



QC  
EVENT  
SCHOOL

A CHECKLIST FOR STARTING YOUR OWN  
EVENT PLANNING BUSINESS





## A CHECKLIST FOR STARTING YOUR OWN EVENT PLANNING BUSINESS

For some event planners, the independence and profit that comes with starting your own business is too good an idea to pass up!

If you've been planning events in the professional industry for long enough to feel confident in your skills, the idea might have crossed your mind too.

Before you jump in with both feet, however, there are some steps you need to take to really prepare yourself for launching and running your own business. Here's a checklist of things you should have, know, and do before you throw your doors open to the world!

# THE ESSENTIALS

The good news is, you can start preparing yourself as a future business owner from the very moment you decide that you want to become an event planner.

The closer you get to your business becoming a reality, the more focused your steps towards launching and running it will be. Which of the following have you already begun, and how many of them should you set as goals for the future?

## QUALITY TRAINING AND/OR PLANNING EXPERIENCE

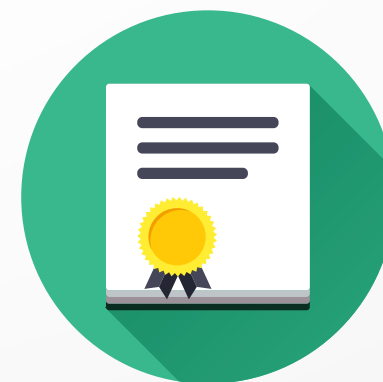
In order to run your own business, you need to be an expert at what you do. Getting a thorough education before you attempt to run an entire business is beneficial to both you and your clients.

For your clients, backing up your services with a credentials and a certificate from a reputable program is reassuring. They'll know that you're well informed and capable of giving them quality service for their money.

Being properly trained is also reassuring for you. You'll be much more confident in your knowledge and abilities if you've studied your trade before jumping into running your own business, especially if you don't have much experience in the industry.

Never lie about your education! No matter where you studied or how long the program was, display your qualifications proudly so people can see that you put the work in.

Most planners who decide to become business owners also have practical experience. There are definitely benefits to working in the industry before you try branching out on your own. Consider working for event planning companies, travel agencies, or resort and hotel venues first. The knowledge you gain as an employee will prepare you for the possibility of having your own employees some day, and it will also inform how you run your business. You can learn from the mistakes of your employers and make note of the things they do well. When you start your own business, you'll have a better idea of how things should run.





## A PORTFOLIO

As you gain experience working for other planners or companies, you should put together a portfolio filled with pictures and descriptions of your best work. Include images that display your organization, innovation, and sense of style. You can even put in some positive testimonials from past clients as well. When your business opens, new clients will be more likely to take an interest in your services if they can see examples of your skills. Your portfolio, and your employees' portfolios, will exemplify your professional knowledge and skills and contribute positively to the reputation of your new business.

NEED MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO BUILD  
A PORTFOLIO? CHECK OUT THIS VIDEO!



## AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE INDUSTRY

- Is there enough demand for a new event planning business where you live?
- What kinds of event planning companies or freelance planners already exist in that area?
- Which type of event planning is needed the most?

The answers to questions like these will influence which services you offer, or possibly even where you decide to open your business. Some planners take a risk by offering planning services that none of their competitors offer. Specializing in a service that no one else in the area provides can make you the resident expert in the field, attracting all of the clients who want that service exclusively to you. At the same time, the fact that you're the only one offering that service can make clients wonder whether it's really necessary or reliable.

Other planners take a risk by offering services that are also available from many other planners in the area. This can be healthy for the industry because it generates competition and regulates pricing. It can also, however, make attracting and building your own client base more difficult. You'll need a thorough understanding of how to provide what your target market really needs before you can successfully open and run a business.





## A KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL REGULATIONS

No matter where you decide to open your business, you will have to meet certain licensing requirements. These are determined by your local government. Before you take any other steps, research the licenses that you'll need to operate an event planning business and run your events without violating any of those regulations.

Make sure that all of your business information is registered with the correct governing bodies and that you have all of the licenses you need before your doors open. You'll be very upset later if you try to get your business on its feet and you are shut down by the local government because you overlooked a licensing or registration requirement. This will also look unprofessional to your employees and potential clients. Educating yourself about local business requirements early on will save you trouble.



## A BRAND

One of the most important parts of opening your own business is choosing the name and building the brand. These things are often the first impression of your business for potential new clients and they represent you, your employees, and your work.

