

A Business Guide to Hosting



Ribbon Cuttings, Grand Openings & Open Houses

presented by



West of the
River Chamber

Agawam • West Springfield

Table of Contents



Getting Started.....3

Initial planning, setting the date and time

Guest Lists.....4

Who to invite and how to do it

Refreshments.....5

Food service simplified

Organizing Your Day.....6

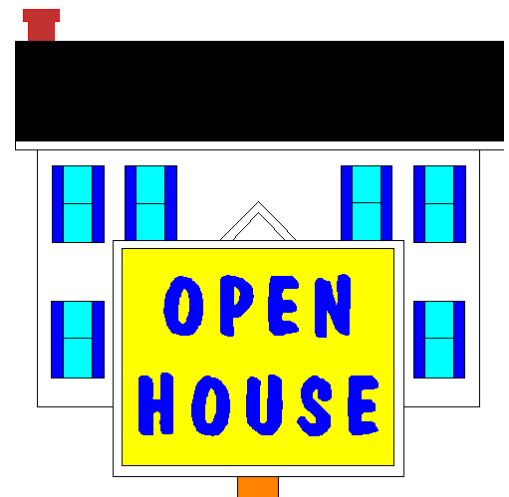
Manage your event wisely

Getting Noticed.....7

Communications and press releases

Additional Services.....8

Let WRC work for you



Getting Started

Allow ample time to plan.

This is the formal introduction of your business to the community so make sure you give yourself enough time to make arrangements and invite your guests, while also giving them plenty of time to RSVP.

- WRC strongly encourages 4-5 weeks for proper planning.



Selecting the date.

As you look at the calendar and try to decide what date to host your event, try to keep the following things in mind:



- Avoid major holidays and weekends if possible
- Be aware of what's going on in your community and try to avoid any overlap with local events. www.valleyvisitor.com and www.masslive.com are great resources to find out what may be happening locally.
- Mid-weekdays, Tuesday– Thursday, are the best days to get the business community and town officials to join you for your opening.

Setting the time.

Timing is everything, but as a business professional you already knew that. Here are some event timing recommendations that will help make your event a success:



- Morning events may be a challenge for many of your attendees. If this is your only option, do not begin your event before 8 a.m.
- Luncheons are generally well attended but serving lunch will require an increased budget. These events should be started between 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Late afternoon/early evening events provide flexibility to your guests as they may stop by after work with minimal disruption to their day.
- Unless they are traditional within your industry, half-day open houses or company tours are not recommended.
 - If you decide on a half-day event, be sure to designate a specific time for any ceremonial activities and be sure to let your VIP's and guests know.

Guest Lists

Who do we invite?

Having the right people on hand will help make this a special day for you and your business. Consider inviting the following people:

- City Officials– City council members and the mayor
- WRC Chamber Representatives
- Potential and current customers
- Business associates such as suppliers, carriers or distributors
- Employees and their families
- Neighboring businesses
- Media outlets



Sending invitations.

As you look at the calendar and try to decide what date to host your event, try to keep the following things in mind:

- Create an invitation that is clear and concise in addressing the basics- Who, What, When, Where and Why
- If you are serving food, request an RSVP so you have an accurate idea of what to provide.
 - Give your guests plenty of time to send their reply. Invitations should be sent 3-4 weeks in advance of your event.
 - Be sure to provide an email and phone number that guests can use to reply.
- Provide a map or specific directions that includes specific information about parking.
- Let your guests know what attire is appropriate if something other than business dress is expected.
- Be sure to let your invitees know if guests are welcome at your event.



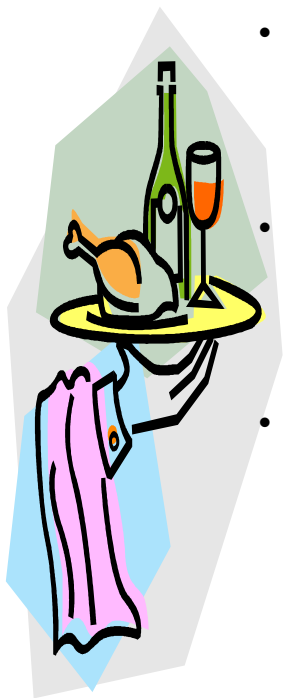
Refreshments



Providing food and beverages.

