



200 YEARS *of* AMERICAN RAIL

The Beginner's Guide to Planning an Event

This guide provides essential tips for planning successful events to celebrate the 200th anniversary of American railroading.

1. Venue Selection: Finding the Right Setting

Choosing the right venue is the first step to creating a successful event. Begin by reviewing the scope of your celebration. Consider the anticipated number of attendees, the nature of the planned activity (exhibit, lecture, concert, etc), and the atmosphere you wish to create. There are likely a diverse range of options in your community, from the flexible spaces of community centers and parks to the historically rich environments of local museums and heritage sites. Partnering with local businesses that possess substantial event spaces can also be a strategic move.

- **Venue Checklist:**

- Capacity and layout
- Accessibility for all attendees
- Availability of restrooms, power outlets, and other amenities
- Parking and transportation access
- Rental fees and terms

When evaluating potential venues, pay close attention to the items in the checklist. Perhaps most importantly, make sure the venue's rental fees and terms align with your event's budget and requirements.

2. Community Partnerships: Building Collaborative Celebrations

Forging strong community partnerships is essential for amplifying the impact of your event. Initiate contact with local organizations that share an affinity for rail history and community engagement.

- **Benefits of Partnerships:**

- Expanded reach and audience
- Shared resources and expertise

- Increased community engagement

Historical societies and railfan clubs can contribute invaluable expertise and volunteer support. Local businesses can offer sponsorship opportunities, in-kind donations, or promotional support. Educational institutions, such as schools and universities, can enhance the event with educational programs, student projects, and research contributions. By working collaboratively, you can create a more enriching and memorable experience for all attendees.

3. Vendor Selection: Curating Quality Services

The selection of reliable and high-quality vendors is crucial for ensuring the smooth execution of your event.

- **Vendor Considerations:**
 - **Catering:** Seek vendors with experience in handling events of your size. Consider rail-themed menu options for a unique touch.
 - **Entertainment:** Live music, art gallery exhibits, lectures, and model train displays are popular choices, but you are only limited by your imagination. Ensure vendors are licensed and insured.
 - **Equipment Rentals:** Tables, chairs, tents, and audio-visual equipment may be needed. Obtain quotes from multiple vendors to compare prices.
 - **Vetting Vendors:** Always ask for references and review contracts carefully.

Before finalizing any agreements, request references from previous clients and carefully review vendor contracts to ensure clarity and mutual understanding.

4. Ticketing Websites: Streamlining Attendance Management

Online ticketing websites can significantly simplify the process of ticket sales and attendance management for your event.

- **Popular Platforms:**
 - Eventbrite: www.eventbrite.com
 - Ticketmaster: www.ticketmaster.com
 - Ticketweb: www.ticketweb.com

When selecting a ticketing platform, consider factors such as platform fees, payment processing options, customization capabilities, and customer support availability. Choose a platform that aligns with your event's specific needs and budget, and ensure that it provides a user-friendly experience for both event organizers and attendees. Online ticketing streamlines the process, and allows for real time data collection.

We hope your event is a wonderful success!