You should choose a name and design a logo that communicates your style of event planning and the tone of your company and service. Your brand needs to reflect what your target market is looking for. For example, if you are offering luxury services, build a brand that presents a classy, high quality image. If you are offering local, family friendly services, choose a name and logo that make people feel comfortable. Make your name and logo simple but memorable, and develop marketing materials to match that tone. Is your target market a young professional crowd? Maybe you want a catchy sound and bright, trendy colors. Are you gearing your services toward an older generation? Perhaps your brand should appear more home-grown.

Your advertising materials should suit the style and tone of your brand and communicate the same messages.

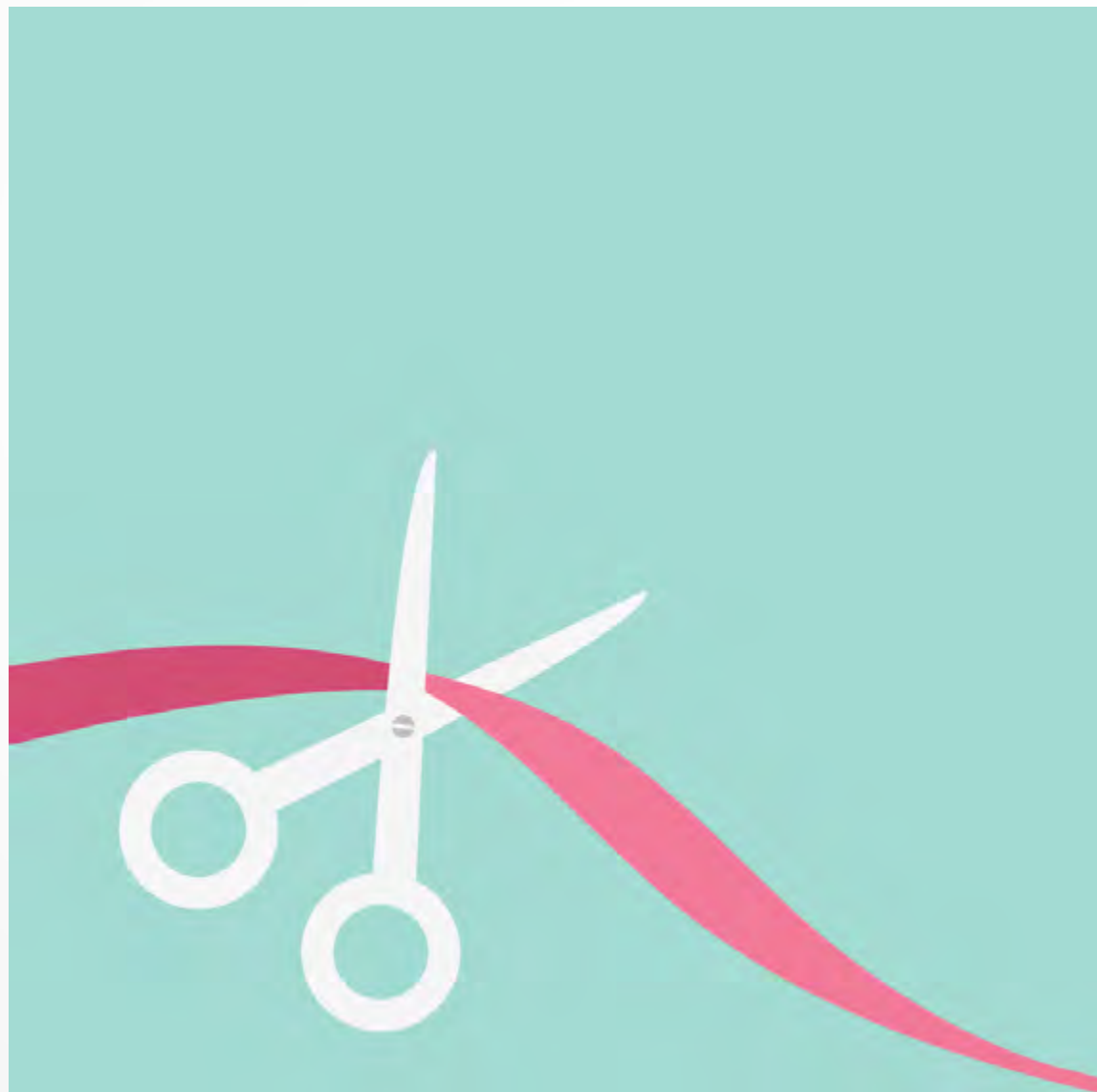
[LEARN MORE ABOUT PERSONAL BRANDING  
AND YOUR BUSINESS HERE!](#)



## A BUSINESS LAUNCH PLAN

Being spontaneous can be fun, but the way you launch your business is crucial for its success. How will you announce to the world that you're ready to go? How will you attract new clients from day one and keep them interested? Creating a plan for the launch of your business can help you ensure a successful start.

