

Bespoke events

» Be clear about your objectives and the costs will start to come down

SUPPLIER



David Wolanski
managing director
The Recipe

Have bespoke events taken a bigger hit than most sectors this year?

The number of bespoke corporate events has decreased and there is greater focus on value for money. This has affected organisations who are having a tough time and need to cut costs, and those that

can afford prestige events but don't want to appear extravagant during a financial crisis.

What advice would you offer clients on a tight budget?

Don't waste money on peripherals, and work closely with suppliers to get value. Beware of the cheapest quotes – they

may be compromising on quality or hiding costs. Find a caterer you trust and have an open and honest dialogue. Doing it piecemeal means you will go backwards and forwards playing off one supplier against another.

What elements should organisers cut back on?

Allocate budget to areas you feel the guests will appreciate most. If it's a celebration and the focus is to drink and dance, you won't need elaborate food. But if food is more important than entertainment, feed the guests well and cut back on a DJ by making a great playlist on an iPod.

How can organisers create a bespoke event with maximum impact at minimum cost?

Bespoke allows you to choose exactly where to focus your budget. Be creative – look for a quirky venue that may be off the beaten track, and potential strategic partners who might want to get their product or service in front of your guests.

What can organisers do to make sure their bespoke events don't appear to have been done on a budget?

You can get some fantastic prosecco at a fraction of the cost of champagne. Don't cut back on staffing – it will be noticed and not only will you look cheap, you'll make the caterer look bad.

How do bespoke events justify their slice of the event marketing budget?

They are no different to any other event and how you quantify the success of the event does not depend on whether it is bespoke or a package. It's all about setting yourself clear aims and objectives, then fulfilling them.

What added extras can clients expect to get from you?

We introduce our clients to hand-picked suppliers we work with, such as bar-hire companies, stationery or event designers, rather than simply getting a quote from them and putting a mark-up on it.

AGENCY

What advice would you offer clients with a tight budget?

Be clear on your objectives. Keep it real – your audience may prefer a nice picnic to a flash event. Also keep it simple and don't forget it is about people meeting people, rather than the glitz.

Remember the essentials of the event and don't worry too much about the extras.

What elements should organisers be cutting back on?

From experience, I would say that what most guests really care about is a well-stocked bar and quality tunes. People don't remember the food at an event, but they will remember having to fork out for their own drinks.

How can organisers create a bespoke event with maximum impact at minimum cost?

It's always a good idea to pick a venue that doesn't require too much

dressing. Blank canvas venues are lovely, of course, but in lean economic times organisers don't want to be spending their money on dressing a space. People remember people. If it ultimately comes down to a choice between having a quirky set for your event or some fantastic entertainment, don't ever compromise on the talent.

How do bespoke events justify their slice of the event marketing spend?

Unlike an off-the-shelf package, a bespoke event can be created to the company's exact objectives, as well as the needs of the people attending. Guests feel special and important, and so are more likely to listen to the messages being conveyed.

What steps can organisers take to ensure they get value for money?

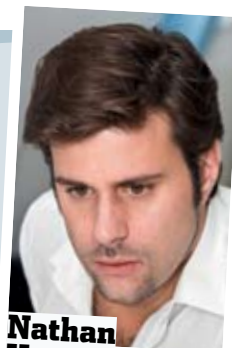
Organisers should always make sure that they

get three quotes for anything that will cost more than £5,000.

Use tendering, but use it fairly and openly – good negotiation demands transparency.

What added extras do you expect from suppliers?

People cost but kit doesn't have to, so always ask if suppliers can add in extra kit free of charge, such as a canapé tray or plasma screen. If they have it lying around it won't cost them anything, but will add sparkle to your event.



Nathan Homan
creative director
The Rouge Partnership

VENUE



Andrew Morrow
head of sales
One Marylebone

What advice would you offer clients on a tight budget?

It's funny, the term 'tight budget' today has very different connotations to that of 18-24 months ago. I don't think there has been a better time for lower budgets to produce a better standard of

event. Suppliers to the industry are doing everything they can to win business, so if there was ever a time to negotiate, it is now.

What elements should organisers be cutting back on?

I'm not sure it's possible to list specific elements because each client has their own ideas on what their priorities are. However, I have seen a lot of keeping it simple and 'less is more' in recent months in regards to

flower displays and lighting options. The shift has also seen receptions preferred to sit-downs, because the evening can be shorter, thereby lowering costs considerably.

How can organisers create a bespoke event with maximum impact at minimum cost?

I have always tried to liaise with clients to see how they can share the costs of events. There are huge savings to be made on the install and then it's just a question of fine-tuning the design to create something different. Production and catering companies are happy because they have more work, clients are happy saving money, and the venue is happy because less kit is coming in and out.

What measures can organisers take to make sure their bespoke events don't appear to have been done on a budget?

Use suppliers that you trust, or those recommended by established venues – a good supplier will never let a product go out that will damage their reputation.

How do bespoke events justify their slice of the event marketing spend?

We are all having to work smarter and more realistically in these times, which in some respects is a good thing for the industry. Each event has to be justified on what the actual returns are going to be. For a consumer event or product launch, the aim is to create as much 'noise' and PR as possible, and if executed properly they will return the greatest ROI within the marketing mix. Bespoke Christmas parties, however, are being highly scrutinised and we are even finding directors involved with site visits, which never used to be the case.

What can organisers do to make sure they get value for money?

There are deals to be had out there – just ask around. Suppliers are no longer able to keep products sitting on shelves, waiting for the price they could command 18 months ago.

What added extras do you expect from suppliers? Fortunately, the climate hasn't changed this for us – venues and suppliers tend to work so closely that support goes hand in hand, through both the good times and the bad.

CLIENT

What advice would you offer clients with a tight budget?

It's essential to get three or four quotes. In today's climate, talking to more than one supplier will make you realise how competitive the marketplace is. This will also put you in a strong negotiating position with your current supplier.

What elements should organisers be cutting back on?

It depends on the type of event. Travel can eat into the budget, so hosting it in the UK is an acceptable way to keep costs down. Also, partnering with brands that complement your brand or event, and asking the partner to sponsor the non-essential elements, such as goodie bags, can reduce costs and enhance the occasion.

How can organisers create a bespoke event with maximum impact at minimum cost? Use all available channels to promote and enhance your event. For example, when *Cloverfield*

was launched, the organiser used Myspace to generate interest around the film and its premiere. People were encouraged to make *Cloverfield* their top Myspace 'contact' to secure tickets. The cinema was then decked out to represent a Myspace profile page. The end result meant the competition winners all had a sense of ownership of the event.

What measures can organisers take to make sure their bespoke events don't appear to have been done on a budget?

Don't cut corners on the essentials. Equally, there are areas where you can turn a budget challenge into a creative idea. For example, instead of hiring private cars to drive guests home, look into renting tuk tuks to take people to the closest station and present it as an initiative to lower your carbon footprint.

How do bespoke events justify their slice of the event marketing spend?

Traditional marketing no longer gets the cut-

through it once did. Bespoke events offer an effective way to speak directly to your customers, and to get this cut-through in an overcrowded marketplace.

What can organisers do to get value for money?

Evaluate past events and look at ways you could have reduced your costs, then shop around. Recommendations from industry colleagues can also be an effective way to find cost-efficient suppliers.

What added extras do you expect from suppliers? If they deliver successfully on time and on budget we always look to use them again for future events.



Nick Becker
senior event manager
O2