

Top 10 Secrets of a Nonprofit Event Specialist

Chris Lipari, is founder and owner of [Lipari Production Group](#), event specialists providing production and consultation services to nonprofit organizations. LPG has produced events ranging from large star-studded benefits to “K9K” walks across the Brooklyn Bridge. Chris shares his top 10 “insider secrets” for successful fundraising events. These tips resonate with Event Journal, because they are many of the same suggestions we give our clients:

- Think strategically about your event. What is your organization hoping to gain from the event? What do you want the event to achieve and communicate? Set goals — and not just financial goals!
- Determine how you want your event to make people *feel*. How do you envision the complete event experience, from start to finish?
- Build an infrastructure into your development team to anticipate, plan and manage your annual major special event. Your other development activities should not come to a screeching halt each year when the event is being planned. If this is the case, consider outsourcing more responsibilities to seasoned event professionals.
- Engage all departments in your organization: development, communications, finance, and programing to work as a team — you all have the same goal!
- Be smart about budget — both revenue and expenses. Dinner Galas are costly to produce and are not the right fit for every organization. Consider other possibilities, such as a cocktail party or tasting event.
- The planned flow of an event is always likely to change. Who is the one person who knows the objective of the event, what should happen and (most importantly) is *empowered to make real-time decisions* to create a positive outcome?
- What are you spending money and time on? Do you really need a printed journal? Make use of video projection to recognize supporters and sponsors at the event. Consider a digital event journal. It lives online year-round, saves paper and is one less thing for guests to carry home (and throw away!)
- At the event, you have a captive audience. How are you going to communicate with them? Attendees should walk away with new knowledge about your organization and its mission, and why you need their support. There must be a compelling call to action.
- Who are your guests? Often, tickets get passed down the line and may end up in the hands of a table sponsor’s guests who have no connection with your organization and its mission. Find a way to engage these people too. Make sure there are giving opportunities for guests at every financial level. Not only will this yield more revenue, it will allow your organization to capture guest information and begin to cultivate these new donors.

Make sure to hold a post-event debriefing: the good, the bad and the not-so-good! Consider sending a short survey to board and committee members and a selection of guests. Take specific notes, so you can start to build a year-to-year dossier of the event and build on your success.