Rather than "winging it", why not map out a "grand opening" promotion or plan a small launch event so potential clients can meet you and your team, ask questions, and learn about your services? You want to make an impact on your local market without discouraging people by advertising too obnoxiously.



## CONFIDENCE AND DETERMINATION

Starting and running your own business takes a lot of dedication. With the right training and experience and a little bit of confidence, however, it's a goal that you can definitely achieve. Before you get in over your head, just be sure to prepare yourself for how much time, money, and effort becoming a business owner takes. Investing yourself in your goals and staying realistic about the preparation process will be rewarding later on.





# STARTUP COSTS

Your “startup costs” are the things that you’ll need to pay for or purchase before you officially open your business. These are items or fees that are absolutely necessary to get your business off the ground. You should create a startup fund and budget portions of that money to each thing on your list. Remember to save a portion of your funds for unforeseen expenses and emergency costs, in case something doesn’t go as planned.

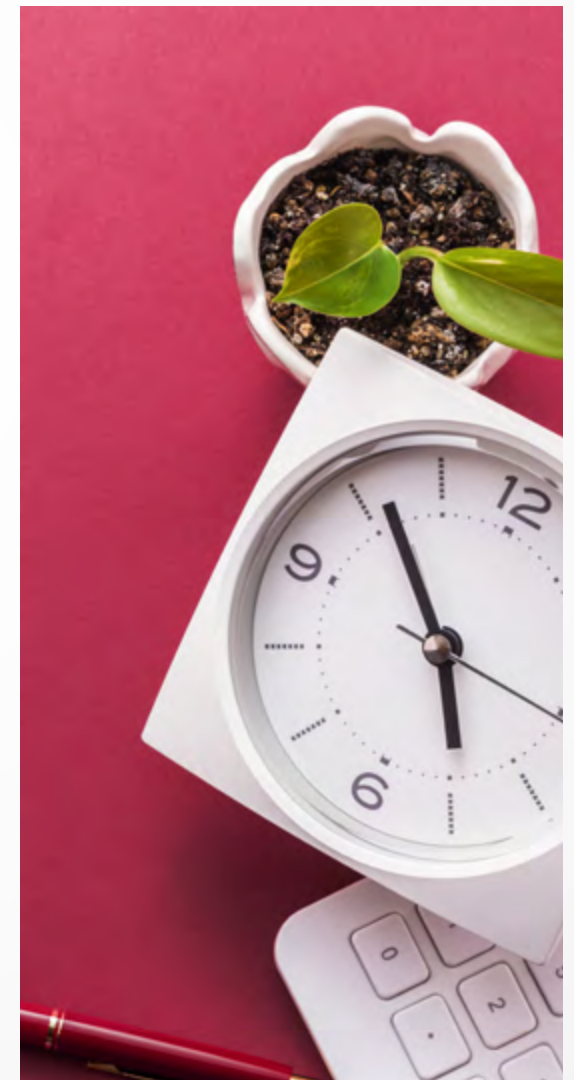
## BRAND LAUNCH

Building your website, having business cards printed, hosting a launch party, networking at events... all of these will cost money and will need to be done before you book your first few clients. Unless you have design or IT experience, you’ll probably want to hire a web developer and graphic designer to help you build your brand. Factor-in these costs!



## RENT

Where will you operate your business from? Do you plan to work from an office or storefront, or will you operate things from home? Rent might not be an expense for you if you’re comfortable working from a home office, but you should allot funds for the monthly cost of renting a space if you decide to work elsewhere.



## TRANSPORTATION

Will you or your employees have access to a vehicle that is used for business only? The cost of maintenance for a company car should be budgeted from your business funds, rather than your own pocket. Keep in mind, however, that if you're going to insure and register a vehicle as a company car, it must only be used for business purposes and not personal convenience.



