

a guide...

to Ribbon Cuttings and Open Houses

■ One of the most exciting events for a business, whether new or existing, is celebrating a grand opening, anniversary, recent achievement or business milestone.



These events are a significant part of your overall marketing and advertising plan and a great way to increase awareness about your company, products or services. The Chamber has put together this guide in order to assist you in the planning and preparation of these important events.



■ Getting started: setting a date

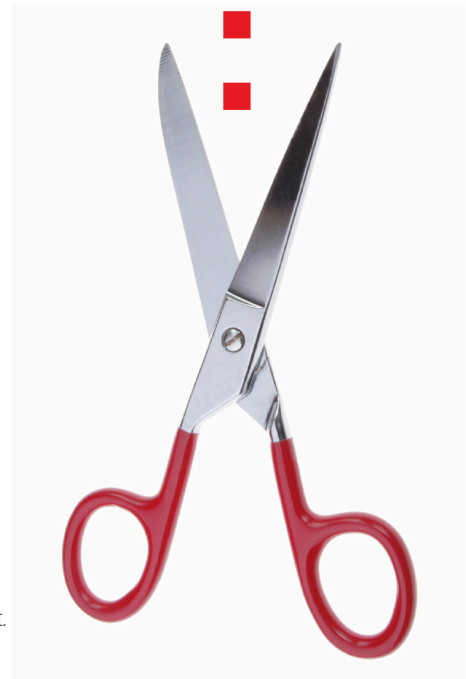
You should allow yourself plenty of time to organize the details of the event. Planning should begin at a minimum of three to four weeks ahead of the actual event date. This will also allow attendees enough time to respond and mark their calendars. Before choosing a date, here are some important things to consider:

■ Be aware of major holidays and avoid planning your event for those days. Also, if you are trying to attract bankers or government officials, take note of any special holidays when their offices may be closed.

■ Try to avoid a conflict with major community and/or sports events. Log on the Convention and Visitors Bureau Web site, www.exploresouthbend.org, to find out what events are taking place locally.

■ Consult The Chamber's online Events Calendar at www.sjchamber.org/events to assure you aren't selecting a date that conflicts with an established Chamber event.

■ The best days of the week to get good attendance are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Mondays tend to be too busy for most people to leave the office and many people take Fridays off to start their weekend early.



■ Try to avoid holding a weekend event. Most people have their own personal or recreation plans on Saturday and Sunday.

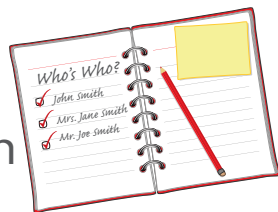
■ choosing the best time of day



The time of day you choose to hold your event is also critical to its success. It's an important step in the planning process and helps determine the type of special event that you'll conduct. Morning functions, for example, will have an entirely different atmosphere and style than an evening cocktail reception. Luncheon gatherings will naturally require more food and beverages. Consider the following when making your decision:

- Very few successful special events are held early in the morning (7 to 7:30 a.m.) Unless it is a necessity, morning events should begin no earlier than 8:00 a.m.
- Luncheon events often turn out well, since most everyone eats a mid-day meal. However, luncheons require more advance notice in sending out invitations. Many people schedule luncheon arrangements weeks ahead and they will need to be notified as early as possible to get your event on their calendars. If you decided on a luncheon event, the best time is 11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Late afternoon and early evening functions seem to be the most popular and successful. This allows people to drop by after work at their convenience and doesn't interfere with the regular workday. The best time for an evening event is 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., allowing everyone time to "drop in." Unless your event is a major one, a few people will want to go home, change clothes and go out again, so avoid late evening functions (7 to 8:00 p.m.).
- Try to avoid mid-morning and mid-afternoon time periods. Many people are reluctant or unable to break away from their work in the middle of the day.
- Half-day open house or tours of your company are not advisable unless it's necessary or traditional in your line of business (i.e. hotels or restaurants). If you decide on a half-day event, be certain to have a designated time for a ribbon-cutting or other special ceremonies to lend focus to your event.
- If media coverage is important to you, give serious consideration to their deadlines before selecting a time for your event.

