

Planning Your Chamber Event

Provided By:



Planning a Special Event?

Are you planning a Ribbon Cutting, Coffee, Afterhours, or Lunch & Learn? This toolkit provides you with the steps you need to take to plan your event!

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Step One: Date Selection

Selecting a date is a very important decision to make as you begin planning a successful event. Remember, it can affect all subsequent steps. Before you make your decision, consider the following:

- Allow plenty of preparation time. If possible, give yourself at least three to four weeks to make arrangements.
- Avoid holding your event on, or too near a major holiday. If you are trying to attract a specific crowd, take note of their holiday work hours.
- Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are the best attendance days for community leaders and business people. Mondays are usually too busy to leave work and on Fridays, many people leave town early to begin the weekend, particularly in the summer.
- Remember to notify the Chamber at least ten business days in advance of a Ribbon Cutting so that we may have time to notify the Board of Directors and Ambassadors, and order the ribbon.

Step Two: Choosing a Time

The time you choose to hold your event is crucial to its success. An important step in the planning process is to determine the type of special event you will conduct.

- As a rule, morning events should begin no earlier than 8:00AM.
- Try to avoid scheduling during lunch hours, unless you plan to offer lunch.
- Early notice will get your event on guests' calendars. The Chamber will send out a reminder email a week prior to, and the day before your event. The Chamber will also send out reminders via our text messaging program, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
- For media coverage, consider their deadlines before selecting a time. Media outlets will inform you of their deadlines over the phone.
- If you are hosting a Lunch & Learn at the Chamber Office, please let us know ahead of time how you would like the tables to be set-up, and if you will need a display board, projector, or etcetera.

Set Chamber event times include:

- Chamber Coffee – First Thursday of each month from 8:00-9:00AM
- Afterhours – Date of your choice from 5:30-7:00PM
- Lunch & Learns – Date of your choice from 12:00-1:00PM

Step Three: Food & Beverage

Although it is an added expense that you may prefer to avoid, serving food and beverage is a necessity for a successful event. It is also a nice gesture that shows your guests that you appreciate them taking time out of their busy schedules to support your endeavor. Here are some helpful food and beverage suggestions:

- Morning: fruit, muffins, pastries, coffee, juice – a full breakfast is not necessary unless you are in the restaurant business and want to showcase what you offer.
- Lunch: lunch-appropriate meal - such as a sandwich tray, heavy hor d' oeuvres, water, tea – This is a midday meal for most of your guests, so don't hold an event during lunch hour and expect your guests to go elsewhere for lunch unless it is clearly specified in your invitation.
- Afternoon: light hor d' oeuvres, finger foods, fruit/vegetable platter, tea, punch, wine/beer
- Water is *always* appropriate as an additional beverage, because some guests may prefer it to the other beverage selections you provide.
- Serving alcohol at your event is not necessary, but can be a nice touch (during Afterhours). Be sure to check ID when serving.

Catering:

- If your event is a large undertaking or you do not have enough preparation time, you may want to enlist the help of a caterer. Caterers may also give you good advice for your event. Check with the Chamber for recommendations of area restaurant members that also do catering.
- If you decide to provide your own refreshments, be sure to have plenty of food items and beverages for your guests. Also, remember to provide sufficient plates, cups, napkins, trash cans, and other supply items. Running out of food is a bad way to end an event.
- If you are hosting a Lunch & Learn, the Chamber will provide all food and beverage supplies, at no cost to the host.

Step Four: Program Planning

Whether you are planning a Ribbon Cutting, Coffee, Afterhours, or Lunch & Learn, you may want to consider these points to help the event run smoothly:

- Speaker(s): Limit the number of speakers to one or two at the most. It is tempting to let several people speak on behalf of your business, but in most cases, one speaker can represent the business well. Feel free to have several employees, owners, business representatives, etc. present for the event, but decide ahead of time which person will do the majority of the talking. This will prevent lengthy, rambling remarks, and redundant responses. *Be sure to have a brief (i.e. 30 second) "commercial about your business prepared. This is an opportunity to give everyone information about your company.*

- Tour: Many Ribbon Cutting ceremonies include a group tour of the building. If you choose to give a tour, be sure to have a knowledgeable employee conduct the tour.
- Back-Up Plan: If you are holding an outdoor event, be sure to have a back-up plan for inclement weather.
- Camera: In all Ribbon cutting ceremonies, a picture will be taken for the local newspaper, whether by a Chamber staff member, or the newspaper photographer. Chamber staff members also do their best to take numerous pictures throughout any event you hold, so that they may be posted on social media outlets. You may wish to have your own camera on hand to capture the event, as well.
- Door Prizes: A door prize drawing takes place during all Chamber Coffees. The Chamber will provide door prizes, but also encourages the host to provide at least one door prize to promote their business. For events other than a Coffee, the host will need to provide all door prizes if they wish to have a drawing.
- Thank You Notes: Be sure to send thank you letters the day after your event to anyone who played a key role in staging it; particularly those who took part in the program or ceremonies – i.e. the Mayor, if he/she attended and cut the ribbon at your Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.
- Event Formats:
 - Chamber Coffee – Networking from 8:00-8:30AM; Chamber, Host, and Member Announcements from 8:30-9:00AM
 - Afterhours – Floating Event from 5:30-7:00PM
 - Ribbon Cutting – Host, City Representative, and Chamber speak; Ribbon is cut; Guests network/tour facility/enjoy refreshments

Step Five: Invitation List

Depending on the type of event you are hosting, and the type of business you run, there are several different people you may want to invite or notify. These are suggestions of people you should consider inviting to your special event:

- Current and potential customers
- Family and friends
- Suppliers
- Media
- Those who helped you get started: banker, accountant, attorney, architect, and etc.
- Neighboring business people in your area
- Representatives of the Chamber (one you contact the Chamber, we will send out e-blast and social media invitations to our members, Ambassadors, and Board of Directors)

Allow plenty of notice!

Predicting how many people will attend your event is tricky. These are our suggestions for how many people to plan for:

- Chamber Coffee – 30 to 50 people
- Afterhours – 25 people

- Ribbon Cutting – 15 to 20

Attendance for all events depends on how well the Chamber AND host advertise an event.

Step Six: Getting the Word Out There + Media Coverage

Realistically, you should not expect to have extensive media coverage, but inviting the media to your special event is definitely worthwhile. Be aware that there is a lack of people to cover every event as well as a lack of sufficient airtime/print space to carry every story.

- Inviting the Media: Send your invitation to the news directors or editors at least a week prior to your event. Include a brief personal letter explaining some details about your firm and why your event is different, or has some significance in the community.
- Follow-Up: A follow up reminder call the day before is always a good idea.
- News Release: In the event that an individual from a media outlet is unable to attend your event, you may consider sending a news release that contains the basics: who, what, when, where, and why. The release does not have to be fancy, just factual, and you may like to include a photo (with caption) from the event.
- Photographers: You may want a friend or photographer to take a photo of the key people/activities at your event. This will make it easy for you to mail or email it to all daily, weekly, and bi-weekly newspapers with a brief, clear caption.

The Chamber will feature your event in our page of the Greensboro News & Record (Rockingham County Section) on the last Sunday of the month, following your event.

Chamber Services

- Providing a mail merge list of Lombard Chamber members for you to create mailing labels, or for \$10 we can provide you with printed member mailing labels.
- Send out E-blast to our contact list to have members attend your event and represent businesses in our area.
- Post your event on our website and social media outlets.
- Supply a list of Chamber member restaurants that can cater your event.
- Supply your business with a list of all of your event attendees.
- Supply traditional items, such as ribbon and ceremonial scissors.