## PAYROLL

Your initial funds, and your monthly budget from there on out, should account for the cost of paying your assistants or employees. If you're going to build an event planning team within your business, they will expect to be paid fairly and on time, and you'll be legally required to provide that.

If your business is very small or you are the only one working under the business name for now, your payroll cost will obviously be less than if you've hired many people. Your profit, however, might also be less. Business with a bigger team and help more clients, but that team might not be realistic when you're first starting out.



## LICENSING

Getting the proper licenses to run your own business often comes with fees. You should have already researched exactly what you'll need to meet your local regulations and legal requirements, so account for these costs in your startup budget.



## TAXES

All businesses and business owners pay taxes, no matter the size of the company. Event planning businesses are no exception. You can find out how you might be taxed by researching your local small business bureau. If it helps, you can hire a financial advisor to help you with the taxation process. You will have to account for both the cost of your taxes and the cost of your advisor in your budget.





## ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

Your marketing materials should correspond with the theme and tone of your business name, logo, image, and overall brand. What mediums will you use to advertise your services? Which kind of advertisement is most likely to reach your target market, based on the types of planning services you offer? Your startup budget should include funds for your initial advertising campaigns. How much money, and how often, will you invest in marketing your services?



## LEGAL AND ACCOUNTING FEES

Even experienced business owners often work with lawyers and accountants to make sure that their financial and legal affairs are in order. You might be an expert in event planning, and you should have a good idea about how the legal and financial aspects of your business function, but you're not a professional solicitor or financial advisor.

It's okay to hire other experts to help you ensure that your business runs smoothly, flourishes financially, and meets all legal requirements. In fact, working with these advisors rather than trying to fly solo when you're unsure of the details is actually a smart business choice.



## INSURANCE

No matter where you open your business, insurance is legally mandatory for all business owners. This protects your interests and covers your employees, vehicles, equipment, office space, and general liability. Many business owners, including event planners, hire lawyers or insurance advisors to help them choose the policy that is right for their company. Make sure you account for the cost of your advisors, as well as the ongoing cost of your insurance.



## COMMUNICATION

How will you communicate with your clients, assistants, or employees? Will you need company-owned phones, tablets, or laptops for this? How many will you need to purchase and pay for?

Even if you aren't providing company cell phones or iPads for your employees, you might decide to get one for yourself to avoid running up your personal bills throughout your work day. You'll also need at least an office phone to speak with clients and vendors.

Additionally, there aren't many companies left today that can function without computer access and the Internet. Each of these elements of communication should be factored into your startup costs, as well as your ongoing monthly budget.