Hors d'oeuvres and other time appropriate finger foods are typically served but not required. Keep these considerations in mind as you build your event:

- Morning events
 - Coffee, tea, juice, fruit and pastries are acceptable.
- Luncheon events
 - Many attendees will be on their lunch hour so keep refreshments quick and easy in the form of sandwiches or a buffet meal.
- Late afternoon/early evening events
 - Finger foods and light hors d'oeuvres such as chips and dip, cheeses, vegetable and/or cold-cuts platters are all good options.
- Formal events
 - If you're asking your guests to dress up for the your event and spend more than an hour with you, plan on providing a sit-down meal. Catering services are strongly recommended to help make your event as special as possible.
- Serving alcohol
 - Alcoholic beverages are only appropriate at late afternoon/evening events or formal occasions.
 - You may require a special permit and additional insurance for your event. Contact WRC for questions about how to apply.



Depending on the size of your event, the number of people you're inviting and how much time you have to invest in preparing, you may want to hire a caterer. WRC is happy to recommend catering services that can help you with your event.

If you going to provide your own refreshments, in addition to having enough food and beverages for everyone, make sure to provide the following:

- Plenty of plates, cups, utensils and napkins.
- Make sure trash cans are out and convenient to reach.

Organizing Your Day



Create a program.

Having a brief program at your event will help provide purpose and give you a chance to explain more about your business.



- Try to keep the program to no more than 30 minutes.
- If you invite guest speakers, be sure to tell them in advance how long they will have to speak. Be sure to contact your speakers the day before the event to confirm their attendance.
- If you're hosting an outdoor event, have a back-up plan for inclement weather.
- For an event with less than 50 people a microphone is not necessary. For an event with more than 50 people, a microphone and podium are recommended.
- Consider having a door prize or drawing as a part of your program. This will help increase attendance and is a great opportunity to introduce your products and services.
- End your program with the appropriate ceremonial/symbolic activity such as a ribbon cutting for grand openings or shoveling a load of dirt for a ground breaking ceremony to let your guests know that the formal program is over.

After your program concludes, be sure to let your guests know what else is available for them to see or do at your event:

- Re-invite guests to share in the refreshments.
- If your event includes an open house or a tour, have knowledgeable and friendly employees conduct the groups throughout your business. Unguided self tours are a missed opportunity for you and your employees to actively engage your guests and promote your business.

Be sure to send Thank-You notes to anyone who helped to plan or participated in your event. If you collected names of guests who attended, consider sending them a thank you note as well. This is a great way to keep your business' name in front of community leaders and shows how much you appreciate their taking the time to join you for your event.

Getting Noticed

Getting the word out about your event.

The purpose of your event is to help tell the community more about your business. Building your communication plan is one of the most important steps to hosting a successful event.

- Send a press release to area news directors at least 10 days in advance of your event.



- Press releases should contain information about the location, date and time for your event.
- Make sure to note if this event is open to the public or not.
- If you're having a special guest speaker or a raffle/drawing, be sure to mention that as well.
- Media guides may be purchased from The Valley Press Club for \$38. To purchase a copy call (413) 335-8551.

- Contact local media outlets the day before to remind them about your event.
- Have someone available to take pictures of your event so if the media was unable to attend you can send a follow-up press release out with photos.
- Don't forget about social media sites!

- Use Facebook to create an electronic invitation that employees and customers can share publically.



- Like WRC's page, West of the River Chamber of Commerce (WRC), and share your event with our members.

- Use LinkedIn to let your business associates know about your company and event.



- Send WRC an invitation and join our professional network.

- Use Twitter to tell people about special promotions you'll have going on during your event.



- Follow @WRChamber and share your event with our followers.

Additional Services

Member Services

Members of WRC who are hosting an event are provided with the following support and services:

- WRC will draft and distribute press releases about your event.
- WRC will invite its Board of Directors to attend your event.
- A WRC representative will be on hand to take photos of your event and will provide you copies of the pictures afterwards for your use.
- WRC will assist you with requesting town officials to attend your event.

Not a member yet?

WRC can still help! For a nominal professional service fee, WRC will:

- Draft and distribute a press release on your behalf
- Invite WRC's Board of Directors and town officials
- Attend your event
- Take pictures of your event and provide you with copies

If you join WRC within 30 days of your event, your professional service fees will be put towards your membership investment!

WRC is committed to the economic development and growth of Agwam and West Springfield. Contact WRC with any additional questions you may have about hosting a business event or about membership.

West of the River Chamber of Commerce

Businesses building business.

West of the River Chamber of Commerce

P.O. Box 48

West Springfield, MA 01090-0048

(413) 426-3880 ❖ info@ourwrc.com

www.ourwrc.com