■ who's who – developing an invitation list



When developing the list of who you will invite, consider the following groups of people:

- Potential/current customers
- Suppliers
- Employees and their domestic partners
- Representatives from The Chamber

- Key government officials – City Council members, mayors and public officials from the district where your business is located. If your goal is to have a public official present, you may want to schedule that person first and build your event around his/her availability.
- Media outlets
- Neighboring businesses
- Friends and family
- Business associates

To help identify public officials, The Chamber publishes an Elected Officials Directory. The online listing can be found by logging on to www.sjchamber.org/policy. For a printed version, call 574.234.0051, ext. 301.

■ invitations



Once you have identified your guest list, here are some tips to remember when sending out invitations:

- Prepare a basic invitation that is simple and to the point. Make sure all the basic information is included – who, what, when, where and why.
- If desired, include an RSVP. This will give you an idea as to how many people can attend and how much food / beverages to have on hand.
- Allow a sufficient amount of time for guests to return their reply. A week to 10 days is sufficient for most events, although two weeks would be preferable if you are planning a luncheon or dinner event.
- Be sure to include a good map or very clear instructions on how to get to your event. A street address alone is not sufficient.
- Identify parking areas for your guests.
- Indicate in your invitation whether the event is casual, semi-formal/business attire or formal.
- If a spouse or other guest is also invited, indicate that as well.

■ serving food and beverages



Hors d'oeuvres and beverages are typically served, but it is your decision. When planning for food, it is important to make time-appropriate selections. Here are some helpful ideas when it comes to planning a menu:

- For morning events, coffee, juices, fruit and pastries are common. A full breakfast is not necessary.

■ food & beverages cont.

- At luncheon functions, serve some kind of sandwich or buffet meal. Keep in mind that guests attending a noon event are spending their lunch hour with you.
- During the late afternoon or early evening events, light hors d'oeuvres or finger foods are appropriate. Chips, dips, cheeses, vegetable plates or cold-cut meat trays are perfect.
- If you choose to have a formal dinner or late evening party, make it exceptionally nice. If you are asking people to spend most of their evening at your event, they deserve something special.
- Serving alcohol: the only times alcoholic beverages are advisable are for late afternoon or evenings. Many people enjoy an after-work cocktail. Beer and wine are sometimes served at luncheon gatherings, but alcohol is seldom served at morning events. Remember to provide some non-alcoholic beverages for guests who don't drink. (Check with your insurance agent about host liability).
- Many people choose to enlist the help of a caterer for medium to large events. This is especially helpful if you don't have the time, manpower or experience to provide your own food and beverages. Check with The Chamber or visit the online Membership Directory at www.sjchamber.org for a list of our catering members.
- If you do decide to provide your own refreshments, be sure to have an ample amount of food and beverages for your guests, as well as sufficient plates, cups, napkins, trash cans and other supply items.

■ lights, camera, action! – planning a program



Whether you're staging a groundbreaking or a ribbon cutting for your company, it adds a nice touch to an event to have a brief program of some kind. It provides not only valuable recognition for you and your key people, but it makes the event more purposeful, and allows you to explain more about your business.

Consider these suggestions when planning your program or formal ceremony:

- People generally anticipate spending no more than about a half hour at a ribbon cutting or grand opening ceremony, so plan your event agenda accordingly.
- Limit the number of speakers and the length of their speeches. To help keep the program flowing smoothly, set a time limit for everyone asked to participate in the program. Be sure to give each of your speakers a call the day before the event as a reminder.

- Indoors or out, any group of 50 or less usually does not need a microphone system. More than 50 people usually requires voice amplification. A podium or lectern is often helpful to speakers.
- Conclude your program with the appropriate ceremonial or symbolic activity to commemorate the event: a ribbon cutting for a grand opening or shoveling the first load of dirt for a groundbreaking. These activities let guests know the formal program is over and they also create good photo opportunities.
- If your event includes an open house or tour of your facilities, be sure friendly and knowledgeable employees conduct group tours. Unguided self-tours by your guests are not nearly as valuable as guided tours.
- Consider having some kind of door prize or drawing as part of your program. Winning a sample of your product, a free trip for two or dinner at a nice restaurant can add to your guests' enjoyment...and perhaps help build attendance.
- If holding an outdoor event, always have a back-up plan in case of bad weather.
- 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 official program. If you collected names and addresses of guests who attended, consider sending out a thank-you note to them as well.