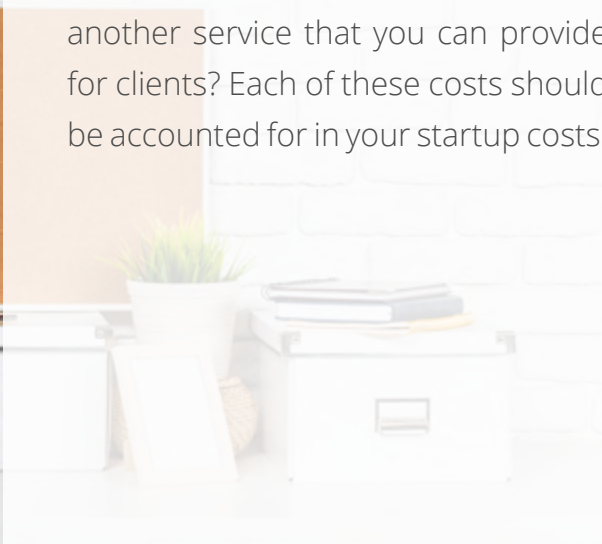






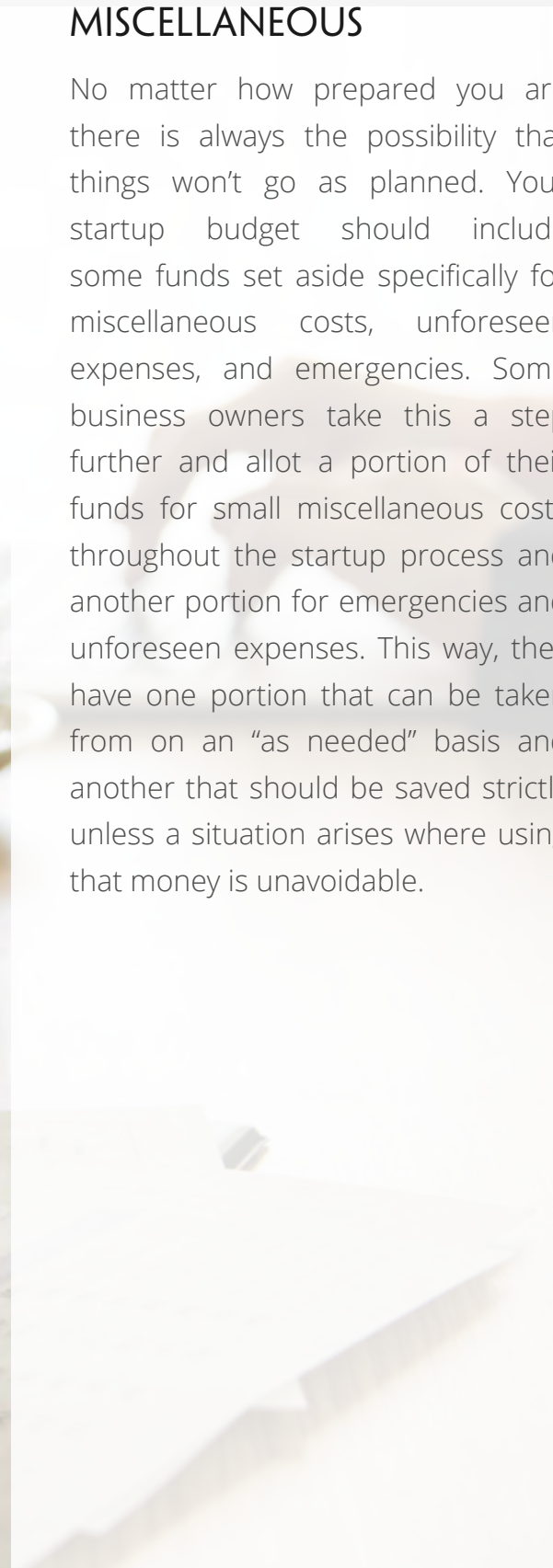
## SUPPLIES

Many of the other things on this list are fees and services that you'll need to account for, but what kinds of actual items will you need? Do you have an office or workspace that you'll need to furnish and decorate? Do you plan to keep event inventory, like rental furniture and décor, on hand as another service that you can provide for clients? Each of these costs should be accounted for in your startup costs.



## MISCELLANEOUS

No matter how prepared you are there is always the possibility that things won't go as planned. Your startup budget should include some funds set aside specifically for miscellaneous costs, unforeseen expenses, and emergencies. Some business owners take this a step further and allot a portion of their funds for small miscellaneous costs throughout the startup process and another portion for emergencies and unforeseen expenses. This way, they have one portion that can be taken from on an "as needed" basis and another that should be saved strictly unless a situation arises where using that money is unavoidable.





## COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

Many business owners find themselves stumbling over a few pitfalls in the startup process. These are common across businesses of different kinds and event planners should be aware of these challenges so they can avoid making similar mistakes.

### JUMPING THE GUN

Don't open your doors until you know that you're 100% ready to go! If you get excited and launch your business before every last startup detail has been taken care of, you'll find yourself unprepared to give your first few clients the best service you have to offer. Your first contracts shouldn't be practice rounds. Start taking clients on when you're absolutely positive that everything is in place and you're ready to start things off on the right foot.

### EXPECTING IMMEDIATE SUCCESS

On the flip side, many business owners open their doors and expect a rush of new clients right from the get-go. The reality is, it might take some time for your brand to reach your target audience and for potential clients to hire you. Don't stress, and don't give up!

IF YOU'RE HAVING TROUBLE  
GETTING YOUR FIRST CLIENT,  
HERE'S A VIDEO THAT CAN HELP!





## CUTTING CORNERS

Try not to take any shortcuts in your startup process. Every detail leading up to your business launch should be taken care of thoroughly and properly. If you cut corners in a hurry to get things up and running, you could face problems later.

For example, don't promise someone that you'll plan their party before you've researched and finalized every type of insurance and licensing that your company will need to legally provide them the service they're paying for. If you get half way through the planning process and suddenly find out that you're in legal trouble, your reputation will suffer.



## SOCIAL MEDIA MISTAKES

Online networking tools are an absolute must for businesses today. Unfortunately, there are many ways that business owners can use these tools poorly. Not having a social networking presence at all, or having one that is too small and not often used, can make you miss out on opportunities to connect with clients and vendors. At the same time, flooding your social networks and using them to advertise obnoxiously can annoy clients and make them think twice about using your services. You want to use tools like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to connect easily and effectively with those you'd like to work with and to show people why you're worth their money.

