. The earlier the venue is locked away, the better the chance of having it for your desired time. You will also have more flexibility in settling on a date if you start early.

**Cost** – Cost is always a factor to consider, particularly if operating on a tight budget but make sure you are taking all costs into account. For example a more expensive venue that provides additional facilities at no charge may well work out cheaper in the long run than a cheaper venue that provides little and you need to arrange additional facilities.

**Venue staff** – The quality of the venue staff is sometimes overlooked. Good venue staff are a major help both in the organisational phase and on the actual event day. Alarm bells should start ringing if you find them disinterested or they fail to respond to enquiries.

**Other help** – Don't be shy to ask other organisations that have had similar types of events about their experiences. Event organisers can take away most of the venue selection work. They also have more detailed intelligence on possible venues and the range of options available.





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# ENGAGING YOUR AUDIENCE

We have all been to business functions that failed to engage the audience. They were too long or just plain boring and had attendees watching the clock or even making excuses to leave early.

When organising a business event you can fall into the trap of putting so much effort into the purpose of the event and the logistics that you forget about the most important people, the attendees – keeping them engaged and providing them with a positive experience.

Each event is different, but the following tips should be remembered when you plan an event:

**Always keep attendees in mind** – The event may well have some very serious messages to get across but to ensure the audience remains engaged you must organise the event from their point of view. This may sound blatantly obvious but is still often forgotten and must be one of the key aspects of organising.

**Make attendees feel welcome** – Upon arrival, it should be clear where attendees should go. If applicable, signs or welcoming people should direct attendees. Upon arrival at the room or location there should be people welcoming them. Light refreshments are often good at this stage.

**Run on time** – Businesspeople are busy people. The last thing you want is to make them feel like they are wasting time waiting for an event to commence or stressed because the event is running overtime and clashing with other activities on their schedule.



Networking time at the start is often useful for some attendees but you should be upfront with the attendees about any networking time and the commencement of the more official parts of the event.

**Keep presentations short and sharp** – The reality is that most attendees to a business event are not interested in the very fine details of your organisation or the same message repeated by multiple presenters.

Keep speeches short and to the point, focusing on the key points, but with an open invitation for attendees to obtain additional information. It is also often well worthwhile to have some printed information available, particularly if media representatives are present. For awards ceremonies consider if every recipient really needs an acceptance speech and ensure that any acceptance speeches are short.

**Entertain attendees** – The event may well have a very serious purpose but you need to entertain the attendees. This provides them with a more positive overall experience and can keep them in a more receptive frame of mind for your message. Sometimes event organisers fear that entertainment may trivialise any messages they are trying to get across but properly organised entertainment can enhance attendee receptiveness and provide them with a more positive opinion of your organisation. Entertainment may take many forms, from keynote speakers to music to comedians to magicians and much more.

**Create a theme** – For major events, organisers can consider creating a theme. This will make the whole experience more enjoyable and also allow attendees to join in.

**Provide breaks** – For longer events ensure that frequent breaks are scheduled for attendees to have a refreshment, visit toilets, talk with others, check on emails or contact the office. This also helps attendees to maintain their attention levels.

**Provide attendees with a positive ending to the event** – Make sure that attendees have a positive ending to the event. Ensure they are thanked and consider a small gift if applicable. Also ensure that key members of the organisation are available to meet with attendees who wish to make personal contact or have additional queries.

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# MARKETING YOUR EVENT

One of the most important parts of organising an event is letting people know about it. If there are no attendees, there is no event.

There are many paths available to do this. Advertising for your event should involve a mixture of the tactics depending on your target audience and where they seek out event information.

## Traditional marketing tactics

Direct mail marketing campaigns, press releases and hard copy advertising are a great way to announce the event and know that it is getting to the right target audience.

## Social media

Social media can be an effective way to advertise your event. Platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and X (Twitter) are an easy way to reach people.

## Use attendees

When people sign up for your event, provide them with opportunities to share the information about your event on social media or via email.

## Invite major industry players

Contact prominent people in the industry, who also have a following on their social networks. Invite these people to your event and it's sure to get coverage on a lot of related socials.

## Market the speakers

If your business has the budget to book a well-known speaker, it will create more hype. When marketing your speakers focus on their education, experience, and interesting facts about their lives. This will generate interest in hearing these facts and experiences live. Feature your speakers in your media releases, hard copy advertising and social media.

## Testimonials

Testimonials are great if your business organises an annual event that is well attended, especially by regular attendees and repeat vendors. Get testimonials from attendees and vendors about your key outcomes for the event e.g. the event was informative, fun and I made some key contacts.

## Corporate sponsorships

Gaining corporate sponsors for your event is a plus for both parties. When the sponsors advertise the event, not only is it good marketing for the event, it is also a good marketing strategy for their company.

## Free tickets

Another great way to promote your event is to offer the participating sponsors, speakers, industry players and vendors free admission tickets. You can request that they mention the event to all their contacts or share it on social media.




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