



CHALLENGE



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A Herff Jones IMPACT Resource for Students

Essentials of Project Planning

Project planning is the backbone of most student activity groups. Aside from meeting skills, student leaders use project planning skills most often to carry out the work of their organization. While every project is different, basically three kinds of information are needed when planning an activity:

- What needs to be done?
- Who will do it?
- When must it be completed?

What Needs To Be Done?

Someone in your group comes up with the great idea to do an end-of-year multimedia presentation with photos of students from the whole year. Everyone loves the idea and votes to proceed. Great. Now, what do you do?

First, determine your purpose in sponsoring this project. A student group shouldn't sponsor any project just to do it, or just because it's always been done. The project should support the goals of your organization. If it doesn't, then perhaps another activity would make better use of your time and efforts.

Once you know the purpose of your project, it's a good idea to set some specific goals you hope to achieve. How will you determine

that the project was successful?

In the case of the multimedia presentation, perhaps you want to include a photo of every student and teacher in the school. Or include photos of every major event during the year as a flashback. Or involve non-members by reaching out to students in the



school's photography classes or computer classes. Be sure to set measurable objectives so you can look back later and determine the degree of your success.

With your purpose and goals in mind, now comes the task of imagining what the final product will be. As Steven Covey puts it, "Begin with the end in mind." Brainstorm what the project will look like, sound like, and feel like when it is completed, then list all the tasks that need to be done to accomplish that vision.

A standardized checklist such as the one in this newsletter might help in remembering some of the usual tasks that are common to all projects.

Who Will Do It?

The next step to make your project a reality is to determine who will do each of the tasks on the list of all that needs to be accomplished. How many people are needed to get it all done? What skills are necessary? Who will assume responsibility to ensure nothing is overlooked?

At this stage it's usually a good idea to form committees to handle the different types of work and get more people involved. Typical committees organize such things as decorations, publicity, food, set-up and clean-up, judging, and so forth.

Each committee should have a designated leader, someone who has final responsibility to ensure that the work is done. He or she must work with the committee members to decide WHAT has to be done, WHO will do it, WHERE it will be done, and WHEN it must be completed. Writing down these responsibilities and agreements can help ensure that all tasks are assigned to someone, that everyone knows what is expected of them, and what their deadlines are.

Good committee leaders don't try to do all the work themselves, but instead delegate responsibilities to members of their committees. When delegating, it's best to focus on the result to be achieved, not

the method of achieving it. Let members use their own knowledge and skills to come up with a way to do it—their way might even turn out to be better!

Although control of certain tasks has been delegated, you should maintain some responsibility for the outcome. Check periodically to see how the project is going. It may not be enough to merely ask, “How’s it going?” You may need to ask specific questions: “How many photographers have you recruited?” “Have you gotten a list of student names from the office yet?” “What program are you using to put together the show?” “What music have you selected?”

The delegate’s ability—or lack of ability—to answer these types of questions will give you a good indication of how well the project is progressing.

When Must It Be Completed?

When assigning tasks to committee members, be sure to set a deadline for their completion. Resist the temptation to use “ASAP” as a deadline; specific dates are harder to put off when life gets busy and many tasks are being juggled.

To set deadlines, work backwards from the date the item is needed

and allow enough time to get each item finished. When setting deadlines, always allow yourself a little wiggle room, if possible, to accommodate unforeseen circumstances—decorations you ordered get delayed in shipping, equipment breaks down, a key person gets sick, etc.

Although no two projects are ever the same, the steps involved in planning the projects are usually similar. Keeping in mind what needs to be done, who needs to do it, and when it needs to be completed will help any student leader successfully manage project planning.

General Checklist for Activity Planning

The steps involved in planning an activity will vary depending on the type of activity. Review the following list and check the items needed for your event:

- Obtain administrative approval for the activity
- Put the activity date on the school calendar
- Make arrangements to reserve needed facilities
- Submit requests for custodial assistance
- Determine audio/visual needs
- Select theme
- Order decorations
- Organize people to decorate & gather supplies
- Determine admission/ticket price
- Design ticket
- Arrange for tickets to be printed
- Schedule ticket sales workers
- Arrange for cash box for ticket sales
- Arrange for depositing money from sales
- Create schedule of events
- Create chart for lay-out of event and traffic flow
- Contract with entertainment (DJ, speaker, etc.)
- Request checks for contracted services (band/DJ, security, caterer etc.)
- Design printed program
- Arrange for program to be printed
- Order refreshments or contract with caterer
- Arrange for ice, tables, etc. for refreshments
- Obtain necessary supplies: cups, plates, napkins, utensils, serving utensils, etc.
- Organize servers for refreshment distribution
- Arrange for a cash box if selling refreshments
- Request administrative supervision
- Recruit chaperones
- Create a schedule of work stations and list of duties for chaperones
- Hire security guards for parking lot patrol
- Design and create posters, fliers, table tents, etc.
- Create PA announcements
- Draft press release and deliver to local media
- Send invitations to special guests
- Alert yearbook staff to have a photographer at the event
- Organize clean-up effort
- Conduct evaluation
- Write and send thank you notes
- Complete reports for the files