HERE'S A GREAT RESOURCE  
TO GET YOU STARTED: SOCIAL  
MEDIA DO'S AND DON'TS



## A POOR WEBSITE

Your website is one of your most important tools. Because people depend on the Internet so heavily to connect with others and find information, your website is often the first impression that potential new clients get of you and your business.

If your pages are cluttered, unclear, difficult to navigate, hard to read, or full of annoying music, people are more likely to click on someone else's site than to continue look at yours. You want the layout to be eye-catching and interesting, but your clients should be able to find the information they're looking for easily. Having a poor website can make you seem unprofessional and discourage people from contacting you, so invest the time and money in developing something of quality.

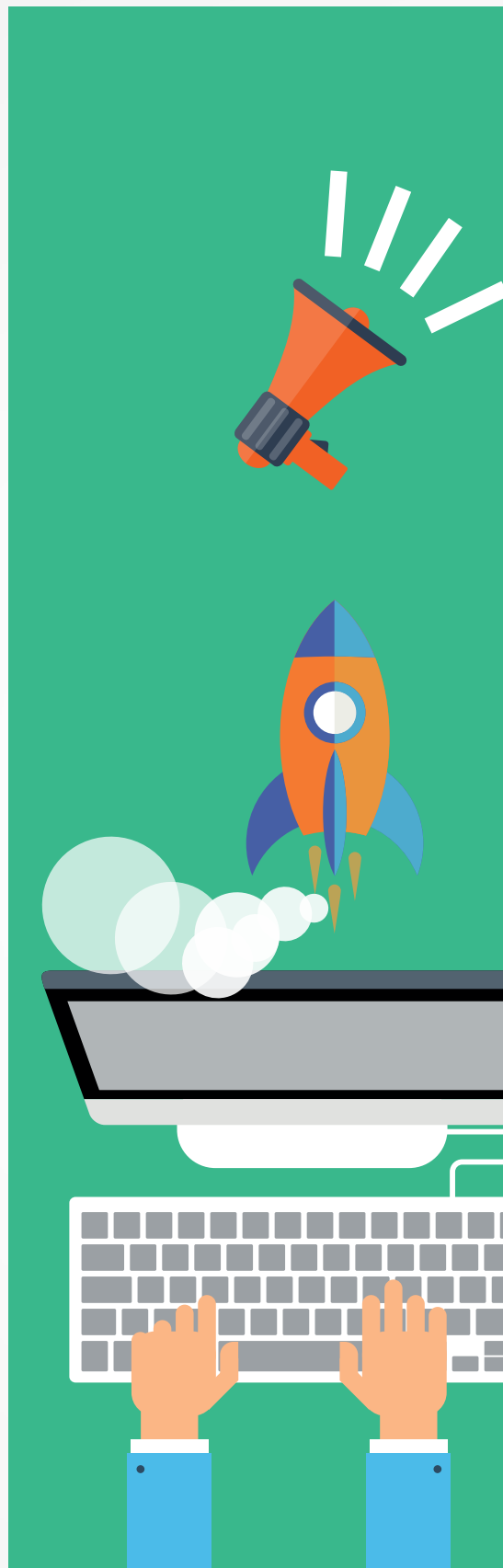
NEED MORE INFO? BUILDING  
YOUR WEBSITE: WHAT YOU  
NEED TO KNOW



## GOING OVER YOUR BUDGET

You want to invest well in your business startup, but you don't want to bury yourself in debt right from the beginning. Budgets exist for a reason and once you've determined what yours is, you should stick to it. If you start off your business operations by going over your budget, you could spend a significant amount of time playing catch-up rather than profiting like you should be. It could also affect your professional reputation if clients find out that you're already digging yourself a hole financially. If you can't work within your own budget, how will you work within theirs when you plan their event? Reorganizing the way your funds are allotted is a much safer option than exceeding your budgeted limit.





## LAUNCHING TOO LOUDLY OR TOO QUIETLY

How you launch your business onto the market is very important. You want people to know that you're there and ready to help them, but you don't want to overwhelm anyone.

If you simply prop your office door open and hope that someone notices, you won't profit as much as you could if people knew about your exciting new business. If, on the other hand, you scream about your opening from the rooftops and stop traffic to tell drivers what you can do for them, you might annoy potential clients and discourage them from considering your business.