■ getting media coverage

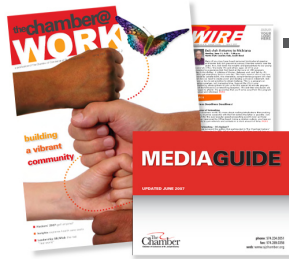


You should not rely on the media to give extensive coverage to your special event. It's not that they do not view your function as significant - it's simply a matter of lack of staffing and sufficient air time or print space to carry your story. The media is often swamped with news leads and are unable to provide good coverage to everything.

The following are some concrete things you can do to increase the chances of getting more media coverage for your event.

- Send a press release to the news directors or city editors at least ten days ahead of your event. More time may need to be allowed for print media. The Chamber offers a Media Guide to its members at no charge. For a copy, call 574.234.0051, ext. 301.
- Your press release should include the journalistic basics of who, what, when, where and why. See a sample press release on the following page.
- A follow-up or reminder call the day before your event may also be a good idea.
- Have a camera and photographer on hand so that if the media was not able to attend your event, you can send a follow-up press release (with photo) stating that your event took place.

pre-planning: resources available from the chamber



THE CHAMBER@WORK QUARTERLY

The Chamber's quarterly newsletter, *The Chamber@Work* includes a section for "Member Investor News." To include details of your event, e-mail a press release to Erin Heldstab at eheldstab@sjchamber.org. Submission deadlines are as follows:

Newsletter Issue	Submission Deadline
Summer '08	June 3, 2008
Fall '08	September 2, 2008
Winter '09	December 2, 2008
Spring '09	March 3, 2009

THE CHAMBER WEB SITE

A news brief of your event can also be placed under the "Member News" section of The Chamber's Web site. E-mail press releases to Erin Heldstab at eheldstab@sjchamber.org. Allow at least 10 days for publication.

MEDIA GUIDE

The media guide includes contact information for all regional media outlets, including newspapers, magazines, television stations and AM/FM radio stations. *

ELECTED OFFICIALS DIRECTORY

If you would like to invite local and state elected officials to your event, The Chamber has an online listing of these local leaders at www.sjchamber.org/policy. A printed version is also available. *

MEMBERSHIP LIST

If you would like to invite fellow Chamber member businesses, you can request a membership list from The Chamber. It lists all active Chamber members, the main contact at that company, address and phone number. Due to proprietary reasons, e-mail addresses are not published. Membership lists are complimentary to Chamber members. Membership mailing lists and disks (or via e-mail in Excel format) are also available for an additional fee. *

*The Media Guide, Elected Officials Directory and Membership List are available by calling The Chamber at 574.234.0051, ext. 301.

at the event

CHAMBER ATTENDANCE

The Chamber will make every attempt to ensure that Chamber representation is present at your event. Notify Sheri Miller, Membership Director, at least two weeks prior to your event so that Chamber staff and volunteers can make plans to be in attendance. Sheri Miller can be contacted by calling 574.234.0051, x312 or by e-mail at smiller@sjchamber.org. If you would like a Chamber representative to speak at your event, please provide more advanced notification.

PRESENTATION SCISSORS

The Chamber can provide you with a pair of oversized, 25-inch presentation scissors to use during the ribbon cutting ceremony. We also have eight, smaller gold ceremonial scissors that can be distributed to other dignitaries at the event and used during the ceremonial cut. Note: The Chamber does not provide ribbon or bow materials. If you need to use the scissors, please notify Sheri Miller in advance at 574.234.0051, ext. 312 or e-mail smiller@sjchamber.org.

PHOTOGRAPHY

If arrangements have been made to have a Chamber representative present at your event, they will also have a camera. Digital photos will be taken and e-mailed to you for your purposes.

If you have additional questions or would like more information on Chamber resources, please contact:



Sheri Miller
Membership Director
574.234.0051, ext. 312
smiller@sjchamber.org

COMPANY NAME

Press Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: (Name)
(Title)
(E-mail Address)
(Phone Number)
(Fax Number)

[Company Name] To Host Open House

[Your Town, STATE] - [Month Date, Year] -
To celebrate their [grand opening/ground breaking],
[business name] will host an [open house, ribbon
cutting ceremony] on [date].

The event will take place from [time] with opening remarks beginning at [time]. Following the [ceremony, ribbon cutting, ground breaking], refreshments will be served and staff members will be available to answer questions and provide tours of the facility.

[Include a paragraph about the company and the product/service offered. Try to include information about the company that is unique or different. May also want to include a quote from the owner/president.]

[Company name] is located at [address] in [city] and is open [hours of operation].

###