

Get paid to plan events!

FabJob Guide to
**Become an
Event
Planner**



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1. Introduction

Congratulations on choosing a career as an event planner! You are embarking on a path full of fun, excitement, big challenges and endless possibilities. Your job will vary from day to day, even minute to minute, and you'll enjoy the satisfaction of creating fabulous events that will be the talk of the town. You'll work hard and, if you do it right, you'll make it look easy.

Some people have a real knack for throwing parties, organizing group activities, and moving people in a common direction. If this describes you, this guide will help you take that natural talent and channel it into a lucrative and rewarding career in event planning. This book will provide you with a step-by-step road map for reaching success in the world of events. So let's get started!

1.1 Welcome to Event Planning

An event planner is, quite simply, someone who organizes events. When you think of an "event" you may think of something spectacular, such as the:

- Academy Awards
- Mardi Gras
- Super Bowl
- Presidential Inauguration
- New Year's festivities in Times Square
- Any other major events we hear about or see on television

Event planners are needed for all these events. Event planners also work on thousands of smaller events. Any time people gather together for a purpose, someone is needed to oversee all the details to ensure the event happens and that it is a success. The event planner is the primary point of contact for coordinating the countless details, both large and small, that go into a successful gathering.

As you will discover in Chapter 2, event planners may work on:

- social events (birthday parties, private dinner parties, family reunions, etc.)
- corporate events (company social events, board meetings, open houses, etc.)
- industry events (conferences, association meetings, trade shows, etc.)
- special events (festivals, parades, fashion shows, etc.)

Some event planners work on staff for businesses, organizations and associations, while others work in the hospitality industry for hotels and conference centers. Other employers include casinos, country clubs, theme parks, and public relations firms. (Chapter 4 has more information about employers.) Many experienced planners are independent consultants, working for clients on a per-project basis.

Meeting planners (a distinct group) specialize in planning conventions, conferences and seminars for professional organizations and businesses. Some event planners specialize further, planning exclusively out-of-town events (destination management) or incentive travel programs for company employees (incentive planning).

Wedding planners form another distinct category, and are covered in another FabJob guide, the [FabJob Guide to Become a Wedding Planner](#). A variety of job titles related to event planning can be found in section 4.2.

1.1.1 Event Planning as a Profession

You are entering a vibrant, growing and rather young industry. While event planning has been around since the beginning of recorded history, only during the last 15 to 20 years has the industry been recognized as a separate entity with a distinct skill set and body of knowledge.

Convention Industry Council president Mary Powers estimates that there are approximately 100,000 full-time or professional event planners in the United States. That number continues to expand as more top executives recognize this relatively new profession.

According to *FutureWatch 2007*, an annual report on the future and progress of the meeting planning industry produced by Meeting Planners International and American Express, planners were forecasting continuing market growth, including further globalization of the industry. Budgets for meetings were expected to increase by an average of about 19% among corporate and association planners. Spending per meeting was also expected to increase by an average of about 6%.

Globalization is expected to have a major impact on all areas of the industry. Those most affected by this trend were expected to be hotels, resort companies and corporations with international locations and activities. Another trend expected to impact the industry is the growth of virtual meetings and the expanding role of event planners in this new area of the market. According to *FutureWatch 2007*, "Respondents' expectations for the coming year paint a picture of sustained industry growth."

"The health of the meetings industry mirrors that of business and the economy in general," explains Colin Rorrie, President and CEO of Meeting Planners International. He adds: "Anecdotal predictions of the demise of face-to-face meetings due to technology or economic challenges haven't come to pass. Rather, organizations are recognizing the value of events as a strategic business tool."

1.1.2 Benefits of this Career

A career in event planning offers many personal and professional rewards, including:

Recognition

Events involve people – usually large groups of people – and you’ll fast become known as the person behind the scenes who gets the job done and makes sure everything is done flawlessly. Event planning is a great way to get to know your community, and will help you network with the movers and shakers in your town, your state, and even beyond.

Financial Rewards

With the increased recognition of event planning as an industry, professionals in the field are seeing an increase in compensation in both the business and non-profit arenas.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics median annual earnings of meeting and convention planners were \$39,620 in May 2004 (the most recent date for which figures were available), while the top 10 percent earned \$65,060. Event planners working for associations can expect to earn a bit less on average — about 84 percent of these figures.

Of course, if you start your own event planning business, your income potential is much higher, and will reflect the growth and success of your business from year to year.

Personal Satisfaction

If you’ve ever known the satisfaction that comes from working incredibly hard on a challenge and seeing outstanding results, you can understand why event planning can be so rewarding on a personal level. Financial and professional rewards are fine, but what a gift it is to find a career that gives you to have this much fun!

Flexibility

If you are looking for a job that will allow you some flexibility in setting your own schedule, event planning might be a good fit. Many smaller organizations and businesses can’t afford a full-time event planner. And

recent downsizing in some fields have left remaining staff overworked. This creates an opportunity for part-time or seasonal work rather than a rigid 9-to-5 routine. Carol Palmatier describes the benefits of flexible event planning work:

“I recently joined the staff of my local Chamber of Commerce as their event coordinator. The Chamber sponsors four major fundraising events each year. The job averages about 15 hours per week, but prior to each event the time commitment can be much greater. By taking this job, I am able to adjust my other client work and arrange vacation and travel time with my family – a perfect balance!”

Independence

Because of the timely and transient nature of event planning, the field lends itself beautifully to independent consulting. If you’ve ever wanted to start your own business, this field offers some terrific opportunities. More detailed information on starting your own business as an event planner can be found in Chapter 5.

1.2 Inside this Guide

This book was written to help launch you into your new career by providing industry information, event planning guidelines, helpful hints on finding and getting work, and advice on starting your own event planning business.

Chapter 2 will explain in more detail the role of an event planner, and give you step-by-step guidance on planning an event – from the initial planning stage to the day of the event.

In Chapter 3, we’ll outline the talents and skills you will need in order to be a smashing success as an event planner, and offer suggestions on how to develop those skills through formal and continuing education and self-study.

Chapter 4 focuses on event planning jobs. You will discover who hires event planners, how to find out about job openings, how to prepare an effective resume and cover letter, and how to do well in an interview. You will even discover how to create your own job!

If you want to start your own business, you will find some good advice in Chapter 5. You will find practical information on setting up your office and getting ready to open for business, including setting your fees. In Chapter 6, you will discover practical tips for Getting Clients.

When you're finished with this guide you will know what step to take next and where to go from there. By applying what you learn here, it's just a matter of time before you'll be where you want to be... in an exciting career as an Event Planner!