Hitting the perfect balance between launching your business too loudly or too quietly is part of the reason that a business launch plan is so important. Research which tactics other successful businesses have used in their launches and think about how you might adapt those ideas to your own launch.

## UNDERSELLING YOURSELF

A "grand opening" promotion is a great way to attract initial clients, but be wary of cutting your prices too far. You want to provide incentive by offering potential new clients a deal, but you don't want to rip yourself off.

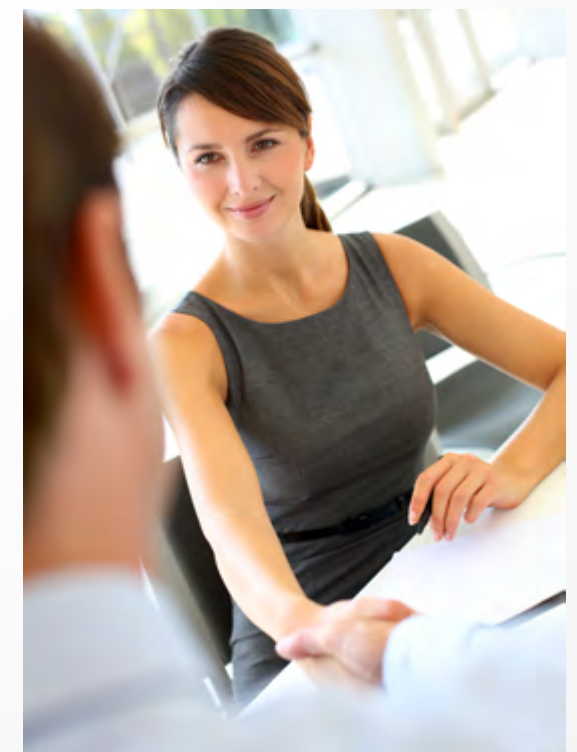
Just because you're a new business doesn't mean you shouldn't be paid what you're worth! If you advertise an oddly cheap price right off the bat, that might be your target market's expectation from there on out. When you raise your prices to your regular rate after your sale ends, clients might be put off by the great difference between the two prices. Multiple companies making this mistake at once can actually drive prices across the whole market down, meaning that everyone profits less. Offer your clients a promotion if you'd like, but make sure your discount is realistic.



## LYING ABOUT YOUR SERVICES OR EXPERIENCE

This pitfall is fairly simple to avoid—don't lie to your clients! If you tell people that you are more experienced, qualified, or highly trained than you really are, they will have very high expectations of you. What happens if you can't live up to those expectations? Worse yet, what if you provide them an impeccable service, but then they learn that you lied to them?

Similarly, try not to promise clients services or perks that you can't deliver on. Sticking to the truth and showing clients the true value of what you can really offer them is the best way to go.





# A CHECKLIST FOR STARTING YOUR OWN EVENT PLANNING BUSINESS

Print out this checklist and use it to keep track of your progress as you move closer to launching your event planning business.

Note: You can download and print this single page here:

Do you have sufficient training or event planning experience?

Do you have a portfolio that contains pictures and descriptions of your best work?

Do you have a thorough understanding of the event planning industry?

Have you researched all local regulations that pertain to starting a business?

Do you have a strong brand and brand identity?

Do you have a solid business launch plan?

Are you prepared to cover business startup costs? You'll need money for:

Rent

Transportation

Payroll (if you have a staff)

Licensing

Your Brand Launch

Advertising/Promotion

Legal/Accounting Fees

Insurance

Office Supplies

Miscellaneous



## ABOUT QC EVENT SCHOOL

If you've decided that a career in event planning is right for you, and you want to become an event planner, QC Event School is here to help!

- ✓ Study from home on your own time. Take up to three years to complete any program.
- ✓ Read course texts, watch instructional videos, and complete hands-on assignments that prepare you for your event planning career.
- ✓ Learn from expert tutors — professionals working in the event planning industry — who evaluate and critique all your assignments.
- ✓ Gain access to a top-tier student support team that's ready to answer all your questions from assignment assistance to career advice.
- ✓ Join an international community of event planners on the school's forum, social media, and continued access to QC's online student center for continuing education materials.
- ✓ Graduate with a certification and professional designation that's recognized world-wide.

**Enroll in an online event planning course today and take the first step towards becoming a successful business owner!**

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