

## Peace of Mind Conference Planning Tips

12 months ahead:

1. Who is the champion of the event? There needs to be a clear picture of the person and the organization(s) who agree to be the driving force behind everything about the conference.
2. Will there be a planning committee and what will its role be? We gathered professionals and personal friends for an initial meeting to decide the level of interest, needed focus in our community, level of commitment. The planning committee is the workhorse of the event.
3. Is there any value in adding an advisory committee? These may be potential donors and key influencers.
4. Who is the event coordinator? This is crucial. You must have one person who is in charge to make sure everything else happens. One point of contact makes everything run much smoother.

The champion, event coordinator and planning committee need to decide:

1. Who is the audience you want to reach?
2. Decide the conference focus in 10 words or less.
3. Name the conference and write a two-sentence description. (You are welcome to use the Peace of Mind name and logo. Please just let us know.)
4. What is your goal attendance number?
5. How do you plan to finance the event? Will there be registration fees or only donations and sponsorships? How do you plan to collect any money? Are you a 501c3?
6. Establish a KEY person to be in charge of all donations. This may be the event “champion” or may be another key influencer. This person is vital to having community “buy-in” of the event. Decide levels of sponsorship if any and how you will publicize, if any.
7. What do you want them to know and to do when the conference is over?
8. What is the length of the conference? How will you break up the event schedule?
9. Determine potential dates and venues. (See Venue Hints Below.) Research any other significant events that might be scheduled for your city, church, area that would affect attendance at your event.
10. How do you plan to run the registration system? Is it online? Do you need a website? Will you print invitations?

11. Will you serve a meal?
12. What will be your cancellation policy?
13. Do you have adequate liability insurance? Most venues require a copy of this.
14. Begin researching for topics and potential speakers.
15. Establish a KEY marketing person to decide and implement publicity plans, ie Facebook page, Twitter, radio/TV/newspaper, word of mouth, church posters, etc.
16. Will you offer onsite counseling or a “safe room” if people get emotional?

### 9 Months Ahead:

1. Prepare a preliminary budget. (See budget hints below.)
2. Planning meeting to discuss all researched speaker options.
3. Retain speakers and obtain bios and photos.
4. Finalize catering options if needed
5. Will you provide an opportunity for vendors/service providers to have a table/booth? If so, will you charge a fee?
6. Approve marketing plan and begin publicity.
7. Approve registration system and make sure it will all be tested and ready.
8. Establish the volunteer coordinator and determine number of volunteers needed, as well as what those duties would be.

During this time, the “champion” and the person in charge of obtaining sponsors and donors will continue to work hard to keep momentum growing. The publicity person will also continue to work on social media and all other efforts.

### 3 Months Ahead:

1. Order any “give-aways” (i.e., pens, bags, notepads)
2. Begin working on any printed material (schedule, etc.) to be given to attendees.
3. Open registration for the event.

### 2 Months Ahead

1. Finalize with the venue any set-up requirements for each room.
2. Get titles and descriptions of presentations as well as audio/visual requirements from speakers.

3. Make any hotel/travel arrangements for speakers.
4. Hire security for event day.
5. Publicity push to secure spots on radio/TV/newspaper

#### 1 Week Ahead:

1. Confirm attendance numbers (and any other information) with the venue.
2. Confirm numbers with a caterer (if needed).
3. Finalize/print any materials (schedule/speaker bios, etc.) to be given to attendees on the day of the event.
4. Follow-up with all volunteers re-confirming their times and duties.
5. Follow-through on all marketing blasts and interviews.

#### 1 Day Ahead:

1. Set-up venue and double check all A/V, seating, catering, trash cans, etc.
2. Set-up registration tables. Make sure you have all materials needed. (We did not use nametags as we felt anonymity might be important.)
3. Double check what time you may enter the venue on the day of the event.
4. Confirm one more time all volunteer duties.

#### Venue Hints

Keep any mind that the venue reflects the message you will send. For example, using a church might send a message that this is a faith-based event. That will be good news for some, but a different message for others that may have a negative feeling/experience with church and its response to mental illness. On the other hand, an event/convention center is more generic in nature and has a completely different feel than a church. Each community has to decide what is best for its culture. Specific questions to keep in mind:

1. Is it located in a good accessible location?
2. Is there plenty of parking space?
3. Is there a general feeling of welcome and warmth?
4. Is there good lighting?
5. Are the rooms/carpet/flooring/ in good shape, clean and well maintained?
6. Is the layout conducive to a good crowd flow?
7. Are their adequate restroom facilities?

8. Are the ceilings high enough to not have a “closed in” feel?
9. Are there any renovations/construction scheduled that might affect your event?
10. Will there be any other groups meeting there at the same time?
11. If you will be using rooms with moveable air walls, is their quality adequate enough to eliminate any noise bleed?
12. Is there any outside noise interference (trains, traffic, near an airport, etc.)
13. Is it conducive to good sound and video for recording?
14. What are the technology/audio visual options?
15. Are there additional fees for A/V or security?
16. When would you be allowed in to set up?
17. Does it accommodate all types of meeting areas you need, from large rooms for the entire group to break-out session rooms?
18. Do you want tables or rows of chairs?
19. Is there adequate space for a registration/welcome area?
20. What type of food/drinks will you provide? Is there space for food lines/service?
21. Does the event provide tables/chairs/linens? Is there an additional cost?
22. Be sure to read facility contract carefully (pay close attention to any payment deadlines, food and beverage requirements, etc.)

## Budget Hints

Listed below are some basic expenses associated with producing an event of this type.

1. Contract Labor (*salaries or fees paid for an event manager, events workers, security on day of event, website development, etc.*)
2. Honoraria (*fees to speakers*)
3. Event Facility (*fees to rent facility, tables, chairs, linens, table/stage decorations, signage*)
4. Event Meals (*cost of any food or beverages*)
5. Event A/V (*fees for any technical/audio visual equipment for speaker presentations*)
6. Travel and Expense (*travel expense for speakers, to include airfare, mileage, meals while traveling, hotel expense, ground transportation, etc.*)
7. Technology Expense (*any fees for website creation, maintenance and hosting, videography, etc.*)
8. Printing (*any printed materials, signage*)

9. Volunteer & Speaker Appreciation (*thank you gifts for volunteers, hotel welcome gifts for speakers, etc.*)

For more information or details on a Peace of Mind Conference in your community, please email [info@peaceofmindtyler.com](mailto:info@peaceofmindtyler.com) and we will help you however we can.